



**Comhairle Cathrach
na Gaillimhe**
Galway City Council

Galway City Climate Action Plan
2024 -2029

Screening Report for Appropriate
Assessment

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Galway City Climate Action Plan

Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

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This report has been prepared by DEC Ltd. 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.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Doherty Environmental Consultants (DEC) Ltd have been appointed by Galway City Council to prepare a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment of the draft City Galway Climate Action Plan (CAP). This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment forms Stage 1 of the Habitats Directive Assessment process and is being undertaken in order to inform the competent authority's assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (as amended). The function of this Screening Report is to identify the potential for the draft CAP to result in likely significant effects to European Sites and to provide information so that the competent authority can determine whether a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required for the project.

1.1 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Mr. Pat Doherty BSc., MSc, MCIEEM, of DEC Ltd. Mr. Doherty is a consultant ecologist with over 20 years' experience in completing ecological impact assessments and environmental impact assessments. Pat has been involved in the completion of assessment reports for proposed developments and land use activities under the EIA Directive and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive since 2003 and 2006 respectively. He has extensive experience completing such reporting for projects located in a variety of environments and has a thorough understanding of the biodiversity issues that may arise from proposed land use activities. Pat was responsible for completing one of the first Appropriate Assessment reports for large scale infrastructure developments in Ireland when he prepared the Appropriate Assessment for the N25 New Ross Bypass in 2006/07. Since then Pat has completed multiple examinations of both plans and projects in Ireland. He has completed Natura Impact Statements for national scale plans such as Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan and National Seafood Development Plan and regional and county scale plans including County Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Tourism Strategies and Climate Action Plans. Pat has completed multiple Natura Impact Statements for a range of development types that include large scale infrastructure developments in sectors such as transport and energy as well as industrial, commercial and residential developments.

Pat has completed focused certified professional development training in Appropriate Assessment as well as in a range of ecological survey techniques and assessment processes. Training has been completed for National Vegetation Classification (NVC) and Irish

Vegetation Classification (IVC) surveying, bryophyte survey for habitat assessment and identification, professional bat survey and assessment training, mammal surveying and specific training for bird and bat survey techniques. Ongoing training has been completed by approved training providers such as CIEEM, British Trust for Ornithology, the Botanic Gardens and the Field Studies Council.

1.2 EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE ARTICLE 6(3) ASSESSMENT

Legislative protection for habitats and species is provided within the European Union by the Habitats Directive. The Habitats Directive has been implemented in Ireland and throughout Europe through the establishment of a network of designated conservation areas known as the Natura 2000 (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 2009/147/EC (as amended). 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.

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment is being prepared in order to enable the competent authority to comply with Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive). It is prepared to assess whether or not the project alone or in combination with other plans and projects is likely to have a significant effect on any European Site in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European Sites and specifically on the habitats and species for which the sites have been designated. Measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the proposed project on European sites (i.e. “mitigation measures”) or best practice measures have not been taken into account in this screening stage appraisal.

1.2.1 Requirement for an Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive

According to section 177U(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) the competent authority has a duty to:

- Determine whether the proposed Project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of one of more European Sites; and, if not,
- Determine if the Project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on the European Site(s) in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of the site(s).

This report contains information to support a Screening for Appropriate Assessment and is intended to provide information that assists the competent authority when assessing and addressing all issues regarding the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project and to allow the competent authority to comply with the Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive defines the requirements for assessment of projects and plans for which likely significant effects on European Sites may arise. The Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive together list habitats and species that are of international importance for conservation and require protection. The Habitats Directive requires competent authorities, to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects that are not directly connected to or necessary for the management of a European Site, to assess whether the plan or project alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have significant effects on European Sites in view of best scientific knowledge and the Site's conservation objectives. This requirement is transposed into Irish Law by, inter alia, Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). Section 177U(4) of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act states:

"The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or a proposed development, as the case may be, is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the draft Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site. "

1.3 SCREENING METHODOLOGY

This Screening Report has been prepared in order to comply with the legislative requirements outlined in Section 1.2 above and aims to establish whether or not the proposed plan, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have significant effects on European Sites in view of best scientific knowledge and the Site's conservation objectives. In

this context “likely” means a risk or possibility of effects occurring that **cannot** be ruled out based on objective information and “significant” means an effect that would undermine the conservation objectives of the European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects (Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), 2021).

