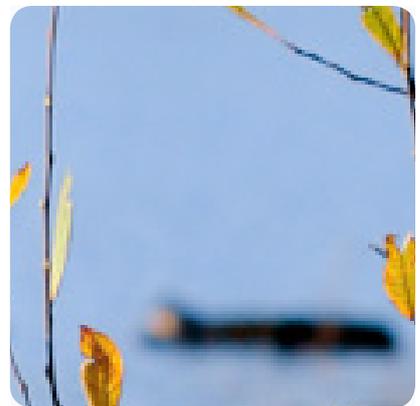
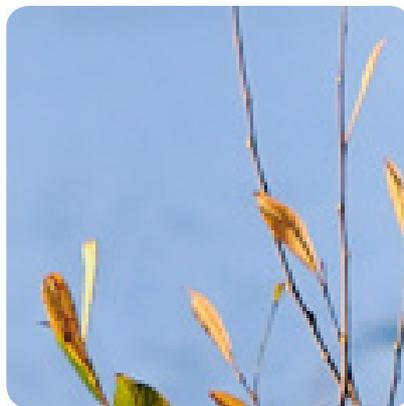
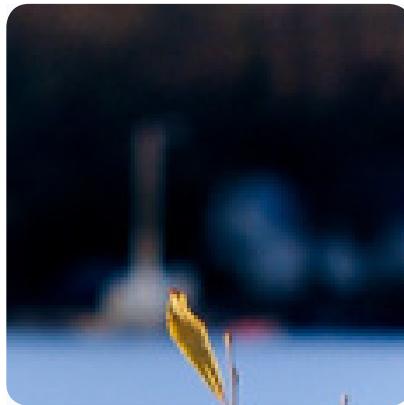


River Ilen (Skibbereen) Drainage Scheme

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report Addendum

February, 2015



DixonBrosnan

environmental consultants

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dixon Brosnan have been commissioned to review the River Ilen Drainage Scheme Appropriate Assessment Screening Report based on proposed amendments to the scheme which were made following public consultation of the Drainage Scheme in April / May 2013. The proposed amendments to the scheme are detailed in Chapter 2 of the Addendum to the EIS which should be read in conjunction with this report.

In conjunction with the preparation of EIS for the proposed Drainage Scheme, which addressed impacts on aquatic and terrestrial ecology, an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, which specifically considered potential impacts on sites designated under the Habitats Directive (SACs and SPAs), was also prepared.

This addendum to the original AA Screening Report specifically identifies any changes in the predicted impacts on designated sites which may arise due to the proposed modifications to the project design. A site visit was carried out on the 10th January, 2015 to reassess impacts in light of the proposed changes.

Generally these changes are considered to be relatively minor with respect to ecology as none of the changes are predicted to have a significantly increased ecological impact.

2. ORIGINAL AA SCREENING REPORT

2.1 DESIGNATED SITES AND CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES - ORIGINAL AA SCREENING REPORT

The original report noted that a total of five Natura 2000 sites are located within 15 km of Skibbereen. The boundary of Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC lies approximately 7.5 km downstream of the town, and given that the proposed works involve flood prevention measures and possible impacts on water quality, this site must be considered to be in the 'likely zone of influence' of the proposed works. None of the remaining designated sites are located within the catchment of the River Ilen and no potential impact on these sites were identified.

Conservation objectives for Roaringwater Bay cSAC were provided in the NPWS document *Conservation Objectives Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC 000101* (NPWS, July 19, 2011). These objectives were as follows:-

- *Maintain the favourable conservation status of the following Qualifying Interests of the cSAC: Large shallow inlets and bays (Habitat code 1160), Reefs (1170), Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts (1230), European dry heaths (4030), Submerged or partly submerged sea caves (8330), Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) (species code 1351) and Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) (1364).*
- *Restore the favourable conservation status of the Qualifying Interests of the cSAC: Otter (*Lutra lutra*) (1355).*

2.2 POTENTIAL IMPACTS - ORIGINAL AA SCREENING REPORT

Two broad categories of potential impact were identified as theoretically possible by the original report as detailed below:-

- Impacts within the boundary of the cSAC resulting either from changes to the quantity or quality of water flowing from the River Ilen to the cSAC.
- Impacts on Annex II species that are qualifying features of the cSAC that occur outside the boundary of the cSAC, but have effects on the populations of the species' populations, or on the dynamics of the broader ecosystems, inside the boundary of the cSAC.

3. CONCLUSIONS OF ORIGINAL AA SCREENING

Following an assessment of the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts and the mitigation measures which will be implemented as part of the project design, the original report concluded the following:-

- *There will be no direct impacts on qualifying habitats and species within any Natura 2000 site.*
- *From a hydrological viewpoint there will be no net reduction or increase in the volume of water or water borne nutrients reaching the Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC. It is noted that reduction of flooding within the town may have a net positive impact on aquatic ecology as high flood levels within an urban setting have the potential to introduce into the river a wide range of potentially toxic substance including sewage, hydrocarbons, household chemicals etc. Thus no impact on Natura 2000 sites arising from changes in hydrology have been identified.*
- *Based on the proposed programme of works the introduction of waterborne contaminants is potentially possible. However a broad range of mitigation measures will be implemented to prevent contaminants including suspend solids from significantly impacting on watercourses. Such mitigation measures are implemented as standard for such construction projects with a high degree of success. It is also noted that the Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC is located 7.5 km away from the proposed works and in any event as a large marine site would provide very high levels of dilution which would significantly ameliorate any limited impacts from the works. Given the low magnitude of any impact from the proposed works no significant impacts on qualifying habitats (Large shallow inlets and bays (Habitat code 1160), Reefs (1170), Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts (1230), European dry heaths (4030) and Submerged or partly submerged sea caves (8330)) is predicted.*
- *During the Appropriate Assessment process which was carried out for the Skibbereen and Bantry LAPs, inadequate waste water treatment was identified for a number of towns within the Roaringwater Bay catchment. However following the adoption of changes to policies, settlement boundaries and zonings arising out of the Appropriate Assessment process it was concluded by the Natura Impact Habitats Directive Assessment for both plans including the Skibbereen and Bantry EA LAPs will not give rise to impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. In this context and given the low risk of significant impacts arising from the River Ilen Drainage Scheme no significant in-combination impact on Natura 2000 sites has been identified.*
- *Increased noise and disturbance during construction could impact on Otter and Grey Seal within the River Ilen although no impacts within the boundary of the cSAC is predicted given its distance from the proposed works. Standard protection measures will be implemented with regard to otters and noise levels will be minimised for the duration of works. Although there may some short term disturbance of both species during works it is likely to be short-term and localised in nature and no long-term impacts on the populations of either species within or outside the cSAC boundary is predicted.*

