ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

The Metals Green, Proposed Public Park

Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

October 2025

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
AA	Appropriate Assessment
BOCCI	Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
EC	European Commission
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
LSE	Likely Significant Effects
NHA	Natural Heritage Areas
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Areas
OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
SCI	Special Conservation Interest
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Definitions

Definition	Term
Appropriate Assessment (AA)	An assessment of the potential adverse effects of a plan or project (in combination with other plans or projects) on Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas
Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government	The previous name for Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Irish government department responsible for housing, local government (including planning) and heritage.
Effect	Outcome to an ecological feature from an impact, e.g., the effects on an animal population from the loss of a hedgerow.
European Commission (EC)	The executive body of the European Union responsible for proposing legislation, enforcing European law, setting objectives and priorities for action, negotiating trade agreements, and managing and implementing European Union policies and the budget.
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	European Directive relevant to on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
Impact	Actions resulting in changes to an ecological feature, e.g., the construction activities of a development removing a hedgerow.
Natura 2000 / European Site	A network of sites selected to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. European site" replaced the term "Natura 2000 site" under the EU (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) Regulations 2011 S.I. No. 473 of 2011
Receptor	Environmental components that may be affected, adversely or beneficially, by the project.
Special Protection Areas (SPAs).	Sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) which came into force in April 1979. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex 1 of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory Species.
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	Areas of protected habitats and species as defined in the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
Qualifying Interest (QI)	Relates to the habitats and/or (non-bird) species for which an SAC or SPA is selected
Zone of Influence (ZoI)	Spatial extent of potential impacts resulting from the project.

1 Introduction

ID Environmental Consultants Ltd were appointed by Murray & Associates to produce an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the development of a public park with a small food and beverage outlet at the Metals Green, a site covering 0.41ha, adjacent to Dún Laoghaire Harbour, Co. Dublin.

The following report has been completed to provide information regarding the ecological status of the proposed site of works. The report includes a general ecological assessment of the site, including designated sites. This report has been completed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6[3] Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening of the Proposed Development.

1.1 Statement of Authority

This report was completed by Ian Douglas (MSc, BSc, H Cert.Ag) of ID Environmental Consultants. Ian is an Ecologist and Environmental consultant with over 10 years' experience in appropriate assessment, ecological impact assessment, habitats assessment, soil science, GIS mapping and regenerative agriculture. Ian has worked on projects including large road developments, power infrastructure projects, planning applications, planning and design of nature trails, constructed wetland creation and on farm habitat development. Ian previously worked in Ecology and Agriculture in England and Australia before taking a position with Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants in 2018. With whom he retains a position as Associate Director. Ian formed ID Environmental Consultants in 2021.

The completion of the report for this project was aided by Ellen Irwin. Ellen is a former student of UCD, who has finished her degree in Agri-Environmental Science (BAgrSc, Level 8). Through this degree, Ellen has developed practical field and lab-based skills that are necessary for field/habitat surveying and soil sampling and has also gained knowledge of GIS software. Ellen has also completed modules in the areas of agri-environmental management, rural conservation and sustainable agriculture that have developed her knowledge in the policies, schemes and practices required to protect the rural environments. Since finishing her degree in May 2023, Ellen has spent the last two years working on projects with both Ian Douglas Environmental Consultants and Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. During this time Ellen has gained ample experience in both ecological surveying and compiling environmental reports.

1.2 Relevant Legislation and Overall Screening Methodology

The methodology for this screening statement is set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (European Commission, 2019). This report and any contributory fieldwork were carried out in accordance with guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (2009, amended 2010).

The process is given in Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and is commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' (which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment). Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making

tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (Natura2000) 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."

Article 6(4) of the same directive states:
"If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the 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 social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of the 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."

It is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project to provide the relevant information (ecological surveys, research, analysis, etc.) for submission to the 'competent national authority'. Having satisfied itself that the information is complete and objective, the competent authority will use this information to screen the project, i.e., to determine if an AA is required and to carry out the AA, if one is deemed necessary. The competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

1.3 Case law

The European Court of Justice has made a number of relevant rulings in relation to when an Appropriate Assessment is required and its purpose: "*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site is to be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on that site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*" and that the plan or project may only be authorised "*where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects*".

A list of relevant rulings to the proposed project is provided below:

Table 1: Case law relevant to this AA Screening for the Proposed Development

Case	Ruling
People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)	The ruling of the CJEU in this case requires that any conclusion of 'no Likely Significant Effect' on a European site must be made prior to any consideration of measures to avoid or reduce harm to the European site. The determination of Likely Significant Effects should not, in the opinion of the CJEU, constitute an attempt at detailed technical analyses. This should be conducted as part of the AA.
Waddenzee (C-127/02)	The ruling in this case clarified that AA must be conducted using the best scientific knowledge and that there must be no reasonable scientific doubt in the conclusions drawn. The Waddenzee ruling also provided clarity on the definition of 'significant effect', which would be any effect from a plan or project which is likely to undermine the conservation objectives of any European site.
Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála (C-461/17)	The conclusions of the Court in this case were that consideration must be given during AA to: effects on qualifying habitats and/or species of a SAC or SPA, even when occurring outside of the boundary of a European site, if these are relevant to the site meeting its conservation objectives; and, effects on non-qualifying habitats and/or species on which the qualifying habitats and/or species depend, and which could result in adverse effects on the integrity of the European site.
T.C Briels and Others v Minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu (C-521/12)	The ruling of the CJEU in this case determined that compensatory measures cannot be used to support a conclusion of no adverse effect on site integrity.

1.4 Guidance Documents

This report has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents on Appropriate Assessment, where relevant:

Table 2: List of relevant guidance documents

Name	Description
Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities	National guidance on Appropriate Assessment for planning authorities. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (2010 revision)
Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities	Circulars issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government with guidance relating to Appropriate Assessment. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 (2010)
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	The guidance within this document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive. European Commission Environment Directorate-General (2001 and updates April 2015 and September 2021).

Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC	Publication to the Member States with an interpretation of certain concepts in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. EC Environment Directorate-General (2018)
Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle.	Publication relating to the use of the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000)
Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Practice Note PN01.	Publication from the Office of the Planning Regulator relating to screening for Appropriate Assessment. OPR (March 2021)

2 Methodologies

A desk study informed this screening report of all relevant environmental information and also included a review of the ecological field survey data collected in July 2025. The screening then incorporated the following steps (broadly based on EC [2000]):

- Determine if the proposed works are directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
- Describe the proposed works;
- Describe the baseline environment;
- List 'Relevant' European sites, which are those sites potentially connected to the proposed works by source-pathway-receptor linkages; and
- Conclude if linkages to 'Relevant' sites have the potential to give rise to Likely Significant Effects (LSE).

