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Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites

Longwood Local Area Plan 2009-2015

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Screening matrix

Brief description of the project or plan

The project title is the Longwood Local Area Plan 2009-2015. The objective of the Local Area Plan is to establish a land use framework for the sustainable development of Longwood village in a co-ordinated and coherent manner (Draft Local Area Plan, 2009-2015).

Brief description of the Natura 2000 site

The River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation EU code 002299 is situated 1.5 km to the west of the village of Longwood. Under the Habitats Directive Annex I habitats, and Annex II and Annex V species have been identified within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, along with migratory wildfowl listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive (NPWS website).

| Conservation aspect | Annex Directive |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Alkaline fens (7230) | Annex I priority habitat |
| Alluvial forests (91E0) | Annex I priority habitat |
| Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) | Annex II (Habitats Directive) |
| Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) | Annex II (Habitats Directive) |
| River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) | Annex II (Habitats Directive) |
| Pine marten (<i>Martes martes</i>) | Annex V (Habitats Directive) |
| Hare (<i>Lepus timidus</i>) | Annex V (Habitats Directive) |
| Frog (<i>Rana temporaria</i>) | Annex V (Habitats Directive) |
| Whooper swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) | Annex I (Birds Directive) |

Table 1 Annex habitats and species of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

Changes in habitat type could have a slight impact on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and are identified as follows:

- Development of the urban environment (Buildings and artificial surfaces BL3, Fossitt, 2000, habitat classification) reducing the habitat range for Otter, an Annex II species.
 - Increased population will require that suitable waste treatment facilities such as waste water treatment works to minimise any impact on water quality.
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Assessment criteria

Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:

- *size and scale;*
- *land-take;*
- *distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;*
- *resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);*
- *emissions (disposal to land, water or air);*
- *excavation requirements;*
- *transportation requirements;*
- *duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;*
- *other.*

Direct, indirect or secondary impacts which may occur on the conservation aspects of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC are as follows:

- Reduction in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment
 - Increase in urban habitats (Buildings and artificial surfaces BL3, Scattered trees and parkland WD5 and Treelines WL2).
 - Additional light emissions, noise and dust generation.
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Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:

- *reduction of habitat area;*
- *disturbance to key species;*
- *habitat or species fragmentation;*
- *reduction in species density;*
- *changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);*
- *climate change*

The proposed Local Area Plan for Longwood village will not bring about a reduction of habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation or a reduction in species diversity within the conservation area. To cater for an increased population density within the Longwood village appropriate waste management facilities will need to be developed to maintain the water quality and consequently the conservation aspects of the site.

Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:

- *interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;*
- *interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.*

The Longwood Local Area Plan is proposing that the village development is undertaken along existing roads and residential areas, thereby maintaining a land buffer between the urban village environment and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC.

Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

- *loss;*
- *fragmentation;*
- *disruption;*
- *disturbance;*
- *change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.)*

Deterioration in water quality within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC is the primary indicator of significance based on the identified effects as set out above. The water quality should meet the standard of “good ecological status” adopted through the Water Framework Directive.

Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.

- Reduction in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment

Significant impact: Deterioration in water quality will impact negatively on the watercourse habitat and Annex II species namely salmon, river lamprey and otter.

- Increase in urban habitats (Buildings and artificial surfaces BL3, Scattered trees and parkland WD5 and Treelines WL2).

Unknown impact: Can lead to both habitat creation and loss beyond the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. For otter and hare there will be a minor impact but the additional planting of trees may and development of open spaces could mitigate for some loss of habitat.

- Additional light emissions, noise and dust generation.

Unknown impact: Similarly light, noise and dust will have a minor impact on nocturnal feeding of mammals and reptiles associated with the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC.

Finding of no significant effects report matrix

Name of project or plan

Longwood Local Area Plan 2009-2015

Name and location of Natura 2000 site

River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation EU code 002299, situated 1.5km west of Longwood village.

Description of the project or plan

The objective of the Local Area Plan is to establish a land use framework for the sustainable development of Longwood village in a co-ordinated and coherent manner.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?

The Longwood Local Area Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site.

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?

This plan is set clearly within the context of the Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013, for which a strategic environmental assessment was prepared.

The assessment of significance of effects

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.

Longwood Local Area Plan could affect the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC by:

- Reduction in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment
- Increase in urban habitats and associated urban activity i.e. light and noise emissions.

The identified parameters may have a minor impact on the conservation species of the SAC.

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

- Reduction in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment

Not considered significant: As stated in the Longwood Local Area Plan 2009 – 2015 development of Longwood village can only be sustained provided the appropriate infrastructure is in place. To prevent the deterioration of water quality waste water treatment facilities of suitable capacity must be provided and compliance with the Water Framework Directive adhered to.

- Increase in urban habitats and associated urban activity i.e. light and noise emissions.

Not considered significant: Where an increase in urban habitat may result in reduced habitat for fauna of the SAC, measures can be taken to reduce the impact. Urban land management regime and design could be developed to support biodiversity. The effect of light emissions can be reduced by employing down lighting. Noise levels can be reduced by the planting of native trees and shrubs in urban environments to suppress noise.

List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.

National Parks and Wildlife Service, geographical information system, website:

<http://www.designatednatureareas.ie/mapviewer/mapviewer.aspx>

Response to consultation

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?

Niamh Ní Bhroin BSc PhD, Dúlra is Dúchas Teoranta, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Sources of data

Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds.

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy

Draft Local Area Plan for Longwood 2009-2015, Meath County Council.

European Commission, (2002). *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

Fossitt, J.A. (2000). *A Guide to the Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

National Parks and Wildlife Service, (2003). Site synopses for River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation.

National Parks and Wildlife Service, geographical information system, website:
<http://www.designatednatureareas.ie/mapviewer/mapviewer.aspx>

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Planning Development Unit, River Boyne and River Blackwater designation map (printed April 2005).

Level of assessment completed

- Desktop survey
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Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed?

Planning Department Meath County Council, County Hall, Navan, Co. Meath.