The nature of the likely interactions between the proposed development and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites will depend upon the:

- the ecological characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change; *and/or*
- the character, magnitude, duration, consequences and probability of the impacts arising from land use activities associated with the plan, in combination with other plans and projects.

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with respective National and European guidance documents: Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities (DEHLG 2010) and *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*; Office of the Planning Regulator – OPR Practice Note PN01: *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management* (2021), and recent European and National case law. The following guidance documents were also of relevance during the preparation of this Screening Report:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2010). DEHLG.
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/42/EEC. European Commission (EC) (2021).
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2018).

The EC (2021) guidelines outline the stages involved in undertaking a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment for projects. The methodology adopted during the preparation of this Screening Report is informed by these guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

1. Describe the project and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
2. Identify European Sites that could be influenced by the project;
3. Where European Sites are identified as occurring within the zone of influence of the project identify potential effects arising from the project and screen the potential for such effects to negatively affect European Sites identified under Point 2 above; and
4. Identify other plans or projects that, in combination with the project, have the potential to affect European Sites.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE GALWAY CITY CAP

2.1 BACKGROUND TO GALWAY CITY CCAP

Through the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Ireland is now on a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade. The Act provides the framework for Ireland to meet its international and EU climate commitments and to become a leader in addressing climate change.

As required by the 2021 Act, Galway City Council is preparing their first Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LA-CAP) which must be adopted by the Elected Members before 23rd February 2024. This will continue the work undertaken over the first Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 which was non statutory.

2.1.1 Local Authority Climate Action Plans

Local Authorities will have a particularly important role in the delivery of both climate mitigation and adaptation. This is reflected in the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021, which requires each Local Authority to prepare

a CAP specifying the mitigation and the adaptation measures to be adopted by the Local Authority.

Local authorities are key drivers in advancing climate policy at the local level and the Galway CAP aims to strengthen the alignment between national climate policy and local circumstances with the prioritisation and acceleration of evidence-based measures, to assist in the delivery of the climate neutrality objective for Galway City Council.

Galway City Council will use its CAP in planning how it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase climate resilience from across its own assets and infrastructure, whilst also taking on a broader role to influence, facilitate and co-ordinate the climate actions of communities and other stakeholders and what it will do to advocate for climate action in Galway. In order to ensure that the CAP is centred around a strong understanding of the role and remit of Galway City Council on climate action, the Plan is being developed through the following framework.

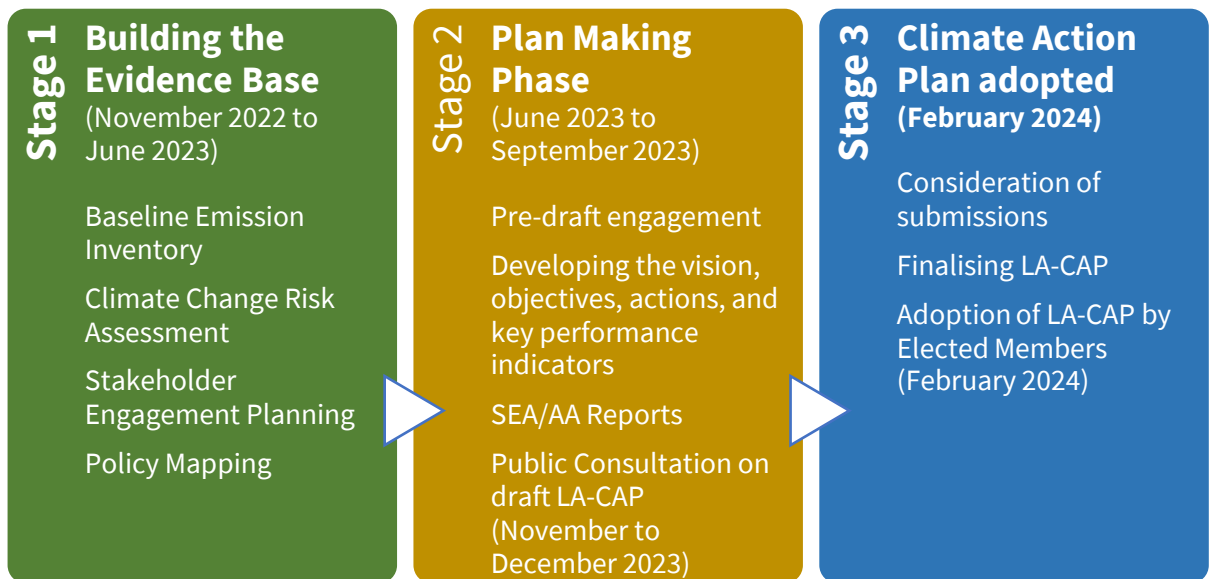
- Fully accountable: Targeted actions for areas where Galway City Council has full accountability for climate action within their own operations.
- Influence: Actions for where Galway City Council can influence businesses, communities, and individuals in the delivery of local climate action through the functions and services they provide.
- Coordination: Actions for where Galway City Council can coordinate and facilitate local and community action bringing together stakeholders in partnership to achieve climate action related projects.
- Advocate: Actions aligned to Galway City Councils role as advocate on climate action through raising awareness, communicating, informing, and engaging in open dialogue on the topic.

While the Climate Action Plan will be ambitious to reflect the leadership role of Galway City Council on climate action, the Plan will not include actions whereby their implementation and achievement fall outside their role, remit, and governance.

2.1.2 Development of the LA-CAP

The development of the Climate Action Plan will follow a number of stages as explained in the Figure 1.1. below.

Figure 2-1 Stages in the development of the Climate Action Plan



2.2 SCALE, NATURE AND LOCATION OF THE GALWAY CITY CAP

The plan will cover all of the functional area of Galway City. Figure 1.2 shows the location of Galway City, and the Atlantic Seaboard North Climate Action Regional office extent (CARO).

Supported by a robust evidence base, the Framework of Climate Actions configures the arrangement of actions within a defined structure, ensuring alignment between potential on the ground actions and the vision that the plan aspires to deliver. The framework comprises:

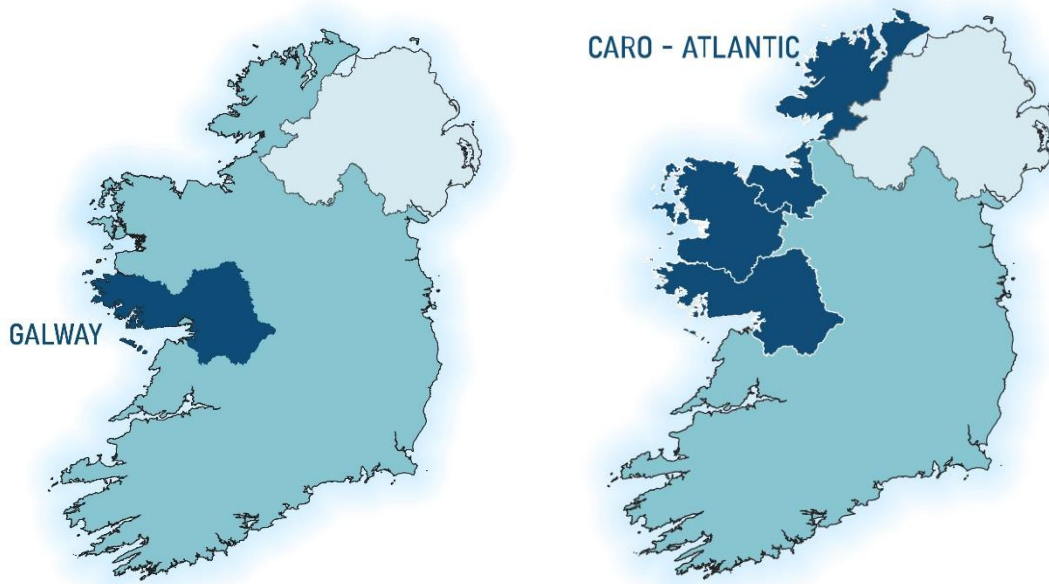
- An overarching Vision that reflects the shared perspective of a climate resilient and climate neutral future.

