

Report by:

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For:

Mid and East Antrim Outdoor Recreation

Date:

12/08/2021

Habitat Regulations Assessment Stage 1 Screening : Opening of access to coastal path Jointure Bay, Greenisland, Belfast Lough, Co. Antrim

Contents:

BACKGROUND:
SURVEY DETAILS 2
SITE DESCRIPTION:
NATURA 2000 DESIGNATIONS:4
RISKS TO THE DESIGNATION FEATURES:
PROPOSAL SUMMARY
SCREENING
POTENTIAL IMPACT: STAGE 1: TEST OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE
PHOTOGRAPHS 18

Habitat Regulations Assessment Stage 1 Screening:

Opening of access to coastal path

Jointure Bay, Greenisland, Belfast Lough, Co. Antrim

Background:

The current proposal relates to the opening of an access point to an existing path at Jointure Bay, Greenisland, Co. Antrim on the shore of Belfast Lough.

Given the sites position adjoining a number of Natura 2000 sites and the potential for the project to result in adverse impact on the feature species of these sites, the requirement has been identified for a Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) in compliance with European Commission Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) to assess the potential for impacts upon Natura 2000 sites.

The assessment has been commissioned by Mid and East Antrim Council.

The aims of this report are:

- 1. Identification of the designation (selection) features that the proposal must be screened against.
- 2. Identification of potential risks to the specified features and of any standard environmental precautions that may be necessary irrespective of the threat to N2K designations.
- 3. Provide the HRA Screening Assessment.

Legal Framework:

E.U. Directives	
Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ('the Habitats Directive')	Provides a requirement and framework for the conservation of habitats and species identified as being of EU importance, in designated Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Article 6 sets out Appropriate Assessment tests of the predicated effects of developments likely to impact upon SACs (and SPAs). These tests now known as a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)
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NB the above evaluation procedure is still in force post-Brexit.

Survey details:

This report is based on a field survey visit which also provided information to inform the HRA. Additional information used is identified in the Screening section.

11/08/2021	Ian Enlander
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Statement of Authority: Ian Enlander BSc, MSc, DIC.

Before leaving the Civil Service, Ian was senior ornithologist at NI Environment Agency, leading on Northern Ireland's statutory ornithological site designation programme (ASSI, SPA and Ramsar). He produced the conservation objectives and related documentations for the series of SPAs in Northern Ireland.

His work included assessment and evaluation of development proposals in relation to designated sites throughout Northern Ireland including HRA and related procedures.

Ian has over 30 years of organising, co-ordinating and delivering ornithological and related terrestrial and marine habitat surveys including WeBS, BBS, breeding waders, raptors, WBBS, breeding seabirds and heronries (NI coordinator for BTO).

He has been involved as a surveyor in a number of long-term ornithological surveys on Belfast Lough including BTO Wetland Birds Surveys (WeBS) and Low Tide Surveys.

Since retiring, Ian has worked with a number of ecological consultancies carrying out ornithological surveys, mainly in relation to planning applications and other development proposals.

Statement of Objectivity: The data have been collected and presented impartially. Payment or other favour is not dependent upon any particular planning outcome, and there is no other vested or personal interest in any particular outcome, or any commercial products mentioned.

Site Description:

Setting:

The proposal is for open access to an existing path off the Shore Road. The path, which currently serves a Northern Ireland Water pumping facility, is on the west side of Jointure Bay and adjoins private gardens on the inland side. A number of these gardens have access via gates on to the path while these, and other gardens associated with properties on Island Park, overlook the shoreline and Green Island. The latter site is an important high tide roost for various waterbirds outside the breeding season. Jointure Bay and adjoining inter-tidal areas provide foraging opportunities for a number of these birds.

It is understood that the proposal will not involve any construction activities. The path length is approximately 175m.

