

Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

Active Travel Strategy for Fingal

2023

Active Travel Strategy

Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Fingal County Council (FFC) have prepared an Active Travel Strategy for the county. MEC Ltd. have been appointed to prepare a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment for the Active Travel Strategy (hereafter referred to as “the plan”).

The function of this report is to identify whether or not the plan has the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites and to provide information so that Fingal County Council can determine whether a Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment is required for the Active Travel Strategy.

1.2 HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of the potential effects of a land use plan or project on one or more Natura 2000 (N2K) Sites. It is noted that a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) is commonly referred to as an “Appropriate Assessment” (Dodd *et al*, 2007). However “Appropriate Assessment” forms only one stage of the HDA process (all stages making up the assessment process are outlined in detail below). The EU Habitats Directive provides the legislative framework for the protection of habitats and species throughout Europe through the establishment of a network of designated conservation areas known as the N2K network. The N2K network includes sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the EU Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive. Under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011, as amended) SACs and SPAs are referred to as European Sites. SACs are designated in areas that support habitats listed on Annex I and/or species listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. SPAs are designated in areas that support: 1% or more of the all-Ireland population of bird species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive; 1% or more of the population of a migratory species; and more than 20,000 waterfowl.

Articles 6(1) & (2) of the Habitats Directive set out provisions for the conservation management of European Sites. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive set out a series of procedural steps to test whether or not a plan or project is likely to affect a European site. Article 6(3) also establishes the requirement for a HDA:

“any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (European) site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public”.

Therefore, the objective of this Screening is to identify whether or not any land use measures that may be supported by the Plan will have the potential to negatively affect the Conservation Objectives

of European Sites. Such a conclusion will be arrived at by assessing the implications of future land use activities that could be implemented or supported by the Plan on each European Site occurring within its zone of influence.

The HDA is underpinned by the precautionary principle. Therefore, if the risk of negative impacts to the conservation objectives of a European Site cannot be ruled out it is assumed that the potential for an adverse impact will exist. Where such uncertainties are identified during the assessment, measures will be proposed to avoid or mitigate the risk of adverse impacts occurring.

The Screening was undertaken with reference to the following guidance documents on Habitats Directive Assessments:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009). DEHLG.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats directive 92/43/EEC. European commission (2018).
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2001).

1.3 STAGES OF THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT

The European Commission (2001) Guidance has outlined a staged process for the completion of a HDA.

- Stage 1 – Screening: This stage defines the proposed plan, establishes whether the proposed plan is necessary for the conservation management of the European Site and assesses the likelihood of the plan to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, upon a European Site.
- Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment: If a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken. In this stage the impact of the plan or project to the Conservation Objectives of the European Site is assessed. The outcome of this assessment will establish whether the plan will have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the European Site.
- Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions: If it is concluded that, subsequent to the implementation of mitigation measures, a plan has an adverse impact upon the integrity of a European Site it must be objectively concluded that no alternative solutions exist before the plan can proceed.

- Stage 4 – Where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain but imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist for the implementation of a plan or project an assessment of compensatory measures that will effectively offset the damage to the Natura site 2000 will be necessary.

2.0 SCREENING METHODOLOGY

The function of the Screening Assessment is to identify whether the Plan will have a likely significant effect on European Sites. In this context “likely” means a risk or possibility of effects occurring that **cannot** be ruled out based on objective information and “significant” means an effect that would undermine the conservation objectives of the European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects (Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), 2021) The nature of the likely interactions between the Plan and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites will depend upon the:

- the ecological characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change; *and/or*
- the character, magnitude, duration, consequences and probability of the impacts arising from land use activities associated with the plan, in combination with other plans and projects.

The European Commission Guidelines (2001) outline the stages involved in undertaking a Screening assessment of a plan or project that has the potential to have likely significant effects on European Sites. The methodology adopted for the Screening of the Plan is informed by these guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

- A brief description of the Plan is provided and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
- Identification of European Sites occurring within the zone of influence of the Plan;
- Identification of potential likely significant effects to European Sites; and
- Identification of other plans or projects that, in combination with the Plan, have the potential to affect European Sites.

2.1 CHANGES TO THE STRATEGY FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

The AA Screening report was issued to Statutory environmental authorities for a four week period under the SEA Regulations (SI 435 of 2004 as amended) with submissions received from the following consultees:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM).

Annex B of this Final SEA Screening Report provides a summary of points raised and the SEA and AA response to same.

