FEHILY TIMONEY

DESIGNING AND DELIVERING
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment Screening

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Kildare County Council

Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Report to Inform AA Screening to Kildare County Council for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) was commissioned by Kildare County Council to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for their Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP) for the years 2026-2031. The aim of the LABAP is to promote biodiversity conservation at local authority level.

This report presents an examination of whether the LABAP is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is based on best available scientific knowledge. This report has been prepared to inform the competent authority in completing their statutory obligations in relation to Appropriate Assessment, as required by Article 6(3) under Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive).

1.2 Background to Biodiversity Action Plans

LABAPs must be prepared in accordance with The Heritage Council's Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan Guidelines (2024). These guidelines provide best practice guidance to local authorities on preparing and implementing biodiversity conservation actions within their functional area. These guidelines advise that LABAPs *'should aim to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of it among the people of the area.'*

LABAPs are designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at local level. Local Authorities are required to develop a compelling vision for their LABAP and a set of clear, measurable and achievable objectives for biodiversity conservation in their functional area. LABAPs are developed by Local Authority Biodiversity Officers with the support of a dedicated Biodiversity Working Group. Public engagement and consultation must be undertaken at the Pre-draft and Draft Plan stages of the Plan-making process. All submissions from stakeholders and members of the public should be considered during the development of a LABAP.

LABAPs should serve to define targeted and focussed action for promoting biodiversity conservation through the functions of a local authority in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related policy. LABAPs should be in harmony with and support the land use planning framework, including City and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

LABAPs are non-statutory land use plans that should be screened for the need for SEA and AA.

1.3 Legislative Context

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The Directive requires that where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, while not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the site, it will be subject to 'Appropriate Assessment' to identify any implications for the European site in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. Specifically, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

> *"6(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (Natura 2000 sites) but likely to have significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications 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 adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."*

These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The competent authority must carry out a screening for appropriate assessment to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed plan, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site. If it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site, an appropriate assessment of its implications for the European Site(s) in view of the Site's conservation objectives must be carried out.

The provisions of Article 6(3) do not apply where the proposed plan or project is *'connected with or necessary to the management of the site'*. In this case, the plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s).

1.4 Guidance

The assessment was conducted in accordance with the following guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin (2009, updated 2010);
- Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission 2013;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Guidance.
- Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2019). Brussels, (2019/C 33/01). OJ C 33, 25.1.2019.

- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (European Commission, 2002). This document was updated by Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Commission Notice (2021) Brussels, 28.9.2021 C (2021) 6913 final;
- OPR Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, Office of the Planning Regulator (2021).
- Atkinson, S., Magee, M., Moorkens, E.A. & Heavey, M. (2024). Guidance on Assessment and Construction Management in Margaritifera Catchments in Ireland. https://e-mussels.eu/europe/conservation-guidelines

1.5 Assessment Process and Approach

The process of determining the likelihood of significant effects from a proposed plan or project on European sites is an iterative process centred around a Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) model. In order for an effect to be established, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is not of any relevance or significance.

- Source(s) – e.g., pollutant run-off, noise, removal of vegetation etc.;
- Pathway(s) – functional link, or ecological pathway e.g., groundwater connecting to nearby qualifying wetland habitats; and,
- Receptor(s) –the qualifying habitats and species of European sites and ecological resources supporting those habitats/species.

In the context of this report, a source is any identifiable element of the proposed plan that is known to interact with the receiving environment. A receptor is the Qualifying Interests (QI)[1] for an SAC or Special Conservation Interests (SCI)[2] for an SPA or an ecological feature that is known to be utilised by the QI/SCI. In practice, the term Qualifying Interests also applies to SCIs (and is used in this document for simplicity). A pathway is any connection or link between the source and the receptor.

The assessment commences with a description of the plan, and the associated sources for impacts to the receiving environment. The type of impacts that are likely due to the plan (Source) are identified having regard to the spatial and temporal scale of the plan, resource requirements and likely emissions. These sources are then used to define the zone of influence (ZoI) of the plan.

[1] SACs are areas designated under the Habitats Directive to conserve habitats listed in Annex I of the Directive and plant and animal species listed in Annex II. Collectively these are referred to as the 'Qualifying Interests' or 'QIs' of the SAC.
[2] SPAs are sites classified under the Birds Directive to protect rare or vulnerable bird species listed in Annex I to the Directive as well as regularly occurring migratory species and wetlands. Wetland habitats that support internationally important populations of migratory birds may be coastal or inland. Collectively, these species and habitats are referred to as the 'Special Conservation Interests' of the SPA.

The European Commission Notice (2021) on the 'Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC', states that in identifying European sites (Natural 2000 sites), which may be affected by a plan or project, the following should be identified:

- Any European sites geographically overlapping with any of the actions or aspects of the plan or project in any of its phases, or adjacent to them;
- Any European sites within the likely zone of influence of the plan or project. European sites located in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) that could still be indirectly affected by aspects of the plan project, including as regards the use of natural resources (e.g., water) and various types of waste, discharge or emissions of substances or energy;
- European sites whose connectivity or ecological continuity can be affected by the plan or project.

The zone of influence of a plan is the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have potential effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European site. The OPR (2021) practice note states that the Zone of Influence must be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) framework and not by arbitrary distances (such as 15 km). Section 3.3 sets out the detailed rationale for the identification of relevant European sites within the ZoI based on the sources of impacts arising from the proposed plan. Subsequently, an assessment is undertaken with respect to potential connectivity (Pathways) to European Sites and their qualifying interests/special conservation interests are identified.

The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects is also assessed having regard to the identified impacts of the proposed plan along the ecological pathways identified to European sites.

The likelihood of significant effects on the European Sites within the ZoI is examined having regard to the sensitivity of each European site with pathways for impacts associated with the proposed plan on its own and in combination with other plans and projects.

Having regard to the European Commission Communication on the Precautionary Principle (European Commission, 2021) the:

> *"absence of scientific evidence on the significant negative effect of an action cannot be used as justification for approval of this action. When applied to Article 6(3) procedure, the precautionary principle implies that the absence of a negative effect on Natura 2000 sites has to be demonstrated before a plan or project can be authorised. In other words, if there is a lack of certainty as to whether there will be any negative effects, then the plan or project cannot be approved."*

Where significant effects are determined to be likely, or where there is uncertainty regarding the likelihood of significant effects, the plan will be required under law to be subjected to Appropriate Assessment.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

2.1 Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan

The Vision of the LABAP is to "*lead the way with a step-change in biodiversity protection, where consideration and restoration are prioritised, through urgent, inclusive and targeted actions. These actions will benefit nature, facilitate people connecting to nature, and will grow a legacy of thriving, resilient and sustainable communities in the county*."

The following Objectives are defined in the LABAP:

- Objective 1: Landscapes for Nature
- Objective 2: Engagement, Awareness and Understanding
- Objective 3: Recording, Monitoring and Data Management
- Objective 4: Embed Action Across Kildare County Council
- Objective 5: Support Community-led Initiatives

A series of Actions have been defined in the LABAP under each Objective. The higher-level Objectives are broader in scope, whilst the Actions underpinning the Objectives are more defined and measurable. These are presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: LABAP Objectives and corresponding Actions

Objective	Action Reference	Action
Objective 1: Landscapes for Nature	1.1	Identify and map all local authority owned land holdings, categorise and rank, then identify: a) Risk to site, b) Suitability for nature restoration, and c) Assess for protection through statutory planning.
	1.2	Identify, map and where possible create site inventories for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) to determine areas with high biodiversity value. Investigate feasibility of legal protection for high biodiversity value sites, through statutory plans.
	1.3	Create a "Kildare Ecological Network" map and site list, of all sites of ecological and geological importance to include designated sites.
	1.4	Review and update the County Kildare Wetland Survey 2012-2014 and develop a Wetlands Action Plan based on the findings.
	1.5	Support the development of Management Plans for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites, as appropriate.
	1.6	Prepare a Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan (including green, blue and brown infrastructure) that can inform the delineation of core areas, stepping stones, and corridors, that would identify ecologically sensitive areas to be excluded from any potential amenity/ tourism plans and that may inform the designation of an interconnected Nature Reserve, Regional Park, a potential National Peatlands Park, inter alia.
	1.7	Support LAWPRO and other key stakeholders to identify and support waterbody, wetland and water quality projects to develop co-benefits for climate action and biodiversity.
	1.8	Continue to promote 'Nature Based Solutions' in urban and rural areas, and in existing towns and villages.
	1.9	Prepare a County Policy for Wildlife-Friendly Lighting.
	1.10	Actively support the implementation of national biodiversity initiatives, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
	1.11	a) Devise a Kildare County Council Tree Management Plan b) Promote native tree and broadleaf planting within the council and throughout the community c) Promote the "Right Tree, Right Place" message

Objective	Action Reference	Action
	1.12	Support the development of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for County Kildare.
	1.13	Promote habitat mapping in all Master Plans, Settlement Plans, including in smaller settlements, towns, villages, rural settlements and nodes, and require that trees and hedgerows are also identified for surface water management properties.
Objective 2: Engagement, Awareness and Understanding	2.1	Contribute to the development a communications 'toolkit', with materials[3], messaging and informative content on key biodiversity topics[4].
	2.2	Develop a 'Community Biodiversity Demonstration Garden' for use in training and capacity-building on all aspects of biodiversity (and climate action) for Community Groups, KCC Staff and potentially as a best practice regional demonstration site.
	2.3	Explore opportunities to encourage and/or grant-aid local nurseries (business and community) to cultivate indigenous hedgerow species and indigenous broadleaf tree species, with best practice guidance, logistical and potentially financial supports where possible.
	2.4	Continue to pursue an inclusive and targeted approach towards working with new and already engaged/active groups[5] by supporting them to raise awareness of biodiversity and take nature-positive actions.
	2.5	Actively investigate opportunities to improve incentivisation of community biodiversity actions through awards and grants schemes, e.g. Pride of Place and TidyTowns scoring, and via implementing biodiversity conditions on KCC-administered community funding.
	2.6	Support the KCC Environmental Awareness Officer in providing composting educational materials and workshops to community groups, schools, residential and industrial estates and businesses to increase basic horticulture skills within the public space, such as group composting schemes where food and gardening waste is collected and can be used locally.

