

Habitats Directive Assessment

Appropriate Assessment (Screening)

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CHARLESTOWN - BELLAGHY LOCAL AREA
PLAN 2010-2016**



IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF
ARTICLE 6(3) & 6(4) OF THE
EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE 92/43/EEC & PART XAB OF THE
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACTS 2000-2010

June 2012



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Mayo County Council and Sligo County Council intend to amend the Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 under the Planning and Development Act 2010 (as amended). The purpose of this screening report is to consider whether the proposed amendment requires full Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Under Section 7 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 the written statement of a County Development Plan is required to include a Core Strategy which shows that the development objectives in the development plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives as set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs).

New Regional Planning Guidelines for the Western Region 2010-2022 were adopted on the 19th October 2010. Accordingly, Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 was varied on the 17th of October 2011 in order to include a Core Strategy which reflects the revised population targets in the RPG's. The new Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010-2022 were adopted on 29th September 2010. Sligo County Development Plan was adopted on 16th May 2011 and includes a Core Strategy for the County which reflects revised population targets in the Border RPGs.

The Charlestown-Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010–2016 was made prior to the incorporation of the Core Strategies into the County Development Plans. Accordingly this amendment is required to align the LAP with the revised population targets and associated residential land requirements in the Core Strategies.

Mayo and Sligo County Councils are required to undertake Appropriate Assessment Screening on the Proposed Amendment to the Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 to fulfil the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and Part XAB of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2010 which requires the planning authority to carry out a screening for appropriate assessment of a draft land use plan *“to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge if the plan, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European site”*.

1.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 sites are also known as European Sites and include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EU Habitats Directive. Natura 2000 is an EU wide network of nature protection areas, the aim of which is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of global importance, listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Ramsar sites overlap with SACs or SPAs. A policy for the protection of Ramsar sites does not exist in Ireland, however they are indirectly afforded protection due to the overlap with Natura 2000 sites.

1.3 The purpose of Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA)

Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site(s), and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects. Principally, the purpose of AA is to identify the possible effects of implementing a Plan or Project on the conservation status of designated Natura 2000 sites within the Plan or Project area. Directive 92/43/EEC *on the conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna* – the ‘Habitats Directive’ provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of interest to the EU in a favourable condition.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states ‘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. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and 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 social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of the Nature 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted’.

1.4 Overview of Habitats Directive Assessment Process

The European Commission, as well as the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government have both published methodological guidance, both of which recommend a four stage approach in carrying out the entire Habitats Directive Assessment process as follows:

Stage 1 - Screening:

Determines whether a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have an impact on a Natura 2000 site, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant;

Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment (AA):

Considers the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to the site’s structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, it assesses the potential mitigation of those impacts;

Stage 3 - Assessment of Alternative Solutions:

Examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

Stage 4 - Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest:

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

Each stage determines whether the next stage in the process is required. If, for example, it is concluded at the end of Stage one are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site, there is no requirement to proceed further.

1.5 Habitats Directive Screening – The Process Involved

In accordance with European Commission and Irish Government guidance Stage 1 of the Appropriate Assessment process is Screening which comprises four steps:

- Determining whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 site.
- Describing the project or plan and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site(s).
- Characteristics of the site – identifying the potential effects on the Natura 2000 site(s).
- Assessment of the Significance – assessing the significance of any effects on the Natura 2000 site.

1.6 Sources/References

In preparation of this Habitats Directive Assessment Screening document regard has been had to the following guidance documents:

- National Parks & Wildlife Service (2008) *The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland*.
- Part XAB of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2010.
- Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government – *Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*.
- European Commission (2000) *Managing Natura 2000 Sites. The provision of Article 6, of the 'Habitats' directive 92/43/EEC*
- European Commission (2002) *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/443/EEC*.
- Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (2007): *The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England – A Guide to why, when and how to do it*
- Scott Wilson/Levett-Therivel/Treweek Environmental Consultants/Land Use Consultants(September 2006) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans*

- Scottish Natural Heritage(January 2006) *Guidance for Competent Authorities when dealing with proposals affecting SAC freshwater sites*
- Scottish Executive Development Department (May 2006) *Assessing Development Plans in Terms of Need for Appropriate Assessment – Interim Guidance.*
- Duchas, The Heritage Service 1998/ J.D Reynolds; Irish Wildlife Manuals No.1: *Conservation Management of the White-Clawed Crayfish*
- **Other websites consulted:**
 - National Parks & Wildlife Service (Internet) Available from www.npws.ie
 - EU Water Framework Directive (Internet) Available from www.wfdireland.ie
 - Western River Basin District Project (Internet) Available from <http://www.wrbd.ie/>
 - Environmental Protection Agency (Internet) Available from www.epa.ie

2 STAGE 1: SCREENING

2.1 Brief Description of the Plan

Mayo and Sligo County Councils intend to amend the Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 under the Planning and Development Act 2010 (as amended) in order to ensure consistency with each counties Core Strategies which were adopted into the Mayo County Development Plan on 17th October 2011 and the Sligo County Development Plan on 16th Mayo 2011.

As the Core Strategies identified excess residential zoning in the Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP for the revised population targets, this amendment is necessary to bring the Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP into alignment with the Core Strategies of the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 as varied and the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017.

In order to address the excess zoning provision in the Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP it is proposed to phase residential development in Charlestown and designate lands in Bellaghy as Strategic Land Reserve Also where necessary, having regard to flood risk assessment, rezoning lands subject to flood risk to a more suitable use such as agriculture or amenity uses.

2.2 Identification of Natura 2000 sites

There is one Natura 2000 site (European Sites) within the Local Area Plan boundary. The Mullaghanoe River and catchment are designated as within the River Moy SAC (site code 002298).

While the Proposed Amendment relates to the plan area only, regard must also be had to potential indirect effects on Natura sites outside of the plan area. Figure 1 illustrates the Natura 2000 sites within and in closest proximity to the Plan boundary (within 5 and 15km). These sites are described in table 1.1 below.

2.3 Natura 2000 Site Conservation Objectives

Favorable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

Favorable conservation status of a species is achieved 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, and
- 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 probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Fig. 1 Location of Natura 2000 sites within 5 and 15km of LAP boundary

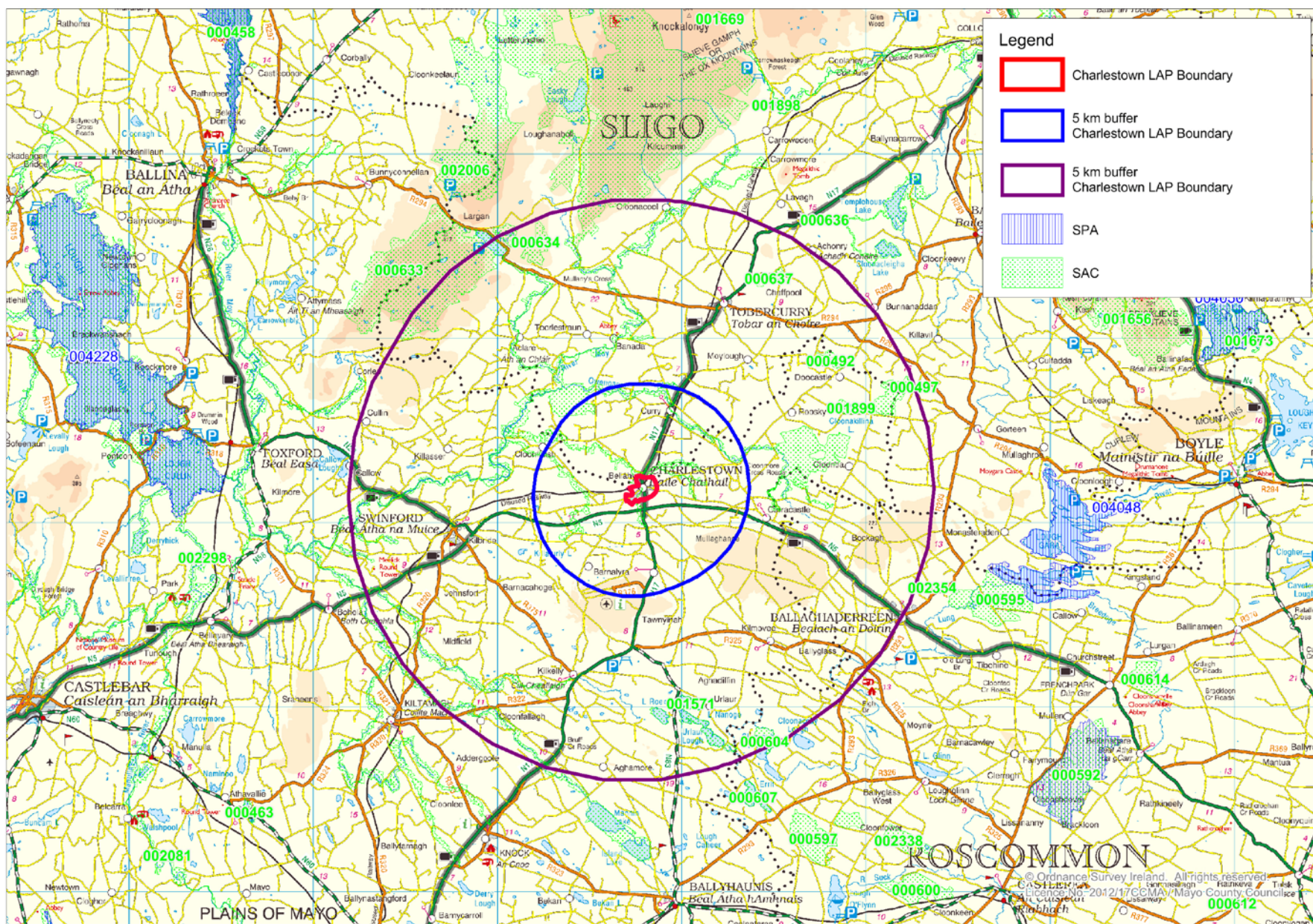


Table 1.1 - SACs within the 15km Study Area, Qualifying Interests and Threats

Site Code 002298	Site Name River Moy SAC	
Site Quality & Importance	<p>This extensive site contains good examples of the Annex 1 habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog, Rhynchosporion vegetation, alluvial woodland and old oak woodlands. The raised bog areas present constitute the most north-westerly examples of raised bog in Ireland, with the most important examples occurring at Derrynabrock and Tawnaghbeg. Excellent example of old oak woodland is to be found just east of Pontoon along the shores of Loughs Conn and Cullin. This represents one of the largest stands of oak woodland in western Ireland. Water quality of the river channels is generally good and the majority is classified as unpolluted. The open waters of Loughs Conn and Cullin