

# Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report



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## Environmental Assessment **Built Environment**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Fingal County Council (FCC) has prepared the *Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030*, to provide an opportunity for a more collaborative approach towards optimising the positive impacts of outdoor recreation. Several national and global trends have informed the formulation of this Plan. The Plan includes a framework set out under six strategic objectives and sets out priorities and actions for the next five years in County Fingal.

Brady Shipman Martin has been appointed by FCC to undertake a screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment (AA). This will determine the effects, if any, on European sites, of the implementation of the *Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030* (hereafter either the 'Outdoor Recreation Plan' or the 'Plan').

This document constitutes an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared for this purpose. European sites are also known as Natura 2000 Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)) and are designated for nature conservation. The requirements for an Appropriate Assessment are set out under *Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)*, transposed into Irish law through the *European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)* and the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* (as amended).

A comprehensive study has been undertaken and the potential impacts on European sites, both as a result of the implementation of this Plan and in-combination with other plans and projects, are appraised in this report.

This AA Screening should be read in conjunction with the *Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030* and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report (prepared by Brady Shipman Martin, 2025).

## 1.2 Expertise and Qualifications

This report has been prepared by Namrata Kaile, Ecologist and Environmental Consultant at Brady Shipman Martin. She holds a bachelor's degree (BSc) in Life Sciences from University of Delhi and a master's degree (MSc) with distinction in Environmental Sciences from Trinity College Dublin. She is a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and has been working professionally in the field of environmental consultancy for the last five years. Namrata is experienced in drafting and reviewing AA Screening Reports, Natura Impact Statements, EIA Screening Report as well as in coordination of EIARs. She is also experienced in undertaking baseline ecological surveys and preparing Ecological Impact Assessments Reports (EclA).

This report has been technically reviewed by Ecologist Matthew Hague BSc MSc Adv. Dip. Plan. & Env. Law CEnv MCIEEM. Matthew is an Associate with Brady Shipman Martin and is a highly experienced and qualified ecologist, with a master's degree in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management. He has over 20 years of experience in ecological and environmental consultancy, across a wide range of sectors. He has prepared numerous reports for AA Screening as well as Natura Impact Statements, for projects of all scales, from small residential developments to nationally important infrastructure projects. Matthew is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). Matthew has also completed an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law, at King's Inns and is a member of the Irish Environmental Law Association (IELA).

### 1.3 Legal requirement for Appropriate Assessment

European sites make up a network of sites designated for nature conservation under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the “Habitats Directive”) and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the “Birds Directive”). The requirements for Appropriate Assessment are set out under *Article 6 of the Habitats Directive*, transposed into Irish law by the *European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)*<sup>1</sup> (the “Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations”) and the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*, as amended (the “Planning Acts”).

European sites are also known as Natura 2000 Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)). As defined in section 177R of the Planning Acts “European site” means:

- (a) a candidate site of Community importance,
- (b) a site of Community importance,
- (ba) a candidate special area of conservation,
- (c) a special area of conservation,
- (d) a candidate special protection area and
- (e) a special protection area.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:

*(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have 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 subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.*

The first test is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. Sections 177U of the Planning Acts requires that the AA screening test must be applied to the Plan, as follows:

- To assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site;
- An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the development (plan or project), individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

This AA Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Planning Acts and the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> SI No. 477 of 2011, SI No. 293 of 2021

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Baseline data collection

This assessment focused on habitats and species that are listed as Qualifying Interests (QI) (in the case of SACs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) (in the case of SPAs) in the designations for European sites. During the assessment, habitat suitability for bird species with links to European sites was examined, in order to appraise the potential for *ex-situ* effects on European sites.

This report takes the following guidance documents into account:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites- Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2021);
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Guidance issued by the European Commission (21<sup>st</sup> November 2018);
- Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive (Directorate – General for Environment (European Commission, 2021);
- Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (Office of the Planning Regulator, March 2021);
- Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public authority (National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) (2021)).

Information was collated from the organisations and websites listed below:

- Data on European sites and rare and protected plant and animal species contained in the following databases:
  - The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht ([www.NPWS.ie](http://www.NPWS.ie));
  - The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC) ([www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie));
  - BirdWatch Ireland ([www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie));
  - Bat Conservation Ireland ([www.batconservationireland.org](http://www.batconservationireland.org)).
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (<http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>);
- Recent and historical OSI mapping and aerial photography, including [www.geohive.ie](http://www.geohive.ie);
- Information on local watercourses from [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie);
- Information on water quality in the area ([www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie));
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area ([www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie));
- Information on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (Article 17 report) (NPWS, August 2019);
- Ireland's 4<sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2023);
- Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 and the accompanying reports.

The report has regard to the following legislative instruments:

- Planning and Development, Act 2000, as amended;
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended;
- European Commission (EC) Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- European Commission (EC) Birds Directive 2009/147/EC;
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

The report takes full account of the details of the Plan and a detailed examination of all relevant elements was undertaken. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report (Brady Shipman Martin, 2025) was also reviewed in the preparation of this report.

## 3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

### 3.1 Background

The first part of the Appropriate Assessment process is the Screening phase. Screening identifies the likely effects of the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan on European sites that could arise, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and considers whether these impacts are likely to have a significant effect on the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

In accordance with sections 177U and 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the AA screening must be carried out:

- 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 the European site;
- An appropriate assessment is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Screening must be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, and it is in this context that this AA Screening Report is prepared.

Following screening therefore, if there is a possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site, this will generate the need for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. This means that if the conclusions at the end of the screening exercise are that significant effects on any European sites, as a result of the implementation of the Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely, uncertain or unknown, then an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out. This is in accordance with established precedent and case law.

### 3.2 Potential zone of influence

This assessment is based on the source-pathway-receptor model, which dictates that, for an effect to occur, there must be a 'source' (such as a construction site); a 'receptor' (such as a designated site for nature conservation); and a 'pathway' between the two (such as a watercourse that links the construction site to the designated site). A construction site or completed development may also create a barrier to movement, for example, by preventing the migration of fauna along a river corridor, or by obstructing the migration of birds.

Identification of a potential effect means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the potential effect and the characteristics of the receptor. Although there may be a risk of an impact, it may not necessarily occur, and if it does occur, it may not be significant.

There are no set recommended distances for projects to consider European sites as being relevant for assessment. In 2010, DoEHLG stated that (pp. 31 – 32):

*“The approach to screening is likely to differ somewhat for plans and projects, depending on scale and on the likely effects, but the following should be included:*

- 1. Any Natura 2000 sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area*
- 2. Any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the plan or project. A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans, and derives from UK guidance (Scott Wilson et al., 2006). For projects, the distance could be much less than 15km, and in some cases less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects*
- 3. Natura 2000 sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. In the cases of sites with water dependent habitats or species, and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment.”*

The 2021 Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) guidelines, *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*, state that the Zone of Influence “*should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework and not by arbitrary distances (such as 15 km)*” (p. 8).

Therefore, considering the nature of the Outdoor Recreation Plan and in accordance with the source-pathway-receptor model, the potential Zone of Influence (Zol) for the Plan has been defined as follows:

- Any site to which there is a pathway from the Fingal County Council administrative area, upon which significant effects could arise, resulting from the implementation of any element of the Plan. See Section 4.2.

Throughout the preparation of the Plan the strategic objectives and actions were reviewed in the context of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, in order to ensure that no elements of the Plan would have a significant impact on any European site.

## 4 Description of the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

In 2022, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) launched the national outdoor recreation strategy ‘*Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors 2023-2027*’, that aims to strengthen the sustainable development of the outdoor recreation sector and drive economic and health benefits to communities, while protecting landscapes, habitats and built heritage. The national outdoor recreation strategy highlights the requirement for county outdoor recreation plans across Ireland.

As described in the Plan, several national and global trends have informed the development of the Fingal Outdoor Recreation Plan. This includes:

- *Increase in demand: A growth in interest and participation in outdoor recreation in Ireland and globally.*

- *Activities: Soft activities, such as walking and cycling, represent the most significant segment of outdoor recreation and consumer demand for soft activities is set to continue. There is a rise in new activities such as open water swimming and stand up paddleboarding.*
- *Ageing population: The population in Ireland is getting older and the number of older people taking part in outdoor recreation is expected to increase, along with a growth in multi-generational participation in outdoor recreation.*
- *Closer to home: People are seeking opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation ‘closer to home’.*
- *Sustainability: People are increasingly concerned about the environment and behaving more sustainably.*
- *Wellbeing: The global trend to improve our physical and mental wellbeing is driving a desire to integrate health and wellbeing into leisure and tourism choices.*

### 4.1 Strategic Objectives

The Fingal Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 has set out the following strategic objectives as defined within the 6 themes set out in the national outdoor recreation strategy 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors 2023-2027':

#### 4.1.1 Leadership & collaboration

*To create a more co-ordinated, cohesive approach across Fingal to ensure co-ordination and collaboration and ensure best use of our resources*

	Action
1.1	<i>Establish a County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC) in line with ‘Guidance for Establishment of County Outdoor Recreation Committees and County Outdoor Stakeholder Forums’ (Dept of Rural Community and Development) to ensure co-operation and collaborative working between the key stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in outdoor recreation at a County level.</i>
1.2	<i>Establish a Stakeholder Forum to ensure wider stakeholder representation and consultation on outdoor recreation in Fingal.</i>
1.3	<i>Establish a cross-directorate Council Outdoor Recreation Committee to bring together all staff involved in outdoor recreation projects to ensure collaborative working within the Council.</i>
1.4	<i>Secure the funding to appoint a County Outdoor Recreation Officer (ORO) to lead and coordinate the CORC and Stakeholder Forum and drive forward the implementation of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP).</i>

#### 4.1.2 Environment & heritage

*To protect Fingal's environment and heritage through better planning and development of outdoor recreation*

	Action
2.1	<i>Ensure that environment and heritage are incorporated within the planning and development of all future outdoor recreation projects and programmes – including consideration of suitability, sustainability, education and enhancement in line with existing and future action plans.</i>
2.2	<i>Ensure that environment and heritage are standing items at all Cross Directorate meetings.</i>
2.3	<i>Ensure all future outdoor recreation projects align with the Council's Climate Action Plan.</i>
2.4	<i>Carry out annual pathway condition assessment of looped pathway network on Howth Head and carry out maintenance as required.</i>

2.5	<i>Ensure that visitor management measures in Special Amenity Areas are implemented to reduce the impact of recreational use in the natural environment, whilst enhancing biodiversity and nature connection.</i>
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#### 4.1.3 Access & infrastructure

*To protect and improve access to Fingal's outdoors, for the benefit of all across the County*

	Action
3.1	<i>Continue to support delivery of ongoing projects throughout the County, including Greenways and active travel routes, the Fingal Camino and the Dublin Coastal Trail.</i>
3.2	<i>Continue to support the Active Travel work programme as a method to increase the connectivity between communities and greenspace throughout the County.</i>
3.3	<i>Ensure that all new outdoor recreation projects incorporate active travel and public transport considerations when being planned including, where possible, new connections and linkages to areas of population.</i>
3.4	<i>Ensure future outdoor recreation projects, where possible, meet accessibility standards for all.</i>
3.5	<i>Support the delivery of recommendations from the County Sports Audits, where possible. The recommendations include the provision and improvement of beaches and open water swimming facilities – toilets, buoys, changing shelters, hooks, ramps, steps, signage, showers etc..</i>
3.6	<i>Undertake an accessibility and inclusivity audit of all existing recreation sites and facilities (toilets, car parks, buildings etc) across the County.</i>
3.7	<i>Explore potential opportunities for community trail provision across the County.</i>
3.8	<i>Carry out an audit of public water recreation access points and identify areas of need for greater provision within the County.</i>
3.9	<i>Pilot a scheme to promote the delivery of safe, leisure cycling routes on rural roads within the County and, if deemed successful, support the delivery of this concept across the County encourage greater connectivity to rural areas.</i>
3.10	<i>Continue monitoring water quality along the coast and inland waterways and disseminate results widely to the public.</i>
3.11	<i>Carry out an audit of existing outdoor recreation assets (including trails, signage – interpretation, trailhead - waymarking, fingerposts, benches, parking – bicycle and cars - toilets etc.) within the regional and neighbourhood parks.</i>
3.12	<i>Engage with minority sports to explore development opportunities where possible.</i>
3.13	<i>Continue to support the implementation of 'Space for Play – A Play Policy for Fingal'.</i>
3.14	<i>Undertake a feasibility assessment to identify further Public Rights of Way.</i>

#### 4.1.4 Awareness

*To create awareness of Fingal's outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly*

	Action
4.1	<p><i>Develop a Communication Strategy to achieve greater collaboration and consistency in messaging when sharing and signposting information with locals and visitors, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Aligning Fingal's outdoor recreation with existing brand to maintain consistency</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Creating a single authoritative digital database, interactive maps and website that details all recreation sites, trails, pre-visit information (including in accessible formats), programmes (e.g. participation, hire), events, public transport and active travel connectivity</i></li> <li>■ <i>Using 'local heroes' to help market and promote the opportunities available particularly to underrepresented and hard to reach groups</i></li> <li>■ <i>Collaborate with Leave No Trace Ireland to ensure inclusion of Leave No Trace principles</i></li> </ul>
4.2	<i>Support the roll out of the national 'Responsible Use of the Outdoors' campaign at a local level.</i>

#### 4.1.5 Opportunities

*To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors across Fingal, especially young people and under-represented groups*

	Action
5.1	<p><i>Co-ordinate the delivery of a wide range of targeted programmes including (but not limited to) Watersports Camp for All, HEROutdoors Week, Woodlands for Health and ParkFit / Beach Yoga, Open Sea Swim events which focus on encouraging the following target groups to engage in outdoor activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Women</i></li> <li>■ <i>Children and young people</i></li> <li>■ <i>Disability</i></li> <li>■ <i>Under-represented groups</i></li> </ul>
5.2	<i>Identify and support opportunities to participate in a range of priority activities through coordinating and facilitating a variety of programmes. Priority activities to include; walking, open water swimming, cycling, water sports.</i>
5.3	<i>Collaborate with Leave No Trace Ireland to ensure all activities and programmes are delivered in line with Leave No Trace principles.</i>

#### 4.1.6 Expertise

*To improve the knowledge, skills, and expertise of Fingal's stakeholders and partners*

	Action
6.1	<i>Continue to support engagement with open water swimming groups to provide training and safety advice.</i>
6.2	<i>Continue to engage with the Visitor Safety Group (VSG) to build capacity in safety and visitor management issues.</i>
6.3	<i>Ensure that visitor monitoring is implemented as part of all future outdoor recreation development to understand usage, help target promotion and support funding of development and maintenance costs.</i>
6.4	<i>Deliver training both internally and externally on the opportunities available under ORIS funding.</i>

## 4.2 Description of the receiving environment

The Outdoor Recreation Plan covers the entire Fingal Administrative Area (an area of over 450 sq.km). Fingal County has a varied coastline of beaches, dunes and cliffs. Most outdoor recreation activities are carried out on the east coast of Fingal and includes beaches, public parks, amenity areas, water access points, walking trails, active travel routes, recreation hubs etc.

Fingal County Council manages approximately 2,000ha of public open space and many public parks in the county have significant stands of woodland framing important and often iconic landscapes. There are two

nature reserves in Fingal, namely Rogerstown Nature Reserve and Baldoyle Estuary Nature Reserve. The Ramsar Sites of Rogerstown Estuary (site no. 412), Broadmeadow Estuary (site no. 833), Baldoyle Bay (site no. 413) are also within the Fingal Administrative Area. Fingal County Council have also identified lands around Malahide/Broadmeadow, Rogerstown and Baldoyle estuaries and around Sluice River Marsh and the Bog of the Ring as ecological buffer zones.

Fingal has high-quality public open space and includes the historic demesnes of Malahide, Newbridge and Ardgillan and parks such as Millennium Park and St. Catherine's Park. The high quality of Fingal's parks is recognised in the awarding of Green Flag status to Ardgillan Demesne, Malahide Demesne, Millennium Park, Newbridge House and Farm, Santry Demesne and St. Catherine's Park for exceeding environmental standards in green space management and excellence in visitor attractions. New park facilities include the first phase of the Rogerstown Park, Lusk as well as the completion of major restoration works at Shackleton Gardens, Clonsilla.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) has identified 21 County Geological Sites in Fingal which are important geological heritage sites. Special Amenity Area Orders are also in place for Howth and the Liffey Valley.

Fingal is traversed by a number of rivers and their tributaries including the Liffey, Tolka, Ward, Broadmeadow River, Delvin, Mayne and Sluice rivers, which are important fisheries and wildlife resources. They are also important for the ongoing provision of water services and for the management of flood risk. Other important river corridors include the Matt, Corduff, Ballyboghil and Santry rivers. Fingal has no natural lakes.

Fingal has a rich archaeological and architectural heritage ranging from historic buildings, churches, castles, Martello Towers, windmills, mounds, sub-surfaces sites, graveyards and burials, mill races and shipwrecks. Currently, there are known 1311 archaeological sites, 790 protected structures, 127 historic demesnes, 21 geological heritage sites and 33 architectural conservation areas (ACAs) within the administrative area of Fingal County Council (*Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029*).

Fingal has a diverse building stock ranging from farmsteads, small cottages and large country houses to the architecture of a capital city, including an international airport, large shopping centres and modern office blocks. Most people identify the large estates of Luttrellstown, Newbridge, Ardgillan and Malahide as being of significant architectural merit, but more modest and functional structures also form part of the architectural heritage of the county. This includes lighthouses; the 19th century railway stations; the Martello towers; holy wells; milestones; water-pumps and individual thatched buildings.

Fingal has designated 33 no. Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA), indicating the locations where many clusters of protected structures were to be found. Fingal contains a rich heritage of fishing, transport network, industrial buildings and features and structures associated with extractive industries such as quarries and lime kilns. Some of the industrial heritage sites in Fingal include Skerries Windmill complex, remains of a lime kiln in Malahide Castle Demesne and the copper mines north of Loughshinny.

The status of the river waterbodies in the Plan area ranges from 'good' to 'poor' during the 2016-2021 monitoring period (see [Figure 4.1](#)).

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of the transitional waterbodies in Fingal ranges from 'poor' to 'moderate' during the 2016-2021 monitoring period. The transitional waterbodies in Fingal are (refer to [Figure 4.1](#)):

- Rogerstown Estuary (Poor and 'at risk of not achieving good status');
- Broadmeadow Estuary (Moderate and 'at risk of not achieving good status');
- Baldoyle Bay / Mayne Estuary (Moderate and under review);
- North Bull Island (Moderate and under review);

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

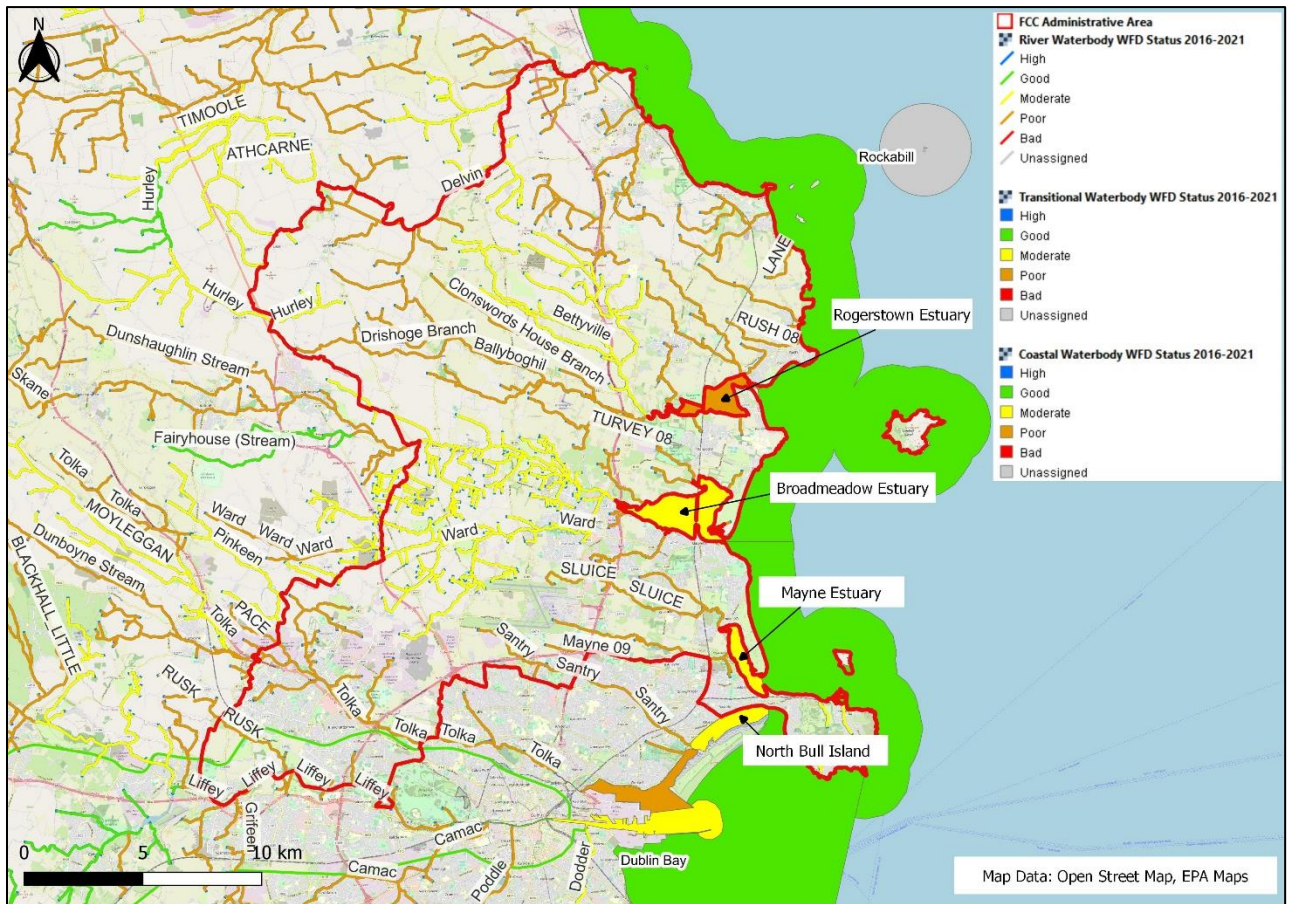
The WFD status of the coastal waterbodies in Fingal ranges from ‘good’ to ‘moderate’ during the 2016-2021 monitoring period. The coastal waterbodies in Fingal are (refer to [Figure 4.1](#)):

- North-western Irish Sea (Good);
- Rockabill (Unassigned and under review);
- Malahide Bay (Moderate and ‘at risk of not achieving good status’);
- Irish Sea (Good);
- Dublin Bay (Good).