[3] materials potentially including print, broadcast, signage, social media, podcasts, online video, short films etc.
[4] include topics on the fundamental role of biodiversity in our lives, managing pets on high nature value areas, Invasive Alien Species, Impacts of lighting, Traditional Skills (such as seed saving and hedge laying), Wildlife and the Law, Peat Free gardening, Glyphosate science and alternatives etc.
[5] faith communities, GAA Green Clubs, landscaping contractors, architects, garden nurseries, artists, amongst others.

Objective	Action Reference	Action
	2.7	Engage with young people through targeted youth-focused nature-positive projects being run by Scouts, pre-schools, schools, youth clubs and community biodiversity groups/organisations. Encourage and support actions that work with the staff who maintain and manage the grounds and campuses for these young people, to embed the learning.
	2.8	Support the preservation and passing on of ecological field-skills and knowledge, through: a) supporting/hosting specialist field clubs b) knowledge-share events and opportunities c) supporting third-level placements for ecology/zoology/botany amongst others, and d) explore course development with the Education and Training Board (ETB)
	2.9	Work with relevant agencies, public bodies and local groups annually to continue to assess wildfire risk to bogs and upland habitats and their management and explore publication of “fire risk maps”.
	2.10	Work with Kildare Local Enterprise Office to a) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives via demo projects at regional hubs b) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives as part of sustainable economic development (e.g. farm diversification opportunities)
	2.11	Support collaborative projects with farming groups to: a) raise awareness of positive action already being taken, b) highlight importance of farmland for biodiversity, c) facilitate community connecting to the land, natural and cultural heritage, d) focus on semi-natural grasslands e) promote EIP opportunities, Hare's Corner, Farming for Nature, inter alia.
	2.12	Investigate the feasibility of a national campaign to dissuade the public from planting Laurel hedging via the Biodiversity Officer Network.
	2.13	Provide guidance and supports to develop nature-based tourism responsibly.

Objective	Action Reference	Action
Objective 3: Recording, Monitoring and Data Management	3.1	Continue to commission and publish ecological surveys, where appropriate[6], to gather baseline and/or regular monitoring data on under-surveyed aspects of Kildare's natural heritage, for the purposes of informing county policies and priorities and to provide an evidence base for the Council in meeting its obligations under European and Irish Environmental legislation, subject to available resources.
	3.2	Update Kildare County Council's Pollinator Plan, and as part of that process design-in ways to assess changes in sample local pollinator populations, resulting from the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions at site level.
	3.3	Review accessibility of and provide signposting and training on the accessing and interpretation of, water quality data, to inform the public.
	3.4	Support the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) to have up to date biological records for Kildare by ensuring survey results from KCC projects and surveys are fed into the national database.
	3.5	Develop a 'Citizen Science Strategy for Kildare' – in conjunction with existing environmental non-governmental organisations and natural heritage groups in the county.
Objective 4: Embed Action Across Kildare County Council	4.1	Support delivery of Part 8 projects and local authority owned development with best practice guidance for development, at inception, design and delivery, with best-practice guidance for development.
	4.2	Develop and deliver a biodiversity education programme for all staff, including elected members, to upskill awareness, knowledge and understanding, especially with regard to the council's legal obligations to nature protection, invasive species management, nature restoration and reporting.
	4.3	Develop a regional working group for professional stakeholders of (internationally and nationally) protected sites for infrequent but regular information sharing, and to coordinate the monitoring, protection and management of these sites.
	4.4	Consider the progression of a bond scheme on landscaping and biodiversity conditions for new developments.
	4.5	Strengthen hedgerow preservation by establishing a hedgerow protection policy using a quality rating system (e.g. Level 1 - Retain at all costs = townland boundary, Level 2 - Consider alternatives = other high quality / high nature value hedgerows, Level 3 – minimise removal = medium quality nature value, Level 4- Low value hedgerows, such as non-native, invasive species, e.g. Laurel, Leylandii).

[6] Some ecological datasets are sensitive and for conservation purposes it is necessary to keep the data unpublished, for example the location of rare plants, or the breeding sites of rare birds; revealing location data may open the species up to illegal exploitation.

Objective	Action Reference	Action
	4.6	Advance a policy of 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG), wherever possible, through strategies, plans, developments, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Green and Blue Infrastructure with specific evidence-based and locally relevant biodiversity and environmental measures, through the review of the next County Development Plan.
	4.7	Introduce a specific land use zoning purely for nature preservation and restoration (i.e. stronger protection than the F: Open Space and Amenity zoning, currently offers) through the review of the next County Development Plan.
	4.8	Investigate the feasibility of phasing out rodenticide and pesticide use in Kildare County Council operated facilities, campuses, depots and in service-provision throughout the county (except for ecological necessity, e.g. relating to the eradication of invasive species).
	4.9	Continue to develop biodiversity measures as part of housing estate management responsibilities, once 'taken in charge' by KCC.
	4.10	Support the work of environmental non-governmental organisations and communities working to promote and conserve peatlands throughout the county.
	4.11	Support the establishment and expansion of community gardens and allotments through local authority initiatives in conjunction with private landowners and on public land, in both urban and rural communities, as set out in the KCC Allotment Strategy and County Development Plan.
	4.12	Update biodiversity guidelines for developers, private gardens and community action for County Kildare.
	4.13	Report annually on the Public Sector Duty on Biodiversity, as mandated by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023, for Kildare County Council.
	4.14	Increase funding and capacity in the Nature and Heritage Team, to provide for additional roles, such as a team of ecologists for cross-department all support, including Parks, Roads, Environment, and Planning, and Biodiversity Officers with specific responsibilities for Community and Project work.
	4.15	Investigate the feasibility of a percentage of development contributions to be ring-fenced for nature restoration efforts/projects.
Objective 5: Support Community-led Initiatives	5.1	Provide funding and practical supports to local community, TidyTowns and other voluntary groups, engaged in actions addressing biodiversity loss and restoration, e.g. managing landscapes for wildlife, managing invasive species, participating in citizen science, creating biodiverse spaces, and protecting and monitoring the health of the local environment.

Objective	Action Reference	Action
	5.2	Support the biodiversity/e-NGO groups in the county with their work relating to training communities in citizen science initiatives (including those focusing on water quality).
	5.3	Continue to prepare, roll-out and update Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), in partnership, where appropriate with LEADER, subject to funding.
	5.4	Continue to run a biodiversity 'small grants' scheme, and provide information and support for the public, to undertake biodiversity action in public spaces.
	5.5	Conservation-focused community groups should be supported with tools and equipment to carry out citizen science, particularly to monitor regenerating habitats.

2.2 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

The LABAP sits within a hierarchy of plans and has been informed by and is consistent with the aims and objectives of other plans, programmes and strategies developed at national, regional and local levels. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

National Level

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (2018).
- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework First Revision (2025).
- Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage (2022).
- Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028 (2023).
- The 4th National Biodiversity Plan 2023 - 2030 (2024) (discussed further in Section 2.2.1 below).
- Climate Action Plan (2025).

Regional and Local Level

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly 2019 - 2031.
- The Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029.
- The Kildare Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029.
- The County Kildare Heritage Plan 2019 - 2025.

The Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans within the Republic of Ireland will also serve to complement their Northern Ireland counterparts, which include:

- Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland
- Biodiversity Strategy (Draft Nature Recovery Strategy)
- Climate Change Adaptation Programme and Action Plan for Northern Ireland

2.2.1 The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2050

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023 - 2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to protect and value nature. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to *'act for nature.'* This plan provides the overarching arching framework for delivering biodiversity conservation through LABAPs.

This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. The five overarching objectives to address new and emerging issues include the following:

- Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity
- Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs
- Objective 3 - Secure Nature's Contribution to People
- Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
- Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

The NBAP contains actions pertaining to the preparation to LABAPs under *Objective One: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity and Objective Three: Secure Nature's Contribution to People*, including the following:

Table 2-2: NBAP Actions pertaining to the preparation of Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans

Action Number	Action
1C5	The Heritage Council will publish updated guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans and their integration with City and County Development Plans
1C6	All Local Authorities will have a Biodiversity Action Plan adopted by the end of 2026 which is subject to regular review and revision processes in line with relevant guideline standards
3A3	Local Authorities will work to identify and respond to opportunities for enhancing the biocultural value of GBUE through appropriate design strategies, the use of visual and performing arts, and enhancing equity of access and promoting use of GBUE by community groups, and integrating cultural services in local biodiversity action plans

Local Authorities are expected to align their LABAPs with national commitments defined in the NBAP to ensure a cohesive approach to biodiversity conservation across the country.

3. SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction to Screening

This section of the report examines if the Plan is likely to have a significant effect upon European Sites, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans. The screening phase is progressed in the following stages. A series of questions are asked during the Screening Stage of the AA process in order to determine:

- Whether the plan or project introduces any sources of environmental or ecological impact.
- Whether a plan or project can be excluded from AA requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site.

Whether the plan or project will have a likely significant effect on a European Site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site's conservation objectives or if residual uncertainty exists regarding potential effects.

Plans are screened out based on one or a combination of the following criteria:

- Where it can be shown that there are no sources of environmental impact associated with a plan or project.
- Where there are no pathways such as hydrological links between a plan or project area, and relevant European sites
- Where a European site is located at a distance from the plan or project area such that effects are not foreseen;
- Where known threats or vulnerabilities at a European site cannot be linked to potential effects that may arise from a plan or project.

