National Transport Authority

Liffey Valley to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme

Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

The National Transport Authority (the "**NTA**") is proposing to carry out the Liffey Valley to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme (hereafter referred to as the "**Proposed Scheme**").

The Proposed Scheme is comprised of one main alignment in terms of the route it follows, from Liffey Valley to the City Centre. The Proposed Scheme is approximately 9.2km in length and commences at Fonthill Road and proceeds to the west and south of Liffey Valley Shopping Centre along the distributor road towards Coldcut Road. From here, it will join the R833 Coldcut Road continue over the M50, through Ballyfermot Village and along Sarsfield Road. It will then turn onto Grattan Crescent and proceed through Kilmainham to terminate at the end of High Street. The Proposed Scheme includes a substantial increase in the level of bus priority along the corridor, including the provision of additional lengths of bus lane. A segregated cycle track is also being accommodated in both directions along with improved pedestrian facilities. The Proposed Scheme is located within the Dublin City Council (DCC) and South Dublin County Council (SDCC) administrative areas.

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 recommendation 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 Sites (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. **South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA,**
7. **North Bull Island SPA,**
8. **Howth Head Coast SPA,**
9. **Malahide Estuary SPA,**

10. **Baldoyle Bay SPA,**
11. **Rogerstown Estuary SPA,**
12. **Skerries Islands SPA,**
13. **Lambay Island SPA;**
14. **Ireland's Eye SPA,**
15. **Dalkey Island SPA,**
16. **Rockabill SPA, and**
17. **The Murrough 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 loss and fragmentation;
- 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 loss and fragmentation

The Proposed Scheme does not overlap with any European sites and the nearest European site is South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, which is located in Dublin Bay, approximately 6km downstream of the Proposed Scheme . Therefore, there is no potential for direct habitat loss and fragmentation to occur. Habitat loss may occur indirectly as a consequence of severe habitat degradation arising from a reduction in water quality and / or a change to the hydrological regime, as described in the section below.

1 Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species for which SPAs in the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme have been designated are known to utilise ex situ feeding sites in the Dublin area (i.e. Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA and Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Lambay Island SPA and The Murrough SPA). The Proposed Scheme will result in the temporary loss of one inland site within the Proposed Scheme footprint suitable to support breeding gull and wintering bird species - at Liffey Gaels GAA Club grounds , before the junction with Chapelizod Bypass on Con Colbert Road (referred to as CBC0007WB003). While no birds were recorded during the single season of surveys, nonetheless the Proposed Scheme will result (for the duration of the construction period) in the loss of sites suitable to support breeding and wintering SCI bird species. Therefore, there is potential for impacts on SCI species associated with SPAs to occur as a result of habitat loss / fragmentation.

As the Proposed Scheme has the potential to result in habitat loss / fragmentation and effects on the QI / SCI species of European sites as a result, there is the potential for in combination effects to occur.

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

The Proposed Scheme is hydrologically connected to Dublin Bay via the Ringsend waste-water treatment plant (WWTP), River Liffey and River Camac.

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. Such a pollution event may include: the release of

sediment into receiving waters and the subsequent increase in mobilised suspended solids; and the accidental spillage and / or leaks of contaminants into receiving waters. It should be noted that a highly substantial event or events would be required to generate such quantities, which is considered unlikely.

In 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, Lambay Island SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, North Dublin Bay SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA, The Murrough 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.

As the Proposed Scheme has the potential to result in habitat degradation and effects on the QI/SCI 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

Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), a species listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 was identified along or adjacent to the Proposed Scheme in four locations. Additionally, the desk study returned records of several listed invasive species in the wider study area of the Proposed Scheme. Therefore, there is potential for spread or introduction of invasive species, during construction and/or routine maintenance / management works, to terrestrial habitat areas in European sites downstream in Dublin Bay. (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 150m[1]. For wintering birds, disturbance effects would not be expected to extend beyond a distance of

[1] This is consistent with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance (Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes. This is a precautionary distance, and likely to be moderated by the screening effect

approximately 300m^2, as noise levels associated with general construction activities would attenuate to close to background levels at that distance. There are no European sites within the disturbance ZoI of the Proposed Scheme. However, ex-situ SCI species associated with European sites have been recorded foraging and / or roosting in the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme. The Proposed Scheme has the potential to result in the disturbance / displacement of the SCI 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 loss / fragmentation and degradation of habitats, 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 Proposed Scheme is likely to have 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 through the LSEs identified for the Proposed Scheme (i.e. habitat loss and fragmentation, habitat degradation (hydrological and invasive species) and disturbance and displacement) 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 fragmentation (for example European sites at risk of ex-situ habitat losses; Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, North Bull Island SPA and South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA and The Murrough SPA);
- 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, Howth Head Coast SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, Lambay Island SAC, North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Rockabill

provided by surrounding vegetation and buildings, with the actual ZoI 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.

SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Dalkey Islands SPA and The Murrough SPA);

- Habitat degradation as a result of introducing / spreading non-native invasive species (for example to downstream European sites North Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA and 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 Murrough SPA.

Conclusions of Screening Assessment Process

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of all 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 loss and fragmentation, 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 Murrough 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