

NATURA IMPACT REPORT

IN SUPPORT OF THE
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT
OF THE
**WILD ATLANTIC WAY OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
2015-2019**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF
ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

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Section 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Background

This is the Natura Impact Report for the Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme that has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.

This report is divided into the following five sections:

Section 1	Introduction and Background
Section 2	Screening
Section 3	Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
Section 4	Mitigation Measures
Section 5	Conclusion

1.2 Legislative Context

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. In Ireland, these are candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC), hereafter referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European Sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [European 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

This legislation is implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. These regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats)(Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in the CJEU judgements.

1.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

This AA has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance and legislation:

- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.
- Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010.
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009.
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting European Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, European Commission Environment DG, 2000.
- *Managing European Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*: European Commission, 2000.

AA comprises up to four successive stages:

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: AA

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts. If adequate mitigation is proposed to ensure no significant adverse impacts on European sites, then the process may end at this stage. However, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage 3.

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site.

Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. First, the plan should aim to avoid any impacts on European sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan-making process and writing the plan in order to avoid such impacts. Second, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If the plan is still likely to result in impacts on European sites, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, then it must be rejected. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI test) under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect.

In the case of this Natura Impact Report, it was found that the Programme required assessment to Stage 2 AA.

Section 2 Screening

2.1 Description of the Programme

This Natura Impact Report considers the potential impacts of implementing the *Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme* on the Natura 2000 network of sites. The Operation Programme is summarised in the following sections.

2.1.1 The Wild Atlantic Way

The Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) is a new tourism brand for the west of Ireland. The most tangible expression of the brand comprises the coordination and linking of a number of existing touring routes stretching approximately 2,500 km along the Atlantic coast from Donegal to West Cork (See Figure 1). Along the route, candidate Discovery Points (viewing points and lay-bys), all of which are existing and in use, in addition to 28 Embarkation Points to the 26 off-shore islands, are identified. Fáilte Ireland is co-ordinating future WAW works relating to the Discovery Points through the Operational Programme, but not developing any of these works – they will be developed by the relevant local authorities (Part 8 requirements as set out in the Planning and Development Act as amended still apply) and others. The route and the candidate Discovery Points may change if the environmental monitoring strategy produces results that show that visitor activity and/or visitor intensification is predicted or observed to result in a negative impact on the environment in particular locations. For this reason, a mid-term review of the route and the candidate Discovery Points has been built into the Operational Programme.

2.1.2 Operational Programme 2015-2019

The Operational Programme for the WAW sets out a strategy and an implementation framework and programme for the sustainable development of the WAW over the period 2015-2019.

This Operational Programme is the first in a series of strategies which will set out a vision for the continued evolution of the WAW over the decades to come. While the WAW brand is currently in an embryonic form, it is hoped that it will mature over time to become synonymous with great experiences of Atlantic culture in a high quality environment.

This and future Programmes will constitute an iterative process which will continually adapt to meet the needs of visitors, the local community and culture, the environment and the tourism industry and trade, while striving all the time to strike a balance between them.

While the route has been branded for almost a year, the Operational Programme now sets out the strategy that will guide the future sustainable development of the initiative as the initiative enters its implementation stage. The immediate catchment of the WAW is the area surrounding the spine of the route itself, the landmass to the west of the route and the immediate landmass to the east of the route. It is envisaged that before the end of the period of this Operational Programme, a process will be followed to identify a series of loops linked to the main spine, in association with appropriate partners, to encourage further exploration of the west of Ireland by visitors. In addition, a number of gateways to the WAW, including Cork, Killarney and Limerick which, while not directly on the route, have an important role to play as key accommodation hubs which service the wider area in addition to having an appeal in their own right.

While the immediate catchment of the WAW is the coastal zone, the Programme Area for the purpose of the Operational Programme is the totality of the nine western coastal counties, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry, and Cork. At almost 2,500 km, the WAW covers an extensive geographical area which can prove difficult for visitors to understand and consume in its entirety. For this reason six geographic zones have been identified to amplify different sections of the WAW and to make it easy for consumers to orientate themselves based on their motivations. The presentation of the WAW through six geographic zones allows the travel trade to present the brand through a series of distinct

destinations and itineraries. The route stretches from the village of Muff on the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal to Kinsale in West Cork.

The goals and outcomes of the Wild Atlantic Way are presented under the headings of the 'VICE' model, a recognised tourism model for sustainable development and which considers the four key and interdependent elements of Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment.

The vision for the WAW brand is as follows:

To create a world class, sustainable and un-missable destination brand that engages and energises the visitor so that they become powerful advocates and leaves them wanting to return for more.

The primary goals of the Operational Programme are as follows:

- 1. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way brand is compelling to our target market segments and that the Wild Atlantic Way itself becomes a world-class visitor experience.*
- 2. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers balanced and sustainable revenue and jobs growth with greater geographic and seasonal spread.*
- 3. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers benefits to local communities in the west of Ireland and contributes to a better place to live for everyone.*
- 4. To ensure that the implementation of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme facilitates the protection and enhancement of the environment of the west of Ireland – as the fundamental asset that is the basis of the Wild Atlantic Way – in association with other key stakeholders.*

Relating to these four goals, the following are the outcomes that are expected following the implementation of the Operational Programme:

- An increase in the number of paid bed-nights in the programme area.*
- An increase in the satisfaction ratings among visitors to the Wild Atlantic Way.*
- Growth in the number of overseas visitors engaging with the Wild Atlantic Way on social media platforms.*
- An increase in the levels of awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way among overseas visitors.*
- An increase in the average length of stay of visitors to the programme area.*
- An increase in revenue from overseas visitors.*
- Greater spread / dispersal of visitors throughout the programme area.*
- Season extension into the shoulder and off-peak months.*
- An increase in the number of repeat visits by overseas holidaymakers.*
- Growing employment levels within tourism.*
- Growing commercial opportunities as a result of the Wild Atlantic Way.*
- Increase in the number of tourism businesses working collaboratively and developing tourism experiences.*
- High levels of positive engagement and sense of ownership by local communities with the Wild Atlantic Way.*
- Awareness is raised among communities and visitors of the unique Irish Atlantic heritage, culture and wildlife.*
- The Operational Programme demonstrates full compliance with all relevant requirements arising from EU and Irish planning and environmental legislation.*
- The Wild Atlantic Way facilitates the protection and enhancement of the environment of the West of Ireland, in association with other key stakeholders.*

The detailed provisions of the Operational Programme are presented as a series of Objectives under each of which there is a strategy and a series of actions listed (see Table 6).

2.1.3 Consideration of Alternatives

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland needed to respond to the significant decline in international bednights and revenue in the west of Ireland that had occurred between 2007 and 2010, with a marketing initiative that would help to arrest and eventually begin to reverse this decline.

There were a number of options open to the Authority, all of which were considered.

Option 1 Continuation of Uncoordinated Approach

Option 1 was to continue with a regional approach to tourism development in the west, with each of four regions competing with one another for market share, but all contributing to a large mix of destination brands which struggled for attention in the international marketplace. In terms of touring routes, over 35 were identified which touched upon the west coast, but only three of which crossed a county boundary. Any of the existing brands in the west of Ireland lacked the scale and singularity required to be noticed in overseas markets. This option could be classed as a 'do nothing' or a 'status quo' scenario. It was considered that pursuing this option would not result in a sufficient disruption of the downward trend in overseas bednights and revenue that was the case at the time. It was this 'status quo' option that had been in force when the decline occurred so there no evidence to suggest that it would have the ability to arrest or reverse the decline.

Option 2 Further Growth of Popular Centres

Option 2 was to focus future growth on those centres that are currently popular with visitors and try to grow them further. This option would involve the development of a single attraction of sufficient scale to focus attention on the west coast. Such an attraction would be of a scale similar to that of the recently developed Titanic Visitor Centre in Belfast. It was considered that such an approach would not provide a solution for the entire western seaboard and would not have the ability to sufficiently disrupt the geographical seasonal inequities that currently exist along the west coast. It was also considered that it would be more appropriate as part of a tourism development strategy for a large urban centre, as the Titanic Visitor Centre was for Belfast.

Option 3 Single Overarching Brand - Coastal Touring Routes

Option 3 was to consider to have a single, overarching brand for the west of Ireland which would equip it with a greater potential to achieve 'cut-through' in target overseas markets by developing the concept of the WAW as both a brand and a touring route. Comparator experiences such as the Great Ocean Road (Australia), the Garden Route (South Africa) and the Big Sur (North America) were all examined. The brand was tested and consumer groups responded very positively to it. In order to deliver on the brand proposition, the route identified had to be a coastal route.

Option 3a Greenway Route

As part of this option, the development of a single walking route or Greenway (including cycling) was considered instead of a branded touring route. The model for this was the Wales Coast Path which was in development at the time. This constituted Option 3a. However, this option would constitute a significant level of new development in terms of cycleways and, therefore, presented barriers to the launch of the brand in 2014, as on-road cycling routes would not satisfy the needs or expectations of our core overseas markets. Other issues included land ownership and the possible requirement to seek planning permission, neither of which were insurmountable in principal, but not within the timescale allowed.

However, this Option 3a, in whole or in part, will still be considered as part of an objective of this Operational Programme. Building on the existing and planned network of coastal Greenways, walking routes and Blueways, Fáilte Ireland will co-ordinate the Local Authorities in their efforts to provide enhanced facilities for walking, cycling and kayaking, so that they tie in with the WAW. In time, therefore, it is hoped that Option 3a will become a reality. In particular, Fáilte Ireland is exploring options with the National Trails Office and other partners, associated with the realisation of the Eurovelo 1

European Cycle route. In order to allow for this option to be part of the future implementation of the WAW, the original name of 'Wild Atlantic Drive' was deliberately changed to 'Wild Atlantic Way' so that it would not imply to the visitor that the WAW is just about driving and that there are also options to explore the WAW based on public transport, cycling, walking and on the water.

Option 3b Most Scenic Driving Routes only

Option 3b was considered as part of the route identification process and involved only including those roads that were most scenic or which had largely unbroken views of the coast. This was the approach taken in identifying the 16 National Touring Routes in Norway. It was decided, however, that this might only serve to intensify visitors in already popular areas and might not achieve one of the goals of the initiative, namely to spread visitor bednights and revenue into areas where there is under-utilised capacity.

Option 3c Single, Continuous Route

Option 3c was to identify a single, continuous route along the entire west coast, from Co. Donegal to Co. Cork. It was deemed that this would create the necessary scale and singularity required for a brand that was to be visible in our key overseas markets. It was decided as part of this option to eventually identify and include a number of loops inland off the main spine within the first five years of operation. The reason why it was decided not to identify the loops immediately was because it was considered that it would result in a dilution of the brand during the formative years if a large portion of the route was inland as opposed to predominately coastal and, thereby, not directly 'on-brand'.

The key environmental consideration in the route identification process, which included collective stakeholder decision-making and public consultation, was to ensure that the route to be chosen had to have the capacity to take two-way car, camper van and minibus traffic, while separate sections of the route were identified for coaches as appropriate. This was to avoid the selection of routes in sensitive areas that would require expansion or renewal works. Where roads along the coast with continuous sea-views were deemed to be too narrow, spurs from a wider road which ended in an existing beach car park or viewing point ('Discovery Point') were identified. This meant that even if the chosen route did not closely follow the coast due to capacity issues, the visitor was never very far at any one time from a view of the Atlantic.

Within Option 3c 'Single, Continuous Route' there are three sub-options for the provision of Discovery Points (viewing points and lay-bys) as follow:

3c (i) No Discovery Points, continuation of uncoordinated tourism projects

The Programme under this alternative does not provide for Discovery Points but allows for the continuation of new, uncoordinated tourism projects along the western seaboard undertaken by a variety of local groups, private landowners and local authorities.

3c (ii) New Discovery Points

The Programme under this alternative provides for a coordinated set of new Discovery Points.

3c (iii) Restriction of new development, Limit in number of Discovery Points

The Programme under this alternative facilitates a restriction of new development and limits the number of Discovery Points. There is an emphasis on re-use and reinforcement of existing infrastructure and there is an application of design guidelines to contribute towards the protection of the environment. Option 3c is the one that is currently being pursued, with the intention that the objectives at the core of Option 3a will also be implemented over time.

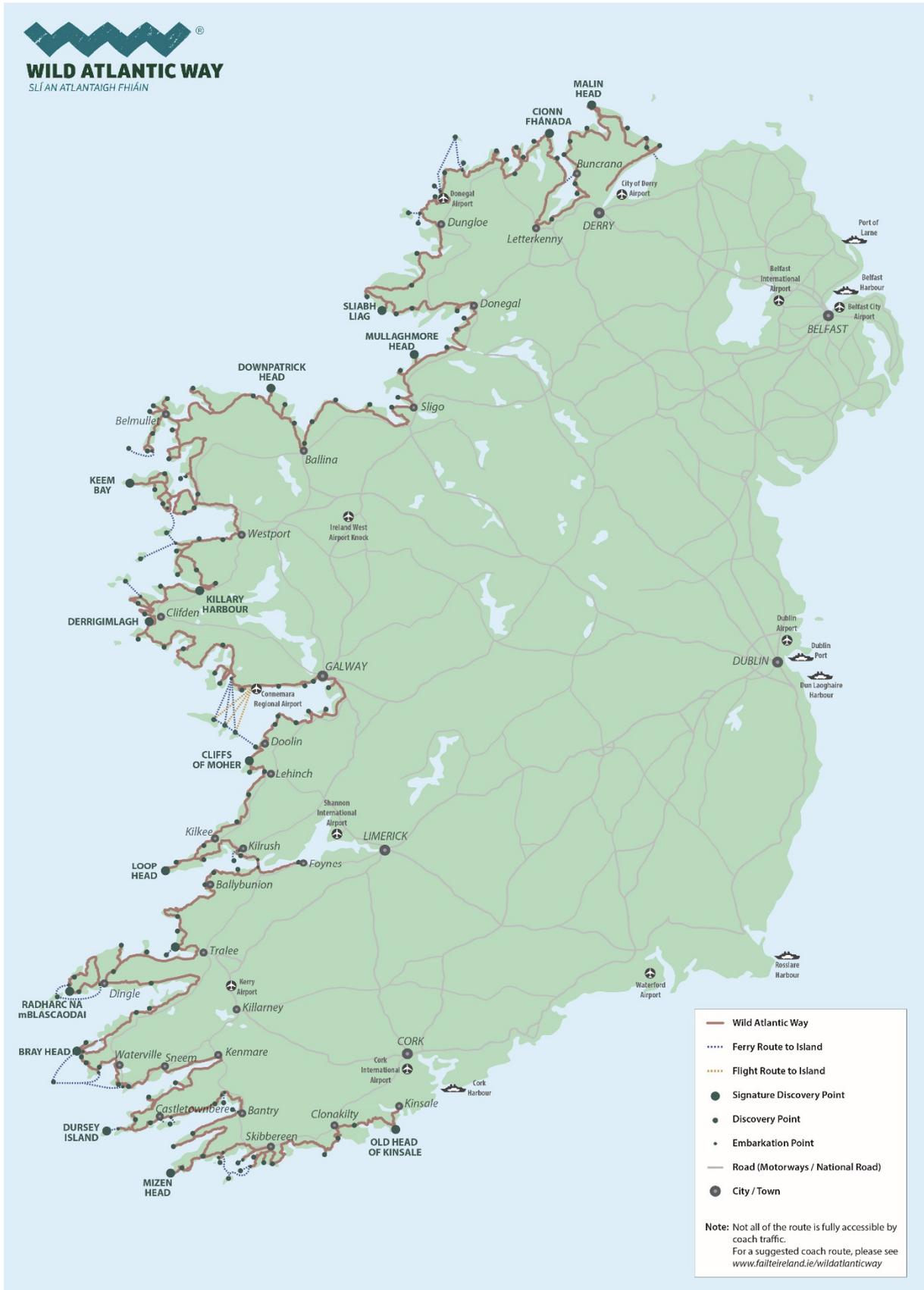


Figure 1: Wild Atlantic Way Route

2.2 European sites potentially affected by the WAW Operational Programme

This section of the screening process describes the European sites which may be potentially affected by the implementation of the Operational Programme. The Study Area of the Operational Programme comprises the entire extent of the nine western coastal counties that the route passes through. A distance of 15 km is currently recommended in the DEHLG document *Guidance for Planning Authorities*¹ and as a precautionary measure, to ensure that all potentially affected European sites are included in the screening process, therefore those European sites which occur within a 15 km buffer zone of each county are also considered. Those European sites which occur within the Study Area of the Operational Programme are presented in Table 1 below (total of 281 cSACs and 108 SPAs), while those sites which occur within a further 15 km are presented in Table 2 below (total of 29 cSACs and 4 SPAs, of which eight occur in Northern Ireland). A map illustrating the location of all relevant European sites in relation to the Study Area is presented in Figure 2 below.

Further information including those Qualifying Interests (QIs) of relevant cSACs and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of SPAs for which individual sites have been selected are presented in Appendix I of this report. The previously reported threats associated with each individual site are also presented in Appendix I. This information was derived from a variety of sources:

- *Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission "Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland" (NPWS 2013)*
- *Site Synopses*
- *NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms*
- *Detailed Site Specific Conservation Objectives and supporting documents (where available)*

Since the conservation objectives for the European sites focus on maintaining and restoring the favourable conservation condition of the QIs and SCIs of each site, the screening process concentrated on assessing the potential implications of the Operational Programme against the qualifying interests of those European sites which may potentially be affected.

