

Article 6 (3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Proposed Carpark and
Mass Rock Trail Upgrades
at Mullagherve, Co.
Leitrim





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Planning and
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Consultants

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

MKO has been appointed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6(3) Screening for Appropriate Assessment for Leitrim County Council of a proposed carpark and upgrades to the existing Mass Rock Trail at Mullaghgarve, Co. Leitrim. (Grid ref: H 03270 14655).

Screening for Appropriate Assessment is required under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Where it cannot be excluded that a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, would have a significant effect on a European Site then same shall be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The current project is not directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of any European Site consequently the project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process.

The assessment in this report is based on a desk study and field surveys undertaken in May 2022. It specifically assesses the potential for the works to result in significant effects on European sites in the absence of any best practice, mitigation or preventative measures.

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010) and the Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin 7, Ireland OPR (2021).

In addition to the guidelines referenced above, the following relevant documents were also considered in the preparation of this report:

1. *Council of the European Commission (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Official Journal of the European Communities. Series L 20, pp. 7-49.*
2. *EC (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence. Opinion of the commission.*
3. *EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission.*

1.2 Appropriate Assessment

1.2.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening is the process of determining whether an Appropriate Assessment is required for a plan or project. Under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, screening must be carried out by the Competent Authority. As per Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended 'A screening for appropriate assessment shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site'. The Competent Authority's determination as to whether an Appropriate Assessment is required must be made on the basis of objective information and should be recorded. The Competent Authority may request information to be supplied to enable it to carry out screening.

Consultants or project proponents may provide for the competent authority, the information necessary for them to determine whether an Appropriate Assessment is required and provide advice to assist them in the Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening decision.

Where it cannot be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt at the Screening stage, that a proposed plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, an Appropriate Assessment is required.

Where An Appropriate Assessment is required, the Competent Authority may require the applicant to prepare a Natura Impact Statement.

The term Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is defined in legislation¹. An NIS, where required, should present the data, information and analysis necessary to reach a definitive determination as to 1) the implications of the plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, for a European site in view of its conservation objectives, and 2) whether there will be adverse effects on the integrity of a European site. The NIS should be underpinned by best scientific knowledge, objective information and by the precautionary principle.

This Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared in compliance with the provision of section 177U of the Planning & Development Act 2010 as amended.

Statement of Authority

Baseline ecological surveys were undertaken on the 24th of May 2022 by Cillian Burke (BSc.) and Rachel Walsh (B.Sc., QCIEEM) of MKO. This report has been prepared by Cillian Burke (BSc.) and reviewed by Rachel Walsh (B.Sc., QCIEEM). Rachel has 2 years' experience in ecological consultancy.

¹ As defined in Section 177T of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, an NIS means a statement, for the purposes of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, of the implications of a proposed development, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, for a European site in view of its conservation objectives. It is required to include a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify and classify any implications for the European site in view of its conservation objectives

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKS

2.1 Site Location

The site of the proposed development is located along the Mullaghgarve Mass Rock Walk, near Sliabh an Iarainn, Co. Leitrim (Grid ref: H 03270 14655). It is approx. 7km east of Drumshanbo town. The proposed trail is partly located within the Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SAC while the proposed carpark footprint is located outside of the SAC boundary within agricultural fields.

The site location is shown in Figure 2-1.

2.1.1 Description of the Development

The proposed development comprises an upgrade to the existing Mass Rock Trail, and the construction of a carpark at Aghacashel (grid ref: H 03270 14655) of approx. 0.04ha in area.

The proposed car park will consist of 13 no. spaces and will be surrounded with stock-proof fencing. The carpark area will be surfaced with Terram, 5F2 capping, Clause 804 and Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) finish.

The Mass Rock Trail is an existing trail with begins north of the proposed carpark (grid ref: H 03229 14714) and proceeds northward along an existing hardcore surface for 975m. The trail then turns westward over the mountain for approximately 520m until it reaches Mass Rock.

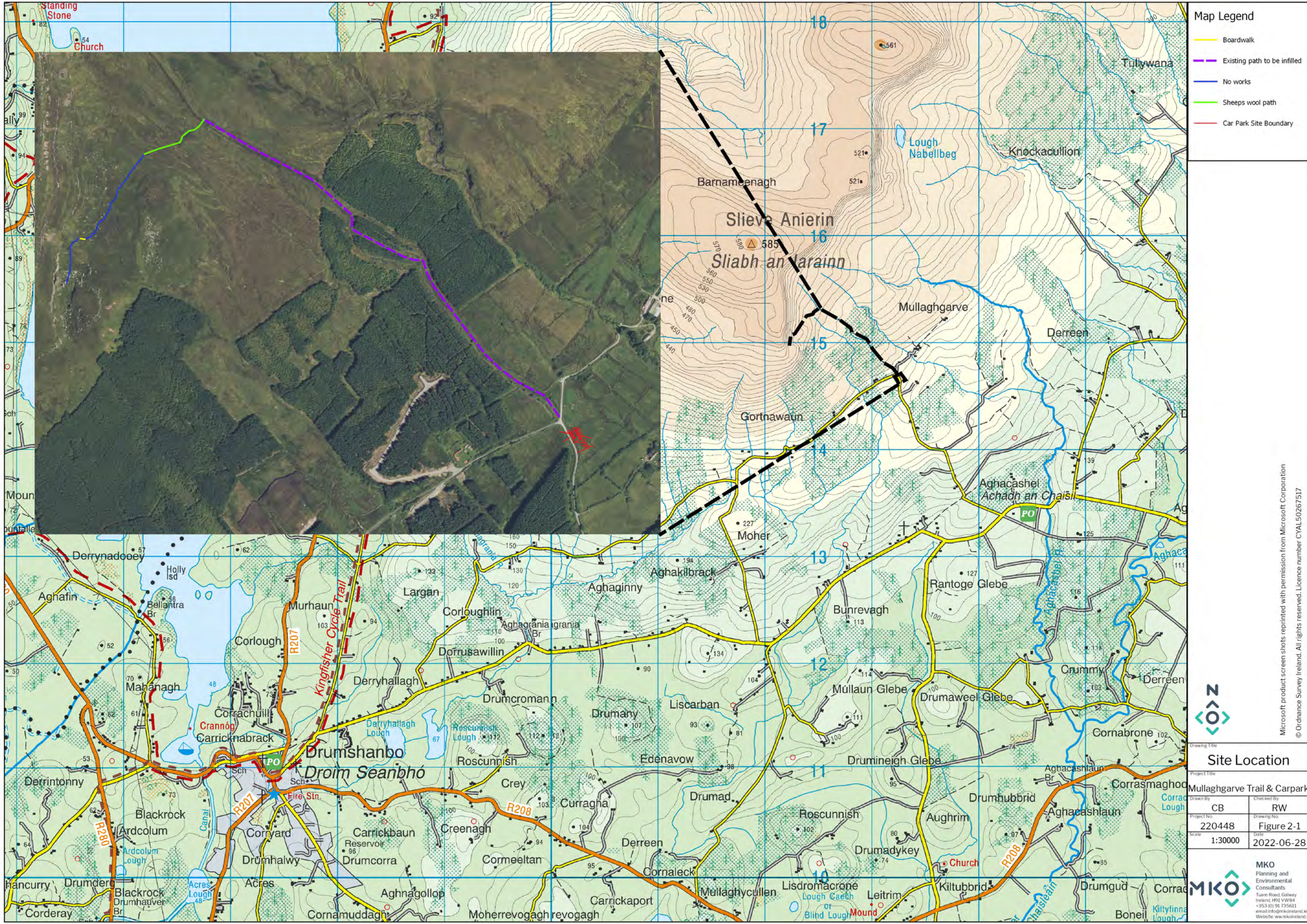
It is proposed to clean off the first section of the trail by removing overgrowth and laying Clause 804 stone onto the existing hardcore surface. Four no. field gates are proposed along this section.

As the trail turns westwards, it is proposed to lay 150m of sheep's wool pathway along the existing trail route. This will involve an excavation of approx. 2ft deep x 3ft wide. Approx. 300 to 500mm of sheep's wool will be laid followed by 50mm of drainage stone and approx. 150mm of CL804 stone. This will be carried out manually. A seasonally dry channel traverses this section of trail. It is proposed to create a bridge structure over this channel consisting of wooden planks so that the seasonal flow remains unimpeded.

For the majority of the remainder of the existing trail, no works are proposed. Towards the end of the trail a boardwalk, measuring 20m long, is proposed. This will be a pre-constructed structure and will be transported to the proposed location manually.

The proposed trail works, and location of the carpark are shown in Figure 2-2.

A detailed layout of the proposed carpark is shown in Figure 2-3.



Map Legend

- Boardwalk
- Existing path to be infilled
- No works
- Sheeps wool path
- Car Park Site Boundary

