



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

**Adoption of Glenveagh National Park Woodland
Management Strategy in accordance with Regulation
42A EC (Birds and Natural) Habitats Regulations 2011-
2021**

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
npws.ie

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1. Introduction

This determination on Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been made by the Ecological Assessment Unit (EAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021 ('the 2011-2021 Regulations').¹

On the 4th September 2023, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 42A(3) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('the Minister') furnished the EAU with a request for a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) determination on the Draft Glenveagh National Park Woodland Management Strategy within Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation [Site Code: 002047] and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area (SPA) [Site Code: 004039]. Hereafter referred to as "the strategy".

The EAU have evaluated and analysed the information contained in the referred to above document and location maps provided and carried out a determination. The purpose of this document is to provide a record and an audit trail of the EAU reasoned thinking in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites.

¹ As inserted by Regulation 7 of the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment).

2. Background

Pursuant to Regulation 42A(1) of the Regulations 2011-2021, a Screening for AA is required to be carried out on the project. AA is a process required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) is transposed in Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended, and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

All plans and projects which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site, but which either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are likely to have a significant effect on a “European Site”, require that an AA of these effects to determine if they will adversely affect the integrity of these sites. The strategy is considered to fall under the requirements of AA as applied to all plans and projects.

The Screening for AA process scrutinises the plan or project to determine if there is potential for likely significant effects either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European Site. European Sites are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Candidate SACs (cSACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). This Screening for Appropriate Assessment describes the outcome of this analysis in respect of the strategy.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This section provides details on the adopted methodology with sources of guidance and information gathered to inform the preparation of the report.

3.1. Guidance and Data Sources

- AA under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2007);
- AA of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Guidelines for Good Practice AA of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2018); [hereafter referred to as MN 2018];
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodical Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2021);
- Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN01 - AA Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021);
- The monitoring and assessment of four EU Habitats Directive Annex I woodland habitats. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Irish Wildlife Manual No.146 (Daly, O.H., O'Neill, F.H. and Barron, S.J., 2023).
- Guidelines on Biodiversity-Friendly Afforestation, Reforestation and Tree Planting SWD 61 (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2023); and,
- Guidelines for Defining, Mapping, Monitoring and Strictly Protecting EU Primary and Old-Growth Forests SWD 62 (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2023).

3.2. Assessment Methodology

This report is based on review of desktop data. Sources of information utilised for this report and accessed during February 2024 include the following:

- National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Designations Viewer²; and,
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) Maps³.

3.3. Legislative Background

According to the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), Member States are required to establish a Natura 2000 network of sites of highest biodiversity importance for rare and threatened habitats and species across the EU.

In Ireland, the Natura 2000 network of European sites comprises SACs, candidate SACs and SPAs.

SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II species (other than birds). SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and all migratory birds and their habitats. The Annex habitats and species, for which each site is selected, are the Qualifying Interests (QI) for SACs and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) for SPAs of each site. Conservation Objectives for the site are defined for these Qualifying Interests.

A key requirement of the Habitats Directive is that the effects of any plan or project, which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site, but which alone, or in combination with, other plans or projects, are likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, should be assessed before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed. The obligation to undertake a screening for AA, and if necessary, an AA, derives from Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and both involve a number of steps and tests that need to be applied in sequential order.

Article 6(3) is concerned with the strict protection of sites, while Article 6(4) is the procedure for allowing derogation from this strict protection in certain restricted circumstances.

² National Parks & Wildlife Service Designation Viewer. Accessed at ArcGIS Web Application 15/02/2024

³ National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 15/02/2024

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 and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s 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 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 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.”

The competent authority is required to carry out a screening for AA, and if necessary, an AA as required by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. If the competent authority determines that the plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of a European site, it may only authorise that plan or project by following the Article 6(4) procedure.

The Article 6(3) and 6(4) procedures are outlined as follows:

Stage 1 - Screening for Appropriate Assessment – to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the project or plan, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 site.

Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment – This is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the project or plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The AA must include a final determination by the competent authority as to whether or not a proposed project would adversely affect the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. In order to reach a final determination, the competent authority must undertake examination, analysis and evaluation, followed by findings, conclusions and a final determination. The appropriate assessment must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions, and may not have lacunae or gaps.

Stage 3 – Assessment of alternative solutions - the process which 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 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain - an assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

Under Regulation 42A(1) of the Regulations 2011-2021, the Ecological Assessment Unit is the competent authority in relation to screening for AA of projects and plans (such as the strategy) which the Minister proposes to undertake or adopt.

4. Overview of the Project

Glenveagh (in Irish Gleann Bheatha = “the valley of the birches”) National Park is located in northwest Donegal (Fig. 1). It is the second-largest of Ireland’s six national parks, encompassing approximately 16,000 ha of bog, heath, woodland and lake habitats. The Park originally comprised just the Glenveagh Estate and deer forest but was later extended to include the An Taisce-owned block to the west around Crocknafarragh and Glenfornan Lough, the hinterland of the Lough Barra Bog and Meenachullion nature reserves, and the area southwest of Errigal Mountain to Dunlewy Lough. The vast majority of the Park is dual designated as the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area, and, the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation (Figure 2). Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA is an extensive upland site in north-west Co. Donegal, comprising Glenveagh National Park, a substantial part of the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains and a number of the surrounding lakes (Figure 3). Much of the site is over 300 m above sea level, rising to a peak of 678 m at Slieve Snaght. The Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC is designated for its rich diversity of habitats and landscape features, including mountains, exposed rock and scree, blanket bogs, dry, wet and alpine heath, upland grassland, wet grassland, rivers, lochans, scrub and woodland (Figure 3).

The focus of the Glenveagh Woodland Management Strategy (hereafter referred to as the Strategy) is the woodland habitat within Glenveagh, specifically native woodland and, as a subset of that, Annex I Old Oak woodland [91A0]. A focus area has been defined in which the majority of the native woodland in the Park is located, around the main Glen of Lough Beagh. The location of this focus area is shown in Fig. 4).

4.1. Purpose

The focus of this strategy for Glenveagh National Park is the woodland habitat within the Park, specifically native woodland and, as a subset of that, Annex I Old Oak woodland [91A0]. The main goal of the strategy is to identify actions that will address the issues that contribute to the poor ecological condition of these internationally important woodlands and to provide a framework over which these actions can be implemented to enhance the ecological and conservation value of the woodlands.

Invasive plant species and overgrazing, primarily by deer, are intricately linked to the focus of the strategy. The success of any attempts to improve woodland quality and increase native woodland area will be largely dependent on how well these two problems are managed. It is recognised that, while the strategy focuses on deer as the main problem grazer, other grazers such as sheep and cattle are present in peripheral areas of the Park, linked to long-standing grazing rights. While these areas may not contain core woodlands, it should be borne in mind that measures to establish woodland or improve woodland condition there should also take into account the effects of these grazers on regeneration.

Climate change is another impact that is becoming increasingly significant. Scientific evidence has shown that ongoing human-induced changes to our climate will have predicted long-term effects on our atmospheric, terrestrial, hydrological and ocean environments, manifesting as higher air and soil temperatures, fewer cold snaps and frost days, extended heat-waves, increased rainfall, soil moisture deficits, more frequent extreme weather events, and changes to global air and ocean circulation patterns. These have consequences for all ecosystems, including woodlands and forestry. For example, that rising air temperatures could result in greater threats from exotic pests and pathogens, while heat-waves and extended dry periods lead to stress due to soil moisture deficits, and greater risk of peatland fires. Higher temperatures and fewer frost days could alter the phenology (developmental timing) of some species, changing the date of leaf emergence of trees, for example, with the decrease in the number of frost days projected to be greatest in the north of the country. This could also lead to mis-alignments between life-cycles of interdependent species, such as birds and insects. While climate change itself cannot be directly addressed by this strategy, the focus should be on building more resilient woodland ecosystems that are able to cope better with the effects of climate change in Donegal.

4.2. Policies and Actions

Seven policies underpin this Woodland Management Strategy.

Policy 1 Invasive plant density is brought down to and maintained at a level at which invasive plants do not interfere with normal woodland ecological processes.

Policy 2 Deer density is brought down to and maintained at a level at which deer activity and grazing does not interfere with normal woodland processes and functions.

Policy 3 Sensitive woodland management is employed so that natural woodland processes are supported rather than replaced.

Policy 4 Local-provenance material is used for all planting within the Park, supplied by an in-house nursery that propagates stock primarily originating from Glenveagh and northwest Ireland. An exception is made for rare genotypes for *ex situ* conservation, such as native Scots pine from Co. Clare.

Policy 5 The management team of Glenveagh National Park operates, as far as possible, a closed ecological cycle within the Park. This means retaining natural materials within the Park's natural ecological systems, including animal carcasses, dead wood and felled timber, for *in situ* decomposition and nutrient recycling.

Policy 6 The management team of Glenveagh National Park recognises the Park's importance as a focus for education and research on all aspects of woodland ecology, and continues to support educational and research initiatives in woodland ecology, especially where these contribute to policies 1 to 5 above.

Policy 7 The special place held by Glenveagh National Park in the hearts of the local community and throughout the northwest is recognised and valued. A policy of openness operates between the management team of Glenveagh National Park and the community who interact with the Park on a regular basis. The management team will continue to strive to keep local stakeholders apprised of important aspects of the woodland management taking place in Glenveagh, including the rationale, desired outcome and duration of works.

5. Part 1: Necessary conservation measures

Answer these questions if the activity is “directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site”. Otherwise go to Part 2.

- a). List the European site(s) and the relevant Conservation Objectives (include version number of the Conservation Objective).

Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA [Site code: 004039].

NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives. Accessed 4th March 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004039.pdf

Special Conservation Interests

Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*) [A001]

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) [A098]

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) [A103]

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina schinzii*) [A466]

Conservation Objectives for Special Conservation Interests

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.

Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC [Site code: 002047].

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC 002047. Version 1. Accessed 4th September 2023.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002047.pdf

Qualifying Interests

Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*) [3110]

Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation [3260]

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010]

European dry heaths [4030]

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) [6410]

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]

Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles [91A0]

Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]

Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]

Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Interests.

Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*) [3110]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Typical species.
- Vegetation composition: characteristic zonation.
- Vegetation distribution: maximum depth.
- Hydrological regime: water level fluctuation.
- Lake substratum quality.
- Water quality: transparency; nutrients; phytoplankton biomass; phytoplankton composition; attached algal biomass; and, macrophyte status.
- Acidification status.
- Water colour.
- Dissolved organic carbon (DOC).
- Turbidity.
- Fringing habitat: area and condition.

Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Hydrological regime: river flow; and, groundwater discharge.
- Substratum composition: particle size range.
- Water quality.
- Vegetation composition: typical species.
- Floodplain connectivity: area.
- Riparian habitat: area.

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: cross leaved heath; positive indicators species; lichens and bryophytes; ericoid species and crowberry; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; bracken; and, soft rush.
- Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage.

- Indicators of local distinctiveness

European Dry Heaths [4030]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: cross leaved heath; positive indicators species; cover of positive indicator species; dwarf shrub composition; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; bracken; and, soft rush.
- Vegetation structure: senescent ling; signs of browsing; burning; growth phases of ling.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alpine and Boreal heaths in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes; positive indicators species; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; and, non-native species.

- Vegetation structure: signs of grazing; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; and, drainage.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Vegetation composition: typical species; negative indicator species; non-native species; and, moss species.
- Vegetation structure: woody species and bracken; broadleaf herb: grass ratio; sward height; and, litter.
- Physical structure: bare ground; bare soil; and, disturbance.

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Blanket bogs (* if active bog) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: cross leaved heath; positive indicators species; cover of positive indicator species; dwarf shrub composition; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; bracken; and, soft rush.

- Vegetation structure: senescent ling; signs of browsing; burning; growth phases of ling.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; *Rhynchospora* spp; potential dominant species; negative indicator species; non-native species; and, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage; and, erosion.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Woodland size.

- Woodland structure: cover and height; community diversity and extent; natural regeneration; dead wood; veteran trees; indicators of local distinctiveness.
- Vegetation composition: typical species; negative indicator species.

Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Population size.
- Population structure: recruitment; and, adult mortality.
- Suitable habitat: extent; and, condition.
- Water quality: macroinvertebrate and phytobenthos (diatoms).
- Substratum quality: filamentous algae (macroalgae); and, macrophytes (rooted higher plants); sediment; and, oxygen availability.
- Hydrological regime: flow variability.
- Host fish.
- Fringing habitat: area and condition.

Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution: extent of anadromy.
- Adult spawning fish.
- Salmon fry abundance.
- Out-migrating smolt abundance.
- Number and distribution of redds.

- Water quality.

Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Extent of terrestrial habitat.
- Extent of freshwater (river) habitat.
- Extent of freshwater (lake) habitat.
- Couching sites and holts.
- Fish biomass available.
- Barriers to connectivity.

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Trichomanes speciosum* (Killarney Fern) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Number of populations.
- Number of colonies.
- Population: life cycle stage.
- Population size: area of occupancy; and, living sporophyte fronds.
- Population structure: young and unfurling fronds; fertile fronds; and, juvenile sporophyte fronds emerging from gametophytes.
- Habitat extent.
- Hydrological conditions: wet/damp microhabitats; relative humidity; and, desiccated fronds.
- Light levels: shading.

- Woodland canopy cover.
- Invasive species.

b). State how this activity furthers the Conservation Objective(s)

Under Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive, DHLGH is required to ensure the favourable conservation status of all Annex I habitats and Annex II species within SACs. The national conservation status of Old Sessile Oak woods [91A0] has been assessed as bad and declining. The conservation status of the remnant ancient woods in Glenveagh National Park was recently assessed as bad, primarily due to overgrazing by deer and invasive non-native plant species (e.g. Rhododendron). In this context, there is an urgent need to restore and expand existing Old Sessile Oak woods [91A0], and to re-establish this Annex I habitat in locations that will improve the connectivity between existing fragmented areas and enhance the overall viability of the habitat within the wider SAC and nationally.

Since invasive species and overgrazing are pressures known to negatively alter Old Sessile Oak woods [91A0] habitat in the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, the implementation of the policies within the Draft Glenveagh National Park Woodland Management Strategy will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives. Notably:

Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]

- **Habitat area.**
- **Habitat distribution.**
- **Woodland size.**
- **Woodland structure: cover and height; community diversity and extent; and, natural regeneration.**
- **Vegetation composition: typical species; negative indicator species.**

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010]

- **Community diversity.**
- **Vegetation composition: cross leaved heath; positive indicators species; lichens and bryophytes; ericoid species and crowberry; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; non-native species.**
- **Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.**

European Dry Heaths [4030]

- **Community diversity.**
- **Vegetation composition.**
- **Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.**
- **Physical structure: disturbed bare ground**

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

- **Community diversity.**
- **Vegetation composition.**
- **Vegetation structure: signs of grazing; and, signs of browsing.**
- **Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.**

Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]

- **Vegetation composition: negative indicator species; and, non-native species.**
- **Physical structure: bare ground; and, bare soil.**

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

- **Community diversity.**
- **Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; cover of positive indicator species; dwarf shrub composition; negative indicator species; and, non-native species.**
- **Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.**
- **Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.**

Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]

- **Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; negative indicator species; non-native species.**
- **Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; and, signs of browsing.**
- **Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; and, erosion.**

The decline of Freshwater Pearl Mussel in Ireland and North-western Europe has been well researched and documented. Impacts related to increases in water temperature, altered flow regimes, the decline in the populations of Salmonids which act as hosts — have been identified as threats and pressures on this species. The potential effects of these different elements on the unique symbiotic lifecycle and ecology of Freshwater Pearl Mussel are complex and often counterintuitive. The presence of Freshwater Pearl Mussel in any watercourse depends on Salmonid host fish availability. Freshwater Pearl Mussel have a short, host specific parasitic larval phase (called glochidia) on juvenile fish (fry and parr) of suitable native host Salmonid fish. The larvae can only complete their development on Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) or brown/sea trout (*Salmo trutta*).

The ability of Freshwater Pearl Mussels, and their Salmonid hosts to survive the short to longer term predicted impacts of climate breakdown will depend on the resilience of catchments to maintain natural variations in hydrographic flow and cool thermal regimes and refuges. Native woodland planting, especially in riparian zones is an established and important measure in river ecosystem restoration. Riparian vegetation regulates water temperature by providing shade, stabilising riverbanks,

while falling leaves and insects provide food for host salmonids and contribute to the nutrient cycle within aquatic ecosystems.

Woodland cover restoration as part of the strategy will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives for Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029], notably:

- **Water quality: macroinvertebrate and phytobenthos (diatoms).**
- **Substratum quality: filamentous algae (macroalgae); and, macrophytes (rooted higher plants); sediment; and, oxygen availability.**
- **Hydrological regime: flow variability.**
- **Fringing habitat: area and condition.**

The woodland restoration measures in the strategy will contribute to reductions in sedimentation and diffuse pollution directly contributing to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives for Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106], notably:

- **Water quality.**

Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355] will make use of all watercourses for foraging and commuting and being generally peripatetic, have extensive linear home ranges. Otters use a wide variety of habitats, existing structures or patches of dense vegetation for couching (resting), are nocturnal, and lack a recognised breeding season. While, the majority of couching sites are located in riparian areas, wet woodlands, fens and adjacent woodland habitats, natal holts and dens tend to be further away from open water. The availability of holts and dens is a crucial element of Otter home range size, therefore the extent of wider areas of woodland will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives for Otter, notably:

- **Extent of terrestrial habitat.**
- **Couching sites and holts.**
- **Barriers to connectivity.**

The Birds Directive (Article 4) obliges Member States to ensure that in all Natura 2000 sites positive conservation measures are taken, where necessary, to maintain and restore the species present and their habitats, taking account of the economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics of the area concerned.

The reduction of grazing pressure on peatland and heath habitats is a proven practical intervention shown to improve habitat condition, which will be beneficial for small to medium sized passerines and other prey species of Merlin [A098] and Peregrine [A103]. Reduced grazing pressure will optimise habitat mosaics for Golden Plover and Dunlin on Wet Heath [4010] and Alpine and Boreal heath [4060], improving vegetation structure, composition and prey abundance that is critical for chick survival (prey sources and chick concealment). The implementation of the strategy within the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives, notably:

- **maintain populations of Merlin, Peregrine, Golden Plover and Dunlin on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats**

- c). Does this activity have the potential to impact negatively on any Conservation Objective (CO), Qualifying Interest (QI)/Special Conservation Interest (SCI) for this or any other European site?

The effect on European Sites and their QI/SCI within a defined Zone of Influence of the proposed conservation measures in the strategy was assessed using expert opinion, reviewing all available spatial data on QI and SCI within the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation, and the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area.

One element of the strategy requires the restoration of Old Sessile Oak woods [91A0]. The target area for this restoration is on habitat recognised as Annex I Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010]. While evidence from a variety of sources provides a strong substantive conclusion the existing habitat was once extensively wooded, the Site-Specific Conservation Objective for both Annex I habitats 91A0 and 4010 within this SAC is to restore the habitat to favourable conservation condition. The process of prioritising the management of an area within an SAC for the Conservation Objectives that result in conflict between two or more QI habitats should balance the need to undertake practical management measures on a scale that promotes the conservation of the individual QI habitats and the overall sites ability to achieve all its stated Conservation Objectives

In this particular case, the integrity of 4010 in the site, its proportion to other Annex I habitats and its distribution and range nationally has been examined and considered. It is noted that areas within the SAC have been specifically identified and prioritised to support 4010 including the south-eastern slopes of Errigal and in the area around Croangar (see the sites Conservation Objectives).

In cases where conflicting objectives in the management of a site arise the CJEU has been clear (Case 241/08 Commission v France). In this instance both the Judgement and the Advocate General's Opinion are instructive. In particular, attention should be focused on paragraph 53 of the Judgement which refers to the need for reconciliation of conflicting objectives in developing conservation and restoration objectives for Natura 2000 sites. This is further elaborated on in paragraphs 43-44 and paragraphs 70-71 of the Advocate General's Opinion. In paragraph 71 she states:

“Contrary to the Commission’s opinion, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive does not compel measures relating to the management of the site to be subject to the assessment of the implications for the site if such measures could have an effect on certain conservation objectives. Setting conservation and restoration objectives may in fact require decisions to be made on conflicts between various objectives. Therefore, it may be necessary to accept adverse effects on certain habitat types or species in order to facilitate other developments. Here, the relative importance of the respective conservation and restoration objectives for Natura 2000 is decisive.”

It is the position of the EAU, in view of the baseline 96 ha of existing native woodland within the SAC, that the gradual transition of an area of 4010 habitat back to a mosaic and successional climax vegetation of restored 91A0 woodland through the strategy does not affect the wider ability of 4010 habitat to achieve its Conservation Objectives.

Areas identified in the strategy for woodland restoration may be subject to change from the implementation of the measures, particularly where other non-woodland QIs may be affected as a result of on-going species monitoring data. Any material change to the strategy will be subject to an updated determination.

No likely significant effects or adverse impacts on the QI or SCI features of any other SAC or SPA are anticipated. Implementation of phases of the strategy will be funded through NPWS Conservation Measures Unit which are subject to a detailed assessment and validation process. This process also includes the engagement with the EAU prior to full approval of measures.

Yes

No

d). Are there aspects of this activity which are NOT directly connected with the management of the site?

Yes

No

If the answer to EITHER of the above questions is **Yes** a Screening for AA is required, go to Part 2.

If the answer to BOTH questions is **No** go to Part 5.

6. Part 2: Identification of European Sites within the Potential Zone of Influence of proposed activities

List all European sites which may be affected by this activity because they are linked by an ecological pathway. If the site has a second European designation (SAC, SPA) this also needs to be considered.

7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects

Provide this information for **each site** listed in Part 2.

List the QI/SCIs for the site(s), their current conservation condition and the Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) for that QI/SCI. Then answer the questions about the impact on that QI/SCI.

Tick all the boxes below which may apply.

Your answer will determine if the activity is likely to have a (negative) effect on this QI/SCI. Negative effects may arise because of the activity's location within the site; its proximity to the QI/SCI or the size of the land take involved; the abstraction of water or minerals; emissions or waste arising; the types of transport or machinery being used; the length of time involved or seasonality of the work.

- a). There is likely to be a reduction in the area of QI/SCI habitat

- b). The physical/chemical quality of the environment is likely to be changed in a way which may cause the deterioration of the QI/SCI habitat (e.g. applying lime to an acidic soil)

- c). The structure of the ecological community is likely to be altered (e.g. through altered species composition) in a way which will have negative impact on the QI/SCI.

- d). A QI/SCI species is likely to be disturbed (e.g. through noise, vibrations)

- e). The population size, characteristics or reproductive success of a QI/SCI species is likely to be changed either directly or indirectly (e.g. lighting close to a bat roost entrance)

- f). QI/SCI species or habitats are likely to be more vulnerable to change or less resilient to external change (e.g. to flooding, fire or drought)

- g). There are likely to be effects on other species /habitats (not a QI/SCI for this site) which are ecologically linked with this QI/SCI and, as a consequence, there are likely to be negative effects on this QI/SCI (e.g. the impacts on geese which are the SCI when their non-QI feeding areas are damaged).

- h). This activity will cause a deterioration in the conservation condition of this QI/SCI.

- i). There are likely to be other ecological effects not listed above which are likely to have a significant effect on the QI/SCI.

Explain the effects:

If you have ticked a box for any QI/SCI in any of the sites affected by this activity the likelihood of a significant effect cannot be ruled out and the activity MUST be screened IN for AA.

8. Part 4: In Combination Effects

Is this activity likely to cause negative effects in combination with any other plan or project?

(In answering this question you should consider any other consents which have been applied for or granted. For example, other ARCs, planning consents, forestry consents, or activities authorised as part of an agreed farm or land management plan. List the plans or projects considered).

No Yes Uncertain

If the answer is Yes or Uncertain the activity MUST be screened IN for AA. Fill in Part 5 accordingly.

9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA

Screening not carried out as the activity is “directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site”.



Likely significant effects are expected or uncertain.

This activity Screens **IN** and AA **is** required.



Likely significant effects are NOT expected.

This activity Screens **OUT** AA **is not** required.



Signature: Ryan Wilson-Parr, Head of Ecological Assessment

Date: 1st May 2024

10. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the strategy, the EAU determines⁴, in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, that the Glenveagh National Park Woodland Management Strategy is entirely comprised of activities that directly support the Conservation Objectives of Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation, and the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area.

It can be concluded with certainty that the strategy is a necessary conservation measure that is directly connected with or necessary for the management of these sites.

⁴ Ryan Wilson-Parr (Head of Ecological Assessment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 1st May 2024.

11. Supplementary Information

Figure 1. (below): Location of Glenveagh National Park area managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Available at: <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data>

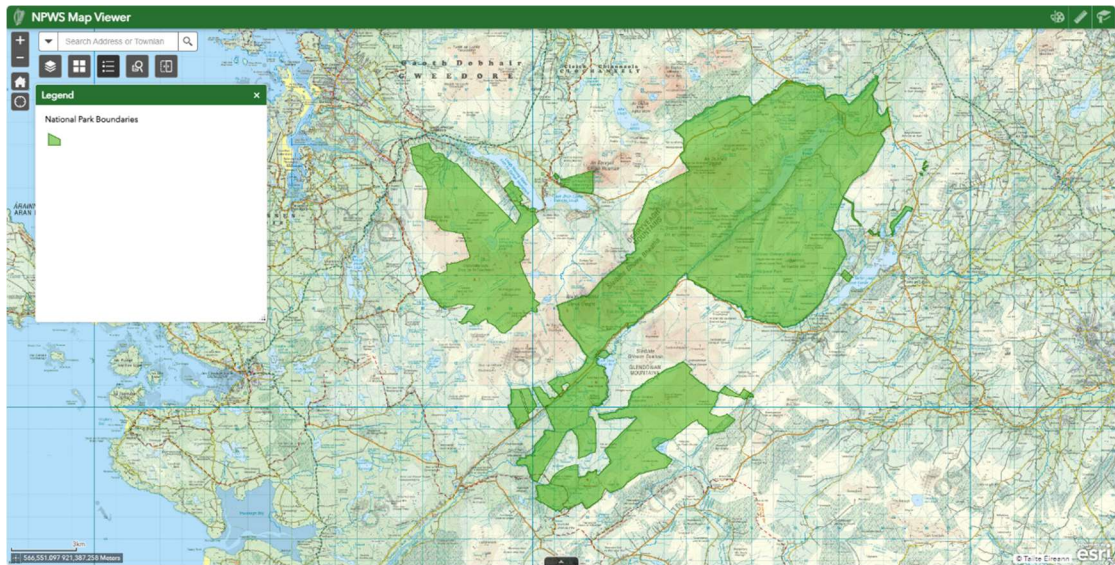


Figure 2. (below): Location of Glenveagh National Park in relation to overlapping Natura 2000 sites. Available at: <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data>

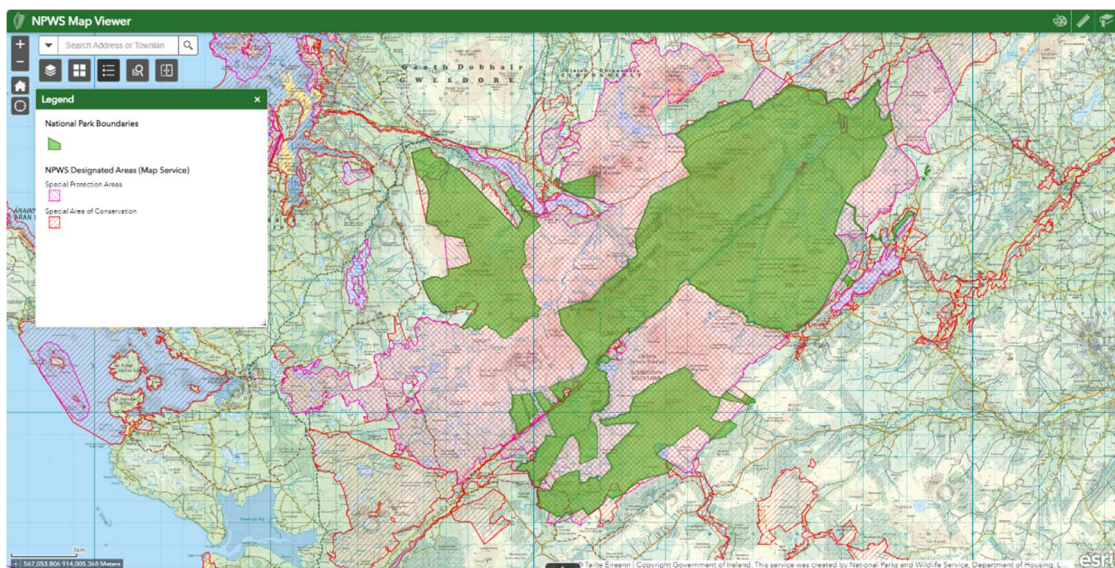
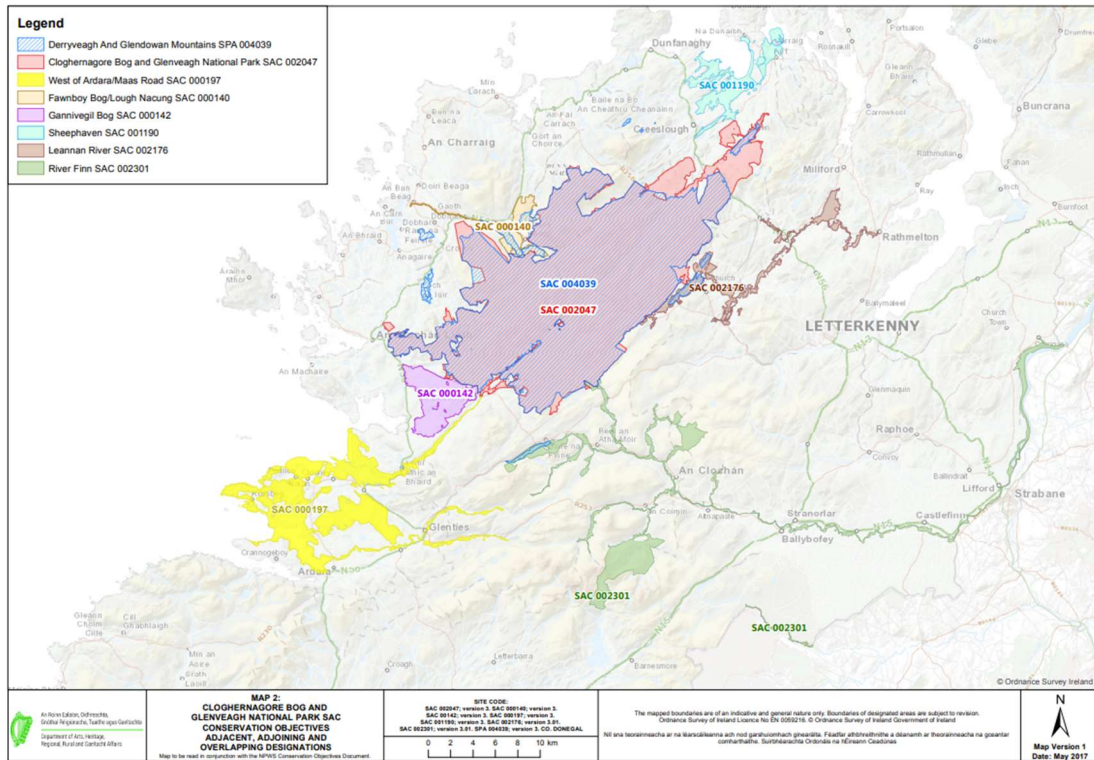


Figure 3. (below): Location of Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area and Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation.



Please refer to the Glenveagh National Park Woodland Management Strategy for more detailed maps and figures. This should be available on the Departments website at the time of publication of this determination.

npws.ie