Those QIs and SCIs for the relevant European sites are discussed in Section 2.2.1 below.

Table 1: All European sites that occur within the nine counties of the Study Area

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
4034	Trawbreaga Bay SPA	Donegal	SPA
4039	Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA	Donegal	SPA
4057	Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA	Donegal	SPA
4060	Lough Fern SPA	Donegal	SPA
4073	Tory Island SPA	Donegal	SPA
4075	Lough Swilly SPA	Donegal	SPA
4082	Greers Isle SPA	Donegal	SPA
4083	Inishboffin, Inishdoeey and Inishbeg SPA	Donegal	SPA
4087	Lough Foyle SPA	Donegal	SPA
4090	Sheskinmore Lough SPA	Donegal	SPA
4099	Pettigoe Plateau SPA	Donegal	SPA
4100	Inishtrahull SPA	Donegal	SPA
4110	Lough Nillan Bog SPA	Donegal	SPA
4115	Inishduff SPA	Donegal	SPA
4116	Inishkeel SPA	Donegal	SPA
4120	Rathlin O'Birne Island SPA	Donegal	SPA
4121	Roaninish SPA	Donegal	SPA

¹ DEHLG (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
4132	Illancrone & Inishkeeragh SPA	Donegal	SPA
4145	Durnesh Lough SPA	Donegal	SPA
4146	Malin Head SPA	Donegal	SPA
4148	Fanad Head SPA	Donegal	SPA
4149	Falcarragh to Meen	Donegal	SPA
4150	West Donegal Coast SPA	Donegal	SPA
4151	Donegal Bay SPA	Donegal	SPA
4194	Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA	Donegal	SPA
0111	Aran Island (Donegal) Cliffs	Donegal	cSAC
0115	Ballintra	Donegal	cSAC
0116	Ballyarr Wood	Donegal	cSAC
0129	Croaghonagh Bog	Donegal	cSAC
0133	Donegal Bay (Murvagh)	Donegal	cSAC
0138	Durnesh Lough	Donegal	cSAC
0140	Fawnboy Bog/Lough Nacung	Donegal	cSAC
0142	Gannivegil Bog	Donegal	cSAC
0147	Horn Head and Rinclevan	Donegal	cSAC
0154	Inishtrahull	Donegal	cSAC
0163	Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood	Donegal	cSAC
0164	Lough Nagreany Dunes	Donegal	cSAC
0165	Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatieve)	Donegal	cSAC
0168	Magheradrumman Bog	Donegal	cSAC
0172	Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog	Donegal	cSAC
0173	Meentygrannagh Bog	Donegal	cSAC
0181	Rathlin O'Birne Island	Donegal	cSAC
0185	Sessiagh Lough	Donegal	cSAC
0189	Slieve League	Donegal	cSAC
0190	Slieve Tooy/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay	Donegal	cSAC
0191	St. John's Point	Donegal	cSAC
0194	Tranarossan and Melmore Lough	Donegal	cSAC
0197	West of Ardara/Maas Road	Donegal	cSAC
1090	Ballyness Bay	Donegal	cSAC
1107	Coolvoy Bog	Donegal	cSAC
1125	Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau	Donegal	cSAC
1141	Gweedore Bay and Islands	Donegal	cSAC
1151	Kindrum Lough	Donegal	cSAC
1179	Muckish Mountain	Donegal	cSAC
1190	Sheephaven	Donegal	cSAC
1195	Termon Strand	Donegal	cSAC
1880	Meenaguse Scragh	Donegal	cSAC
1975	Ballyhoorisky Point to Fanad Head	Donegal	cSAC
1992	Tamur Bog	Donegal	cSAC
2012	North Inishowen Coast	Donegal	cSAC
2047	Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park	Donegal	cSAC
2135	Lough Nageage	Donegal	cSAC
2159	Mulroy Bay	Donegal	cSAC
2164	Lough Golagh and Breesy Hill	Donegal	cSAC
2176	Leannan River	Donegal	cSAC
2259	Tory Island Coast	Donegal	cSAC
2283	Rutland Island and Sound	Donegal	cSAC
2287	Lough Swilly	Donegal	cSAC

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
2301	River Finn	Donegal	cSAC
2303	Dunmuckrum Turloughs	Donegal	cSAC
4187	Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA	Leitrim, Sligo	SPA
0428	Lough Melvin	Leitrim, Donegal	cSAC
0584	Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands	Cavan, Leitrim	cSAC
0623	Ben Bulbin, Gleniff and Glenade Complex	Leitrim, Sligo	cSAC
0625	Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore	Leitrim, Sligo	cSAC
1403	Arroo Mountain	Leitrim	cSAC
1919	Glenade Lough	Leitrim	cSAC
1976	Lough Gill	Leitrim, Sligo	cSAC
2032	Boleybrack Mountain	Cavan, Leitrim	cSAC
4013	Drumcliff Bay SPA	Sligo	SPA
4035	Cummeen Strand SPA	Sligo	SPA
4036	Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA	Mayo, Sligo	SPA
4048	Lough Gara SPA	Sligo	SPA
4050	Lough Arrow SPA	Sligo	SPA
4068	Inishmurray SPA	Sligo	SPA
4129	Ballysadare Bay SPA	Sligo	SPA
4133	Aughris Head SPA	Sligo	SPA
4135	Ardbolin Island & Horse Island SPA	Sligo	SPA
0458	Killala Bay/Moy Estuary	Mayo, Sligo	cSAC
0497	Flughany Bog	Mayo, Sligo	cSAC
0622	Ballysadare Bay	Sligo	cSAC
0627	Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay)	Sligo	cSAC
0633	Lough Hoe Bog	Mayo, Sligo	cSAC
0634	Lough Nabrickeagh Bog	Sligo	cSAC
0636	Templehouse and Cloonacleigha Loughs	Sligo	cSAC
0637	Turloughmore (Sligo)	Sligo	cSAC
0638	Union Wood	Sligo	cSAC
1656	Bricklieve Mountains & Keishcorran	Sligo	cSAC
1669	Knockalongy and Knockachree Cliffs	Sligo	cSAC
1673	Lough Arrow	Roscommon, Sligo	cSAC
1680	Streedagh Point Dunes	Sligo	cSAC
1898	Unshin River	Sligo	cSAC
2006	Ox Mountains Bogs	Mayo, Sligo	cSAC
4004	Inishkea Islands SPA	Mayo	SPA
4037	Blacksod Bay / Broadhaven	Mayo	SPA
4051	Lough Carra SPA	Mayo	SPA
4052	Carrowmore Lake SPA	Mayo	SPA
4072	Stags of Broadhaven SPA	Mayo	SPA
4074	Illanmaster SPA	Mayo	SPA
4084	Inishglora & Inishkeeragh SPA	Mayo	SPA
4093	Termoncarragh Lough & Annagh Machair SPA	Mayo	SPA
4098	Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA	Mayo	SPA
4111	Duvillaun Islands SPA	Mayo	SPA
4136	Clare Island SPA	Mayo	SPA
4177	Bills Rocks SPA	Mayo	SPA
4212	Cross Lough (Killadoon) SPA	Mayo	SPA
4227	Mullet Peninsula SPA	Mayo	SPA
4228	Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA	Mayo	SPA
4235	Doogort Machair SPA	Mayo	SPA

Appropriate Assessment for the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme 2015-2019

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
0461	Ardkill Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0463	Balla Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0466	Bellacorick Iron Flush	Mayo	cSAC
0470	Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex	Mayo	cSAC
0471	Brackloon Woods	Mayo	cSAC
0472	Broadhaven Bay	Mayo	cSAC
0475	Carrowkeel Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0476	Carrowmore Lake Complex	Mayo	cSAC
0479	Cloughmoyne	Mayo	cSAC
0480	Clyard Kettle-holes	Mayo	cSAC
0484	Cross Lough (Killadoon)	Mayo	cSAC
0485	Corraun Plateau	Mayo	cSAC
0492	Doocastle Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0495	Duvillaun Islands	Mayo	cSAC
0500	Glenamoy Bog Complex	Mayo	cSAC
0503	Greaghans Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0504	Kilglassan/Caheravoostia Turlough Complex	Mayo	cSAC
0507	Inishkea Islands	Mayo	cSAC
0516	Lackan Saltmarsh and Kilcummin Head	Mayo	cSAC
0522	Lough Gall Bog	Mayo	cSAC
0525	Shrule Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0527	Moore Hall (Lough Carra)	Mayo	cSAC
0532	Oldhead Wood	Mayo	cSAC
0534	Owenduff/Nephin Complex	Mayo	cSAC
0541	Skealaghan Turlough	Mayo	cSAC
0542	Slieve Fyagh Bog	Mayo	cSAC
1482	Clew Bay Complex	Mayo	cSAC
1482	Clew Bay Complex	Mayo	cSAC
1497	Doogort Machair/Lough Doo	Mayo	cSAC
1501	Erris Head	Mayo	cSAC
1513	Keel Machair/Menaun Cliffs	Mayo	cSAC
1529	Lough Cahasy, Lough Baun and Roonah Lough	Mayo	cSAC
1536	Mocorha Lough	Mayo	cSAC
1571	Urlaur Lakes	Mayo, Roscommon	cSAC
1899	Cloonakillina Lough	Mayo	cSAC
1922	Bellacorick Bog Complex	Mayo	cSAC
1932	Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex	Mayo	cSAC
1955	Croaghaun/Slievemore	Mayo	cSAC
2005	Bellacragher Saltmarsh	Mayo	cSAC
2081	Ballinafad	Mayo	cSAC
2144	Newport River	Mayo	cSAC
2177	Lough Dahybaun	Mayo	cSAC
2179	Towerhill House	Mayo	cSAC
2243	Clare Island Cliffs	Mayo	cSAC
2268	Achill Head	Mayo	cSAC
2298	River Moy	Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo	cSAC
2320	Kildun Souterrain	Mayo	cSAC
4042	Lough Corrib SPA	Galway, Mayo	SPA
4056	Lough Cutra SPA	Galway	SPA
4062	Lough Mask SPA	Galway, Mayo	SPA
4089	Rahasane Turlough SPA	Galway	SPA

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
4096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Galway	SPA
4097	River Suck Callows SPA	Galway	SPA
4107	Coole-Garryland SPA	Galway	SPA
4134	Lough Rea SPA	Galway	SPA
4142	Cregganna Marsh SPA	Galway	SPA
4144	High Island, Inishshark & Davillaun SPA	Galway	SPA
4152	Inishmore SPA	Galway	SPA
4159	Slyne Head To Ardmore Point SPA	Galway	SPA
4170	Cruagh Island SPA	Galway	SPA
4181	Connemara Bog Complex SPA	Galway	SPA
4221	Illaunnaon SPA	Galway	SPA
4231	Inishboffin, Omev Island and Turbot Island SPA	Galway	SPA
0212	Inishmaan Island	Galway	cSAC
0213	Inishmore Island	Galway	cSAC
0216	River Shannon Callows	Galway, Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary, Westmeath	cSAC
0218	Coolcam Turlough	Galway, Roscommon	cSAC
0231	Barroughter Bog	Galway	cSAC
0238	Caherglassaun Turlough	Galway	cSAC
0242	Castletaylor Complex	Galway	cSAC
0248	Cloonmoylan Bog	Galway	cSAC
0252	Coole-Garryland Complex	Galway	cSAC
0255	Croaghill Turlough	Galway	cSAC
0261	Derrycrag Wood Nature Reserve	Galway	cSAC
0278	Inishboffin and Inishshark	Galway	cSAC
0285	Kilsallagh Bog	Galway	cSAC
0286	Kiltartan Cave (Coole)	Galway	cSAC
0295	Levally Lough	Galway	cSAC
0296	Lisnageeragh Bog and Ballinastack Turlough	Galway	cSAC
0297	Lough Corrib	Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	cSAC
0299	Lough Cutra	Galway	cSAC
0301	Lough Lurgeen Bog/Glenamaddy Turlough	Galway	cSAC
0304	Lough Rea	Galway	cSAC
0318	Peterswell Turlough	Galway	cSAC
0319	Pollnacknockaun Wood Nature Reserve	Galway	cSAC
0322	Rahasane Turlough	Galway	cSAC
0324	Rosroe Bog	Galway	cSAC
0326	Shankill West Bog	Galway	cSAC
0328	Slyne Head Islands	Galway	cSAC
0330	Tully Mountain	Galway	cSAC
0474	Ballymaglancy Cave, Cong	Galway	cSAC
0606	Lough Fingall Complex	Galway	cSAC
1228	Aughrusbeg Machair and Lake	Galway	cSAC
1242	Carrownagappul Bog	Galway	cSAC
1251	Cregduff Lough	Galway	cSAC
1257	Dog's Bay	Galway	cSAC
1271	Gortnandarragh Limestone Pavement	Galway	cSAC
1275	Inisheer Island	Galway	cSAC
1285	Kiltiernan Turlough	Galway	cSAC
1309	Omev Island Machair	Galway	cSAC

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
1311	Rusheenduff Lough	Galway	cSAC
1312	Ross Lake and Woods	Galway	cSAC
1313	Rosturra Wood	Galway	cSAC
1774	Lough Carra/Mask Complex	Galway, Mayo	cSAC
1913	Sonnagh Bog	Galway	cSAC
2008	Maumturk Mountains	Galway	cSAC
2031	The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex	Galway	cSAC
2034	Connemara Bog Complex	Galway	cSAC
2074	Slyne Head Peninsula	Galway	cSAC
2110	Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog	Galway, Roscommon	cSAC
2111	Kilkieran Bay and Islands	Galway	cSAC
2117	Lough Coy	Galway	cSAC
2118	Barnahallia Lough	Galway	cSAC
2119	Lough Nageeron	Galway	cSAC
2129	Murvey Machair	Galway	cSAC
2130	Tully Lough	Galway	cSAC
2180	Gortacarnaun Wood	Galway	cSAC
2181	Drummin Wood	Galway	cSAC
2213	Glenloughaun Esker	Galway	cSAC
2241	Lough Derg, North-East Shore	Galway, Tipperary	cSAC
2244	Ardrahan Grassland	Galway	cSAC
2265	Kingstown Bay	Galway	cSAC
2293	Carrowbaun, Newhall and Ballylee Turloughs	Galway	cSAC
2294	Cahermore Turlough	Galway	cSAC
2295	Ballinduff Turlough	Galway	cSAC
2296	Williamstown Turloughs	Galway	cSAC
2317	Cregg House Stables, Crusheen	Galway	cSAC
2347	Camderry Bog	Galway	cSAC
2350	Curraglehanagh Bog	Galway	cSAC
2352	Monivea Bog	Galway	cSAC
2356	Ardgraique Bog	Galway	cSAC
4005	Cliffs of Moher SPA	Clare	SPA
4031	Inner Galway Bay SPA	Clare, Galway	SPA
4041	Ballyallia Lough SPA	Clare	SPA
4058	Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA	Clare, Galway	SPA
4077	River Shannon and River Fergus SPA	Clare, Kerry, Limerick	SPA
4114	Illaunonearaun SPA	Clare	SPA
4119	Loop Head SPA	Clare	SPA
4168	Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA	Clare, Galway	SPA
4182	Mid-Clare Coast SPA	Clare, Galway	SPA
4220	Corofin Wetlands SPA	Clare	SPA
0014	Ballyallia Lake	Clare	cSAC
0016	Ballycullinan Lake	Clare	cSAC
0019	Ballyogan Lough	Clare	cSAC
0020	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex	Clare	cSAC
0030	Danes Hole, Poulnalecka	Clare	cSAC
0032	Dromore Woods and Loughs	Clare	cSAC
0036	Inagh River Estuary	Clare	cSAC
0037	Pouladatig Cave	Clare	cSAC
0051	Lough Gash Turlough	Clare	cSAC
0054	Moneen Mountain	Clare	cSAC

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
0057	Moyree River System	Clare	cSAC
0064	Poulnagordon Cave (Quin)	Clare	cSAC
0268	Galway Bay Complex	Clare, Galway	cSAC
0308	Loughatorick South Bog	Clare, Galway	cSAC
0994	Ballyteige (Clare)	Clare	cSAC
0996	Ballyvaughan Turlough	Clare	cSAC
1013	Glenomra Wood	Clare	cSAC
1021	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands	Clare	cSAC
1321	Termon Lough	Clare, Galway	cSAC
1912	Glendree Bog	Clare	cSAC
1926	East Burren Complex	Clare, Galway	cSAC
2010	Old Domestic Building (Keevagh)	Clare	cSAC
2091	Newhall and Edenvale Complex	Clare	cSAC
2126	Pollagoona Bog	Clare	cSAC
2157	Newgrove House	Clare	cSAC
2165	Lower River Shannon	Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary	cSAC
2245	Old Farm Buildings, Ballymacrogan	Clare	cSAC
2246	Ballycullinan, Old Domestic Building	Clare	cSAC
2247	Toonagh Estate	Clare	cSAC
2250	Carrowmore Dunes	Clare	cSAC
2264	Kilkee Reefs	Clare	cSAC
2312	Slieve Bernagh Bog	Clare	cSAC
2314	Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane	Clare	cSAC
2316	Ratty River Cave	Clare	cSAC
2318	Knockanira House	Clare	cSAC
2319	Kilkishen House	Clare	cSAC
2343	Tullaheer Lough and Bog	Clare	cSAC
4161	Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limrick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA	Cork, Kerry, Limerick	SPA
4165	Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA	Limerick	SPA
0174	Curraghchase Woods	Limerick	cSAC
0432	Barrigone	Limerick	cSAC
0439	Tory Hill	Limerick	cSAC
0646	Galtee Mountains	Limerick, Tipperary	cSAC
0930	Clare Glen	Limerick, Tipperary	cSAC
1430	Glen Bog	Limerick	cSAC
1432	Glenstal Wood	Limerick	cSAC
2036	Ballyhoura Mountains	Cork, Limerick	cSAC
2037	Carrigeenamronety Hill	Cork, Limerick	cSAC
2170	Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford)	Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford	cSAC
2279	Askeaton Fen Complex	Limerick	cSAC
4003	Puffin Island SPA	Kerry	SPA
4007	Skelligs SPA	Kerry	SPA
4008	Blasket Islands SPA	Kerry	SPA
4029	Castlemaine Harbour SPA	Kerry	SPA
4038	Killarney National Park SPA	Kerry	SPA
4108	Eirk Bog SPA	Kerry	SPA
4125	Magharee Islands SPA	Kerry	SPA
4153	Dingle Peninsula SPA	Kerry	SPA
4154	Iveragh Penninsula SPA	Kerry	SPA
4155	Beara Peninsula SPA	Cork, Kerry	SPA