are moderately hard with relatively low colour and good transparency. Lough Conn, with a surface of 50km², is classified as a trophic system, while Lough Cullin (surface of 11 km²) is classified as moderate. The rivers and lakes support important populations of <i>Lutra lutra</i>, <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>, <i>Lampetra planeri</i> and <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>. The Moy system is one of the most important in Ireland for <i>Salmo salar</i> and is an internationally renowned fishery. It also has important stocks of <i>Salmo trutta</i>. Lough Conn supports a nationally important population of <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> and has regionally important numbers of <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> and <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> (all Annex I Bird Directive species). The lakes support a range of other wintering waterfowl, notably nationally important populations of <i>Aythya fuligula</i> and <i>Bucephala clangula</i>. Lough Conn / Cullin represents one of only four breeding sites in Ireland for <i>Melanitta nigra</i>, which in Ireland is at the south-west end of its European range. The population, however, has seriously declined in recent years. A range of mammals listed in the Red Data Book occur within the site, including <i>Martes martes</i> and <i>Myotis daubentoni</i>. At least five Red Data Book plant species occur, including <i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i> and <i>Spiranthes romanzoffiana</i>.</p>	
Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>) White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)	Current threats to qualifying interests One of the main threats to this species is the introduction of diseases transmitted by introduced American crayfish, which are now spreading across Europe. Other notable threats include habitat deterioration (water and substrate quality), siltation, eutrophication and nutrient enrichment, arterial drainage, invasive alien species, competition, disease, crayfish-fishing	Specific threats to site Lough Conn is a mesotrophic system but with eutrophic tendencies in its north basin. A doubling of phosphorus inputs for the period 1980 to 1990 caused a number of ecological changes such as an apparent increase in the littoral algal production and the extinction of <i>Salvelinus alpinus</i> . Total phosphorus loadings to the lake continued to increase significantly from all four main tributaries during the mid to late 1990s and into the 2000s. In addition there were increased incidences of cyanobacterial accumulations and

