**Habitats Directive Assessment**

**Screening of 2 No. play spaces**

**at**

**Newcastle South and Ballynakelly,**

**Newcastle Co. Dublin**

**for**

**Appropriate Assessment**

**in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive**

**South Dublin County Council**

***May 2018***

**Screening of the proposed play spaces at Newcastle for**

**Appropriate Assessment in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive**

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**Screening of 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle for**

**Appropriate Assessment in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of** **the EU Habitats Directive**

# SECTION 1

* 1. ***INTRODUCTION***

This document represents South Dublin County Council’s Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). Council directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna – ‘The Habitats Directive’ was transposed into Irish law by the European Community (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997).

The aim of the European Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of wild habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is to create a network of protected wildlife sites across Europe, which are to be maintained at a favourable conservation status[1](#_bookmark2). Each member state must designate their most important natural areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

The Directive specifies the scientific criteria on the basis of which SAC sites must be selected and very strictly curtails the grounds that can be used as justification for damaging a site. The network of sites is referred to as NATURA 2000 and includes SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) for protected habitats and species and SPAs (Special Protection Areas) for birds.

The European Habitats Directive (Council of the European Communities 1992) was transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 and amended in 1998 and 2005.

The Natural Habitats Regulations amend the Planning Acts 2000-2009 and require planning authorities when considering an application for a development that is likely to have a significant effect on the SAC/SPA, to ensure that an appropriate assessment of the implications of the development for the conservation status of the site is undertaken.

The only justifications for damaging a qualifying "priority" site are "considerations relating to human health and public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance of the environment, or further to an opinion from the European Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest” (IROPI), but this can only be allowed after an

1 The conservation status of a **habitat** can be taken as "favourable” 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.

The conservation status of a **species** can be taken as "favourable" when population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future and there is and will continue to be a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis. Article 1 (i) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

assessment is made in line with the Article 6 procedure, and there are no other alternatives and an agreement is reached with the European Commission.

The European Parliament, in a communication to the European Council in September 2000, states: The implementation of the European Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, both with respect to species conservation and with respect to the establishment of the Natura 2000 network, is one of the most important tools for achieving the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the European Union and member states (European Parliament 2000).

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive provides a strict assessment procedure for any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a designated European site but which has the potential to have implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.

Article 6 (3) of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC states that;

*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the sites conservation objectives. In the 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) 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 economic or social nature, the Member State 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.*

Article 6(3) therefore requires that an "appropriate assessment" be undertaken for any plan or project which is not necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 site and which has the potential to have an impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site *i.e.* a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA), or on the conservation objectives of such a site.

Following guidance issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 (*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities)*, plans and projects requiring to be considered for AA screening include:

* + - Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs);
    - City and County Development Plans (CDPs) and any material amendments/variations;
    - Development Plans by Town Councils (TCDPs) and any amendments/variations;
    - Local Area Plans (LAPs) and any amendments; and
    - Planning Schemes in respect of Strategic Development Zones (SDZs).

In effect, the Commission’s ruling requires a robust and thorough application by all consent authorities, including planning authorities, of the requirement to undertake an appropriate

assessment of the ecological implications of any plan or project, or material variation of a plan or project, whether within or outside of a designated site, which may impact upon its stated conservation objectives.

* 1. ***METHODOLOGY***

This Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents where relevant:

* + - *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* (European Commission Environment Directorate General, 2001)
    - *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC Environment Directorate General, 2000)
    - *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities Circular* NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10
    - *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities.* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision)
    - *Guidelines for Good Practice, Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive* (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011)
    - *Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* Clarification of the Concepts of Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Over- riding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence. Opinion of the European Commission (European Commission, January 2007)

There are four stages in an Appropriate Assessment as outlined in the European Commission Guidance Document (2001), summarised below:

* **Stage 1: Screening**

The first step to establishing if an appropriate assessment is required is referred to as 'screening' and its purpose is to determine on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria if the plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, could have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site in view of the sites conservation objectives. The process identifies any likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 Site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

* **Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment**

This step considers the impact of the project or plan on the integrity of the Natura 2000 Site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are deemed to be adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts is considered.

* **Stage 3: Alternative Solutions**

This stage examines alternative means of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that aim to avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

* **Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest**

This stage is the main derogation process outlined in Article 6(4) which examines whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project which will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site to proceed.

The current screening exercise was based on a desk-top study, drawing on information sources which included the following: NPWS on-line data for Natura 2000 sites; Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography; geological, hydrological and soils data available from GSI; water quality data (EPA and SDCC); and in-house data. This was supplemented by a site visit by ecologist Faith Wilson who also conducted a bat detector survey of the route.

# SECTION 2 SCREENING MATRIX

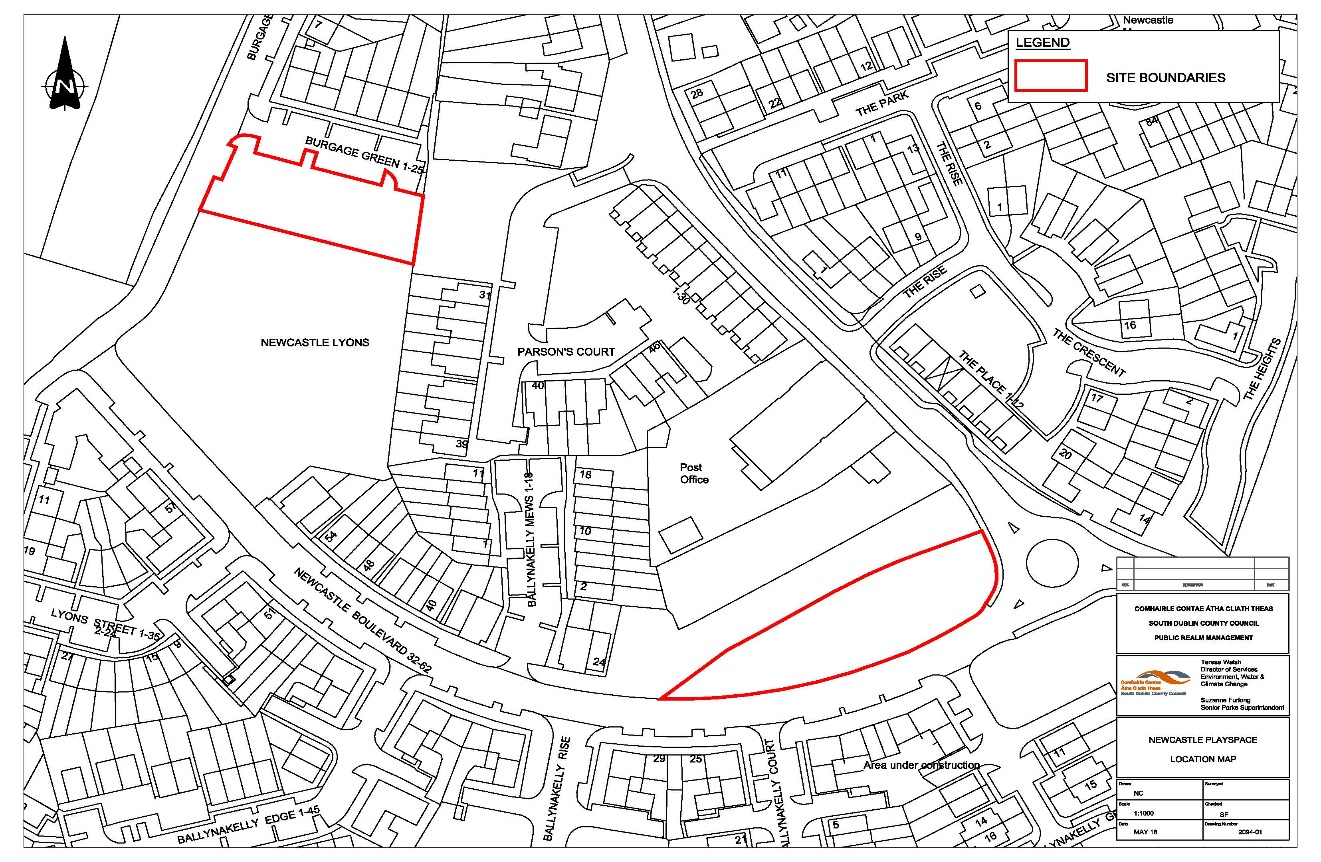
* 1. ***DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN OR PROJECT***
     1. ***Description of the proposed 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin***

**2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin**

The proposed play spaces are natural type play spaces that incorporate play equipment, surfacing, paving, planting and ancillary items.

***Description of the receiving environment at Newcastle Co. Dublin***

Both areas at Newcastle are grassed open spaces within recently developed land. Burgage Green is a small pocket park type space that faces onto terraced development across a street with a hoarded off development site on its opposite boundary. Newcastle Boulevard is a larger triangle shaped open space bounded by roads on two sides and a hedgerow on its third side.

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***Figure 1 Lands proposed for the development of 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin, outlined in red***

* 1. ***ASSESSMENT OF RELEVANCE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT TO NATURA 2000 SITES***

In line with the European Commission Methodological Guidance (EC (2001)) and the DoEHLG Guidance (DoEHLG (2009)) a review of all Natura 2000 sites that could be potentially affected by the proposed project was made using the NPWS online map viewer.

These included any Natura 2000 sites within or adjacent to Newcastle and any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the proposed development (a 15km radius) including those downstream. In addition to the identified Natura 2000 sites consideration was also given to relevant species listed under Annexes I and II of the Birds and Habitats Directives respectively, which form part of the qualifying/conservation interests of the sites – namely Otter, Kingfisher, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Sandwich Tern, Roseate Tern, Arctic Tern, Common Tern, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Ring Ouzel, Red Grouse, and various species of bats.

The lands at Newcastle, Co. Dublin are not currently designated for any nature conservation purposes. The sites for the 2 No. proposed play spaces are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura 2000 sites in South Dublin County or elsewhere. There are no Natura 2000 sites located either within or directly adjacent to the site.

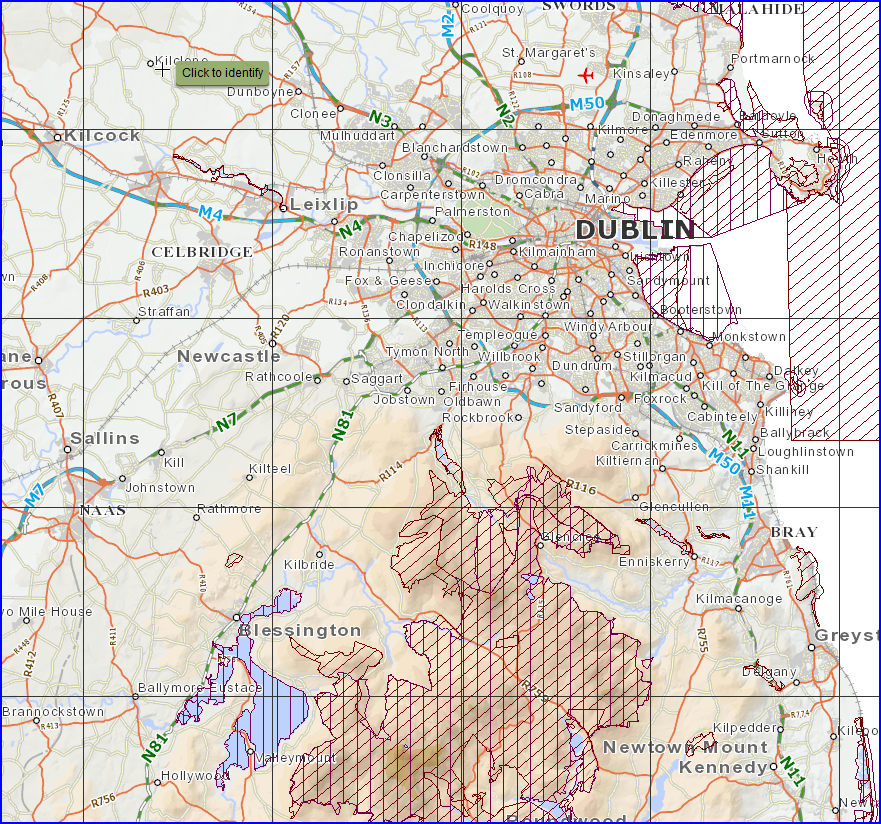
**Brief description of the Natura 2000 site**

In accordance with Guidance on Appropriate Assessment for Planning Authorities (2009) a 15km zone was applied around the proposed development area.

Rye Water Valley/Carton

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**Approximate location of 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin**

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA

Glenasmole Valley SAC

South Dublin Bay SAC

South Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary SPA

Red Bog, Kildare

Wicklow Mountains SAC and SPA

***Figure 2: Showing proposed site and Designated Natura 2000 sites***

Best practice recommends assessing Natura 2000 sites located within 15km of a proposed plan or project. Those Natura 2000 sites occurring within a 15km radius of the site at Newcastle, Co. Dublin, are shown in **Figure 2** above and **detailed** in **Table 1** below.

These include;

* **Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (Site Code: 001398)**
* **Red Bog Kildare SAC (Site Code 000397)**
* **Glenasmole Valley SAC (Site Code: 001029)**
* **Wicklow Mountains SAC/SPA (Site Code: 002122/004040)**
* **Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code: 004063)**

***Table 1: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the location of the 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Site Code** | **Site Name and Designation** | **Approximate distance** | **Conservation Interest (summarised from site synopsis)** |
| 001398 | Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC | 9.5km N | * (1014) *Vertigo angustior* * (1016) *Vertigo moulinsiana* * (7220) Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*) |
| 000397 | Red Bog Kildare SAC | 13km SW | Objective: 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:   * 7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs |
| 001209 | Glenasmole Valley SAC | 10km SE | * (6210) Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia) (\*important orchid sites) * (6410) *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clavey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) * (7220) Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*) |
| 004040 | Wicklow Mountains SPA | 10km SE | * Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus*), * Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), * Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*), * Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*). |
| 002122 | Wicklow Mountains SAC | 10km SE | * (3130) Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea * (3160) Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds, * (4010) Northern Atlantic wet heaths with   *Erica tetralix*,   * (4030) European dry heaths, * (4060) Alpine and Boreal heaths, * (6230) Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas, * (7130) Blanket bog (\*active only), * (8110) Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani), * (8210) Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation, * (8220) Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation, * (9990) Blanket bog (not active), * (1355) Otter (*Lutra lutra*), * Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus*), * Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Site Code** | **Site Name and Designation** | **Approximate distance** | **Conservation Interest (summarised from site synopsis)** |
| 004063 | Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA | 14.km S | Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:   * Greylag Goose * Lesser Black-backed Gull |

There are no Natura 2000 sites located either within or directly adjacent to the lands at Newcastle. There are no direct ecological links between the lands at Newcastle and any of the Natura 2000 sites outlined above.

There are no other designated biodiversity areas affected by the proposed playspaces that have a recognised European Union or International protection status. Some of the Natura 2000 sites and a number of other sites in the area are also designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas, these include:

* Glenasmole Valley pNHA (Site Code: 001029),
* Red Bog Kildare SAC (Site Code 000397)
* Rye Water Valley/Carton pNHA (Site Code: 001398),
* Royal Canal pNHA (Site Code: 002103),
* Liffey Valley pNHA (Site Code: 00128),
* Grand Canal pNHA (Site Code: 002104),
* Dodder Valley pNHA (Site Code: 000991),
* Lugmore Glen pNHA (Site Code: 001212),
* Slade of Saggart and Crooksling pNHA (Site Code: Glen 000211),
* Kilteel Wood pNHA (Site Code: 001394),
* Santry Demesne (Site Code: 000178).

There are no ecological links between the proposed sites at Newcastle and these or any other pNHA.

**SECTION 3 DESCRIPTIONS OF NATURA 2000 SITES**

The Natura 2000 sites located within 15km of the route are listed in **Table 1** above and the full site synopsis for each site is presented in **Appendix 1**.

**Rye Water/ Carton SAC**

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:

Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)

Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail

Desmoulin's Whorl Snail

**Red Bog Kildare**

Bogs are formed in hollows in the landscape. Through the process of plant growth and decay in a waterlogged environment peat is formed. The conservation aspect of the Red Bog is that of Transitional Mires and Quaking Bogs – a peat forming habitat (NPWS, 2015).

**Wicklow Mountains SPA**

Wicklow Mountains SPA is located approximately 9.5km from the proposed development site and is situated at a minimum elevation of 118m OD (levels from EU-DEM). The Wicklow Mountains SPA is designated for the protection of Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) and Peregrine (*Falco peregrines*) bird species. Habitats of blanket bog, heaths and upland grassland provide suitable foraging areas for the birds of prey. Old crow’s nests in conifer plantation suit the Merlin while the cliffs and crags are preferred by breeding Peregrine (NPWS, 2010).

**Wicklow Mountains SAC**

Wicklow Mountains SAC comprises of a mosaic of upland habitats consistent with Irish Mountain terrain. Freshwater habitats comprise of nutrient poor water (Dystrophic Lakes) and standing water of low to medium alkalinity and plant nutrients (Oligotrophic to Mesotrophic Standing Waters). Three varieties of heath habitat are provided protection within the SAC Wet Heath, Dry Heath, Alpine and Subalpine Heath. Heath is characterised as scrubland habitat with no more than 25% dwarf shrub cover. Two priority habitats protected on the mountains uplands are Species-rich *Nardus* Grassland and Blanket Bogs (Active). Exposed rock habitats include Siliceous Scree, Calcareous Rocky Slopes and Siliceous Rocky Slopes. Small areas of oak woodland categorised as Old Oak Woodlands are found around Glendalough and Glenmalure. Otter is the only Annex II species provided protection by the SAC (NPWS, 2013).

**Glenasmole Valley SAC**

Situated on the most northern section of the Wicklow Mountains, Glenasmole Valley is the closest Natura 2000 site to the proposed development at a distance of 4km. The River Dodder flows through the valley. The conservation aspects of the Glenasmole Valley include Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (priority Annex I habitat where orchid species are present), Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae), Petrifying springs with tufa formation (a priority Annex I habitat)(NPWS, 2013).

**Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA**

Poulaphouca Reservoir was created as a manmade lake in 1944 for the purpose of generating hydroelectric power on the River Liffey (NPWS, 2005). The lake is situated at a minimum 182m elevation above sea level in contrast with the proposed development at 108m. Stored water from the lake is discharged to the River Liffey watercourse on the western side of the lake. The river flows west to Kilcullen before it turns north to north east towards Leixlip in Co. Kildare.

# SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

* 1. **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED PLAY SPACES AT NEWCASTLE**

The potential impacts of the 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle, Co. Dublin on nearby Natura 2000 sites are assessed using the following factors:

* + - 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.
    - 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
    - key relationships that define the structure of the sites
    - key relationships that define the function of the site

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Brief description of the project or plan** | * 1 no. playspace at Burgage Green, Newcastle South to incorporate play equipment, surfacing, seating areas, planting, paving. * 1 No. play space at Newcastle Boulevard, Ballynakelly to incorporate play equipment, surfacing, seating areas, planting, paving. * All ancillary works |
| **Brief description of the Natura 2000 sites** | There are no Natura 2000 sites either within or directly adjacent to the site. Natura 2000 sites occurring within and just outside of a 15km radius from Newcastle include the following which are described in detail in Appendix 1:   * Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (Site Code: 001398) * Red Bog Kildare SAC (Site Code 000397) * Glenasmole Valley SAC (Site Code: 001029) * Wicklow Mountains SAC/SPA (Site Code: 002122/004040) * Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code: 004063) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 sites** | As the proposed playspace sits within the framework of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022, which itself has been subject to Screening for Appropriate Assessment, there are no cumulative  elements expected which are likely to give rise to impacts on Natura 2000 sites. |
| **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** | The proposed site is not within or directly adjacent to any Natura 2000 site, therefore there will be no impacts arising from the project regarding size and scale or land-take.  The proposed playspace sites are 9-10km distant from the nearest Natura 2000 site (Rye Water/Carton) to which there is no hydrological or ecological link. There are also no potential ecological or hydrological links to the other Natura 2000 sites listed in Table 1.  There are no requirements to abstract water from any Natura 2000 site.  The potential for emissions relates primarily to surface water disposal from the playspaces. These activities will be subject to the over- arching policies and objectives listed in the SDCC County Development Plan 2016-2022 and to Regional and National frameworks. The current plan is to infiltrate on site within the adjacent park land.  Surface waters generated during construction that do not infiltrate through groundwater carry silt, oils, or other chemicals into the local surface water network which discharges to the River Liffey and Dublin Bay. However, there will be no significant effects on the reasons for designation of the European site in view of the relevant conservation objectives. This judgement was informed by:  - The significant downstream distance between the subject lands with the River Liffey Estuary;  -The existing buffer of grass land between the area of proposed works and nearest watercourses  -The temporary nature of any discharges related to construction of the site; |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | -The known potential for waters in Dublin Bay to rapidly mix and assimilate pollutants (Wilson & Jackson, 2011).  There is no evidence of a link between effluent discharge and macro algae growth (i.e. eutrophication) in Dublin Bay (Wilson & Jackson, 2011 cited in CDM, 2012);  NPWS standard data form for North Dublin Bay SAC states that there had been no apparent impacts to the associated flora and fauna from polluted water.  Due to the location of the proposed site at distance from any Natura 2000 site, there are also no impacts to Natura 2000 sites expected from transportation, duration of construction,  operation, or decommissioning of any element of the playspaces. |
| **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** | Due to the distance of the proposed development from any Natura 2000 site and the expected implementation of Development Plan policies and objectives relating to the maintenance and protection of water quality, there are no changes expected to any Natura 2000 site relating to habitat or species reduction, changes to key indicators of conservation value, or to climate change |
| **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** | Due to the considerable distance of the site from these sites, coupled with Council’s adherence to the policies for ground and surface water protection contained in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022, any such impacts on either the structure or function of the sites in question are not expected. |
| **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.)** | There will be no impacts to Natura 2000 sites relating to loss, fragmentation, disruption, disturbance, or changes to key elements of the site. |
| **Describe from the above those elements of**  **the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are** | There will be no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts from the proposed play spaces on Natura 2000 sites. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.** |  |

# SECTION 5 CONCLUSIONS

This screening report has evaluated the 2 No. proposed play spaces at Newcastle Co. Dublin to determine whether or not significant negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites are likely to arise by virtue of its construction and use. The report finds that the project will not, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, give rise to significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

The Appropriate Assessment procedure for this proposed Plan is therefore concluded at this Screening Stage and a detailed (Stage 2) Appropriate Assessment is not required.

# APPENDIX 1. NATURA 2000 SITE DESCRIPTIONS (as listed in Table 1)

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE CODE: RYE WATER VALLEY/CARTON SITE CODE: 001398**

This site is located between Leixlip and Maynooth. It extends along the Rye Water, a tributary of the R. Liffey.

The Rye Water in Carton Estate is dammed at intervals, creating a series of lakes. Reed Grass (*Glyceria maxima*) is frequent around the lakes, along with Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Starwort (*Callitriche* spp.). Along the remainder of the site the river has recently been dredged and much of the Reed fringe removed.

To the north-west of Carton Bridge a small clump of Willows (*Salix* spp.), with Dogwood (*Cornus* sp.) some Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) occurs. The ground flora found here includes Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), Wavy Bitter-cress (*Cardamine flexuosa*) and Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*).

The woods on Carton Estate are mostly old demesne woods with both deciduous and coniferous species. Conifers, including some Yew (*Taxus baccata*) are dominant, with Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Oak (*Quercus* sp.), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Ash and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) also occurring. The ground flora is dominated by Ivy (*Hedera helix*) with such species as Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*), Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), Common Dog- violet (*Viola riviniana*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) and Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederae*) also occurring.

Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*), a species legally protected under the Flora Protection Order (1987), occurs in Carton Estate; there is an old record from the estate for the similarly protected, Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*), but this has not been recorded from here in recent years. Another species listed in the Red Data Book, Green Figwort (*Scrophularia umbrosa*), occurs on the site in several locations by the Rye Water. The woods at Carton Demesne are the site of a rare Myxomycete fungus, *Diderma deplanatum*.

Within the woods, Blackcap, Woodcock and Long-eared Owl have been recorded. Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Tufted Duck, Teal and Kingfisher, the latter a species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, occur on and about the lake.

The marsh, mineral spring and seepage area found at Louisa Bridge supports a good diversity of plant species, including Stoneworts, Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Sedges (*Carex* spp.), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*). The mineral spring found at the site is of a type considered to be rare in Europe and is a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The Red Data Book species Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*) is found growing on a wall at Louisa Bridge. The Rye Water is a spawning ground for Trout and Salmon, and the rare, White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) has been recorded at Leixlip. The latter two species are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. The semi-aquatic snails *Vertigo angustior* and *V. moulinsiana* occur in marsh vegetation near Louisa Bridge; both are rare in Ireland and Europe and are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

The scarce Dragonfly, *Orthetrum coerulescens*, has been recorded at Louisa Bridge. The main importance of the site lies in the presence of several rare and threatened plant and animal species, and of a rare habitat, thermal, mineral, petrifying spring. The woods found on Carton Estate and their birdlife are of additional interest.

**SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: RED BOG, KILDARE SAC**

**SITE CODE: 000397**

Red Bog, Kildare is located 3 km north of the village of Blessington in east Co. Kildare, close to the boundary with Co. Wicklow. It comprises a wetland complex of lake, fen and bog situated in a hollow between ridges of glacially-deposited material and underlain by rocks of Ordovician age.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[7140] Transition Mires

The shores of the lake are muddy and support such species as Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria alsine*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). Fringing the lakeshore is a narrow zone with emergent Soft Rush, Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago*-*aquatica*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), as well as the moss *Climacium dendroides*. In places, particularly at either end of the lake and along its south-eastern side, this zone grades into extensive areas of quaking scraw vegetation of dense Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), accompanied by such species as Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and the mosses *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and *Sphagnum squarrosum*. Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and areas of Willow (*Salix* spp.) scrub also occur in association with this vegetation.

The deeper water supports submerged aquatic plants such as Water-starworts (*Callitriche* spp.) and Water-crowfoots (*Ranunculus* spp.), while in sheltered areas floating plants including Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and the liverwort *Riccia fluitans* are found.

At the north-east end of the site, bog vegetation has developed, with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Hare’s-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) being the most frequent species. Other bog plants found here include Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Heath Wood-rush (*Luzula multiflora*), the mosses *Sphagnum palustre*, S. *capillifolium*, *S. subnitens*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Polytrichum commune* and *Dicranum scoparium*, and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*.

Red Bog is of ornithological significance and breeding birds recorded from the site include Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen, Snipe and Black-headed Gull (estimated <20 pairs).

Gravel extraction, drainage and eutrophication of the wetland from agricultural activities in the surrounding lands all pose a threat to the site.

Red Bog, Kildare is a site of particular conservation significance, supporting a good example of transition mire, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

**SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: GLENASMOLE VALLEY SITE CODE: 001209**

Glenasmole Valley in south Co. Dublin lies on the edge of the Wicklow uplands, approximately 5 km from Tallaght. The River Dodder flows through the valley and has been impounded here to form two reservoirs which supply water to south Dublin. The non- calcareous bedrock of the Glenasmole Valley has been overlain by deep drift deposits which now line the valley sides. They are partly covered by scrub and woodland, and on the less precipitous parts, by a herb-rich grassland. There is much seepage through the deposits, which brings to the surface water rich in bases, which induces local patches of calcareous fen and, in places, petrifying springs, a priority habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

Examples of calcareous fen and flush areas occur between the two reservoirs, where sedges (*Carex flacca* and *Carex panicea*) are joined by such species as Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Few-flowered Spike-rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*), Zig-zag clover (*Trifolium medium*) and the scarce Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*).

Orchid-rich grassland occurs in the drier parts of this site and in places grades into *Molinia* meadow, both of these habitats are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Species recorded in these habitats include Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Northern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*), Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*), Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) and Greater Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*).

Two Red Data Book species have also been found here, Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*) and Small-white Orchid (*Pseudorchis albida*). The sward includes Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*). Other species which occur are Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) and Autumn Gentian (*Gentianella amarella*).

Woodland occurs in patches around the site. On the east side of the valley, below the northern lake, a Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) wood has developed on the unstable calcareous slopes and includes Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*) and (Irish) Whitebeam (*Sorbus hibernica*). Spring Wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*), Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*) and Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) are included in the ground flora.

Wet semi-natural broad-leaved woodland is also found around the reservoirs and includes Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Willow (*Salix* spp.) with Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Horsetail (*Equisetum* spp.), Brambles and localised patches of Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), an introduced species.

The lake shore vegetation is not well developed, which is typical of a reservoir. There are occasional patches of Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), which are more extensive around the western shore of the northern lake, along with Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). Other vegetation includes Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*) and the scarce Water Sedge (*Carex aquatilis*).

As well as the Green-winged Orchid and Small-white Orchid, two other threatened species which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book also occur in the site, Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) and Yellow Bird's-nest (*Monotropa hypopitys*).

The site provides excellent habitat for bat species, with at least four species recorded: Pipistrelle, Leisler’s, Daubenton’s and Brown Long-eared Bat. Otter occurs along the river and reservoirs. These habitats also support Kingfisher, an Annex I species under the EU Birds Directive.

Glenasmole Valley contains a high diversity of habitats and plant communities, including three habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The presence of four Red Data Book plant species further enhances the value of the site as does the presence of populations of several mammal and bird species of conservation interest.

**SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: WICKLOW MOUNTAINS SPA SITE CODE: 004040**

This is an extensive upland site, comprising a substantial part of the Wicklow Mountains. The underlying geology of the site is mainly of Leinster granites, flanked by Ordovician schists, mudstones and volcanics. The area was subject to glaciation and features fine examples of glacial lakes, deep valleys and moraines. Most of site is over 300 m, with much ground being over 600 m; the highest peak is Lugnaquilla (925 m). The substrate over much of site is peat, with poor mineral soil occurring on the slopes and lower ground. Exposed rock and scree are features of the site.

The dominant habitats present are blanket bog, heaths and upland grassland. The bog habitat is usually dominated by Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum vaginatum* and *E. angustifolium*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). Bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) are well represented. On shallower peats, dry heath is represented by such species as Ling, Gorse (*Ulex* spp.), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and lichens (*Cladonia* spp.). Fine examples of native Oak woodlands are found in the Glendalough area, and include Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) trees of 100-120 years old. Glendalough Lake is a good example of an oligotrophic system.