- A plan Mission that speaks practically to the grounded purpose of the local authority in delivering effective climate action.
- Strategic Goals that set the context for the climate actions and establish a structured or thematic arrangement of actions.
- High level Objectives that support the delivery of the strategic goals whilst framing the appropriate emphasis of the actions.
- Actions that are specific, action-focused, time-bound and measurable reflecting a scaling up of ambitious local level climate action.

The framework forms the basis for implementation and the reporting mechanisms required over the duration of the five-year plan period. In tailoring actions as part of the place-based approach to climate action reflective of local conditions and responsive to local impacts, the SMART approach to the development of actions is encouraged whereby actions identified are Specific, Measurable, Assigned, Realistic, Time-bound.

The Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Ecological Impact Assessment and requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting. Actions arising from the plan will demonstrate compliance with the environmental protection measures in the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023, as varied, and SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report that accompanies same. The draft Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report will replace the current CDP once adopted by Galway City Council.

Figure 2-2 Galway City and the Atlantic Seaboard North CARO



3.0 EUROPEAN SITES

3.1 OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN SITES

Galway City is situated in the west coast of Ireland, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the south and County Galway to the north, east and west.

The Plan area is rich in biodiversity, containing many important, and protected, habitats and species such as, coastal habitats from cliffs to estuaries, reefs, machairs, mudflats, sandy beaches, and terrestrial habitats such as lakes, turloughs, fens, wetlands, woodlands, bogs, wildfowl (duck and geese), waders, salmon, lamprey and otters. However, it also contains many other habitats which are not protected such as scrub, parks, streams, hedgerows, tree lines, roadside verges, housing estate open spaces and gardens.

There are a total of 4 European Sites; 2 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), namely the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Lough Lough Corrib SAC, and 2 Special Protection Areas

(SPA), namely the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Lough Corrib SPA occurring within Galway City administrative area. Collectively referred to as the Natura 2000 network, SACs and SPAs are designated in consideration of Habitats Directive Annex I habitats and Annex II species and classified in consideration of Birds Directive Annex I bird species.

There are a high number of European Site bordering the City or connected to the city area via hydrological pathways. In order to identify these sites the spatial boundary data for the European site network, as published by the NPWS in July 2023 was used. All European Sites which were deemed to be within the zone of influence of the potential implications of the draft CAP are considered further in Section 3.2 below and are listed in Table A1.1 in Appendix 1.

3.2 ZONE OF INFLUENCE OF THE PLAN & IDENTIFICATION OF EUROPEAN SITES

The approach to defining the zone of influence of the Galway City CAP follows the approach used during for the draft Galway City Development Plan 2023 - 2029. The land use effects of the CAP, be they direct or indirect effects, will be primarily restricted to Galway City only. However a wider zone of influence is used for impacts relating to surface waters that are hydrologically connected to the Plan area and that support freshwater-dependent habitats; habitats for SACs or SPAs; habitats for Annex 2 qualifying species; and habitat for SPA special conservation interest bird species.

In line with the approach to defining the zone of influence as set out in the Galway City CDP, the screening of the draft CAP identified 71 European Sites that are either located within Galway City, within a 15km buffer of the City boundary or within a 35km buffer of the city boundary where an SAC designated for freshwater pearl mussel is hydrologically connected to the Plan Area of Galway City. As noted above 4 of these European Sites are located within Galway City. Of the remaining 67, 11 are SPAs and 56 are SACs.

