

2019

SCREENING STATEMENT  
IN SUPPORT OF  
APPROPRIATE  
ASSESSMENT OF THE  
LAOIS NOISE ACTION  
PLAN 2019 -2022

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This report has been prepared by Minogue and Associates with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information report herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is prepared for Laois County Council and we accept no responsibility to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk

# 1 LAOIS NOISE ACTION PLAN 2019-2022

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Minogue & Associates have been appointed by Laois County Council to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directive Assessment of the *Laois Noise Action Plan 2019-2022*.

This Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA): Stage 1 Screening has been undertaken in conjunction with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the draft plan and should be read in combination with the plan and associated SEA Screening Report.

The purpose of this Screening exercise is to assess whether the draft plan has the potential to result in likely significant effects to the integrity and conservation status of European Sites.

## 1.2 HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT

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

Articles 6(1) & (2) of the Habitats Directive set out provisions for the conservation management of European Sites. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive set out a series of procedural steps to test whether or not a plan or project is likely to affect an N2K site. Article 6(3) also establishes the requirement for a HDA:

*“any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (Natura 2000) site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public”.*

Therefore, the objective of this HDA is to assess and conclude whether or not the proposed Draft Plan will adversely affect the integrity of European Sites. Such a conclusion will be arrived at by assessing the implications of the draft Plan for each European Site’s conservation objectives and

associated qualifying features of interests (i.e. those Annex I habitats and Annex II species of SACs and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of SPAs).

## 2 SCREENING METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The function of the Screening Assessment is to identify whether or not the Draft Plan will have a likely significant effect on European Sites. In this context “likely” means any effect that may be reasonably predicted and “significant” means not trivial or inconsequential but an effect that is potentially relevant to the Site’s conservation objectives<sup>1</sup>. Any effect, which would compromise the functioning and viability of a Site and interfere with achieving the conservation objectives of the Site would constitute a significant effect.

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

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

- Managing Natura 2000 sites The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC ( European Commission, 2018)
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision). ·
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. ·
- 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 (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001);
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC. Clarification of the Concepts of Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence. Opinion of the European Commission (European Commission, January 2007). ·
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive. Findings of an international workshop on Appropriate Assessment in Oxford, December 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> See English Nature’s Habitat Regulations Guidance Note No. 3, 1999.

## 2.2 APPROACH TO HABITATS DIRECTIVE SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

As per the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011) as amended, a Screening for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken on behalf of Laois County Council to assess the Draft Plans' potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites.

The European Commission's publication *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites* (2001) provides methodological guidance for Screening for Appropriate Assessment. The guidance publication outlines the stages involved in undertaking a Screening assessment of a plan or project that has the potential to have likely significant effects on European Sites. The methodology adopted for the Screening assessment of this Strategy is informed by these guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

1. Describe the Strategy and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
2. List all European Sites occurring within the study area;
3. Assess the goals of the Strategy and identify those that could have the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites; and
4. Identify other plans or projects that, in combination with the goals Strategy, have the potential to affect European Sites.

## 2.3 CONSULTATION

The Strategy will be on public display along with the SEA Screening and this Habitats Directive Assessment. Prescribed environmental authorities will also be provided with these reports and feedback and consultation requested within the prescribed time period.

## 2.4 AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE DRAFT PLAN

This Noise Action Plan 2019 has been prepared by Laois County Council to address environmental noise from major roads with more than three million vehicles per annum. The action planning area covers the M7, M8, N80, N77 and sections of the R445. It also covers the major rail line between Hazelhatch and Portarlinton within the functional area of Laois. It is a follow up to the 2014 Noise Action Plan which addressed environmental noise from roads with more than three million vehicles per annum and the 2008 Noise Action Plan which addressed environmental noise from roads with more than six million vehicles p.a.

The plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2002/49/EC (known as the Environmental Noise Directive, or "END"), which was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, SI No. 140 of 2006.

The aim of the Directive and the Regulations is to provide for the implementation of an EC common approach to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise. Environmental noise is unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise emitted by means of transport, road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and noise in agglomerations over a specified size. Types of noise not included in the

Regulations are noise that is caused by the exposed person, noise from domestic activities, noise created by neighbours, noise at workplaces or noise inside means of transport or due to military activities in military areas.

Noise Mapping Bodies and Local Planning Authorities were assigned responsibility under the regulations to draw up noise maps for the third round of the process in 2017 and prepare action plans for noise from the following noise sources:

- Sections of rail route above a flow threshold of 30,000 train passages per year.
- Major airports with more than 50,000 movements per year -a movement being a takeoff or landing. (Not applicable to Laois).
- Sections of major roads with a flow threshold of 3 million vehicles per annum.
- Agglomerations with more than 100,000 inhabitants. (Not applicable to Laois)

Local authorities play an active role in noise management in Ireland through dealing with complaints from members of the public.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA), as the noise mapping body for major national roads, has prepared noise maps for the sections of the National Routes – (M and N routes) in Laois that were confirmed by verified vehicle count data to have more than 3 million vehicles per annum. The TII on behalf of Laois County Council has prepared noise maps for Regional roads (R route) with more than 3 million vehicles per annum. The TII has estimated from the noise maps and from geo directory data that approximately 4,612 individuals living within the action planning area in Laois may be located in environmental noise bands from 55 to >75dB Lden. Approximately 2,945 individuals may be located in noise bands from 50 to >70dB Lnight. Iarnród Éireann has prepared noise maps for the main rail line between Hazelhatch and Portarlinton which occurs within the Laois boundary area. Iarnród Éireann has estimated from the noise maps and from geo directory data that approximately 100 individuals living within the action planning area in Laois may be located in environmental noise bands from 55 to >59dB Lden.

The purpose of this Action Plan is to endeavour to manage the existing noise environment and protect the future noise environment within the action planning area. Management of the existing noise environment may be achieved by prioritising areas for which further assessment and possible noise mitigation may be required. Protection of the future noise environment may be achieved by acoustical planning, which further incorporates noise into the planning process via measures such as land-use planning, development planning, sound insulation measures, traffic planning and control of environmental noise sources.

The Laois Noise Action Plan has the following Policy Statement:

*Laois County Council will seek to address environmental noise from major roads in the county, will endeavour to maintain satisfactory noise environments where they exist and will have regard to acoustical planning in the planning process (within the confines of Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended) to endeavour to ensure that future developments include provisions to protect*

*the population from the effects of environmental noise in the interests of residential amenity and public health.*

### 3 EUROPEAN SITES

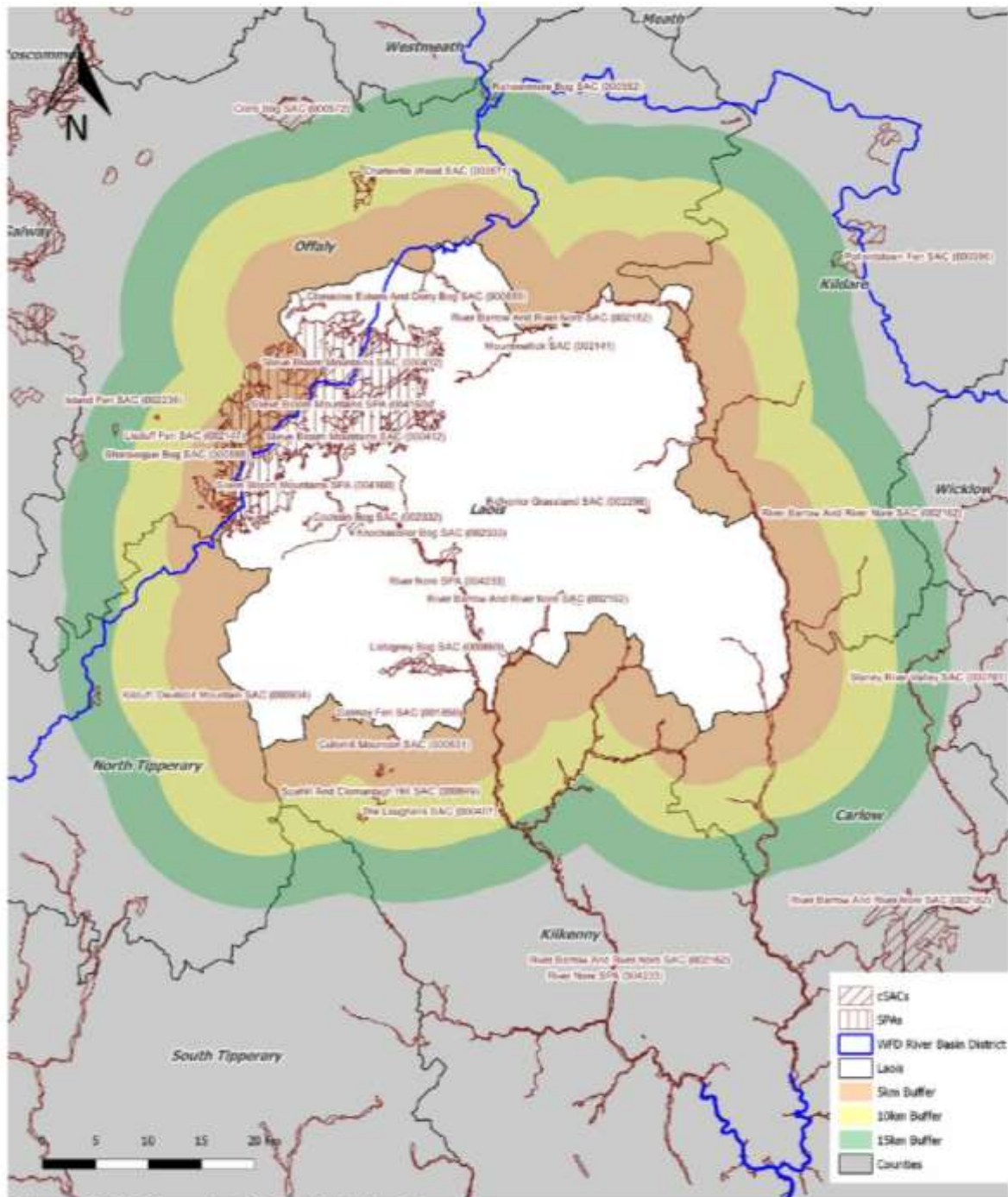
#### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN SITES