3.2 Potential Interactions of the Proposed Plan on the Receiving Environment

Having regard to the European Commission (2021) guidance document and the OPR (2021) practice note, the potential impacts of the LABAP Actions on the receiving environment at source are considered based (in Table 3-1) on the following criteria:

- Habitat destruction/fragmentation/deterioration;
- Surface water run-off carrying suspended silt and contaminants, into local watercourses;
- Changes to groundwater quality, yield and/or flow paths associated with the proposed project;
- Plan related activities (noise, vibration, lighting, human presence, structures, etc) leading to disturbance / displacement of species;
- Plan related activities leading to a reduction in species populations / density;
- Air pollution due to dust and other airborne emissions; and
- Disturbance and potential spread of invasive species.

These impacts are further examined in defining the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the plan to identify likely significant effects through the Source-Pathway-Receptor assessment (See Section 3.3).

Table 3-1: Identification of sources arising from the Proposed Plan that have potential for interactions with the receiving environment

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
Objective 1: Landscapes for Nature	1.1	Identify and map all local authority owned land holdings, categorise and rank, then identify: a) Risk to site, b) Suitability for nature restoration, and c) Assess for protection through statutory planning.	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline surveying in the Plan area. Developing an understanding of Council-owned land holdings in County Kildare, risk associated with such and the potential for nature restoration of such will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted sustainability improvements. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.2	Identify, map and where possible create site inventories for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) to determine areas with high biodiversity value. Investigate feasibility of legal protection for high biodiversity value sites, through statutory plans.	This action proposes the carrying out of baseline surveying in the Plan area. Developing an understanding and an inventory of Locally Important Biodiversity Sites (LIBS) in County Kildare and the potential for legal protection of said sites will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially contribute to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. LIBS are areas of local interest or significance which form an integral part of the ecological network and provide a range of ecosystem services in the local authority. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.3	Create a “Kildare Ecological Network” map and site list, of all sites of ecological and geological importance to include designated sites.	This action proposes the undertaking of baseline ecological mapping in the Plan area. Developing an inventory of the Kildare Ecological Network will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and will contribute to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.4	Review and update the County Kildare Wetland Survey 2012-2014 and develop a Wetlands Action Plan based on the findings.	The action proposes the undertaking of a wetland survey for wetland habitats in the Plan Area, which will underpin and support the effective implementation of the LABAP and will potentially lead to focussed and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action supports the development and implementation of a Wetlands Action Plan for County Kildare. The prospective Wetlands Action Plan will be subject to mandatory SEA and AA Screening during the draft Plan and Plan-making processes. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.5	Support the development of Management Plans for Locally Important Biodiversity Sites, as appropriate.	This action supports the preparation and implementation of Management Plans for LIBS within the Plan area. The development of Management Plans for LIBS will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. This action supports the development and implementation of Management Plans in County Kildare. Such Management Plans will be subject to mandatory SEA and AA Screening during the draft Plan and Plan-making processes. The action has the potential to result in benefits for environmental receptors such as Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	1.6	Prepare a Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan (including green, blue and brown infrastructure) that can inform the delineation of core areas, stepping stones, and corridors, that would identify ecologically sensitive areas to be excluded from any potential amenity/ tourism plans and that may inform the designation of an interconnected Nature Reserve, Regional Park, a potential National Peatlands Park, inter alia.	This action supports the development of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan which will provide an evidence-based framework to guide the delineation of core areas, stepping stones, and ecological corridors, and identify sensitive areas for exclusion from inappropriate amenity or tourism development. The prospective Masterplan, which will be subject to its own SEA and AA processes, will support the delivery of biodiversity objectives at a strategic level and has the potential to enhance environmental protection through integrated land-use planning. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.7	Support LAWPRO and other key stakeholders to identify and support waterbody, wetland and water quality projects to develop co-benefits for climate action and biodiversity.	The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) works on behalf of Ireland's 31 local authorities to protect and restore good water quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, ground and coastal water through catchment science and local community engagement. This action pertains to Kildare County Council supporting LAWPRO and other key stakeholders in identifying and delivering waterbody, wetland, and water quality-projects (which will be subject to project-level EIA and AA Screenings). The action will contribute to the protection and enhancement of aquatic ecosystems and promote collaborative approaches to integrated water management. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	1.8	Continue to promote 'Nature Based Solutions' in urban and rural areas, and in existing towns and villages.	Nature-based Solutions (NBS) are actions to address societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems, benefiting both biodiversity and human well-being. The integration of NBS will underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan Area. The action will not generate any negative environmental effects. The development of any NBS infrastructure will be undertaken under the applicable land use planning framework and will require appropriate planning consent. These statutory land use plans are subject to their own SEA and AA. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.9	Prepare a County Policy for Wildlife-Friendly Lighting.	Reducing artificial light in ecologically sensitive areas is an effective way of protecting light-sensitive species such bats and small mammals. This action supports the preparation of a County Policy which will guide the reduction of light pollution and its associated impacts on biodiversity. The action has the potential to protect light-sensitive species and enhance ecological connectivity. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.10	Actively support the implementation of national biodiversity initiatives, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.	This action will fully align the Objectives of this Plan with the Aims and Objectives of higher-order Plans, including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Alignment of lower-order Plans with higher-order Plans avoids conflicts with targets/objectives, ensures compliance and contributes to the achievement of national targets and ambitions.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			It will contribute to the effective delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements generally. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.11	a) Devise a Kildare County Council Tree Management Plan b) Promote native tree and broadleaf planting within the council and throughout the community c) Promote the "Right Tree, Right Place" message	This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Plan area through the implementation of a Tree Management Plan, with the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.12	Support the development of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for County Kildare.	This action supports the development of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for County Kildare. The implementation of an Invasive Alien Species Management Plan will ensure appropriate management of invasive species and protection of native or vulnerable species in County Kildare. Such a Management Plan will be subject to mandatory SEA and AA Screening during the draft Plan and Plan-making processes. This action has the potential to result in positive effects on Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	1.13	Promote habitat mapping in all Master Plans, Settlement Plans, including in smaller settlements, towns, villages, rural settlements and nodes, and require that trees and hedgerows are also identified for surface water management properties.	This action supports the undertaking and inclusion of habitat mapping in Plans within County Kildare. This will ensure that trees and hedgerows are identified for their surface water management functions and will, in turn, have the potential to enhance biodiversity protection in the Plan area through informed planning. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
Objective 2: Engagement, Assessment and Understanding	2.1	Contribute to the development a communications 'toolkit', with materials, messaging and informative content on key biodiversity topics.	This action is engagement and training based. Communications 'toolkits' facilitate and encourage learning and development at local levels. The development of such toolkits in County Kildare can aid to improve understanding of the biodiversity of the County. This action has the potential to improve awareness and knowledge of local biodiversity in County Kildare, which will effectively underpin and support improvements in the Plan area. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.2	Develop a 'Community Biodiversity Demonstration Garden' for use in training and capacity-building on all aspects of biodiversity (and climate action) for Community Groups, KCC Staff and potentially as a best practice regional demonstration site.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The development of such a Community Garden will foster wider public interest in the local biodiversity and potentially increase environmental stewardship. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.3	Explore opportunities to encourage and/or grant-aid local nurseries (business and community) to cultivate indigenous hedgerow species and indigenous broadleaf tree species, with best practice guidance, logistical and potentially financial supports where possible.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. This action has the potential to contribute to the conservation of ecosystems with native flora by promoting the cultivation of indigenous hedgerow and broadleaf species.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.4	Continue to pursue an inclusive and targeted approach towards working with new and already engaged/active groups by supporting them to raise awareness of biodiversity and take nature-positive actions.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The continuation of collaborating with new and existing community groups will increase environmental stewardship within the community. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.5	Actively investigate opportunities to improve incentivisation of community biodiversity actions through awards and grants schemes, e.g. Pride of Place and Tidy Towns scoring, and via implementing biodiversity conditions on KCC-administered community funding.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.6	Support the KCC Environmental Awareness Officer in providing composting educational materials and workshops to community groups, schools, residential and industrial estates and businesses to increase basic horticulture skills within the public space, such as group composting schemes where food and gardening waste is collected and can be used locally.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The provision of materials and information through the local authority will increase accessibility for members of the wider community and contribute to increased environmental stewardship.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.7	Engage with young people through targeted youth-focused nature-positive projects being run by Scouts, pre-schools, schools, youth clubs and community biodiversity groups/organisations. Encourage and support actions that work with the staff who maintain and manage the grounds and campuses for these young people, to embed the learning.	This action will engage youth groups in nature-positive projects and will foster awareness of biodiversity via schools, youth clubs and community groups. This action will, in turn, create a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at local levels in County Kildare and will improve long-term stewardship of biodiversity in the County. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.8	Support the preservation and passing on of ecological field-skills and knowledge, through: a) supporting/hosting specialist field clubs b) knowledge-share events and opportunities c) supporting third-level placements for ecology/zoology/botany amongst others, and d) explore course development with the Education and Training Board (ETB)	This action will create and foster a collaborative and hands-on approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action has the potential to increase biodiversity knowledge ,skills and expertise through the provision of third-level educational programmes and placements. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.9	Work with relevant agencies, public bodies and local groups annually to continue to assess wildfire risk to bogs and upland habitats and their management and explore publication of “fire risk maps”.	Bogs in poor conditions (i.e., low moisture content) have a higher risk of wildfires, which can result in significant financial, anthropological, environmental and ecological losses. Drier areas of bog are generally dominated by heather (a highly flammable species in dry weather), which provides cover for protected bird species such as Red Grouse, Snipe and Curlew.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The management of such habitats to minimise wildfire risk is therefore crucial. The action has positive implications for a range of environmental receptors, including biodiversity, flora and fauna, population and human health, air and climate, and material assets. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.10	Work with Kildare Local Enterprise Office to a) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives via demo projects at regional hubs b) Promote biodiversity friendly initiatives as part of sustainable economic development (e.g. farm diversification opportunities)	The action proposes to integrate biodiversity initiatives into the sustainable economic development of County Kildare, through the operations of the Kildare Local Enterprise Office. The action has the potential to foster a collaborative approach to implementing biodiversity initiatives and improving biodiversity and sustainable development in the Plan Area, contributing to the effective implementation of the Plan. This is positive for both biodiversity and population and human health. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.11	Support collaborative projects with farming groups to: a) raise awareness of positive action already being taken, b) highlight importance of farmland for biodiversity, c) facilitate community connecting to the land, natural and cultural heritage, d) focus on semi-natural grasslands e) promote EIP opportunities, Hare's Corner, Farming for Nature, inter alia.	The action is centred around a collaborative approach to acknowledging and featuring the significance of farmlands for supporting biodiversity The action is awareness-oriented and has the potential to improve biodiversity-related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within County Kildare. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	2.12	Investigate the feasibility of a national campaign to dissuade the public from planting Laurel hedging via the Biodiversity Officer Network.	Laurel Hedging (*Prunus laurocerasus*) is an established invasive species throughout Ireland, primarily in the southeast and midlands. *P. laurocerasus* poses risk to native species by outcompeting and suppressing regeneration of native species. The action has the potential to preserve ecosystems with native species by preventing disturbances to native habitats and/or undue ecological competition for native species. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	2.13	Provide guidance and supports to develop nature-based tourism responsibly.	This action supports the development of guidance to support the development of nature-based tourism within the Plan area in a responsible manner. The action will encourage tourism initiatives that are aligned with biodiversity protection, thus supporting the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
