

National Transport Authority

Ballymun / Finglas to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme

Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

The National Transport Authority (the “NTA”) is proposing to carry out the Ballymun / Finglas to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme (the “**Proposed Scheme**”).

The Proposed Scheme will be approximately 11km in length and has two main sections. The Ballymun Section will run from R108 Ballymun Road at its junction with St. Margaret’s Road just south of M50 Motorway Junction 4 to R148 Arran Quay. The Finglas Section of the Proposed Scheme will run from the R135 Finglas Road at the roundabout junction with R104 St. Margaret’s Road to Hart’s Corner in Phibsborough, where it will join the Ballymun Section of the Proposed Scheme.

The Proposed Scheme, which will provide segregated cycling facilities, bus priority infrastructure and improvement pedestrian facilities, is within the Dublin City Council (DCC) administrative area.

Scott Cawley Limited were instructed to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the Proposed Scheme to consider, analyse and assess whether in view of best scientific knowledge and objective information and the conservation objectives of the European site(s) (which are discussed further below), if the Proposed Scheme individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site(s).

The NTA has received and read the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and has considered its content and its conclusions and recommendation set out therein. Having done this, the NTA agrees with the conclusions and recommendations as set out in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

AA Screening Determination

The NTA has determined that an Appropriate Assessment of the Proposed Scheme is required as it cannot exclude, in view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective scientific information, following the screening that the NTA has carried out, that the Proposed Scheme, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in the absence of mitigation, will have a significant effect on the following 17 European Site(s) (five Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 12 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in view of the conservation objectives of those site(s):-

1. **North Dublin Bay SAC;**
2. **South Dublin Bay SAC;**
3. **Howth Head SAC;**
4. **Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC;**
5. **Lambay Island SAC;**

6. Skerries Islands SPA;
7. Lambay Island SPA;
8. Howth Head Coast SPA;
9. Ireland's Eye SPA;
10. North Bull Island SPA;
11. South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA;
12. Dalkey Islands SPA;
13. Malahide Estuary SPA;
14. Rockabill SPA;
15. Baldoyle Bay SPA;
16. Rogerstown Estuary SPA; and
17. The Murrrough SPA.

The NTA has made this determination on the basis of having considered the baseline ecological environment; the extent and characteristics of the Proposed Scheme and having identified the following potential impacts which could result in likely significant effects (LSE) to European Sites:

- Habitat degradation / effects on Qualifying Interests (QI) / Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species as a result of hydrological impacts;
- Habitat degradation as a result of introducing / spreading non-native invasive species; and
- Disturbance and displacement impacts.

Further detail is provided below on each of the potential impacts identified.

Habitat degradation / effects on QI / SCI species as a result of hydrological impacts

The Proposed Scheme is hydrologically connected to Dublin Bay via the River Tolka, Royal Canal, Claremont Stream and Bachelors Stream and existing surface water drainage pipes which drain to Ringsend WwTP, and subsequently to Dublin Bay. The potential release of contaminated surface water runoff and/or an accidental spillage or pollution event into any surface water features during construction, or operation, has the potential to affect water quality in the receiving aquatic environment.

In a potential worst case scenario, in the absence of mitigation measures, the release of contaminated surface water runoff and/or an accidental spillage or pollution event into any surface water features during construction, or operation, also has the potential to affect mobile SCI bird species and QI mammal species that commute, forage and loaf in Dublin Bay i.e., birds associated with Skerries Islands SPA, Rockabill SPA and Lambay Island SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, North Dublin Bay SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA, The Murrrough SPA and, marine mammals associated with Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC and Lambay Island SAC. This potential reduction in water quality (either alone or in-combination with other pressures on water quality) could result in the degradation of sensitive habitats present within downstream European sites, which in turn would negatively affect the SCI bird species that rely upon these habitats as foraging and / or roosting habitat. It could also negatively affect the quantity and quality of

prey available to SCI and QI populations. In a worst-case scenario these potential impacts could occur to such a degree that the conservation objectives of the Skerries Islands SPA, Rockabill SPA and Lambay Island SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, North Dublin Bay SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA, Murrough SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC and Lambay Island SAC are undermined.

As the Proposed Scheme has the potential to result in habitat degradation and effects on the qualifying / special conservation interest species of European sites as the result of hydrological impacts, there is the potential for in-combination effects to occur.

Habitat degradation as a result of introducing / spreading non-native invasive species

Three non-native invasive plant species (giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica* and Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*) listed on the Third Schedule of the (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 were recorded as being present within, or in close proximity to, the Proposed Scheme. Additionally, the desktop review returned records of five further listed species in the wider study area of the Proposed Scheme, however these species records are present within the grounds of the Botanic Gardens and Royal Canal and are considered to be confined to these locations. Therefore, there is potential for invasive species to spread or be introduced, during construction and / or routine maintenance / management works, to terrestrial habitat areas in European sites downstream in Dublin Bay via watercourses (i.e. North Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA and South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA). The introduction and / or spread of these invasive species to downstream European sites could potentially result in the degradation of existing habitats present, in particular, coastal habitats not permanently or regularly inundated by seawater. These species may outcompete other native species present, negatively impacting the species composition, diversity and abundance and the physical structural integrity of the habitat. This in turn could undermine the conservation objectives of these European sites.

