



Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Project reference	230723
Date	10/09/2024
Statement of Authority	This report has been completed by Colin Murphy. Colin is a Project Ecologist with MKO and has over 4 years professional consultancy experience.

Site Location

The site boundary is based on the strategy area outlined in 'Limerick City and Environs Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy' boundary (GBI Strategy), and as described within the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 Zoning Map.

The proposed Blue Green Ring broadly follows the following geographical features;

- To the north and north west, the River Shannon corridor;
- To the south, stretching southerly along the green corridor adjacent to the M7 through Rathbane to the Ballinacurra Creek corridor, diverting eastwards.
- To the northeast, from south of the junction of the M7 / N24, via Ballysimon and the Groody Valley, then following the River Shannon from the end of the Park Canal to Corbally.

Description of Project

The aim of the Limerick City Centre and Environs Blue Green Ring Masterplan (draft Masterplan) is to refine the existing alignment of routes found within the Limerick City and Environs Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy, with the intention to designate active travel routes away from vehicular routes and large infrastructure, promoting healthy lifestyles by increasing access to Blue Green Infrastructure and sports facilities for local communities and recreational users through an active travel network with improved air quality.

The following outcomes are identified in the draft Masterplan;

- The draft Masterplan will holistically incorporate the multi-functional requirements identified within the GBI strategy, and successfully balances GBI priorities according to area need.
- Sub-projects that have demonstrate measurable improvements, in relation to the key drivers of Climate, Biodiversity, Health and Economy.
- Sub-projects that can contribute to be Environmental and Social issues and Governance i.e. offsetting of impact by private sector bodies, such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

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Identification of Relevant European Sites

All European Sites that could potentially be affected by the proposed works were identified using a source-pathway - receptor model and are listed and assessed below. No potential for the proposed works to result in likely significant effects on any other European Site was identified.

European Sites and distance from proposed development	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 10/09/2024)	Conservation Objectives	Identification of Source-Pathway-Receptor chain and Likely Zone of Impact Determination
Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>• [1095] Sea Lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>• [1096] Brook Lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i>• [1099] River Lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>• [1106] Atlantic Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water)• [1110] Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time• [1130] Estuaries• [1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide• [1150] *Coastal lagoons• [1160] Large shallow inlets and bays• [1170] Reefs• [1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks• [1230] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts• [1310] <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002165.pdf	<p>The draft Masterplan boundary is located adjacent to the Lower River Shannon SAC, with sections of various routes overlapping with the SAC.</p> <p>The draft Masterplan has the potential for significant effects on the Lower River Shannon SAC as its implementation would be promoting the use of lands located within the SAC for recreational and green transport purposes.</p> <p>Future developments that may arise from the implementation of the plan could result in the intensification of land use within the SAC. Whilst such future developments/projects arising from the draft Masterplan would be subject to their own Appropriate Assessment, potential effects may include but are not limited to pollution, disturbance, increased lighting and habitat removal.</p> <p>As such, there is potential for the draft Masterplan to result in likely significant effects on this European Site and further assessment is required.</p>

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	<p>colonizing mud and sand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [1330] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)• [1349] Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>• [1355] Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>• [1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimae</i>)• [3260] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation• [6410] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)• [91E0] *Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae</i>)	
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [A017] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)• [A038] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)• [A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)• [A048] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)• [A050] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)• [A052] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)• [A054] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)• [A056] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)	<p>https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objects/CO004077.pdf</p> <p>The draft Masterplan boundary is located adjacent in close proximity to the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.</p> <p>The draft Masterplan has the potential for significant effects on the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA as its implementation would be promoting the use of lands located adjacent to the SPA for recreational and green transport purposes.</p> <p>Future developments that may arise from the implementation of the plan could result in the intensification of land use close to the SPA. Whilst such future developments/projects arising</p>

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- [A062] Scaup (*Aythya marila*)
- [A137] Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)
- [A140] Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)
- [A141] Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)
- [A142] Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)
- [A143] Knot (*Calidris canutus*)
- [A149] Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)
- [A156] Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)
- [A157] Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)
- [A160] Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)
- [A162] Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
- [A164] Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)
- [A179] Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)
- [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds

from the draft Masterplan would be subject to their own Appropriate Assessment, potential effects may include pollution to supporting wetland habitat and disturbance.

As such, there is potential for the draft Masterplan to result in likely significant effects on this European Site and further assessment is required.

Appropriate Assessment Screening Conclusion

It cannot be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, that the draft Masterplan, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

As a result, it is recommended to the competent authority that an Appropriate Assessment is required, and a Natura Impact Report will be prepared in respect of the draft Masterplan.