Objective 3: Recording, Monitoring and Data Management	3.1	Continue to commission and publish ecological surveys, where appropriate, to gather baseline and/or regular monitoring data on under-surveyed aspects of Kildare's natural heritage, for the purposes of informing county policies and priorities and to provide an evidence base for the Council in meeting its obligations under European and Irish Environmental legislation, subject to available resources.	This action proposes the undertaking of ecological surveying in County Kildare. Data gathering, as proposed in this action, will underpin and support effective implementation of the Plan and will contribute to more focused biodiversity improvements. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	3.2	Update Kildare County Council's Pollinator Plan, and as part of that process design-in ways to assess changes in sample local pollinator populations, resulting from the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions at site level.	The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a cross-sectoral framework to create landscapes and environmental conditions where pollinator species can survive and thrive.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action is centred around the revision and update of the Kildare County Council Pollinator Plan, which will inform, and support focused and target pollinator-friendly biodiversity initiatives in County Kildare. The action, being review/research-based, will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	3.3	Review accessibility of and provide signposting and training on the accessing and interpretation of, water quality data, to inform the public.	This action supports the assessment and review of the accessibility of data by the public, and the provision of training to support public understanding of said data. This action has the potential to promote community engagement in the Plan area and will thus support the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Kildare. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	3.4	Support the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) to have up to date biological records for Kildare by ensuring survey results from KCC projects and surveys are fed into the national database.	This action will ensure that ecological survey results from Kildare County Council projects are incorporated into the NBDC national database. This will augment the availability of up-to-date biological records to inform biodiversity planning and management. This action has the potential to generate positive effects for biodiversity. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	3.5	Develop a 'Citizen Science Strategy for Kildare' – in conjunction with existing environmental non-governmental organisations and natural heritage groups in the county.	Citizen science initiatives enable data collection by members of the public to contribute to research and add to the national dataset on Ireland's biodiversity and biological data. Such research can help identify trends in biodiversity and improve understanding of the ecological baseline in the Plan Area.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action has the potential to improve awareness and knowledge of local biodiversity in County Kildare, which will underpin and support improvements in the area. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
Objective 4: Embed Action Across Kildare County Council	4.1	Support delivery of Part 8 projects and local authority owned development with best practice guidance for development, at inception, design and delivery, with best-practice guidance for development.	Developments carried out by Local Authorities, Part 8 developments, provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity by integrating enhancement measures into the design of the proposed development. The action supports the integration of biodiversity improvements into the planning process, which will potentially contribute to the realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and co-benefits for other environmental components. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.2	Develop and deliver a biodiversity education programme for all staff, including elected members, to upskill awareness, knowledge and understanding, especially with regard to the council's legal obligations to nature protection, invasive species management, nature restoration and reporting.	This action promotes biodiversity related training within the Local Authority's staff members. It has the potential to improve biodiversity related expertise and underpin and support biodiversity improvements within the Plan area by improving knowledge and awareness across different functions of the Local Authority. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.3	Develop a regional working group for professional stakeholders of (internationally and nationally) protected sites for infrequent but regular information sharing, and to coordinate the monitoring, protection and management of these sites.	This action supports the development of a regional working group for key stakeholders of protected sites, providing a platform for information sharing and coordination. It will strengthen collaboration in the monitoring, protection, and management of sensitive sites.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.4	Consider the progression of a bond scheme on landscaping and biodiversity conditions for new developments.	This action supports the establishment of a bond scheme to integrate landscaping and biodiversity considerations in new developments. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.5	Strengthen hedgerow preservation by establishing a hedgerow protection policy using a quality rating system (e.g. Level 1 - Retain at all costs = townland boundary, Level 2 - Consider alternatives = other high quality / high nature value hedgerows, Level 3 – minimise removal = medium quality nature value, Level 4- Low value hedgerows, such as non-native, invasive species, e.g. Laurel, Leylandii).	Hedgerows hold features of archaeological, geological, social and natural heritage, and are important wildlife corridors and habitats, serving as refuges for biodiversity. The development of a hedgerow protection policy will underpin and support the effective implementation of the Plan and potentially lead to more focused and targeted biodiversity improvements. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.6	Advance a policy of 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG), wherever possible, through strategies, plans, developments, mitigation measures, appropriate off-setting and/or investment in Green and Blue Infrastructure with specific evidence-based and locally relevant biodiversity and environmental measures, through the review of the next County Development Plan.	Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development which centres around improving biodiversity at a site by encouraging developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features and therefore arrest the loss of biodiversity and restore ecological networks. The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and improvements within the land-use framework and development planning process. The action has the potential to contribute to realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and generate co-benefits for other environmental components. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	4.7	Introduce a specific land use zoning purely for nature preservation and restoration (i.e. stronger protection than the F: Open Space and Amenity zoning, currently offers) through the review of the next County Development Plan.	The action supports the integration of nature preservation considerations and restoration within the land-use framework and development planning process. The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations and enhancement opportunities within County policies and has the potential to contribute to realisation of positive effects on biodiversity and generate co-benefits for other environmental components. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.8	Investigate the feasibility of phasing out rodenticide and pesticide use in Kildare County Council operated facilities, campuses, depots and in service-provision throughout the county (except for ecological necessity, e.g. relating to the eradication of invasive species).	The action has the potential to result in direct positive effects for biodiversity and population and human health, and indirect positive effects for the water and soils environments, without affecting any environmental receptor in a negative fashion. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.9	Continue to develop biodiversity measures as part of housing estate management responsibilities, once 'taken in charge' by KCC.	The action proposes the integration of biodiversity enhancement measures as part of KCC's housing estate management responsibilities. The action will result in biodiversity improvements at the locations where such measures are carried out, and result in direct positive effects on receiving biodiversity, flora and fauna (i.e. key species and habitats), and potentially result in indirect positive effects on soils, water and local air quality. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	4.10	Support the work of environmental non-governmental organisations and communities working to promote and conserve peatlands throughout the county.	This action supports the promotion and conservation of peatlands via collaboration with non-governmental organisations and community groups. This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.11	Support the establishment and expansion of community gardens and allotments through local authority initiatives in conjunction with private landowners and on public land, in both urban and rural communities, as set out in the KCC Allotment Strategy and County Development Plan.	This action supports the aims and objectives of the Kildare County Council Allotment and Community Garden Strategy 2024-2030. Allotments and community gardens can become a unique and valuable aspect in the provision of greenspace in communities for recreation as well as offering habitats for wildlife. The action has the potential to contribute to the wellbeing of the wider community (population and human health). The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.12	Update biodiversity guidelines for developers, private gardens and community action for County Kildare.	This action is in support of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Plan Area, with the potential to generate co-benefits for other environmental components. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.13	Report annually on the Public Sector Duty on Biodiversity, as mandated by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023, for Kildare County Council.	This action involves the preparation and publication of annual reports on biodiversity, as required under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023. The action supports the integration of biodiversity considerations into council operations and promotes awareness.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
			The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.14	Increase funding and capacity in the Nature and Heritage Team, to provide for additional roles, such as a team of ecologists for cross-department all support, including Parks, Roads, Environment, and Planning, and Biodiversity Officers with specific responsibilities for Community and Project work.	This action supports the strengthening of the Kildare County Council Nature and Heritage Team by increasing staffing and resources. The action supports improved management and protection of biodiversity across council functions. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	4.15	Investigate the feasibility of a percentage of development contributions to be ring-fenced for nature restoration efforts/projects.	The action proposes assessing the feasibility of allocating a percentage of development contributions (from new development within the Plan Area) to be directed to funding nature restoration efforts and projects. The action has the potential to underpin and support the delivery of the Plan, as well as contribute to biodiversity improvements generally within the Plan Area. The action, being review/research-based, will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
Objective 5: Support Community-led Initiatives	5.1	Provide funding and practical supports to local community, Tidy Towns and other voluntary groups, engaged in actions addressing biodiversity loss and restoration, e.g. managing landscapes for wildlife, managing invasive species, participating in citizen science, creating biodiverse spaces, and protecting and monitoring the health of the local environment.	This action will create and foster a collaborative and hands-on approach to implementing the Objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	5.2	Support the biodiversity/e-NGO groups in the county with their work relating to training communities in citizen science initiatives (including those focusing on water quality).	Citizen science initiatives enable data collection by members of the public to contribute to research and add to the national dataset on Ireland's biodiversity and biological data. Such research can help identify trends in biodiversity and improve understanding of the ecological baseline and water quality in the Plan Area. The action has the potential to improve awareness and knowledge of local biodiversity in County Kildare, which will underpin and support improvements in the area. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	5.3	Continue to prepare, roll-out and update Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), in partnership, where appropriate with LEADER, subject to funding.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to forming and implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans in County Kildare, which in turn contributes to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.
	5.4	Continue to run a biodiversity 'small grants' scheme, and provide information and support for the public, to undertake biodiversity action in public spaces.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Objectives of Biodiversity Action Plan at a local level in County Kildare, which in turn will facilitate the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

Objective	Action Reference	Action	Potential Sources of Impact
	5.5	Conservation-focused community groups should be supported with tools and equipment to carry out citizen science, particularly to monitor regenerating habitats.	This action will create and foster a collaborative approach to implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan in County Kildare, which in turn will contribute to the effective and targeted delivery of the Plan and biodiversity improvements in general. The action intends to support community groups through the provision tools and equipment to undertake citizen science. The action will not introduce a source of negative impact that can result in likely significant effects on any European Site.