		filamentous algal growths (Donnelly, pers. comm.) intensification within the catchment. Further afforestation in the catchment is not desirable for water quality reasons. The main threats to raised bog areas within the site are peat-cutting and associated activities such as drainage and burning. The long-term future of the woodland areas near Pontoon is threatened by overgrazing and the spread of exotic plant species, particularly <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> . The breeding <i>Melanitta nigra</i> population has seriously declined in the last decade, possibly due to predation by <i>Mustela vison</i> which has spread throughout the site.
Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)	On several rivers, weirs are known to block upstream migrating sea lampreys, thereby limiting the species to the lower stretches and restricting access to spawning beds. Also channel maintenance, which removes the silt deposits and gravel shoals used by lampreys.	
Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)	Threats include Channel maintenance which removes silt deposits and gravel shoals used by lampreys.	
Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)	Sea - diseases, parasites and marine pollution; River - reduced marine survival (probably as a result of climate change), poor river water quality (resulting from factors such as inadequate sewage treatment, agricultural enrichment, acidification, erosion, siltation), forestry-related pressures and over-fishing.	
Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Main threats to the otter are road kill, smaller number are killed in fishing nets and lobster pots; localised reduction in otter habitat	

	quality, due mainly to water pollution and clearance of riparian vegetation	
Active raised bogs	Current pressures include overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning and infrastructural developments	
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	Ongoing deterioration of the hydrological conditions of raised bogs at current rates caused by peat cutting, drainage, forestry and burning severely threatens the viability of the habitat at most locations.	
Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>	Overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning	
Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in British Isles	Invasive alien species are a threat to many stands and sub-optimal grazing is a feature of many woods.	
Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>)	Burning, overgrazing, clearance, inappropriate development, climatic factors, felling, illegal dumping, fragmentation, invasive species, disease	
Alkaline fens	Eutrophication, drainage, desiccation, alien invasive floral species, human interference, climate change - water regime changes	
Site Code 001571	Site Name Urlaur Lakes SAC	
Site Quality & Importance A relatively unpolluted system of oligotrophic marl lakes, typical of several in the region, with a diversity of semi-natural habitats bordering the open water. The lakes are of local importance for a variety of wildfowl, including <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> , <i>Aythya ferina</i> and <i>Anas penelope</i> , amongst others.		

Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>)		Current threats to qualifying interests	Specific threats to site
<p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</p> <p>Alkaline fens</p>		<p>Threat from nutrient enrichment in these lowland lakes arising from intensification of agriculture and urban developments.</p> <p>Abandonment of traditional agricultural practices on these marginal lands and reclamation.</p> <p>Peat mining, draining for cropland, infilling, and fertiliser pollution and eutrophication.</p>	<p>The lakes are vulnerable to eutrophication and acidification from surrounding agricultural and peat cutting activities.</p>
Site Code 000637	Site Name Turloughmore (Sligo) SAC		
Site Quality & Importance The habitat is rather uniform though the vegetation that is there is well developed and not currently overgrazed. The importance of the site stems largely from its northerly location and the sand content of the soil which is fairly unusual. There is little if any precipitation of calcium carbonate.			
Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>) * Turloughs		Current threats to qualifying interests	Specific Threats to Site
		<p>Nutrient enrichment and inappropriate grazing regimes are the main threats to turlough habitats in Ireland</p>	<p>The site would be adversely affected by regional drainage or eutrophication from agriculture. There seem to be no current threats.</p>
Site Code 000634	Site Name Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog SAC		
Site Quality & Importance. This site holds one of a small number of good quality blanket bogs in the Ox Mountains. It supports a good diversity of vegetation communities and has a well developed microtopography. Areas of intact blanket bog and actively revegetating old cutover occur. The site supports an excellent <i>Sphagnum</i> flora, both in terms of cover and number of species. Other than in cutover areas, the site is very little damaged. Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog is a good example of a highland blanket bog, a habitat which is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland.			

<p>Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>) Blanket bogs (* if active only)</p>	<p>Current threats to qualifying interests peat cutting, drainage, forestry and burning</p>	<p>Specific Threats to Site Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog is particularly vulnerable to afforestation with conifer species - many of the peatland sites in the Ox Mountains have been so afforested. Peat extraction also threatens the site, especially through mechanical means. Mechanical removal of peat is presently occurring in several small areas of the site - it is likely that this activity will expand if not controlled. Though overgrazing by stock is hardly damaging the site at present, this may threaten the site in the future.</p>
<p>Site Code 000604</p>	<p>Site Name Derrinea Bog SAC</p>	
<p>Site Quality & Importance. Derrinea bog is a small raised bog site which contains examples of the Annex I habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (<i>Rhynchosporion</i>). A small area of heath, developed over a till mound, occurs and this adds to the ecological/geomorphological interest of the site. The site is an example of a western raised bog and although it is rather small in comparison to other raised bog sites in the country the quality of the habitats is good. A number of other raised bogs and calcareous lakes lie in close proximity to this site and together they constitute one of the most important ecological areas in the east Mayo/Roscommon region.</p>		
<p>Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active raised bogs • Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration • Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 	<p>Current threats to qualifying interests Current pressures include overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning and infrastructural developments</p> <p>Ongoing deterioration of the hydrological conditions of raised bogs at current rates caused by peat cutting, drainage, forestry and burning severely threatens the viability of the habitat at most locations.</p> <p>Overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning</p>	<p>Specific Threats to Site Raised bogs, due to the high water content of peat, are vulnerable to activities which cause water loss, such as drainage, peat cutting and fire. Peat cutting is intensive to the south of the site and deep drains have been inserted to the west and parts of the south. The boundary river has also been dredged. All these threaten the viability of the site.</p>
<p>Site Code 002354</p>	<p>Site Name</p>	