Each of these 71 sites are considered to fall within the zone of influence of the draft CAP. These 71 European Sites are listed in Appendix 1.

3.3 CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the

Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site. The maintenance of habitats and species within European Sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level. Site-specific conservation objectives have been published by the NPWS for 356 SACs and 37 SPAs in the Republic of Ireland. Given the number of European Sites occurring within the zone of influence of the Plan and the level of detail outlined in the site-specific conservation objectives for each European Sites it is not practical to reproduce the site-specific conservation objectives for each site within this screening report. Instead the generic conservation objectives for European Sites, which represent the overarching aims of site-specific conservation objectives, that is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation condition of qualifying habitats and species are presented below.

The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and

- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE DRAFT GALWAY CITY CAP WITH POTENTIAL TO RESULT IN LAND USE EFFECTS

The Galway City draft CAP sets out a range of measures that aim to future proof the City, its lands and communities, as well as the council as an organisational body, against the impact of climate change. For the purposes of this screening exercise the actions set out in the draft CAP can be divided into those that have the potential to result in land use and those that do not, the latter being principally concerned with organisational structures, co-operation and research.

Example of actions with potential land use consequences include those that require climate change adaptation measures for existing key infrastructure such as roads and flood defences; the provision of infrastructure to enable modal shifts in transport from private vehicle to active travel and public transport; the implementation of nature-based actions with local authority lands; and the facilitation of community decarbonisation and future proofing initiatives.

The potential ecological effects land use activities associated with these actions could include:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation;
- Habitat degradation resulting from emissions to surface water;
- Habitat degradation resulting from emissions to groundwater;
- Habitat degradation resulting from the spread of non-native invasive species during works within enterprise zones; and
- Disturbance and/or displacement of qualifying species from within or outside European Sites.

Given the broad scale of the plan within the administrative area, the lack of locational specificity and the similarity in terms of potential impact with the nature of impacts identified for the Galway City CDP it is considered that those European Sites that were identified as being at risk from the CDP will also be at risk from land use effects associated with the draft CAP.

These European Sites, as identified in the screening of the CDP are:

268	Galway Bay Complex SAC
297	Lough Corrib SAC
4042	Lough Corrib SPA
4031	Inner Galway Bay SPA
322	Rahasane Turlough SAC
606	Lough Fingall Complex SAC
1285	Kiltiernan Turlough SAC
2244	Ardrahan Grassland SAC
4089	Rahasane Turlough SPA
4142	Cregganna Marsh SPA

4.1 IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS WITH OTHER PLANS & PROJECTS

As part of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3) assessment the potential for the Plan to combine with other plans or projects to result in cumulative negative effects to European Sites must be considered. Given the broad level of detail associated with the Plan's actions and the potential for land use effects to arise as result of the implementation of actions with consequential land use interventions, the potential for the Plan to combine within other Plans to result in cumulative effects cannot be ruled out.

5.0 SCREENING CONCLUSION

This Screening for the forthcoming draft Galway City CAP has found that it cannot be ruled out at the screening stage that the land use actions set out at the screening stage, will not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to the conservation objective of European Sites.

Due to the potential risk of such effects occurring following the implementation of the Galway City CAP, it has been concluded that the forthcoming draft CAP will have the potential to result

in significant effects to European Sites. As such, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required to inform an Appropriate Assessment of the Galway City CAP 2023 - 2029.

REFERENCES

DEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities. Rev Feb 2010. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

European Commission (2021) Assessment of Plans and Projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General)

European Commission (2019) Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 2/43/EEC. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

APPENDIX 1: EUROPEAN SITES SCREENED IN

Table A1.1 below provides a list of the European Sites occurring within the zone of influence of the draft CAP and screened in for further examination as part of an Natura Impact Statement of the draft Plan. The list of European Sites screened in follows that identified for the Galway City Development Plan.