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
4188	Tralee Bay Complex SPA	Kerry	SPA
4189	Kerry Head SPA	Kerry	SPA
0093	Caha Mountains	Cork, Kerry	cSAC
0332	Akeragh, Banna and Barrow Harbour	Kerry	cSAC
0335	Ballinskelligs Bay and Inny Estuary	Kerry	cSAC
0343	Castlemaine Harbour	Kerry	cSAC
0353	Old Domestic Building, Dromore Wood	Kerry	cSAC
0364	Kilgarvan Ice House	Kerry	cSAC
0365	Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment	Cork, Kerry	cSAC
0370	Lough Yganavan and Lough Nambrackdarrig	Kerry	cSAC
0375	Mount Brandon	Kerry	cSAC
0382	Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog	Kerry	cSAC
1342	Cloonee and Inchiquin Loughs, Uragh Wood	Kerry	cSAC
1371	Mucksna Wood	Kerry	cSAC
1879	Glanmore Bog	Cork, Kerry	cSAC
1881	Maulagowna Bog	Kerry	cSAC
1890	Mullaghanish Bog	Cork, Kerry	cSAC
2041	Old Domestic Building, Curraglass Wood	Kerry	cSAC
2070	Tralee Bay and Magharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane	Kerry	cSAC
2098	Old Domestic Building, Askive Wood	Kerry	cSAC
2112	Ballyseedy Wood	Kerry	cSAC
2158	Kenmare River	Cork, Kerry	cSAC
2172	Blasket Islands	Kerry	cSAC
2173	Blackwater River (Kerry)	Kerry	cSAC
2185	Slieve Mish Mountains	Kerry	cSAC
2187	Drongawn Lough	Kerry	cSAC
2261	Magharee Islands	Kerry	cSAC
2262	Valencia Harbour/Portmagee Channel	Kerry	cSAC
2263	Kerry Head Shoal	Kerry	cSAC
2315	Glanlough Woods	Kerry	cSAC
2351	Moanveanlagh Bog	Kerry	cSAC
4021	Old Head of Kinsale SPA	Cork	SPA
4022	Ballycotton Bay SPA	Cork	SPA
4023	Ballymacoda Bay SPA	Cork	SPA
4028	Blackwater Estuary SPA	Cork	SPA
4030	Cork Harbour SPA	Cork	SPA
4066	The Bull & Cow Rock SPA	Cork	SPA
4081	Clonakilty Bay SPA	Cork	SPA
4094	Blackwater Callows	Cork	SPA
4095	Kilcolman Bog SPA	Cork	SPA
4109	The Gearagh	Cork	SPA
4124	Sovereign Islands SPA	Cork	SPA
4156	Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA	Cork	SPA
4162	Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA	Cork	SPA
4175	Deenish Island and Scarriff Island SPA	Cork	SPA
4190	Galley Head to Duneen Point SPA	Cork	SPA
4191	Seven Heads SPA	Cork	SPA
4219	Courtmacsherry Bay SPA	Cork	SPA
0077	Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore)	Cork	cSAC
0090	Glengarriff Harbour and Woodland	Cork	cSAC
0091	Clonakilty Bay	Cork	cSAC

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
0097	Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs	Cork	cSAC
0101	Roaringwater Bay and Islands	Cork	cSAC
0102	Sheep's Head	Cork	cSAC
0106	St. Gobnet's Wood	Cork	cSAC
0108	The Gearagh	Cork	cSAC
0109	Three Castle Head to Mizen Head	Cork	cSAC
1040	Barley Cove to Ballyrisode Point	Cork	cSAC
1043	Cleanderry Wood	Cork	cSAC
1058	Great Island Channel	Cork	cSAC
1061	Kilkeran Lake and Castlefrefre Dunes	Cork	cSAC
1070	Myross Wood	Cork	cSAC
1230	Courtmacsherry Estuary	Cork	cSAC
1547	Castletownshend	Cork	cSAC
1873	Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog	Cork	cSAC
2171	Bandon River	Cork	cSAC
2189	Farranamanagh Lough	Cork	cSAC
2280	Dunbeacon Shingle	Cork	cSAC
2281	Reen Point Shingle	Cork	cSAC

Table 2: European sites located within 15km of the Operational Programme Study Area

Site Code	Site Name	Counties	Designation
UK0030211	Moneygal Bog SAC	Tyrone	cSAC
UK0016613	Magilligan SAC	Derry	cSAC
UK9020031	Lough Foyle SPA	Derry	SPA
UK0016603	Cuilcagh Mountain SAC	Fermanagh	cSAC
UK0016607	Pettigoe Plateau SAC	Fermanagh	cSAC
UK0030047	Lough Melvin SAC	Fermanagh	cSAC
UK0030300	West Fermanagh Scarplands	Fermanagh	cSAC
UK9020051	Pettigoe Plateau SPA	Fermanagh	SPA
4049	Lough Oughter SPA	Cavan	SPA
0007	Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC	Cavan	cSAC
0588	Ballinturly Turlough SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0592	Bellanagare Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0595	Callow Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0597	Carrowbehy/Caher Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0600	Cloonchambers Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0604	Derrinea Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0607	Errit Lough SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0609	Lisduff Turlough SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0610	Lough Croan Turlough SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
0614	Cloonshanville Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
1625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
1637	Four Roads Turlough SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
2214	Killeglan Grassland SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
2338	Drumalough Bog SAC	Roscommon	cSAC
1818	Lough Forbes Complex SAC	Longford; Roscommon	cSAC
4086	River Little Brosna Callows SPA	Offaly; Tipperary	SPA
0566	All Saints Bog and Esker SAC	Offaly	cSAC
0581	Moyclare Bog SAC	Offaly	cSAC
0919	Ridge Road, SW of Rapemills SAC	Offaly	cSAC
0646	Galtee Mountains SAC	Tipperary	cSAC
0647	Kilcarren-Firville Bog SAC	Tipperary	cSAC
1197	Keeper Hill SAC	Tipperary	cSAC
2125	Anglesey Road SAC	Tipperary	cSAC

2.2.1 Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs)

Those cSACs listed in Table 1 and Table 2 are selected for a range of different habitats and species listed on Annex I and Annex II of the habitats directive, known as Qualifying Interests (QIs). In summary, those QIs for which cSAC sites are selected and associated threats / vulnerabilities² are presented in Table 3 (habitats) and Table 4 (species) below.

Those SPA sites considered have been selected for the protection of endangered species of wild birds. Each SPA has been selected for one or a combination of the following:

- Listed rare and vulnerable species (as listed on Annex I of EU Birds Directive 2009/147/EC);
- Regularly occurring migratory species, such as ducks, geese and waders;
- Wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year.

The features for which SPAs have been selected are referred to as Special Conservation Interests (SCIs). A summary list of those SCIs for which sites are selected within and surrounding the Study Area are presented in Table 5 below. The QIs and SCIs for individual sites are presented in Appendix I.

Table 3: Annex I habitats for which cSACs within and surrounding the Study Area have been selected, and associated threats and vulnerabilities

Habitat	EU Code	Threats and vulnerabilities
Alkaline fens	7230	Peat extraction, wetland reclamation, and infilling are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Alpine and subalpine heath	4060	High levels of sheep grazing, hill walking and abandonment of traditional agricultural practices (which has lead to scrub encroachment) are the most notable threats to this habitat
Atlantic salt meadows	1330	This habitat is affected by ecologically unsuitable grazing levels impacting on the condition of the habitat.
Blanket bog (active)*	7130	Main threats include overgrazing, trampling, burning, drainage, afforestation, peat extraction, windfarm and other infrastructural development.
Bog woodland*	91D0	Drainage and effects of peat cutting.
Calaminarian grassland	6130	Household dumping, overgrazing, trampling, erosion and abandonment to coarse vegetation as toxicity declines through leaching, are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Calcareous rocky slopes	8210	Recreational activities such as rock climbing, unsuitable grazing levels and invasive non-native species are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Caves	8310	May be subject to disturbance and dumping.
Chenopodium rubri	3270	No data available.
Cladium fen*	7210	Peat extraction, wetland reclamation, and infilling are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Decalcified dune heath*	2150	Pressures from under grazing and agricultural intensification.
Decalcified empetrum dunes*	2140	Pressures from under grazing and agricultural intensification.
Degraded raised bogs	7120	Peat extraction (ongoing) and drainage have resulted in shrinking and slumping of the bog structure.
Drift lines	1210	Recreational pressures, beach cleaning in particular, and coastal defences which may affect the sediment dynamics of this habitat are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Dry heaths	4030	Afforestation and agricultural improvement are the most notable threats to this habitat. The quality of the habitat has been affected by overgrazing, trampling, burning, invasive non-native species, drainage and erosion.
Dune slack	2190	This habitat suffers from ongoing habitat loss from interference in the local hydrology, recreation and agriculture.
Dunes with creeping willow	2170	This habitat is affected by undergrazing, forestry, and agricultural intensification.
Dystrophic lakes	3160	Pressures causing peatland damage results in hydrological changes in dystrophic lakes and ponds, as well as increased sedimentation, colour, turbidity, organic material and ammonia. Fertilisation of forests may also contribute to enrichment of this habitat.
Embryonic shifting dunes	2110	Recreational pressures and coastal defences which may affect the sediment dynamics and wave dynamics are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Estuaries	1130	Pollution and fishing/aquaculture related activities affect habitat quality,

² Threats/vulnerabilities of habitats and species according to NPWS published document 'The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland 2013'.

Habitat	EU Code	Threats and vulnerabilities
		particularly in some highly sensitive areas.
Eutric Scree	8120	Recreational activities such as rock climbing, unsuitable grazing levels and invasive non-native species are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Fixed dunes (grey dunes)*	2130	This habitat is affected by ecologically unsuitable grazing levels impacting on the condition of the habitat, along with recreational pressures.
Floating river vegetation	3260	Nutrient and organic losses from agriculture, municipal and industrial discharges are the most significant pressures to river habitats.
Halophilous scrub	1420	The overall status for this habitat is bad (declining), particularly because of recent losses that have been recorded and the vulnerability of the habitat, which is dependent on a rare species (Perennial glasswort) with a restricted distribution.
Hard water lakes	3140	The hard water lake habitat is under significant pressure from eutrophication, the primary sources of nutrients and organic material being agriculture, municipal, and industrial wastewaters. Movement of pollutants, especially phosphorus, through groundwater is of significant concern.
Hydrophilous tall herb	6430	Grazing (sheep and cattle), the spread of invasive species, intensified agriculture and land reclamation are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Juniper scrub	5130	Low recruitment and ecologically unsuitable grazing regime are the main issues affecting the quality of this habitat.
Lagoons*	1150	The most damaging impact affecting habitat extent is the drainage of the previously largest lagoon for largely agricultural reasons. Further habitat loss has occurred as a result of natural silting. Water pollution is the major impact affects the habitat quality, mostly in the form of excessive nutrient enrichment from agricultural sources, and domestic effluent from an increase in urbanisation, commercial and industrial activities.
Large shallow inlets and bays	1160	Fishing and agriculture related activities are likely to affect habitat quality, particularly for highly sensitive species.
Limestone pavement*	8240	Quarrying, land reclamation, scrub encroachment, invasive non-native species and undergrazing are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Lowland hay meadows	6510	Lack of mowing, agricultural improvement, and changes in land management are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Machair*	21A0	Recent habitat loss is considered negligible. Overall status is bad due to the pressures from disturbance and ecologically unsuitable grazing regimes which have compromised the quality of the habitat.
Marram dunes (white dunes)	2120	Recreational pressures and coastal defences are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Mediterranean salt meadows	1410	This habitat is affected by ecologically unsuitable grazing levels impacting on the condition of the habitat.
Molinia meadows	6410	Succession to scrub, abandonment of pastoral systems, and abandonment of mowing have lead to a decline in this habitat type.
Natural eutrophic lakes	3150	Habitat threatened by significant eutrophication from agriculture domestic wastewaters.
Old oak woodlands	91A0	Invasive non-native species such as Rhododendron and Beech, and overgrazing by deer are regarded as the main pressures to this habitat type.
Oligotrophic soft water lakes	3110	Habitat is under significant pressure from eutrophication, and from drainage and other damage to peatland. Diffuse nutrient losses from agriculture and forestry are the most likely cause of enrichment in this lake habitat. Damage to peatlands can result in hydrological changes in lakes, increased water colour and turbidity, changes in sediment characteristics, acidification, and enrichment.
Orchid-rich calcareous grassland*	6210	Agricultural intensification and abandonment leading to scrub encroachment have led to habitat loss and fragmentation.
Perennial vegetation of stony banks	1220	Recreational pressures and coastal defences which may affect the sediment dynamics of this habitat are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Petrifying springs*	7220	Drainage, land reclamation, unsuitable grazing levels, pollution and water abstraction, along with isolated incidences of road drainage and outdoor leisure pursuits are the most notable pressures on this habitat type.
Raised bog (active)*	7110	Peat extraction (ongoing) and drainage have resulted in shrinking and slumping of the bog structure.
Reefs	1170	Pressures from fishing can potentially affect the ecological quality of this habitat.
Residual alluvial forests*	91E0	This habitat has suffered considerable historic losses and is highly fragmented. Non-native and invasive species especially Sycamore and beech and problematic native species such as bramble and common nettle are regarded as the main pressures impacting on this habitat.
Rhynchosporion depressions	7150	Sheep grazing is one of the main land uses occurring in this habitat, resulting in trampling and concomitant in standing water surfaces. This habitat is also affected by peat cutting and drainage.
Salicornia mud	1310	The ongoing spread of common cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) and invasion are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Sandbanks	1110	It is considered that current pressures and future threats are unlikely to significantly impact this habitat

Habitat	EU Code	Threats and vulnerabilities
Sea caves	8330	No significant pressure affecting this habitat.
Sea cliffs	1230	Erosion caused by sea defences and pathways, and invasive species are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Siliceous rocky slopes	8220	Recreational activities such as rock climbing and unsuitable grazing levels are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Siliceous scree	8110	Recreational activities such as rock climbing, unsuitable grazing levels and invasive non-native species are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Soft water lakes with base rich influences	3130	Habitat affected by eutrophication and other activities linked to water pollution and hydrological change. Agriculture and domestic wastewater are the most significant sources of nutrients causing enrichment of this habitat, particularly in peaty soils. Peat-cutting and forestry on peatland are also notable pressures on this habitat.
Spartinion	1320	No longer considered as it is an invasive species.
Species-rich nardus upland grassland*	6230	Forestry planting and agricultural improvements are ongoing and causing habitat loss, along with succession to heath and scrub.
Taxus baccata woods*	9130	No records of decline since the Directive came into force, current area is not considered adequate. The quality of existing habitat is poor due to overgrazing, lack of regeneration and invasive species.
Tidal mudflats	1140	Pollution and fishing/aquaculture and diverse use of the foreshore are likely to affect habitat quality, particularly eelgrass beds.
Transition mires	7140	Peat extraction, wetland reclamation, and infilling are the most notable threats to this habitat type.
Turloughs*	3180	Ecologically unsuitable grazing and groundwater pollution are the most notable threats to this habitat.
Wet heath	4010	Afforestation and agricultural improvement are the most notable threats to this habitat. The quality of the habitat has been affected by overgrazing, trampling, burning, invasive non-native species, drainage and erosion.