2.1 The Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The standard 'source-pathway-receptor' conceptual model is a standard tool in environmental assessment. In order for an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the mechanism's elements means there is no likelihood that the effect will occur. An example of this model is provided below:

- Source (s); – e.g. Piling;
- Pathway (s); e.g. Vibration; and
- Receptor (s); e.g. Underground otter resting site at risk of collapse

The model evaluates the receptors as the qualifying interests (QIs) for which individual European sites are designated, with reference to the latest conservation objectives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website, or substitute detailed objectives from other European sites where only generic objectives are available.

European sites are at risk of significant effects as a result of the proposed works, where a source-pathway-receptor link exists between any elements of the proposed works and the European site. In order for an impact to occur there must be a risk enabled by having a 'source' (e.g. proposed works), a 'receptor' (e.g. a SAC/SPA

or their QI habitats/species), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects the impact source at a site of proposed works to a SAC/SPA). The risk of the impact does not automatically mean it will occur, nor that it will be significant. However, identification of the risk does mean that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental impact occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk, and the characteristics of the receptor.

2.2 The Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: "When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis". Reasoned application of the 'Precautionary Principle' is fundamental to the Screening Stage (and AA). The precautionary principle is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It relates to an approach to risk management whereby if there is the possibility that a given policy or action might cause harm to the public or the environment and if there is still no scientific consensus on the issue, the policy or action in question should not be pursued.

The precautionary principle prevails where 'reasonable scientific doubt' cannot be ruled out. Known threats to QIs of relevant sites are analysed to avoid overlooking subtle or far-field effect pathways. The duration of potential effects is a key consideration, in particular, because the European Court of Justice has recently ruled—albeit in specific reference to priority habitats—that those effects to site integrity must be "lasting".

2.3 Likely Significant Effect

The threshold for a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) is treated in the screening exercise as being above a de minimis level[1] . The opinion of the Advocate General in CJEU case C-258/11 outlines:
"the requirement that the effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on a European site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill."

In this assessment, therefore, 'relevant' European sites are those within the potential ZOI of activities associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, where LSE pathways to European sites were identified through the source-pathway-receptor model.

[1] Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála (Court of Justice of the EU, case C-285/11). A de minimis effect is a level of risk that is too small to be concerned with when considering ecological requirements of an Annex I habitat or a population of Annex II species present on a European site necessary to ensure their favourable conservation condition. If low level effects on habitats or individuals of species are judged to be in this order of magnitude and that judgment has been made in the absence of reasonable scientific doubt, then those effects are not considered to be likely significant effects.

2.4 Desktop Study

Prior to the main fieldwork contributing to this assessment, a desktop survey of available information sources was carried out. These included:

- The NPWS Protected Species Database and Online Mapping (Updated November 2023)
- Data on waterbodies, available for download and interrogation from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web map service (Environmental Protection Agency, 2018);
- Information on the location, nature and design of the Proposed Development supplied by the applicant's design team;
- Review of previous and current planning applications for the subject site and local area via the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Planning portal[2], Myplan[3] and the An Bord Pleanála[4]
- Desk research included a review of records available through the National Biodiversity Data Centre mapping system. These included rare and protected species. Records were requested for all species appearing within the study area or immediately surrounding the study area (2km)[5].
- Data held on the NPWS Article 17 datasets for protected species[6]

2.5 Ecology Surveys

Field surveys were carried out on the 31st of July 2025. Habitats were identified, mapped, and classified, and dominant plant species were noted in accordance with the guidelines of the JNCC (2007) and The Heritage Council (2010). Habitats were classified as per Fossitt (2000). Plant nomenclature follows the BSBI's List of Accepted Plant Names (BSBI, 2007). Fauna surveys were carried out during this multidisciplinary walkover survey to detect field signs, including tracks, markings, feeding signs, and droppings, as well as by direct observation. Mammal surveys followed the guidance as per NRA (2009).

The sites suitable for bat roosting and foraging, and a bat transect survey were assessed based on Collins (2023).

A bird survey was carried out in July 2025. Point counts were carried out for the adjacent harbour from the water edge of Metals Green following Gilbert et al. (1998) and Bibby et al. (2000). If birds were identified by sound but not observed, these species were marked as present; however, no estimation of numbers was undertaken.

[2]https://www.dlrcoco.ie/planning-applications/planning-applications-online-search
[3] https://www.myplan.ie/
[4] https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/map-search
[5] https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map
[6] https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/habitat-and-species-data/article-17

3 Possible Impacts and Zones of Influence

The potential ecological hazards arising from the construction and operational phase of this development have been evaluated and are detailed below.

3.1 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

Site clearance of vegetation and soil removal will occur entirely within the red line boundary. No habitat fragmentation impacts are predicted within the ZOI of the proposed development. All habitats lost as a result of this development are of low local importance.

3.2 Dust

The Institute of Air Quality Management's 'Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction' (Holman et al., 2014) outlines the potential dust emission risk classes to ecological receptors. The guidelines specify that, for highly sensitive environmental receptors, sensitivity to dust is 'High' up to 20m from the source and 'Medium' beyond 50m. The generation of dust from the proposed works is considered to be of small scale, and therefore 50m is taken as the worst-case dust impact zone from the works.

3.3 Noise and Vibration

The proposed project will result in a temporary increase in noise due to machinery operation. Given the works area's location within the urban area of Dun Laoghaire, adjacent to a railway line where baseline noise levels are already elevated, a temporary increase in noise during construction is not expected to result in significant impacts on the surrounding environment or sensitive receptors. Noise disturbance varies among species and depends on the volume and nature of the noise source.

Wetland birds have been documented to tolerate noise levels at or below 70dB(A) (Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies, University of Hull, 2009). BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014 prescribes typical noise level data for various construction plant and activities within 10m of the various sources. The inverse-square law can then be applied to estimate likely noise levels at varying distances from the proposed works. This identifies that the noise levels fall below 70dB within 200m of the works. As such, the zone of impact for noise is taken 50m from the red line boundary.