3.2.1 Summary of the interactions of the Proposed Plan on the receiving environment

The LABAP provides a general framework for biodiversity protection and enhancement on lands in the Plan area. It defines the actions that support and promote:

- Best practice biodiversity management and improvement,
- Local authority biodiversity protection and enhancement initiatives,
- The improvement of biodiversity on local authority controlled lands,
- Biodiversity training and awareness events,
- Biodiversity education and training,
- Planting of native species (i.e. trees, shrubs, plants etc.)
- Ecological surveying and mapping to identify areas of risk from threats and pressure and areas for targeted biodiversity protection/enhancement action,
- Collaborating with key stakeholders and the public to achieve biodiversity aims.

The range of Actions defined in the LABAP have the potential to have a range of positive environmental effects on biodiversity, including habitats, key species, designated sites and locally important non-designated sites.

All Actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. They have been carefully reviewed, and it has been concluded that these Actions do not have the potential to have unintended negative effects on the receiving environment.

The Actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause significant negative environmental effects. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. There is no real likelihood of significant negative environmental effects occurring as result of the implementation of the LABAP.

The implementation of the LABAP will not introduce any sources of negative environmental impact, such as:

- Land take;
- Resource Requirements (Drinking Water Abstraction Etc.);
- Emissions (Disposal to Land, Water or Air);
- Excavation Requirements;
- Transportation Requirements; and
- Construction, Operation, Decommissioning.

The LABAP will not introduce any source of negative environmental impact which could result in or contribute to the following types of negative effect on a European site:

- Reduction of habitat area, habitat degradation or fragmentation;
- Disturbance to species, reduction in species populations and density;
- Changes in ecological functions and/or features that are essential for the ecological requirements of habitats and species (e.g. water quality and quantity);
- Interference with the key relationships that define the structure and function of the site.

The implementation of the LABAP will not result in any source of negative environmental impacts that may combine with effects occurring due to other plans or projects to create an 'in-combination' significant effect on a European site.

It is clear the LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impact that may result in a negative effect on any European site.

3.3 European Sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI)

The OPR (2021) AA Screening practice note states that the Zone of Influence must be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model. The S-P-R model has been used to identify the ZoI to ensure that relevant European sites are identified. The S-P-R model minimises the risk of overlooking distant or obscure effect pathways, while also avoiding an over reliance on buffer zones (e.g. 15 km), within which all European sites should be considered. This approach follows the DoEHLG (2009 rev 2010) guidance on AA which states that:

> *"For projects, the distance could be much less than 15 km, and in some cases less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects"*

As detailed in Section 1.5 in order for an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence of one of the elements of the mechanism means there is no likelihood for the effect to occur. The potential impacts of the plan are set out in Section 3.2 of this report. The impact is essentially the 'source' in the S-P-R model.

These impacts may be very localised and confined to defined area with no potential connectivity to a European site and therefore no potential for effects. Alternatively, where an ecological or functional pathway exists, they may give rise to a potential effect to a Qualifying Interest of a European site.

The dominant ecological pathways to consider are:

- Direct physical interactions or changes to the local environment;
- Air dispersal (noise, dust, odour emissions etc.);
- Hydrological interactions; and
- Dispersal patterns of mobile species

Based on the precautionary principal, the Zone of Influence of the proposed plan has been defined as:

- All European sites locally either solely or partially in County Kildare
- All hydrologically connected European Sites to waterbodies within County Kildare; and
- All European sites within a 15km buffer of County Kildare

All European sites within the Zone of Influence of the Plan area or which are connected to the Plan area ecologically, hydrologically or through hydrogeology have been identified - having appropriate regard to the interaction criteria defined in Section 1.5.

A map showing these European sites in or connected to the plan area is presented in Figure 3-1. Background information on these European sites is presented in Appendix 1, including:

- Quality and site characteristics of European sites considered in the assessment.
- Background data for European sites considered in the assessment; including the Qualifying features (Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests).

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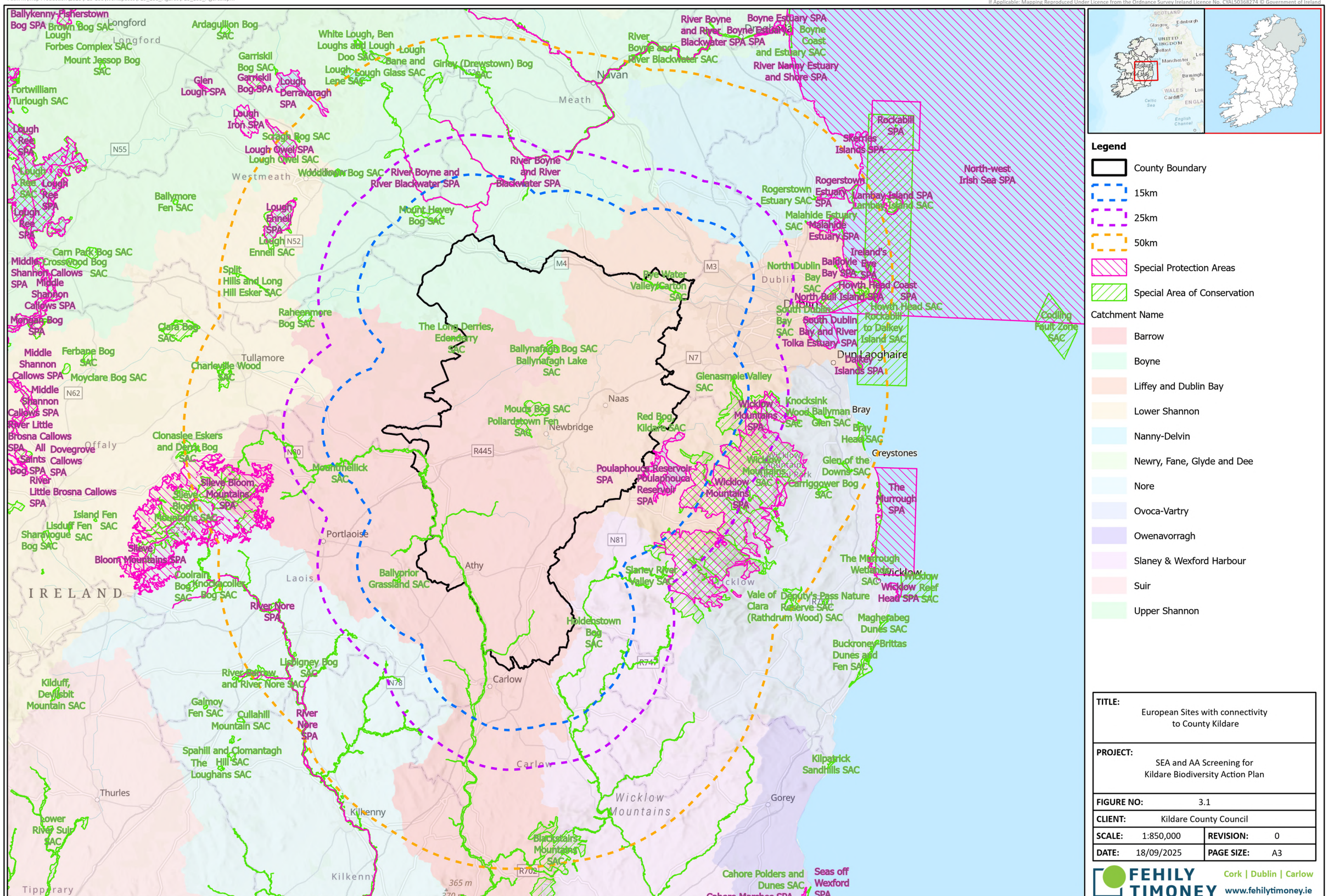

Legend

- County Boundary
- 15km
- 25km
- 50km
- Special Protection Areas
- Special Area of Conservation

Catchment Name

- Barrow
- Boyne
- Liffey and Dublin Bay
- Lower Shannon
- Nanny-Delvin
- Newry, Fane, Glyde and Dee
- Nore
- Ovoca-Vartry
- Owenavorragh
- Slaney & Wexford Harbour
- Suir
- Upper Shannon

Kilometers
0 10 20 40

TITLE: European Sites with connectivity to County Kildare			
PROJECT: SEA and AA Screening for Kildare Biodiversity Action Plan			
FIGURE NO:	3.1		
CLIENT:	Kildare County Council		
SCALE:	1:850,000	**REVISION:**	0
DATE:	18/09/2025	**PAGE SIZE:**	A3

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3.4 Consideration of in-combination Effects with other Plans or Projects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that:

> *"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives".*

It is therefore required that the likely significant effects of the plan are considered in-combination with other plans or projects within the Zone of Influence.

The consideration of in-combination effects with other plans or projects, focused on the sources of impacts identified for the plan in Section 3.2. The principal plans that are related to the LABAP are defined in Section 2.2.