Consideration of Natura 2000 Designations to evaluate

A 'rapid' evaluation was undertaken to determine which N2K sites to include within the formal HRA screening process. Consideration was given to N2K feature relevance/vulnerability in context of the project proposal, pathways and processes between the development and each N2K site and distance between the development area and nearest point of the N2K site boundary

Sites deemed relevant on the basis of general location and potential relevance are shown in the table below

Jurisdiction	Site type	Site - feature	Considerations	Outcome
Northern	Special Protection	Belfast Lough.	Immediately adjoining area of	Include
Ireland	Area	Non-breeding	the access point and path –	
		waterbirds	inter-tidal	
		Belfast Lough Open	From low water mark seawards	Include
		Water.	<100m from project area.	
		Non-breeding		
		waterbirds		
		East Coast	Proposed SPA which will	Include
		(Northern Ireland)	encompass Belfast Lough open	
		Marine.	Water hence same consideration	
		Non-breeding		
		waterbirds + marine		
		area used by		
		breeding Seabirds		

Natura 2000 Designations:

Selection Features and Conservation Objectives

Natura 2000 sites are a part of an international network of sites designated to protect species and habitats identified as being at risk in Europe and the Overseas Territories of current and former EU Member States. They are therefore designated for specified species or habitats which are termed the qualifying features.

Article 2 of The Habitats Directive outlines that habitats and species qualifying Features protected by the Directive must be maintained in 'favourable conservation status' within their range.

The conservation status of a Habitat Feature is regarded as 'favourable' when:

The natural range, and area it covers within that range, is 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; and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

Favourable conservation status of a Species Feature is normally achieved when:

Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long term basis as a viable component of the sites 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.

To target Favourable Conservation Status, a set of conservation objectives relating to each Selection Feature has been compiled for each Natura 2000 site.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is undertaken to determine if the proposed development or project has the potential to impact on the Favourable Conservation Status of the selection features for the sites evaluated as set out in the sites Conservation Objectives.

Proposed Natura 2000 sites.

Prior to the UK's decision to leave the EU, site selection for the Natura 2000 site series was still ongoing, especially with regard to the SPA's (Birds Directive). A series of renotifications of existing SPA's (to update and extend as necessary selection feature) together with entirely new SPAs (based on species/aspects of life cycle not previously addressed) were at various stages of implementation. The current statutory obligations towards N2K sites still applies including the decision that planned site renotifications and additional designations, should be treated as if these planned actions had been implemented. Hence the current exercise addresses the extended site features for Belfast Lough SPA as well as the proposed marine East Coast Marine SPA (which will subsume the Belfast Lough open Water SPA as well as designating an additional marine area).

N2K designations in relation to the proposed Jointure Bay project



Belfast Lough SPA (UK 9020101) and Belfast Lough Ramsar (7UK117) is a large intertidal sea lough situated at the mouth of the River Lagan on the east coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough comprises a series of sand and mudflats, shell dominated banks and artificial lagoons. The outer lough is mainly rocky shores with a number of sandy bays on the southern shore with more extensive mixed sediment intertidal areas on the northern side.

On renotification the Belfast Lough Special Protection Area boundary was unchanged. Marine areas below mean low water are not included.

The Special Protection Area boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Belfast Lough Ramsar Site.

The principal interests are the breeding colony of Common and Arctic Tern and the wintering populations of Redshanks, Bar-tailed Godwit and Black-tailed Godwit.

Renotification dated 23rd November 2015

Belfast Lough SPA Selection Feature and Objectives:

Feature	Component Objective				
Common Tern	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Sterna hirundo	Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population				
(breeding population)	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
Annex I species	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
_	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
	Distribution of the species within site				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting				
	the species				
Arctic Tern	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Sterna paradisaea	Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population				
(breeding population)	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
Annex I species	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
1	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
	Distribution of the species within site				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting				
	the species				
Bar-tailed Godwit	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Limosa lapponica	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
(non-breeding population)	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
Annex I species	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained; To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
Timex T species	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
	Distribution of the species within site				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting				
	the species				
Redshank	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Tringa totanus	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
(non-breeding population)	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
Regularly occurring	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
migratory species	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
	Distribution of the species within site				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting				
	the species				
Black-tailed Godwit	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Limosa limosa	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
(non-breeding population)	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
Regularly occurring	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
migratory species	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
	Distribution of the species within site				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting				

	the species
Habitat Extent*	To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or potentially usable by Feature bird species subject to natural processes
Habitat Extent*	Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes
Roost sites*	Maintain or enhance sites utilised as roosts

