

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

The Murrough Waterfront Park Enhancement -
Actions associated with the Murrough Masterplan,
Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow



For:
Wicklow Municipal District,
Wicklow County Council



Document Control

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Authors: Rozanne Bell, Alan Lauder

Field Investigations and Data

Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work. Where any data supplied by the client or from other sources have been used it has been assumed that the information is correct. No responsibility can be accepted by Alan Lauder Consulting for inaccuracies in the data supplied by any other party.

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1. Introduction

This report, which contains information required for the competent authority to undertake a Stage One Screening Assessment (“AA screening”) in respect of The Murrough Waterfront Park Enhancement - Actions associated with the Murrough Masterplan, Wicklow Town, County Wicklow, was prepared by Rozanne Bell and Alan Lauder of *Alan Lauder Consulting* on behalf of their client, Wicklow County Council.

This report provides information and appraises the potential for this project to have significant effects, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on any Natura 2000 sites (hereafter ‘European sites’).

2. Legislation and Background

Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter ‘the Habitats Directive’) requires that, any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to AA of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

The possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site will generate the need for an AA to be carried out by the competent authority for the purposes of Article 6(3). Accordingly, a screening for AA in respect of an application for consent for proposed development must be carried out by the competent authority in order to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed project, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European site.

A Stage Two AA is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that a proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site. The Screening (Stage One) operates to determine whether an AA (Stage Two) must be undertaken on the implications of the plan or project for the conservation objectives of relevant European sites.

This document comprises information to enable the competent authority to perform a Stage One Screening for AA.

3. Guidance

This AA screening report has been prepared with reference to the following guidance documents where relevant:

- 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)
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat’s Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000 updated draft April 2015)

- 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

4. Methodology

4.1 Site Visits and Desk Study

The information collected for this report, to assist the competent authority to screen the proposal for AA, was based on a desktop study and site inspection. A site visit was carried out on 17 January 2024, to examine the habitats and characteristics of potential areas to be utilised by the operations and to inspect the areas for the likely presence of protected species and qualifying interests.

Information relied upon included the following information sources, which included maps and ecological data:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie
- Online data available on European sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland (National Parks & Wildlife Service)
- Fossitt, J. (2000) 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland'
- Outline details and site design concepts provided by the Client

4.2 Authors Qualifications and Expertise

This report has been prepared by Rozanne Bell (Project officer) and Alan Lauder (Owner/principal consultant) at Alan Lauder Consulting¹.

Alan gained an honours degree in Ecology from The University of Stirling in 1989 and is an experienced ecologist, nature conservation and habitat management specialist with over 35 years professional post-graduate experience. His relevant professional experience includes extensive planning related casework for state and non-governmental organisations within Scotland and Ireland, input to and preparation of site designations, Environmental Impact Statements & Assessments. He has extensive knowledge of survey and conservation management of a wide range of habitats. He is also a highly experienced ornithologist with considerable, recognised expertise in woodland, wetland, coastal and upland bird ecology, mammal survey including otter and bats and the ecology and management of macro-invertebrates, notably butterflies and Odonata. Alan currently carries out a wide range of relevant work including management planning for designated sites, ecological assessment and advisory works for a wide range of commercial and state clients. He has attended a range of relevant training courses throughout his career including training in Appropriate Assessment from CIEEM (2016).

¹ More information at www.Alanlauderconsulting.com

Rozanne Bell is Projects Officer with ALC since June 2020 and regularly supports the completion of AA Screening Reports concerning a range of habitats and various types of operations and projects. She holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Environmental Sustainability including modules on Wildlife Management and Conservation, Environmental Assessment and GIS.

4.3 AA Screening Methodology

The above referenced guidance documents set out a staged process for carrying out AA, the first stage of which is referred to as Screening. This stage identifies the likely significant impacts on a Natura site, if any, which could arise from a proposed project either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. If the conclusions at the end of screening are that there is no likelihood of significant effects occurring on any European sites, as a result of the proposed plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, then there is no requirement to undertake AA.

However, even if screening makes a finding of no significant effects, and therefore concludes that AA is not required, these findings must be clearly documented in order to provide transparency of decision-making, and to ensure the application of the ‘precautionary principle’ where this may be required.

Screening for AA involves the following:

1. Determining whether a project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of any European sites
2. Describing the details of the project/plan proposals and other plans or projects that may cumulatively affect any European sites
3. Describing the characteristics of relevant European sites
4. Appraising likely significant effects of the proposed project on relevant European sites.