In response to concerns raised by the DHLGH, minor changes have been made to the final Active Travel Strategy for Fingal, these are presented and evaluated in Table 5.2 of this AA Screening report.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Strategy sets out Fingal County Council’s ambitions to increase the number of people choosing to walk and cycle for everyday short journeys, and as part of longer journeys by public transport. The strategy considers the full range of infrastructure and supporting initiatives which, when combined, can make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for more people. Active travel means travelling with a purpose using your own energy. It includes walking, scooting, running, wheeling and cycling. It includes all journeys, with an emphasis on distances under 5km, including trips to work, education, shopping, visiting friends and for recreation. Active travel considers the needs of those who use prams, pushchairs, scooters, wheelchairs and adapted cycles, as well as new mobility modes such as e-scooters and e-bikes.

Fingal is one of four Metropolitan local authorities in Dublin, comprising of 22% of the total Dublin population. It has one of the youngest, most highly educated and most diverse populations in the country. Fingal has a mix of urban and rural communities, often acting as commuter hubs to Dublin city centre, and to other regional towns such as Blanchardstown, Swords, and Malahide. The strategy is intended for use by planners, decision makers and anyone else within the council who is in a position to influence how people travel in the county.

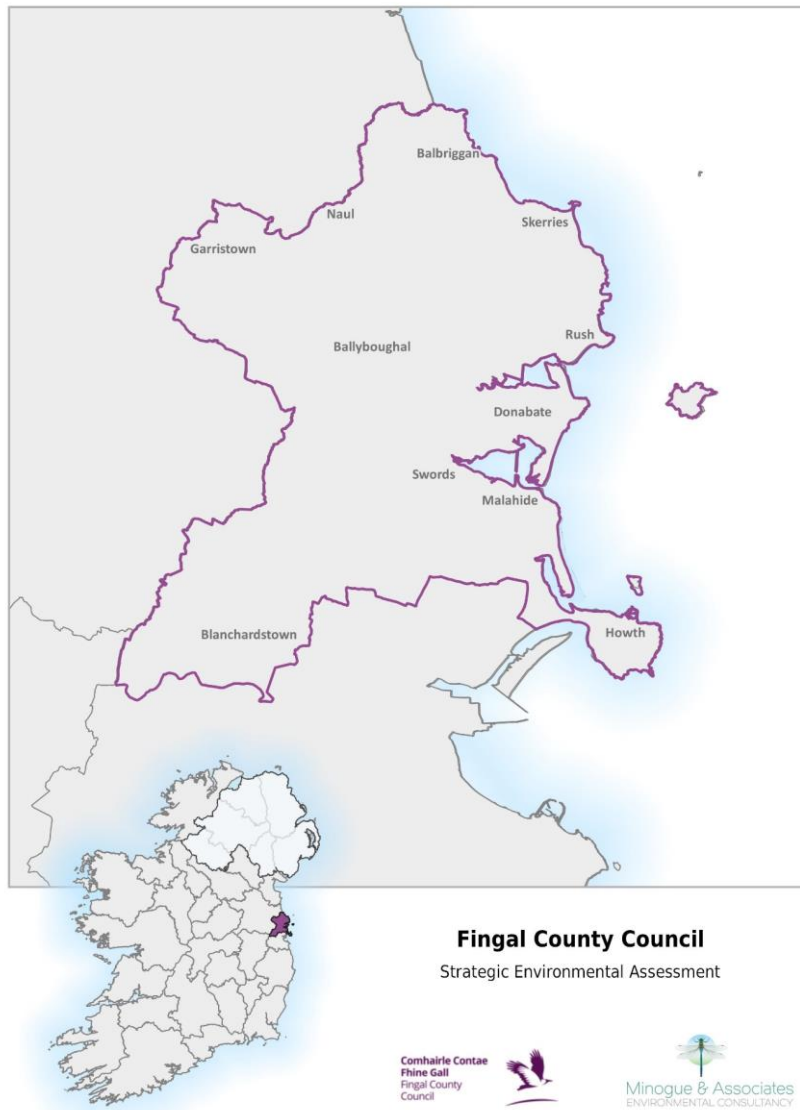
“ Our vision for Fingal is to ensure that walking, cycling and wheeling will become a realistic and safe choice for everyday short journeys. We will achieve this vision by putting active travel first in our planning, design and delivery of infrastructure and initiatives.”

There are six pillars within the Active Travel Strategy:

1. Protected Cycleways
2. Towns and Villages
3. Connectivity
4. Road Safety
5. Mobility
6. Strategic Planning

The six pillars reflect the key priorities within the strategy. Protected Cycleways is principally focussed on infrastructure, whereas Strategic Planning is mainly about processes. The other pillars include a blend of hard measures (new or modified infrastructure such as traffic calming or cycle parking) and soft measures (revenue funded items such as cycle training, road safety campaigns and marketing promotions). Research has shown that both approaches are required for successful active travel outcomes. Figure 3.1 shows the location of Fingal County.

Figure 3.1 Fingal County Boundary and Location



Data- © Open Street Map contributors; Fingal County Council

4.0 IDENTIFICATION OF EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE OF THE PLAN

Current guidance on undertaking EU Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessments recommends that all European Sites that could be connected to a plan or project via pathways should be included within a Screening Assessment. The DEHLG (2010) guidelines go on to state that for certain plans or projects the distance determining the zone of influence of the Plan could be much more or less than 15km, depending on the likely impacts of the plan and the sensitivities of ecological receptors. The example of water dependent habitats and species is provided in the guidelines to highlight the need for considering the full extent of upstream and/or downstream catchments at significant distances from a plan or project area.

4.1 CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Current guidance (OPR, 2021) informing the approach to screening for Appropriate Assessment defines the zone of influence of a proposed development/plan as the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European site. It is recommended that this is established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor (SPR) framework.

As a first step in identifying the European Sites that could be connected to the project via SPR pathways, all European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area that could be conceivably connected to the Plan area (administrative areas of the four Local Authorities) were identified. Figures 4.1 and Figure 4.2 presented at the end of this chapter show the European Sites located within and in close proximity of Fingal County Council and the details of these sites are provided in Section 4.2. As the zone of influence comprises of the zone of influence of all the Fingal local authority the potential for a connection between the local authorities and these European Sites requires further examination. All other European Sites are located at a remote distance from the local authorities and are not connected to it via any SPR pathways and as such are excluded from further examination.

Under the SPR model the Strategy, as described above, represents the source. It is noted that the proposed plan is mostly strategic in nature and does not involve any significant land use activities that will have the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites. Other pathways that can typically function as impact pathways to sensitive ecological receptors such as hydrological pathways, noise or disturbance through the presence of humans is also not considered relevant given the nature of the proposed strategy and the absence of specific physical land-use interventions in the plan measures.

The receptors represent European Sites and their associated qualifying features of interest. European Sites and their associated qualifying features are likely to occur in the zone of influence of the project only where the above pathways establish a link between the study area and European Sites or where the project site is likely to play an important role in supporting populations of mobile species that are listed as special conservation interests/qualifying species for surrounding European Sites.

As the Strategy's measures encompass mainly local themes and actions, some of which are still in development, and which in themselves do not contain significant development proposals, specific potential hydrological pathway and wastewater pathways are not envisaged. Where significant developments are subsequently proposed to deliver against these strategies and policies, the specific potential hydrological pathway and wastewater pathway that will arise during any construction or operation will be identified in separate AA screenings prior to the commencement of such developments.

4.2 CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES OF EUROPEAN SITES

Generic conservation objectives for all European Sites have been established by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The generic conservation objective for the habitats occurring within the zone of influence of the project is to maintain the favourable conservation status of these habitats. The favourable conservation status of these habitats is achieved when

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The generic conservation objective for the qualifying species occurring within the zone of influence of the project is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of these species. This is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Site-specific conservation objectives of European Sites have been identified for many of the European Sites occurring within the plan area and the details of these site-specific conservation objectives are provided by the NPWS at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives>.

4.3 EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN AND IN THE SURROUNDING OF THE PLAN AREA

A total number of eighteen European Sites, comprising ten SACs and eight SPAs occur within the Plan Area (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2).. There is no official requirement for a buffer zone of 15km, however, it is in line with good practice and is shown in figures 4.1 and 4.2 for spatial context.

Table 4.1 lists the qualifying features of interest of the SAC and the special conservation interests of the SPAs occurring within and surrounding the Plan area. In addition, the broad habitat types and species for which each site is designated are also outlined.