^{*} Non feature SPA Objectives

For further information see www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/special-protection-area-belfast-lough

NB Features listed above are taken from the renotification documentation for Belfast Lough SPA – the NIEA Conservation Objectives have not been updated to reflect the additional selection features www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/belfast-lough-spa-citation-documents-map.pdf

Belfast Lough Open Water SPA (UK9020290) comprises the marine area below the mean low water mark. Seawards it extends to a notional boundary between the eastern limits on the north and south shores of the Outer Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest at Kilroot and Horse Rock respectively. The boundary towards the head of the lough is a notional line between Greencastle on northern shore and Holywood Bank on the southern shore. Water depths within the site are generally between 1m and 10m. Shallow waters, less than 5m in depth, dominate the area with deeper waters confined to the central area of the lough, east of a line between Greenisland and Cultra.

The principal interest is the non-breeding population of Great Crested Grebe.

Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Selection Feature and Objectives:

Feature	Component Objective		
Great Crested Grebe	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species		
Podiceps crislatus	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying		
(non-breeding population)	species		
Regularly occurring	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;		
migratory species	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and		
	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:		
	Population of the species as a viable component of the site		
	Distribution of the species within site		
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species		
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting		
	the species		
Habitat Extent*	To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or		
	potentially usable by Feature bird species subject to natural processes		
Habitat Extent*	Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes		

^{*} Non feature SPA Objectives

For further information see www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/special-protection-area-belfast-lough-open-water

The East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine proposed Special Protection Area (not yet classified) includes coastal and near shore waters from Ringfad near Carnlough, Co. Antrim in the north, the marine area of Larne Lough, the marine area of Belfast Lough, waters around the Copleand Islands and offshore of the Ards Peninsula to Cloghan Head, near Ardglass in the south.

The proposed SPA covers a diverse range of seabed habitats, from extensive coastal fringing reefs of various lithologies to the fine silt of inner Belfast Lough.

To the north of Belfast Lough, fringing reef is notable, with substantial areas of coarse sediments and boulders and cobbles offshore from Islandmagee. Further north, towards Ballygally and Carnlough, the glacial till dominates the seabed but also with important areas harbour maerl, a coralline algae (mostly Phymatolithon calcareum), known for its associated high biodiversity and for acting as a scallop nursery ground. Rippled sands and gravels are also notable between the relic drowned drumlins that are present off much of the 'Glens of Antrim' coastline. Bedrock outcrops with near vertical sides are found at the Maidens; these reefs and the surrounding sand banks form part of the designated Maidens SAC.

Within Belfast Lough muds grade into muddy sands toward the outer Lough, with extensive areas of cobbles and shell debris overlying the muddy sand. Part of the muddy sand in the outer Lough is bioturbated by Dublin Bay prawn (Nephrops norvegicus), and also harbour the Seapen Virgularia mirabilis. Topographically complex reef areas surround the Copeland Islands.

To the south of Belfast Lough, the seabed off the Ards Peninsula is dominated by stony reef and mixed sands and gravels (often with a notable silt content). The gravelly sands support commercially harvestable seed mussel in geographically limited areas (affected by local hydrography), and further offshore support a scallop fishery (Pecten maximus). Mobile bedforms, such as extensive sand waves and banks, are found at Rigg Bank and extending south of the bank.

Offshore of Belfast Lough and off the Maidens Islands the seabed within the site reaches a depth of 125m.

The boundary adjoins the following existing Special Protection Areas –

- Larne Lough SPA
- Belfast Lough SPA
- Outer Ards SPA
- Copeland Islands SPA
- Strangford Lough SPA

This site also subsumes the existing Belfast Lough Open Water SPA

The landward boundary for this marine area is the mean low water mark, medium tide

The principal interests are the marine area used by non-breeding populations of Red-throated Diver and Eider Duck, rafting Manx Shearwater involving breeding birds originating from the colony at Copeland Islands SPA and foraging Sandwich, Common and Arctic Tern originating from adjoining tern colonies in Larne Lough, Belfast Lough, the Outer Ards and Strangford Lough.