Figure 3: Typical noise levels for various construction plant and activities (source: BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014)

Plant Item	100m Distance	200m Distance	300m Distance
Rock Breaking (excavator and crusher)	73 dB	65 dB	61 dB
Compactor rammer	57 dB	49 dB	45 dB
Tracked excavator	55 dB	47 dB	43 dB
Earthworks (Dozer)	63 dB	55 dB	51 dB
Dump truck (empty)	65 dB	57 dB	53 dB
Road planer	59 dB	51 dB	47 dB
Asphalt paver	54 dB	46 dB	42 dB
Spreading chipping/fill (dozer)	59 dB	51 dB	47 dB

Plant Item	100m Distance	200m Distance	300m Distance
Trenching	54 dB	46 dB	42 dB
Vibratory roller	61 dB	53 dB	49 dB
Pumping water	42 dB	34 dB	30 dB
All above	75 dB	68 dB	64 dB

3.4 Changes in Water Quality

The development is located adjacent to Dublin Bay and the Open Irish Sea Dublin but within the harbour wall. It is within 300m of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA and within 1km of South Dublin Bay SAC. Possible Hydrological connectivity also exists between Rockabill and Dalkey Island SAC, and between Rockabill and South Dublin Bay SAC. No direct hydrological connectivity exists between the proposed development site and any designated site. Potential indirect impacts on water quality in Dublin Bay could negatively affect the QI habitats and species of the designated sites.

3.5 Cumulative Impacts

Potential cumulative and in combination impacts with other plans and projects.

4 Project Description

4.1 Development Description

The proposed development involves the construction of a public park to be known as the Metals Green. The proposed development will consist of the following:

- Public Park of 3,080 sq m within a site area of 4,070 sq m adjoining Harbour Road, Dún Laoghaire Harbour.
- The proposed park development comprises of plaza, paths, boundary railings and balustrades, low walls (up to 450mm height), seating/picnic tables, cycle parking stands, lawns, wildflower- and shrub-planted areas, tree planting and public lighting to part of park (adjoining Harbour Road).
- Minor alterations to c. 10 linear metres of existing rock armour sea defences are proposed, with a new retaining wall to support a viewing space on the northern edge of the park.
- A food and beverage outlet – e.g., a small modular building or food truck (c.2m x 3m in plan x 2.5m height) will be located in the park, as a commercial opportunity for a food and beverage vendor. This outlet will be serviced as follows:
- Foul sewer connection to manhole in adjoining Commissioners of Irish Lights Headquarters car park.
- Water Connection in public road from adjoining public water supply.
- Electrical power connection.
- Drainage system comprises of nature-based Sustainable Drainage Systems with rain gardens, bioretention and stormwater outlets to existing stormwater system.
- All associated site development works and associated services.

Figure 1: Extract from the proposed plan (Murray & associates, 2025)

4.2 Site of Works

The subject site is located on Harbour Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. The site is approximately 0.4 ha in size and sits on the edge of Dún Laoghaire Harbour within Dublin Bay. The proposed development site lies within the built-up urban area of Dún Laoghaire, which is dominated by retail and commercial amenities, residential housing, and transport infrastructure. The Royal Irish Yacht Club is found immediately east of the development site and the Commissioners of Irish Lights Headquarters immediately West. Dún Laoghaire train station and the DART train line run adjacent to Harbour Road just south of the development site. The proposed project will occur on the margin of Dublin Bay, which borders the north of the site. The project entails the development of a public park designed to provide recreational benefits, featuring a children's play area, picnic benches, cycle parking and native wildflower planting. A site location map can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Site Location Map

4.3 Watercourses and Surface Water Bodies

The subject site directly adjoins the southern shore of Dublin Bay at Dún Laoghaire Harbour. Dublin Bay is designated as part of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (Site Code: 004024) and the South Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code: 000210), reflecting its importance for a range of coastal habitats and waterbird species.

Dublin Bay is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EU Birds Directive, with special

conservation interest for species such as light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*), Oystercatcher *(Haematopus ostralegus),* ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) and bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*). The EU Birds Directive places significant emphasis on wetlands, and since they are part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds (NPWS, 2014). It is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive, with species conservation interest for habitats such as *Mudflats and Sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Annual vegetation of drift lines* and Embryonic shifting dunes.

Dublin Bay was recorded as having 'Good" water quality status from monitoring under the Coastal Water Framework Directive (WFD) Period 2019-2024.

4.4 Dun Laoghaire Harbour Marine Environment and Key Species

4.4.1 Harbour Porpoise[7]

The harbour porpoise is Ireland's smallest cetacean, and also the most commonly recorded around the Irish coast. The harbour porpoise population in the Irish Sea in 2005 was estimated to be 15,230 (CV = 0.35) (Hammond & MacLeod, 2006), while the Celtic Sea population was calculated as 36,280 (CV = 0.57) in 1994 and 80,616 (CV=0.50) in 2005 (the Celtic Sea survey area boundary varied somewhat between surveys) (Hammond et al., 2002, Hammond & MacLeod, 2006). The harbour porpoise population in Irish coastal waters outside the Irish Sea was calculated to be 10,716 (CV = 0.37; CI 95% = 5,010 - 21,942) in 2005 (Hammond & MacLeod, 2006). The surveys carried out by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) in 2008 estimated an overall abundance of 211 (CV = 0.22, CI 95% = 137 – 327) in North County Dublin and 138 (CV 0.24, CI 95% = 86 – 221) in Dublin Bay (Berrow et al., 2008). North County Dublin recorded the highest harbour porpoise density of the sites surveyed and also the highest ratio of young to adults (8%), an important consideration when selecting a site for designation as an SAC (Berrow et al., 2008). There have been 49 recorded sightings of harbour porpoises in the Dún Laoghaire area in the period 2010-2014, with the majority number of sightings (67%) and animals (78%) occurring in the period October-December Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) (IWDG, 2015).

Calving in harbour porpoise occurs between May and August, with a strong peak in June (IWDG, 2014). It is thought that harbour porpoises move offshore in the period March – June to calving/breeding areas (IWDG, 2014). Harbour porpoises are listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive as an animal species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of SACs. Three SACs have harbour porpoises listed as a Qualifying Interest in Ireland; two are in the southwest, while a further SAC has been designated on the east coast extending from Rockabill to Dalkey Island (Table 5.2.1.5). The mouth of Dún Laoghaire Harbour is approximately 2.5 km from the boundary of the SAC.