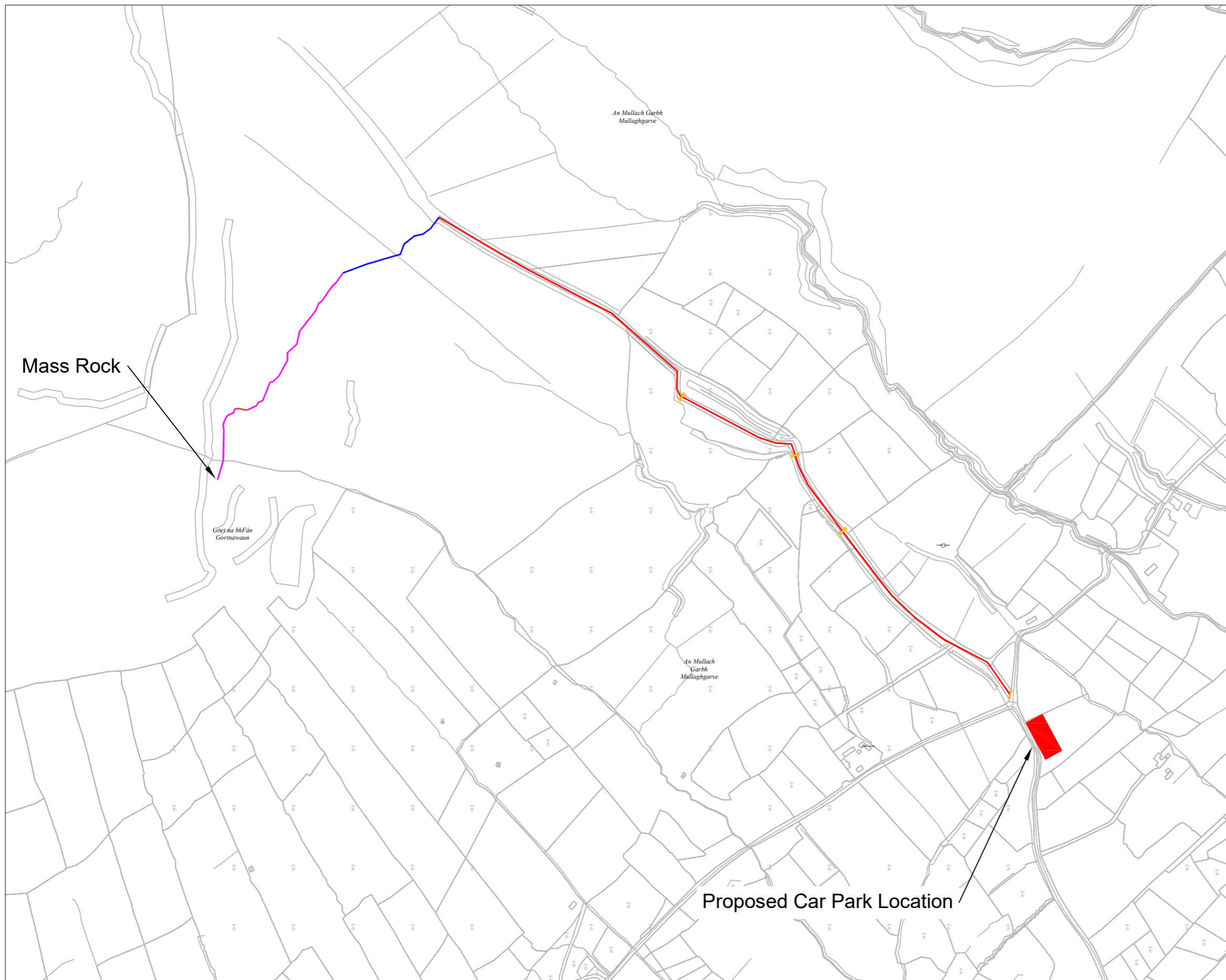


Site Location

Project Title	
Mullaghgarve Trail & Carpark	
Drawn By	Checked By
CB	RW
Project No.	Drawing No.
220448	Figure 2-1
Scale	Date
1:30000	2022-06-28






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Legend:

Trail to extend from proposed car park adjacent to local public road to the mass rock site. Trail length is 1455m and proposed works to trail as follows:

-  Existing access road to be cleaned off & 150mm CL804 stone material to be laid on existing hardcore surface. Side drains along path to be reopened. 975m
-  Existing mountain bog. Proposed sheep's wool pathway to be installed. 150m
-  No works to take place on this section. 310m
-  Timber boardwalk. 20m
-  Proposed 10ft field gate with kissing gates adjacent.

Mass Rock

Proposed Car Park Location



Leitrim County Council

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Tel: 071 9620005

REV:	DATE:	AMENDMENT:

<i>Project</i> Mullaghgarve Mass Rock Walking Trail				
<i>Component</i> Map			<i>Title</i> Overview of Scheme	
<i>Scales</i> 1:5000@A3	<i>Date</i> 13/04/2022	<i>O.S. Sheet Ref.:</i> 1471	<i>Drawing No.:</i> ACP-003	<i>Revision:</i> 0
<i>Design</i> RF	<i>Drawn</i> RF	<i>Checked</i> PMS		



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REV:	DATE:	AMENDMENT:
0	28/04/21	Original Design

Project				
Aughacashel Mass Rock Carpark				
Component		Title		
Layout		Proposed Carpark		
Scale:	1:500@A3	Date:	01/09/2021	O.S. Sheet Ref.:
Design:	RF	Drawn:	RF	Checked:
			PMS	ACP-001
				0

2.2

Description of the Baseline Ecological Environment

Assessing the impacts of any project and associated activities requires an understanding of the ecological baseline conditions prior to and at the time of the project proceeding. Ecological baseline conditions are those existing in the absence of proposed activities (CIEEM 2018). Multidisciplinary ecological walkover surveys were conducted on the 24th of May 2022 in line with NRA (2009) guidelines (Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes) by Cillian Burke (BSc.) and Rachel Walsh (BSc.).

