Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe
Galway City Council

Proposed Footbridge at Wolfe Tone Bridge, Co. Galway

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

MARCH 2021

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

1.1 BACKGROUND

Ryan Hanley was commissioned by Galway City Council to prepare a Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for the proposed pedestrian footbridge at Wolfe Tone Bridge, Co. Galway.

The works will consist of the construction of a pedestrian footbridge on the southern side (seaward facing) of Wolfe Tone Bridge located on Father Griffin Road in Galway City. The proposed pedestrian bridge will be 2.0m wide and will consist of steel support structures on the existing piers and abutments of Wolfe Tone Bridge. The footbridge on the northern side of the bridge was previously constructed in 2004 with the new footbridge following a similar design.

The purpose of the AA screening is to determine the potential adverse effects, if any, that the proposed project may have, alone or in combination with other plans or projects on European Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA), within the potential zone of influence of the works.

This report constitutes Appropriate Assessment Screening for the proposed upgrade works to the proposed footbridge at Wolfe Tone Bridge, Co. Galway in accordance with Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

1.2 THE REQUIREMENT FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The requirement for Appropriate Assessment is set out in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in Article 6 (3) which states:

> *"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives."*

The Habitats Directive is transposed in Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations) which consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010.

A key protection mechanism in the 2011 Regulations is the requirement, under regulation 42, for all public authorities to conduct a screening for Appropriate Assessment and, if necessary, an Appropriate Assessment on any plan or project for which it receives an application for consent, or which the local authority itself wishes to undertake or adopt. This obligation derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (NPWS, 2020).

1.3 EUROPEAN SITES

There are two types of EU site designation, the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Special Protection Area (SPA). SACs are designated for the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats of European importance and SPAs for the conservation of bird species and habitats of European importance. These sites form part of *"Natura 2000"* a network of protected areas throughout the European Union.

Annex I of the Habitats Directive lists certain habitats that must be given protection. Certain habitats are deemed 'priority' and have greater protection. Irish habitats include raised bogs, active blanket bogs,

turloughs, heaths, lakes and rivers. Annex II of the Directive lists species whose habitats must be protected and includes Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Otter, Salmon and White-clawed Crayfish.

The Birds Directive aims to protect all wild bird species naturally occurring within the European Union. Emphasis is placed on the protection of habitats for migratory and endangered species. Endangered species within the European Union are listed under Annex I of the Birds Directive. Member states must designate SPA's for the survival of Annex I species and for all migratory birds.

1.4 THE AIM OF THIS REPORT

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) has been prepared in accordance with current guidance and provides the information required in order to establish whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant adverse effects on European sites in the context of their conservation objectives and specifically on the habitats and species for which they have been designated.

By undertaking the Screening for AA in a step-by-step manner in relation to the habitats and species of the European Sites, this report seeks to inform the Stage 1 Screening for AA process pursuant to Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive.

2 THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

2.1 GUIDANCE

Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) defines the requirement for Appropriate Assessment of certain plans and projects. In order to inform the requirements of this Screening Report the following guidance documents have been referred to:

- DoEHLG Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- DoEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environmental Heritage and Local Government.
- European Commission (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2000) Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.
- European Commission (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- European Commission (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/49/EEC; clarification of the concepts of: Alternative solutions, Imperative reasons of overriding public interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No.477 of 2011).

2.2 STAGES OF ARTICLE 6 ASSESSMENT

The European Commission's guidance promotes a staged process, as set out below, the need for each being dependent upon the outcomes of the preceding stage.

(1) Screening

(2) Appropriate Assessment

(3) Assessment of Alternative Solutions

(4) Assessment where no alternative solutions remain and where adverse impacts remain.

The final stage is the Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest (IROPI test) requirement for compensatory measures.

Within this staged process a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation, and compensatory measures is promoted by the Habitats Directive.

Stage 1 of the process is intended to identify whether the project is 'likely to have a significant effect' upon a European site, referred to as 'Screening for Appropriate Assessment'.

