

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER: 669/21

BLESSINGTON eGREENWAY

AA SCREENING DETERMINATION

Wicklow County Council is proposing to develop the Blessington eGreenway located in the Counties of Wicklow and Kildare. The proposed development of the Greenway will link the historic town of Blessington to the Palladian mansion of Russborough House and continue adjacent to other local villages of Valleymount, Ballyknockan and Lacken in a 'loop' around the lake of Blessington. The provision of this Greenway will act as sustainable transport route around the Blessington Lake and will provide a safe cycle and walking facility for visitors and for the communities of the towns and villages along the route. A detailed description of the proposed development has been provided in Section 1 of the Report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

It is intended to place the plans and particulars of this development on public display in accordance with the requirements of Section 177AE the Planning and Development Act 2000 to 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 to 2012.

According to the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) that the effects of any plan or project, alone, or in combination with, other plans or projects on the Natura 2000 Site network, should be assessed before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed.

Having regard to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as transposed into Irish Law, a Report for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (the AA Screening Report) was prepared by Aecom on behalf of Wicklow County Council. The report has determined that this project, individually, and in combination with other plans and projects, does require an Appropriate Assessment to be prepared.

Based on objective information provided in the Report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment and by applying the precautionary principle, the report has concluded that:

- The proposed project is not directly connected with, or necessary to the conservation management of any Natura 2000 Sites.
- The proposed project will not significantly affect the Natura 2000 Site. However, short-term impacts to water quality are possible because of the proposed works.
 - **Direct impacts upon the Natura 2000 Site:** No direct impacts upon the Natura 2000 site are predicted.
 - **Indirect impacts upon the Natura 2000 Site:** Potential for temporary disturbance to bird species as a result of the construction works close to the shoreline of the reservoir.

Consequently, it has been determined by the consultants for the project that it is not definitely possible to rule out likely significant impacts on the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA and therefore it is a view of the consultants that it is necessary to prepare an Appropriate Assessment.

The report of Declan O'Brien, Executive Engineer which was endorsed by Margaret Hartnett, Senior Executive Engineer recommended the following –

1. An appropriate order (CE/DOS) be prepared stating that:

“That Wicklow County Council as the Competent Authority having considered the report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment prepared by the consultants for the project (Aecom), hereby makes the determination that a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment is required to inform the proposed development Blessington eGreenway project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects with respect to any Nature 2000 Sites and its conservation objectives.”

2. The Consulting Engineers are notified of the Councils determination

Michael Nicholson, Director of Services endorsed the above recommendations.

ORDER:

For the reasons set out in the AA screening report, by virtue of the powers vested in me, I hereby order that Wicklow County Council as the Competent Authority having considered the report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment prepared by the consultants, hereby makes the determination that a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment is required to inform the proposed development Blessington eGreenway project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects with respect to any Natura 2000 Sites and its conservation objectives.”

Also I hereby order that the Consulting Engineers are notified of the Council's determination.

SIGNED *fe C*

DATED: 21/12/21

FRANK CURRAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE