IARNRÓD ÉIREANN

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING DETERMINATION
EAST COAST RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION PROJECTS
GROUND INVESTIGATIONS & GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY WORKS

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, IARNRÓD ÉIREANN has undertaken screening for Appropriate of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites, if the project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site(s). The screening has been informed by the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by Jacobs Engineers (Report Ref: IR_AA_Screening_Report_ECRIPP_GI_Gephys_260923, dated 03rd October 2023).

Description of the Project

The ECRIPP scheme is located along the east coast railway line in Ireland. The works have been split into five separate survey areas:

- CCA 1 – Merrion to Dun Laoghaire
    - The railway runs on an embankment protected by a seawall and revetment. Resilience measures are required to:
        - Stop coastal erosion, platform lowering and scour of existing defences, which could undermine the railway.
        - Stop the railway being inundated by periodic storm waves that may affect rolling stick, erode ballast or damage trackside equipment.
- CCA 2-3 – Dalkey Tunnel to Killiney
    - The railway passes at the base of a coastal slope and is protected by a seawall. Resilience measures are required to:
        - Stop slope failures and to manage run-off of sediment and water on to the railway or lineside equipment.
        - Stop coastal erosion, platform lowering and scour of existing defences, which could undermine the railway.
        - Stop the railway being inundated by periodic storm waves that may affect rolling stick, erode ballast or damage trackside equipment.
- CCA 5 – Bray Head to Greystones North Beach
    - The railway passes rock cuttings, tunnels and rocky slopes and is supported in places by a seawall. Resilience measures are required to:
        - Stop rock falls and slope failures and to manage runoff of sediment and water onto the railway or lineside equipment.
        - Ensure that structures supporting the railway are resilient to future coastal process and that wave overtopping does not occur.
- CCA 6.1-6.2 – Greystones south to Newcastle and Newcastle to Wicklow
    - The railway runs on an embankment protected by a revetment. Resilience measures are required to:
        - Stop coastal erosion, platform lowering and scour of existing defences, which could undermine the railway.
        - Stop the railway being inundated by periodic storm waves that may affect rolling stick, erode ballast or damage trackside equipment.
        - Manage the amount of wind-blown beach and dune sediment that reaches the line.

The proposed terrestrial GI works will be undertaken in 179 locations in total which will include 3 rotary core boreholes, 24 cable percussive with rotary follow-on boreholes, 100 window samples, 16 sediment sampling, 15 percussion boreholes, eight foundation

inspection pits (vacuum or hand dug), seven dynamic probes and six slit trenches. Groundwater monitoring will be undertaken at 33 borehole locations. Access to the GI locations will be via the railway line or other existing access tracks and no new access routes will be created.

For one window sample (WS024) a 1.5m wide access track will need to be excavated through artificial marram dune habitat which has colonised rip rap rock armour. However, this habitat is not associated with an SAC or SPA and is outside any European site boundary and at a distance of 300m to nearest European site. To create an access point rip rap will be moved to either side to facilitate a path and remain on the existing rip rap until completion of work when it will be moved back into its original position.

The geophysical surveys involve the use of a land streamer which is towed along behind a vehicle such as a light weight Argocat vehicle. The surveys will primarily be undertaken within the foreshore beach habitat, but some areas will require works within the upper shore or within existing public footpaths. Access will be via existing access tracks and no new routes will be created through SAC or SPA habitat. There are 39 locations for geophysical survey across the five surveys areas.

The proposed GI and geophysical survey works are programmed to commence in November 2023 and will be completed by the end of February 2024.

Minor vegetation clearance may be required in locations to facilitate mobilisation of ground investigation rigs. Works areas will be reinstated to their original state as directed by the on-site ECoW, which will typically involve replacement of topsoil and may involve reseeding. All GI works are set back from open watercourses by at least 10 m.

A temporary mobile portacabin will be provided for the duration of the works in self-contained facility which will be parked on roads in public areas as the scheme progresses.

Identification of European sites potentially affected by the project

The proposed works were examined with reference to their location to European sites, and taking account of the potential effects outlined in Table 5.1 below, the following European sites are considered to be within the zone of influence (ZoI) of the proposed works:

- South Dublin Bay SAC (000210) – works located within SAC
- Bray Head SAC (000714) – Works located within SAC
- The Murrough Wetlands SAC (002249) Works located within SAC
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (003000) – Works located 0.45 km over land and 0.44 km over sea
- Lambay Island SAC (000204) - Works located 21 km over land and 25 km over sea
- The Murrough SPA (004186) – Works located within SPA
- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024) – Works located within 0.05 km
- Dalkey Islands SPA (004172) – Works located 0.75 km over land and 0.75 km over sea
- Wicklow Head SPA (004127) – Works located 2.6 km over land and 2.3 km over sea
- North Bull Island SPA (004006) – Works located 6.8 km over land and 4.8 km over sea
- North-West Irish Sea cSPA (004236) – Works located 12.2 km over land and 5.18 km over sea
- Baldoyle SPA (004016) – Works located 19.2 km over land and 10 km over sea

- Irelands Eye SPA (004117) – Works located 13.2 km over land and 16.6 km over sea
- Howth Head Coast SPA (004113) – Works located 14.7 km over land and 11.5 km over sea
- Malahide Estuary SPA (004025) – Works located 18 km over land and 26 km over sea
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA (004015) – Works located 22.31 km over land and 31.32 km over sea

Assessment of the likely significant effects

The Stage 1 Screening considered the following:

- Qualifying interests/special conservations interests for which the European sites were designated;
- Conservation objectives;
- Likely zone of impact determination;
- Pathways for impact of the European sites;
- Potential for individual and in combination likely significant effects.

The following findings were reported:

- The GI borehole locations are situated within the railway line, areas of hardstanding, agricultural land and the beach environment. However, these locations, most notably those within the beach environment, do not include any habitats which are of qualifying interest to the SACs and will therefore not impact the Conservation Objectives of the designated sites.
- None of the GI borehole locations are situated within the marine environment or within close proximity of the marine environment to have an impact on marine mammals.
- Breeding and wintering birds, which are qualifying features of the SPAs, will not be impacted by the proposed works.
- No likely significant effects are anticipated as a result of the GI borehole works.

- The geophysical surveys will only be undertaken along areas of beach which can be easily accessed and no vegetation clearance will be required.
- No qualifying interest habitats of the SACs will be destroyed or disturbed as result of the surveys.
- The surveys will not impact the marine environment so the qualifying interest marine mammal species will also not be impacted by the works.
- Breeding and wintering bird species for which the SPAs are designated will also not be impacted by the geophysical surveys.
- No habitat utilised by the qualifying interest bird species will be damaged or destroyed as a result of the geophysical surveys.
- No likely significant effects from the geophysical surveys are anticipated.

- No potential for in-combination effects have been assessed to undermine the integrity of any European sites from the proposed works and other plans or projects.

Determination

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, Iarnród Éireann has made a determination following screening that an Appropriate Assessment of the project is not required.

It can be concluded that the project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site.

Furthermore, it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, that the project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a likely significant effect on a European sites.

Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Mark Conroy, Environmental Sustainability Manager, CCE IM	01 November 2023
Signature and Date of Designated Officer	 Michael Danaher Head of Projects & Programmes IM	02 November 2023