Habitats were identified in accordance with the Heritage Council's 'Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000). Plant nomenclature for vascular plants follows 'New Flora of the British Isles' (Stace, 2010), while mosses and liverworts nomenclature follow 'Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland - a field guide' (British Bryological Society, 2010).

The proposed trail begins along an existing hardcore track for 975m. This is categorised as spoil and bare ground (**ED2**) with recolonising species of improved agricultural grassland (**GA1**) (Plate 2-1), with species including sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), horsetail (*Equisetum spp.*) and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). Soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) delineates both sides of the track. Plots of conifer plantation (**WD4**) are present alongside the track. Two streams, categorised as eroding/upland rivers (**FW1**) (Plate 2-2), are located along both sides of this section of track. Both rivers are heavily vegetated and shaded along much of the stretch and dominated by soft rush (*Juncus effusus*). The streams flow in a south-easterly direction and are approximately 30cm wide with a rocky substrate. The stream which flows along the western side of the track is culverted as the track turns westwards over this stream.

The existing Mass Rock Trail, as it crosses westwards over Sliabh an Iarainn, traverses an area mapped under Article 17 habitat mapping (NPWS 2019) as a mosaic of Dry Heath, Active Blanket Bog, Siliceous Scree, and Siliceous Rocky Slopes.

The proposed 150m sheep's wool path crosses westwards over the mountain and is located on an existing trodden path across mosaic peatland habitat dominated by dry siliceous heath (**HH1**). The existing trodden path is degraded with bare, exposed and recolonising soils and is categorised as spoil and bare ground/recolonising bare ground (**ED2/ED3**) (Plate 2-3). Adjacent dry heath habitat is dominated by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). The trail crosses a seasonally dry channel (Plate 2-4) which was damp with no flow at the time of survey.

The remainder of the trail, for which predominantly no works are proposed, except for a 20m length of board walk, continues along an existing degraded track (Plate 2-5). The trail then ends at Mass Rock, an elevated area on the mountain which consists of Dry siliceous heath (**HH1**) and exposed siliceous rock (**ER1**) (Plate 2-6 Mass Rock, at the end of the trail, with Siliceous Dry Heath (HH1) and Exposed Siliceous Rock (ER1). The dry heath habitat is dominated by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), with occasional tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), deergrass (*Trichophorum caespitosum*) and occasional soft rush (*Juncus effusus*). Bryophyte species present include Common Tamarisk-moss (*Thuidium tamariscinum*), Common haircap moss (*Polytrichum commune*) and *Sphagnum capillifolium*. Heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) are less frequent but also present.

The proposed carpark, located approx. 40m south of the beginning of the trail, is categorised as wet grassland (**GS4**) (Plate 2-7) Scattered hawthorn trees (*Crataegus monogyna*) are present along the western boundary with a drainage ditch (**FW4**). The drainage ditch is heavily vegetated and was damp

with no flowing water at the time of survey. The grassland is dominated by sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), meadow grass (*Poa sp.*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Also present are sedge species (*Carex sp.*), marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and occasional cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*).

There were no Annex I habitats within the footprint of the proposed carpark.

No Invasive Alien Species (IAS) listed under the Third Schedule of the European Communities Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2015) were found within the study areas.



Plate 2- 1 Existing walking track (ED2/ED3) with improved agricultural grassland species, and adjacent conifer plantation (WD4).



Plate 2-2 Heavily vegetated eroding/upland river (FW1) running along the existing track.



Plate 2-3 Proposed footprint for sheep's wool track over existing degraded bare soil (ED2).



Plate 2-4 Seasonally dry channel which traverses southwards along the proposed sheep's wool track.



Plate 2-5 The existing trodden track, continuing through adjacent dry heath (HH1).