Table 4: Annex II species for which cSACs within and surrounding the Study Area have been selected, and associated threats and vulnerabilities

Habitat	EU Code	Recognised threats/vulnerabilities to relevant Annex II species
Atlantic Salmon	<i>Salmo salar</i>	There are numerous threats to the freshwater habitats of this species.
Bottle-Nosed Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Vulnerable to disturbance from human activities, accidental entanglement in fishing gear, illegal killing, competition for prey, pollution and other habitat degradation.
Brook Lamprey	<i>Lampetra planeri</i>	No significant pressures affecting this species
Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Vulnerable to disturbance from human activities, accidental entanglement in fishing gear, illegal killing, competition for prey, pollution and other habitat degradation.
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>	Urban wastewater, development activities, farming, and forestry have led to increased sedimentation and nutrient run-off, a significant threat to the species. Direct impacts from channelization, bridge construction and recreational fishery structures.
Geyer's whorl snail	<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>	Sites for this species are small and easily damaged.
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	Vulnerable to disturbance from human activities, accidental entanglement in fishing gear, illegal killing, competition for prey, pollution and other habitat degradation.
Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	Vulnerable to accidental entanglement in fishing gear, illegal killing, competition for prey, pollution and other habitat degradation.
Kerry Slug	<i>Geomalacus maculosus</i>	Habitats for this species remain largely in good condition. Previously recorded threats have been reassessed and the effect that these threats were considered to have less of an impact on the conservation status than previously considered.
Killarney Fern	<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>	Threatened by habitat loss, deliberate collection, encroachment of invasive or vigorous species, or indirectly by water pollution, removal of woodland or alteration of watercourses.
Lesser Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	There are no significant pressures affecting this species.
Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	Declines in habitat quality lead to species decline.
Marsh Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>	There is no evidence of any major pressures impacting this species.
Narrow-mouthed whorl snail	<i>Vertigo angustior</i>	Declines in habitat quality from drainage and grazing.
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	There are no significant threats to this species.
Petalwort	<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>	There are no significant impacts affecting this species.
River Lamprey	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	No significant pressures affecting this species
Sea Lamprey	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>	Barriers to upstream migration (e.g. weirs), which limit access to spawning beds and juvenile habitat are main threats to this species.
Slender green feather moss	<i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>	There are no significant impacts affecting this species.
Slender Naiad	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	Threatened by enrichment (eutrophication), acidification, and

Habitat	EU Code	Recognised threats/vulnerabilities to relevant Annex II species
Twaite Shad	<i>Alosa fallax</i>	peatland damage. Habitat quality, particularly at spawning sites is the most notable threat to this species.
White-Clawed Crayfish	<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	The threat of disease introduction is the most notable impact on this species.

Table 5: Special conservation interests (SCIs) of SPAs within and surrounding the Study Area

Common Name	Latin Name
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Greenland White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Leach's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Light-bellied Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Red-throated diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>

Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Wetlands	

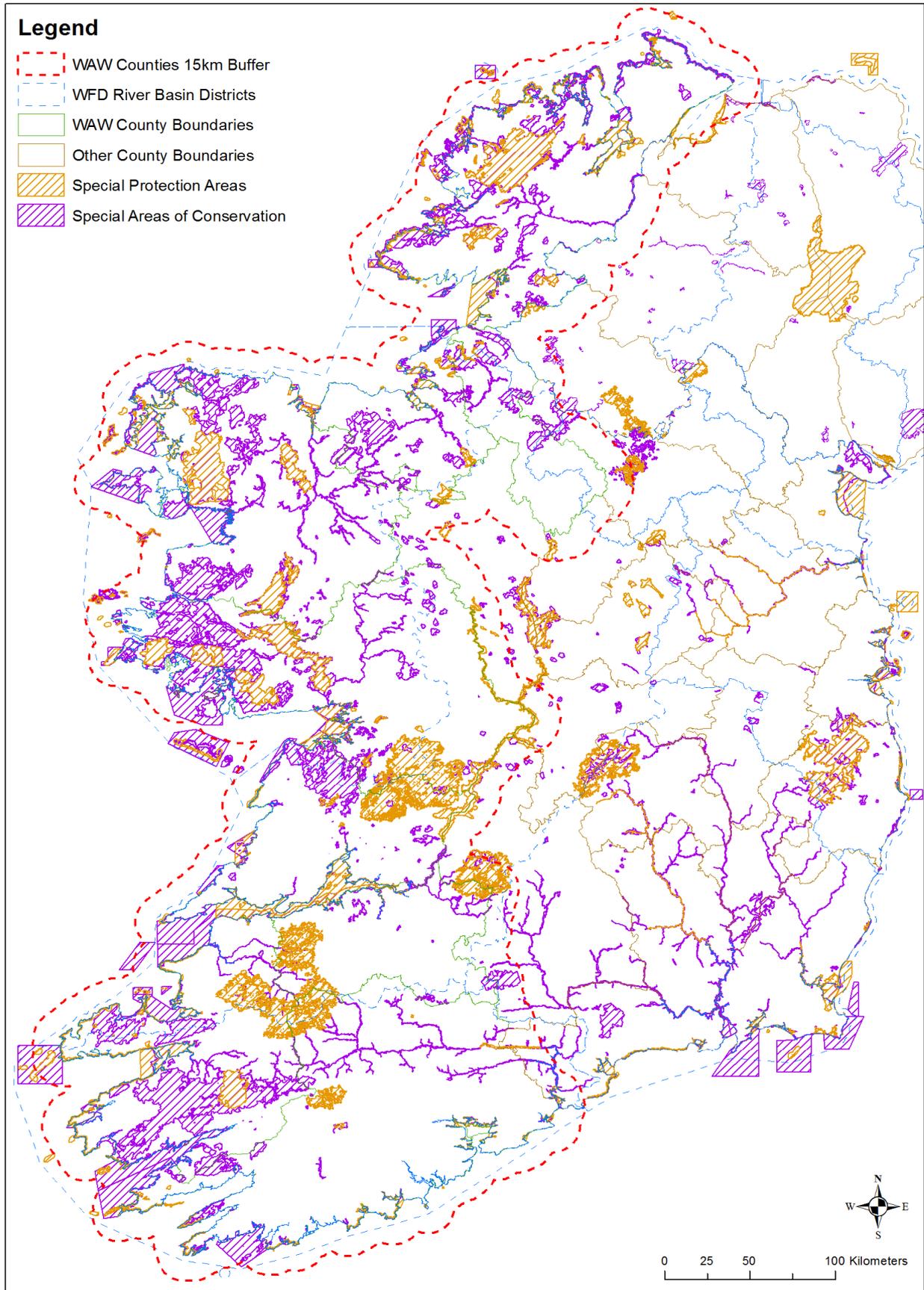


Figure 2: European sites in relation to the Study Area of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme

2.3 Assessment Criteria

2.3.1 Is the Plan Necessary to the Management of European Sites?

Under the Habitats Directive, Plans that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site do not require AA. For this exception to apply, management is required to be interpreted narrowly as nature conservation management in the sense of Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive. This refers to specific measures to address the ecological requirements of annexed habitats and species (and their habitats) present on a site(s). The relationship should be shown to be direct and not a by-product of the Plan, even if this might result in positive or beneficial effects for a site (s). The primary purpose for developing the WAW Operational Programme is not the nature conservation management of the sites, but to facilitate visitors to Ireland's western seaboard. Therefore, the WAW Operational Programme is not considered by the Habitats Directive to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura 2000 sites.

2.3.2 Elements of the Operational Programme with Potential to Give Rise to Effects

An assessment of the potential for effects on European sites to arise due to the implementation of the Operational Programme is presented in the following sections. The assessment considers the full range of effects including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. The Operational Programme under consideration is a high level strategic plan. The potential for each provision of the Operational Programme to impact on European sites is assessed in Table 6 below. In summary, it is considered that the following provisions included in the programme would have the potential to cause adverse impacts on European sites:

- The development of Option 3a as outlined in the Operational Programme; to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking, cycling and water-based activities along the WAW;
- The development of loops and spurs off the main WAW route;
- Improvements to towns and villages within the footprint of the route;
- Development in 'Gateway' towns;
- Possible changes to the route of the WAW;
- Development of tourism along the route;
- Undertake an interpretative programme for candidate Discovery Points and candidate Signature Discovery Points to build on the work that is underway as part of the remedial works programme; and
- Increased visitor numbers.

2.3.2.1 Candidate Discovery and Embarkation Points

The route identification process has identified 161 Candidate Discovery Points (viewing points and lay-bys), all of which are existing and in use, in addition to 28 Embarkation Points to the 26 off-shore islands. The location of each of these points in relation to European sites in the surroundings is presented in Table 5 of Appendix I. Fáilte Ireland is co-ordinating future WAW works relating to the Discovery Points through the Operational Programme, but not developing any of these works – they will be developed by the relevant local authorities (Part 8 requirements as set out in the Planning and Development Act as amended still apply) and others. The route and the candidate Discovery Points may change if the environmental monitoring strategy produces results that show that visitor activity and/or visitor intensification is predicted or observed to result in a negative impact on the environment in particular locations. For this reason, a mid-term review of the route and the candidate Discovery Points has been built into the Operational Programme.

Table 6: Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme and potential impacts upon the Natura 2000 network of sites.

Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme	Potential effects, if unmitigated, on European Sites
Goals and Outcomes	
<p>1. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way brand is compelling to our target market segments and that the Wild Atlantic Way itself becomes a world-class visitor experience.</p> <p>1.1 An increase in the number of paid bed-nights in the programme area. 1.2 An increase in the satisfaction ratings among visitors to the Wild Atlantic Way. 1.3 Growth in the number of overseas visitors engaging with the Wild Atlantic Way on social media platforms. 1.4 An increase in the levels of awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way among overseas visitors.</p>	<p>The provision to increase the levels of awareness of the WAW to overseas visitors may potentially lead to increased visitor numbers to sensitive areas, therefore increasing the potential for adverse impacts on European sites.</p>
<p>2. To deliver balanced and sustainable revenue and jobs growth with greater geographic and seasonal spread.</p> <p>2.1 An increase in the average length of stay of visitors to the programme area. 2.2 An increase in revenue from overseas visitors. 2.3 Greater spread / dispersal of visitors throughout the programme area. 2.4 Season extension into the shoulder and off-peak months. 2.5 An increase in the number of repeat visits by overseas holidaymakers. 2.6 Growing employment levels within tourism. 2.7 Growing commercial opportunities as a result of the Wild Atlantic Way. 2.8 Increase in the number of tourism businesses working collaboratively and developing tourism experiences.</p>	<p>The development of tourism along the WAW route, and within the nine western coastal counties may potentially lead to adverse impacts on European sites if unmitigated.</p>
<p>3. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way delivers benefits to local communities in the west of Ireland and contributes to a better place to live for everyone.</p> <p>3.1 High levels of positive engagement and sense of ownership by local communities with the Wild Atlantic Way. 3.2 Awareness is raised among communities and visitors of the unique Irish Atlantic heritage, culture and wildlife.</p>	<p>An awareness of the uniqueness of the natural environment of the west of Ireland may help to safeguard the protection of European sites.</p>
<p>4. To ensure that the implementation of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme facilitates the protection, enhancement of the environment of the west of Ireland – as the fundamental asset that is the basis of the Wild Atlantic Way – in association with other key stakeholders.</p> <p>4.1 The Operational Programme demonstrates full compliance with all relevant requirements arising from EU and Irish planning and environmental legislation. 4.2 The Wild Atlantic Way facilitates the protection and enhancement of the environment of the West of Ireland, in association with other key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Compliance with this legislation will safeguard the integrity of the Natura 2000 network of sites.</p>
Wild Atlantic Way Route and Candidate Discovery Points	
Objective	
<p>Ensure that the visitor management at each of the candidate Discovery Points, candidate Signature Discovery Points and Embarkation Points is contributing to the protection and enhancement of the environment, and based on this, that the visitor experience is optimised through improved interpretation. Ensure that all proposed works are assessed in accordance with the relevant environmental regulations to the satisfaction of the competent authorities/agencies.</p>	<p>Controlled visitor management will benefit the safeguarding of the Natura 2000 network of sites.</p>
Strategy	
<p>Use findings from the Environmental Monitoring to inform Local Authorities, through the publication of a set of guidelines, on the nature and extent of any proposed interventions at candidate Discovery Points and candidate Signature Discovery Points in order to improve visitor management at these sites, where appropriate. The guidelines will be prepared in consultation with the Environmental Authorities. Each Local Authority will be encouraged to adopt appropriate policies and objectives in their Development Plans relating to the goals and objectives contained in this Operational Programme.</p>	<p>This strategy will have a positive impact on the Natura 2000 network of sites. The route and Discovery Points may change should they be deemed to have a negative impact on the environment in particular locations.</p>
Actions	
<p>Action 1: By the end of 2017, Fáilte Ireland, in association with relevant partners, will have undertaken a review of the route of the WAW in order to (a) establish whether any stretches of the existing route are causing difficulties for visitors due to the width of the road or other factors, and (b) consider whether any additional roads should become part of the WAW route as a result of the findings of (a). Any proposed change to the route will be subject to public consultation, which will begin take place during the second half of 2017. The results of the Environmental Monitoring Strategy will also inform this process. The original route selection criteria will also apply to the identification of any new sections of route. Action 2: During the latter half of 2016, Fáilte Ireland, in association with relevant partners, will initiate a process to identify suitable loops off the WAW, which are intended to become part of the overall WAW experience. There are a number of</p>	<p>These provisions may potentially lead to increased visitor numbers, along with associated recreational activities, to sensitive areas. The development of loops/spurs from the existing route along with tourism development along the route may potentially lead to adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 network, if unmitigated. The development of loops will be informed by consideration of, among other things, their likely significant effects,</p>

Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme	Potential effects, if unmitigated, on European Sites
<p>good examples of these that have already been in existence for a number of years which are being promoted locally. This process will be informed, inter alia, by an analysis of visitor movement patterns throughout the WAW Programme area. The identification and establishment of loops off the main spine will also encourage the dispersal of visitors throughout the wider destinations. These new loops will be informed by consideration of, among other things, of their likely significant effects, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on European sites, and will be subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Action 3: Prepare and publish guidelines for the Local Authorities on good practice for any future visitor management works to the candidate Discovery Points and candidate Signature Discovery Points.</p> <p>Action 4: Work with the Local Authorities, the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking, cycling and water-based activities along the Wild Atlantic Way, with a view to having strong offerings for Wild Atlantic Way experiences by bike, on foot and on the water.</p> <p>Action 5: Promote the existing opportunities for visitors to experience the Wild Atlantic Way by bike, on foot and on the water in an integrated manner.</p> <p>Action 6: Undertake an interpretative programme for candidate Discovery Points and candidate Signature Discovery Points to build on the work that is underway as part of the remedial works programme.</p> <p>Action 7: Work with the ESB in delivering sufficient E-Car charging points to ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way can be experienced by electric car by 2020, with sections 'electrified' by the end of 2016. Charging points would be delivered in built up areas including hotels, towns and villages and are not planned for Discovery Points.</p>	<p>alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on European sites, and will be subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Action 3 will have a positive impact on the Natura network of sites.</p> <p>Action 4 and 5 will be undertaken within the framework of local county development plans which have undergone SEA and AA. Any such projects will be required to comply with environmental and planning legislation including the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Charging points will only be developed in previously built up areas and therefore impacts on European sites are not foreseen.</p>
Visitor Management	
Objective	
<p>To use seasonal and site-specific visitor management measures to anticipate and avoid increases in environmental loadings due to changing visitor numbers.</p> <p>To influence Local Authorities to take steps to avoid unwanted traffic congestion in local areas.</p>	<p>Anticipation and avoidance of increase in environmental loadings will benefit the protection of European sites.</p>
Strategy	
<p>To target areas where there is under-utilised capacity and encourage greater levels of travel during the shoulder season by using sales and marketing initiatives.</p> <p>To work with Local Authorities to ensure that unsustainable environmental loading (such as traffic congestion, water loading or habitat pressure) are identified in advance and action taken to avoid the issue or reduce its impact locally.</p> <p>To ensure that visitor activities are managed to avoid and reduce additional pressures at sensitive sites.</p>	<p>This strategy provides for the anticipation and avoidance of increases in environmental loadings and will therefore have a positive impact on the protection of European sites.</p>
Actions	
<p>Action 8: Undertake visitor observation surveys at each of the 15 candidate Signature Discovery Points in 2015, and a selection of other candidate Discovery Points in subsequent years for the period of the Operational Programme, for the purpose of improving visitor management at these sites and to identify any likely environmental impact issues early. Details are set out in the Environmental Monitoring Strategy.</p> <p>Action 9: Undertake regular reviews of car and coach parking requirements, in consultation with the Local Authorities, to ensure the provision of well-managed parking facilities.</p> <p>Action 10: Undertake a review of the current provision of motorhome parking and overnighting facilities along the Wild Atlantic Way and identify priorities for the future improvement of such facilities, informed by good practice internationally, and in association with the Local Authorities. This review will, amongst other things, consider potential effects on European sites in view of their conservation objectives.</p> <p>Action 11: Work with Local Authorities to ensure that unsustainable environmental loading [such as traffic congestion, water loading or habitat pressure potential] are identified in advance and action taken to avoid the issue or reduce its impact locally.</p>	<p>The identification of these issues will benefit the protection of the European sites potentially impacted upon by the implementation of the Operational Programme. These actions will assist in identifying those sites where existing pressures exist and may be contributing to deterioration at individual European sites.</p>
Industry – Trade Engagement	
Objective	
<p>To help all tourism providers along the WAW with the insights, information and opportunities they need to continually improve the experiences for visitors in accordance with the brand promise of the Wild Atlantic Way, and to facilitate the creation of those new experiences. Also to build digital and sales capability amongst the industry to help maximise the opportunity presented by the Wild Atlantic Way.</p>	<p>The expansion of tourism activities along the route may potentially lead to increased pressures on European sites if unmitigated.</p>

Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme	Potential effects, if unmitigated, on European Sites
Strategy	
To equip the industry with market insights and competitor set analysis, and to facilitate networking between businesses to work together to develop, improve and protect 'Wild Atlantic' tourism experiences.	The expansion of tourism activities along the route may potentially lead to increased pressures on European sites if unmitigated.
Actions	
<p>Action 12: Organise a series of business networking and innovation events over the period of this Operational Programme to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share trends, market insights and digital assets; - Facilitate businesses in sharing knowledge and expertise, and identifying possible collaboration; - Increase the level of peer-to-peer learning; - Identify opportunities to create new and improved Wild Atlantic Way experiences for visitors. <p>Action 13: To provide a co-ordinated range of business supports for tourism businesses, in association with other business support providers to facilitate innovation and improvement in terms of the visitor's experience.</p> <p>Action 14: To establish an insights and innovation support programme for experience providers along the Wild Atlantic Way.</p> <p>Action 15: To help businesses to improve the packaging of experiences and services to contribute to a more seamless visitor journey.</p> <p>Action 16: To introduce a Brand Charter as part of the Wild Atlantic Way brand. From 2016, businesses and providers wishing to use the WAW brand must sign up to this charter which will demonstrate a commitment by the businesses to make continual improvements year on year in their business with regard to Sustainability and Experience Development. Used in this way the WAW brand will, therefore, become more than just a logo and more of a commitment to continually deliver the brand values.</p>	The expansion of tourism activities along the route may potentially lead to increased pressures on European sites if unmitigated.
Industry – Sales and Marketing	
Objective	
<p>To add incremental value and increase international revenue for businesses along the Wild Atlantic Way through the identification of new sales opportunities within the key market of North America/Canada, Germany, Great Britain and France.</p> <p>To increase brand awareness amongst identified target segments in these markets (Great Escapers and Culturally Curious).</p> <p>To increase bednights and revenue from overseas visitors; to sustain and grow employment in the tourism sector, and provide new commercial opportunities for tourism businesses. In particular, to achieve a greater distribution of visitors along the west coast in areas where there is currently under-utilised accommodation stock.</p>	The provision to increase the levels of awareness of the WAW to overseas visitors may potentially lead to increased visitor numbers to sensitive areas, therefore increasing the potential for adverse impacts on European sites.
Strategy	
<p>To equip the domestic industry (Sellers) to effectively up sell and sell more bednights to the source international markets.</p> <p>To proactively engage with distribution channels (Buyers) by generating new leads and new niche markets.</p> <p>To create new sales platforms that are focussed on Business to Business sales opportunities.</p>	The provision to increase the levels of awareness of the WAW to overseas visitors may potentially lead to increased visitor numbers to sensitive areas, therefore increasing the potential for adverse impacts on European sites.
Actions	
<p>Action 17: Work with Tourism Ireland to ensure the Wild Atlantic Way destination brand is a key component of all international marketing communications activity.</p> <p>Action 18: Create and curate digital content that activates the Wild Atlantic Way destination brand across a range of digital platforms and which will be compelling to the key target consumer segments.</p> <p>Action 19: Develop a one stop web platform for the Wild Atlantic Way destination brand to encourage engagement and interaction with the brand from consumer, trade and communities.</p> <p>Action 20: Ensure Wild Atlantic Way social channels are optimised to encourage engagement with target consumers.</p> <p>Action 21: Equip the domestic industry (Sellers) to effectively up-sell and sell more Wild Atlantic Way product and offerings to the source international markets through a Sales Account Management process.</p> <p>Action 22: Engage directly with distribution channels (Buyers) to generate new leads and new niche markets (e.g. Luxury, Adventure, Youth, Culture) to work with them to feature the Wild Atlantic Way in their programming or to increase their distribution share of programming. Identify the best prospects from these.</p>	The expansion of tourism activities along the route may potentially lead to increased pressures on European sites if unmitigated.

Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme	Potential effects, if unmitigated, on European Sites
<p>Action 23: Establish new sales platforms that are focused on business to business sales opportunities (involving pre-qualified participants) and deliver effective sales opportunities.</p> <p>Action 24: Target new leads in key markets to increase programming.</p> <p>Action 25: Present new saleable visitor experiences to new and existing intermediaries.</p> <p>Action 26: Develop the capability of the trade to design, deliver and cross-sell Wild Atlantic Way visitor experiences through insights identified through the Path to Purchase research.</p> <p>Action 27: Develop a strategy for regional dispersion along the Wild Atlantic Way to drive additional sales where there is under-utilised capacity whilst extending the season through the identification of new buyers.</p> <p>Action 28: In association with Tourism Ireland, to support media and trade activities from secondary markets including Southern Europe, The Nordics and Australia and Developing Markets.</p>	
<p>Community</p>	
<p>Objective</p>	
<p>To ensure that local communities feel a sense of ownership of the Wild Atlantic Way, that they engage with it, that it benefits them, that they become custodians/advocates for the brand and that it does not result in any negative impacts for them.</p> <p>To facilitate local communities in raising awareness about their unique Irish Atlantic culture with visitors, in association with the Local Authorities and the Heritage Council.</p> <p>To ensure that there is a high level of awareness both internationally and domestically about the rich heritage and cultural of the Atlantic coast of Ireland.</p>	<p>High levels of positive engagement and sense of ownership by local communities with the WAW and increasing awareness of environmental assets among communities (and visitors) may have a positive impact on the behaviour towards these assets and therefore assist with their protection.</p>
<p>Strategy</p>	
<p>To engage local communities directly and regularly throughout the period of the Operational Programme to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve them in decision-making on initiatives related to the Wild Atlantic Way; • ensure that any concerns about the impact of the Wild Atlantic Way on local communities are highlighted at an early stage; • gather ideas about improving the experience for visitors; and • to keep local communities informed about any WAW initiatives that may be of benefit to them. <p>To create and curate content across a range of platforms relating to the heritage and culture of the Atlantic coastal zone, in association with key stakeholders, such as the Local Authorities, the Heritage Council, the Department of Art, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, other relevant agencies and local communities and businesses.</p>	<p>High levels of positive engagement and sense of ownership by local communities with the WAW and increasing awareness of environmental assets among communities (and visitors) may have a positive impact on the behaviour towards these assets and therefore assist with their protection</p>
<p>Actions</p>	
<p>Action 29: Host a series of events for local communities at which they can share their ideas about the Wild Atlantic Way and at which issues can be identified and resolved as they arise.</p> <p>Action 30: Engage local communities in a series of local interpretation projects, in association with, inter alia, the Heritage Council, the Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, the OPW and the NPWS, building on previous work undertaken by these stakeholders, which explore and highlight the distinctive Irish Atlantic culture, traditions and the Irish language in destinations and communities all along the Wild Atlantic Way. These are opportunities for local communities to present and share their own culture with visitors to their area. These initiatives also encourage further dispersal of visitors along the Wild Atlantic Way.</p> <p>Action 31: To create, in collaboration with a range of stakeholders and local communities, a stream of digital and traditional form content that explores Ireland's Atlantic culture, in terms of its influences and all its various manifestations.</p> <p>Action 32: To work with local communities and local tourism providers to further explore opportunities to introduce elements of the Irish Atlantic heritage and culture to existing and new tourism offerings in a way that creates richer and more authentic cultural experiences for visitors.</p> <p>Action 33: To undertake a series of initiatives with a range of stakeholders, such as the NPWS and Birdwatch Ireland, to raise awareness of the wealth of wildlife along the WAW and to identify the best sites at which to view wildlife, in accordance with good environmental practice.</p> <p>Action 34: To undertake a series of initiatives with the National Monuments Service and the Historic Properties Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the</p>	<p>Although these provisions may lead to increased visitor numbers to sensitive areas, consultation with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, NPWS, and Birdwatch Ireland may benefit the safeguarding of the Natura 2000 network.</p> <p>Local interpretation projects may potentially result in adverse impacts on European sites in construction and operation if unmitigated.</p> <p>Monitoring will benefit the identification of and avoidance of potentially adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 network.</p>

Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme	Potential effects, if unmitigated, on European Sites
<p>Gaeltacht, to identify archaeological and historic sites that are accessible to the public which are not currently well known, in accordance with good environmental and conservation practice.</p> <p>Action 35: To implement the Wild Atlantic Way Environmental Monitoring Strategy to ensure that the effects of tourism on environmental, heritage and cultural assets is monitored to allow for early detection of any possible issues.</p>	
Environment	
Objective	
<p>To make sure that 100% of the direct and indirect potentially significant environmental effects (if unmitigated) of Wild Atlantic Way initiatives and actions are fully assessed in compliance with relevant legislation.</p>	<p>This provision will further safeguard the integrity of the Natura network.</p>
Strategy	
<p>Use best practice and compliance with all relevant environmental regulations to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate that environmental protection and enhancement has been fully integrated with the OP. • ensure that environmental considerations form a fundamental consideration when selecting sites and designs of actions. • avoid potential for delays or reputational effects arising from any adverse environmental effects. 	<p>This provision will further safeguard the integrity of the Natura network.</p>
Actions	
<p>Action 36: Use the Strategic Environmental Assessment process to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate and avoid potential adverse environmental effects • Provide guidance and standards to guide and measure future actions and projects. • Provide a systematic demonstration of legal compliance and environmental protection • Provide the indicators and targets to be used for environmental monitoring programme. <p>Action 37: To promote the Leave No Trace principles to both visitors and tourism providers.</p> <p>Action 38: To promote responsible tourism practices among tourism providers and to encourage them to pursue green certification as appropriate.</p> <p>Action 39: To encourage the retention of all existing Blue Flag beaches and the designation of further Blue Flag awards along the Wild Atlantic Way.</p> <p>Action 40: To support and promote An Taisce's Clean Coast initiative at beaches along the Wild Atlantic Way.</p> <p>Action 41: Fáilte Ireland will continue to contribute to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark LIFE Project and to the Aran LIFE Project and draw best practice from them. In association with the other LIFE Project partners, Fáilte Ireland will look to apply the lessons learned from these LIFE projects to other parts of the Wild Atlantic Way.</p> <p>Action 42: To support responsible development practices by stakeholders through the preparation of guidelines for Local Authorities and other stakeholders on the consideration, design and management of new and existing visitor initiatives.</p> <p>Action 43: Undertake regular monitoring of key indicators at settlements and key environmental sensitivities to provide timely prior notification of emerging adverse effects [if any] so that these can be addressed to avoid deterioration of environmental assets.</p> <p>Action 44: Implement the Environmental Monitoring Programme, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 4.</p>	<p>The provision to incorporate the findings of SEA, along with responsible tourism practices, the Leave No Trace principles, and the development of an environmental monitoring programme will further safeguard the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.</p>
Building Affective Relationships	
Objective	
<p>To implement the Operational Programme through a range of effective partnerships at community, county, regional and national level. Ensure that there is a clear and co-ordinated vision for the Wild Atlantic Way, as outlined in this Operational Programme, and that it understood by all stakeholders at community, county, regional and national levels.</p>	<p>Effective partnerships with various stakeholders have the potential to modify behaviour towards environmental assets and assist with their protection and management by facilitating high levels of engagement and a sense of ownership by local communities, increasing awareness of environmental assets among organisations, communities and visitors. Therefore this objective may potentially benefit the protection of the Natura 2000 network.</p>
Strategy	
<p>To devise a Partnership Strategy with stakeholders and partners identified as being central to the implementation of the Operational Programme.</p>	<p>Effective partnerships with various stakeholders have the potential to modify behaviour towards</p>

Provisions of the WAW Operational Programme	Potential effects, if unmitigated, on European Sites
	<p>environmental assets and assist with their protection and management by facilitating high levels of engagement and a sense of ownership by local communities, increasing awareness of environmental assets among organisations, communities and visitors.</p> <p>Therefore this strategy may potentially benefit the protection of the Natura 2000 network.</p>
Actions	
<p>Action 45: Establish a national Wild Atlantic Way implementation group comprising a number of key national agencies and Local Authorities to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme and to ensure the effective management of the Wild Atlantic Way brand.</p> <p>Action 46: Encourage and facilitate the establishment of strong business and community networks / clusters at destination level in order to improve the range and quality of experiences for visitors.</p> <p>Action 47: Explore opportunities for collaboration with other EU states on research and funding projects at an inter-regional level.</p> <p>Action 48: Establish partnerships at national and regional levels with the relevant environmental and heritage bodies to ensure the protection and responsible promotion of the core environmental and heritage assets upon which the Wild Atlantic Way is based.</p>	<p>Effective partnerships with various stakeholders have the potential to modify behaviour towards environmental assets and assist with their protection and management by facilitating high levels of engagement and a sense of ownership by local communities, increasing awareness of environmental assets among organisations, communities and visitors.</p> <p>Therefore these actions may potentially benefit the protection of the Natura 2000 network.</p> <p>Monitoring will benefit the identification of and avoidance of potentially adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 network.</p>

2.4 Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts

As outlined in the European Commission Environment DG document “*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*”, impacts that could potentially occur through the implementation of the Plan can be categorised under a number of headings:

- Loss / reduction of habitat area (e.g. due to the development of new projects);
- Disturbance to Key Species (e.g. increased public access to protected sites, or during the construction phase of infrastructure projects);
- Habitat or species fragmentation;
- Reduction in species density;
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value such as changes in water quality / quantity (e.g., alteration to drainage regime in sensitive wetland areas; run-off of pollutants during construction and operation of developments).

In determining the potential for significant effects, a number of factors have been taken into account.

Firstly, the sensitivity of the European sites (as indicated by their QIs and SCIs and known vulnerabilities as presented in Appendix I), and secondly, the provisions of the Programme and the potential effects its adoption could have on European sites in the surroundings (as detailed in Table 6). The Study Area of the Operational Programme includes the entire extent of the nine western coastal counties, and as a precautionary measure a 15 km buffer zone around each county has also been considered in this assessment.

In order to determine the potential for impacts from the Operational Programme, information on the qualifying features, known vulnerabilities and threats to site integrity pertaining to all European sites

within and surrounding the nine counties affected by the WAW route were reviewed. This information, as presented in Appendix I, was derived from a variety of sources, including:

- Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission "Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland" (NPWS, 2013).
- Site Synopses
- NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms

As the conservation management objectives for the European sites focus on maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the qualifying interests of each site, the Screening process also concentrated on assessing the potential implications of the Operational Programme against the qualifying interests of each site.

2.4.1 Reduction of Habitat Area

Direct habitat loss is caused where there is complete removal of a habitat type due to development or alteration of land uses. Habitat loss can also occur through the reduction of habitat quality and a loss of important habitat functions. It can arise from the introduction of invasive species, toxic contamination, or physical alteration.

Given that the implementation of the Operational Programme may result in developments within the study area and that works have not yet been explicitly defined, habitat loss within those sites occurring within the nine coastal counties cannot, at this stage, be ruled out.

It is therefore concluded that sites occurring within these counties could potentially be impacted by direct habitat loss due to the provisions of the Operational Programme. Indirect habitat loss and deterioration could also occur where works/development are carried out in proximity to sensitive sites. This indirect habitat loss could be caused by drainage effects or possible spread of invasive species.

Habitat loss is unlikely for those sites which occur outside the nine coastal counties.

2.4.2 Fragmentation

Habitat and species fragmentation can occur through the breaking up of or loss of habitats resulting in interference with existing ecological units. Fragmentation can also result from impediments to the natural movements of species. This is relevant where important corridors for movement or migration are likely to be disrupted such as along river corridors when construction introduces a barrier to the free movement of species from one area of habitat to another.

The likelihood and severity of this impact depends on the nature of the works to be carried out over the five year duration of the Operational Programme. At this stage, it is therefore not possible to rule out potential fragmentation of habitats and species of European sites that occur within the nine coastal counties. Those sites which occur outside these county boundaries are unlikely to be impacted by fragmentation.

2.4.3 Disturbance of Species

Disturbance of species supported by a European site is likely to increase where there is an increase in activity levels from recreation and amenity or from developments within or adjacent to designated areas. Sources of disturbance include noise, vibration, light, associated with construction and operation activities or other sources of disturbance arising from recreation and amenity or from the inappropriate timing of works.

Disturbance to species is likely to be exclusive to those sites within the nine western coastal counties of the WAW. SPAs designated for the protection of bird species and cSACs designated for Annex II

species, within these counties would be susceptible to disturbance from the implementation of the WAW Operational Programme.

2.4.4 Changes in Key Features of Conservation Value

Changes in key indicators of conservation concern which may occur as a result of the implementation of the Programme include alteration to the drainage regime in sensitive wetland areas; and run-off of pollutants during works at Discovery Points, development of loops and spurs from the existing WAW route. Alterations to water quality and quantity could impact those sites located within the Study Area which are dependent on water quality and/or quantity. Those sites which are dependent on water quality and quantity (habitats and species) which occur within 15 km of the Study Area may also be subject to alterations if hydrologically linked to the areas developed during the implementation of the Operational Programme.

Changes in key features of conservation value is unlikely for those sites which occur outside the nine coastal counties as river catchments outside the county boundaries flow westwards, towards the Study Area.

2.5 Outcome of Screening

Following due consideration to the issues discussed in Section 2.4 above screening for AA was undertaken.

Given the high level nature of the Programme coupled with the broad scope and extensive study area, it is not possible to screen out any of those European sites which occur within the nine western coastal counties that are included within the study area.

However, considering the provisions of the Programme and the geographic location and characteristics it is considered that those sites that occur within 15km of the study area can be screened out from consideration in Stage II Appropriate Assessment.

2.6 Other Plans and Programmes

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combination with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon Natura 2000 sites. Table 7 lists the plans or projects that may interact with the WAW Operational Programme to cause in-combination effects to Natura 2000 sites. The plans or projects are listed according to a spatial hierarchy of International, National, Regional/Local Projects and Plans.

The assessment provided above in Section 2.4 above concluded that there is potential for significant adverse effects on Natura 2000 network to arise from implementation of the Operational Programme. Considering the measures incorporated into those plans listed in Table 7 below to safeguard Natura 2000, and the scale of works being proposed as part of the current plan, cumulative or in-combination impacts of significance are likely.