	Tullaghanrock Bog SAC	
<p>Site Quality & Importance. This site, while relatively small in size, is an important raised bog complex and is of particular note as it occurs at the north-western limit of raised bog distribution in the Republic of Ireland. The site displays good examples of active raised bog, degraded raised bog and <i>Rhynchosporion</i> vegetation. There has been relatively low levels of disturbance in the past and thus the bog is one of the best preserved in the country at present. Of particular note are the near-natural vegetation transitions from bog to river along the eastern margins of the site.</p>		
<p>Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 	<p>Current threats to qualifying interests</p> <p>Current pressures include overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning and infrastructural developments</p> <p>Ongoing deterioration of the hydrological conditions of raised bogs at current rates caused by peat cutting, drainage, forestry and burning severely threatens the viability of the habitat at most locations.</p> <p>Overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning</p>	<p>Specific Threats to Site</p> <p>In general terms this site is one of the best conserved raised bog sites in the country. Peat-cutting is now very rare within the site and the area of forestry is not extensive. Therefore, the main threats to the site at present are burning and intensification of reclamation of the former cutover areas.</p>
<p>Site Code 001899</p>	<p>Site Name Cloonakillina Lough SAC</p>	
<p>Site Quality & Importance. A rich variety of plant species and communities in a relatively small area, showing interesting stages in the development from open water, transition mire, fen, wet woodland and bog. Sites of this kind in good condition are relatively uncommon in Ireland. This area also supports small numbers of a variety of waterfowl, many of which breed amongst the relatively undisturbed vegetation.</p>		
<p>Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>) Transition mires and quaking bogs</p>	<p>Current threats to qualifying interests Drainage, grazing, water pollution, burning, fragmentation</p>	<p>Specific Threats to Site A dynamic hydrological and ecological system susceptible to drainage.</p>

Site Code 000497	Site Name Flughany Bog SAC	
<p>Site Quality & Importance. Flughany bog is a small raised bog site which contains examples of the Annex I habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (<i>Rhynchosporion</i>). The bog is one of a series of small to medium-sized raised bogs which occur close to the north-westerly limit of raised bog formation along the border between counties Mayo and Sligo. The site supports a good range of raised bog habitats including well-developed pool and hummock area, flushed areas (including a swallow-hole) and an area with shallow peat overlying a drumlin ridge. The site provides good habitat for both breeding and wintering <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> and also breeding <i>Numenius arquata</i>. Other typical bog fauna includes <i>Lagopus lagopus</i> and <i>Lepus timidus hibernicus</i>.</p>		
<p>Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 	<p>Current threats to qualifying interests</p> <p>Current pressures include overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning and infrastructural developments</p> <p>Ongoing deterioration of the hydrological conditions of raised bogs at current rates caused by peat cutting, drainage, forestry and burning severely threatens the viability of the habitat at most locations.</p> <p>Overstocking, peat extraction, drainage, burning</p>	<p>Specific Threats to Site</p> <p>The southern section of this site is vulnerable to drainage and peat cutting, more so than the northern section where the peat layer is much thinner. The wet central section is threatened if peat cutting continues. Other possible future threats include frequent burning and overgrazing.</p>
Site Code 000492	Site Name Doocastle Turlough	
<p>Site Quality & Importance. This site is the best developed of the three most northerly turloughs in the country with a good diversity of vegetation and several plants uncommon in the locality. There is some nutrient-poor fen with <i>Galium uliginosum</i> - its only station in east Mayo. No arterial or other drainage has been carried out. The bird population is relatively large also.</p>		
<p>Habitat & Species (<i>species in italic</i>)</p> <p>* Turloughs</p>	<p>Current threats to qualifying interests</p> <p>Nutrient enrichment and inappropriate grazing regimes are the main threats to turlough habitats in Ireland</p>	<p>Specific Threats to Site</p> <p>The site is closely grazed and fenced into numerous strips. This seems to cause less damage than expected but it is a significant risk factor.</p>

2.4 Screening Assessment

The following screening assessment is carried out in accordance with EU guidance (EC 2001) and using the screening assessment form provided in that document.