If the screening process identifies effects to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening

is undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided though the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the altered plan or project.

Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2010 states that; "the competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of the proposed development is not required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European site."

Stage 2 of the process considers any potential impacts in greater detail including whether further mitigation measures are required. If an adverse impact upon the site's integrity cannot be ruled out then Stage 3 will need to be undertaken to assess whether alternative solutions exist. If no alternatives exist that have a lesser effect upon the European Site/s in question, the project can only be implemented if there are 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest', as detailed in Article 6(4). In essence, the assessment at Stage 1 will determine whether further stages of the process are required.

This report includes the testing required under Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

2.3 REPORT FORMAT

In complying with the obligations under Article 6(3) and to be consistent with the Guidance for Planning Authorities, this report has been structured as follows:

- Description of the Plan/Project;
- Identification of European sites, and the associated Conservation Objectives, which may potentially be affected;
- Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts likely to result from the Plan/Project;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above; and
- Exclusion of site from further Stage 2 assessment where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The proposed footbridge at Wolfe Tone Bridge is located within Galway City Centre in a predominantly urban environment consisting of continuous and discontinuous artificial surfaces (Figure 3.1). Father Griffin Road traverses over Wolfe Tone Bridge which crosses the River Corrib and Corrib Estuary. The Spanish Parade and Jurys Inn Hotel are located on the eastern bank. To the west, lies Eglinton Canal, the Claddagh Basin, fisheries tower and the New Ireland Building consisting of both business offices and residential apartments. Small regions of treelines are located on the northern banks of the River Corrib, with a pedestrian walkway along the length of the River Corrib following down from the Salmon Weir Bridge.

Waterbodies present within the vicinity of the works include the River Corrib and Corrib Estuary, which the bridge crosses. Both the River Corrib and Corrib Estuary form part of the Lough Corrib SAC and Galway Bay Complex SAC respectively. The Claddagh Basin is located c. 25m southwest and Eglinton Canal located c. 63m west, with associated streams and rivers feeding out of the Canal and River Corrib namely Mederia River (c. 184m NW), Parkavara River (c. 208m NW), Convent River (c. 200m north) and Gaol River (c. 268m north). Galway Commercial Docks are located c. 234m east.

Wolfe Tone Bridge traverses through a 1km Grid Square of the Biodiversity Ireland Database: M2924. Within this grid square the invasive species Canadian Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*), Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*) and European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) have been recorded. Annex I bird species Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Little Gull (*Larus minutus*), Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) and Great Northern Diver (*Gavia immer*) have also been recorded within this grid square.

NPWS Special Conservation Interest (SCI) habitat data (SSCO data; NPWS maps and data, 2020) illustrates regions of the Corrib Estuary south of Wolfe Tone Bridge supports tidal mudflats and sandflats, marine community types, harbour seal habitats and otter habitat.

Figure 3.1 below depicts aerial imagery of the proposed works.

