



Title

Natura Impact Statement

Development Description

"The proposed works will include internal modification, the construction of a toilet block extension (10m²), a glazed entrance lobby and a covered outdoor area, replacement of the existing wastewater treatment system and percolation area with a packaged Wastewater Treatment System, provision of wayfinding signage and all associated works."

Location

*Unit 1, Páirc Ghnó, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Baile Iarthach
Thuaidh, Oileán Chléire, Co. Corcaigh*

Applicants

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Prepared by:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement (Appropriate Assessment Report) has been prepared by Edel Hardiman (B.Sc) in consultation with James O' Donnell, Planning Consultant (BA, MRUP, Dip APM) on behalf of Údarás na Gaeltachta who are applying for planning permission to Cork County Council for *“works at Unit 1, Páirc Ghnó, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Baile Iarthach Thuaidh, Oileán Chléire, Co. Corcaigh. The proposed works will include internal modification, the construction of a toilet block extension (10m²), a glazed entrance lobby and a covered outdoor area, replacement of the existing wastewater treatment system and percolation area with a packaged Wastewater Treatment System, provision of wayfinding signage and all associated works.”*

Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC surrounds the application site. This report provides the information necessary for the competent authority to complete an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on sites of European importance in the area. This report has also had regard to the provisions of the March 2021 publication entitled *“OPR Practice Note PN01- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.”*

The current project is not directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of any European Site.

The assessment in this report is based on a desk study, and a field survey undertaken on the 25th of July 2025 by Edel Hardiman.

This Stage 2 NIS has been informed by the Stage 1 AA Screening Report, which concluded that indirect impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 network could not be ruled out at that stage. In the absence of best practice and mitigation measures, the proposed development could potentially affect the integrity of the Natura site. As per the precautionary principle, construction phase activities could result in surface water runoff pollutants potentially impacting the groundwater in this area in the absence of mitigation measures. Therefore, indirect impacts cannot be ruled out in this regard on this Natura 2000 site.

This Report has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission guidance document 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 the Department of the Environment's Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (December 2009, amended February 2010).

1.2 Statement of Authority

A baseline ecological survey was undertaken on the 25th of July 2025 by Edel Hardiman (B.Sc). Edel Hardiman is a qualified ecologist and has obtained a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science (BSc Hons) at the University of Galway. Edel has completed Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports, Natura Impact Statements, Ecological Impact Assessments, Bat Survey Reports and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Reports for a wide range of public and private sector projects. She has conducted Bird Surveys and Bat Surveys in the Republic of Ireland. She is a registered member of CIEEM.

James O' Donnell is a qualified Town Planner and Project Manager with over 25 years planning experience in both the public and private sector in the west of Ireland, including 6 years experience as a local authority planning officer. James has particular experience in the project management and delivery of a wide range of complex planning applications requiring environmental and ecological assessment, in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and EIA Directives.

2. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

The screening exercise will be conducted in line with the recommendations and protocol set out in the Guidance from the Commission (EC, 2002). This protocol involves a four-stage process to complete an Appropriate Assessment. At each stage, the findings of certain issues and tests will determine whether the next stage in the process is required.

The four stages in the Appropriate Assessment process are outlined below:

Stage 1: Screening

This step consists of examining the likely potential impacts of a project or plan, alone or in combination with other projects, upon a Natura 2000 site or sites, and considers whether these impacts may be considered significant. If no significant impacts are foreseen, then a 'finding of no significant effects' (FONSE) statement is issued to the appropriate authority, and the process is complete. If the effects are considered significant or their significance is unknown, then the process moves on to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Where the screening process has identified potential impacts which are considered significant or unknown, this process examines these potential impacts in detail, in relation to the conservation interests of the Natura 2000 site or sites. Mitigation measures may be suggested to reduce the likelihood or severity of these impacts. If the impacts are still considered to be significant or unknown after this stage is complete, then alternative solutions must be considered (Stage 3).

This Natura Impact Statement represents an **Appropriate Assessment** for planning permission for “works at Unit 1, Páirc Ghnó, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Baile Iarthach Thuaidh, Oileán Chléire, Co. Corcaigh. The proposed works will include internal modification, the construction of a toilet block extension (10m²), a glazed entrance lobby and a covered outdoor area, replacement of the existing wastewater treatment system and percolation area with a packaged Wastewater Treatment System, provision of wayfinding signage and all associated works”.

Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

‘If the potential impacts are still considered to be significant or unknown after the appropriate assessment stage, then alternative ways of implementing the project are considered at this stage. If no alternative solutions are possible, then it is considered whether the project or plan may go ahead regardless, if imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) are found’.

Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)

If significant negative impacts on the Natura 2000 site are unavoidable, and no alternative solutions may be found, then this stage involves the consideration of whether the project or plan may go ahead despite these effects, for ‘imperative reasons of overriding public interest’ (IROPI).

3. Description of the Proposed Development

3.1 Site Location

The application site is located on Cape Clear Island; an island located off the south of County Cork. The subject site is located along the northwestern edge of the island. The application site features a number of existing buildings together with an existing treatment system. The subject site overlooks the island pier to the east.

3.2 Characteristics of Proposed Development

“Údarás na Gaeltachta, intend to apply for full planning permission from Cork County Council for works at Unit 1, Páirc Ghnó, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Baile Iarthach Thuaidh, Oileán Chléire, Co. Corcaigh. The proposed works will include internal modification, the construction of a toilet block extension (10m²), a glazed entrance lobby and a covered outdoor area, replacement of the existing wastewater treatment system and percolation area with a packaged Wastewater Treatment System, provision of wayfinding signage and all associated works”.

The development site comprises an overall area of 0.581 ha. A map showing the site location is provided as **Figure 3.1**.



Figure 3.1: Indicative Location of Application Site (Source- <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool>)



Figure 3.2: Site Location (Red X) in Relation to the Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC Natura 2000 site

4. Characteristics of the Existing Environment

4.1 Habitats

A walkthrough of the site was conducted on the 25th of July 2025. The NRA publication *Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna* was used as a guide for surveying. Habitats were classified according to the information in *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt 2000) and correlated with any Annex I habitats if applicable.

The application site is located on Cape Clear Island; an island located off the south of County Cork. The subject site is located along the northwestern edge of the island. The application site features a number of existing buildings together with an existing treatment system. The subject site overlooks the island pier to the east. Trá Ciaráin is to the south of these docks

Listed habitats as informed by the 25th of July 2025, field survey follows:

- BL1 – Stone walls and other stonework
- BL 3 – Buildings and artificial surfaces
- GS2 – Dry meadows and grassy verges

The site itself includes an existing building (BL3). Stone walls (BL1) border existing hardstanding areas and there is an area of amenity grassland to the north.



Plate 4.1 Habitat Map



Plate 4.1 Looking north at the existing building entrance from the centre of the site



Plate 4.2 Looking northeast at the existing port from the southwestern boundary



Plate 4.3 Looking north from the southern boundary at the port



Plate 4.4 Looking southwest at the existing port from the southern boundary



Plate 4.5 Looking south from the centre of the site



Plate 4.6 Looking north at the existing buildings from the centre of the site



Plate 4.7 Looking south from the north of the site



Plate 4.7 Looking north from the center of the site

4.2 Fauna

Bird species noted during the site survey included European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) and Common Gull (*Larus canus*).

No mammals were noted on site during the site visit including mammal tracks and mammal prints.

5. EU Nature Conservation Legislation and Natura 2000 Sites.

There are three main types of designation for nature conservation in Ireland: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). NHAs are designated under the Irish Wildlife Act 1976 (amended 2000). SACs and SPAs are designated under European legislation, the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (transposed into Irish law in the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended in 1998 and 2005) and the EU Habitat Directive 79/409/EEC, respectively. These European designated sites (SACs and SPAs) are also known as Natura 2000 sites. This means that they are part of the Natura 2000 Network, a network of important ecological sites across the European Union.

Sites are designated on the basis of the presence of certain 'Qualifying Features', i.e. the habitats listed under Annex I and the species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

Once a site is designated as a SAC/SPA and publicly advertised it is legally protected and becomes a proposed candidate SAC (pcSAC) or proposed candidate SPA (pcSPA). A three-month period follows during which landowners may lodge an objection to the designation. Details of each proposed SAC and proposed SPA are then given to the EU Commission, and thereafter the site is called a "candidate SAC" or "candidate SPA". Once the sites are approved by the commission, they are formally designated by the Minister.

5.1 Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites

Due to the proximity of the proposed development site to a Natura 2000 site, an Appropriate Assessment may be required under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 6(3) and (4), Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites. Such assessments are required where it is identified that a proposed plan or project could have significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Directive, state the following:

6.3 '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 site's conservation objectives... 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....'

6.4 '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... the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected...'

6. European Sites in the likely Zone of Impact of the Proposed Development

A desktop study was conducted examining online and GIS spatial datasets for Surface Water Catchments and European designated sites on the 14th of August 2025. Information from the site was gleamed from the following source:

- The National Park and Wildlife website www.npws.ie was consulted for details of protected sites and rare and protected species in the area.
- The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) was consulted for information on the soils, geology and hydrology of the site.
- The website catchments.ie was used to review information on groundwater
- Relevant Development Plans and Local Area Plans in the neighbouring areas.
- The planning section of the Cork County Council's website was consulted for information on local planning applications.