- *Instream works have the potential to impact on fish stocks on which Otter and Grey Seal feed. If there was to be catastrophic impacts on fish stocks due to works it could theoretically impact on these predatory species. However the works have been designed to minimise long term impacts on fish stocks and the impact on long-term fish stocks is predicted to be minor to moderate negative at a local level. In this context no significant risk to prey availability for otter or grey seal is predicted.*
- *Overall there is no evidence to indicate that works will cause significant deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species and species of special conservation interest or significant disturbance to these species thus ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained. No significant indirect nor direct impacts are envisaged. As this Stage 1 Screening Report did not identify significant impacts on designated sites, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not considered necessary*

4. PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE SCHEME AND ADDITIONAL MITIGATION PROPOSED AS PART OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

The amendments to the originally proposed scheme are generally not expected to significantly alter the magnitude of ecological impacts. A detailed description of the proposed amendments are provided in the Addendum to the EIS (Chapter 2). The amendments that are likely to be of potential significance are summarised below:-

- Replacement of embankments with walls/sheetpiling or walls will be constructed on sheet piled foundation (Ilen River, Caol Stream, Showground Stream, Assolas Stream, Mill Stream).
- Loss of channel width/aquatic habitat due to sheetpiling within the Ilen River will be balanced by compensation works on the opposite bank of the river. It is proposed that sheetpiling will be offset from the river wall by approximately 4-6m for Ilen 7 and approximately 6m for Ilen 9.
- Increases in length of flood defences (Ilen River, Caol Stream).
- Construction of previously unplanned embankment and wall (Ilen).
- Previously unplanned embankment and culvert on a drain without fish populations (Caol Stream).
- A culvert replaced by open U-shaped channel (Showgrounds Stream).
- Increased road level and bridge to be replaced with culvert on small stream (Showgrounds Stream).
- Pipe under road to be replaced with culvert box on drain without fish populations (Showgrounds Stream).
- U-shaped channel will replace flood wall (Assolas Stream).
- Sealing of existing open section of stream channel; it will now be an open chamber with a grid cover (Assolas Stream).
- Planned pumping station location moved to south side of N71 adjacent to Ilen River (Glencurragh Stream).

- Additional treeline will be removed along the main channel of the Ilen River and along the Caol Stream.
- There will be minor amount of additional scrub lost along the Caol and Ilen Rivers.

A suite of mitigation measures were proposed during the original EIS with respect to ecology. These remain relevant to the modified scheme. The following additional mitigation will be implemented as part of the project design for the modified scheme:-

- Modification of the channel at two locations on the Ilen is proposed. In compensation for the loss of aquatic habitat it is proposed to widen the channel at the opposing bank. It is important that the new bank is effectively stabilised and that the recreated substrate is as natural as possible. The original flow regime should be maintained if feasible. Caution will be required to ensure there is no impact on water quality during construction. Post construction, suitable native tree species should be planted to replace those removed by works.
- The new culvert proposed for the Showground Stream should be designed with input from a qualified fisheries/aquatic engineering specialist to ensure that it does not form a barrier to fish movement within the watercourse.

5. CONCLUSIONS OF AA SCREENING OF THE MODIFIED SCHEME

The proposed amendments to the scheme including use of open, U shaped channels instead of walls, the provision of additional instream structures such as culverts, sheet piling and modifications of the main channel of the Ilen will increase the potential risk of high levels of sedimentation and potential hydrocarbon contamination. This could theoretically impact on water quality within the Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC. However given that the risk of increased impacts on water quality is slight, given the distance of the works from the Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC (7.5km) and given the high levels of dilution provided in a marine context, no significant impact on the cSAC as a result of the modified scheme is predicted.

Overall the use of sheetpiling will increase noise levels during construction which could impact on otter and grey seal which are listed as qualifying interests for the Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC. However the long-term impact is not predicted to be significant. The provision of sheetpiling/walls instead of embankments may limit access to the watercourse for otters during times of peak flow; however the impact will be slight. An otter survey in January 2015 along the Caol Stream again recorded otter signs within the original works area and otter signs were recorded within the new extended works area. Signs of otter extended an additional 300m upstream from the original works area. This area will be affected by the provision of a previously unplanned embankment. However given the limited scale of the works and the distance from the SAC no long-term impacts on otter populations are predicted. No significant reduction in fish populations which provide prey for otter and grey seal is predicted to occur.

Overall no significant increased impact on designated sites has been identified. Therefore the original conclusion that there is no evidence to indicate that works will significantly impact directly, indirectly or cumulatively on qualifying interests and conservation objectives, remains valid. On this basis no threat to the integrity of designated sites has been identified and **a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not considered necessary.**