

Habitats Directive Project Screening Assessment

Table 1: Project Details

Development Consent Type	Local Authority Works
Development Location	Mahon Bridge
File Ref	
Description of the project	Development of Car Park

Table 2: Identification of Natura 2000 Sites (SACs and SPAs) which may be Impacted by the proposed development

Please answer the following five questions in order to determine whether there are any Natura 2000 sites which could potentially be impacted by the proposed development.

Impacts on SACs		
1	<p>Impacts On Freshwater Habitats <i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include freshwater habitats, or in the catchment of same?</i></p> <p>Sites to consider: Blackwater River, Lower River Suir Habitats to consider: Rivers, Lakes and Lagoons</p>	No
2	<p>Impacts On Wetland Habitats <i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include wetland habitats, or within 1 km of same?</i></p> <p>Sites to consider: Comeragh Mountains Habitats to consider: Bogs, Fens, Marshes and Wet Heaths.</p>	No just over 1km south of the Comeragh Mountains SAC.
3	<p>Impacts on Intertidal and Marine Habitats <i>Is the development located within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include intertidal and/or marine habitats and species, or within the catchment of same.</i></p> <p>Sites to consider: Tramore Dunes and Backstrand, River Suir (Tidal Section), River Blackwater (Tidal Section), Waterford Estuary Habitats to consider: Mudflats, Sandflats, Saltmarsh, Estuary; Shingle, Reefs, Sea Cliffs.</p>	No
4	<p>Impacts On Woodlands , Grasslands and Dry Heaths <i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying habitats include woodlands or grasslands habitats, or within 200m of same.</i></p> <p>Sites to consider: Glendine Wood Nire Valley Woods, Ardmore Head, Helvick Head Habitats to consider: Woodlands, Grasslands or Dunes.</p>	No
5	<p>Impacts On Birds <i>Is the development within a Special Protection Area, or within 1 km of same.</i></p> <p>Sites to consider: Tramore Backstrand, Dungarvan Bay, Blackwater Callows, Blackwater Estuary, Helvick Head –Ballyquin Coast, Mid Waterford Coast</p>	No

Conclusion Table 2:

If the answer to all of these questions is **No**, significant impacts can be ruled out for Natura 2000 sites. No further assessment is required, proceed to the Habitats Directive Conclusion Statement.

If the answer to any of these questions is **Yes** please refer to tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Determination of Possible Impacts On Natura 2000 Sites.

Where it has been identified that there is a Natura 2000 site within the potential impact zone of the proposed development, it is necessary to try to determine the nature of the possible impacts. Please answer the following questions as appropriate.

1	Impacts on designated freshwater habitats (rivers, lakes streams and lagoons). Sites to consider: Blackwater River, Lower River Suir <i>Please answer the following if the answer to question 1 in table 2 was yes.</i> <i>Does the development involve any of the following:</i>	
	Works inside the boundary of designated site	
1.1	All works within the boundary of any SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species, excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
	Works outside the boundary of designated site	
1.2	Discharge to surfacewater or groundwater within the boundary of an SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.3	Abstraction from surfacewater or groundwater within 1km of the boundary of an SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats or species.	
1.4	Removal of topsoil within 100m of the boundary of an SAC, whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.5	Infilling or raising of ground levels within 100m the boundary of any SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.6	Construction of drainage ditches within 1km of the boundary of an SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.7	Installation of waste water treatment systems; percolation areas; septic tanks within 100 m of the boundary of an SAC site whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.8	Construction within a floodplain of EU designated watercourse whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.9	Crossing or culverting of rivers or streams within 1km of the boundary of any SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats.	
1.10	Storage of chemicals hydrocarbons or organic wastes within 100 m of the boundary of an SAC whose qualifying features include freshwater habitats/species.	
1.11	Development of a large scale, within catchment of an EU designated watercourse or waterbody, which involves the production of an EIS.	
1.12	Development or expansion of quarries within catchment of an EU designated watercourse or waterbody.	
1.13	Development or expansion of windfarms within catchment of an EU designated watercourse or waterbody.	
1.14	Development of pumped hydro electric stations within catchment of an EU designated watercourse or waterbody.	
2	Impacts On Wetland Habitats <i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include wetland habitats, or within 1 km of same?</i>	

	Sites to consider: Comeragh Mountains Habitats to consider: Bogs, Fens, Marshes and Wet Heaths. <i>Please answer the following if the answer to question 2 in table 2 was yes.</i>	
	Works inside the boundary of designated site	
2.1	All works within the boundary of an SAC whose qualifying features include heath, marsh, fen or bog, excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	No
	Works outside the boundary of designated site	
2.2	Construction of roads or other infrastructure on peat habitats within 1km of any SAC whose qualifying features include heath, marsh, fen or bog.	No
2.3	Development of a large scale within 1km of any SAC, whose qualifying features include heath, marsh, fen or bog, which involves the production of an EIS.	No
3	Impacts on Intertidal and Marine Habitats <i>Is the development located within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include intertidal and/or marine habitats and species, or within the catchment of same.</i> Sites to consider: Tramore Dunes and Backstrand, River Suir (Tidal Section), River Blackwater (Tidal Section), Waterford Estuary <i>Please answer the following if the answer to question 1 in table 3 was yes.</i>	
	Works inside the boundary of designated site	
3.1	All works within the boundary of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats, excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
	Works outside the boundary of designated site	
3.2	Coastal protection works within 5km of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats.	
3.3	Development of piers, slipways, marinas, pontoons or any other infrastructure within 5km of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats.	
3.4	Dredging within 5km of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats.	
3.5	Works within 1km of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats, which will result in discharges to rivers or streams directly connected to the designated site.	
3.6	Infilling of coastal habitats within 500m of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats.	
3.7	Removal of topsoil or infilling of terrestrial habitats within 100m of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats.	
3.8	Development of a large scale within 1km of any SAC whose qualifying features include intertidal or marine habitats, which involves the production of an EIS.	
4	Impacts on other designated woodlands and grasslands (woodland, upland grassland, lowland grassland, coastal grassland including dunes). Sites to consider: Glendine Wood Nire Valley Woods, Ardmore Head, Helvick Head <i>Please answer the following if the answer to question 4 in table 2 was yes.</i> <i>Does the development involve any of the following:</i>	
	Works inside the boundary of designated site	

4.1	All works within the boundary of any SAC whose qualifying interests include woodland or grassland habitat types excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
	Works outside the boundary of designated site	
4.2	Development within 200m of any SAC whose qualifying interests include woodland or grassland habitat types.	
4.3	Development of a large scale within 1km of any SAC, whose qualifying interests include woodland or grassland habitat types, which involves the production of an EIS.	
5	Impacts on birds in SPAs Sites to consider: Tramore Backstrand, Dungarvan Bay, Blackwater Callows, Blackwater Estuary, Helvick Head –Ballyquin Coast, Mid Waterford Coast <i>Please answer the following if the answer to question 5 in table 2 was yes.</i> <i>Does the development involve any of the following:</i>	
	Works inside the boundary of designated site	
5.1	All works within the boundary of any SPA excluding small extensions/alterations to existing buildings.	
	Works outside the boundary of designated site	
5.2	Erection of wind turbines within 1km of any SPA.	
5.3	All construction works within 100m of any SPA.	
5.4	Infilling of coastal habitats within 500m of intertidal SPA.	
5.5	Works within 1km of coastal/wetland SPAs which will result in discharges to rivers or streams that are directly connected to designated sites.	
5.6	Development of cycleways or walking routes within 100m of SPAs.	
5.7	Construction works on feeding areas adjacent to SPAs	

Conclusion Table 3: If the answer to all of the above is no or n/a, significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites can be ruled out. No further assessment is required, proceed to the Screening Conclusion Statement. If the answer to any question in table 3 is yes, you may require further information, unless you are satisfied that the project proponents have incorporated adequate mitigation into their design to avoid impacts on the Natura 2000 site (e.g. water pollution protection measures). Such information should be provided in the form of a Natura Impact Statement which should address the particular issues of concern as identified through the above.