European sites within the zone of likely effects of the project were identified. Natura 2000 site, Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC, was screened in. As per the precautionary principle, construction phase activities could result in groundwater contamination and surface water runoff pollutants potentially impacting the Natura 2000 site in the absence of mitigation measures.

Table 6.1- European Sites within the zone of likely effect.

European Site	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European Site has been designated (Sourced www.npws.ie)	Conservation Objectives	Zone of Likely Impact Determination
Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC Site code: 000101	• Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] • Reefs [1170] • Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] • European dry heaths [4030] • Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330] • <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] • <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Detailed conservation objectives for this site were reviewed as part of the assessment.	The proposed works are located adjacent to the Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC. Following preliminary assessment, it is considered to be within the Likely Zone of Impact.

7. Mitigation and Best Practice Measures

The following best practice measures will be adhered to during the construction of the proposed development. These are an integral part of the design of the project and are considered standard procedure. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the “*Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan*” prepared by Enviroplan Consulting Limited and submitted as part of this planning application.

7.1 Site Set Up

- All works will be located within the site boundary. No works will take place outside the site boundary to prevent damage to areas outside the necessary development footprint.
- The existing stone walls will be retained where possible.

7.2 Earthworks

- Works such as soil excavations, soil depositing or soil stripping shall not take place immediately following periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall.
- All stockpile areas of sand, gravels and soils should be stored on level terrain and shall be covered during heavy rainfall periods in order to prohibit the mobilization of sediments.
- If gravel or handstand materials are being brought onsite ensure that the source is free of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, *Gunnera* and *Rhododendron*.
- Any invasive species identified within the application site are to be removed and treated by a licensed and trained specialist to prevent the spread of invasive species. This measure is to be carried out prior to any construction work on the application site.
- Prior to commencement of development, a Decommissioning Management Plan (DMP) for the existing treatment plant shall be prepared. This shall inform best practice measures for the decontamination, safe removal and disposal of the existing treatment plant to prevent environmental pollution.
- The existing treatment plant shall be decommissioned in accordance with the provisions of the DMP.

7.3 Air Quality Dust and Emissions

- Dust and mal odors will be kept to a minimum.
- The site shall be dampened down as necessary to minimize windblown dust when necessary or during periods of dry weather.
- Dust suppression equipment must be used when point source emissions are likely.
- No Burning of materials will be allowed onsite.
- Care will be taken from the commencement of the project that the deposition of debris on local roads is kept to a minimum.

7.4 Refuelling, fuel and hazardous materials storage

- All machinery maintenance and re-fueling shall be carried out off-site. Spill kits for contaminants such as fuels oils and lubricants must be used.
- All petroleum products to be bunded during the construction stage of the development.

7.5 Environmental Approvals and Licenses

- Appropriate waste permits will be provided to and retained by the supervising engineer for the completion of demolition / waste disposal file.

7.6 Water Contamination

- All direct discharges of pollutants into groundwater are prohibited.
- Drip trays must be utilized for all machinery on site and monitoring undertaking to ensure that there is no risk of overflowing and that they are adequately sized to deal with the specific element of machinery that they are protecting against.
- Site storage will be on an impervious base within a secondary containment system such as a bund.
- A spill kit with sand or earth will be kept close to storage areas. Staff will be trained on how to use spill kits correctly.
- Damaged, or leaking drums will be removed from site immediately and disposed of via a registered waste disposal contractor.
- No concrete or cleaning water should enter soil or the adjacent waterway.
- Construct systems to collect, convey, treat and attenuate the surface water runoff generated by the proposed development.

7.7 Drainage and Water Quality

- The works shall be planned and executed in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency Guidelines.
- Wash water from on-site mixers or lorries shall be disposed of appropriately off site.
- The contractor should ensure that operations do not give rise to the discharge of large quantities of dirty water into the watercourses. Measures must be in place to ensure that silt will not be allowed to enter the water system.
- To prevent run off from stripped ground, banks are to be placed on the downstream side of stock piles.
- Good site management will ensure that surface water and groundwater will be protected from accidental contamination.
- Washing out of concrete trucks should not be permitted within the site and should be conducted in hard standing areas.
- Works with concrete shall be done during dry conditions for a period sufficient to cure the concrete (at least 48 hours).
- Concrete pours shall occur in contained areas.
- Portable toilets and sanitary facilities will be provided for site use.
- Plant will be re-fueled away from watercourses.
- All site operatives will have immediate access to spill kits when machinery is being used.

7.8 Noise Control Measures

- While increased levels of background noise are unavoidable during the demolition and construction phase of any project, measures will be implemented to reduce the number of noise-generating activities occurring concurrently.
- A copy of the EPA 'Guidance Note for Noise: License Applications, Surveys and Assessments in Relation to Scheduled Activities (NG4)' will be available on site for the duration of the works and will be referred to as required during the works.