As the proposed strategy applies to County Laois, the total county forms the basis for the study area. However a precautionary approach has been taken to this assessment and in line with current guidance on Habitats Directive Assessments, all European Sites occurring within Laois and within a 15km radius of the county were included. Hence the study area includes all European Sites occurring within a 15km radius of Laois County. Table 4.1 lists all European Sites occurring within the study area, along with the dominant habitat features and/or species characteristics. These characteristics are important in establishing whether or not each site occurs within the sphere of influence of measures outlined in the strategic plan and whether it is likely to be vulnerable to any potential effects arising from the implementation of such policies. Figure 4.1<sup>2</sup> show the location of each of these European Sites within the study area.

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<sup>2</sup> From SEA ER of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

TABLE 0.1: EUROPEAN SITES OCCURRING WITHIN THE STUDY AREA



**Figure 4.2 SPAs and cSACs within the County**  
 Source: NPWS (datasets downloaded April 2015)

There are 8 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within the Plan area: • Ballyprior Grassland SAC (002256) • Clonaslee Eskers and Derry Bog SAC (000859) • Coolrain Bog SAC (002332) • Knockacoller Bog SAC (002333) • Lisbigney Bog SAC (000869) • Mountmellick SAC (002141) • River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162) • Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (000412) and Two Special Protection Areas.

Within the study area (15km buffer) there are a further 14 SACs. Therefore a total of 24 European Sites occur within the study area. As can be seen from Table 4.1 the dominant broad habitat



characterising European Sites occurring within the study area is waterbodies. Other dominant habitat characteristics include peatland and grassland,.

With regard to species all SPAs support mobile bird species. Species are included as qualifying features of interest for 8 SACs occurring in the study area. The dominant mobile species occurring in the study area for SACs are otter and freshwater aquatic species. Sedentary species consist of invertebrates and plants species.

The following sub-section provides a brief overview of the main sensitivities and pressure to habitat and species characteristics influencing European Sites.

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
<b>SACs</b>			
Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (000412)	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] Blanket bog (*active only) [7130] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]	Peatland	NA
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)	<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> [1016] Freshwater pearl mussel ( <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> ) [1029] White-clawed crayfish ( <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> ) [1092] Sea lamprey ( <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> ) [1095] Brook lamprey ( <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ) [1096] River lamprey ( <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> ) [1099] Allis shad ( <i>Alosa alosa</i> ) [1102] Twaite shad ( <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> ) [1103] Salmon ( <i>Salmo salar</i> ) [1106] Estuaries [1130]	Waterbody  Woodland	Mobile  Sedentary