5. Overview of Proposed Project and its Receiving Environment

5.1 Description of Proposed Project

The project, titled ‘The Murrough Waterfront Park Enhancement’ relates to the re-design and upgrade of an area of The Murrough in Wicklow Town stretching from the Murrough Memorial Garden in the South to the gravel pathway which runs between existing private residences in the North. An aerial image of the Zone of Operation is contained at Figure 1 below. The proposed site (hereafter referred to as the Zone of Operation) covers an area of c.1.9 ha adjacent to the coastal walkway north of Wicklow Harbour. Works associated with the project will commence in 2024.

The project involves re-design of the Zone of Operation to include hard and soft landscaping and improved accessibility between existing amenities. The project includes both the retention and upgrade of existing features (car park, playground, skate park and dog park) as well as the construction of new features such as additional parking, overnight camper facilities, a linear park, a community meeting space, walkways and street furniture. Layout design relating to the project is contained at Appendix 1. Starting from the Southern boundary of the Zone of Operation, the existing Murrough Memorial Garden will be incorporated into the new design forming the ‘gateway’ to the new development. Moving north, it is proposed that an area of c. 0.12 ha., currently classified as **Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)** and **Scrub (WS1)**², will be developed into an area

² Habitat descriptions taken from Fossitt, J. (2000) ‘A Guide to Habitats in Ireland’

of hard standing for overnight campervan parking. The existing dog park will be retained but upgraded. An area of amenity grassland and scrub to the north of the dog park will be landscaped to form a linear park including topography changes, cement pathways, seating areas, lighting and planting to enhance the site. An area of hard standing is envisaged on the Easterly boundary of this area to accommodate small community events. An outdoor gym area is proposed at the north end of the linear park, leading into a purpose-built bicycle pump track. The existing skate park and play ground will be retained. Additional parking spaces are proposed to compliment those already provided in the existing Murrough car park to the north of the Zone of Operation. Additional spaces will face existing spaces at 2.5m from the existing kerb. The area between the car park and the sea, currently amenity grassland and a gravel path, will be landscaped and seating added. The northern boundary of the Zone of Operation is delineated by the gravel path running between the first and second private dwelling adjacent to the car park. It is proposed that the existing tarmac coastal pathway will be extended from the playground to this northerly point.

The entire area is currently used as an amenity and recreational space favoured by walkers, dog walkers, runners and cyclists. The Murrough Masterplan envisages a re-design of the area to improve accessibility and update features.



Figure 1: An aerial view of the Zone of Operation at The Murrough – extract from design

5.2 Description of the Receiving Environment

The Zone of Operation is not situated within the boundaries of any European site but is adjacent to The Murrough SPA.

The Zone of Operation is bordered by an existing coastal walkway and rock armour to the East. The area is bordered to the West by existing buildings and the R999 roadway. The Zone of Operation is < 10m from the boundary of The Murrough SPA to the North (Figure 2 & Appendix 1) and is bordered to the South by a continuation of the existing coastal walkway and existing corporation car park. The Southern and Central sections of the Zone of Operation consist mainly of amenity grassland, heavily trampled in places, and scrub. The coastal walkway forms the Easterly boundary of the Zone of Operation, transitioning from a tarmac surface to gravel and bare ground north of the playground.

Habitats within the Zone of Operation include **Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)**, **Sea walls, piers and jetties (CC1)**, **Amenity Grassland (GA2)**, **Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)**, **Bare Ground (ED2)** and **Scrub (WS1)**³