Table 7: Plans & Projects Likely to Cause In-Combination Effects

International		
Directive	Purpose	In-combination Effects
European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to halt or reverse biodiversity loss and speed up the EU's transition towards a resource efficient and green economy • Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Objectives seek to maintain and enhance the quality of all surface waters in the EU.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Freshwater Fish Directive (78/659/EEC)	Objectives seek to protect those fresh water bodies identified by Member States as waters suitable for sustaining fish populations. For those waters it sets physical and chemical water quality objectives for salmonid waters and cyprinid waters.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	This directive establishes a regime, which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	The Floods Directive applies to river basins and coastal areas at risk of flooding. With trends such as climate change and increased domestic and economic development in flood risk zones, this poses a threat of flooding in coastal and river basin areas.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure such as flood walls or flood defences. Avoidance on, or near protected areas should be implemented or where this is not possible, favouring infrastructure that carries a lower risk of damage to protected areas should be emphasised in the Programme.
Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)	This Directive has the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources and preventing further pollution.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)	Preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment and to protect human health by complementing the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC	Compliments the Operational Programmes provision to increase the number of Blue Flag beaches along the west coast. No negative impacts are foreseen.
The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC)	The primary objective is to protect the environment from the adverse effects of discharges of urban wastewater, by the provision of urban wastewater collecting systems (sewerage) and treatment plants for urban centres. The Directive also provides general rules for the sustainable	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.

	disposal of sludge arising from wastewater treatment.	
Sewage Sludge Directive (86/278/EEC)	Objective is to encourage the appropriate use of sewage sludge in agriculture and to regulate its use in such a way as to prevent harmful effects on soil, vegetation, animals and man. To this end, it prohibits the use of untreated sludge on agricultural land unless it is injected or incorporated into the soil.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
The Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (96/61/EC)	Objective is to achieve a high level of protection of the environment through measures to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions to air, water and land from industrial sources.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)	Establish a framework of environmental liability based on the 'polluter-pays' principle, to prevent and remedy environmental damage	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. Provide for a high level of protection of the environment by carrying out an environmental assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
EIA Directive(2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the assessment of the environmental effects of public and private projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. Aims to assess and implement avoidance or mitigation measures to eliminate environmental effects, before consent is given of projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to a requirement for development consent and an assessment with regard to their effects. Those projects are defined in Article 4 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of the European Union's ambitious Marine Strategy Framework Directive is to protect more effectively the marine environment across Europe. 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
National		
Plan	Purpose	In-combination Effects
Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an analysis and a strategic framework for sustainable development in Ireland Identifies the approaches required to support sustainable development 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020	Objectives of the NSS are to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise, if unmitigated, where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure. Provision of infrastructure may result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat loss Alteration of hydrology Deterioration in water quality Disturbance during construction / operation
Wildlife Act of 1976 Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The act provides protection and conservation of wild flora and fauna 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Act is to improve wildlife species and their habitats.

Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016 Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out strategic objectives, targets and actions to conserve and restore Ireland's biodiversity and to prevent and reduce the loss of biodiversity in Ireland and globally 	No in-combination impacts foreseen. The implementation of the Biodiversity Plan will have a positive impact on the Natura 2000 network.
NPWS Biodiversity Action Plan	Aims to achieve biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Plan is to improve biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland.
National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025	The National Landscape Strategy aims to implement the European Landscape Convention in Ireland by providing for specific measures to promote the protection, management and planning of the landscape.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Plan is to improve biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland by promoting sustainable planning for the Irish landscape.
National Peatland Strategy (DECLG)	Designed to conserve and protect peatlands in Ireland.	No risk of likely significant in-combination impacts as the Peatland Strategy aims to promote the conservation and management of peatlands in Ireland.
Raised Bog SAC Management Plan and Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to meet nature conservation obligations while having regard to national and local economic, social and cultural needs 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
National Forestry Programme 2014 – 2020 (DAFM)	The Department's Statement of the Strategy includes the following goal: "Promoting economic, social and environmentally sustainable farming, fishing and forestry". Strategic actions under this goal include the developing and implementation measures, schemes and services that underpin a rural economy. Collaboration with other organisations to deliver policies on environmental sustainability and biodiversity. Enhance the development of a sustainable and diverse forestry sector. Implement measures to promote use of non-food crops for energy production.	Potential for in-combination effects if unmitigated with drainage issues associated with afforestation.
Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Management (CFRAM)	The Programme delivers on core components of the National Flood Policy; the programme is currently in a studies and studies of parallel activity stage. Implementation of the Plan is due to take place from 2016. The programme aims to meet the needs of the EU floods Directive. The Floods Directive applies to river basins and coastal areas at risk of flooding. With trends such as climate change and increased domestic and economic development in flood risk zones, this poses a threat of flooding in coastal and river basin areas.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise, if unmitigated, where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure such as flood walls or flood defences. Avoidance on, or near protected areas should be implemented or where this is not possible, favouring infrastructure that carries a lower risk of damage to protected areas should be emphasised in the plan.
European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface waters) Regulations of 2009 (SI 272 of 2009)	Transposes the requirements of the Water Framework Directive into Irish Legislation	No potential for in-combination effects as the Directive aims to improve water quality.
Water Pollution Acts 1977 to 1990	The Water Pollution Acts allow Local Authorities the authority regulate and supervise actions relating to water in their division	No potential for in-combination effects as the Directive aims to improve water quality.
Groundwater Protection Schemes	Aims to maintain and improve the quantity and quality of groundwater, by using a risk assessment-based approach to groundwater protection and sustainable development.	No potential for in-combination effects as the Directive aims to improve groundwater quality.

Water Quality Management Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the quality of waters covered by the plan is maintained • Maintain and improve the quantity and quality of water included in the Plan scope 	No potential for in-combination effects as the Directive aims to improve water quality.
European Communities (Urban Waste Water Treatment) Regulations 2001 (S.I. No. 254/2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transposes the Urban Waste Water treatment Directive into Irish Legislation • Aims to protect receiving waters from environmental damage arising from Urban Wastewater 	No potential for in-combination effects as the Directive aims to improve water quality.
Water Services Act 2007 Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 Water Services Act 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the water services infrastructure • Outlines the responsibilities involved in delivering and managing water services • Identifies the authority in charge of provision of water and waste water supply • Irish Water was given the responsibility of the provision of water and wastewater services in the amendment act during 2013, therefore these services are no longer the responsibility of the 34 Local Authorities in Ireland 	No potential for in-combination effects as the Directive aims to improve water services.
Water Services Strategic Plan	Irish Water is currently preparing a Water Services Strategic Plan (referred to as the WSSP below) which will set out Irish Water's high level strategies for providing water services to their customers over a 25 year horizon and how they will meet their environmental compliance commitments.	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out comprehensive mechanisms for the incorporation of flood risk identification, assessment and management into the planning process • Ensures flood risk is a key consideration in preparing development plans and local area plans and in the assessment of planning applications • Implementation of the Guidelines is through actions at national, regional, local authority and site-specific levels 	The Operational Programme is required to comply with the provisions of the Directive.
Smarter Travel Initiative 2012-2016	Sustainable transport investment programme to encourage transport initiatives such as cycling, car sharing, the use of public transport etc.	Potential for in-combination effects with the Operational Programme if unmitigated as Smarter Travel encourages alternative modes of transport, therefore promoting greenways and other alternative routes which may cause amplified pressures on the Natura 2000 network in-combination with the proposed Programme.
Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines a policy for how a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved • Sets out five key goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o To reduce overall travel demand. o To maximise the efficiency of the transport network. o To reduce reliance on fossil fuels. o To reduce transport emissions. o To improve accessibility to transport. 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
Ireland's First National Cycle Policy Framework (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines objectives and actions aimed at developing a strong cycle network in Ireland • Sets out 19 specific objectives, and details the 109 actions, aimed at ensuring that a cycling culture is developed 	Potential for in-combination effects with the Operational Programme if unmitigated as the Cycle Policy encourages alternative modes of transport, promoting greenways and other alternative routes which may cause amplified pressures on the Natura 2000 network in-combination with the proposed Programme.

Scoping Study for a National Cycle Network (NCN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigated the feasibility of developing a National Cycle Network for recreational routes in rural areas, urban areas and connecting larger urban areas The scoping study and subsequent workshops resulted in a recommended National Cycle Network 	Potential for in-combination effects with the Operational Programme if unmitigated as the Cycle Policy encourages alternative modes of transport, promoting greenways and other alternative routes which may cause amplified pressures on the Natura 2000 network in-combination with the proposed Programme.
Grid25 Implementation Programme	Framework for the development of the electricity transmission grid in the short, medium and long terms, to support a long-term sustainable and reliable electricity supply	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Programme is to improve sustainable electricity in Ireland.
Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets Northern Ireland's Tourism Strategy until 2020 Vision is to "Create the new Northern Ireland experience and get it on everyone's destination wish list" Details an Action Plan to achieving targets for People, Products and Places, Promotion and Partnership 	Potential for in-combination impacts on European sites as promotes further tourism development in Northern Ireland.
Our Great Outdoors – The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven year Action Plan for development of outdoor recreation Outlines targets for increased participation, sustainable access and improved infrastructure in Northern Ireland 	Potential for in-combination impacts on European sites as promotes further tourism development in Northern Ireland.
Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework 2007 – 2020 (2007)	<p>White paper setting out a framework for delivering a sustainable energy future in Ireland</p> <p>Outlines strategic Goals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security of Supply Sustainability of Energy <p>Competitiveness of Energy Supply</p>	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
National Renewable Energy Action Plan	A strategic approach for Ireland including measures to meet European targets for 2020 including Ireland's 16% target of gross final consumption to come from renewables by 2020	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
National Rural Development Programme (draft/in preparation)	The National Rural Development Programme, prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, sets out a national programme based on the EU framework for rural development and prioritises improving the competitiveness of agriculture, improving the environment and improving the quality of life in rural areas	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Programme is to improve sustainable rural development.
Harvest 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to innovate and expand the Irish food industry in response to increased global demand for quality foods Sets out a vision for the potential growth in agricultural output after the removal of milk quotas in 2015 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Programme is to improve agricultural yield.
Agri-vision 2015 Action Plan	Outlines the vision for agricultural industry to improve competitiveness and response to market demand while respecting and enhancing the environment	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Programme is to improve agricultural yield.
Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) Agri-Environmental Options Scheme(AEOS) Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agri-environmental funding schemes aimed at rural development for the environmental enhancement and protection GLAS is the new replacement for REPS and AEOS which are both expiring 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of these Programmes is to improve environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

Regional		
Regional Planning Guidelines For The Border Region 2010 – 2022. Regional Planning Guidelines For The West Region 2010 – 2022. Regional Planning Guidelines For The Mid West Region 2010 – 2022. Regional Planning Guidelines For The South West Region 2010 – 2022.	Policy document which aims to direct the future growth of the Regional Area over the medium to long term and works to implement the strategic planning framework set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS)	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure or policies supporting tourism development
River Basin Management Plans and associated Programmes of Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a framework for the protection of water bodies at River Basin District (RBD) level • Preserve, prevent the deterioration of water status and where necessary improve and maintain "good status" of water bodies in that RBD before 2015 • Promote sustainable water usage 	No in-combination impacts foreseen. The implementation of the River Basin Management Plans will have a positive impact on the Natura 2000 network.
Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Northern Ireland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial strategy for the future development of Northern Ireland • Strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide public and private sectors 	No in-combination impacts foreseen.
Regional & County Green Infrastructure Plans/Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes the maintenance and improvement of green infrastructure in an area • Aims to protect and enhance biodiversity and habitats 	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub-Basin Management Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the current status of the species and the reason for loss or decline • Identifies measure required to improve or restore current status 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-jurisdictional land and marine based framework plan to guide the future development and management of the Shannon Estuary • Statutory planning policy to be included in relevant Local Area Plans County/Town Development Plans 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
Shellfish Pollution Reduction Programmes	Aims to improve water quality and ensure the protection or improvement of designated shellfish waters in order to support shellfish life and growth and contribute to the high quality of shellfish products directly edible by man	No risk of potential in-combination effects as the purpose of the Programme is to improve conditions for edible shellfish.
Local		
Donegal County Development Plan 2012-2018 Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017, Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020 Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017 Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021 Cork County Development Plan 2015-2021	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of the relevant Local Authorities.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure or policies supporting tourism development
Local Area Plans from the townlands of the nine coastal counties.	Overall strategies for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative town lands of the relevant Local Authorities.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a requirement to provide for new infrastructure or policies supporting tourism development.

Biodiversity Action Plans	Aims to protect, conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services across all spectrums	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of the Directive is to improve environmental quality.
Heritage Plans	Aims to highlight the importance of heritage at a strategic level.	No risk of likely significant in-combination effects will result as the primary purpose of Heritage Plans are to improve heritage quality.
Local Catchment Flood Risk Management Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced by Local Authorities • Outlines areas local flood risk • Sets out measures to manage and prevent flood risk at a local level 	Implementation of the Programme to cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management
Other Relevant Projects		
Eurovelo 1 European Cycle route	This cycle route runs along existing roads from Donegal to Wexford and picks up greenways where they exist.	Considering the characteristics of this project, in-combination effects on European sites are not foreseen.
Causeway Coastal Route	Included in the Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020, this is a waymarked coastal drive between Belfast and Londonderry including a number of key sites.	Considering the location of the coastal route in relation to the WAW, in-combination effects on European sites are not foreseen.
Individual projects on or adjacent to Wild Atlantic Way candidate Discovery Points	There are 23 projects that are recently completed or proposed at or adjacent to candidate discovery points as listed in Appendix 3 of the Operational Programme. These site specific projects include; bicycle trails, walking trails, improving access, and enhancement of visitor experiences. Many of these projects also aim to improve visitor management at existing recreational sites.	Potential in-combination impacts may arise where there is a provision for new infrastructure. Effects such as disturbance and trampling may arise due to pressures associated with resultant increased visitor numbers. Each of these projects will be subject to project level assessment. Visitor management may halt habitat deterioration in those places where existing pressures may be having adverse effects.

2.7 Conclusion of Screening Stage

AA Screening has been undertaken on the proposed WAW Operational Programme in accordance with Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive. The potential impacts that may arise from the implementation of the Operational Programme on the Natura 2000 network have been examined by considering the works being proposed as part of the Plan within each of the nine coastal counties.

On the basis of the findings of this Screening for AA, it is concluded that the Programme:

- (i) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site; and
- (ii) may have significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network, if unmitigated.

Therefore, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, it is considered that a Stage 2 AA is required.

Those sites that are susceptible to potential impacts are all of those European sites that occur within the nine coastal counties associated with the WAW as listed in Table 1 above.

Section 3 Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

3.1 Introduction

The main objective of this stage (Stage 2) in the AA is to determine whether the Operational Programme would result in significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any European site with respect to the site's structure, function, and/or conservation objectives.

The Stage 1 Screening presented above has identified that all those European sites within the nine western coastal counties (see Table 1), may potentially be affected by the WAW Operational Programme, if unmitigated. Therefore, Stage 2 AA is required. The potential adverse effects considered at this stage will either be effects occurring as a result of the implementation of the Programme alone or in combination with other plans, programmes, and/or projects.

Detailed information relevant to the individual sites that has been reviewed to inform the AA includes the following:

- NPWS Site Synopsis
- Natura 2000 Standard Data Form
- Conservation Objectives and supporting documents

Summary data relevant to each site including the qualifying features and known site vulnerabilities are presented in Appendix I.

3.2 Potential Significant Effects

As outlined in the European Commission Environment DG document "Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC", impacts that could potentially occur through the implementation of the Programme, if unmitigated, can be categorised under a number of headings:

- Loss / reduction of habitat area (e.g. due to the development of new projects)
- Disturbance to Key Species (e.g. increased public access to protected sites, or during the construction phase of infrastructure projects)
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value such as decrease in water quality / quantity (e.g. through inadequate wastewater treatment, run-off of pollutants during construction and operation of developments)

The analysis of likely impacts is examined at a high level at this stage. It must be noted that developments resulting from this Programme will themselves be subject to project level AA when works are identified at project level.

The key features of the Operational Programme that could give rise to significant adverse impacts on European sites throughout the study area and the types of potential effects are summarised in Table 8.

All qualifying features relevant to designated European sites within the study area are listed in Table 9 (QI habitats of SACs), Table 10 (QI species of SPAs), and Table 11 (SCIs of SPAs) together with an assessment of their vulnerability to the provisions of the Operations Programme. The number of sites selected for each individual habitat or species is also presented.

The potential for in-combination effects to occur due to interaction with other plans and projects is presented in Table 7 above. The degree to which effects can be determined is limited as the Programme will be implemented through the lower tier environmental assessments and decision making of local authorities. Details of the project(s) which will emanate from the Programme will allow for a more detailed consideration of environmental effects – including in-combination/cumulative effects – by project level assessments i.e. EIA and AA.