Table 4: Consideration of Potential Impacts on Protected Species

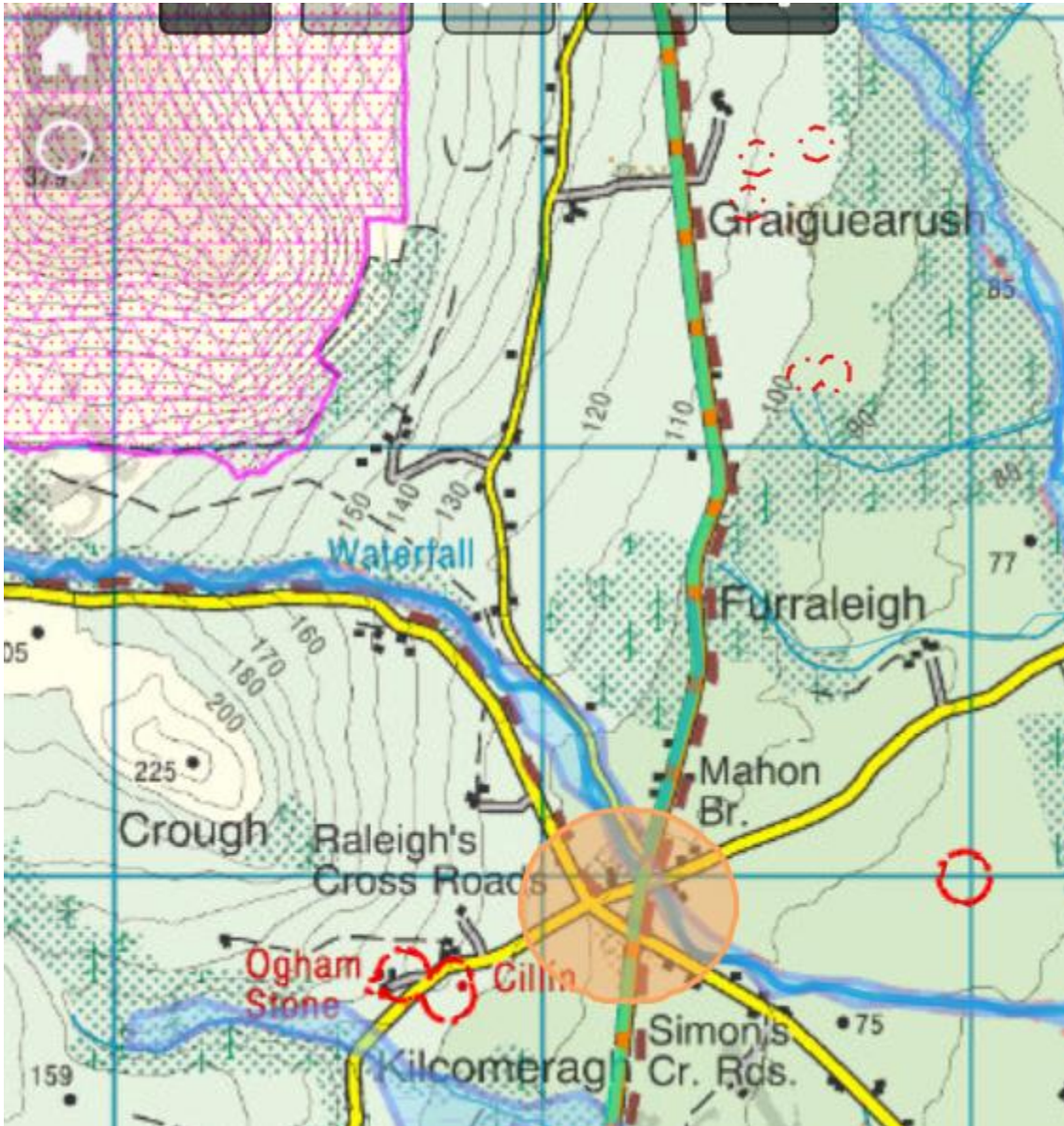
Many of our Special Areas of Conservation are designated for species as well as for habitats. These are listed below, alongside the sites for which they are designated. Included is a short list of the types of activities which could have an impact on these species. Please tick if you are concerned that the proposed development could have an impact on these species.