The LABAP is in harmony and consistent with all inter-related plans, including land use plans relevant to the plan area, higher order heritage related plans, the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, the national Climate Action Plan and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The range of positive effects that may be realised by the implementation of the LABAP have the potential to interact and combine with positive effects associated with biodiversity measures defined in these inter-related plans to create larger, more significant positive effects.

All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The implementation of the LABAP will not give rise to likely significant negative effects on the environment that have the potential to interact and combine with negative effects associated with measures defined in these inter-related plans or projects to create larger, more significant negative effects.

The Plan does not therefore have any potential to contribute to in-combination likely significant effects on European sites that may occur due to the wider implementation of inter-related plans or projects.

3.5 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Table 3-2 examines whether there is potential for effects on identified European sites considering information provided above and the background information on the relevant European sites provided in Appendix 1.

Table 3-2: Identification of European Sites within the Zone of Influence of the Plan

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential Effects	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects	Likely Significant Effects
000391	Ballynafagh Bog SAC	0	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150], Active raised bogs [7110]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
000396	Pollardstown Fen SAC	0	Geyer`s whorl snail (*Vertigo geyeri*) [1013], Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo angustior*) [1014], Desmoulin`s whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) [1016], Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae* [7210], Alkaline fens [7230], Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
000397	Red Bog, Kildare SAC	0	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
001387	Ballynafagh Lake SAC	0	Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) [1065], Alkaline fens [7230], Desmoulin`s whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) [1016]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential Effects	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects	Likely Significant Effects
001398	Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC	0	Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo angustior*) [1014], Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220], Desmoulin`s whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) [1016]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	0	Reefs [1170], Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330], Sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) [1095], River lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) [1099], Twaite shad (*Alosa fallax*) [1103], Killarney fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) [1421], White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) [1092], European dry heaths [4030], Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410], Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) [1029], Estuaries [1130], Desmoulin`s whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) [1016], Nore Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera durrovensis*) [1990], Brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*) [1096], Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310], Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260], Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355], Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) [1106], Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220], Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and Fraxinus excelsior (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae,*	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential Effects	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects	Likely Significant Effects
			Salicion albae) [91E0], Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]				
002331	Mouds Bog SAC	0	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150], Active raised bogs [7110], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
004063	Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA	0	Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183], Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) [A043]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	0.37	Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) [A229]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC	0.38	Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) [1106], Alkaline fens [7230], Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355], River lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) [1099], Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
000925	The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC	0.57	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) * important orchid sites [6210]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
000781	Slaney River Valley SAC	2.49	Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Twaite shad (*Alosa fallax*) [1103], Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410], Estuaries [1130],	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential Effects	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects	Likely Significant Effects
			Brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*) [1096], Harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) [1365], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], River lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) [1099], Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330], Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) [1029], Sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) [1095], Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0], Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355], Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) [1106], Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]				
002256	Ballyprior Grassland SAC	2.8	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) * important orchid sites [6210]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
001757	Holdenstown Bog SAC	3.05	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC	4.13	Active raised bogs [7110], Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
002122	Wicklow Mountains SAC	6.12	Blanket bogs * if active bog [7130], Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220], Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060], Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0], Calcareous rocky slopes	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential Effects	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects	Likely Significant Effects
			with chasmophytic vegetation [8210], Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (*Androsacetalia alpinae* and *Galeopsietalia ladani*) [8110], Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160], Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae* [6130], Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355], Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*) [3110], Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010], Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas - and submountain areas in Continental Europe [6230], European dry heaths [4030]				
001209	Glenasmole Valley SAC	6.47	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220], Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) * important orchid sites [6210], Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) [6410]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
002141	Mountmellick SAC	8.76	Desmoulin`s whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) [1016]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
004040	Wicklow Mountains SPA	9.07	Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) [A098], Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) [A103]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential Effects	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects	Likely Significant Effects
004080	Boyne Estuary SPA	37.55	Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143], Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144], Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) [A195], Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142], Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156], Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola)* [A141], Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) [A169], Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140], Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162], Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects
001957	Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC	38.49	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria - white dunes [2120], Estuaries [1130], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Embryonic shifting dunes [2110], Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310], Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation - grey dunes [2130]	The LABAP will not generate any source of negative environmental impacts that may result in a negative significant effect on this European Site.	No	No	No likely significant effects

4. SCREENING CONCLUSION

This report presents an examination of whether the Kildare LABAP is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is based on best available scientific knowledge. This report has been prepared to inform the competent authority in completing their statutory obligations in relation to Appropriate Assessment, as required by Article 6(3) under Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive).

It can be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information, that the Plan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites. The principal reasons for this are as follows:

- The LABAP does not introduce any source of impacts that have potential for interactions with the receiving environment.
- All actions in the LABAP are aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity. There is no requirement to integrate further environmental considerations into the LABAP given its intrinsic nature, its stated aims and objectives, and the potential positive effects associated with its actions.
- The LABAP is in alignment with nature legislation and higher order policy such as the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan and inter-related plans and programmes.
- The actions in the LABAP do not support intensive land use or development projects sitting outside the land use planning framework that can cause likely significant negative environmental effects.
- The LABAP is not a statutory land use plan. The LABAP will not in and of itself set the context for future development consent. Any lower-order plans and projects supported by the Plan shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening, where necessary, in accordance with the requirements of European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) or the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), as the case may be.