Figure 4-1 Special Areas of Conservation

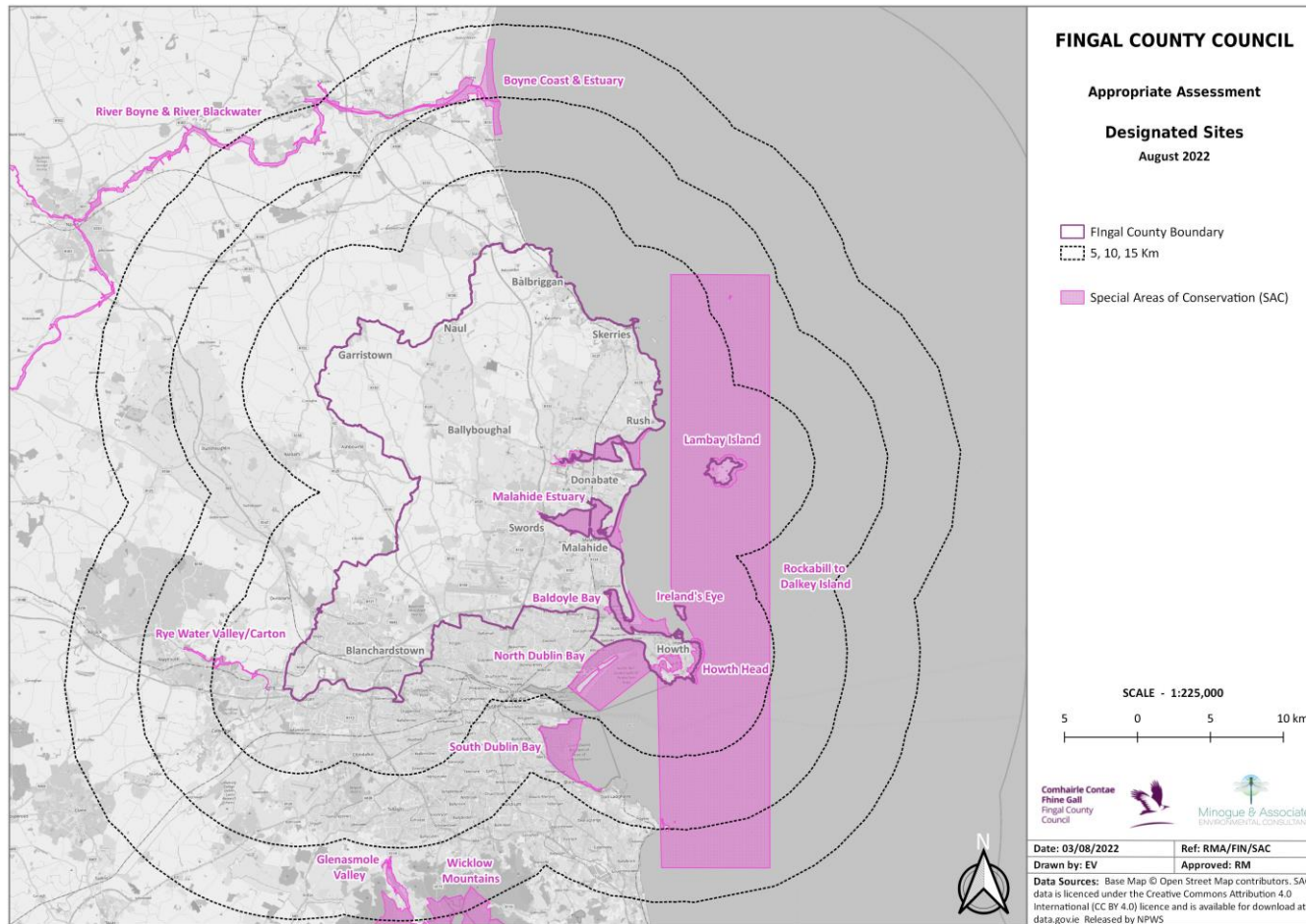


Figure 4-2 Special Protection Areas

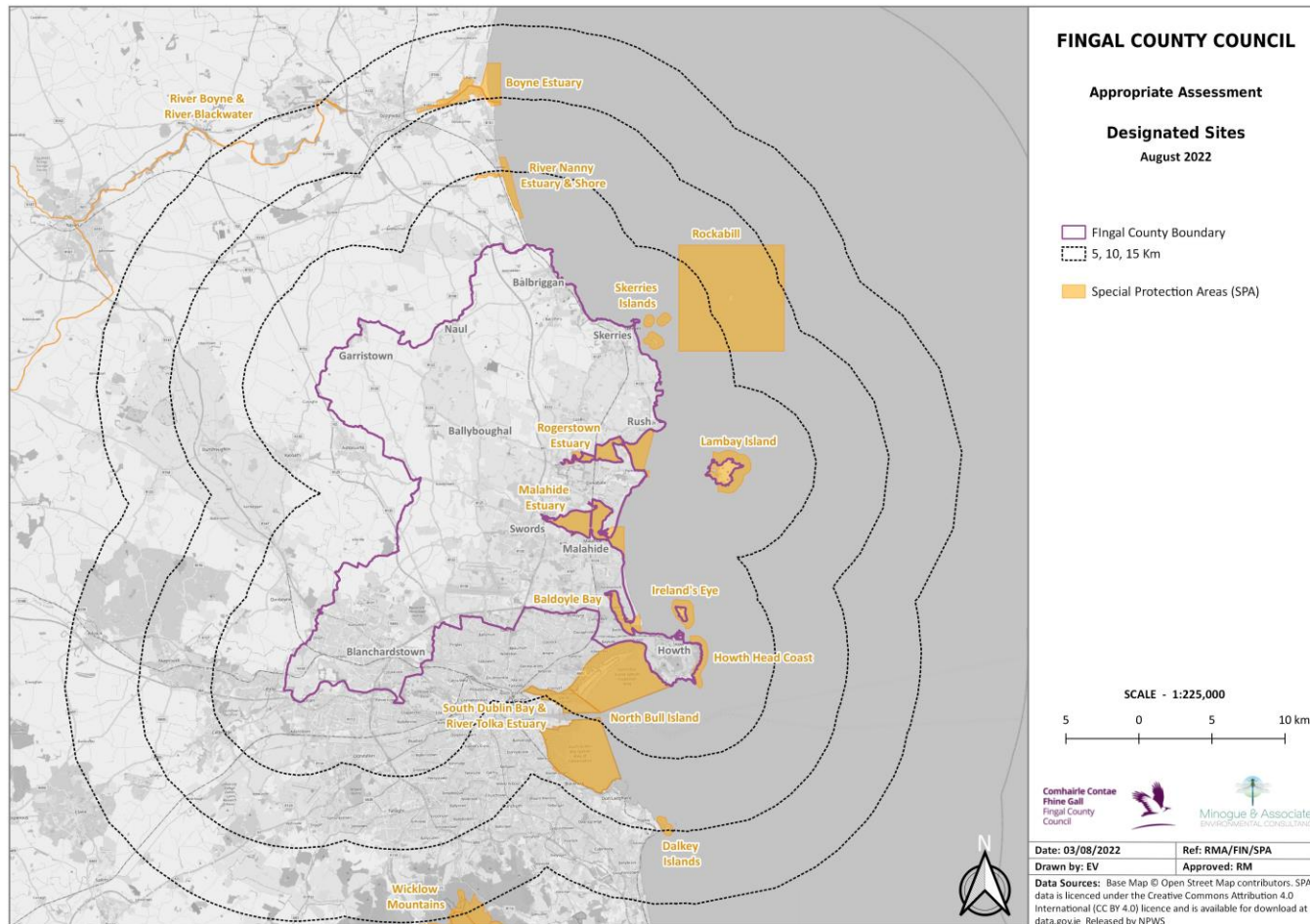


Figure 4-3 European Sites and hydrological connections

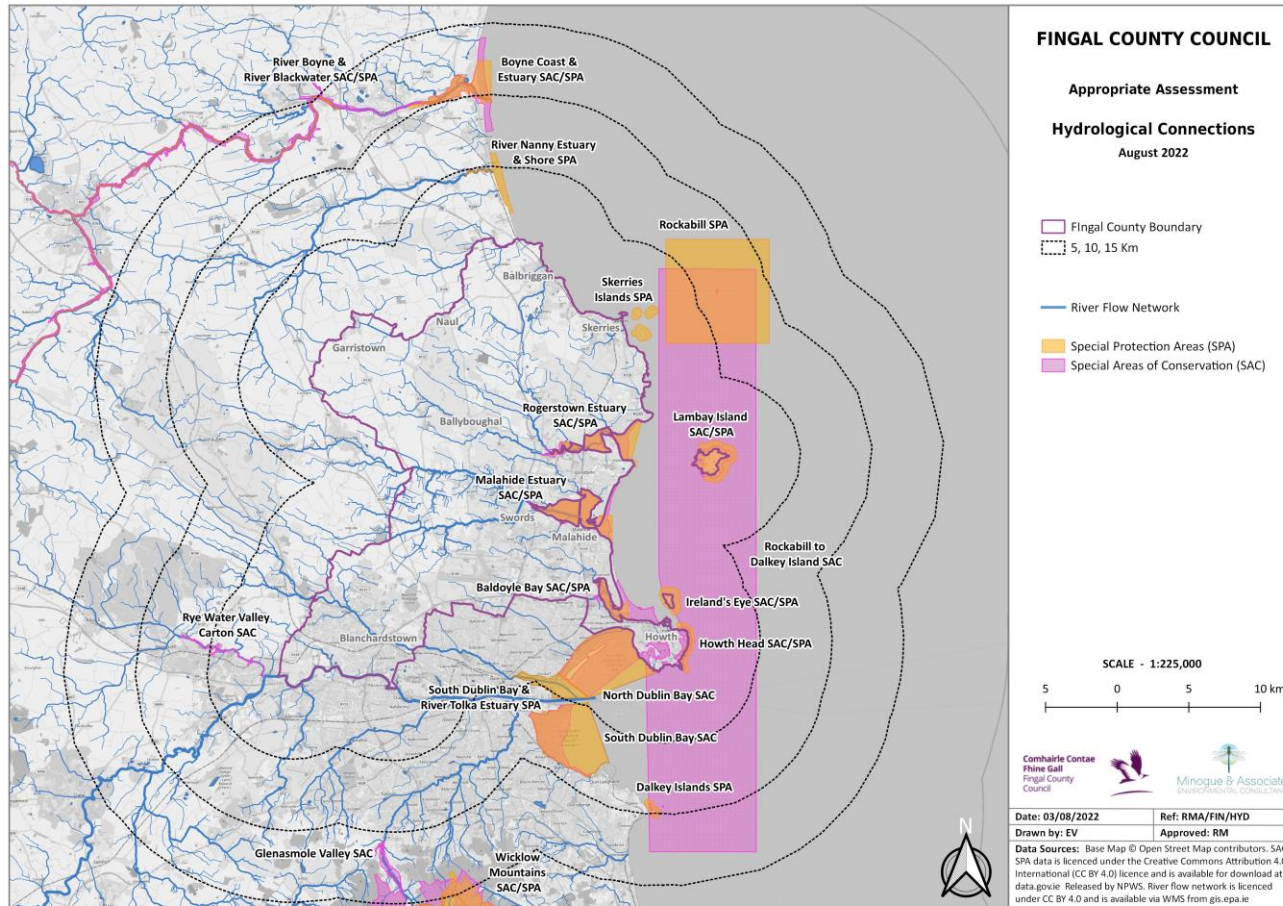


Table 4-1 Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 Sites	Distance from Plan Area	Qualifying Features of Interest/Special Conservation Interests	Broad QI/SCI Category
Rogerstown Estuary SAC	Within Plan area	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]	Coastal Habitats
Malahide Estuary SAC	Within Plan area	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]	Coastal Habitats
Baldoyle Bay SAC	Within Plan area	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	Coastal habitats

Natura 2000 Sites	Distance from Plan Area	Qualifying Features of Interest/Special Conservation Interests	Broad QI/SCI Category
		Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]	
Howth Head SAC	Within Plan area	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030]	Terrestrial exposed rock and peatland habitats
North Dublin Bay SAC	Within Plan area	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]	Coastal habitats Plant species (Petalwort liverwort)
South Dublin Bay SAC	Within Plan area	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	Coastal habitats

Natura 2000 Sites	Distance from Plan Area	Qualifying Features of Interest/Special Conservation Interests	Broad QI/SCI Category
Glenasmole Valley SAC	Within Plan area	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]	Terrestrial grassland and peatland habitat Groundwater dependent habitat
Ballyman Glen SAC	Within Plan area	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alkaline fens [7230]	Groundwater dependent habitats
Wicklow Mountain SAC	Within Plan area	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110] Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> [6130] Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]	Surface water dependent habitats Terrestrial grassland, peatland, woodland and exposed rock habitat Mammals (otters)

Natura 2000 Sites	Distance from Plan Area	Qualifying Features of Interest/Special Conservation Interests	Broad QI/SCI Category
		Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	
Knocksink Woods SAC	Within Plan area	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]	Groundwater dependent habitats
Rogerstown Estuary SPA	Within Plan area	Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Wintering coastal waterbirds Coastal habitats
Malahide Estuary SPA	Within Plan area	Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]	Wintering coastal waterbirds Coastal habitats

Natura 2000 Sites	Distance from Plan Area	Qualifying Features of Interest/Special Conservation Interests	Broad QI/SCI Category
		Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	
Baldoye Bay SPA	Within Plan area	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Wintering coastal waterbirds Coastal habitats
Howth Head Coast SPA	Within Plan area	Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]	
North Bull Island SPA	Within Plan area	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]	Wintering coastal waterbirds Coastal habitats

Natura 2000 Sites	Distance from Plan Area	Qualifying Features of Interest/Special Conservation Interests	Broad QI/SCI Category
		Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	
Dalkey Island SPA	Within Plan area	Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]	Breeding waterbirds
South Dublin Bay & Tolka Estuary SPA	Within Plan area	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Wintering coastal waterbirds Breeding Terns Coastal habitats
Wicklow Mountain SPA	Within Plan area	Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	Breeding raptor bird species

5.0 EXAMINATION OF POTENTIAL TO EUROPEAN SITES

The next step of this report is to identify whether or not the plan has the potential to damage, disturb or result in the loss of qualifying habitat or qualifying species/special conservation interests of European Sites and undermine the conservation objectives of the European Sites listed in Table 4.1 above.

Table 5.1 identifies the overall aim and measures of the plan and evaluates the potential for each to result in likely significant effects on European Sites. Where objectives and actions have the potential to result in positive implications for European Sites, such implications are recognised in Table 5.1.