As the Proposed Scheme has the potential to result in habitat degradation and effects on the QI / SCI species of European sites as a result of introducing / spreading non-native invasive species, there is the potential for in-combination effects to occur.

Disturbance and displacement impacts

A temporary and / or permanent increase in noise, vibration and / or human activity levels during the construction of the Proposed Scheme could result in the disturbance to and / or displacement of fauna species present within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme. For mammal species such as otter, disturbance effects would not be expected to extend beyond 250m¹. For wintering birds, disturbance effects would not be expected to extend beyond a distance of approximately 300m², as noise levels associated with general

¹ This is consistent with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance (Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes (2008) and Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes(2005)) documents. This is a precautionary distance, and likely to be moderated by the screening effect provided by surrounding vegetation and buildings, with the actual Zol of construction related disturbance likely to be much less in reality.

² Current understanding of construction related noise disturbance to wintering waterbirds is based on the research presented in Cutts *et al.*, (2009) and Wright *et al.*, (2010). In terms of construction noise, levels below 50dB would not be expected to result in any response from foraging or roosting birds. Noise levels between 50dB and 70dB would provoke a moderate effect / level of response from birds, i.e. birds becoming alert and some behavioural changes (e.g. reduced feeding activity), but birds would be expected to habituate to noise levels within this range. Noise levels above 70dB would likely result in birds moving out of the affected zone, or leaving the site altogether. At approximately 300m, typical noise levels associated with construction activity (BS 5228) are generally below 60dB or, in most cases, are approaching the 50dB threshold.

construction activities would attenuate to close to background levels at that distance. There are no European sites within the disturbance Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the Proposed Scheme.

There are a number of SPAs which are designated for SCI species that are known to forage and / or roost at inland sites across Dublin, such as amenity grassland playing pitches (i.e. Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Rockabill SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA and The Murrough SPA). These species included include light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*), oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), blacked-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) and lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*). Suitable inland foraging / roosting sites, which these bird species utilise, are located within the potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme.

There is potential for the Proposed Scheme to result in the disturbance / displacement of SCI bird species associated with SPA populations. Therefore, there also is the potential for in-combination effects to occur as a result of disturbance / displacement.

Summary

The habitat degradation (hydrological and invasive species), and disturbance and displacement of species impacts associated with the Proposed Scheme have the potential to affect the receiving environment and, consequently, have the potential to affect the conservation objectives supporting the QI / SCI of a European site(s). Therefore, the potential for the Proposed Scheme to have likely significant effects on a European site(s) cannot be excluded.

In-combination effects

There is the potential for developments planned or granted, or those implemented under a range of land use and other plans, to lie either within European sites, or be situated in a location where they may be within the ZoI of the European sites which also fall within the ZoI of the Proposed Scheme.

Key development projects with potential for in-combination effects due to their size, nature and / or location include other Core Bus Corridor Schemes, MetroLink, upgrades to or new rail infrastructure, utility infrastructure including proposed or consented water utility improvement.

The potential for in-combination effects between these plans and projects and the Proposed Scheme arises via through the LSE as identified for the Proposed Scheme (i.e. habitat degradation (hydrological and invasive species), and disturbance and displacement effects) acting in-combination with similar effects.

Therefore, the potential for the following in-combination effects arising from plans and key development projects cannot be ruled out:

- Habitat degradation / effects on QI / SCI species as a result of hydrological impacts (for example reduction in water quality in catchments draining to Dublin Bay affecting the conservation objectives supporting aquatic habitats and species in North Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, Howth Head SAC, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, Lambay Island SAC, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Rockabill SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, and The Murrough SPA);

- Habitat degradation as a result of introducing / spreading non-native invasive species (North Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA); and
- Disturbance and displacement impacts (for example ex-situ inland feeding sites which are utilised by SCI wintering bird species within the potential disturbance ZoI of the Proposed Scheme for Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Lambay Island SPA, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA and The Murrugh SPA.

Conclusions of Screening Assessment Process

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of all the relevant information and in view of best scientific knowledge, and applying the precautionary principle, it can be concluded that there is the possibility for significant effects on the following European sites, in the absence of mitigation, either arising from the project alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, as a result of habitat degradation from hydrological impacts / invasive species introduction and/or spread, and disturbance and displacement impacts: North Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, Howth Head SAC, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, Lambay Island SAC, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Rockabill SPA and The Murrugh SPA.

In reaching this conclusion, the nature of the project and its potential relationship with all European sites within the zone of influence, and their conservation objectives, have been fully considered.

The NTA has requested that a Natura Impact Statement be prepared and finalised for submission to An Bord Pleanála with an application for approval for the Proposed Scheme.

This determination is available for inspection at the National Transport Authority Offices, Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2, D02 WT20 and on its website at www.busconnects.ie.

Signed: 

For and on behalf of the BusConnects Programme Board of the NTA

Dated:- 24.6.2022