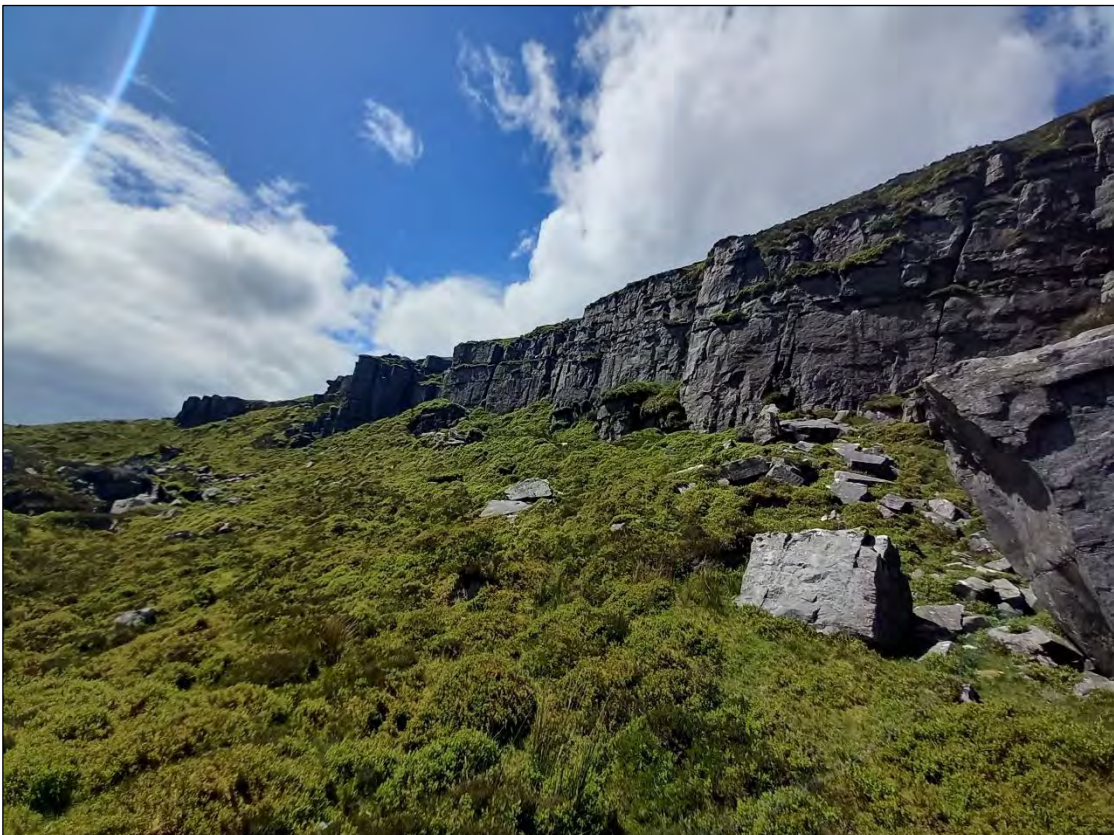


Plate 2-6 Mass Rock, at the end of the trail, with Siliceous Dry Heath (HH1) and Exposed Siliceous Rock (ER1).



Plate 2-7 Wet grassland (GS4) within the proposed footprint of the carpark, with scattered hawthorn trees present along the western boundary visible in the background.

2.3

Significance of Habitats

Ecological evaluation follows a methodology that is set out in Chapter 3 of the ‘Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Roads Schemes’ (NRA, 2009). The habitats within and adjacent to the development site were evaluated in accordance with the criteria developed by the NRA (2009b), which classifies sites in terms of their ecological importance, *i.e.* ‘international importance’, ‘national importance’, ‘county importance’, ‘local importance (higher value)’ or ‘local importance (lower value)’.

Habitats within the development site such as dry siliceous heath (**HH1**), exposed siliceous rock (**ER1**) and are located within the Cuilcagh-Anierin SAC and correspond to Annex I habitats listed on the EU Habitats Directive and are of International Importance.

The 975m of existing track itself is categorised as spoil and bare ground/recolonising bare ground (ED2/ED3) with recolonising agricultural grassland specie and is classed as having Local Importance (lower value).

The eroding/upland rivers (**FW1**) either side of the existing track are of Local Importance (higher value) as they provide wider landscape connectivity.

The wet grassland (**GS4**) is of local importance (lower value) as it is a small area of local importance for wildlife but is common and widespread in the wider area.

The drainage ditch (**FW4**) and scattered hawthorn trees are of Local Importance (higher value) because of their potential to provide wider landscape connectivity.

2.3.1 **Fauna**

The proposed development site is remote from any SAC or SPA designated for fauna. There was no evidence of any Annex II species or potential SCI species observed during the site visit.

2.3.2 **Significance of Fauna**

Fauna observed during the field visit included meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) which are of local importance (higher value).

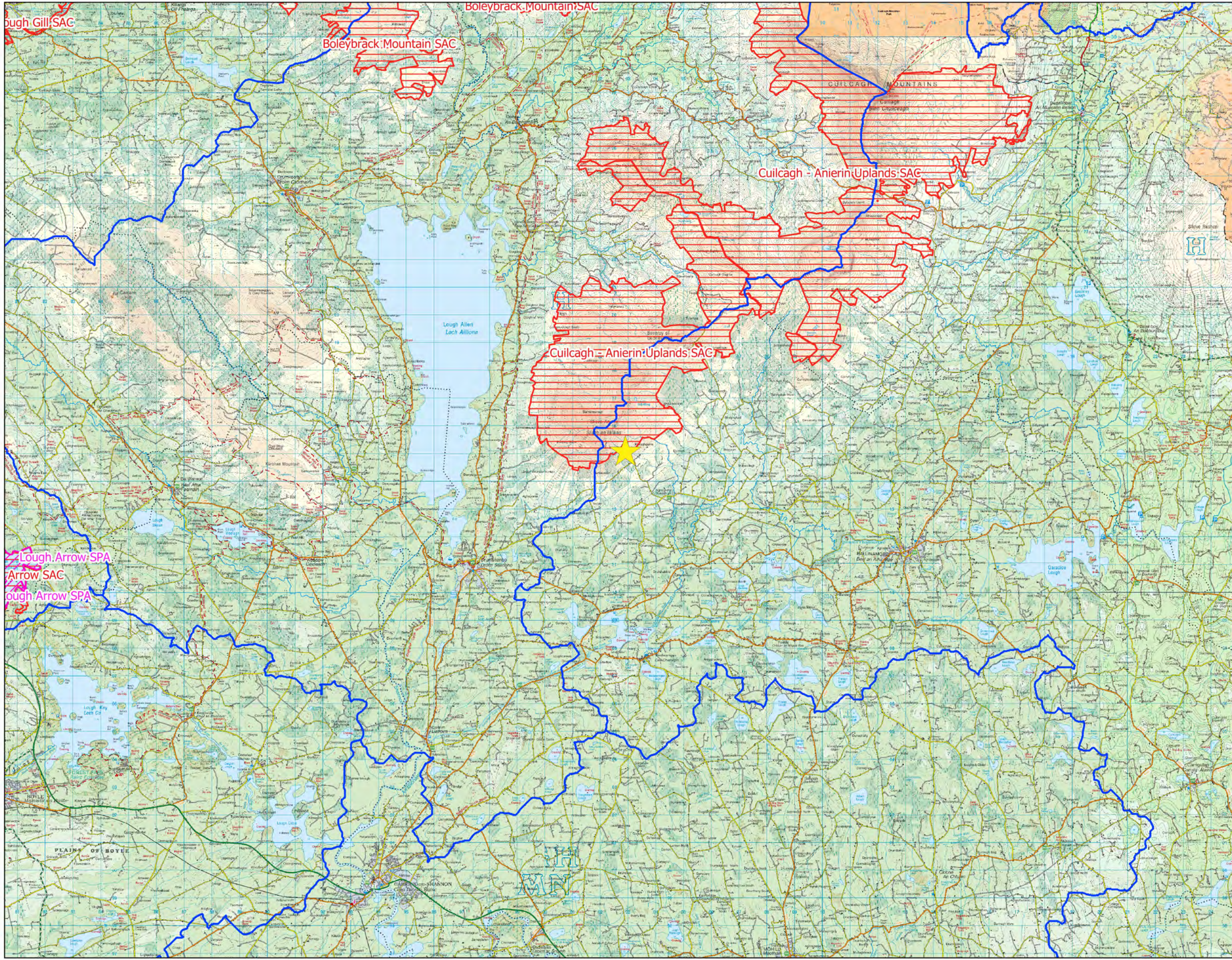
3. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES

3.1 Identification of the European Sites within the Likely Zone of Impact

The following methodology was used to establish which European Sites are within the Likely Zone of Impact of the proposed development:

- Initially the most up to date GIS spatial datasets for European designated sites and water catchments were downloaded from the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) and the EPA website (www.epa.ie) on the 23/05/2022. The datasets were utilized to identify European Sites which could feasibly be affected by the proposed development.
- All European Sites that could potentially be affected were identified using a source-pathway - receptor model. To provide context for the assessment, European Sites within a distance of 15km surrounding the development site are shown on Figure 3.1. Information on these sites according to the site-specific conservation objectives is provided in Table 3-1². Sites that were further away from the proposed development were also considered and no complete source-pathway-receptor chain for significant effect was identified for any European Site that was further than 15km from the site.
- The catchment mapping was used to establish or discount potential hydrological connectivity between the site of the proposed development and any European Sites. The hydrological catchments are also shown in Figure 3.1.
- In relation to Special Protection Areas, in the absence of any specific European or Irish guidance in relation to such sites, the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Guidance, ‘Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPA)’ (2016) was consulted. This document provides guidance in relation to the identification of connectivity between proposed development and Special Protection Areas. The guidance takes into consideration the distances species may travel beyond the boundary of their SPAs and provides information on dispersal and foraging ranges of bird species which are frequently encountered when considering plans and projects.
- Table 3.1, provides details of all relevant European Sites as identified in the preceding steps and assesses which are within the likely Zone of Impact. The assessment considers any likely direct or indirect impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on European Sites by virtue of the following criteria: size and scale, land-take, distance from the European Site or key features of the site, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operation and decommissioning were considered in this screening assessment.
- The site synopses and conservation objectives of these sites, as per the NPWS website (www.npws.ie), were consulted and reviewed at the time of preparing this report 23/05/2022.
- Where potential pathways for Significant Effect are identified, the site is included within the Likely Zone of Impact and further assessment is required.