Table 5-1 Evaluation of the Measures in the Fingal Active Travel Strategy

Protected Cycleways		
Actions		
FCC will work with NTA to deliver the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network, meeting high quality design standards set out in the National Cycle Manual		
<p>This measure aims to provide green sustainable transport options and develop high-quality cycling facilities to encourage more people to switch to active travel. This measure, therefore, is positive and will not involve land use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, it is noted that the projects previously referenced in the body of the text in the strategy are now removed. In addition, reference to those projects is already included in the current Fingal CDP 2017 -2023. Please see for example: Objective ED 68 Fingal Coastal Way, Objective ED 69 Royal Canal Greenway, ED 70 Liffey Valley Greenway.</p> <p>These objectives have already been assessed for SEA and Appropriate Assessment as part of the Fingal CDP 2017 2023, the current plan proposal will not result in any activities over and above those already committed to as part of the above plans.</p> <p>These are also referenced in Table 6.1 of the draft CDP 2023-2029 (please see for example: GINHO74 – Coastal Way see also Table 6.1 of draft CDP for list of greenways). These are currently being assessed for SEA and AA and the current strategy will not result in any activities over and above those already committed to as part of the above plan once adopted.</p> <p>Given the above are ongoing and consenting and subject to detailed assessment the policy to support them will not have the potential to give rise to significant effects.</p>		
Towns and Villages		
<p>We will introduce active travel interventions to reduce car dependency in communities with important regular destinations such as schools, rail stations, hospitals, sports clubs, and education campuses.</p> <p>Measures will include widening footpaths, walkability audits, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, Safe Routes to School measures, one-way systems (for vehicles only) and pedestrianisation schemes built in line with the Government’s Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets (DMURS) and actions arising from Local Transport Plans.</p>		
<p>These measures are not specified in terms of location, but their scale and size are minor and are not identified as giving rise to adverse environmental effects on European Sites. This measure aims to provide green sustainable</p>		

transport options and encourage more people to switch to active travel. This measure, therefore, is positive and will not involve land use activities with the potential to result in likely significant effects on European Sites.

Connectivity

We will continue to assess new development proposals with more emphasis on the promotion of active travel infrastructure through the development management and forward planning processes. In addition, we will review existing developments to assess any connectivity and permeability improvements that can be made. We will also assess any requests for improvements in this regard.

These measures are not specified in terms of location. The incorporation of this concept of connectivity into Forward Planning and Development Control will have the potential to result in positive implications for the environment, particularly in terms of air quality, and will have the potential to result in neutral to positive implications for European Sites within and surrounding the Plan area.

Road Safety

We will seek to reduce the overall casualty rate for pedestrians and cyclists through a range of safety initiatives which will be set out in our Road Safety Plan. Each initiative will be reviewed to check that all messaging is appropriate to different age and user groups and does not achieve safety targets by discouraging walking and cycling

No landuse effects are identified in relation to this action as it relates to safety initiatives which in and of themselves do not give rise to landuse effects. This will have the potential to result in neutral implications for European Sites within and surrounding the Plan area

Mobility

We will work with the NTA and local organisations such as Age Friendly Fingal to develop a structured network of coordinated bike share schemes, support the provision of electric bike sharing schemes, and put in place interoperability between schemes. We will work with public transport operators to deliver measures which improve information, safety and cycle parking at bus stops, DART and regional rail stations and future Luas and Metrolink stops. We will monitor emerging mobility trends and respond accordingly (for example, the use of eScooters)

This action is not specific in terms of location and relates to sharing schemes as they relate to bike schemes. The second element relates to information, monitoring and cycle parking at bus stops. These are either minor in nature or do not, in and of themselves give rise to landuse effects. This will have the potential to result in neutral implications for European Sites within and surrounding the Plan area

Strategic Planning

The Active Travel Strategy will be referred to in the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029. Active Travel considerations will continue to be a requirement of future planning permissions – new developments shall give appropriate space for walking and cycling and provide connectivity and permeability to adjoining neighbourhoods. We will review all relevant Council policies to ensure they support active travel including (but not limited to) land use and transport, cycle parking standards, Safe Routes to Schools, interchange with Public Transport and our own operational procedures. The following projects all have a part to play in promoting active travel:

- car share schemes
- car park management and charges
- treatment of on-street parking
- last mile, low emission deliveries
- marketing and information
- segmented cycle promotion such as Gear up for Cycle Training and Cycling Without Age Strategy

This commits to inclusion of this Active Travel Strategy to the new Fingal CDP 2023 -2029, potential projects are all either not directly relating to landuse or are minor in size and scale. Should projects arise from this they would be subject to appropriate project level assessment through the planning and consenting process.

Table 5-2 Evaluation of post consultation amendments made to the Fingal Active Travel Strategy

Updates to Final Fingal Active Travel Strategy

Additional text to clarify the planning hierarchy and that should any projects arise from the Active Travel Strategy they would be consistent and compliant with relevant consenting processes including, inter alia EIA, AA and EclA as appropriate. Page 2:

"Any land use development or activity progressed under this Strategy shall be required to comply with provisions of the current and future Fingal County Development Plan and the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area."