The site supports good examples of both upland and woodland bird communities. The open peatlands provide excellent foraging habitat for Merlin (5-10 pairs) and Peregrine (*c*. 10 pairs). The Merlins nest in old crows nests, whilst the Peregrines nest on cliffs and crags. Other birds of the open peatlands and scree slopes include Ring Ouzel, now a very rare bird in Ireland, and Red Grouse. The Wicklow uplands are the only regular location in Ireland where Goosander breeds, with the Glendalough lakes being a regular site. This species was proved to be breeding only as recently as 1994 and it is now well established. Whinchat, a localised species in Ireland, breeds within the site.

The Glendalough Oak woods are a regular location for several rare breeding passerines. Redstart is recorded most years and 1-2 pairs probably breed. Wood Warbler is another annual visitor, with perhaps up to 5 pairs in some years. Recently, Garden Warbler has been recorded, whilst Blackcap has a very strong breeding population.

The site, which is within the Wicklow Mountains National Park, is fragmented into about twenty separate parcels of land. Much of the site is State-owned and managed for nature conservation based on traditional landuses for the uplands. The most common landuse is traditional sheep grazing. Other land uses include turf-cutting, mostly by hand though some machine-cutting also occurs. Grazing by sheep and deer in the woodlands can be damaging as it prevents or reduces regeneration. Dublin City is close to the site and amenity use is very high; if not properly controlled, recreational activities could cause disturbance to some bird species.

This site is of high ornithological importance as it supports very good examples of upland and woodland bird communities. Several of the species which occur are very rare at a national level. Two species, Ring Ouzel and Red Grouse, are Red-listed and their status is of high conservation concern. Also of note is that Merlin and Peregrine are both listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

**SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: WICKLOW MOUNTAINS SITE CODE: 002122**

This site is a complex of upland areas in Counties Wicklow and Dublin, flanked by Blessington Reservoir to the west and Vartry Reservoir in the east, Cruagh Mt. in the north and Lybagh Mt. in the south. Most of the site is over 300m, with much ground over 600m and the highest peak of Lugnaquilla at 925m.

The Wicklow Uplands comprise a core of granites flanked by Ordovician schists, mudstones and volcanics. The form of the Wicklow Glens is due to glacial erosion. The Wicklow Mountains are drained by several major rivers including the Dargle, Liffey, Dodder, Slaney and Avonmore. The river water in the mountain areas is often peaty, especially during floods.

The topography is typical of a mountain chain, showing the effects of more than one cycle of erosion. The massive granite has weathered characteristically into broad domes. Most of the western part of the site consists of an elevated moorland, covered by peat. The surrounding schists have assumed more diverse outlines, forming prominent peaks and rocky foothills with deep glens. The dominant topographical features are the products of glaciation. High corrie lakes, deep valleys and moraines are common features of this area. The substrate over much of the area is peat, usually less than 2m deep. Poor mineral soil covers the slopes and rock outcrops are frequent

The vegetation over most of the site is a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and upland grassland (mostly on peaty soil, though some on mineral soil), with stands of dense Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and small woodlands mainly along the rivers. Mountain loughs and corrie lakes are scattered throughout the site. The site supports many habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The two dominant vegetation communities in the area are heath and blanket bog. Heath vegetation, with both wet and dry heath well represented, occurs in association with blanket bog, upland acid grassland and rocky habitats. The wet heath is characterised by species such as Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum* spp.), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), Bent grasses (*Agrostis* spp.) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). In places the wet heath occurs in conjunction with flush communities and streamside vegetation, and here species such as Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and *Carex* spp. are found. Dry heath at this site is confined to shallow peaty soils on steep slopes where drainage is better and particularly in sheltered conditions. It is characterised by species such as Ling, Gorse (*Ulex* spp.), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and lichens (*Cladonia* spp.). In places the heath grades into upland grassland on mineral soil, some examples of which correspond to the E.U. Habitats Directive Annex I priority habitat species-rich *Nardus* grassland.

Blanket bog is usually dominated by Cottongrasses, Ling and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). On steeper slopes there is some flushing and here Purple Moor-grass, Heath Rush, and certain *Sphagnum* species become more common. The Liffey Head blanket bog is among the best of its kind in eastern Ireland, with deep peat formations and an extensive system of dystrophic pools developed among the hummocks and hollows on the bog surface. The vegetation is largely dominated by Ling and Cross-leaved Heath, with Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum vaginatum* and *E. angustifolium*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). In drier areas, Bilberry and Cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) are common, while the scarce Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) is also found. Blanket bog

occurs over extensive areas of deeper peat on the plateau and also on gentle slopes at high altitudes. Peat erosion is frequent on the peaks - this may be a natural process, but is likely to be accelerated by activities such as grazing.

Due to the underlying rock strata, the water of the rivers and streams tends towards acidity. The water is generally oligotrophic and free from enrichment. The lakes within the area range from the high altitude lakes of Lough Firrib and Three Lakes, to the lower pater-noster lakes of Glendalough, Lough Tay and Lough Dan. Spectacular corrie lakes (such as Loughs Bray (Upper and Lower), Ouler, Cleevaun, Arts, Kellys and Nahanagan) exhibit fine sequences of moraine stages. The deep lakes are characteristically species poor, but hold some interesting plants including an unusual form of Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris* var. *morei*), a Stonewort (*Nitella* sp.) and Floating Bur-reed (*Sparganium angustifolium*). The Red Data Book fish species Arctic Char has been recorded from Lough Dan, but this population may now have died out.