4.4.2 Grey Seal[8]

Grey seal (Halichoerus grypus) is one of two seal species that breed in Irish waters, the other being the harbour

[7] Adapted from Proposed Cruise Berth Facility, Dún Laoghaire Harbour (Stephen Little & Associates, 2015)
[8] Adapted from Proposed Cruise Berth Facility, Dún Laoghaire Harbour (Stephen Little & Associates, 2015)

or common seal (Phoca vitulina). Recent population estimates for grey seals in Ireland put the population (based on a breeding survey) in the range 5,509 - 7,083 (Ó'Cadhla et al., 2007), with a minimum population estimate (based on a moult survey) of 5,343 (Ó'Cadhla & Strong, 2007). The more up-to-date data put the population between 7,284 and 9,365 (NPWS, 2013b). The main colonies are located on the Atlantic seaboard, with Inishkea North (Co. Mayo) and Great Blasket Island (Co. Kerry) supporting 45% of the population (Ó'Cadhla & Strong, 2007). The Lambay Island population was estimated to be 45 - 60 in 1995 (NPWS, 1995) and 203 - 261 in 2005 (Ó'Cadhla et al., 2007) and most recently 196-252 (NPWS, 2014), indicating an increasing population.

Grey seals are frequently seen within Dún Laoghaire Harbour. Grey seals are highly mobile predators, with studies showing movement of seals across the Irish Sea between Ireland and Wales and also between Irish sites, though female grey seals may show a degree of inter-annual site fidelity (Kiely et al., 2000). Grey seals spend more time hauled out during the breeding season (September – December) and the moulting season (November – April) than other times of the year (Kiely et al., 2000). The peak moult period in Ireland appears to be February to March, beginning as early as November for adult females and juveniles and continuing up to April for adult males (Kiely, 1998 in Ó'Cadhla & Strong, 2007).

Grey seals are listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive as an animal species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation and also under Annex V (Animal and plant species of community interest whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures). Ten SACs in Ireland list grey seals as a Qualifying Interest, with only the Lambay Island SAC on the east coast. They are also protected under Section 23 of the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012.

The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland report (NPWS, 2008) assessed grey seals as being in Favourable Conservation Status.

4.5 Groundwater

Groundwater vulnerability is a term used to represent the natural ground characteristics that determine the ease with which infiltrating water and potential contaminants may reach groundwater in a vertical or subvertical direction. Groundwater vulnerability was assessed using publicly available data sets from the Geological Survey of Ireland GIS web viewer. Groundwater vulnerability was 'high' at the proposed works' site.

4.6 Invasive species

The Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000, contain several provisions relating to Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), covering several sections and subsections of the Acts. It is prohibited, without a licence, to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state, in any place in the State, any species of flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of invasive flora listed on the Third Schedule.

Articles 49 and 50 of the aforementioned Acts set out the legal implications associated with alien invasive species and Schedule 3 (the Third Schedule) of the regulations lists non-native species subject to the restrictions of Articles 49 and 50, which make it an offence to plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of invasive species.

Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) and Old man's beard *(Clematis vitalba),* second-schedule, medium-impact invasive species, were recorded adjacent to the works area growing outside the railing within the rock armour. No management actions are required for any invasive species recorded.

4.7 Habitats and Flora

Habitats were identified, mapped, and classified and dominant plant species were noted in accordance with the guidelines given by Fossitt (2010). Habitats were classified as per Fossitt (2000). Plant nomenclature follows the BSBI's List of Accepted Plant Names (BSBI, 2007). The survey timings fall within the recognised optimum period for vegetation surveys/habitat mapping in 2025 i.e. April to September (Smith et al., 2011).

The habitat assessment surveys described in this report have been undertaken with reference to the following guidelines and interpretation documents:

- Fossitt, J.A. (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.
- Smith, G.F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hora, K. and Delaney, E., 2011. Best practice guidance for habitat survey and mapping. The Heritage Council: Ireland.
- JNCC. (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - A technique for environmental audit.
- Commission of the European Communities (2007) Interpretation manual of European Union habitats. Eur 27. European Commission DG Environment.
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Habitats considered to be of ecological significance, particularly those having the potential to correspond to those listed in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, were identified and classified as Key Ecological Receptors (KERs).

Plant nomenclature for vascular plants follows 'New Flora of the British Isles' (Stace, 2010).

Field surveys focusing on flora and habitat were carried out on the 31st of July 2025. The desktop assessment of recorded flora via the NBDC[9] no records of protected or rare flora within 2km of the subject lands. The following habitat types were recorded within the survey area.

4.7.1 Made ground habitats

The majority of the area to the south of the proposed works is within the 'made ground' of the urban roadways of Dun Laoghaire, which conform to **Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)**. The surrounding landscape was composed mostly of further **Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)** such as private dwellings, retail and commercial amenities and transport infrastructure. The majority of the proposed area of works is characterised as **Amenity Grasslands (GA1)**, dominated by typical species such as Perennial Rye Grass *(Lolium perenne),* White clover (*Trifolium repens)* and Plantain *(Plantago major).* Three seating benches are also

[9] https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map

located within the area of works. A galvanised steel railing runs along the harbour edge, forming a barrier between the amenity grassland and the rock armour.

4.7.2 Semi-natural habitats

Vegetation developing along the rock armour adjacent to the amenity grassland classified as **Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3)**, was made up of Sycamore *(Acer pseudoplatanus),* Elder *(Sambucus nigra)*, Willowherb *(Chamaenerion angustifolium)* and Butterfly-bush *(Buddleja davidii).* This habitat represents naturally regenerating vegetation on artificial substrates and is typical of coastal infrastructure.

4.8 Otters

Otters (*Lutra lutra*) and Pine Martens (*Martes martes*), along with their breeding and resting places, are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife Act, 1976, as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000. Otters have additional protection because of their inclusion in Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, Pine Martens have additional protection under Annex V of the Habitats Directive, which is transposed into Irish law in the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations (S.I. 94 of 1997), as amended.

Historical record checks of the NBDC database found two Otter records, the most recent in 2018.
No records of Pine Marten were recorded in the database near the site of works.

The Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown Otter Survey 2020, carried out for the County Council in 2019 and 2020, identified evidence of extensive usage of Dún Laoghaire Harbour by otter, a species subject to a system of strict protection under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Sprainting sites were identified on both piers and an otter couch located on the inside of the West Pier.

No evidence of Otter activity was observed during ground surveys of the site or its surroundings in July 2025.

4.9 Birds

The proposed development site is found adjacent to Dublin Bay, km from South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA at the nearest point. Under the E.U. Birds Directive, the following species are of special conservational interest: light-bellied Brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*), Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus)*, ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Knot *(Calidris canutus)*, Sanderling *(Calidris alba)*, Dunlin *(Calidris alpina),* Redshank *(Tringa totanus),* Black-headed Gull *(Chroicocephalus ridibundus),* Roseate Tern *(Sterna dougallii),* Common Tern *(Sterna hirundo),* Arctic Tern *(Sterna paradisaea)* and bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) within that SPA.

The QIs/SCIs for the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary are Wetlands and waterbirds, light-bellied brent goose, black-headed gull, thirteen species and eight wader species. Of these bird species, all to a greater or lesser extent use areas along or adjacent to the West Pier to forage in or for roosting (NPWS, 2025).

It should also be noted that a colony of about a dozen pairs of black guillemots nest each year in cavities under the Carlisle Pier, one of only a small number of such colonies on the Irish East Coast (NPWS, 2025).
All birds seen and heard during site surveys were recorded. All of the birds recorded were typical species seen and heard in coastal and urban settings and are listed in Table 3 below. No SCI species were recorded within

or surrounding the proposed development area. No habitat was identified that could serve as a key foraging or roosting habitat for any SCI species.

Table 3: Bird Species recorded during Site Survey

Bird Species	Scientific Name	Conservation Status
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	Amber
Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*	Green
Common Gull	*Larus canus*	Amber
Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	Amber
Herring Gull	*Larus argentatus*	Amber
Great Black-backed Gull	*Larus marinus*	Green
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*	Green

4.10 Bats

All Irish bat species are protected under the Wildlife Act (1976) and Wildlife Amendment Act (2000). Also, the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive 1992) seeks to protect rare species, including bats, and their habitats, and requires appropriate monitoring of populations. Across Europe, they are further protected under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1982), which, in relation to bats, exists to conserve all species and their habitats. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention 1979, enacted 1983) was instigated to protect migrant species across all European boundaries. The Irish government has ratified both of these conventions. All bats are listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and the greater horseshoe bat and lesser horseshoe bat are further listed under Annex II.

Leisler's bats and pipistrelle bats are regularly observed foraging over Dun Laoghaire Harbour during periods of the year when bat species are active and may have roosts in harbour buildings or other structures.[10]. Bat species recorded in the NBDC database within 2km of the proposed development site are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: NBDC Bat Records

Species Name	Record Count	Date of Last Record	Title of Dataset
Common Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu stricto)*	2	19/06/2012	National Bat Database of Ireland
Leisler's Bat *(Nyctalus leisleri)*	4	01/07/2020	National Bat Database of Ireland
Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu lato)*	1	12/04/2022	National Bat Database of Ireland

4.10.1 Bat Activity Surveys

Signs of bats and bats' roosting potential surveys were carried out following Bat surveys in accordance with

[10] NPWS coorspondance shown in Appendix 2

"Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines"[1]. An inspection of the external areas, including trees within and surrounding the subject lands, was conducted. Bat activity was evidenced by signs including: dead specimens, bat droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining, squeaking noises, feeding remains (moth wings), bat-fly (Nycteribiid) pupal cases, and odour.

To assess potential bat activity across the proposed development site, a transect survey was carried out around the park on the night of the 31st of July using an EchoMeter Touch 2 Pro. This device records species observed in real time. The data were also analysed using Keiolodoscope Software to determine bat species presence and activity levels, with the aim of informing an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on local bat populations. A table of results is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 5: Bat Survey Results

Common Name	Species	Number Recorded
Leisler's bat	Nyctalus leisleri	2
Common pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	1
Grand Total		**3**

None of the bats recorded were observed; they were only detected by the detector. Based on Collins 2023, the site was assessed as having negligible roosting and foraging potential. Collins (2023) defines these as follows.

Negligible Roosting Potential: Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats

Negligable Foarging Potentail: Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats

5 Designated Sites and Ecological Assessment

A desktop study was carried out as part of the screening process. This included a review of available literature on the site and its immediate environs. Sources of information included the NPWS and National Biodiversity Data Centre databases on protected sites and species.

5.1 Designated Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature in Ireland include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)

SACs and SPAs form the European/Natura 2000 network of sites. It is these sites that are of relevance to the screening process for the Appropriate Assessment. SPAs and SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the

country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. SPAs and SACs are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended.

Table 6: Source – Pathway – Receptor Assessment

Site Name Designation Site Code	Distance	Qualifying Interests	Likely Zone of Impact Determination
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA **004024**	468m	Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143] Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects. Given the proximity of this SPA to the Proposed Development. The Possibility of LSE is discussed further below.
South Dublin Bay SAC **000210**	1km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. Given the proximity of this SPA to the Proposed Development. The Possibility of LSE is discussed further below.
Rockabil to Dalkey Island SAC **003000**	3.1km	Reefs [1170] Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects.

			The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out, given the nature and scale of the proposed works and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Dalkey Islands SPA **004172**	3.3km	Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the SCI species of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
North Dublin Bay SAC **000206**	5.5km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**

		Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]	
North Bull Island SPA **004006**	5.5km	Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054] Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056] Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143] Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the SCI species of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Howth Head SAC **000202**	8.1 km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this

			designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Howth Head coast SPA **004113**	9.1 km	Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the SCI species of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Ballyman Glen SAC **000713**	10km	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alkaline fens [7230]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**

Knocksink Wood SAC **000725**	10.3km	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Baldoyle Bay SAC **000199**	10.8 km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Baldoyle Bay SPA **004016**	10.8 km	Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the SCI species of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA.

		Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Wicklow Mountains SAC **002122**	11.4km	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae [6130] Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**

Bray Head SAC **000714**	11.5km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Wicklow Mountains SPA **004040**	11.9km	Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the SCI species of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA. **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**
Irelands Eye SAC **002193**	12.6 km	Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC/SPA and there is no potential for direct effects. The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC

Ireland Eye SPA **004117**	12.1km	Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184] Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188] Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199] Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200]	**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects**

Figure 4: Designated Sites Map

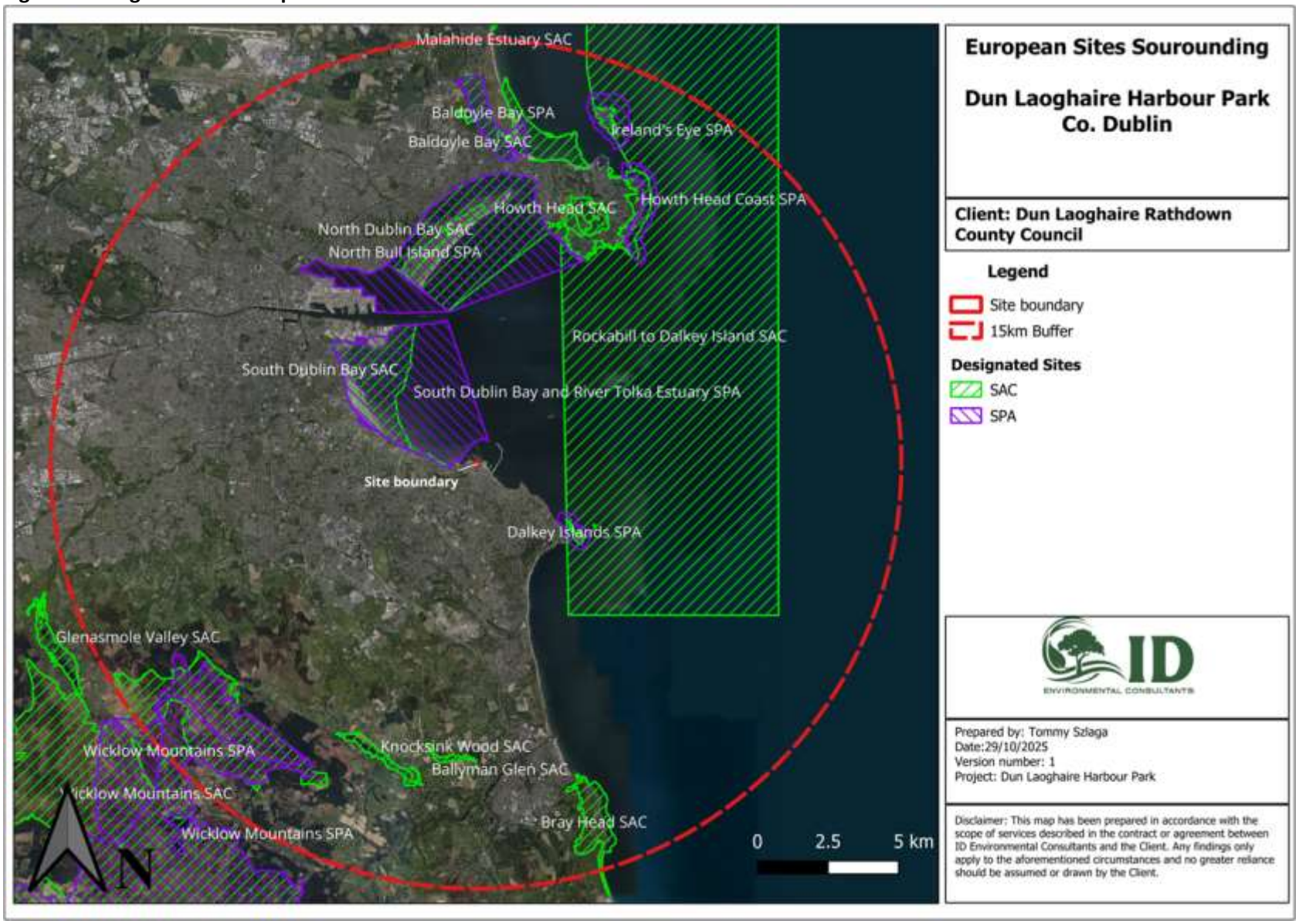
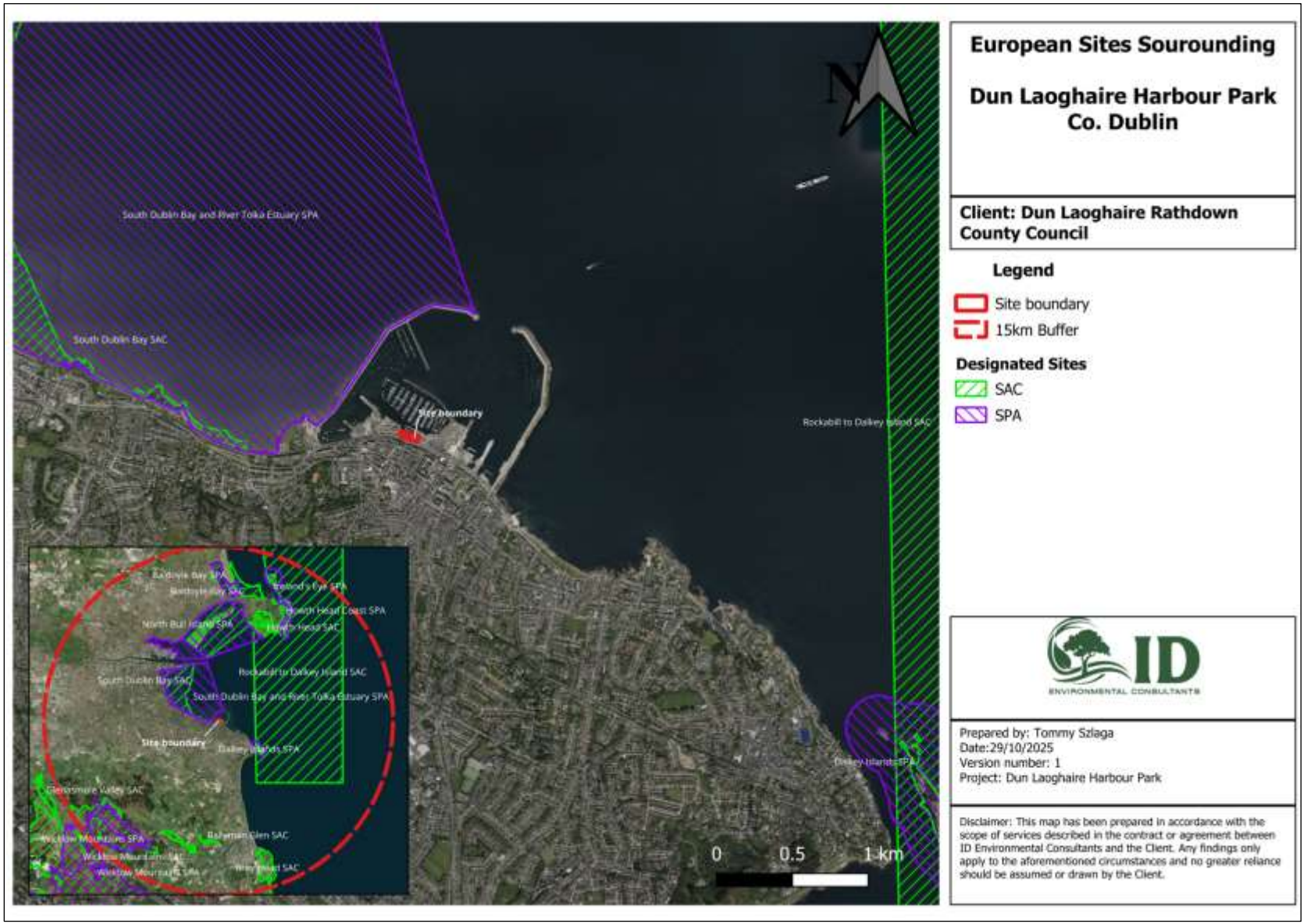


Figure 5: Designated Sites within the Vicinity of the Development Site



5.2 Cumulative and In combination Effects

Several other projects have been considered as part of the screening process. A search of the planning websites of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and An Bord Pleanála was carried out as part of the desktop study. A number of planning applications were reviewed. The greater majority of the schemes were for the construction or alteration of private dwellings.

Table 7 below lists the major projects noted within close proximity to the subject site. This includes an assessment of each project for LSE in conjunction with the Proposed Development, which may lead to cumulative or combined impacts or effects.

Table 6: Projects reviewed for cumulative and in combination effects

Reference	Description of the Development	Likelihood of Significant Effects	Cumulative and In combination Effects
8923	The proposed Coastal Mobility Scheme Development to urban public realm and public and non-public roads (c 4.7km) constitutes Development in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). The Development Includes:- 1. Works comprising physical interventions and improvements, partially in a business district, and 2. Change of use comprising repurposing of roads from use by motorised and non-motorised vehicles to only use by motorised vehicles to form a 2-way cycle track. The development entails making an existing temporary development, that was not assessed, carried out in 2020 permanent as well as additional sections of proposed development.	An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been developed for this project which conluded that the proposed development will not have a significant effect on any European Site and so an NIS is not required.	None Identified
None	Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council has published a Draft Masterplan outlining the long-term redevelopment of the historic Dún Laoghaire Harbour in County Dublin. The plan sets out a phased approach to the regeneration of the harbour area over an estimated 20-year period, with the objective of enhancing its recreational, cultural, residential, and tourism functions while maintaining its heritage and maritime character. Key elements of the proposed development include: • Marine and Recreational Facilities: Installation of floating pontoons to expand berthing capacity for small craft and leisure vessels.	Given the location and scale of this proposed plan, it is highly likely that possible LSE will arise from this development.	None. Given that this proposed project is still in the planning stages, it is extremely unlikely that any of the works will overlap in timeframes with any of the works proposed as part of this project.

	• Public Amenities: Development of a seawater swimming pool, sauna facilities, and upgraded public realm spaces to promote outdoor recreation and year-round waterfront access. • Cultural and Events Infrastructure: Construction of an events and performance centre to accommodate cultural, educational, and community activities. • Tourism and Hospitality: Provision for a spa hotel and associated wellness facilities, supporting increased visitor engagement and local economic activity. • Residential Development: Introduction of new housing within designated zones of the harbour precinct to encourage mixed-use urban renewal and enhance vibrancy in the area. • Environmental and Heritage Integration: The masterplan emphasises adaptive reuse of historic harbour structures, improved public access, and the implementation of sustainable design principles to protect the marine environment and built heritage fabric of the site. Overall, the draft masterplan seeks to create a multifunctional waterfront destination that integrates maritime heritage, recreation, tourism, and community use in a manner consistent with long-term sustainability and coastal management objectives.		

TheDun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028 in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, requires that all Projects and Plans that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same zone of impact of the Project site would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way, any in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the development area and surrounding townlands in which the development site is located would be avoided.

6 Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement and Conclusion

The findings of this Screening Assessment are presented following the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

6.1 Summary of Assessment of Possible LSE to European Sites

Table 8 outlines all possible impacts from the proposed works upon designated sites and provides a rationale for LSE or the exclusion of LSE where appropriate to the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA and the South Dublin Bay SAC.

Table 7: Potential for Likely Significant Effects

Potential Impact and Effect	LSE	Rationale
Land-take resulting in habitat loss or degradation.	No	The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of all designated sites, and so no direct impacts will occur that could cause habitat loss or degradation. Works will require a small incursion into the rock armour but are not expected to have any knock-on effects on its stability or integrity. This man-made habitat is outside the boundaireis of any designated sites.
Changes in water quality and quantity/distribution resulting in habitat loss or degradation.	No	No, given the nature and scale of the proposed works, no water-quality impacts are expected that could affect the QI of any designated sites. Works will be consistent with those associated with groundworks and landscaping, and are not likely to produce large volumes of water or to use high volumes of any hazardous materials. Given the scale of the development, the ability of the harbour walls to act as a hydrological barrier within 500m of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA and within 1km of South Dublin Bay SAC is questioned. No water quality impacts are possible during the construction phase. Once complete, all surface water on site will be redirected to the local sewer network and away from the Bay.
Excavation activities resulting in the temporary generation of dust in the locality of the works area	No	Given the limited scale of the proposed works, and considering that the main Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, which are also supported by the South Dublin Bay SAC, are predominantly wintering species, potential impacts arising from dust are considered to be minimal. Dust-related effects typically present constraints only on larger construction sites and primarily during the summer months. Furthermore, given the separation distance between the proposed development and these designated sites, no LSEs are anticipated.

Noise vibration resulting in disturbance.	No	No sensitive noise receptors were identified in the vicinity of the proposed works. Otter surveys were undertaken and found no evidence of otter activity within 150 metres of the site. While the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA lies within approximately 500 metres of the proposed development, this separation distance is sufficient to avoid any potential impacts on key foraging areas. Therefore, no significant effects are anticipated. Although some bird species associated with the SPA may occasionally occur within a range where disturbance could potentially arise, the existing background noise levels in the area and the general habituation of certain species, particularly gulls, to such conditions indicate that no Likely Significant Effects (LSE) are predicted.
The spread of Invasive species is impacting the integrity of designated sites.	No	No invasive species were found within the site or in close proximity to the proposed development site, so no potential impacts exist.
Cumulative Impacts and Effects	No	None predicted given the nature, location and scale of the proposed development. While other projects may occur within the local area, they could lead to possible LSEs upon the conservation objectives of locally designated European sites. Where these are identified, mitigation measures will be in place to prevent such impacts.

6.2 Findings of Article 6(3) Screening Assessment

Name of project or plan: The Metals Green Public Park, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Name and location of Natura 2000 Site: The closest designated site is South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, which is located 468m northwest The South Dublin Bay SAC 1km of the development site. No impacts to any European Designated site are expected as a result of the proposed development, given the nature and small scale of the works and the intervening distance from the site of works to any designated site, in addition to the physical barriers, including the harbour walls, separating the Proposed Development from the nearest designated sites.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site? The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site.

Are there other projects or plans that, together with the project or plan being assessed, could affect the site (provide details)? No cumulative or in combination impacts are predicted.

6.3 Overall Conclusions

In our professional opinion and in view of the best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites reviewed in the screening exercise, the proposed development individually/in combination with other plans and projects (either directly or indirectly) are not likely to have any significant effects on nearby designated sites**. Therefore, progression to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.**

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Appendix 1: Site Photos

Proposed Site of Works, Area of Amenity Grassland	Harbour Road, Adjacent to the Development Site
	

Vegetation Recorded within the Rock Armour Adjacent to the Works Area. Butterfly-bush Recorded.	Proposed Site of Works adjacent to Dublin Bay.
	

Appendix 2: Consultation Letter with the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (Excerpt of Nature Section)

Nature Conservation

Having considered the Draft Dún Laoghaire Harbour Masterplan, the Department notes from the Masterplan's Section 6.2.1 'Planning Summary' that it is envisaged that a revision of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028, due to commence in 2026, will present an opportunity to potentially give the Masterplan a statutory footing by incorporating it within the CDP. Also, that in Section 6.2.3 'Ecology and Environment Summary' it is set out that it intended to draw up a Strategic Environmental (SEA) Environmental Report and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) on the Masterplan, to respectively facilitate evaluation of the potential overall environmental effects of the plan and its potential effects on Natura 2000 sites in particular. The Department welcomes this approach by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council of making provision to carry out SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the possible effects of the Harbour Masterplan on European sites ahead of incorporating the Masterplan into the CDP.

In this context not just the high biodiversity value of the areas in the immediate vicinity of Dún Laoghaire Harbour, as recognised in their designation or proposed designation under European or Irish legislation as areas where particular habitats and species are to be protected, should be taken in account in undertaking these assessments, but also the presence within the harbour itself of mammal and bird species of considerable conservation significance. The outer side of the West Pier of the harbour and the intertidal and open sea areas to its northwest are included in the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and therefore the proposed development in the Masterplan of a West Pier Nature Park in the area between the West Pier and The Gut, consisting of either artificial floating islands or islands formed by the deposition of sand transported from elsewhere will only be possible if there will be no adverse effects on the Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special conservation Interests (SCIs) for which this European site is designated to protect. The QIs/SCIs for the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary are Wetlands and waterbirds, light-bellied brent goose, black-headed gull, three tern species and eight wader species. Of these bird species, all to a greater or lesser extent use areas along or adjacent to the West Pier to forage in or for roosting. Therefore, only development which would not significantly interfere with the present pattern of usage of the West Pier and adjacent areas by these bird species or with the distribution of wetland habitats there is likely to be permissible.

Similarly, the South Dublin Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) encompasses all the intertidal areas of South Dublin Bay from approximately west of the West Pier to

Sandymount and the Poolbeg Peninsula. The SEA Environmental Report and NIS on the Harbour Masterplan will consequently have to include evaluation of the possible effects on the QI habitats for this SAC, comprising in the section nearest Dún Laoghaire Harbour mainly Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, of the proposed deposition of large quantities of sand off the West Pier to be moulded by natural processes into islands. In the opinion of the Department, given the prevailing tides and currents in the area off the West Pier, it seems unlikely without the construction of hard containing structures that any sand deposited in this area could be retained there, and without such containing structures would probably migrate into the SAC.

The intertidal sections of Scotchman's Bay between the base of the East Pier and Sandycove are included amongst areas it is proposed to designate in future as the Killiney Hill and Dalkey Coastal Zone Natural Heritage Area (NHA). While the Harbour Masterplan does not seem to involve any direct encroachment on this pNHA, SEA of the plan should include evaluation of any indirect effects on it which might result from its implementation.

The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Otter Survey 2020, carried out for the County Council in 2019 and 2020, identified evidence of extensive usage of Dún Laoghaire Harbour by otter, a species subject to a system of strict protection under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Sprainting sites were identified on both piers and an otter couch located on the inside of the West Pier. Observations by a staff member of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department, reports from the public and survey work carried out in connection with a planning application in 2015 for a new cruise ship berth in the harbour and for a foreshore licence application to install fenders on the Carlisle Pier in 2022, suggest in addition that otter holts may be located within the harbour in rock armour protecting the lawn area near the Royal Irish Yacht Club, where under the Masterplan it is proposed to lay out the Marina Pocket Park, and in similar armour on the outside of the marina jetty and recorded much evidence as well in the form of spraints of otter usage of the areas around the Carlisle Pier. Any development works eventually undertaken under the auspices of the Harbour Masterplan in the vicinity of otter holts or couches (i.e the breeding or resting places of this species) independently of any other permissions granted for them will require derogations from the Habitats Directive to be obtained from the NPWS.

Leisler's bats and pipistrelle bats are regularly observed foraging over Dún Laoghaire Harbour during periods of the year when bat species are active and may have roosts in harbour buildings or other structures. As bat species are afforded the same protection as otter under the Habitats Directive any works under the auspices of the Masterplan which may disturb their roosts will similarly require the obtaining of derogations from the Habitats Directive independent of any other permissions.

It should also be noted that a colony of about a dozen pairs of black guillemots nest each year in cavities under the Carlisle Pier, one of only a small number of such colonies on the Irish East Coast and therefore of considerable conservation value. Any works proposed for the vicinity of the Carlisle Pier should include measures to ensure the survival of the black guillemot colony there.

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The above observations/recommendations are based on the papers submitted to this Department on a pre-planning basis and are made without prejudice to any observations that the Minister may make in the context of any consultation arising on foot of any development application referred to the Minister, by the planning authority/ies, in their role as statutory consultee under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.