For the avoidance of doubt please note on the final version of the Fingal Active Travel Strategy page 2:

"Any land use development or activity progressed under this Strategy shall be required to comply with provisions of the current and future Fingal County Development Plan and the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. "

In relation to the comments raised in consultation relating to Protected Cycleways, it is noted these objectives already included in the Fingal CDP 2017 2023. These objectives have already been assessed for SEA and Appropriate Assessment as part of the Fingal CDP 2017 2023, the current plan proposal will not result in any activities over and above those already committed to as part of the above plans.

Given the above are ongoing and consenting and subject to detailed assessment the policy to support them will not have the potential to give rise to significant effects.

The removal of projects within the text previously listed on Page 18 (not actions or objectives) that references 'projects underway'. For the avoidance of doubt any projects yet to be subject to planning approval are now removed from the strategy.

For clarification, the listing of projects underway are removed to exclude any projects that have not gone through the planning and consenting process. For the avoidance of doubt, it is noted that the projects previously included in the draft Active Strategy are already included in the current Fingal CDP 2017 -2023 (please see for example: Objective ED 68 Fingal Coastal Way, Objective ED 69 Royal Canal Greenway, ED 70 Liffey Valley Greenway).

These objectives have already been assessed for SEA and Appropriate Assessment as part of the Fingal CDP 2017 2023, the current plan proposal will not result in any activities over and above those already committed to as part of the above plans.

Reference is made to same in the draft CDP 2023-2029 (please see for example: GINHO74 – Coastal Way see also Table 6.1 of draft CDP for list of greenways). These are currently being assessed for SEA and AA and the current strategy will not result in any activities over and above those already committed to as part of the above plan once adopted.

5.1 EXAMINATION OF THE PLAN'S POTENTIAL TO RESULT IN NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN THE PLAN AREA

European Sites and their associated qualifying features and associated conservation objectives are likely to be compromised by the plan only where the actions of the plan have the potential to result in land-use activities that could result in damage or disturbance to qualifying habitat, qualifying species and or special conservation interests and the processes that they rely upon to maintain their favourable conservation status.

As identified in Section 5.0 above the Plan will not result in the implementation of land use activities that will have the potential to result in negative impacts on European Sites and their conservation objectives. On the contrary, certain actions in the plan have been identified as having the potential to result in positive implications for the environment and air quality in particular and neutral to positive implications for European Sites and their conservation status.

5.2 IN COMBINATION EFFECTS WITH OTHER PLANS & PROJECTS

As part of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3) assessment process consideration must be given to the potential for the Plan to combine with other plans or projects to result in cumulative negative effects to European Sites. In combination effects refer to a series of individual effects that may, in combination, produce a significant effect. The underlying intention of this in combination evaluation is to take account of in-combination effects from existing or proposed plans and projects and these will often only occur over time. Plans have been identified, which have the potential to interact with the implementation proposals for the Plan and thereby result in in-combination effects. Projects have not been considered here as these are more appropriately considered at assessment for each individual project. None of the plans listed below are considered to have potential for in-combination likely significant effects with the Plan which would necessitate mitigation to avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of any European site. Relevant plans include, *interalia*:

- Planning Framework 2040
- National Development Plan (NDP) 2021- 2030
- National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (2040)
- Climate Action Plan 2021
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019 to 2031
- Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)
- Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042
- Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029
- Local Transport Implementation Plans
- Local Economic and Community Plans

The implementation of the plan will have the potential to result in a positive effect for European Sites within and surrounding the county and will not have the potential to combine with other plans to

result in cumulative negative effects to European Sites. Additionally, any Strategy/Plan upon which it relies will be subject to separate AA/SEA.

5.3 SCREENING CONCLUSION

The Screening of the Fingal Active Travel Strategy as set out above shows that the plan will not result in land use activities that have the potential to result in negative impacts to the qualifying features of interest of European Sites occurring within or surrounding the plan area and will not have the potential to compromise the achievement of the conservation objective of these European Sites.

Given the strategic level of detail provided in the plan, and the current and draft Fingal CDP objectives and policies in place for the protection of Natura 2000 sites, it is considered that further assessment of the Plan would not provide any further level of detail and that any appropriate assessment screening is best carried out at project stage.

The examination of the plan has found that elements of the plan will have the potential to contribute to the conservation management of European Sites within and surrounding the plan area and will thus have positive implications for the conservation objectives of these European Sites.

In light of the findings of this report, it is the considered view of the authors of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment that it can be concluded by Fingal County Council that the Plan is not likely, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites in view of their Conservation Objectives and on the basis of best scientific evidence and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to that conclusion.

REFERENCES

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