East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine proposed Special Protection Area Selection Feature and Objectives:

Feature	Component Objective			
Great Crested	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species			
Grebe	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species			
Podiceps	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;			
crislatus	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and			
(non-breeding	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:			
population)	Population of the species as a viable component of the site			
Regularly	Distribution of the species within site			

occurring	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
migratory	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species				
species	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitute supporting the species				
Red-throated	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Diver	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
Gavia stellata	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
(non-breeding	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
population)	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
Annex I species	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
7 Hillex 1 species	Distribution of the species within site				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species				
Eider Duck	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Somateria	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
mollissima	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
(non-breeding	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
population)	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
Regularly	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
occurring	Distribution of the species within site				
migratory	Distribution of the species within site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
species	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species				
Sandwich Tern	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Thalasseus	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
sandvicensis	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
(breeding	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
population)	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
Annex I species	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
7 Hillex 1 species	 Distribution of the species within site 				
	 Distribution of the species within site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species 				
Common Tern	• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Sterna hirundo	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
(breeding	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
population)	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
Annex I species	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
Ailliex I species	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
	Distribution of the species within site Distribution and automated behinds appropriate the appropriate the species.				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
A madin TD	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species The support of the support of the supporting the species. The support of the support				
Arctic Tern	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Sterna	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
paradisaea	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
(breeding	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
population)	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
Annex I species	Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species wide site.				
	Distribution of the species within site Distribution and automated behinds appropriate the appropriate the species.				
	Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species				
14	Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species The support of the support of the supporting the species. The support of the support				
Manx	To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species				
Shearwater	To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species				
Puffinus	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;				
puffinus	To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and				
(breeding	To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:				
population)	Population of the species as a viable component of the site				
Regularly	Distribution of the species within site				

occurring migratory species	 Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species 				
Habitat Extent*	To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or potentially				
	usable by Feature bird species subject to natural processes				
Habitat Extent*	Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes				

^{*} Non feature SPA Objectives

For further information see www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/east-coast-northern-ireland-marine-special-protection-area-consultation

Risks to the designation features:

Proposal Summary

The proposal is for open access to an existing path off the Shore Road. The path, which currently serves a Northern Ireland Water pumping facility, is on the west side of Jointure Bay and adjoins private gardens on the inland side. A number of these gardens have access via gates on to the path while these, and other gardens associated with properties on Island Park, overlook the shoreline and Green Island.

It is understood that the proposal will not involve any construction activities. The path length is approximately 175m.



Measures within the proposal that will protect the environment

As the project is limited to provision of access with no planned construction or similar activities, no actions have been specified with regard to the statutory sites or the wider environment.

Potential Pathways for Impacts upon Feature Habitats or Species

The path comes within approximately 10m of the nearest designated site (Belfast Lough SPA). However with no construction activities planned or other alterations to the existing path there is no risk of direct impacts arising.

People using the path or accessing the beach/inter-tidal areas may be an issue in terms of disturbance of foraging birds (inter-tidal area most important outside the breeding season) and roosting birds (Green Island is a very important high tide roost for a range of waterbirds again outside the breeding season). The area is also regularly used by large numbers of Eider Duck undergoing their post-breeding moult.

The path is separated from the beach and inter-tidal areas in Jointure Bay by a section of 'informal' rock armouring (see photographs) and by the small unnamed stream. This may act as a deterrent to people accessing the beach. There is an existing 'rough' path leading from the project path. This is partially underwater at high tide making disturbance of roosting birds on Green Island unlikely.

It should be noted that there are existing informal access routes into the area. At low tide, the area can be reached from the Loughshore (west) area. Similarly, access via the Trooperslane/Tory Town area allows walkers to access the area via beach/ground in front of Seapark House.

Additional (non-statutory) ornithological considerations

It is understood that NIEA raised concerns about potential for impacts on breeding birds on Green Island.