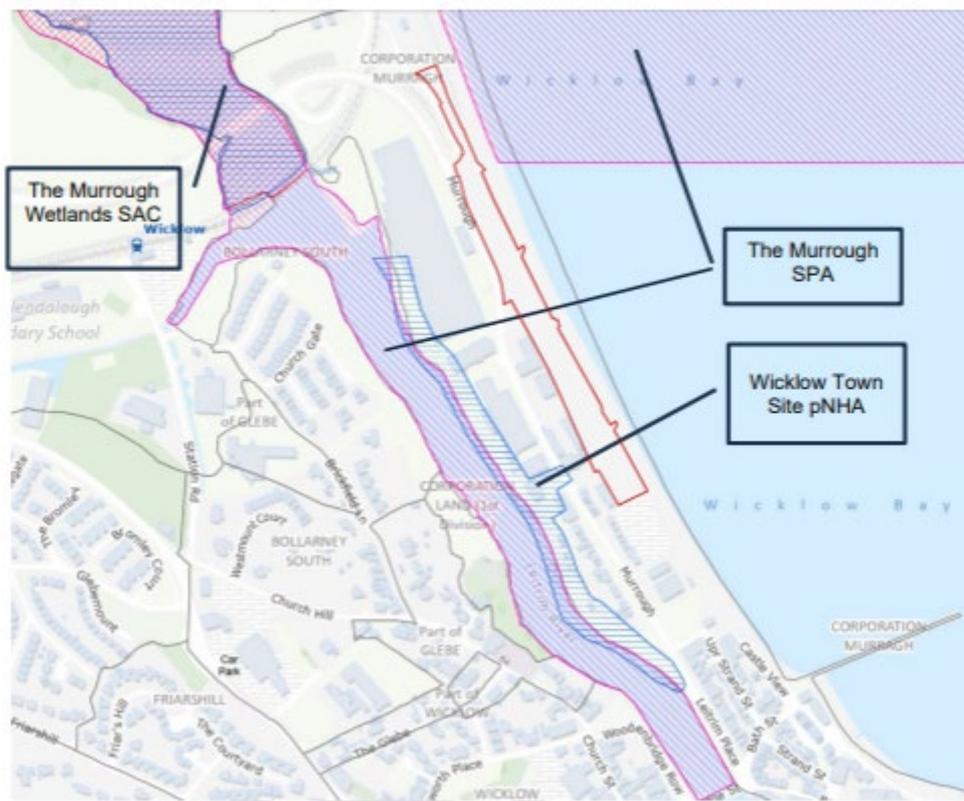


Figure 2: The Zone of Operation in relation to nearest European sites (extract from draft planning application)

Figures 3 - 7 show the receiving environment at the Zone of Operation.

³ Habitat descriptions follow Fossitt, J. (2000) *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council



Figure 3: Additional car parking spaces are proposed facing existing spaces (area of existing pathway and grass immediately to the left



Figure 4: View of northern section of Zone of Operation, showing informal pathways and heavily trampled ground



Figure 5: Existing playground, skate park and pump track



Figure 6: Area of amenity grassland bordered by scrub to the south of the pump track (area of proposed linear park)



Figure 7: Area for proposed over-night camper parking

6. Provision of Information for Stage One Screening

6.1 Zone of Influence of the Proposed Project

While there is no recommended distance from a proposal for which European sites are considered as being relevant for AA, national guidance (DCHG, 2010⁴) recommends that the distance should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors and the potential for in combination effects. As a general rule, it is often considered appropriate to look at European sites which fall within 15 km of a project for typical moderate scale development projects such as buildings and energy developments, however, those which might introduce significant ecological or environmental factors such as large scale permanent habitat changes or major pollution risk for example, may require sites to be examined at greater distance through potential catchment effects. Similarly, where large scale territories or ranging of important birds may take them beyond the boundaries of a designated site then a development in excess of 15 km may have the potential to impact upon qualifying interests of a European site.

In this case the proposed project:

1. Small in total area (< 2 ha.)
2. Although not within the boundary of any European Site, it is adjacent to The Murrough SPA
3. The landscape within the Zone of Operation is already heavily modified in places. Habitats include **Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)**, **Sea walls, piers and jetties (CC1)**, **Amenity Grassland (GA2)**, **Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)**, **Bare Ground (ED2)** and **Scrub (WS1)**
4. Proposed works are permanent and include low level construction and excavation

Thus, sites beyond the immediate vicinity of the project area are highly unlikely to be relevant.

For significant effects to arise, there must be:

1. A risk from a 'source' (e.g. construction works)
2. A 'receptor' (e.g. a Natura site or its qualifying interests)
3. A pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. direct impact on a habitat, pollution risk affecting water quality on a Natura site).

The presence of a pathway does not necessarily mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source (e.g. removal or exclusion of qualifying Natura features), the characteristics of the pathway (e.g. water quality status of a watercourse receiving run-off from construction) and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the level of sensitivity, condition or robustness of the European site and its qualifying interests).

⁴ Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision)

Figure 8 below shows the Zone of Operation in relation to European sites in the wider area (15km radius)