Assessment criteria	
<p>Describe the individual elements of the plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.</p>	<p>It is considered that the implementation of the Proposed Amendment of the Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 either alone or in combination with other plans or projects through the safeguarding measures incorporated into the policies, objectives and standards in the LAP is not likely to give rise to significant effects on the Natura 2000 network in the area. A justification of this is set out hereunder.</p> <p>In addition, following HDA Screening of the current Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 when it was being prepared, it was not considered necessary, at that time, to proceed to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>It is considered that the Proposed Amendment should have a positive impact on the area as it will result in less land identified for residential purposes during the lifetime of the plan and lands retaining residential zoning will either be designated as Strategic Land Reserve or released for development in a phased manner over the medium-long term. These processes will limit and control the areas to be developed over the remaining duration of the plan.</p>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ size and scale; ▪ land-take; ▪ distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site; 	<p>Size and Scale: The Proposed Amendment relates to the towns of Charlestown and Bellaghy, which comprises a total area of 151.5 ha within the plan boundary. There are currently 46 ha zoned for residential development of which an excess of 12.5 ha are the subject of the proposed amendment.</p> <p>Land Take: The entire Plan area comprises an area of 151.5 hectares (approx) The area of SAC within the plan area has been zoned “Conservation & Biodiversity” with specific policies and objectives to protect the SAC.</p> <p>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site: The Mullaghanoe River and its banks, which flows through the town of</p>

<p>▪ Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);</p> <p>▪ emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</p> <p>▪ excavation and transportation requirements;</p>	<p>Charlestown/Bellaghy, is identified as an element of the River Moy SAC Site Code 002298.</p> <p>There are a number of Natura 2000 sites occurring within 15km of the Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP boundary comprising SACs and as outlined in table 1.1 and figure 1 above.</p> <p>Given that excessive lands were zoned for residential use in the current Local Area Plan for the town of Charlestown - Bellaghy, the proposed amendment will result in the phasing of residential land over the medium-long term in Charlestown and designating excess lands as Strategic Land Reserve in Bellaghy. Proposals for housing developments on these lands during the LAP will not be considered.</p> <p>Resource Requirements: Many of the Natura sites within the 15km buffer are water dependant however the Proposed Amendment will result in less pressure being put on existing water and wastewater infrastructure, leading to less pressure being placed on vital spare future capacity.</p> <p>Emissions: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the plan area support a diversity of freshwater and terrestrial habitats and species. Water quality and quantity, and the extent and quality of these habitats are the key conditions that support the integrity of these sites. As many of these sites are water dependant and in this regard the main potential environmental impact that the LAP may have on the conservation of these sites relates to Sewage Treatment for the Town.</p> <p>As stated previously, a tributary of the River Moy (Mullaghanoe River) flows through the Plan area where it meets the Moy River c. 8km to the north west of Charlestown/Bellaghy. The existing Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) in Charlestown/Bellaghy which is operational since 1982 (with no subsequent upgrades) has a current design capacity of 1200 PE. The plant consists of preliminary treatment, followed by secondary treatment. The WWTP is located in County Sligo but is owned /operated by Mayo County Council. Following treatment waste water is currently discharged from the wastewater treatment plant to the Mullaghanoe River. Sampling stations downstream of the treatment plant demonstrate that the river is not currently adversely impacted in terms of water quality. As the collection system in the town is a combination (i.e. foul and surface) in places, the WWTP currently accepts both foul and surface water. Upgrades in both the WWTP's capacity and the standard of treatment are currently pending.</p> <p>Mitigation measures have been put in place in the current plan with regards to waste water treatment (Section 3.7.8). These standards will not be affected by the proposed amendment</p> <p>Mayo County Council currently has an application with the E.P.A for a Waste Water Discharge License for the Charlestown/Bellaghy WWTP in compliance with the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 684 of 2007).</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.; ▪ other ▪ In Conclusion 	<p>Excavation and transportation requirements: These will be significantly reduced due to the resulting decline in demand for greenfield development land that will result from the proposed amendment.</p> <p>Duration of Construction, operation...: This will be in line with planning permissions granted.</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are predicted.</p>
<p>Describe any likely changes to the site(s) arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reduction of habitat area: ▪ disturbance to key species; ▪ habitat or species fragmentation ▪ reduction in species density; 	<p>Reduction of habitat area: None envisaged</p> <p>The area of SAC within the plan area has been zoned “Conservation & Biodiversity”, with individual planning applications assessed as to their potential for adverse impacts on the SAC.</p> <p>Disturbance of key species – It is anticipated that there will be no disturbance to key species of the site since the LAP contains sufficient safeguarding measures to ensure this. Section 3.7.3 and Section 3.7.4 of the LAP provide protection for the Natura 2000 site and its primary function. No projects will be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) which give rise to disturbance to key species for the Natura 2000 site. These standards will not be affected by the proposed amendment.</p> <p>Taking into account the current plan, individually and in combination with other plans, and having regard to the ecological requirements of the individual species as described in Table 1.1 above, there will be no significant threat to the listed species as a result of implementing the Amendment to the Charlestown/Bellaghy Local Area Plan. The current plan zones the section of the SAC within the Plan area as “Biodiversity and Conservation” No development shall be permitted that would lead to the reduction of the riverside otter habitat, or their prey. The proposed amendment will not affect this zoning objective</p> <p>Habitat or species fragmentation – None envisaged</p> <p>Reduction in species density – None envisaged</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.); ▪ climate change. ▪ In Conclusion 	<p>Changes in key conservation indicators – None envisaged</p> <p>Climate change – None envisaged</p> <p>No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are predicted.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s) as a whole in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site; ▪ Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site. ▪ In Conclusion 	<p>None envisaged</p> <p>Natura 2000 sites within the plan area and within 15km of the plan area support a diversity of freshwater, and terrestrial habitats and species. Water quality and quantity, and the extent and quality of these habitats are the key conditions that support the integrity of these sites. The frequency and intensity of developments arising from the implementation of the proposed amendment will be less and are therefore not likely to cause alteration or deterioration in these conditions, and consequently alter the structure and function of these sites.</p> <p>No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are predicted.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is envisaged that cumulative/in-combination environmental effects of the proposed amendment will be of a more positive nature in comparison to the current Local Area Plan as the proposed amendment will result in medium-long term phased zoning for residential use within the plan area which in turn will result in less pressure on vulnerable environmental resources over the short-medium term.</p> <p>The Local Area Plan by its nature is a strategic plan, and the exact nature and location of development that may arise is largely unknown and will be the subject of individual project proposals. Individual projects will themselves require individual assessment to determine the nature and extent of impacts. However, it is considered that the LAP, if amended as proposed, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, does not have the potential to have significant impacts on the Natura 2000 sites within the</p>

	plan area and within the 15km buffer and their respective qualifying interests as previously considered during the initial H.D.A Screening undertaken when the plan was being prepared. Therefore, it is not considered necessary to proceed to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.
Findings of no significant effects report matrix	
Name of project or plan	Proposed Amendment to Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016.
Name and location of Natura 2000 sites	Please refer to Table 1.1 above.
Description of the project or plan	The Proposed Amendment to the Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP 2010-2016 is necessary to bring the Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP into alignment with the Core Strategy of the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 as varied, and the Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017 with regards to population targets and associated residential land use requirements.
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?	The Charlestown - Bellaghy LAP is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site. This is a land use Plan and not a Plan designed for the purpose of conservation management of any Natura 2000 Site.
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site(s) (provide details)?	N/A
The Assessment of significance of effects	
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.	It is considered that the implementation of the Proposed Amendment (alone or in combination) <u>will not give rise</u> to adverse impacts on any Natura 2000 site.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant.	Allied to the environmentally responsible policies, objectives and standards in the Draft Charlestown/Bellaghy Local Area Plan, within which are adequate safeguarding measures, any proposed development as may be permitted on the basis of the Plan will also be required to conform to the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or

other environmental effects. Taken in combination these policies, plans and regulations will protect the integrity of the Natura 2000 Site. As the area of SAC within the plan area has been zoned “Conservation & Biodiversity”, with individual planning applications assessed as to their potential for adverse impacts on the SAC, the potential for significant effects on the listed Annex 1 habitat and Annex II species is not considered significant. Section 2.4 of this report identified the 2 no. potential threats to the SAC from implementing the Plan as the following:

- Deterioration of the water quality of the Mullaghanoe River, through pollution, siltation, enrichment, accidental spills.
- Reduction in the quantity/quality of riverside habitat

Therefore, in addition to the foregoing sections of this report, it is considered that any impacts will not be significant for the following reasons:

Wastewater Treatment

- *Sampling Results/Trends/Safeguarding* - Sampling results downstream of the wastewater treatment plant show that the assimilative capacity of the Mullaghanoe River is currently adequate to accept the treated effluent. In addition the Environment Section is satisfied that the Charlestown/Bellaghy Treatment Plant is currently in full compliance with the effluent emission limit values prescribed in the Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations 2001 (as amended) in addition to the European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) Regulations, 1988 and European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2009
- *Treatment Plant Capacity* – The existing wastewater treatment plant in Charlestown/Bellaghy has adequate capacity to cater for short-medium term population growth. However, depending on the take-up of development land during the life of the LAP, Policy Statement I10 in the LAP is an adequate safeguarding measure which states that proposals can be deemed premature if there are issues with inadequate wastewater treatment capacity. Planned upgrades to the WWTP are pending
- *Discharge License* – Mayo County Council has applied to the EPA for a discharge license associated with the Treatment Plant in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Water Discharge

(Authorisation) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 684 of 2007).

Surface water Treatment and Protection

- *SUDS Implementation* - The LAP contains policies and standards to ensure that all development taking place complies with and incorporates the principals of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) thus restricting flows to green-field run-off rates. This will assist in conserving the available capacity in the WWTP.
- *Interceptors* - All surface water drainage systems to be fitted with petrol/oil interceptor traps.
- *Salmonid Waters* – Section 3.7.4 of the LAP provides that any planning application within 15m of a salmonid watercourse (or watercourse feeding into salmonid waters) shall demonstrate that the development would not adversely impact on the salmonid species or the species that sustain them.
- *Construction Management Plans* –All relevant developments will be required to comply with a previously approved construction management plan to ensure that no adverse impacts on any watercourse will take place.
- *Future study of Mullaghanoe River* - As well as ongoing monitoring of the Mullaghanoe River, the LAP also provides for the carrying out of a study into the condition of the Mullaghanoe River (and its tributaries) over the lifetime of the Plan.

Water abstraction/Flow rates – There is sufficient capacity in the current drinking water source (ground water source) to cater for medium term requirements. There is nothing to suggest that flow rates in any of the Moy tributaries in the region have been (or will be) affected as a result of this abstraction. The towns drinking water is sourced from a locally important aquifer which is only moderately productive in local zones.

Riverside SAC Habitat – A small section of the SAC area is inside the Plan boundary, which has been zoned “*Biodiversity and Conservation*” in the current LAP. Any development proposals within this zoning will be assessed individually to determine potential impacts on the conservation objectives of the site.

Data collected to carry out the Assessment

Who carried out the Assessment	Forward Planning Section Mayo County Council in conjunction Heritage Officer, Environment and Sanitary sections of Mayo County Council.
Sources of data	Refer to Section 1.6 of this report
Level of assessment	Desk Top Study
Where can the full results of the Assessment Screening be accessed and viewed?	Forward Planning Section, Mayo County Council

Overall Conclusion

Conclusion (by ecologist)

Following the review of the proposed amendment to the Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016 in accordance with the *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* (EC, 2002), Screening Assessment and Findings of no significant effects matrices have been completed.

This Screening Assessment was carried out to ascertain if the planning policies and development objectives contained within the Proposed Amendment to the Local Area Plan (LAP) are likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site by virtue of adverse impacts on the integrity of the site(s) and associated qualifying interests. If significant effects were predicted, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) would be deemed necessary to investigate the impacts of the proposed amendment to the LAP on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 network, in addition to proposing suitable and effective mitigation measures to minimise, cancel out or avoid negative impacts.

This proposed amendment to the LAP has been formulated to ensure that proposed developments and effects arising from permissions based upon this LAP (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network within the LAP area or to those adjacent to the LAP area.

Based on all information available at this time, in addition to the environmentally-responsible policies, objectives, standards and safeguarding measures included to prevent significant impacts to the Natura 2000 site *within* the Plan area, this Screening Report concludes that this Proposed Amendment to the LAP will not give rise to potential significant effects, hence it does not require further assessment to demonstrate compliance with the EU Habitats Directive and therefore Appropriate Assessment is **not considered necessary**.

Appendix 1 – Revised Land Use Zoning Map (Proposed Amendment) Charlestown - Bellaghy Local Area Plan 2010-2016