Species	Relevant Sites	Activities which could have impacts on species	Possible Impacts Identified? Y/N
Otter	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with river banks.	No
Bats (all species outside designated sites)	Blackwater River, Lower River Suir, Waterford Estuary Glendine Wood, Lismore Woods Nire Valley Woods Along with above, in general all sites with any of the following; woods, mature treelines and hedgerows, old buildings and bridges	Activities that result in loss of woodland or hedgerow habitat or causes disturbance to roost sites. Renovations of old buildings; Repointing of old bridges.	No
Salmon	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with water quality, levels or the river bed;	No
River Lamprey	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with water quality, levels or the river bed;	No
Brook Lamprey	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with water quality, levels or the river bed;	No
Sea Lamprey	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with water quality or the river bed – estuarine areas;	No
Twaite Shad Allis Shad	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with water quality or the river bed – estuarine areas;	No
White-clawed Crayfish	Lower River Suir River Blackwater Waterford Estuary	Activities that interfere with water quality or the river bed;	No
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	Lower River Suir River Clodiagh River Lickey River Blackwater	Activities that interfere with water quality, levels or the river bed ;	No
Whorled Snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>	River Blackwater	Activities that result in loss of fen, marsh or wet grassland habitat within or close to the SAC.	No
Killarney Fern	Glendine Wood Lismore Woods (River Blackwater)	Woodland clearance or other activities resulting in loss or disturbance to woodland habitat within the relevant SACs.	No

Conclusion Table 4: If the answer to all of the above is no, significant impacts on species can be ruled out. If the answer to any of the above is yes, then further information is likely to be required in relation to potential for impact on that particular species. Where potential impacts on the above listed species are within designated sites, then further information should be sought in the form of a Natura Impact Statement. Where impacts are outside designated sites, then a species specific survey should be requested.

Habitats Directive Screening Conclusion Statement

Development Type	Local Authority Works Car Park
Development Location	Mahon Bridge
Natura 2000 sites within impact zone	Site south of the Comeragh Mountains SAC (1.2km)
Planning File Ref	
Description of the project	
Construction of car park to support visitor access to walkway from Mahon Bridge to Crough Wood. Car parking will also serve the local coffee shop.	
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) could affect Natura 2000 site(s)	
Increased visitor numbers to the area could increase footfall in the Comeragh Mountains SAC causing trampling and erosion.	
If there are potential negative impacts, explain whether you consider if these are likely to be significant, and if not, why not.	
<p>A walking trail exists between Mahon Bridge and Crough Wood leading northwards towards a Coillte plantation site. The pandemic year saw increased user numbers to the trail with associated need for car parking facilities at Mahon Bridge. The majority of walkers confine their walk to this route but some walkers continue along the River Mahon within the Comeragh Mountains site. This unofficial trail is the subject of a remediation plan being implemented by Waterford City and County Council under the guidance of NPWS. It is not considered the proposed car park will give rise to additional footfall in the Comeragh Mountains SAC to a level that is significantly increased beyond current user levels as there are several other access points to the Comeragh Mountains north of the proposed car park site towards Mahon Falls. Car parking at Mahon Bridge currently takes place along the roadsides around the site and due to increased traffic to both the cafe and Mahon Bridge to Crough Wood Walk a dedicated car park is required to service this demand. The car park in itself will not cause loss of ecological footprint from the Comeragh Mountains SAC.</p>	
Conclusion of assessment	
Development of the car park is on a site outside the Comeragh Mountains SAC and is proposed to support the increased user numbers to the Mahonbridge- Crough Wood Walk. The development will not cause significant effects to the conservation objectives of the Comeragh Mountains SAC.	
Documentation reviewed for making of this statement.	
WCCC Internal GIS	
Completed By	Bernadette Guest
Date	9 th July 2021



Map 1. Location of proposed car park south of the Comeragh Mountains SAC



Image 1. Aerial view of proposed car park site at Mahon Bridge