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat	Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
	<p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]  Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand [1310]  Spartina swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>) [1320]  Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]  Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]  Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]  Killarney fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>) [1421]  Pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>) [1990]  Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]  European dry heaths [4030]  Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]  Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]  Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in British Isles [91A0]  Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</p>			
Mountmellick SAC (002141)	<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> [1016]	NA		Sedentary

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat	Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
Ballyprior Grassland SAC (002256)	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites) [6210]	Grassland		NA
Knockacoller Bog SAC (002333)	Active raised bogs [7110]  Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]  Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Peatland		NA
Lisbigney Bog SAC (008569)	Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]  Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]	Waterbodies		NA

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
Coolrain Bog SAC (0002332)	Active raised bogs [7110]  Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]  Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Peatlands	No
Clonaslee Esker and Derry Bog SAC (000859)	Alkaline fens [7230]  Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013]	Waterbodies	Sedentary
The Loughans SAC (000407)	Turloughs [3180]	Waterbodies	NO
Spahill and Clomtamagh Hill	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous		No

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat	Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
SAC ( 00084)	substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]			
Cullahill Mountain SAC (000831)	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	grasslands		N
Galmoy Fen (0001858)	Alkaline fens [7230]	waterbodies		No
Kilduff Devilsbit Mountain (000934)	European dry heaths [4030]  Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]	Grassland		NO
Sharavogue Bog (000585)	Active raised bogs [7110]	Peatland		No

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat	Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]  Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]			
Lisduff Fen (0002147)	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]  Alkaline fens [7230]  Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013]	Waterbodies		Sedentary
Island Fen (0002236)	Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]  Alkaline fens [7230]	Peatlands		No
Pollardstown Fen (000396)	Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]	waterbodies		Sedentary

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]  Alkaline fens [7230]  Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013]  Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]  Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]		
Slaney River Valley (000781)	Estuaries [1130]  Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]  Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]  Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]  Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis	Waterbody	Yes



Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat	Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
	<p>and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]</p> <p>Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p>Alosa fallax fallax (Twait Shad) [1103]</p> <p>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</p>			

Site Name	Qualifying Features of Interests	Dominant Feature	Habitat Qualifying Species: Mobile or Sedentary
	Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]		
<b>SPAs</b>			
River Nore SPA (004137)	Kingfisher ( <i>Alcedo atthis</i> ) [A229]	Waterbody	Mobile
Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (004160)	Hen Harrier ( <i>Circus cyaneus</i> ) [A082]	Peatland	Mobile

## 4.2 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR EUROPEAN SITES – GENERAL

### OVERVIEW

In general the aims of Conservation Management Objectives for European Sites is to maintain the favourable conservation status of qualifying features of interest (SACs) and special conservation interests (SPA) and the overall integrity of the site so that it can continue to support these interests.

For the majority of the cSACs occurring within the study area only generic conservation management objectives have been published. The generic Conservation Management Objectives for cSAC occurring within the study area are as follows:

- To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status;
- To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status;
- To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site; and
- To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

However more detailed information on the Conservation Management Objectives of a number of sites have been published since 2005. The presentation of conservation management objectives has evolved since this time.

Conservation Management Plans were published for a number of sites throughout the country in 2005 and these conservation plans were prepared for a five-year period between 2005 and 2010. In general each plan reiterated the generic conservation objectives for the qualifying habitats and species for which the site had been designated.

In 2009 Conservation Statements were published for a number of cSACs throughout the country and these followed a similar format to that of the 2005 Conservation Management Plans.

Recently the Department has noted in the Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 (NPWS, 2014) that many of the conservation plans completed prior to the current Conservation Objectives series do not conform with the Commission's definition of a comprehensive management plan.

The current Conservation Objectives Series goes further than the preceding 2005 Plans and 2009 Statements in that it outlines in detail the attributes that underpin favourable conservation status, along with targets and criteria for measuring the conservation status of each attribute. These documents have been prepared in line with the Commissions definition of a comprehensive management plan.

The European Sites for which conservation plans or detailed conservation objectives have been prepared are as follows:

- River Barrow and River Nore SAC

- Coolrain Bog SAC
- Clonaslee Eskers and Bog SAC
- Kilduff, Devilsbit Mountain SAC
- Sharavogue Bog SAC
- Lisduff Fen SAC
- Island Fen SAC
- Slaney River Valley SAC

## 5 LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS TO EUROPEAN SITES

### 5.1 SCREENING OF ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY FOR LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

This is the draft Noise Action Plan for County Laois as outlined in Section 2.4. This Noise Action Plan 2019 has been prepared by Laois County Council to address environmental noise from major roads with more than three million vehicles per annum. The action planning area covers the M7, M8, N80, N77 and sections of the R445. It also covers the major rail line between Hazelhatch and Portarlinton within the functional area of Laois. It is a follow up to the 2014 Noise Action Plan which addressed environmental noise from roads with more than three million vehicles per annum and the 2008 Noise Action Plan which addressed environmental noise from roads with more than six million vehicles p.a.

The plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2002/49/EC (known as the Environmental Noise Directive, or “END”), which was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, SI No. 140 of 2006.

The aim of the Directive and the Regulations is to provide for the implementation of an EC common approach to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise. Environmental noise is unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise emitted by means of transport, road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and noise in agglomerations over a specified size. Types of noise not included in the Regulations are noise that is caused by the exposed person, noise from domestic activities, noise created by neighbours, noise at workplaces or noise inside means of transport or due to military activities in military areas.

The Noise action plan contains one policy statement and Chapter 7 outlines mitigation measures (already implemented and potential future measures). As the draft plan does not contain individual objectives/policies or actions in Table 5.1 below the main text that presents the purpose of the draft relevant to this assessment, is assessed for their potential to result in land use activities that could have the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites in the study area.

Indicators used to identify potential likely significant effects are based on indicators outlined in EU Guidelines and are as follow:

- Loss of habitat;
- Habitat fragmentation;
- Disruption or damage to habitats;
- Disturbance to habitats or species that undermines favourable conservation status; and
- Change to key elements that underpin the structure and function of a site.

Each of the elements of the Strategy are either Screened In or Out of Appropriate Assessment in Table 5.1.

Reasons for Screening Out elements relate to:

- elements indicating the general intention of the Local Authority

- elements that will not have any potential to result in land use activity.
- elements that are likely to have land use implications but whose effect on any particular European Site cannot be identified because of the generality of the text.

Section	Text	Assessment	Screened In/Out
<p><i>Policy Statement: Laois County Council will seek to address environmental noise from major roads in the county, will endeavour to maintain satisfactory noise environments where they exist and will have regard to acoustical planning in the planning process (within the confines of Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended) to endeavour to ensure that future developments include provisions to protect the population from the effects of environmental noise in the interests of residential amenity and public health.</i></p>	<p>This policy statement is supportive of maintaining and enhancing environmental noise particularly in regard to public health and residential amenity.</p>	<p>This policy statement is positive and has no direct or indirect relationships to European sites. Indirect positive relationships may exist associated with reduction in noise emissions in relation to European Sites and species.</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p><b>Chapter 7 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures</b></p>			<p>Out</p>
<p><b>Section 7.2.1 Existing developments</b></p>	<p>This section refers to measures already provided in relation to the M7 and M8 motorways which received planning consent.</p>	<p>Measures already implemented through the planning consent processes. No direct or indirect relationships to European Sites</p>	<p>Out</p>
<p><b>Section 7.2.2 Future developments</b> The measures available for the protection of future developments from exposure to noise from major roads include acoustical planning measures in land use zoning and development layout, design and specifications. Examples include: locating residential developments away</p>	<p>This text states potential measures that may be applied and would be prepared in line with the planning regime relying upon the measures in the Laois CDP 2017-2023 which has been subject to AA and SEA.</p>	<p>No specific areas or measures are identified. And no direct or indirect relationships to European Sites are identified.</p>	<p>Out</p>

Section	Text	Assessment	Screened In/Out
<p>from major roads; using the lands around major roads feeding into towns for commercial/industrial development; incorporating noise issues into the design of housing developments (see section 2.2.7)</p> <p>By locating the access roads and green areas on the major road side of the development, thus increasing the separation distance between the houses and the roads; using a higher standard of insulation for new dwellings adjacent to major roads and also using higher standards of insulation for the exposed façades of new dwellings. Some of these acoustical planning measures although not all, are within the control of the planning authority</p>			
<p><b>7.3. Proposed Measures for Laois Action Planning Area</b></p> <p><b>7.3.1 Mitigation Measures:</b> Residences located within the action planning area will be tested using the decision matrix -Matrix A -to prioritise areas for which further assessment may be required. Reducing traffic density is the most effective way to reduce road noise emissions. Laois County Council will strive to reduce traffic density on a countywide basis by Promoting Public Transport</p>	<p>This section refers to the forward planning and development control in line with the Laois CDP 2017-2023 and has been subject to both Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment. This section lists relevant policies from the above Laois CDP 2017-2023.</p>	<p>No specific areas or measures identified that have a direct or indirect relationship to European Sites.</p>	<p>Out</p>



Section	Text	Assessment	Screened In/Out
<p><b>7.3. Proposed Measures for Laois Action Planning Area</b></p> <p><b>7.3.1 Mitigation Measures: Residences located within the action planning area will be tested using the decision matrix -Matrix A -to prioritise areas for which further assessment may be required. Reducing traffic density is the most effective way to reduce road noise emissions. Laois County Council will strive to reduce traffic density on a countywide basis by Promoting Public Transport</b></p>	<p>service at Portlaoise and the Togher National Enterprise Park in order to develop a large intermodal facility;</p> <p>TRANS 62 Support provision of additional rail links within the midlands region or other regions adjoining County Laois;</p> <p>TRANS 63 Encourage co-ordination by providers to promote linked up services enabling complete coverage of the county independent of private vehicular transport and promote the provision of appropriately sited and designed facilities, bus shelters and bus lanes which facilitate increased public transport usage; all of which contribute to the development of integrated sustainable transport systems.</p>		
<p><b>7.3.2 Protection Measures for future improvement:</b></p> <p>Laois County Council will endeavour to utilise the planning process as necessary:</p> <p>To incorporate the aims of the present and future noise action plans into the county development plan and into relevant local area plans, protecting larger areas from road noise. Special consideration should be given to zoning objectives, speed limits and established settlements within the area.</p> <p>Developers are encouraged (or</p>	<p>Again as with the above, reference to these measures relate back to the Laois CDP 2017-2023 which has been subject to AA and SEA.</p>	<p>Forward planning strategies including CDP and LAP preparation incorporate present and future noise action plans and will be subject to screening under the Habitats Directive Assessment, and Appropriate Assessment if required. At this juncture, no specific areas or measures identified that have a direct or indirect relationship to European Sites.</p>	<p>Out</p>

Section	Text	Assessment	Screened In/Out
<p>required at the discretion of the Planning Authority) to produce a sound impact assessment and implement mitigation measures as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o For new developments proposed within the current action planning area or</li> <li>o For developments proposed near major roads (i.e. traffic volumes in excess of 3 million vehicles per annum or otherwise on a case by case basis).</li> </ul> <p>Where developments are planned adjacent to major roads, to incorporate acoustical planning into the development design e.g. designing the development so that the access road is adjacent to the major road noise source. It may also involve the use of buffer zones and/or noise barriers and traffic calming measures.</p> <p>To ensure that all future developments are designed and constructed so as to minimise noise disturbance.</p> <p>The above measures may be restricted under the existing provisions of the current Planning, Building and Fire Acts</p>			

## 5.2 IN COMBINATION EFFECTS

As part of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3) assessment process consideration must be given to the potential for the Plan to combine with other plans or projects to result in cumulative negative effects to European Sites. Consideration has been given for this Plans potential to combine with a number of other plans relevant to the wider surrounding area. These plans include:

- Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies (draft)
- Eastern Catchment and Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan (draft)
- River Basin District Management Plan
- Eastern-Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015
- Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023
- Local Area Plans for Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Portarlington 2018-2024
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016
- Laois County Heritage Plan 2014-2019

## 6 SCREENING CONCLUSION

This Screening Statement in support of Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with current available guidance. In particular the DEHLG (2010) and SNH (2015) guidance documents have guided the approach to this screening.

The Noise Action Plan provides a framework for the identification and reduction of noise pollution sources within the County of Laois. Any project that arises as a result of the Noise Action Plan must comply with all relevant levels of the National Planning Framework; including the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023. The potential noise impact of development is managed through the Planning and Licensing processes, including through Environmental Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments and application of relevant Guidance relating to noise..

The principle trigger for Appropriate Assessment would be if the contents of the Laois Noise Action Plan 2019-2022 were likely to have significant effects on a European site. None of these elements of the draft Plan are identified as having any direct or indirect effects on European sites.

Therefore, in accordance with the Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, it is concluded that the Laois Noise Action Plan 2019-2022 has resulted in a finding of no significant effects, and therefore a Stage II Appropriate Assessment is not required.