The survey date is outside any recognised period for assessment of breeding birds (British Trust for Ornithology – BBS guidance¹). A combination of personal familiarity with the site together with an assessment undertaken on the survey date highlighted the limited potential for breeding birds to use Green Island. A significant part of the island is within the inter-tidal zone leaving a limited area exposed at high tide. This is dominated by rank grasses, reflecting the very high nitrogen inputs from roosting birds.

Only 2 potentially breeding species were noted during the survey, Rock Pipit and Pied Wagtail. The latter included a family party which may have bred locally. There was plenty of suitable nesting habitat for Rock Pipit as well so they may also have bred. Given existing access to the area together with tidal limitations, it is unlikely that the current project will alter the potential for these species to breed on Green Island. Both species are tolerant of human presence.

¹ https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/bbs/research-conservation/methodology

Screening

Assessment of significance may be based on a number of factors, as outlined in EC (2001). Such as:

- the character and perceived value of the affected environment;
- the magnitude, spatial extent and duration of the anticipated change;
- the resilience of the environment to cope with change; and
- confidence in the accuracy of predictions of change.

An effect is considered significant if an activity seriously disrupts the lifecycle (breeding, feeding, migration or resting behaviour) of an ecologically meaningful proportion of the population of the species.

In summary, any element of a plan or project that has the potential to affect the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, including its structure and function, should be considered significant (EC, 2006).

Potential impact: Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance

Natura 2000 sites at potential risk:

Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar, Belfast Lough Open Water Spa and East Coast (Norrthern Ireland) Marine proposed SPA

Summary Description of the proposal:

Size and scale;

The project does not involve any construction activity, being limited to provision of access to an existing short section (approx. 175m) of coastal path.

Land-take;

No development involved - there is no encroachment into any N2K site.

• Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;

At its closest, the project is some 10m (straight line distance) from the boundary of the Belfast Lough SPA. See below for evaluation against individual feature species.

Resource requirements (water abstraction etc);

None

None					
Transportation requirements;					
None.					
Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc;					
Not applicable.					
Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to management of the site for conserva of N2K features?	tion				
No					
Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a result of*:	or				
Habitat loss;					
None.					
Reduction of habitat area;					
None.					
Disturbance;					
The project is likely to result in small numbers of people using the path – note exist access exists to area. The area would be most vulnerable to disturbance (greatest poter impact) outside the breeding season i.e. in autumn and winter when feature species the area mainly for roosting (on Green Island) at high tide and for foraging (Jointure and adjoining areas) on inter-tidal habitats as the tide permits.	ntial use				
Green Island is sufficiently distant to minimise any significant disturbance at high due to the paths position.	tide				
Density of foraging waterbirds is relatively low in Jointure Bay (this is not an import foraging area for feature species) with areas for birds to relocate to as necessary. feature species regularly present here include Redshank and Bar-tailed Godwit.					

Moulting Eider Duck flocks are susceptible to disturbance but again the relative distance from the path together with the large area used by the flocks (occurring anywhere from

Emission (disposal to land, water or air);

Excavation requirements;

None.

Carrickfergus to Macedon Point on the north shore and Crawfordsburn to Holywood on the southern shore) means their use of the Green Island area is not consistent.

Great Crested Grebe utilise offshore marine areas for foraging and loafing.

Of the seabird species (Red-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater and Tern species) the former 2 species use offshore marine areas for foraging and rafting.

Terns will use inshore waters but the East Coast Marine pSPA should be viewed as a resource area i.e. most terns from adjoining breeding colonies are predicted to forage within the site.

Prey distribution is not associated with any particular area within the proposed marine area and is not fixed in time. As such the terns will use this as an 'area of search' opportunistically taking prey (principally sand eel species).

Foraging Terns are highly mobile such that any activity which causes them disturbance (which tends to be highly localised e.g. a boat moving through) are easily avoided with birds relocating to another suitable area or waiting for the disturbance to pass and resume foraging.

•	Habitat 6	or spe	ecies fr	agment	ation:

None

Reduction in species density;

None.

• Changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. water quality, climate change).

None

Summary assessment of Project Impacts against individual designated features

Site	Feature	Comment	Projected Impact
Belfast Lough SPA	Common Tern	Refers to breeding site – Belfast	No significant effect
		Harbour area	
	Arctic Tern	Refers to breeding site – Belfast	No significant effect
		Harbour area	
	Bar-tailed Godwit		No significant effect
	Redshank		No significant effect
	Black-tailed Godwit	Limited use of this section of Belfast Lough for foraging or roosting.	No significant effect
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	Great Crested Grebe	Using offshore marine area	No significant effect
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine proposed Special Protection Area	Great Crested Grebe	Using offshore marine area	No significant effect
	Red-throated Diver	Using offshore marine area	No significant effect
	Eider Duck		No significant effect
	Sandwich Tern	Highly mobile and opportunistic foraging strategy. Adapted to short-term disturbances.	No significant effect
	Common Tern	Highly mobile and opportunistic foraging strategy. Adapted to short-term disturbances.	No significant effect
	Arctic Tern	Highly mobile and opportunistic foraging strategy. Adapted to short-term disturbances.	No significant effect
	Manx Shearwater	Using offshore marine area	No significant effect

Only standard environmental protection measures built in to the proposal have been considered at this stage. No specific impact mitigation measures will be required.

Describe any potential effects on the Natura 2 as a whole in terms of: interference with the k relationships that define the structure or function the site	Effect considered significant/non- significant: Finding of No significant effects Matrix			
None	No significant effect			
Provide details of any other projects or plans together with the project or plan being assess (directly or indirectly) affect the site.	Provide details of any likely in- combination effects and quantify their significance -			
It is not anticipated that the Greenisland project will have any impact on any Natura 2000 site. Given there will be no impact, then it follows that there will be no contribution to cumulative impacts.		No significant effec	t on N2K Features.	
		•		
Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effe	be significant?			
Alone?		Yes□ No⊠		
In-combination with other projects of plans?		Yes□ No⊠		
List of Agencies Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address.	None			
Above consultee response.	NA			
Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on an N2K site?	Yes⊡ No⊠			
IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT				

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?	lan Enlander
Sources of data	Site visit: 11 th August 2021
	Information provided by MEA
	BTO website
	NIEA website
	JNCC website
Level of assessment completed	Stage 1 – Screening

Additional References

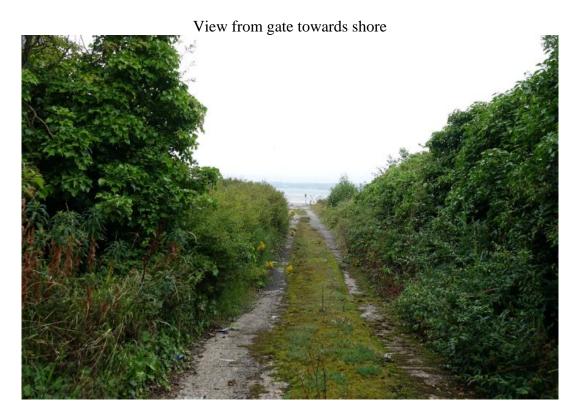
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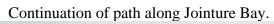
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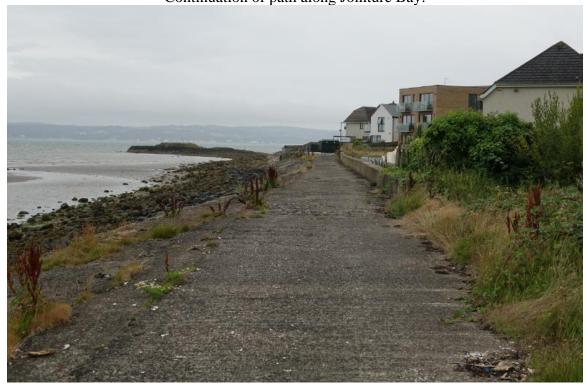
Photographs











Shoreline below path towards Green Island







Green Island