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APPENDIX 1

Background Information on European Sites

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
000397	Red Bog Kildare SAC	The site displays a succession from open water (eutrophic in status) to ombrotrophic bog. Transition mire vegetation is considered to be well represented at this site with some typical species. A small colony of Larus ridibundus has bred in the past (current status unknown) which is one of few nesting sites in eastern Ireland and the site also has breeding Aythya fuligula and Fulica atra.	The site comprises a relatively small wetland which lies between moranic ridges. Open water is a principal habitat though there are no obvious inflowing or outflowing streams. Open water is fringed by various wetland habitats with bog (raised type) fens and freshwater marsh. Some willow (Salix spp.) occurs. The surrounding land is improved grassland. An extensive quarrying operation occurs to the east and south of site.
000781	Slaney River Valley SAC	Estuaries and intertidal sand and mud flats are particularly well represented in this site with salinity ranging from full freshwater to full seawater. The quality of these habitats is generally good. The Slaney River and its tributaries display good examples of floating river vegetation. An important area of alluvial forest is found at Macmine while old oak woodlands occur at Toomnafinnoge the latter being a remnant of the ancient oak woods of Shillelagh. The site is of high importance for the conservation of fish species notably Salmo salar Petromyzon marinus Lampetra fluviatilis L. planeri and the very localised Alosa fallax fallax. Lutra lutra is well distributed throughout while a significant population of Margaritifera margaritifera occurs on the Derreen River. The site provides year-round haul-out habitat for the Annex II species Phoca vitulina and includes regionally significant breeding and moulting sites. The site has high ornithological importance especially for wintering waterfowl with internationally important populations of Branta bernicla hrota Cygnus olor Limosa limosa and Limosa lapponica. There is at least a further 14 species of wintering waterfowl which occur in numbers of national importance. Wintering Larus gulls are well represented especially Larus ridibundus and Larus fuscus. A nesting colony of Egretta garzetta has recently become established within the site and birds are present in the area throughout the year. The site supports one of the best breeding concentrations of Acrocephalus scirpaeus in the country. A range of flora and fauna species listed as Red Data Book species occur within the site.	This site comprises almost the entire Slaney system from the headwater streams in the Wicklow Mountains to the extensive estuarine area of Wexford Harbour. The main river tributaries included are the Bann Glasha Clody Derry Derreen Douglas and Carrigower Rivers. The tidal influence extends upriver as far as Enniscorthy. In the upper and central regions the geology consists of granite. Above Kilcarry Bridge the Slaney has cut a gorge into the granite plain. The Derry and Bann Rivers are bounded by a narrow line of uplands which corresponds to schist outcrops. South of Kildavin the Slaney flows through an area of Ordovician slates and grits. The river is often fringed by woodland and/or swamp vegetation. Other habitats which occur alongside the river include wet grassland scrub and in higher areas heath and bog. Improved grassland and arable land is included alongside the river for water quality reasons. Salt marshes are a feature of the lower estuarine area of the site.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
000925	The Long Derries Edenderry SAC	This is an important site for several reasons. It supports good quality dry calcareous esker grassland in which occurs a substantial population of the rare and protected Orchis morio. An interesting transition between this habitat and acid peaty grassland is found on the eastern side of the site. Gravel quarries on the site support other rare plant species: Acinos arvensis (a protected species) and Erigeron acer as well as the uncommon introduced Minuartia hybrida. The site is an important ornithological site; the most notable species Caprimulgus europaeus (Nightjar) of which only about thirty pairs are known to breed in Ireland breeds on the site. Several other important bird species also occur.	The site forms part of a low esker ridge which primarily consists of glacial gravels interspersed with loam and peat soils. The site comprises a mosaic of dry esker grassland (calcareous) Cretaegus scrub gravel quarries (used and disused) and humid grassland. The north-eastern side of the site grades into peatland and here an interesting mixture of acid and base loving plants occurs. Much of the western half of the site was previously used as a golf course. A wide variety of activities occur on the site and the western half is the most disturbed.
001387	Ballynafagh Lake SAC	Alkaline fen is a main habitat at this site occurring in mosaic with a range of swamp and transitional bog communities as well as fen woodland. The fen is well-developed and of good quality and represents one of the best examples in eastern Ireland. The site also contains a relict population of Vertigo moulinsiana. Confirmed record for 1997 and noted to be a large population. All recently surveyed sites with confirmed populations of this species are considered important. The site supports a population of Euphydryas aurinia and contains a number of other rare invertebrate species some of which are good wetland indicator species including the mollusc Pisidium pseudosphaerium the lepidopterans Ectoedemia argyropeza and Apomyelois bistriatella subcognata and the coleopterans Chlaenius tristis and Philonthus corvinus. Of some local importance for wintering waterfowl.	The site comprises a former reservoir (generally called Ballynafagh Lake) and an associated canal feeder (Blackwood feeder) the latter now disused and mostly dry. The lake is shallow and is now very overgrown with various wetland vegetation types with only a small area of open water remaining. Fen is the predominant habitat with reed-swamp wet grassland and some bog or heath also occurring. A strip of deciduous woodland occurs on some drier ground. The main habitats along the canal feeder are dry grassland (partly improved) wet grassland swamp vegetation and scrub.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
004040	Wicklow Mountains SPA	The site supports good examples of both upland and woodland bird communities. It has breeding Falco columbarius and Falco peregrinus as well as Turdus torquatus and Lagopus lagopus both of the latter being Red-listed in Ireland. It is the only site in Ireland where Mergus merganser breeds regularly. It is important for rare breeding passerines of oakwoods notably Phoenicurus phoenicurus and Phylloscopus sibilatrix. It also has Sylvia borin and Sylvia atricapilla.	This is an extensive upland site comprising a substantial part of the Wicklow Mountains. The underlying geology of the site is mainly of Leinster granites flanked by Ordovician schists mudstones and volcanics. The area was subject to glaciation and features fine examples of glacial lakes deep valleys and moraines. Most of site is over 300 m with much ground over 600 m and the highest peak of Lugnaquillia at 925 m. The substrate over much of site is peat with poor mineral soil occurring on the slopes and lower ground. Exposed rock and scree are features of the site. The dominant habitats present are blanket bog heaths and upland grassland. Fine examples of native Oak woodlands are found in the Glendalough area. The site which is within the Wicklow Mountains National Park is fragmented into about 20 separate parcels of land.
001398	Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC	The importance of the site lies in the presence of a number of rare plant and animal species and a rare habitat i.e. thermal mineral petrifying spring. The spring gives rise to a calcareous marsh the habitat for Vertigo angustior and Vertigo moulinsiana. This marsh is species-rich and holds a number of plant and insect species which are rare or locally uncommon in Ireland. Four Red Data Book plant species have been recorded from the site two of which Hypericum hirsutum and Viola hirta are legally protected. The woods at the eastern end of the site have some ornithological interest.	A river valley site which includes at its western end a large area of estate woodland and an artificial lake. The eastern section of the site includes a section of railway canal and aqueduct; it continues as far as leixlip town. The site is underlain by carboniferous limestone over which has been laid a layer of glacial drift.
001757	Holdenstown Bog SAC	The site supports an important though small example of transition mire vegetation. Transition mires associated with raised bogs are particularly rare in the region and this is probably the most easterly example in the country. It has many of the expected plant species for the habitat including the locally rare Carex limosa. The site appears to be in a fairly natural state.	The site is a small wetland in a kettle hole amongst morainic deposits. It is mostly dominated by raised bog but there is some open water. Birch woodland is invading the drier areas of the bog. An area of semi-improved grassland is included for practical boundary purposes. The area surrounding site is agricultural land.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
001957	Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC	While the site has a good diversity of coastal habitats including fixed dunes most have been modified in some way. The containment of the main tidal channel has altered the tidal pattern which affects the functioning of the various estuarine habitats. Both dune systems were formerly far more extensive but much of the stable areas have now been converted to golf courses. Site is important for wintering waterfowl supporting nine species in nationally important numbers including Pluvialis apricaria an Annex I EU Birds Directive species. Sterna albifrons breeds or attempts to breed in most years.	This moderately sized coastal site which is situated below the town of Drogheda comprises most of the estuary of the Boyne River a substantial river which drains a large catchment. On the seaward side the site extends north and south for several kilometres to include the remaining intact areas of dune systems at Baltray and Mornington as well as the adjacent beaches and intertidal sand flats. The main channel of the Boyne is contained by training walls for navigable purposes. As well as intertidal sand and mud flats the inner part of the site has salt marshes and Spartina swards.
002122	Wicklow Mountains SAC	The site comprises the largest complex of upland habitats in eastern Ireland with important examples of blanket bog wet heath and dry heath extensive in area and mostly of good quality. Alpine heath occurs at high levels along with calcareous and siliceous rocky habitats harbouring an arctic-alpine flora. A fine series of oligotrophic lakes occur and some have Salvelinus alpinus. Several oakwoods of moderate quality typical of the dry acidic woods of eastern Ireland are found. Seven Red Data Book plant species occur including the rare Alchemilla alpina and Nitella gracilis at its only Irish station. The site supports significant populations of breeding Falco columbarius and Falco peregrinus. The site is important for rare breeding passerines of oakwoods notably Phoenicurus phoenicurus and Phylloscopus sibilatrix. The site also has breeding Turdus torquatus and Lagopus lagopus. Lutra lutra occurs on several of the riverine systems.	An extensive upland site comprising much of the Wicklow Mountains and extending into Co. Dublin. The solid geology is mainly Leinster granites flanked by Ordovician schists mudstones and volcanics. The area has been glaciated and features fine examples of high corrie lakes deep valleys and moraines. Most of the site is over 300m with much ground over 600m and the highest peak of Lugnaquillia at 925m. The site includes the headwaters of several major rivers including the Liffey the Dargle and the Slaney. The substrate over much of the site is peat with poor mineral soil on the slopes and lower ground. Exposed rock and scree is a feature. The dominant habitats on the site are blanket bog heaths and upland grassland.
002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC	Mount Hevey Bog is one of the most easterly relatively intact raised bogs in Ireland and represents one of the largest bog areas in the eastern half of the country. Although more than half of the site area consists of cutover bog there is a large area of active raised bog. The active areas support well-developed pool areas and have a high Sphagnum cover which include the rare species Sphagnum fuscum and S. imbricatum.	Mount Hevey is a large midland raised bog which is situated 3 km north-east of Kinnegad village and lies on the border of counties Meath and Westmeath. The bog overlies Carboniferous limestone bedrock and occurs in four sections. Two of these are small and lie to the north of a railway line while two larger lobes lie to the south of the railway line.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
		A soak area which has developed from an infilled lake and now supports some Betula pubescens trees adds diversity to the bog surface. A substantial area of uncut high bog that is classified as degraded raised big is present. The degraded bog supports a wide range of plant communities depending on factors such as height of water table and past burning events. The bog and especially the active parts contains substantial areas of Rhynchosporion vegetation which have a typical species composition and generally exist in a well-preserved condition. The cutover areas which surround the high bog contain large areas of scrub woodland dominated by Betula pubescens.	These two larger lobes are of higher ecological value due to the presence of active bog. Cutover bog surrounds the uncut high bog. Part of the high bog and also part of the cutover has been afforested with conifers. Other parts of the cutover has been invaded by Betula pubescens scrub and small amounts of broad-leaved woodland. Some of the cutover has been converted to semi-improved grassland.
000391	Ballynafagh Bog SAC	Ballynafagh Bog is a small raised bog site which contains examples of the Annex 1 habitats active raised bog degraded raised bog and Rhynchosporion vegetation. The bog is one of the most easterly examples of a relatively intact raised bog in Ireland and together with Mouds Bog is one of only two such systems in Co. Kildare. A central depression on the high bog dome supports a substantial area of active raised bog with a locally high Sphagnum cover. The site is also of ornithological interest being within the breeding territory of a pair of Falco columbarius and providing habitat for breeding Gallinago gallinago and Numenius arquata. Lepus timidus hibernicus occurs within the site.	This area is directly underlain by muddy fossiliferous limestones interbedded with calcareous shales. A reverse fault runs directly under the bog so that the NW of the bog is underlain by fossiliferous mudmounds. Both have low permeabilities. The subsoils are predominantley clay rich tills of low permeability. Part of the site has been planted with conifers.
000396	Pollardstown Fen SAC	The largest spring-fed fen in Ireland largely intact and responding well to restoration measures. Supports one of the largest stands of Cladium fen and is one of the most studied examples of its kind in Ireland. Type locality for the Cirsio dissecti-Schoenetum nigricantis and contains a significant number of rare and threatened species. A number of internationally important invertebrates have been recorded and rare sub-aquatic invertebrates are particularly well represented.	A large spring-fed fen situated in a shallow basin composed of up to 6m of marl/peat overlying clay. The fen contains the feeder channel of the Grand Canal and has survived several attempts at drainage and reclamation. Supports extensive areas of Cladium fen Schoenus fen reed and sedge swamp Molinia grassland and species-rich seepage areas. Restoration of the central fen area following partial reclamation in 1979 has caused re-flooding and allowed the re-establishment and expansion of aquatic and reedswamp vegetation and their associated fauna.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
		Pollardstown is the only known site in Ireland (or Europe) to support all three Annex II Vertigo species (V.geyeri V.angustior V. moulinsiana) and thus provides unique opportunity to study their different habitat and hydrological requirements. Re-flooding of reclaimed areas has increased the ornithological value of the site.	
002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC	The main channel of the Boyne contains a good example of alluvial woodland of the Salicetum albo-fragilis type which has developed on three alluvium islands. Alkaline fen vegetation is well represented at Lough Shesk where there is a very fine example of habitat succession from open water to raised bog. The Boyne and its tributaries is one of Ireland's premier game fisheries and offers a wide range of angling from fishing for spring salmon and grilse to sea trout fishing and extensive brown trout fishing. The site is one of the most important in eastern Ireland for Salmo salar and has very extensive spawning grounds. The site also has an important population of Lampetra fluviatilis though the distribution or abundance of this species is not well known. Lutra lutra is widespread throughout the site. Some of the grassland areas along the Boyne and Blackwater are used by a nationally important winter flock of Cygnus cygnus. Several Red Data Book plants occur within the site with Pyrola rotundifolia Poa palustris and Juncus compressus. Also occurring are a number of Red Data Book animals notably Meles meles Martes martes and Rana temporaria. The River Boyne is a designated Salmonid Water under the EU Freshwater Fish Directive.	This site comprises most of the freshwater element of the River Boyne from upriver of the Boyne Aqueduct at Drogheda the Blackwater River as far as Lough Ramor and the principal Boyne tributaries notably the Deel Stoneyford and Tremblestown Rivers. This system drains a considerable area of Cos. Meath and Westmeath and smaller areas of Cavan and Louth. The underlying geology is Carboniferous Limestone for the most part with areas of Upper Lower and Middle well represented. In the vicinity of Kells Silurian Quartzite is present while close to Trim are Carboniferous Shales and Sandstones. The rivers flow through a landscape dominated by intensive agriculture mostly of improved grassland but also cereals. Much of the river channels were subject to arterial drainage schemes in the past. Natural flood-plains now exist along only limited stretches of river though often there is a fringe of reed swamp freshwater marsh wet grassland or deciduous wet woodland. Along some parts notably between Drogheda and Slane are stands of tall mature mixed woodland. Substantial areas of improved grassland and arable land are included in site for water quality reasons. There are many medium to large sized towns adjacent to but not within the site.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
002331	Mouds Bog SAC	Mouds Bog is the largest relatively intact raised bog in Co. Kildare and thus is the most easterly site remaining in the country. Although there is extensive industrial peat extraction in the west of the site there is still a fairly large area of wet bog surface present including some active raised bog with a small soak system. The degraded bog is typical of the habitat but displays some diversity by way of a number of dry flushes. Rhynchosporion vegetation is well represented in the wetter areas and includes Drosera anglica a relatively scarce species in Co. Kildare. The site contains one of the few Irish populations of the introduced insectivorous plant species Sarracenia purpurea. Lagopus lagopus a Red listed species in Ireland has been recorded.	Mouds Bog is a large raised bog complex located 3 km north-west of Newbridge Co. Kildare. The bog occurs as two basins separated by a central mineral ridge. Approximately half the site comprises uncut high bog though this is predominantly degraded bog. Much of the western end of the site is affected by industrial extraction of peat. Old cutover surrounds the remainder of the high bog though some of this has been reclaimed for pasture grassland. Part of the cutover has been invaded by Betula pubescens scrub.
004063	Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA	The site is of national importance for its population of Anser anser which is one of the largest in the country. The site provides the main roost for the birds with feeding mostly on improved grassland outside of the site. A range of other waterfowl species occur in relatively low numbers including Cygnus cygnus Anas penelope and Bucephala clangula. The reservoir attracts roosting gulls during winter most notably a large population of Larus fuscus which in Ireland is rare in winter away from the south coast.	Poulaphouca Reservoir located in the western foothills of the Wicklow Mountains was created in 1944 by damming of the River Liffey for the purpose of generating electricity from hydropower. The reservoir covers an area of approximately 20 square kilometres and is the largest inland water body in the mid-east and south-east regions. The reservoir receives water from two main sources the River Liffey at the northern end and the Kings River at the southern end. The exit is into the Liffey gorge at the western end. Underlying the reservoir are sands and gravels deposited during the last glaciation. The shores of the lake are mostly sandy. When water levels are low exposed lake muds are colonised by an ephemeral flora of annual plant species.
001209	Glenasmole Valley SAC	The site has important examples of petrifying springs. The physical and chemical properties of the springs have been studied. Good examples of orchid rich calcareous grassland including Pseudorchis albida (legally protected) and Orchis morio (Red Data Book species)are found. The quality of grassland is variable owing to agricultural improvement. Molinia meadows are also represented. Several other Red Data Book plant species occur along with a host of rare or scarce plant species for Co. Dublin.	Glenasmole Valley lies at the northern foothills of the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. It is a glaciated valley with drift deposits consisting of fluvioglacial sands and gravels of varying thickness and rich in Carboniferous limestone occurring on the slopes. Spring lines occur along both sides of the northern part of the valley. The River Dodder flows through the valley and within the site the river has been impounded to form two reservoirs. Associated with the reservoirs are areas of swamp and marsh vegetation.