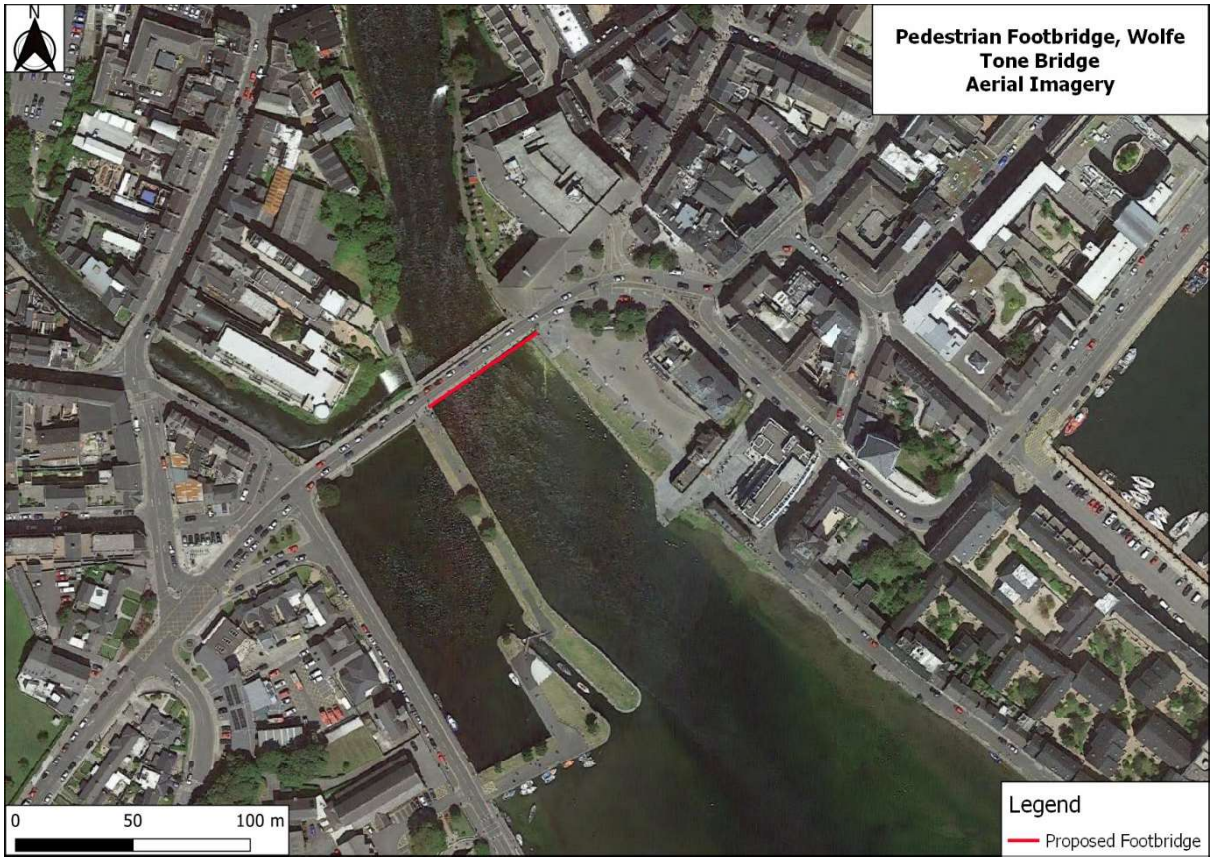

Figure 3.1 - Map of the receiving environment

Figure 3.2 below depicts watercourses in the vicinity of the proposed works.