There are ten designated bathing waters along the Fingal coastline. The most recent report on bathing water quality ‘Bathing Water Quality in Ireland - A Report for the Year 2022’ sets out the status of Irish Seawater and Freshwater Bathing areas. The 2022 Annual Water Quality monitoring period results are:

- Balbriggan, Front Strand Beach (Poor);
- Skerries, South Beach (Sufficient);
- Loughshinny Beach (Sufficient);
- Rush, North Beach (Excellent);
- Rush, South Beach (Excellent);
- Portrane, the Brook Beach (Excellent);
- Donabate, Balcarrick Beach (Excellent);
- Portmarnock, Velvet Strand Beach (Excellent);
- Sutton, Burrow Beach (Good);
- Claremont Beach, Howth (Sufficient).

Figure 4.1 WFD waterbody status within the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan Area



#### 4.2.1 European sites

There are 12no. European (Natura 2000) sites within the administrative boundary of Fingal County Council or in the immediate vicinity (as shown in Figure 4.2):

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):**

- Rogerstown Estuary SAC (site code 000208);
- Malahide Estuary SAC (site code 000205);
- Lambay Island SAC (site code 000204);
- Baldoyle Bay SAC (site code 000199);
- Ireland’s Eye SAC (site code 002193);
- Howth Head SAC (site code 000202).

- **Special Protection Areas (SPA):**

- Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site code 004015);
- Malahide Estuary SPA (site code 004025);
- Lambay Island SPA (site code 004069);
- Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016);
- Ireland’s Eye SPA (site code 004117);
- Howth Head Coast SPA (site code 004113);
- North-west Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236).

There are a further 20no. European sites outside of the administrative area of Fingal County Council, potentially within the zone of influence of the Plan:

- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (site code 003000);
- North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206);
- North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006);
- Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (site code 001398);
- South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210);
- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024);
- Skerries Islands SPA (site code 004122);
- Rockabill SPA (site code 004014);
- River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (site code 004158);
- Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (site code 001957);
- Boyne Estuary SPA (site code 004080);
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299);
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232);
- Dalkey Islands SPA (site code 004172);
- Glenasmole Valley SAC (site code 001209);
- Wicklow Mountains SAC (site code 002122);
- Wicklow Mountains SPA (site code 004040);
- Knocksink Wood SAC (site code 000725)
- Ballyman Glen SAC (site code 000713);
- Bray Head SAC (site code 000714).

#### 4.2.2 Other designated areas (other than European sites)

Designated sites (i.e. proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)) within the potential Zone of Influence have been included in this assessment in order to address their potential to act as supporting sites for European sites. There are 15 no. proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) within the Fingal administrative area (refer to [Figure 4.3](#)):

- Knock Lake pNHA (site code 001203);
- Bog of the Ring pNHA (site code 001204);
- Loughshinny Coast pNHA (site code 002000);
- Rogerstown Estuary pNHA (site code 000208);
- Malahide Estuary pNHA (site code 000205);
- Lambay Island pNHA (site code 000204);
- Portraine Shore pNHA (site code 001215);
- Feltrim Hill pNHA (site code 001208);
- Sluice River Marsh pNHA (site code 001763);
- Santry Demesne pNHA (site code 000178);
- Baldoyle Bay pNHA (site code 000199);
- Ireland's Eye pNHA (site code 000203);
- Howth Head pNHA (site code 000202);
- Royal Canal pNHA (site code 002103);
- Liffey Valley pNHA (site code 000128).

The Skerries Island NHA (site code 001218) is located adjacent to the north-east of the Fingal administrative area boundary.

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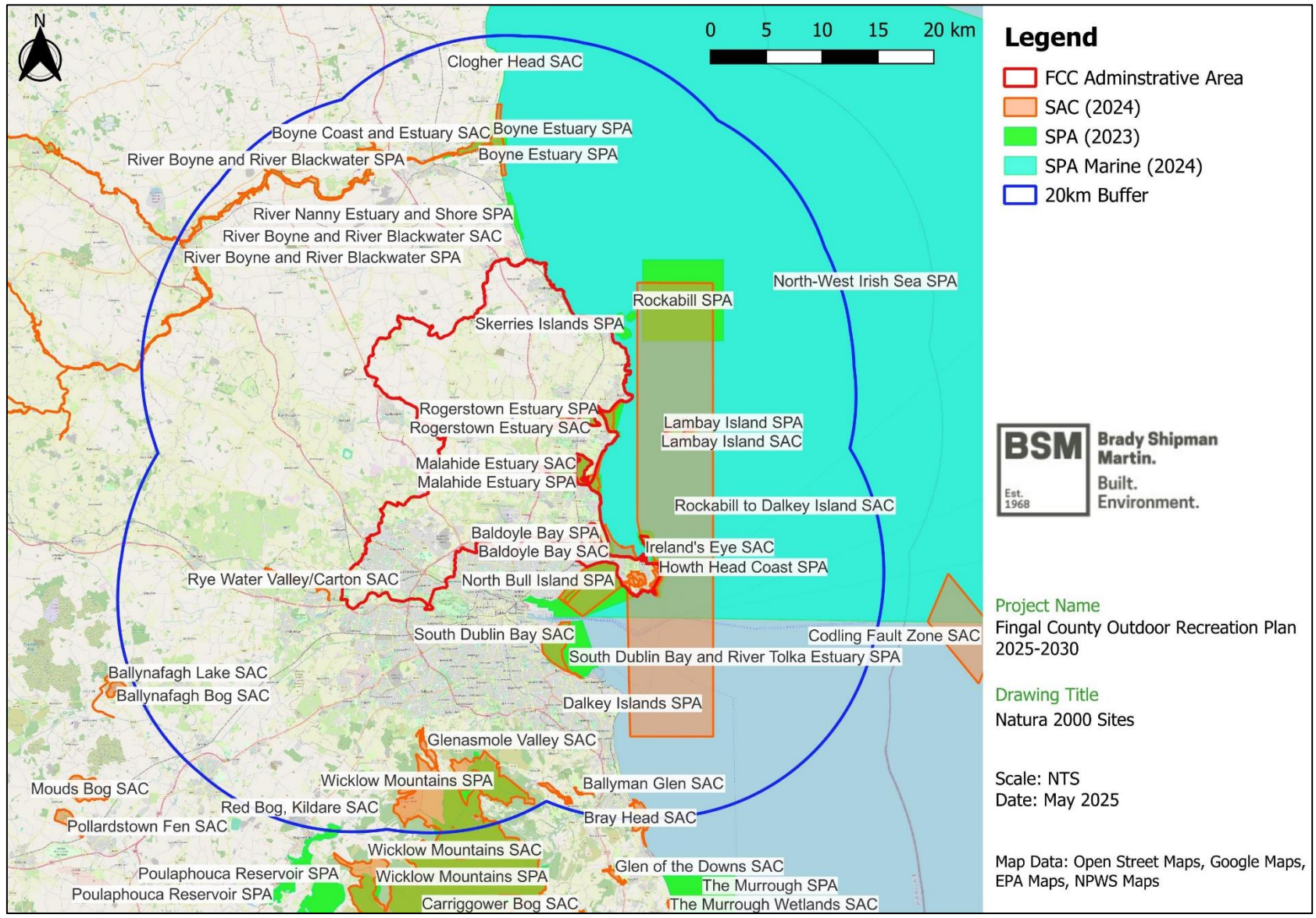
A total of 29 no. pNHAs are located within the potential zone of influence of the Fingal county boundary

- Rockabill Island pNHA (site code 000207);
- Boyne Coast and Estuary pNHA (site code 001957);
- Laytown Dunnes/Nanny Estuary pNHA (site code 000554);
- Boyne River Islands pNHA (site code 001862);
- King William's Glen pNHA (site code 001804);
- Dowth Wetland pNHA (site code 001861);
- Duleek Commons pNHA (site code 001578);
- Thomastown Bog pNHA (site code 001593);
- Balrath Woods pNHA (site code 001579);
- Cromwell's Bush Fen pNHA (site code 001576);
- Rye Water Valley/Carlton pNHA (site code 001398);
- Grand Canal pNHA (site code 002104) ;
- North Dublin Bay pNHA (site code 000206);
- Dolphins Dublin Docks pNHA (site code 000201);
- South Dublin Bay pNHA (site code 000210);
- Booterstown Marsh pNHA (site code 001205);
- Dalkey Coastal Zone and Killiney Hill pNHA (site code 001206);
- Loughlinstown Wood pNHA (site code 001211);
- Fitzsimon's Wood pNHA (site code 001753);
- Dodder Valley pNHA (site code 000991);
- Dingle Glen pNHA (site code 001207);
- Lugmore Glen pNHA (site code 001212);
- Glenasmole Valley pNHA (site code 001209);
- Slade of Saggart and Crooksling Glen pNHA (site code 000211);
- Killeel Wood pNHA (site code 001394);
- Ballybetagh Bog pNHA (site code 001202);
- Bray Head pNHA (site code 00714);
- Ballyman Glen pNHA (site code 00713);
- Knocksink Wood pNHA (site code 000725).

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Figure 4.2 European sites within zone of influence of the Outdoor Recreation Plan. A 20 km radius is shown for scale.





## 5 Potential impacts of the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030, including in-combination effects

### 5.1 Description of any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan on European sites by virtue of:

#### 5.1.1 Size and Scale

The Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 covers the entire administrative area of the Fingal County Council. However, it is not a statutory land use plan and does not set a framework for future development consents.

In 2022, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) launched the national outdoor recreation strategy '*Embracing Ireland's Outdoors 2023-2027*', that aims to strengthen the sustainable development of the outdoor recreation sector and drive economic and health benefits to communities, while protecting landscapes, habitats and built heritage. The national outdoor recreation strategy highlights the requirement for county outdoor recreation plans across Ireland.

As described in the Fingal Outdoor Recreation Plan, several national and global trends have informed the development of the Fingal Outdoor Recreation Plan. This includes:

- *Increase in demand: A growth in interest and participation in outdoor recreation in Ireland and globally.*
- *Activities: Soft activities, such as walking and cycling, represent the most significant segment of outdoor recreation and consumer demand for soft activities is set to continue. There is a rise in new activities such as open water swimming and stand up paddleboarding.*
- *Ageing population: The population in Ireland is getting older and the number of older people taking part in outdoor recreation is expected to increase, along with a growth in multi-generational participation in outdoor recreation.*
- *Closer to home: People are seeking opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation 'closer to home'.*
- *Sustainability: People are increasingly concerned about the environment and behaving more sustainably.*
- *Wellbeing: The global trend to improve our physical and mental wellbeing is driving a desire to integrate health and wellbeing into leisure and tourism choices.*

Therefore, the Fingal Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 sets out the strategic priority statement as follows:

*'The priority for outdoor recreation in Fingal over the next five years is to enhance and expand the outdoor recreation offer and explore sustainable development opportunities, fostering a vibrant community which encourages all to enjoy the natural environment and heritage, and experience a high quality of life'*

The Fingal Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 has set out the following strategic objectives as defined within the 6 themes set out in the national outdoor recreation strategy '*Embracing Ireland's Outdoors 2023-2027*':

- *Leadership & collaboration: To create a more co-ordinated, cohesive approach across Fingal to ensure co-ordination and collaboration and ensure best use of our resources*
- *Environment & heritage: To protect Fingal's environment and heritage through better planning and development of outdoor recreation*

- *Access & infrastructure: To protect and improve access to Fingal's outdoors, for the benefit of all across the County*
- *Awareness: To create awareness of Fingal's outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy them responsibly*
- *Opportunities: To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors across Fingal, especially young people and under-represented groups*
- *Expertise: To improve the knowledge, skills, and expertise of Fingal's stakeholders and partners*

The Plan outlines a series of actions, timescale and stakeholders involved for each theme, and these priorities were identified in consultation with national stakeholders, Fingal stakeholders and the public. The consultation process has been critical to informing the current position of outdoor recreation in Fingal and the five-year actions included in the Plan.

The size and scale of the Outdoor Recreation Plan will not result in any impacts that have the potential, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to result in likely significant effects to European Sites.

#### 5.1.2 Land take

There is no requirement for land take from any European site under any of the actions stated in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

#### 5.1.3 Distance from European Site

A total of 12no. European sites are located either within the Outdoor Recreation Plan area or immediately adjacent to it. A further 20no. European sites are located within approximately 20km. However, all of the Plan strategic objectives and actions take account of the requirements to protect landscapes, habitats and built heritage.

#### 5.1.4 Resource requirement

There are no resource requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

#### 5.1.5 Emissions (to land, water or air)

There are no emissions of any kind that would result in significant effects on any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

#### 5.1.6 Excavation requirements

There are no excavation requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

#### 5.1.7 Transport requirements

There are no transport requirements from any European site as a result of any of the actions contained within the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

### 5.2 Description of any likely changes arising as a result of:

#### 5.2.1 Reduction in habitat area

The Outdoor Recreation Plan proposes no reductions in habitat area in any European site.

#### 5.2.2 Disturbance to key species

The actions described within the Outdoor Recreation Plan will not result in any disturbance to key species, in designated sites and elsewhere.

No habitat or species disturbance will arise.

#### 5.2.3 Habitat or species fragmentation

The actions within the Outdoor Recreation Plan will not result in habitat or species fragmentation.

There will be no loss, fragmentation, disruption, disturbance or other change to any element of any European site as a result of the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan, and no interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of any European site.

#### 5.2.4 Reduction in species density

The Outdoor Recreation Plan will not result in any effects that have the potential to result in reduction in the extent of the qualifying habitats of European Sites, disturb qualifying species of European Sites in the wider surrounding area or affect species population.

#### 5.2.5 Changes in key indicators of conservation value

The actions within the Outdoor Recreation Plan will not result in any changes to key indicators of conservation value. The Plan will not result in any interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of any European site.

#### 5.2.6 Climate change

The actions within the Outdoor Recreation Plan align with Climate Action Plan 2025, Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 and Fingal County Council Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2029.

The Plan states under Action 2.3 to – ‘Ensure that environment and heritage are standing items at all Cross Directorate meetings.’

The actions of the Plan – particularly those around visitor management, climate action, access and infrastructure and raising awareness - may be expected to safeguard natural and cultural assets and encourage responsible participation. This will further enhance climate resilience of the receiving environment in the Local Authority area, thereby reducing vulnerability to accidents and extreme events such as flooding, drought, storms and accidental pollution events.

### 5.3 Description of any likely impacts on European sites in terms of:

#### 5.3.1 Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site

The Outdoor Recreation Plan will result in no interference with the key relationships that define the structure of any European site.

#### 5.3.2 Interference with the key relationships that define the function of the site

The Outdoor Recreation Plan will result in no interference with the key relationships that define the function of any European site.

Potential pathways for impacts to European sites are presented in [Table 5.1](#).

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Table 5.1 Potential impacts on designated sites in the potential Zone of Influence

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
Rogerstown Estuary SAC (site code 000208) Within the Plan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1130 Estuaries</li> <li>■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</li> <li>■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</li> <li>■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> <li>■ 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)</li> <li>■ 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*</li> </ul> <p>*indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 14 August 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No
Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site code 004015) Within the Plan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A043 Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)</li> <li>■ A046 Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</li> <li>■ A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No

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Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</li> <li>■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)</li> <li>■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</li> <li>■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>)</li> <li>■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>)</li> <li>■ A999 Wetlands</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 20 May 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>Malahide Estuary SAC (site code 000205) Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</li> <li>■ 1320 Spartina swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>)</li> <li>■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</li> <li>■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> <li>■ 2120 Shifting dunnes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

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Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*</li> </ul> <p>*indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 May 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
<p>Malahide Estuary SPA (site code 004025)</p> <p>Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A005 Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>)</li> <li>■ A046 Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</li> <li>■ A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)</li> <li>■ A067 Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>)</li> <li>■ A069 Red-breasted (<i>Merganser Mergus serrator</i>)</li> <li>■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</li> <li>■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</li> <li>■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

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Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)</li> <li>■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>)</li> <li>■ A999 Wetlands</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 16 August 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>Lambay Island SAC (site code 000204) Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1170 Reefs</li> <li>■ 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</li> <li>■ 1364 Grey seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>)</li> <li>■ 1365 Harbour seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 2, dated 17 December, 2024), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>
<p>Lambay Island SPA (site code 004069) Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A043 Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)</li> <li>■ A200 Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)</li> <li>■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)</li> <li>■ A009 Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>)</li> <li>■ A204 Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

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Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A183 Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)</li> <li>■ A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)</li> <li>■ A199 Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>)</li> <li>■ A018 Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)</li> <li>■ A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 19 November 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	
<p>Baldoyle Bay SAC (site code 000199) Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</li> <li>■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</li> <li>■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 19 November 2012), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

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Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
<p>Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016) Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A046 Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</li> <li>■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)</li> <li>■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)</li> <li>■ A999 Wetlands</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 February 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>
<p>Ireland's Eye SAC (site code 002193) Within the Plan area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks</li> <li>■ 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 27 January 2017), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

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Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
Ireland's Eye SPA (site code 004117) Within the Plan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)</li> <li>■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)</li> <li>■ A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)</li> <li>■ A199 Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>)</li> <li>■ A200 Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 12 November 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No
Howth Head SAC (site code 000202) Within the Plan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</li> <li>■ 4030 European dry heaths</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 06 December 2016), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitats for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No
Howth Head Coast SPA (site code 004113) Within the Plan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 29 October 2024), for the listed SCI, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird specie listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
<p>North-West Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236) Adjacent to the east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A065 Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>)</li> <li>■ A001 Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>)</li> <li>■ A003 Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>)</li> <li>■ A009 Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>)</li> <li>■ A013 Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>)</li> <li>■ A018 Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)</li> <li>■ A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)</li> <li>■ A177 Little Gull (<i>Larus minutus</i>)</li> <li>■ A188 Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)</li> <li>■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)</li> <li>■ A182 Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>)</li> <li>■ A183 Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)</li> <li>■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)</li> <li>■ A187 Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>)</li> <li>■ A195 Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>)</li> <li>■ A192 Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>)</li> <li>■ A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)</li> <li>■ A194 Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)</li> <li>■ A204 Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>)</li> <li>■ A200 Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)</li> <li>■ A199 Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1 - dated</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p>No</p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<p>19 September 2023), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the species for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (site code 003000) Adjacent to the east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1170 Reefs</li> <li>■ 1351 Harbour Porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 07 May 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>
<p>North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006) Adjacent to the south-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</li> <li>■ A052 Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)</li> <li>■ A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)</li> <li>■ A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)</li> <li>■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</li> <li>■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</li> <li>■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>)</li> <li>■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)</li> <li>■ A160 Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)</li> <li>■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)</li> <li>■ A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)</li> <li>■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)</li> <li>■ A999] Wetland</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 9 March 2015), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206) Adjacent to the south-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>■ 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines</li> <li>■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</li> <li>■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>)</li> <li>■ 1395 Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>)</li> <li>■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> <li>■ 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes</li> <li>■ 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*</li> <li>■ 2190 Humid dune slacks</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 06 November 2013), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
<p>Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC (site code 001398) c. 1km to the south-west of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)*</li> <li>■ 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)</li> <li>■ 1014 Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 22 December 2021), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objectives are to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitats and the Annex II species for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>
<p>South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>)</li> <li>■ A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)</li> <li>■ A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)</li> <li>■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation</p>	<b>No</b>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
<p>c. 5.2km to the south-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)</li> <li>■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</li> <li>■ A192 Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>)</li> <li>■ A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</li> <li>■ A194 Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)</li> <li>■ A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)</li> <li>■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)</li> <li>■ A999 Wetlands</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 9 March 2015), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	
<p>South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210) c. 5.2km to the south-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> </ul> <p>The following habitats are listed as Qualifying Interests on the NPWS website, but are not included in the Conservation Objectives document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines</li> <li>■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</li> <li>■ 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 22 August 2013), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
<p>Skerries Island SPA (site code 004122) Adjacent to the north-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)</li> <li>■ A018 Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)</li> <li>■ A046 Light-bellied Brent goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>■ A148 Purple sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>)</li> <li>■ A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)</li> <li>■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1.0, dated 19 November 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>
<p>Rockabill SPA (site code 004014) c. 2.7km to the north-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A148 Purple sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>)</li> <li>■ A192 Roseate tern (<i>Sterna dougalii</i>)</li> <li>■ A193 Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)</li> <li>■ A194 Arctic tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 8 May</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species for which the SPA has been selected.		
River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (site code 004158) c. 1.8km to the north-east of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) wintering</li> <li>■ A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) wintering</li> <li>■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) wintering</li> <li>■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) wintering</li> <li>■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) wintering</li> <li>■ A184 Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) wintering</li> <li>■ A999 Wetlands</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 21 September 2012), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>
Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (site code 001957) c. 7.5km to the north-east of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1130 Estuaries</li> <li>■ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>■ 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand</li> <li>■ 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> <li>■ 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes</li> <li>■ 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes')</li> <li>■ 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes')</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 31 October 2012), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat for which the SAC has been selected.</p>		
<p>Boyne Estuary SPA (site code 004080) c. 9.3km to the north-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</li> <li>■ A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</li> <li>■ A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>■ A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>■ A142 Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)</li> <li>■ A143 Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</li> <li>■ A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>)</li> <li>■ A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>■ A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)</li> <li>■ A169 Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)</li> <li>■ A195 Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>)</li> <li>■ A999 Wetlands</li> </ul>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	<p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 26 February 2013), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the species and wetland habitat for which the SPA has been selected.</p>		
<p>River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299) c. 10.2km to the north of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</li> <li>■ 1106 Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</li> <li>■ 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>■ 7230 Alkaline fens</li> <li>■ 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 03 December 2021), for the listed QI, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>
<p>River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232) c. 13.3km to the north-west of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A228 Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1.0, dated 02 July 2024), for each of the listed SCIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the bird specie listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
<p>Dalkey Islands SPA (site code 004172), c. 9.2km to the south-east of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ [A192] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>)</li> <li>■ [A193] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)</li> <li>■ [A194] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 29 October 2024), the Conservation Objectives are to restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>
<p>Glenasmole Valley SAC (site code 001209) c. 10.7km to the south of the Plan Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)</li> <li>■ 6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</li> <li>■ 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)*</li> </ul> <p><i>*Indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</i></p> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 10 December 2021), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
Wicklow Mountains SAC (site code 002122) c. 13.6km to the south of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)</li> <li>■ 3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds</li> <li>■ 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>■ 4030 European dry heaths</li> <li>■ 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths</li> <li>■ 6130 Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i></li> <li>■ 6230 Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)*</li> <li>■ 7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog)</li> <li>■ 8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>)</li> <li>■ 8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</li> <li>■ 8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</li> <li>■ 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</li> <li>■ 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 31 July 2017), for the listed QIs, the Conservation Objectives are to maintain or</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
	restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat and the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.		
Wicklow Mountains SPA (site code 004040) c. 13.6km to the south of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ [A098] Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>)</li> <li>■ [A103] Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)</li> </ul> <p>According to this SPA's Site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1.0, dated 16 July 2024), the Conservation Objectives are to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.</p>	<p>There is a hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SPA, and there is the potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>However, there will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the special conservation interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No
Knocksink Wood SAC (site code 000725) c. 21 km to the south of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)*</li> <li>■ 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</li> <li>■ 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 13 December 2021), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	No
Ballyman Glen SAC (site code 00713)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ [7220] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</li> </ul>	There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.	No

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Site	Reasons for designation (information correct as of May 2025) (*denotes a priority habitat)	Discussion of Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Likely Significant Effect?
c. 18.6km to the south of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[7230] Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 17 July 2019), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.	
Bray Head SAC (site code 000714) c. 18.8km to the south of the Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coast</li> <li>4030 European dry heaths</li> </ul> <p>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (Version 1, dated 11 April 2017), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.</p>	<p>There is no hydrological pathway between the Outdoor Recreation Plan Area and this SAC, and there is no potential for habitat loss or degradation.</p> <p>There will be no impacts on water quality or any other emissions and no loss of habitat or species, fragmentation or disturbance to the qualifying interests of this site as a result of the implementation of the strategic objectives or actions proposed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.</p>	<b>No</b>

Table 5.2 Assessment of potential impact of the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan on the European sites within the potential Zone of Influence

Strategic Objective	Action	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation required
<b>Leadership &amp; collaboration</b>	<i>Establish a County Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC) in line with 'Guidance for Establishment of County Outdoor Recreation Committees and County Outdoor Stakeholder Forums' (Dept of Rural Community and Development) to ensure co-operation and collaborative working between the key stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in outdoor recreation at a County level.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Strategic Objective	Action	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation required
	<i>Establish a Stakeholder Forum to ensure wider stakeholder representation and consultation on outdoor recreation in Fingal.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Establish a cross-directorate Council Outdoor Recreation Committee to bring together all staff involved in outdoor recreation projects to ensure collaborative working within the Council.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Secure the funding to appoint a County Outdoor Recreation Officer (ORO) to lead and coordinate the CORC and Stakeholder Forum and drive forward the implementation of the County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP).</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
<b>Environment &amp; heritage</b>	<i>Ensure that environment and heritage are incorporated within the planning and development of all future outdoor recreation projects and programmes – including consideration of suitability, sustainability, education and enhancement in line with existing and future action plans.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Ensure that environment and heritage are standing items at all Cross Directorate meetings.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Ensure all future outdoor recreation projects align with the Council's Climate Action Plan.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Carry out annual pathway condition assessment of looped pathway network on Howth Head and carry out maintenance as required.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Ensure that visitor management measures in Special Amenity Areas are implemented to reduce the impact of recreational use in the natural environment, whilst enhancing biodiversity and nature connection.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
<b>Access &amp; infrastructure</b>	<i>Continue to support delivery of ongoing projects throughout the County, including Greenways and active travel routes, the Fingal Camino and the Dublin Coastal Trail.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Continue to support the Active Travel work programme as a method to increase the connectivity between communities and greenspace throughout the County.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Ensure that all new outdoor recreation projects incorporate active travel and public transport considerations when being planned including, where possible, new connections and linkages to areas of population.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Strategic Objective	Action	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation required
	<i>Ensure future outdoor recreation projects, where possible, meet accessibility standards for all.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Support the delivery of recommendations from the County Sports Audits, where possible. The recommendations include the provision and improvement of beaches and open water swimming facilities – toilets, buoys, changing shelters, hooks, ramps, steps, signage, showers etc..</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Undertake an accessibility and inclusivity audit of all existing recreation sites and facilities (toilets, car parks, buildings etc) across the County.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Explore potential opportunities for community trail provision across the County.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Carry out an audit of public water recreation access points and identify areas of need for greater provision within the County.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Pilot a scheme to promote the delivery of safe, leisure cycling routes on rural roads within the County and, if deemed successful, support the delivery of this concept across the County encourage greater connectivity to rural areas.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Continue monitoring water quality along the coast and inland waterways and disseminate results widely to the public.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Carry out an audit of existing outdoor recreation assets (including trails, signage – interpretation, trailhead - waymarking, fingerposts, benches, parking – bicycle and cars - toilets etc.) within the regional and neighbourhood parks.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Engage with minority sports to explore development opportunities where possible.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Continue to support the implementation of ‘Space for Play – A Play Policy for Fingal’.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Undertake a feasibility assessment to identify further Public Rights of Way.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Strategic Objective	Action	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation required
Awareness	<p><i>Develop a Communication Strategy to achieve greater collaboration and consistency in messaging when sharing and signposting information with locals and visitors, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Aligning Fingal’s outdoor recreation with existing brand to maintain consistency</i></li> <li>■ <i>Creating a single authoritative digital database, interactive maps and website that details all recreation sites, trails, pre-visit information (including in accessible formats), programmes (e.g. participation, hire), events, public transport and active travel connectivity</i></li> <li>■ <i>Using ‘local heroes’ to help market and promote the opportunities available particularly to underrepresented and hard to reach groups</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Collaborate with Leave No Trace Ireland to ensure inclusion of Leave No Trace principles</i></p>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<p><i>Support the roll out of the national ‘Responsible Use of the Outdoors’ campaign at a local level.</i></p>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
Opportunities	<p><i>Co-ordinate the delivery of a wide range of targeted programmes including (but not limited to) Watersports Camp for All, HEROutdoors Week, Woodlands for Health and ParkFit / Beach Yoga, Open Sea Swim events which focus on encouraging the following target groups to engage in outdoor activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Women</i></li> <li>■ <i>Children and young people</i></li> <li>■ <i>Disability</i></li> <li>■ <i>Under-represented groups</i></li> </ul>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<p><i>Identify and support opportunities to participate in a range of priority activities through coordinating and facilitating a variety of programmes. Priority activities to include; walking, open water swimming, cycling, water sports.</i></p>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<p><i>Collaborate with Leave No Trace Ireland to ensure all activities and programmes are delivered in line with Leave No Trace principles.</i></p>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

## Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Strategic Objective	Action	Potential to impact Natura 2000 sites	Mitigation required
Expertise	<i>Continue to support engagement with open water swimming groups to provide training and safety advice.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Continue to engage with the Visitor Safety Group (VSG) to build capacity in safety and visitor management issues.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Ensure that visitor monitoring is implemented as part of all future outdoor recreation development to understand usage, help target promotion and support funding of development and maintenance costs.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No
	<i>Deliver training both internally and externally on the opportunities available under ORIS funding.</i>	No significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are envisaged.	No

## 6 Summary of potential impacts of the implementation of the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030

There will be no loss of any habitat or species listed as a QI or SCI of any designated site as a consequence of the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan. There is, therefore, no potential for the effects of habitat loss or fragmentation to occur.

There will also be no significant effects on any European sites as a result of:

- Habitat loss and/or fragmentation;
- Land-take;
- Resource requirements such as water abstraction;
- Impacts to habitat structure;
- Mortality to species (such as roadkill);
- Noise pollution / vibration impacts;
- Light pollution;
- Emissions to air (including dust);
- Emissions to water.

Additionally, for the reasons outlined in this report for the European sites, no impacts on any other designated sites including proposed Natural Heritage Areas, will occur.

## 7 Mitigation specific to European sites

This screening assessment is consistent with the judgment of the European Court in Case C-323/17, *People Over Wind & Sweetman v Coillte* (Judgment of the Court (Seventh Chamber) of 12 April 2018) and the recent case-law of the High Court, including *Heather Hill Management Company CLG v An Bord Pleanála* [2019] IEHC 450 and *Sweetman v An Bord Pleanála* [2020] IEHC 39.

It is also consistent with the judgment in *Eco Advocacy CLG v An Bord Pleanála* [2021] IEHC 265. In that case, Humphreys J confirmed the core legal principle, being that regard should not be had to mitigation measures at AA screening stage. Humphreys J decided in that case that clarification was required from the CJEU on the matter (as it related to the consideration of SUDs and whether these represented mitigation measures).

The CJEU, in its ruling on this case dated 15 June 2023 clarified issues defining mitigation in the context of European sites<sup>2</sup>. It confirmed that Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 *must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications of a plan or project for a site, account may be taken of the features of that plan or project which involve the removal of contaminants and which therefore may have the effect of reducing the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site, where those features have been incorporated into that plan or project as standard features, inherent in such a plan or project, irrespective of any effect on the site.*

In relation to European sites, there will be no impacts capable of giving rise to any likely significant effects as a result of the Plan.

No mitigation is necessary or proposed for the protection of European sites.

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<sup>2</sup><https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=274644&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=21723482>

## 8 In-combination effects

It is a requirement of Section 177U of the Planning Acts that, when considering whether a plan or project will have a significant effect on a European site, the assessment must take into account in-combination effects with other plans and projects. The assessment should consider plans and projects that are completed, approved but uncompleted, or proposed (but not yet approved)<sup>3</sup>. If there are identified effects arising from the plan or project, even if they are perceived as minor and not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site alone, then these effects must be considered in combination with the effects arising from other plans and projects.

Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out the Council's policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period and has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and AA. It seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County. The Plan has had due regard to all relevant policies and objectives set out in the Development Plan.

On the basis of objective information it can be excluded that the implementation of the Plan, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

A number of other plans were considered when assessing in-combination effects, but it was determined that there would be no in-combination effects with these:

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF) (2018) including First Revision to the NPF (April 2025);
- Embracing Ireland's Outdoors National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027
- National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
- Tourism Policy Framework 2025–2030
- Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019–2023
- National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland (2016, reviewed 2020)
- Sport Ireland Policy on Sport and Physical Activity in the Outdoors (2020)
- Sport Ireland Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities (2017)
- Coillte Strategic Vision (2022)
- Climate Action Plan 2025
- Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027
- Fingal Tourism Strategy 2024-2029
- Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy (2024)
- Local Economic and Community Plan 2023 - 2028
- Local Sport and Physical Activity Plan 2024 - 2029
- An Active Travel Strategy for Fingal (2023)
- Keeping it Green - An Open Space Strategy for Fingal (Draft)
- Fingal Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
- Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030
- Fingal Heritage Plan 2024 - 2030
- Leader Local Development Strategy for Dublin Rural 2023 – 2027
- Space for Play – A Play Policy for Fingal

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<sup>3</sup> Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001)

## 9 Screening conclusion

Following review of the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 against the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites, it is concluded that there is no possibility that the implementation of this Plan could result in any likely significant effects on European sites on its own or in combination with other plans and programmes. This conclusion was reached without considering or taking into account mitigation measures or measures intended to avoid or reduce any impact on European sites.

In view of best scientific knowledge therefore, this report concludes that the Fingal County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in light of their conservation objectives. The Outdoor Recreation Plan does not require an Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report.

## 10 References

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2024). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (Version 1.3).
- DoEHLG (2010a). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- DoEHLG (2010b). Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10: Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.
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- Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029.
- European Commission (2021). Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites- Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission Environment Directorate-General (2021). Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive.
- NBDC (2025). Biodiversity Maps.
- NPWS (2021). Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public authority.
- NPWS (2023). Boundary data – Special Area of Conservation (SAC). [Update date 06/12/2024].
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- NPWS (2015). Boundary data – proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). [Update date 01/11/2015].
- NPWS (2019). Boundary data –Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). [Update date 28/06/2019].
- NRA4 (2009). Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes.
- OPR (2021). Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.
- Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M. (2016). Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. Dublin Ireland: NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

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<sup>4</sup> Now Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

## Appendix I: Background

The European<sup>5</sup> network is a Europe-wide network of ecologically important sites (SPAs and cSACs – also known as ‘European Sites’ or ‘Natura 2000 sites’) that have been designated for protection under either the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) or the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna).

The main aim of the Habitats Directive is “to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the treaty applies”. Any actions taken must be designed to “maintain or restore, at a favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest”. Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, an assessment is required where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a European site.

In addition, it is a matter of law that candidate SACs (cSACs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCI) are considered in this process;

Article 6 (paragraphs (3) and (4)) of the Habitats Directive states that:

(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have 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 the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

(4) If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, 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 requirements of the Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish law by means of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)* (hereafter referred to as the *Birds and Habitats Regulations*) and by the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended.

In Ireland, the statutory agency responsible for the designated areas is NPWS.

### Stages in the assessment

European Commission guidance (2001)<sup>6</sup> sets out the principles on how to undertake decision making in applying the Habitats Directive. The requirements of the Habitats Directive comprise four distinct stages:

**Stage 1: Screening** is the process which initially identifies the likely significant effects upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts may be significant. It is important to note that the burden of evidence is to show, on the basis of objective information, that there will be no significant effect; if the effect may be significant, or is not known, that would trigger the need for an Appropriate Assessment. There is European Court of Justice case law to the effect that

<sup>5</sup> The EU Habitats Directive, Article 3.1, states “A Coherent European ecological network of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas pursuant to Directive 79/409/EEC shall be set up under the title Natura 2000”

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2001) *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European Sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*

unless the likelihood of a significant effect can be ruled out on the basis of objective information, then an Appropriate Assessment must be made.

**Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment** is the detailed consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's conservation objectives and its structure and function. This is to determine with scientific certainty whether or not there will be adverse effects on the integrity of the site in light of its conservation objectives. This stage also includes the development of mitigation measures to avoid or reduce any possible impacts.

**Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions** is the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that would avoid impacts on the integrity of the European site, should avoidance or mitigation measures be unable to cancel out adverse effects.

**Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.** At Stage 4 an assessment is made with regard to whether or not the development is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) and, if so, of the compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the European network.

## Conservation Objectives of European sites

The conservation objectives for a European Site are intended to represent the aims of the Habitats and Birds Directives in relation to that site. To this end, habitats and species of European Community importance should be maintained or restored to 'favourable conservation status' (FCS), as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive below:

The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- Its natural range and the area it covers within that range are stable or increasing;
- 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;
- Conservation status of typical species is favourable as defined in Article 1(i).

The conservation status of a species will be taken as favourable when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future;
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Guidance from the European Commission<sup>7</sup> indicates that the Habitats Directive intends FCS to be applied at the level of an individual site, as well as to habitats and species across their European range. Therefore, in order to properly express the aims of the Habitats Directive for an individual site, the conservation objectives for a site are essentially to maintain (or restore) the habitats and species of the site at (or to) FCS.

The European Commission guidance recommends that screening should fulfil the following steps:

1. Determine whether the plan (or policy) is directly connected with or necessary for the management of European sites;
2. Describe the plan and describe and characterise any other plans or projects which, in combination, have the potential for having significant effects on European sites;
3. Identify the potential effects on European sites;

Assess the likely significance of any effects on European sites.

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<sup>7</sup> Managing European sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. (European Commission 2000)

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