Table A1.1: SACs & SPA Identified as occurring within the zone of influence of the draft CAP

Site Code	European Sites	Within City	Distance (km) from Galway City
000020	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC		12.39
000054	Moneen Mountain SAC		12.41
000238	Caherglassaun Turlough SAC		17.96
000242	Castletaylor Complex SAC		12.23
000252	Coole-Garryland Complex SAC		17.63
000268	Galway Bay Complex SAC	x	0.00
000286	Kiltartan Cave (Coole) SAC		20.74
000295	Levally Lough SAC		29.98
000296	Lisnageeragh Bog and Ballinastack Turlough SAC		44.79
000297	Lough Corrib SAC	x	0.00
000299	Lough Cutra SAC		26.99
000301	Lough Lurgen Bog/Glenamaddy Turlough SAC		41.31
000304	Lough Rea SAC		25.33
000318	Peterswell Turlough SAC		20.60
000322	Rahasane Turlough SAC		11.53
000324	Rosroe Bog SAC		49.65
000461	Ardkill Turlough SAC		31.78
000474	Ballymaglancy Cave, Cong SAC		30.18
000475	Carrowkeel Turlough SAC		38.03
000479	Cloughmoyne SAC		19.96
000480	Clyard Kettle-Holes SAC		28.77

Site Code	European Sites	Within City	Distance (km) from Galway City
000503	Greaghans Turlough SAC		31.92
000504	Kilglassan/Caheavoostia Turlough Complex SAC		32.73
000525	Shrule Turlough SAC		23.36
000527	Moore Hall (Lough Carra) SAC		45.15
000541	Skealaghan Turlough SAC		32.26
000606	Lough Fingall Complex SAC		9.16
000994	Ballyteige (Clare) SAC		26.54
000996	Ballyvaughan Turlough SAC		15.45
001251	Cregduff Lough SAC		53.03
001257	Dog's Bay SAC		54.67
001271	Gortnandarragh Limestone Pavement SAC		12.64
001285	Kiltiernan Turlough SAC		11.91
001312	Ross Lake And Woods SAC		9.89
001321	Termon Lough SAC		25.31
001536	Mocorha Lough SAC		24.63
001774	Lough Carra/Mask Complex SAC		30.15
001913	Sonnagh Bog SAC		24.75
001926	East Burren Complex SAC		11.63
001932	Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC		46.85
002008	Maumturk Mountains SAC		31.61
002034	Connemara Bog Complex SAC		6.95
002074	Slyne Head Peninsula SAC		62.62
002111	Kilkieran Bay And Islands SAC		27.53

Site Code	European Sites	Within City	Distance (km) from Galway City
002117	Lough Coy SAC		21.02
002119	Lough Nageeron SAC		48.87
002129	Murvey Machair SAC		58.37
002179	Towerhill House SAC		45.06
002180	Gortacarnaun Wood SAC		29.74
002181	Drummin Wood SAC		28.79
002197	Derrinlough (Cloonkeenleananode) Bog SAC		33.58
002244	Ardrahan Grassland SAC		13.20
002293	Carrowbaun, Newhall and Ballylee Turloughs SAC		20.74
002294	Cahermore Turlough SAC		16.82
002295	Ballinduff Turlough SAC		18.94
002296	Williamstown Turloughs SAC		43.89
002320	Kildun Souterrain SAC		28.37
002352	Monivea Bog SAC		18.84
004005	Cliffs of Moher SPA		33.05
004031	Inner Galway Bay SPA	x	0.00
004042	Lough Corrib SPA	x	0.00
004051	Lough Carra SPA		39.40
004056	Lough Cutra SPA		27.01
004062	Lough Mask SPA		32.45
004089	Rahasane Turlough SPA		11.46
004107	Coole-Garryland SPA		19.50
004134	Lough Rea SPA		25.38

Site Code	European Sites	Within City	Distance (km) from Galway City
004142	Cregganna Marsh SPA		2.41
004159	Slyne Head To Ardmore Point Islands SPA		42.55
004168	Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA		22.19
004181	Connemara Bog Complex SPA		11.41