8. Assessment of Likely Effects on European Sites

Any likely direct or indirect effects of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on European Sites by virtue of the following criteria: size and scale, land-take, distance from the European Site or key features of the site, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction and operation have been considered in this assessment.

Table 8.1 Assessment of pathways for potential adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites within the Zone of Likely Impact of the Proposed Works

European Site	Pathways for Direct Effects	Pathways for Indirect Effects	Potential for adverse effects on the European Site
Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC Site code: 000101 Located adjacent to the proposed development	There are no existing direct hydrological or ecological pathways between the designated site and the proposal site.). The proposed works are located entirely outside the boundary of the European Site.	In the absence of best practice and mitigation measures, the proposed development could potentially affect the integrity of the Natura site. As per the precautionary principle, construction phase activities could result in surface water runoff pollutants potentially impacting the groundwater in this area in the absence of mitigation measures. Best practice and mitigation measures are outlined in Section 7 of this report.	With the proposed mitigation in place, there is no potential for impact on this European site. No potential for adverse effect.

9. Likely Cumulative Impact of the Proposed Development on European Sites, in-combination with other plans and projects

The proposed development was considered in combination with other plans and projects in the area that could result in cumulative effects on European Sites.

The online planning system for Cork County Council, was consulted on the 14th of August 2025. It was ascertained that there were 3 other local planning applications that have been granted within a 300m radius of the site in the past 5 years.

- **PI Ref – 22558** – *Cead pleanála chun an sean - fhoirgneamh tionsclaíoch Aonad 1 a choinneáil mar atógadh é, chomh maith leis na hoibreacha coimhdeach ar fad a bhaineann leis. Permission for retention of old industrial building Unit 1 as re-constructed, as well as all associated ancillary works*
- **PI Ref – 23151** – *chun athruithe bunísacha agus athchóiriú ar Aonad 1, stór mar atá, a chur in oiriúint lena úsáid mar iarsmalan ag ionchorprú eispeárachas 360 an Charraig Aonar agus leithris chomh maith le gach cineál oibreacha coimhdeach a bhaineann leis. The change of use and alterations to Unit 1, existing store, for use as a museum incorporating a Fastnet Rock 360 visual experience and toilets, as well as all associated works*
- **PI Ref – 23374** – *Change of use of former beer store to off-licence and associated site development works*

10. Concluding Statement

10.1 Characteristics of the Site and Development

This report details the results of an Appropriate Assessment carried out for “*internal modification, the construction of a toilet block extension (10m²), a glazed entrance lobby and a covered outdoor area, replacement of the existing wastewater treatment system and percolation area with a packaged Wastewater Treatment System, provision of wayfinding signage and all associated works*”.

The site for the proposed development is adjacent to the Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC. With the addition of mitigation measures, it is not expected that the proposed development will give rise to any direct impacts on the Natura 2000 sites in question.

Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?

- a) The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC.
- b) Cumulative Impact Assessment - Are there any other projects or plans that together with the project being assessed could affect the site?

A search in relation to plans and projects that may have the potential to result in cumulative impacts on European sites was carried out as part of the Appropriate Assessment Process. As detailed above in **Section 8**, the proposed development will have no individual or in-combination impacts on any European site in any regard.

10.2 Assessment of Significance of Effects

Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 sites

- a) The project as planned will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site. During the assessment, the potential significant effects the Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC were identified. This report has provided an assessment of all potential pathways for direct impacts or indirect impacts on European Sites. Any identified potential pathways for impact are robustly blocked by way of mitigation, avoiding the potential for any adverse impacts via any of the pathways identified.
- b) Explain why these effects are not considered significant
 - There will be no negative direct impacts or reduction in Annex I habitat area or Annex II species within any European Site.
 - There will be no reduction in key habitats supporting populations of Annex II species and no reduction in the populations of any Annex II species.
 - Any potential pathways for impact have been blocked through good design, and a suitability assessment of the lands for development of this type.

Data Collected to Carry Out Assessment

In preparation of the report, the following sources were used to gather information:

- Review of NPWS Site Synopses and Conservation Objectives for European sites.
- Site Visit on the 25th of July 2025.
- Desk study of relevant ecological information.

10.3 Concluding Statement

With the implementation of mitigation and best practice measures as outlined in **Section 7** of this report it can be concluded that there is no potential for impact on this European site.

Measures protecting surface water from potentially impacting the protected sites have been implemented during the construction phase and together with the high standard of the enhanced treatment system which forms part of the proposed development, this concludes that no impacts are predicted on the flora or fauna associated with these protected sites.

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Appendix A – Site Layout Plan