² Office of the Planning Regulator (2021) guidance; ‘OPR Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management’; utilises the Source-Pathway-Receptor model. This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report follows this guidance as well as providing information on European sites located within 15km of the proposed development as recommended in guidance provided by DEHLG (2010).



Map Legend

- Site Location
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- WFD Hydrological Catchment Areas

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EU Designated Sites

Project Title
Mullaghgarve Trail & Carpark

Drawn By CB	Checked By RW
Project No. 220448	Drawing No. Figure 3-1
Scale 1:120000	Date 2022-05-23

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Table 3.1 Identification of designated sites within the Likely Zone of Impact

European Sites and distance from works	Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 23/05/2022	Conservation Objectives	Likely Zone of Impact Determination
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)			
<p>Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands SAC [000584]</p> <p>Part of the proposed trail is located within the boundary of the SAC.</p> <p>The proposed carpark is located 420m south of the SAC boundary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1393 Slender Green Feather-moss <i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i> • 3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) • 3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds • 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> • 4030 European dry heaths • 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths • 6230 Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)* • 7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog) • 7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs • 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)* • 8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) • 8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation 	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site, (Version 1, September 2016), were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie</p> <p>NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands SAC 000584. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.</p>	<p>There is no potential for direct effects as a result of the proposed carpark as it is located completely outside of the SAC.</p> <p>The majority of the proposed trail (975m) is located over an existing hardcore track categorised as spoil and bare ground (ED2) which is colonised by typical agricultural species.</p> <p>The existing Mass Rock Trail, as it crosses westwards over Sliabh an Iarainn, traverses an area mapped under Article 17 habitat mapping (NPWS 2019) as a mosaic of Dry Heath, Active Blanket Bog, Siliceous Scree, and Siliceous Rocky Slopes. The proposed sheep's wool track (150m) and boardwalk (20m) are proposed along an existing well-trodden and degraded track as described in Section 2.3. These works will be carried out manually and will be restricted to the existing degraded track and will be short-term in duration. Therefore, there will be no loss of adjacent Annex I habitats.</p> <p>The Mass Rock Trail is an existing trail which is used recreationally. The proposed sheep's wool track and boardwalk will encourage walkers to avoid adjacent Annex I habitats. There will be no significant increase in the usage of the area.</p>

European Sites and distance from works	Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 23/05/2022	Conservation Objectives	Likely Zone of Impact Determination
			<p>According to Map 12 of the site-specific conservation objectives, the population of Slender Green Feather-Moss for which the SAC is designated is located over 16km northeast of the proposed development. No records of this species were found within development areas during the ecological survey, therefore, there is no potential for significant effect to this species.</p> <p>The proposed trail and carpark are located downgradient of the aquatic QI habitats, therefore, there is no potential for significant effect on aquatic QIs.</p> <p>This site is not within the likely zone of impact and no further assessment is required.</p>
<p>Boleybrack Mountain SAC [002032]</p> <p>Distance: 14.6km</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds • 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> • 4030 European dry heaths • 6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) • 7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog) 	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, April 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie</p> <p>NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Boleybrack Mountain SAC 002032. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.</p>	<p>The proposed development is located outside of this SAC, therefore there is no potential for direct effects.</p> <p>The potential for indirect effect on the listed terrestrial QIs can be ruled out due to the terrestrial nature of the habitats/species, the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC, and the absence of a complete source-pathway-receptor chain for effects.</p> <p>The SAC is located within a separate hydrological catchment and ground waterbody to the development site, therefore, there is no potential for indirect effects on the aquatic QI habitat listed.</p>

European Sites and distance from works	Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 23/05/2022	Conservation Objectives	Likely Zone of Impact Determination
			This site is not within the likely zone of impact and no further assessment is required.

3.2 **Likely Cumulative Impact of the Works on European Sites, in-combination with other plans and projects**

3.2.1 **Other Plans and Projects**

The online planning system for Leitrim County Council was consulted on the 12/05/2022 in relation to the site of the proposed development. One project was identified in the last 5 years in close proximity to the site location. These include:

- › Permission for 2 no. forest bell mouth entrances onto a public road including all other associated site works (PI Ref 18204)

The following plans been reviewed and taken into consideration as part of this assessment:

- Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021
- Draft Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021

No pathway or mechanism for the proposed development to result in any significant effect on any European Site was identified when considered on its own during the assessment process and therefore there is no potential for it to contribute to any such effects when considered in-combination with any other development.

The review focused on policies and objectives that relate to European sites and biodiversity. None of the objectives reviewed had the potential to result in cumulative adverse effects on any European Site.

Review of Plans	Key Policies and Objectives directly related to European Sites and Biodiversity in the Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Impact on European Sites
<p>Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021</p>	<p><u>SAC/SPA</u></p> <p><u>Policy 76</u></p> <p>It is the policy of the Council to protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas including ‘Candidate’ and ‘Proposed’ areas.</p> <p><u>Policy 77</u></p> <p>It is the Policy of the Council to ensure that all Plans and Projects that have the potential to negatively impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, will be subject to a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA), in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and in accordance with best practice and guidance</p> <p><u>Policy 78</u></p> <p>No projects or programme giving rise to significant adverse; direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative impacts upon the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites, having regard to their qualifying interests and conservation objectives, arising from their size, scale, area or land take, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)</p> <p><u>Objective 62</u></p> <p>It is an objective of the Council to protect those sites identified as Special Areas of Conservation as well as any other sites that may be so identified during the lifetime of this plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 000623 Benbulbin, Gleniff and Glenade Complex • 000625 Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore • 001919 Glenade Lough • 001403 Aroo Mountain • 000428 Lough Melvin • 001976 Lough Gill 	<p>The Development plan was comprehensively reviewed, with particular reference to Policies and Objectives that relate to the biodiversity, protected species and designated sites.</p> <p>The proposed development has been designed in order to avoid peatland habitats, by upgrading the Mass Rock Trail along existing, degraded tracks. The upgrades in the vicinity of these habitats will be carried out manually and there will be minimal disturbance of adjacent habitats.</p> <p>There will be no loss of trees or hedgerows as a result of the development.</p> <p>No potential for negative cumulative impacts when considered in conjunction with the current proposal were identified.</p>

Review of Plans	Key Policies and Objectives directly related to European Sites and Biodiversity in the Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Impact on European Sites
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 000584 Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands • 002032 Boleybrack Mountain <p><u>Objective 65</u></p> <p>It is an objective of the Council to protect the following proposed Special Protection Areas and all others as they become proposed and designated during the lifetime of this plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 004187 Sligo/Leitrim Uplands 	
<p>Draft Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029</p>	<p>Policies</p> <p>NH POL 1 To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.</p> <p>NH POL 2 To implement Article 6(3) and where necessary Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects with the potential to impact European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s). All assessments must be in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as relevant.</p> <p>NH POL 4 To consult with relevant prescribed bodies, such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DoHLGH), and take account of any licensing requirements when undertaking, approving and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species or habitats protected by law.</p> <p>NH POL 5 To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact on plant, animal or bird species or habitats protected by law, subject to satisfactory mitigation measures.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>NH OBJ 1 To ensure that no project or programme giving rise to significant adverse, direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site(s), having regard to their qualifying interests and conservation objectives, arising from their size, scale, area or land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions</p>	<p>Within the AA Screening Report that accompanies this application, it was found that there is no potential for significant effect to Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SAC or any other European Site as a result of the development.</p> <p>There will be no negative impacts on birds, bats or any other fauna as a result of the development. There will be no significant impacts on peatland habitats as a result of upgrades to the Mass Rock Trail or the proposed carpark.</p> <p>No potential for negative cumulative impacts when considered in conjunction with the current proposal were identified.</p>

Review of Plans	Key Policies and Objectives directly related to European Sites and Biodiversity in the Zone of Influence	Assessment of Potential Impact on European Sites
	<p>(disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) 30.</p> <p>NH OBJ 2 To protect and conserve those sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) during the lifetime of this Draft Plan. The list of current SACs is contained in Table 11.1 of this Chapter.</p> <p>NH OBJ 3 To protect and conserve those sites designated as Special Protection Areas during the lifetime of this Draft Plan. There is current one SPA in Co. Leitrim which is contained in Table 11.2 of this Chapter.</p>	

3.3.2. **Conclusion of Cumulative Assessment**

The review of plans and projects that is described above did not reveal any additional potential pathways for effect on European Sites that may have arisen as a result of those plans or projects.

The Mass Rock Trail consists of an existing well-trodden and degraded trail over Sliabh an Iarainn. Annex I habitats, designated as part of Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SAC, are present in the vicinity of the trail but there will be no loss of these adjacent habitats as a result of the proposed trail upgrade. No Annex I habitats were found within the footprint of the proposed carpark. There was no evidence of Annex II species using the areas of habitat surveyed. There was no evidence of protected fauna using the proposed study area and there were no species listed as a Third Schedule Invasive Alien Species (IAS) of the European Communities Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2015) recorded within the study area.

No pathway or mechanism for the development works to result in any significant effect on any European Site, was identified when considered on its own during the assessment process and therefore, there is no potential for it to contribute to any such effects when considered in-combination with any other development.

4. **ARTICLE 6(3) APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING STATEMENT AND CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of this Screening Assessment are presented following the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

4.1 **Data Collected to Carry Out Assessment**

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

- Review of NPWS Site Synopses, Conservation Objectives for the European Sites
- Review of 2019, 2013 and 2007 EU Habitats Directive (Article 17) Reports.
- Review of OS maps and aerial photographs of the site of the proposed project.
- Review of other plans and projects within the area.
- Site visit conducted by Cillian Burke (BSc.) and Rachel Walsh on the 24th of May 2022.

4.2 **Concluding Statement**

It is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, that the works, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Site.

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