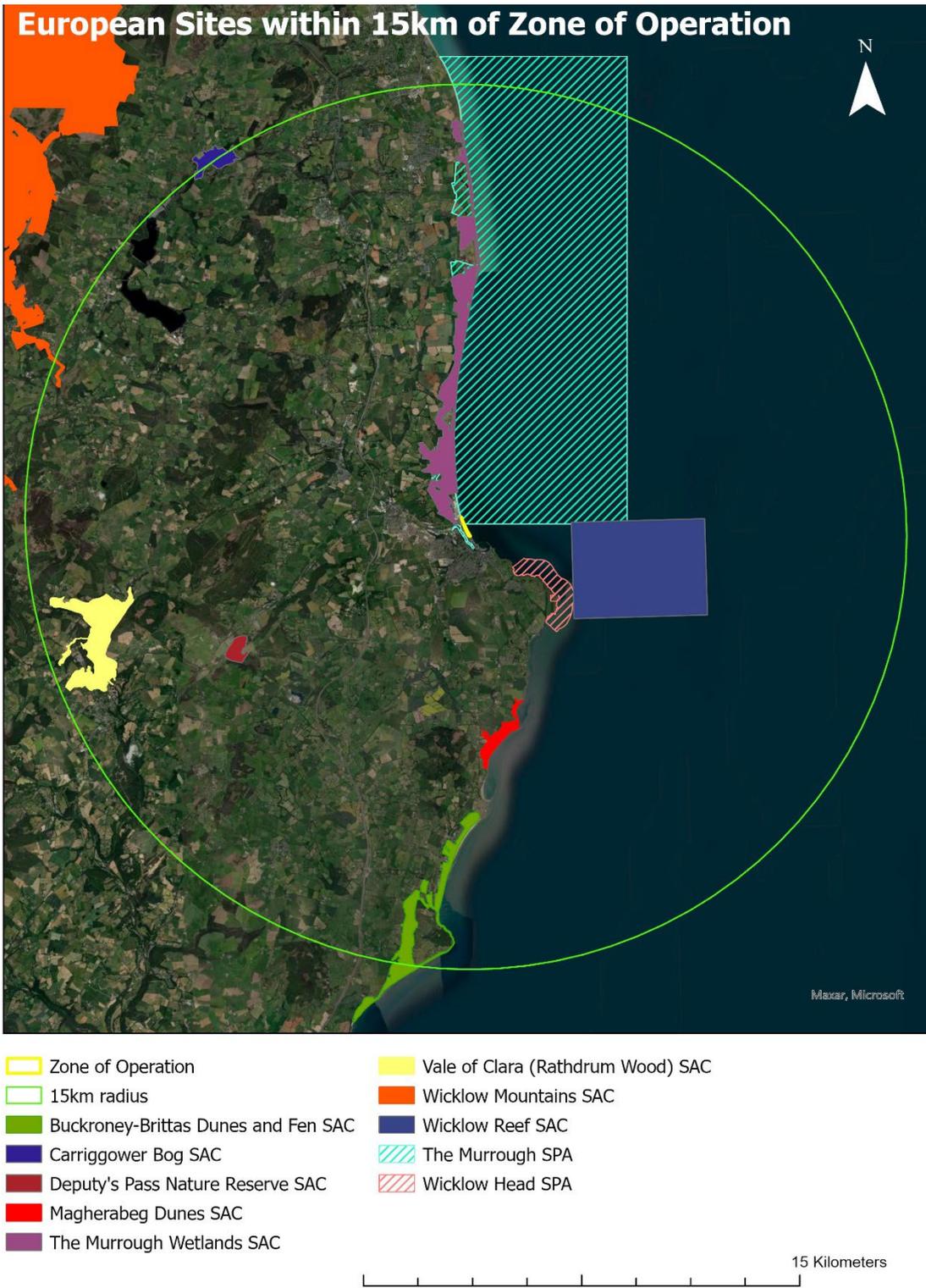


Figure 8: European Sites within 15km of Zone of Operation

6.2 Relevant European Sites and Qualifying Interests

Given the notes regarding the nature of the project (Section 5) and its zone of influence (6.1) the only European sites of relevance are:

1. The Murrough SPA [Site Code: 004186]
2. The Murrough Wetlands SAC [Site Code: 002249]

The relevant site, its interest features, distance and direction from the proposed project are presented in Table 6.2.1.

Sites at greater distance have not been selected as relevant as the scale and nature of the project is small scale, and localised whereby sources of risk are low or localised and receptors are either not present or separated from any potential source of risk by significant distance thereby not creating a clear pathway.

Table 6.2.1 Relevant European Sites and Qualifying Features of Interest

Site name	Qualifying Interest Features	Distance	Direction
The Murrough SPA	The site is designated for the following habitats and species; [A001] Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i> [A043] Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i> [A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> [A050] Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> [A052] Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> [A179] Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> [A184] Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i> [A195] Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	<10m	North and East
The Murrough Wetlands SAC	The site is designated for the following habitats; [1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1330] Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i> [1410] Mediterranean salt meadows <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> [7210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7230] Alkaline fens	c. 190m	West

Table 6.2.2 outlines the qualifying interests or features associated with the site in addition to identified sensitivities of each outlined within their Natura 2000 forms or statutory instruments.

Table 6.2.2 of European Site with Associated Conservation Objectives and Identified Threats and Pressures

The Murrough SPA	
Conservation Objectives	Identified Threats and Pressures
<p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species and habitats listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:</p> <p>[A001] Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i></p> <p>[A043] Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i></p> <p>[A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i></p> <p>[A050] Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i></p> <p>[A052] Teal <i>Anas crecca</i></p> <p>[A179] Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i></p> <p>[A184] Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i></p> <p>[A195] Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i></p> <p>[A999] Wetland and Waterbirds</p>	<p>The site Statutory Instrument list Activities requiring the consent of the minister. These are outlined in Appendix 2.</p>

The Murrough Wetlands SAC	
Conservation Objectives	Identified Threats and Pressures
<p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected (See Table 6.1)</p> <p>[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>[1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks</p> <p>[1330] Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i></p> <p>[1410] Mediterranean salt meadows <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i></p> <p>[7210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></p> <p>[7230] Alkaline fens</p>	<p>The site Statutory Instrument list Activities requiring the consent of the minister. These are outlined in Appendix 3.</p>

Any threats and pressures that may arise during the course of activities may be assessed to have either; likely to have **significant adverse impact** or **unlikely to have significant adverse impact**. This may vary due to the nature, extent, design, location or manner of operation of an activity and its relationship to QIs or to site integrity.

6.3 Results of site-specific survey work

A site specific walkover survey and a desk based review to consider presence/absence of QIs within, or in areas relevant to, the zone of operation, resulted in findings provided in Table 6.3.1

Table 6.3.1 results of survey work and desk based review

The Murrough SPA		
Feature	Status	Results
[A001] Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	QI/Annex II	Not present in operational area – regularly present offshore in winter
[A043] Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	QI/Annex II	Not present in operational area – regularly present at roost at Broad Lough and areas northwards
[A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	QI/Annex II	
[A050] Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	QI/Annex II	
[A052] Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	QI/Annex II	
[A179] Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	QI/Annex II	Species may use the operational area for foraging but are highly habituated to human disturbance and exploit food resources deriving from human presence
[A184] Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	QI/Annex II	
[A195] Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	QI/Annex II	Not present in operational area – regularly present in offshore area foraging during breeding season
[A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	QI/Annex I habitat (SPA)	No wetland habitat is present in operational area but is adjacent

The Murrough Wetlands SAC		
Feature	Status	Results
[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines	QI/Annex I habitat (SAC)	Not present in operational area

[1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks	QI/Annex I habitat (SAC)	Some common species of this feature may appear in bare waste areas within zone of operation but do not form part of the QIs.
[1330] Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>	QI/Annex I habitat (SAC)	Not present in operational area and is only present at considerable separation distance
[1410] Mediterranean salt meadows <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>	QI/Annex I habitat (SAC)	
[7210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>	QI/Annex I habitat (SAC)	
[7230] Alkaline fens	QI/Annex I habitat (SAC)	

7. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on European Sites

The following assessment is in line with the structure detailed in 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 (EC, 2001).

7.1 Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts

Table 7.1.1 indicates the likely impacts from the proposed activity on relevant European sites (outlined in Table 6.2.1). There are no elements of the proposed project that are considered as having potential to give rise to a Likely Significant Impact (LSE) on a European site.

Table 7.1.1 Likely Effect of the Proposed project on the European sites

Size and Scale	Small footprint (c. 1.9 ha.) contained between an existing road and hard coastline defence and consisting mainly of non priority habitats formed on waste/former built ground or amenity grassland
Land-take	No land take from European Sites
Distance from the European Sites or Key Features of the Site	Adjacent to The Murrough SPA (< 10m). Lies at a distance of c. 190m from The Murrough SAC at its closest point. Separated from The Murrough SAC by a roadway and buildings
Resource Requirements	None required from any European Sites.
Emissions	Zone of Operation is bounded by a busy road. Emissions arising from the project would be in line with existing levels in the immediate area
Excavation Requirements	None required from European sites, low level excavation requirements within the zone of operation only

Transportation Requirements	Direct vehicular access is available at the North end of the Zone of operation without crossing a European site
Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning	Timings and duration of the project have not been confirmed but no notable restrictions relating to the European sites QIs would apply.
Cumulative Effects with other Projects or Plans	None - See section 8 of this report

Table 7.1.1 identifies that the predicted direct, indirect or secondary impacts are minimal due to the limited footprint, current use of the site and absence of any significant ecological pathways to potential ecological receptors. Footfall and traffic resulting from this project is likely to increase as a result of the project but the area is already busy and this increase is unlikely to be significant alongside existing recreational levels of the area.

Table 7.1.2 below provides an analysis of all qualifying interest features on the sites in the context of their receptors, and pathway, a brief analysis of the works incurring a Likely Significant Effect (LSE)

Table 7.1.2 Analysis of relevant European sites/qualifying interests

The Murrrough SPA			
Qualifying Interest or feature	Potential receptor/pathway	Analysis of likelihood of impact	LSE ⁵
[A001] Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as species is present only offshore and activities are unlikely to produce significant adverse impact given their location and nature.	NONE
[A043] Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as species are not present in areas likely to be relevant to the zone of operation	NONE
[A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation		NONE
[A050] Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation		NONE
[A052] Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation		NONE
[A179] Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	May be present in the Zone of Operation		The species is present and actively engages with humans as part of its foraging strategy. Roosts in waters offshore are at significant distance and unlikely to be affected by activities and developments onshore.
[A184] Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	May be present in the Zone of Operation	NONE	

⁵ Likely Significant adverse Effect

The Murrough SPA			
Qualifying Interest or Feature	Potential Receptor/Pathway	Analysis of Likelihood of Impact	LSE
[A195] Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation	The species is occasionally present foraging in near shore waters but is currently apparently unaffected by human presence on shoreline. The area is not heavily used by the species – Author pers. obs. & data	NONE
[A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE

The Murrough Wetlands SAC			
Qualifying Interest or Feature	Potential Receptor/Pathway	Analysis of Likelihood of Impact	LSE
[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE
[1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE
[1330] Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE
[1410] Mediterranean salt meadows <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE
[7210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE

The Murrough Wetlands SAC (cont.)			
Qualifying Interest or Feature	Potential Receptor/Pathway	Analysis of Likelihood of Impact	LSE
[7230] Alkaline fens	Not present in the Zone of Operation	No impact likely as habitats are not present and there is no indirect pathway	NONE

All European Sites (Site integrity)			
Qualifying Interest or feature	Receptor/pathway	Analysis of likelihood of impact	LSE
Site integrity ⁶	Permanent removal or destruction of key features which support QI	The project concerns a zone of operation adjacent to European sites but does not extend onto them. The area identified for development has some habitats of low level interest and the area is mainly highly modified and has high levels of existing human disturbance and is of low conservation value. The northern section of the site currently acts as a potential buffer to boundary of The Murrough SPA, however the proposed activities in this section of the Zone of Operation (formalising paths and existing parking) are highly unlikely to impact upon the European Site or its qualifying interests.	NONE

⁶ Site integrity refers to the ecological context of the site as a whole including its constituent features which support designated qualifying interests, by definition in case law of ‘the lasting preservation of the constitutive characteristics of the site concerned that are connected to the presence of a priority natural habitat whose preservation was the objective justifying the designation of that site’ (See case C-258/11 Peter Sweetman, Ireland, Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Local Government v An Bord Pleanala (Sweetman) at para 43; also Article 6(1) Habitats Directive’s reference to the ‘ecological requirements’ of designated features; and Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites, 23/11/2012, p. 5, part 4, 2nd para)

7.2 Likely Changes to European Sites

Any potential changes to the European sites are described in Table 7.1.2.

Table 7.2.1 Likely Changes to European Sites

Reduction of Habitat Area	No proposed reduction of qualifying habitats on any relevant European site
Disturbance to Key Species	No predicted disturbance to key species
Habitat or Species Fragmentation	None predicted.
Reduction in Species Density	No proposed reduction of species density
Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value	None predicted
Climate Change	The sites are not predicted to be significantly impacted by the proposed project. While climate change may affect the sites in the long term through changes to species distribution or habitat composition this will not be exacerbated or accelerated by this project – notably the sites are under considerable threat from sea level rise but the zone of operation sites within an area already protected by coastal defences

8. Effect of the Project in Combination with Other Plans or Projects

Although the project is permanent in nature, the Zone of Operation is already highly modified in places, partially developed and of low conservation value. The project involves improving facilities, landscaping and accessibility on a site which currently experiences high volumes of footfall and recreational use. Direct pedestrian access to The Murrough SPA already exists from the Zone of Operation and while some increase in visitor traffic may ensue, it is somewhat self limiting at close to existing levels and is not a significant step change in level.

Key points in relation to potential in combination and cumulative effects:

- The project has a limited footprint in an already modified environment
- The project is permanent in nature but includes groundworks and low level construction with no significant buildings or major topography changes
- Wicklow town is undergoing several development projects in the wider area but these are somewhat separate and unrelated to this project in terms of environmental impacts. A search of the planning database of Wicklow County Council (on 19 January 2024)⁷ indicated no other plans or projects of a nature or location which could, in combination with this project, increase any impact risk to 'significant' within the zone of influence.

⁷ [Wicklow CoCo Planning Applications \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.wicklow.gov.ie/Planning/Planning-Applications)

8.1 Conclusions on Information Provided for Stage One Screening Assessment

Determination of whether a project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of any European sites

This project does not form part of the activities to manage any European site for conservation but does not impede the achievement of those objectives.

8.2 Appraising the likely significant effects of the proposed project on relevant European sites

An analysis of the project and its potential to interact with or impact upon the relevant SPA and SAC qualifying interests is provided in Section 7. In light of the analysis provided here using all available information, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant effects on the features of conservation interest or site integrity of the relevant European sites.

There is a high degree of certainty that the project will be able to be operated as described to ensure no impact on the designated sites.

Given the high degree of certainty and absence of significant risk to the sites, it is recommended that the precautionary principle need not be applied in this case.

In view of the analysis provided here it is recommended that this project is screened out for appropriate assessment.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Murrough Masterplan Proposed Layout



ECOLOGICAL & NATURAL HERITAGE

The site is located on a peninsula between the River Vantry (referred to as Leitrim after the rail bridge) and the Irish Sea.

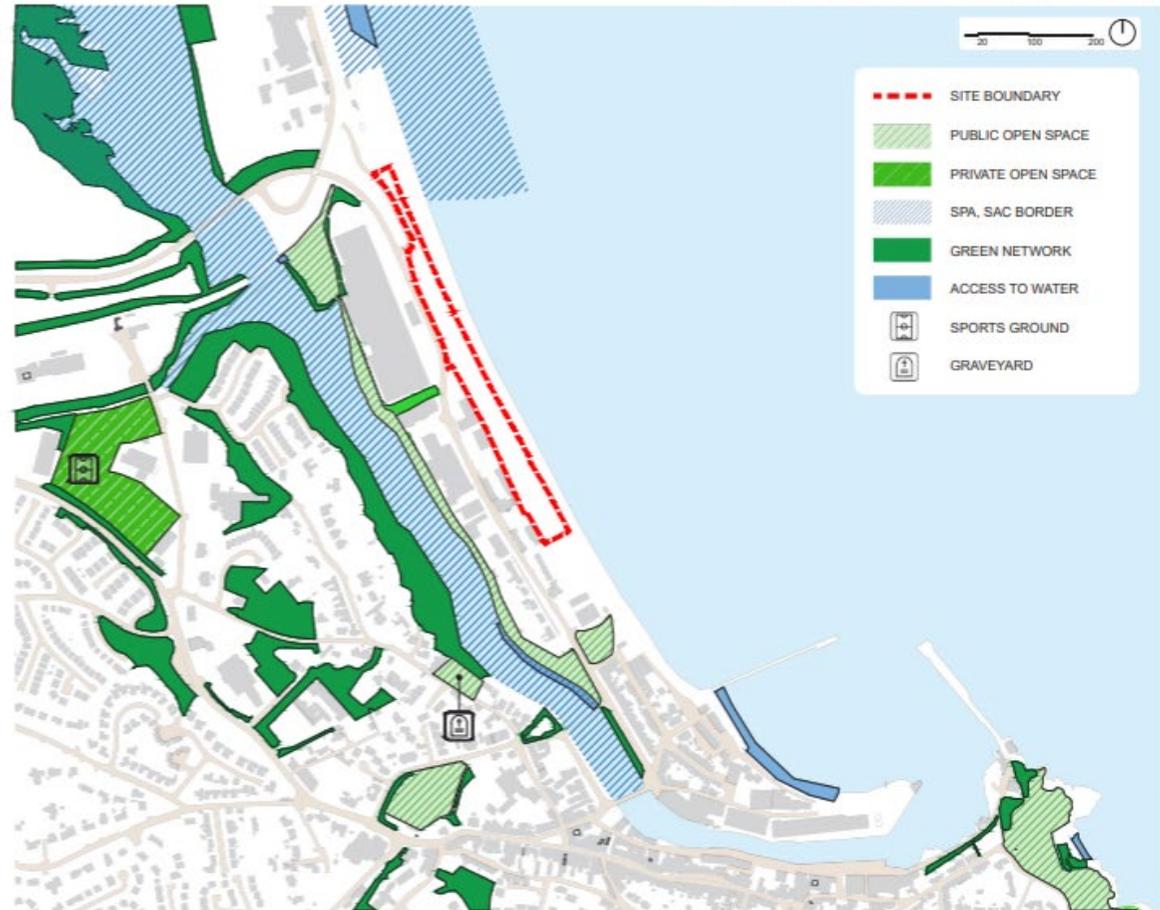
To the north lies the Murrrough Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for a number of protected avian species.

To the west the river corridor forms the Murrrough Wetlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for a number of habitats made up of vegetation communities.

There is potential for the proposed park enhancements to not only increase the overall biodiversity on the peninsula but also celebrate these nearby sites and raise awareness about their value.

The site is already one of the largest open spaces publicly available in the area - particularly within easy reach of the town centre. A key consideration is to maintain flexibility and avoid proscriptive programming and specialist community facilities that exclude other informal uses.

The site is part of a wider green corridor with the Leitrim river walk and village green - forming a nearly complete loop of open spaces.



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Appendix 2 Activities Requiring Consent – The Murrrough SPA

ARC-01 Reclamation, including infilling.

ARC-03 Blasting, drilling, dredging or otherwise removing or disturbing rock, minerals, mud, sand, gravel or other sediment.

ARC-05 Cutting, uprooting or otherwise removing plants. [Consent is not required for harvesting of cultivated crops, or for grazing or mowing.]

ARC-06 Introduction, or re-introduction, of plants or animals not found in the area. [Consent is not required for the planting of crops on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land.]

ARC-09 Construction or alteration of tracks, paths, roads, bridges, culverts or access routes.

ARC-15 Burning, topping, clearing scrub or rough vegetation or reseeded. [Consent is not required for these activities on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC-20 Significant changes in livestock density (including introduction of grazing), changes in livestock type or grazing season, other than on established reseeded grassland.

ARC-25 Drainage works including digging, deepening, widening or blocking a drain, watercourse or waterbody.

ARC-27 Water abstraction, sinking of boreholes and wells.

ARC-29 Planting of trees or multi-annual bioenergy crops.

ARC-30 Any activity intended to disturb birds, including by mechanical, air, gas, wind powered or audible means.

ARC-31 Developing or allowing the development or operation of recreational/ visitor facilities or activities, at a commercial scale.

ARC-36 Harvesting marine invertebrate species in intertidal areas.

ARC-37 Driving mechanically propelled vehicles in intertidal areas, except over prescribed access routes.

Appendix 3 Activities Requiring Consent – Murrough Wetlands SAC

ARC 01 Reclamation, including infilling.

ARC 03 Blasting, drilling, dredging or otherwise removing or disturbing fossils, rock, minerals, mud, sand, gravel or other sediment.

ARC 05 Cutting, uprooting or otherwise removing plants. [Consent is not required for harvesting of cultivated crops, or for grazing or mowing.]

ARC 06 Introduction, or re-introduction, of plants or animals not found in the area. [Consent is not required for the planting of crops on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land.]

ARC 09 Construction or alteration of tracks, paths, roads, bridges, culverts or access routes.

ARC 10 Construction, removal or alteration of fences, stone walls, hedgerows, banks or any field boundary other than temporary electric fencing. [Consent is not required for normal maintenance.]

ARC 11 Digging, ploughing, harrowing or otherwise disturbing soil or substrate. [Consent is not required for these activities on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 50m from a river, stream, floodplain, wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 12 Applying inorganic or organic fertiliser, including slurry and farmyard manure. [Consent is not required for these activities on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 13 Applying lime. [Consent is not required for this activity on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 14 Storage, burial, disposal or recovery of any materials. [Consent is not required for these activities on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 15 Burning, topping, clearing scrub or rough vegetation or reseeded. [Consent is not required for these activities on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 18 Application of pesticides, including herbicides. [Consent is not required for these activities on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 19 Supplementary feeding of livestock. [Consent is not required for this activity on established reseeded grassland or cultivated land provided it is greater than 20m from a river, stream or floodplain; or greater than 50m from a wetland, lake, turlough or pond.]

ARC 20 Significant changes in livestock density (including introduction of grazing), changes in livestock type or grazing season, other than on established reseeded grassland. [Consent is not required for changes of less than 20% in livestock density unless notice has been given that a lower percentage is applicable to a particular site.]

ARC 24 Works on, or alterations to, the banks, bed or flow of a drain, watercourse or waterbody.

ARC 25 Drainage works including digging, deepening, widening or blocking a drain, watercourse or waterbody.

ARC 27 Water abstraction, sinking of boreholes and wells.

ARC 29 Planting of trees or multi-annual bioenergy crops.

ARC 31 Developing or consenting to the development or operation of commercial recreational/visitor facilities or organised recreational activities.

ARC 36 Harvesting marine invertebrate species in intertidal areas.

ARC 37 Driving mechanically propelled vehicles in intertidal areas, except over prescribed access routes.