Table 8: Key Elements of the Operational Programme with potential for adverse impacts on European sites

Programme provision	Potential impacts
Action 2 The development of loops and spurs off the main WAW route	Depending on the location and characteristics of such routes, there is potential for the following impacts on European sites to arise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Fragmentation • Disturbance to key species • Changes to indicators of conservation value
Improvements to towns and villages within the footprint of the route	Such improvements could include new infrastructural developments, which, depending on site / project specific characteristics, could potentially lead to one or more of the following adverse impacts on European sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Fragmentation • Disturbance to key species • Changes to indicators of conservation value
Development in 'Gateway' towns	Development in 'Gateway' towns which are removed from the current route of the WAW could result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Fragmentation • Disturbance to key species • Changes to indicators of conservation value
Action 4 & 5 Development of tourism along the route	The Programme promotes the development of further tourism activities along the route. the following potential impacts may occur as result of the implementation of the Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Fragmentation • Disturbance to key species • Changes to indicators of conservation value
Undertake an interpretative programme for candidate Discovery Points and candidate Signature Discovery Points to build on the work that is underway as part of the remedial works programme	Maintenance or development works at Discovery Points may potentially lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Fragmentation • Disturbance to key species • Changes to indicators of conservation value
Increased visitor numbers	Although the main aim of the Programme is to increase the staying time of visitors, increased tourism and along the route and further branding of the route may lead to increases in visitor numbers to sensitive areas. The extension of the tourism season may in itself lead to potential impacts at particular European sites that may be more sensitive to disturbance outside of the main tourism season. Such sites would include those that are of importance to wintering and breeding birds. The following potential impacts may occur as result of the implementation of the Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat loss • Fragmentation • Disturbance to key species • Changes to indicators of conservation value

Table 9: Habitats which occur within the Study Area of the Plan and the number of European sites potentially affected

Habitat	No. of Sites Potentially Affected	Threats and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Operational Programme
Alkaline fens	21	Vulnerable to any drainage requirements that may potentially arise due to developments / land use changes facilitated by the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Alpine and subalpine heath	31	Vulnerable to hill walking and abandonment of traditional agricultural practices (which has lead to scrub encroachment). Increased hill walking may potentially arise due to implementation of the Operational Programme.
Atlantic salt meadows	25	The condition of this habitat may be vulnerable to human traffic, trampling requirements that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Blanket bog (active)*	35	Main threats include trampling and drainage requirements that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Bog woodland*	3	Vulnerable to drainage requirements that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme..
Calaminarian grassland	3	This habitat is susceptible to trampling requirements that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Calcareous rocky slopes	10	Recreational activities such as rock climbing threaten this habitat type that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.

Habitat	No. of Sites Potentially Affected	Threats and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Operational Programme
Caves	9	May be subject to disturbance and dumping that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Chenopodium rubri	1	No data available.
Cladium fen*	13	Infilling and drainage are the main threats that may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Decalcified dune heath*	7	This habitat type is susceptible to trampling.
Decalcified empetrum dunes*	5	This habitat type is susceptible to trampling.
Degraded raised bogs	18	Drainage will degrade this habitat further.
Drift lines	12	Recreational pressures, beach cleaning in particular, and coastal defences which may affect the sediment dynamics of this habitat are the most notable threats to this habitat type, which may potentially occur resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Dry heaths	36	Susceptible to drainage, trampling and erosion, which may potentially occur resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Dune slack	12	This habitat suffers from ongoing habitat loss from interference in the local hydrology, and recreation, which may be amplified as a result of the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Dunes with creeping willow	9	Susceptible to trampling which may arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Dystrophic lakes	9	Changes in the hydrological regime may potentially impact this habitat type.
Embryonic shifting dunes	22	Recreational pressures and coastal defences which may affect the sediment dynamics and wave dynamics are the most notable threats to this habitat type, which may potentially occur resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme..
Estuaries	12	Pollution and fishing/aquaculture related activities affect habitat quality, particularly in some highly sensitive areas. These activities may potentially be amplified during the course of implementing the Operational Programme.
Fixed dunes (grey dunes)*	30	An increase in recreational pressures which may potentially occur resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme would degrade the condition of this habitat type.
Floating river vegetation	18	This habitat type may be vulnerable to changes in water quality/quantity.
Halophilous scrub	1	The overall status for this habitat is bad (declining), particularly because of recent losses that have been recorded and the vulnerability of the habitat, which is dependent on a rare species (Perennial glasswort) with a restricted distribution. This habitat type is vulnerable to trampling which may arise from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Hard water lakes	13	Vulnerable to drainage works which may be undertaken over the course of the Operational Programme.
Hydrophilous tall herb	1	May be susceptible to trampling from increased visitors to this sensitive habitat type.
Juniper scrub	21	May be vulnerable to trampling from increased visitors to this sensitive habitat type.
Lagoons*	22	Vulnerable to degradation of habitat condition from recreational activities.
Large shallow inlets and bays	20	Vulnerable to degradation of habitat condition from recreational activities.
Limestone pavement*	21	It is not envisaged that the Operational Programme will have an impact on this habitat type, however the habitat may be threaten by trampling.
Lowland hay meadows	10	Changes in land management may be the main threat to this habitat type arising from the Operational Programme.
Machair*	19	Susceptible to disturbance/trampling which may arise as a result of the Operational Programme.
Marram dunes (white dunes)	32	Recreational pressures and coastal defences are the most notable threats to this habitat type, both of which may be amplified by the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Mediterranean salt meadows	20	Vulnerable to trampling which may arise as a result of Operational Programme.
Molinia meadows	13	It is not envisaged that this habitat type will be impacted upon by the Operational Programme.
Natural eutrophic lakes	6	May be vulnerable to run off of pollutants should works occur upstream of this habitat type. This habitat may also be susceptible to water abstraction.
Old oak woodlands	30	It is not envisaged that the Operational Programme will impact upon this habitat type.
Oligotrophic soft water lakes	31	Vulnerable to drainage, also vulnerable to run off of pollutants should works occur upstream of this habitat type.
Orchid-rich calcareous grassland*	21	Vulnerable to habitat loss due to land use changes, also susceptible to trampling.
Perennial vegetation of stony banks	26	Recreational pressures and coastal defences which may affect the sediment dynamics of this habitat are the most notable threats to this habitat type.

Habitat	No. of Sites Potentially Affected	Threats and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Operational Programme
Petrifying springs*	10	Drainage and water abstraction along with pollution are the main threats to this site from the Operational Programme.
Raised bog (active)*	19	Drainage will lead to the degradation of this habitat type.
Reefs	32	Pressures from fishing can potentially affect the ecological quality of this habitat, fishing, which may be amplified as a result of the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Residual alluvial forests*	19	It is not envisaged that the Operational Programme will impact upon this habitat type.
Rhynchosporion depressions	32	This habitat type is vulnerable to trampling and drainage.
Salicornia mud	13	It is unlikely that the Operational Programme will impact upon this habitat type
Sandbanks	1	As this habitat is permanently submerged it is unlikely that the Operational Programme will impact upon this rare habitat type.
Sea caves	9	May be vulnerable to disturbance.
Sea cliffs	19	Vulnerable to pathways and associated erosion, increased trampling which may potentially occur as a result of the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Siliceous rocky slopes	13	Recreational activities such as rock climbing are significant threats to this habitat type; therefore it is vulnerable to tourism development along the west coast.
Eutric scree	1	Recreational activities such as rock climbing are significant threats to this habitat type; therefore it is vulnerable to tourism development along the west coast.
Siliceous scree	4	Recreational activities such as rock climbing are significant threats to this habitat type; therefore it is vulnerable to tourism development along the west coast.
Soft water lakes with base rich influences	8	Vulnerable to water abstraction, pollution from insufficient waste water treatment facilities and to recreational activities.
Species-rich nardus upland grassland*	2	Habitat degradation may occur as a result of trampling..
Taxus baccata woods*	4	It is not envisaged that this habitat type will be impacted upon by the Operational Programme.
Tidal mudflats	27	Eelgrass beds of this habitat type are vulnerable to increased recreational activities, aquaculture and fishing along this habitat type.
Transition mires	10	May be vulnerable to drainage works in the vicinity of this habitat type.
Turloughs*	37	The main threat to this habitat type are ground pollution but may also be vulnerable to drainage works
Wet heath	32	The quality of this habitat type may be compromised by trampling and drainage which may occur resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.

Table 10: Annex II species which occur within the Study Area and the number of European sites potentially affected

Species	Latin Name	No. of Sites Potentially Affected	Threats and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Operational Programme
Atlantic Salmon	<i>Salmo salar</i>	23	Vulnerable to changes in water quality which may arise as a result of the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Bottle-Nosed Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	2	Vulnerable to disturbance from tourism activities along the coast.
Brook Lamprey	<i>Lampetra planeri</i>	8	Susceptible to changes in water quality which may arise as a result of the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	12	Vulnerable to disturbance from tourism activities along the coast.
Desmoulin's whorl snail	<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>	3	Direct and indirect habitat loss may potentially affect this species from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>	17	Vulnerable to changes in water quality, in particular sedimentation which may arise from an implementation of the Operational Programme.
Geyer's whorl snail	<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>	10	Direct and indirect habitat loss may potentially affect this species from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	9	Vulnerable to disturbance from tourism activities along the coast.
Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	2	Vulnerable to disturbance from tourism activities along the coast.
Kerry Slug	<i>Geomalacus maculosus</i>	7	This species is vulnerable to habitat loss which may potentially arise from the Operational Programme.
Killarney Fern	<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>	16	This rare species is susceptible to habitat loss which may potentially arise from the Operational Programme.
Lesser Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	41	Lesser Horseshoe Bats are susceptible to disturbance from increased visitors along caves and other suitable habitat along the west coast. Also vulnerable to habitat loss should the removal or

Species	Latin Name	No. of Sites Potentially Affected	Threats and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Operational Programme
			renovation of disused buildings be undertaken.
Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	12	This species is vulnerable to disturbance and habitat loss which may potentially arise from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Marsh Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>	5	Marsh Saxifrage is susceptible to habitat loss which may potentially arise from the Operational Programme.
Narrow-mouthed whorl snail	<i>Vertigo angustior</i>	12	Direct and indirect habitat loss may potentially affect this species from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	39	Otter are vulnerable to disturbance resulting from increased human activity in otter habitat along the WAW route.
Petalwort	<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>	19	Petalwort is susceptible to habitat loss which may potentially arise from the Operational Programme.
River Lamprey	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	7	Susceptible to changes in water quality which may arise as a result of the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Sea Lamprey	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>	10	Vulnerable to changes in water quality which may potentially arise resulting from the implementation of the Operational Programme.
Slender green feather moss	<i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>	8	Vulnerable to trampling, direct and indirect habitat loss.
Slender Naiad	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	24	Grows in deep water and is vulnerable to changes in water quality/quantity.
Twaite Shad	<i>Alosa fallax</i>	3	Vulnerable to increased leisure fishing that may occur along the route, along with tourism developments along waterways and lakes.
White-Clawed Crayfish	<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	10	Vulnerable to changes in water quality which may potentially arise as a result of the implantation of the Operational Programme.

Table 11: List of Annex I and Red listed (BoCCI, 2013) bird species for which SPAs are designated within the Study Area and the number of European sites potentially affected
(Non annexed species are listed in Table 5 above)

Species	Latin Name	Conservation Status	No. of Sites Potentially Affected	Threats and Vulnerabilities Relevant to Programme
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Annex I	11	All bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests within the Study Area are susceptible to disturbance and displacement due to the implementation of the Operational Programme. Those wintering bird species are vulnerable to disturbance and displacement from October to March whereas those sites designated for breeding birds are vulnerable from March to August.
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Annex I	13	
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>	Annex I	1	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Red listed	12	
Chough	<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Annex I	14	
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Red listed	5	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Annex I	8	
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	Annex I	9	
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Red listed	13	
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>	Red listed	16	
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Annex I	18	
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Red listed	2	
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Annex I	4	
Greenland White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>	Annex I	17	
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Annex I	5	
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Red listed	7	
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Red listed	11	
Leach's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	Annex I	1	
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Annex I	4	
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Annex I	6	
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Annex I	7	
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Red listed	2	
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Red listed	12	
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Annex I	8	
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Red listed	8	
Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Annex I	9	
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Red listed	5	
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Annex I	13	
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	Red listed	17	
Wetlands			33	Vulnerable habitat loss from activities such as drainage, infilling and development.

3.3 Conservation Objectives

The Habitats Directive requires the focus of the assessment at this stage to be on the integrity of the site as indicated by its Conservation Objectives. The Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) is in the process of drawing up Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) for all European sites.

These site-specific conservation objectives aim to define favourable conservation condition for the qualifying habitats and species at that site. The maintenance (or restoration) of the favourable condition for these habitats and species at the site level will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

***Favourable conservation status of a species** can be described as being achieved when: 'population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or 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.'*

***Favourable conservation status of a habitat** can be described as being achieved when: 'its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that 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'.*

For those sites where no SSCO are available, the DAHG has provided generic Conservation Objectives for designated European sites. Generic Conservation Objectives for cSACs have been provided as follows:

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.

One generic Conservation Objective has been provided for SPAs as follows:

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.

SSCOs have been published (as of July 2015) for 63 European sites (38 cSACs and 25 SPAs). The conservation objectives of each qualifying habitat and species for European sites are presented as a selection of attributes against which targets are set. Detailed SSCO are likely to be more useful for project level AA. In this assessment they have been useful in determining the sensitivity of particular Qualifying Interests of European sites that occur along the WAW. The SSCO will also be of value in determining appropriate indicators during the ecological monitoring that will be undertaken as part of the Environmental Monitoring Plan. The reported sensitivity of individual qualifying features that are deemed relevant to the implementation of the Operational Programme are presented in Table 9, Table 10 and Table 11 above. Any significant adverse effects on these site features are likely to give rise to impacts on site integrity as indicated by the conservation objectives of individual sites.

Section 4 Mitigation Measures

4.1 Introduction

This section outlines measures that have been incorporated into the Operational Programme in order to mitigate against potential impacts on the Natura 2000 network of sites as identified above.

The drafting of the Operational Programme was done in an iterative manner whereby Fáilte Ireland prepared the first draft of the Programme which was provided to CAAS who made suggestions for integration into the Programme. Fáilte Ireland then reviewed the Programme to take account of the SEA/AA suggestions and sent the following revision back to CAAS for comment. Multiple revisions of the Programme were prepared before the Draft Programme was arrived at for public display. The Draft Programme and associated SEA and AA documents were updated to take account of various issues raised in submissions made during public display.

Key aspects of the Operational Programme where environmental input was integrated include:

Visitor Management

- With a route extending along the entire western seaboard, the Programme presents an opportunity to contribute towards improvements in environmental management and protection by allowing for both: the management of visitors at a macro spatial level (in terms of what sections of the western seaboard could accommodate increases in visitors); and the management of visitors at a micro spatial level (in terms of what areas adjacent to viewing points, lay-bys etc. should be avoided).
- The Programme also facilitates the management of visitors across the tourist season so that growth can be sought in times outside of the summer peak (while this may reduce the environmental pressures at peak season, it is acknowledged that, in relation to ecological receptors, there are other seasonal sensitivities at particular sites that require consideration such sites of importance for wintering and breeding birds; such consideration is provided through other mitigation measures which have been integrated into the Programme including those which are part of Appendix 6 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities').

Focus on Paid Bednights rather than Visitors

- The objective of growing length of stay (paid bednights) rather than number of visitors has less potential to result in adverse environmental effects.
- Increased length of stay in the context of the touring route is likely to lead to a better geographic distribution of visitors – which will reduce environmental and infrastructural stresses and associated effects in popular areas.
- The Programme facilitates for a better seasonal spread of bednights – which can reduce environmental and infrastructural stresses and associated effects during peak months.

Environmental Management and Sustainability Strategy

- The Programme's Environmental Management and Sustainability Strategy which requires all emerging developments and activities to continue to comply with all relevant environmental and planning requirements – as well as with Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way Guidelines for the consideration, design, management and monitoring of new and existing visitor initiatives.
- The Programme includes an 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others' Appendix comprising various provisions which will be complied with by local authorities and others at lower levels of decision making in order to get funding.

Detailed Monitoring Strategy and Guidelines for Local Authorities

- The development of a detailed Monitoring Strategy which is currently being implemented and will produce various data including an indication of the types of impacting activities at Signature Discovery Points and control sites (and the extent of ecological effect zones, if present) and the type of mitigation responses which may be required. As part of this Monitoring Strategy a

detailed mid-term review of the functioning of the WAW in relation to significant environmental effects. The review will be based on the continuous monitoring of 'Indicators and Targets'. Those Indicators and Targets most relevant to the quality of European sites are presented in Table 12 below.

- The route and the candidate Discovery Points may change if the environmental monitoring strategy in particular locations produce results that show that visitor activity and/or visitor intensification is predicted or observed to result in a negative impact on the environment. For this reason, a mid-term review of the route and the candidate Discovery Points has been built into the Operational Programme. The Monitoring Strategy is included as an Appendix to the Operational Programme.
- Findings from the Environmental Monitoring will be used to inform Local Authorities, through the publication of a set of guidelines, on the nature and extent of any proposed interventions at candidate Discovery Points and candidate Signature Discovery Points in order to improve visitor management at these sites, where appropriate. The guidelines will be prepared in consultation with the Environmental Authorities.