Alpine vegetation occurs on some of the mountain tops, notably in the Lugnaquilla area, and also on exposed cliffs and scree slopes elsewhere in the site. Here alpine heath vegetation is represented with species such as Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Cowberry, Dwarf Willow (*Salix herbacea*), the grey-green moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and scarce species such as Mountain Clubmoss (*Diphasiastrum alpinum*), Firmoss (*Huperzia selago*), and Starry Saxifrage (*Saxifraga stellaris*). Some rare arctic-alpine species have been recorded, including Alpine Lady’s-mantle (*Alchemilla alpina*) and Alpine Saw-Wort (*Saussurea alpina*).

Small areas of old oakwood (Blechno-Quercetum petraeae type) occur on the slopes of Glendalough and Glenmalure, near L. Tay and L. Dan, with native Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) 100-120 years old. On wetter areas, wet broadleaved semi-natural woodlands occur, which are dominated by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Mixed woodland with non-native tree species also occurs.

The site supports a range of rare plant species, which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book: Parsley Fern (*Cryptogramma crispa*), Marsh Clubmoss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), Greater Broom-rape (*Orobanche rapum-genistae*), Alpine Lady's-mantle, Alpine Saw-wort, Lanceolate Spleenwort (*Asplenium billotii*), Small White Orchid (*Pseudorchis albida*) and Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*). The latter three species are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999. The rare Myxomycete fungus, *Echinostelium colliculosum,* has been recorded from the Military Road.

Mammals and birds which occur are typical of the uplands. Deer are abundant, mainly hybrids between Red and Sika Deer. Other mammals include Hare, Badger and Otter, the latter being a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Pine Marten has recently been confirmed as occurring within the site. Among the birds, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Raven and Red Grouse are resident throughout the site. Wheatear, Whinchat and the scarce Ring Ouzel are summer visitors. Wood Warbler and Redstarts are rare breeding species of the woodlands. Dipper and Grey Wagtail are typical riparian species. Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, both Annex I species of the EU Birds Directive, breed within the site. Recently, Goosander has become established as a breeding species.

Large areas of the site are owned by NPWS, and managed for nature conservation based on traditional landuses for the uplands. The most common landuse is traditional sheep grazing. Other land uses include turf-cutting, mostly hand-cutting but some machine-cutting occurs. These activities are largely confined to the Military Road, where there is easy access. Large areas which had been previously hand-cut and are now abandoned, are regenerating. In the last 40 years, forestry has become an important landuse in the uplands, and has affected both the wildlife and the hydrology of the area. Amenity use is very high, with Dublin city close to the site.

Wicklow Mountains is important as a complex, extensive upland site. It shows great diversity from a geomorphological and a topographical point of view. The vegetation provides examples of the typical upland habitats with heath, blanket bog and upland grassland covering large, relatively undisturbed areas. In all ten habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive are found within the site. Several rare, protected plant and animal species occur.

**SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: POULAPHOUCA RESERVOIR SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004063**

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, located in the western foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, was created in 1944 by damming of the River Liffey for the purpose of generating electricity from hydropower. The reservoir covers an area of approximately 20 square kilometres and is the largest inland water body in the mid-east and south-east regions. The reservoir receives water from two main sources, the River Liffey at the northern end, and the Kings River at the southern end. The exit is into the River Liffey gorge at the western end. Underlying the reservoir are sands and gravels deposited during the last glaciation. The shores of the lake are mostly sandy. When water levels are low the exposed lake muds are colonised by an ephemeral flora of annual plant species. Wet grassland areas occur in sheltered bays around the lake but especially in the northern part. Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) is the main grass species present, but other plant species characteristic of wet grasslands occur, including Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). Sedges (*Carex* spp.) are locally common, while Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) scrub is often found associated with the wet grassland. In some places the water washes against grassy banks which are generally less than a metre high, and in a few places there are steep sand and clay cliffs, up to 15 m high - these are remnants of the old River Liffey channel. In many places the banks are actively eroding, and a strip of conifers has been planted around much of the perimeter of the reservoir in an attempt to stabilize the banks.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Greylag Goose and Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Poulaphouca Reservoir is of national importance for its Greylag Goose population, which is one of the largest in the country. The site provides the main roost for the birds, with feeding occurring mostly on improved grassland outside of the site. A mean peak of 701 individuals occurred during the five seasons 1995/96 to 1999/2000. Other waterfowl species occur in relatively low numbers, including Whooper Swan (22), Wigeon (180), Teal (107), Mallard (186), Goldeneye (22), Cormorant (11), Great Crested Grebe (8), Curlew (86) and Mute Swan (11). The site is also used by Grey Heron (6).

The reservoir attracts roosting gulls during winter, most notably a large population of Lesser Black-backed Gull (651), which in Ireland is rare in winter away from the south coast. Black-headed Gull (915) and Common Gull (183) also occur.

Breeding birds at the site include Great Crested Grebe (several pairs), which is localised in its distribution in eastern Ireland, as well as Snipe and Lapwing.

The principal interest of the site is the Greylag Goose population, which is of national importance. A range of other wildfowl species also occurs, including Whooper Swan, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site is also notable as a winter roost for gulls, especially Lesser Black-backed Gull. Part of Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary