



## Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

### CP1136 Alterations to Baltrasna and Drybridge 110 kV Stations, and 110 kV Baltrasna to Drybridge Overhead Line [Exempted Development] (County Louth)

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended ('The Regulations'), EirGrid has undertaken Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of relevant European sites, if the Alterations to Baltrasna and Drybridge 110 kV Stations, and 110 kV Baltrasna to Drybridge Overhead Line [Exempted Development] ('the development') individually or in combination with other plans or projects would be likely to have a significant effect (s) on a European site(s).

#### Development Description

The development consists of:

##### *Drybridge 110 KV Station*

- inspecting, repairing, renewing, altering or removing of protection equipment including teleprotection interfaces; line traps and bases, protection relays and other apparatus including the excavation of any street or other land for that purpose.

##### *Baltrasna 110 kV Station*

- inspecting, repairing, renewing, altering or removing of protection equipment including teleprotection interfaces; surge arrestors line traps and bases, line droppers, protection relays and other apparatus including the excavation of any street or other land for that purpose.
- Installing 3 no. post insulators and associated bases.

##### *Baltrasna - Drybridge 110 kV Overhead Line*

- installation of fibre wrap on the existing Baltrasna – Drybridge 110 kV overhead conductor.
- replacement of existing polesets
- (6, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 44, 45, 46, 48, 51, 52, 53, 60, 63, 66, 68, 70, 74, 76, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 92, 93, 96, 103, 108, 111, 112, 113), including the excavation of any street or other land for that purpose.

#### Analysis of Pathways to European sites

A short stretch of the existing line oversails the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (site code 2299; oversailed by c. 0.39 km)<sup>1</sup>, and the River Boyne and Blackwater Special Protection Area (site code, oversailed by c. 0.34 km)<sup>2</sup> However there will be no intrusive works within the SAC or SPA, or within 0.03km of these sites. The only works within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC/SPA are fibre wrapping which is achieved without breaking of ground, using a hoist/pulley system to mount a device up on the conductor/structure which automates the fibre wrapping, to enable wrapping of existing overhead lines across watercourses, without the requirement for instream or bankside works.

The nearest intrusive works to the SAC requiring removal of vegetation are located c. 30 m distant (replacement of poleset 113). This and other poleset replacements require localized works without concrete

<sup>1</sup> NPWS (2020) Conservation objectives for River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC [002299]. Generic Version 7.0. Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>2</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA [004232]. Generic Version 9.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

foundations. A wheeled or tracked excavator will remove soil at existing timber pole bases, after which existing poles are cut and removed off site. New poles are installed immediately adjacent existing poles, involving an excavation of approximately 2.3 m for each pole using a wheeled or tracked excavator. After excavation and erection of the pole set, a further excavation 0.8 m deep is necessary. This is a linear excavation perpendicular to the line necessary to install wooden sleepers.

All works within the Drybridge and Baltrasna stations are on made ground entirely within the existing fencelines, requiring no vegetation removal. The nearest station works to European sites are those at Drybridge station, which are c. 290m from the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC/SPA

There are no works elsewhere within or adjacent any other European sites.

The AA Screening assessment has reviewed the nature and scale of the works against hydrological connectivity and excluded the risk of downstream surface water impacts to relevant coastal sites; namely the Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (site code 1957)<sup>3</sup>, Boyne Estuary SPA (site code 4080)<sup>4</sup> and River Nanny and Estuary Shore SPA (site code 4158)<sup>5</sup>. The risk of ex-situ impacts to the Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests roosting, foraging, or nesting away from European sites has also been excluded, following analysis of known and potential habitats for mobile bird and other animal populations. There is no increase to bird strike risk from the development, given no change to alignment, or shield wiring on the existing overhead line.

### AA Screening Statement

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, EirGrid has made a determination following screening that an Appropriate Assessment is not required as the project individually or in combination with other plans or projects is not likely to have a significant effect on any European sites. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded on the basis of objective evidence.

This determination is based on the location, scale, extent and duration of the development, including temporary works, and has not taken account of measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



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17 August 2023

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<sup>3</sup> NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC 001957. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>4</sup> NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Boyne Estuary SPA 004080. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>5</sup> NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA 004158. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.