Table 12: Selected Indicators, Targets and Monitoring Sources relevant to the protection of European sites

Environmental Component	Current Indicators (subject to review of findings from Monitoring Strategy for Operational Programme candidate Signature Discovery Points)	Current Target(s) (subject to review of findings from Monitoring Strategy for Operational Programme candidate Signature Discovery Points)	Source (Frequency)
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	B1: Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive	B1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years) • Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years) • Consultations with the NPWS (at monitoring evaluation)
	B2: Percentage loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from development provided for by the Programme	B2: No significant ecological networks or parts thereof which provide functional connectivity to be lost without remediation resulting from development provided for by the Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • Review of permissions granted and the SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) CORINE mapping resurvey (every c. 5 years) • Review of EPA Ecological Network Mapping (if available)
	B3i: Number of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from development provided for by the Programme B3ii: Number of significant impacts on the protection of listed species	B3i: Avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from development provided for by the Programme B3ii: No significant impacts on the protection of listed species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • Review of permissions granted and the SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Consultations with the NPWS (at monitoring evaluation)

Environmental Component	Current Indicators (subject to review of findings from Monitoring Strategy for Operational Programme candidate Signature Discovery Points)	Current Target(s) (subject to review of findings from Monitoring Strategy for Operational Programme candidate Signature Discovery Points)	Source (Frequency)
Water	W1i: Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 272 of 2009) W1ii: Mandatory and Guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (SI No. 79 of 2008)	W1i: Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status'80 by 2015 W1ii: To achieve - as a minimum - Mandatory values and, where possible, to achieve Guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (SI No. 79 of 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Data issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual) • EPA The Quality of Bathing Water in Ireland reports
	W2: Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC	W2: Not to affect the ability of groundwaters to comply with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Data issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual)
	W3: Compliance of development of greenway with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines	W3: For all greenway projects to comply with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)

There are a range of actions that have been incorporated into the provisions of the Programme to ensure that the protection of the natural environment of the study area is given high priority throughout the duration of the Programme. Many of the objectives, strategies, and actions listed in the Programme have been devised with the aim of protecting and enhancing the natural environment including the safeguarding of European sites (see Table 6 for a review of all provisions of the draft Programme).

Another means by which mitigation is to be provided for is the inclusion of an Appendix to the Operational Programme entitled 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities'. The provisions contained in the proposed appendix that are relevant to the protection of European sites are presented in Table 13 below. An explanation on how the various provisions of the appendix provide for the protection of Natura 2000 network of sites is also presented.

Mitigation against the main potential impacts (including direct, indirect, and cumulative) on European sites is discussed in the following sections.

With regard to potential in-combination effects as described in Table 7 above, the potential impacts described are addressed by the mitigation presented below. A further consideration in mitigating potential in-combination effects is the reliance AA (and SEA) of other plans, programmes, and projects. For example, built development (such as that relating to accommodation, bars or restaurants), are planned and permitted through land use plans including Regional, County and Local Plans which are required to take into account fluctuating needs, such as those that may arise as a result of existing and future numbers of residents and tourists. These land use plans are required to undergo AA and comply with

environmental legislation. Similarly, with regard to infrastructure and services, such as those relating to water services, these are planned and permitted through specific processes which are also informed by, inter alia, the needs of such land use plans.

4.2 Reduction of Habitat Area (Habitat Loss)

The inclusion of the provisions in the 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others' Appendix of the Operational Programme (see Table 13 below) will be the primary means by which mitigation against habitat loss is to be provided. All lower level plans and projects provided for by the Operational Programme will themselves be informed by project level AA, the outcome of which will also inform the detailed design and if appropriate provide for site specific mitigation to minimise any potential impacts on the relevant site(s).

Visitor management and a focus on the number of bed-nights spent along the WAW route rather than an increased number of visitors to the study area should also alleviate potential pressures during peak season at sensitive sites. The implementation of a detailed Monitoring Strategy (see Section 4.1 above) will aid the anticipation and avoidance of an increase in environmental loadings on the environment, therefore reducing the risk of habitat loss due to excessive pressures on natural habitats.

4.3 Fragmentation

The inclusion of the provisions in the 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others' Appendix will be the primary means by which mitigation against habitat and/or species fragmentation is to be provided (see Table 13 below). Environmental monitoring of the Programme is also to be carried out (see Section 4.1 above); this monitoring will further prevent fragmentation at European sites and important non designated ecological corridors.

4.4 Disturbance to Key Species

Disturbance to key species has been identified as a potential impact during both the construction and operational phases of the Programme. Those European sites which occur in proximity to the 161 Discovery Points are most susceptible to disturbance from the implementation of the Programme (see Appendix I).

The incorporation of a detailed Monitoring Strategy in conjunction with Visitor Management will assist in the avoidance of disturbance to sensitive species, providing for anticipation and avoidance of environmental loadings affecting European sites.

In relation to new development, where it is not possible to avoid European sites, then works should be informed by project level AA, the outcome of which will also inform the detailed design and if appropriate provide for site specific mitigation to minimise any potential impacts on the relevant site.

4.5 Potential impacts on water dependant habitats and species

The implementation of the Programme has been identified as potentially giving rise to adverse impacts on water quality/quantity within all European sites selected for water dependant habitats and / or species within the nine coastal counties. The inclusion of the Appendix 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others' to the Operational Programme (see Table 13 below) will be the primary means of mitigation against potential impacts on water dependant habitats and species which will ensure that AA will be required at project level, as well as the requirement for development to comply with legislative requirements. The Programme also incorporates a detailed Monitoring Strategy which will allow for the avoidance of increased environmental loadings on sensitive ecological receptors including the aquatic environment (see Table 12 above).

Table 13: Provisions relevant to the protection of European sites contained in Draft Operational Programme Appendix 'Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others'.

Mitigating Provisions Included in Appendix I Relevant to the Safeguarding of Europeans Sites ³	Means by which proposed mitigation addresses potential impacts on European sites
<p>Regulatory framework for environmental protection and management Local authorities and others shall cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. Local authorities and others will demonstrate, as appropriate, that plans, programmes and projects comply with EU Directives - including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended), the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC, as amended) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) – and relevant transposing Regulations.</p>	<p>Contribution toward these directives and regulations will further contribute to the protection of designated European sites potentially affected by the Operational Programme.</p>
<p>Information to be considered by local authorities and others at lower levels of decision making and environmental assessment Lower levels of decision making and environmental assessment by local authorities and others, as relevant, should consider the sensitivities identified in Section 4 of the SEA Environmental Report, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas; • Features of the landscape that provide linkages/connectivity to designated sites (e.g. watercourses, areas of semi-natural habitat such as linear woodlands etc) • Salmonid Waters; • Shellfish Waters; • Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments; • Nature Reserves; • Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas; • Areas likely to contain a habitat listed in annex 1 of the Habitats Directive; • Entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and Zones of Archaeological Potential; • Entries to the Record of Protected Structures; • Un-designated sites of importance to wintering or breeding bird species of conservation concern; • Architectural Conservation Areas; and • Relevant landscape designations. 	<p>The identification of existing infrastructure corridors would assist in determining those areas that are likely to be least sensitive to ecological impacts.</p>
<p>Construction and Environmental Management Plan Construction Environment Management Plans (CEMPs) shall be prepared in advance of the construction of larger projects and implemented throughout. Such plans shall incorporate relevant mitigation measures indicated in this Appendix to the Operational Programme and any lower tier Environmental Impact Statement or Appropriate Assessment. CEMPs typically provide details of intended construction practice for the proposed development, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. location of the sites and materials compound(s) including area(s) identified for the storage of construction refuse, b. location of areas for construction site offices and staff facilities, c. details of site security fencing and hoardings, d. details of on-site car parking facilities for site workers during the course of construction, e. details of the timing and routing of construction traffic to and from the construction site and associated directional signage, f. measures to obviate queuing of construction traffic on the adjoining road network, g. measures to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble or other debris, h. alternative arrangements to be put in place for pedestrians and vehicles in the case of the closure of any public right of way during the course of site development works, i. details of appropriate mitigation measures for noise, dust and vibration, and monitoring of such levels, j. containment of all construction-related fuel and oil within specially constructed bunds to ensure that fuel spillages are fully contained; such bunds shall be roofed to exclude rainwater, k. disposal of construction/demolition waste and details of how it is proposed to manage excavated soil, l. a water and sediment management plan, providing for means to ensure that surface water runoff is controlled such that no silt or other pollutants enter local water courses or drains, m. details of a water quality monitoring and sampling plan. n. if peat is encountered - a peat storage, handling and reinstatement management plan. o. measures adopted during construction to prevent the spread of invasive species (such as Japanese Knotweed). p. appointment of an ecological clerk of works at site investigation, preparation and 	<p>The development of a CEMP will ensure that relevant mitigation measures from lower level SEA and AA will be adhered to during the development and operational phases. The CEMP will also ensure that best practice construction methods are adopted throughout the development of the Plan.</p> <p>The inclusion of a CEMP will safeguard the integrity of the Natura 2000 network of sites by minimising the potential for habitat loss, disturbance of species and potential adverse impacts on water quality/quantity dependant sites.</p>

³ The provisions listed under this column are the requirements which the local authorities and others will have to comply with in order to get funding.

Mitigating Provisions Included in Appendix I Relevant to the Safeguarding of Europeans Sites ³	Means by which proposed mitigation addresses potential impacts on European sites
construction phases.	
<p>Maintenance Plan Lower tier assessments should examine the need for Maintenance Plans informed by environmental considerations to be prepared and implemented.</p>	<p>The development of Maintenance Plans will ensure that works/developments to be undertaken will comply with relevant environmental legislation and that works will be carried out in an ecologically sensitive manner.</p>
<p>Protection of Biodiversity including Natura 2000 Network Local authorities and others shall contribute, as appropriate, towards the protection of designated ecological sites including candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs); UNESCO World Heritage and UNESCO Biosphere sites; Ramsar Sites; Salmonid Waters; Shellfish Waters; Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments; Flora Protection Order sites; Wildlife Sites (including Nature Reserves); Certain entries to the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas; Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs); Wildfowl Sanctuaries (see S.I. 192 of 1979) ; and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Local authorities and others shall demonstrate compliance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines, including the following and any updated/superseding documents):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Directives, including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended)⁴, the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)⁵, the Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)⁶, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC, as amended), the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC). • National legislation, including the Wildlife Act 1976⁷, the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989 (SI No. 349 of 1989) (as amended), the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011), the European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations 2008⁸ and the Flora Protection Order 1999. • National policy guidelines (including any clarifying Circulars or superseding versions of same), including the Landscape and Landscape Assessment Draft Guidelines 2000, the Environmental Impact Assessment Sub-Threshold Development Guidelines 2003, Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines 2004 and the Appropriate Assessment Guidance 2010. • Catchment and water resource management Plans, including River Basin District Management Plans 2009-2015 (including any superseding versions of same). • Biodiversity Plans and guidelines, including Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016: Ireland's 2nd National Biodiversity Plan (including any superseding version of same). • Ireland's Environment 2014 (EPA, 2014, including any superseding versions of same), and to make provision where appropriate to address the report's goals and challenges. 	<p>Contribution towards these Directives and Regulations will further contribute to the protection of European sites potentially affected by the Operational Programme.</p>
<p>Appropriate Assessment All projects and plans arising from this programme will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Plan or project will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or 2. The Plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, 	<p>The need for appropriate assessment at project level will minimise potential impacts on European sites and will ensure that no projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites which may lead to adverse effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Programme (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).</p>

⁴ Including Annex I habitats, Annex II species and their habitats and Annex IV species and their breeding sites and resting places (wherever they occur). Note that the NPWS provide sensitive areas mapping for Freshwater Pearl Mussels which are listed under Annex II of the Directive.

⁵ Including Annex I species and other regularly occurring migratory species, and their habitats (wherever they occur).

⁶ Including protected species and natural habitats.

⁷ Including species of flora and fauna and their key habitats.

⁸ Including protected species and natural habitats.

Mitigating Provisions Included in Appendix I Relevant to the Safeguarding of Europeans Sites ³	Means by which proposed mitigation addresses potential impacts on European sites
<p>including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or</p> <p>3. The Plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.</p>	
<p>Protection of Natura 2000 Sites No projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this programme (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects⁹).</p>	<p>This provision will ensure the protection of European sites during project level development.</p>
<p>NPWS & Integrated Management Plans Regarding integrated management plans, Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive requires that Member States establish the necessary conservation measures for Special Area of Conservation involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans. The NPWS's current priority is to identify site specific conservation objectives; management plans may be considered after this is done.</p> <p>Where Integrated Management Plans are being prepared for all Natura sites (or parts thereof), Fáilte Ireland and local authorities shall engage with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in order to ensure that plans are fully integrated with the Operational Programme and other plans and programmes, with the intention that such plans are practical, achievable and sustainable and have regard to all relevant ecological, cultural, social and economic considerations and with special regard to local communities.</p>	<p>The integration of Natura 2000 site management plans will further contribute to the safeguarding of the Natura 2000 network of sites during the Programmes implementation.</p>
<p>Coastal Zone Management Local authorities and others shall demonstrate that works will be undertaken in accordance with best practice and local authorities and others shall, as appropriate: support measures to protect the coast, the coastal edge and coastal habitats; and facilitate an Integrated Coastal Zone Management approach to ensure the conservation, management and protection of man-made and natural resources of the coastal zone.</p>	<p>Coastal Zone Management will ensure the protection of sensitive coastal habitats which occur along the stretch of the route.</p>
<p>Biodiversity and Ecological Networks Local authorities and others shall demonstrate, as appropriate, protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p>	<p>The inclusion of this provision will mitigate against fragmentation resulting from the implementation of the Programme.</p>
<p>Protection of Riparian Zone and Waterbodies and Watercourses Local authorities and others shall demonstrate that waterbodies and watercourses are protected from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include protection buffers in riverine, wetland and coastal areas, as appropriate.</p>	<p>The inclusion of this provision will safeguard European sites against habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance to key species, and impacts on water dependant habitats and species.</p>
<p>Non-Designated Sites Local authorities and others shall demonstrate the appropriate protection of non-designated habitats and landscapes and to conserve the biological diversity.</p>	<p>The inclusion of this provision will safeguard European sites against fragmentation.</p>
<p>Non-native invasive species Local authorities and others shall support, as appropriate, the National Parks and Wildlife Service's efforts to seek to control the spread of non-native invasive species on land and water.</p>	<p>The control of invasive species will safeguard European sites against habitat loss and impacts on water dependant habitats and species.</p>

⁹ Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- a) no alternative solution available,
- b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and
- c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Mitigating Provisions Included in Appendix I Relevant to the Safeguarding of Europeans Sites ³	Means by which proposed mitigation addresses potential impacts on European sites
<p>Water Framework Directive and associated legislation Local authorities and others shall contribute towards, as appropriate, the protection of existing and potential water resources, and their use by humans and wildlife, including rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater, coastal waters and associated habitats and species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 272 of 2009), the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010) and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same). Local authorities and others shall support the application and implementation of a catchment planning and management approach to development and conservation, including the implementation of Sustainable Drainage System techniques for new development.</p>	<p>Contribution towards these Directives and Regulations will further contribute to the protection of European sites potentially affected by the Operational Programme.</p>
<p>River Basin Management Plan Local authorities and others shall support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the various River Basin Management Plans 2009 – 2015, and associated Programmes of Measures, or any such plans that may supersede same during the lifetime of the Operational Programme, as well as relevant recommendations contained in the Water Quality in Ireland 2007 – 2009 (EPA, 2011, and any updated/superseding document). Local authorities and others shall demonstrate that proposals for development would not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands and coastal waters. Also local authorities and others shall have cognisance of, where relevant, the EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 which provides guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive.</p>	<p>Contribution towards this Plan will further contribute to the protection of European sites potentially affected by the Operational Programme.</p>
<p>Flood Risk Management Guidelines Local authorities and others shall support, as appropriate, in co-operation with the OPW, the implementation of the EU Flood Risk Directive (2007/60/EC), the Flood Risk Regulations (SI No. 122 of 2010), the DEHLG/OPW publication <i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines</i> (2009) (including any clarifying Circulars or superseding versions of same) and relevant outputs of the Catchment and Flood Risk Assessment and Management Studies (CFRAMS).</p> <p>Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) Local authorities and others shall ensure that new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems as appropriate.</p>	<p>These measures will further contribute to the protection of European sites potentially affected by the Operational Programme.</p>
<p>Infrastructure for Walking, Cycling and Water-based activities Local Authorities and others shall work with Fáilte Ireland, the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking, cycling and water-based activities along the Wild Atlantic Way.</p>	<p>Improvements to the existing level of infrastructure along the route may potentially lead to adverse impacts on European sites. The provision to work with the relevant environmental stakeholders will ensure that infrastructural developments are developed in an ecologically sensitive manner, therefore safeguarding the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.</p>
<p>Construction Waste Local authorities and others shall demonstrate that all waste arising during construction phase will be managed and disposed of in a way that ensures the provisions of the Waste Management Acts and regulations and Regional Waste Management Plans. Construction Waste Management Plans will be implemented by local authorities and others to minimise waste and ensure correct handling and disposal of construction waste streams in accordance with the Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects, Department of the Environment, July 2006.</p> <p>Waste Creation Local authorities and others shall support the minimisation of waste creation and promote a practice of reduce, reuse and recycle where possible.</p> <p>Waste Disposal Local authorities and others shall safeguard the environment by seeking to ensure that residual waste is disposed of appropriately.</p>	<p>Competent waste management will further contribute to the protection of European sites potentially affected by the Operational Programme.</p>

Section 5 Conclusion

Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2 AA of the WAW Operational Programme have been carried out. It has been demonstrated that the implementation of the Operational Programme has the potential to result in adverse impacts to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network of sites, if unmitigated.

The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 network have been addressed by the recommended inclusion of mitigation measures to the document that will prioritise the avoidance of impacts in the first place and mitigate impacts where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Operational Programme will themselves be subject to AA when further details of design and location are known.

Having incorporated these suggested mitigation measures; it is considered that the Operational Programme will not impact on the Natura 2000 network of sites¹⁰.

¹⁰ Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- a) no alternative solution available,
- b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
- c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.