Site Code	Site Name	Quality of Site	Other Site Characteristics
		The botany of this site has been well studied since the 19th century. The site has Alcedo atthis and is important for bats with four Red Data Book species present (Pipistrellus pipistrellus Nyctalus leisleri Myotis daubentoni Plecotus auritus).	The valley is heavily wooded mostly with mixed woodland of both deciduous and coniferous species but also some native woodland. Dry calcareous pasture grassland improved to varying degrees is a main habitat of the valley sides and occurs in association with wet grassland and in places of seepage fen or marsh type vegetation.
002141	Mountmellick SAC	Site contains a relict population of Vertigo moulinsiana. Confirmed record for 1997. Typical wetland habitat. All recently surveyed sites with confirmed populations of this species are considered important.	Site comprises a disused section of the Grand Canal at Dungan's Bridge approximately 3 km east of Mountmellick in Co. Laois. The habitat is fen type vegetation with Typha latifolia Glyceria maxima and Iris pseudacorus. At present the site is not used for any particular activity.
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	The site supports many Annexed habitats including the priority habitats of alluvial woodland and petrifying springs. Quality of habitat is generally good. The site also supports a number of Annex II animal species - Salmo salar Margaritifera margaritifera M.m. durrovensis Alosa fallax fallax Austropotamobius pallipes Petromyzon marinus Lutra lutra Lampetra fluviatilis and L. planeri. Annex I Bird species include Anser albifrons flavirostris Falco peregrinus Cygnus cygnus Cygnus columbianus bewickii Limosa lapponica Pluvialis apricaria and Alcedo atthis. A range of rare plants and invertebrates are found in the woods along these rivers and rare plants are also associated with the saltmarsh.	This site consists of most of the freshwater stretches of the Barrow/Nore River catchments. The Barrow is tidal as far upriver as Graiguenamanagh while the Nore is tidal as far upriver as Inishtioge. The site also includes the extreme lower reaches of the River Suir and all of the estuarine component of Waterford Harbour extending to Creadan Head. The larger of the many tributaries include the Lerr Fushoge Mountain Aughavaud Owenass Boherbaun and Stradbally Rivers of the Barrow and the Delour Dinin Erkina Owveg Munster Arrigle and King's Rivers on the Nore. Both rivers rise in the Old Red Sandstone of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. They traverse limestone bedrock for a good proportion of their routes though the middle reaches of the Barrow and many of the eastern tributaries run through Leinster Granite. A wide range of habitats associated with the rivers are included within the site including substantial areas of woodland (deciduous mixed) dry heath wet grassland swamp and marsh vegetation salt marshes a small dune system biogenic reefs and intertidal sand and mud flats. Areas of improved grassland arable land and coniferous plantations are included in the site for water quality reasons.

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002256	Ballyprior Grassland SAC	An estimated 35 hectares 45% of the site area consists of the Annex 1 Priority Habitat orchid-rich calcareous grassland which supports a rich diversity of both calcicole and calcifuge species the latter occurring on mineral poor drift. The site has an exceptionally rich mycoflora and this is a better indication of grassland quality (in terms of continuity lack of disturbance and low nutrient status) than the vascular flora. The Irish Hare Lepus timidus hibernicus recorded as occurring in the site. This sub-species is listed in Annex III of the Bern Convention and in the Red Data Book as Internationally Important. It is legally protected by the Wildlife Act (1976).	The site consists of a limestone plateau supporting open calcareous grassland with occasional rocky scarps and valleys but with little surface water and no streams. Soils are thin on the plateau but deeper with local drift in low areas and valley bottom. Scrub of Crataegus monogyna Prunus spinosa Rubus fruticosus with bracken Pteridium aquiliium or Gorse Scrub of Ulex europaea is frequent in the east and north of the site. Scrub woodland of predominantly Hazel Corylus avellana with Fraxinus excelsior and a well developed ground flora occurs in the extreme west of the site. There are also a few ponds scattered within the site.
004080	Boyne Estuary SPA	The Boyne Estuary is one of the most important sites for wintering waterfowl on the east coast. It has a total of 10 species with populations of national importance - of particular note is that it supports 7.0% of the national total of Calidris canutus and 4.0% of the total for Pluvialis apricaria. Other species which have populations of national importance include Tadorna tadorna Haematopus ostralegus Vanellus vanellus Limosa limosa Tringa totanus and Arenaria interpres. The site provides both feeding and roosting areas for the birds. Sterna albifrons bred in the past but successful breeding has not occurred since 1996.	This moderately-sized coastal site which is situated below the town of Drogheda comprises most of the estuary of the Boyne River a substantial river which drains a large catchment. Apart from one section which is over 1 km wide the width is mostly less than 500 m. The main river channel which is navigable and dredged is defined by training walls the latter being breached in places. Intertidal flats occur on the sides of the channelled river. The sediments vary from fine muds in the innermost areas to sandy muds or sands towards the mouth. The linear stretches of intertidal flats to the north and south of the river mouth are mainly sands. Intertidal areas are fringed by salt marshes in the inner sheltered areas. Spartina is frequent on the flats and salt marshes.

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004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	The River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA supports nationally important numbers of Alcedo atthis. Other species which occur within the site include Cygnus olor Anas crecca Anas platyrhynchos Phalacrocorax carbo Ardea cinerea Gallinula chloropus Gallinago gallinago and Riparia riparia.	The River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA is a long linear site that comprises stretches of the River Boyne and several of its tributaries: most of the site is in Co Meath but it extends also into Counties Cavan, Louth and Westmeath. It includes the following river sections: The River Boyne from the M1 motorway bridge west of Drogheda to the junction with the Royal Canal west of Longwood Co Meath; the River Blackwater from its junction with the River Boyne in Navan to the junction with Lough Ramor in Co Cavan; the Tremblestown River (and Athboy River) from the junction with the River Boyne at Kilnagross Bridge to the bridge in Athboy Co Meath; the Stoneyford River from its junction with the River Boyne to Stonestone Bridge in Co. Westmeath; the River Deel from its junction with the River Boyne to Cummer Bridge Co.Westmeath. The site includes the river channel and marginal vegetation.

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