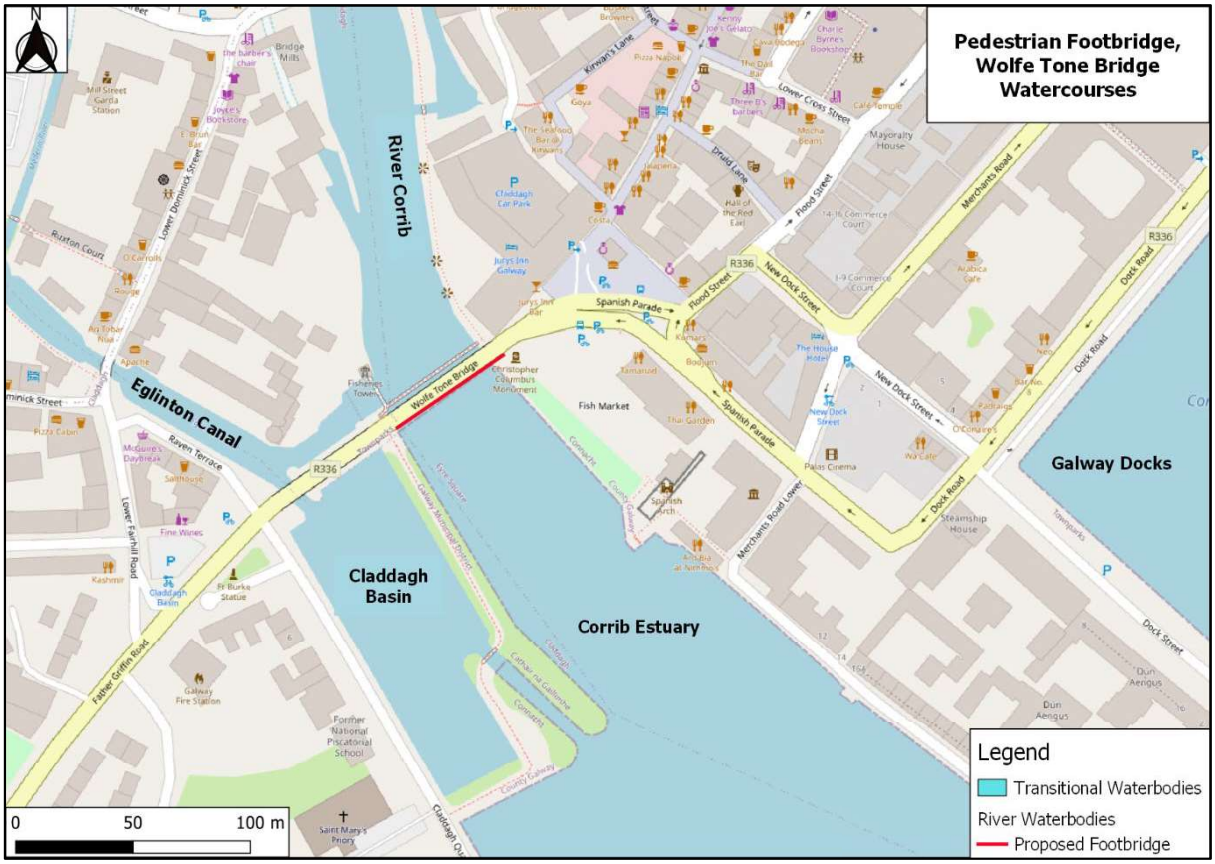

Figure 3.2 – Watercourses in proximity to the proposed works

3.2 PROPOSED DESIGN

The proposed pedestrian footbridge will be located on the southern side (seaward facing) of Wolfe Tone Bridge. The proposed design will consist of a 2m wide aluminium perforated deck, 1.25m high stainless-steel parapet with LED deck lighting on the handrail; the steelwork structure will be galvanised and painted silver (Figure 3.3 to 3.5).

The steelwork supports will be connected to the existing piers and abutments of Wolfe Tone Bridge, tied back through the existing parapet and deck slab and bolted to the existing structure between concrete beams under the deck slab. The steelwork will be further supported and reinforced with concrete, which will be pumped into the space between the steelwork and existing piers. The concrete will be placed through cored holes from the bridge deck into a sealed formwork.

Existing services on the western and eastern banks which will be relocated including a streetlight, mini and micro pillars and bins.

The proposed footbridge will cross over an existing concrete stairway currently in place on the eastern bank, adjacent to Spanish Parade.

It is envisioned that the duration of the construction works will be approximately 6-months in length. A site compound will be established at a minimum of 8m from any watercourses with spill kits readily available nearby. Any liquids which may be stored at the compound area such as fuels, oils, hydraulic fluids, will be done so on an impervious bunded area. Any materials produced on site will be appropriately transferred off site for disposal. The works footprint will not extend beyond the existing Wolfe Tone Bridge and will not extend into the River Corrib and Corrib Estuary.

There is potential for the use of scaffolding during the construction phase of the works which will either be suspended from Wolfe Tone Bridge or be supported on the riverbed below. If scaffolding is used instream, it will take place at three locations: supported on the eastern bank and at the two existing abutments. The use of instream scaffolding, if utilised, will be conducted for a period of 2 weeks at each location, equating to a total of 6 weeks. At each point, it is estimated that the scaffolding will consists of 12 legs in the river bed, of which each are 50mm in diameter, with a level pad approximately 100mm x 100mm to prevent sinking into the riverbed substrate beneath.

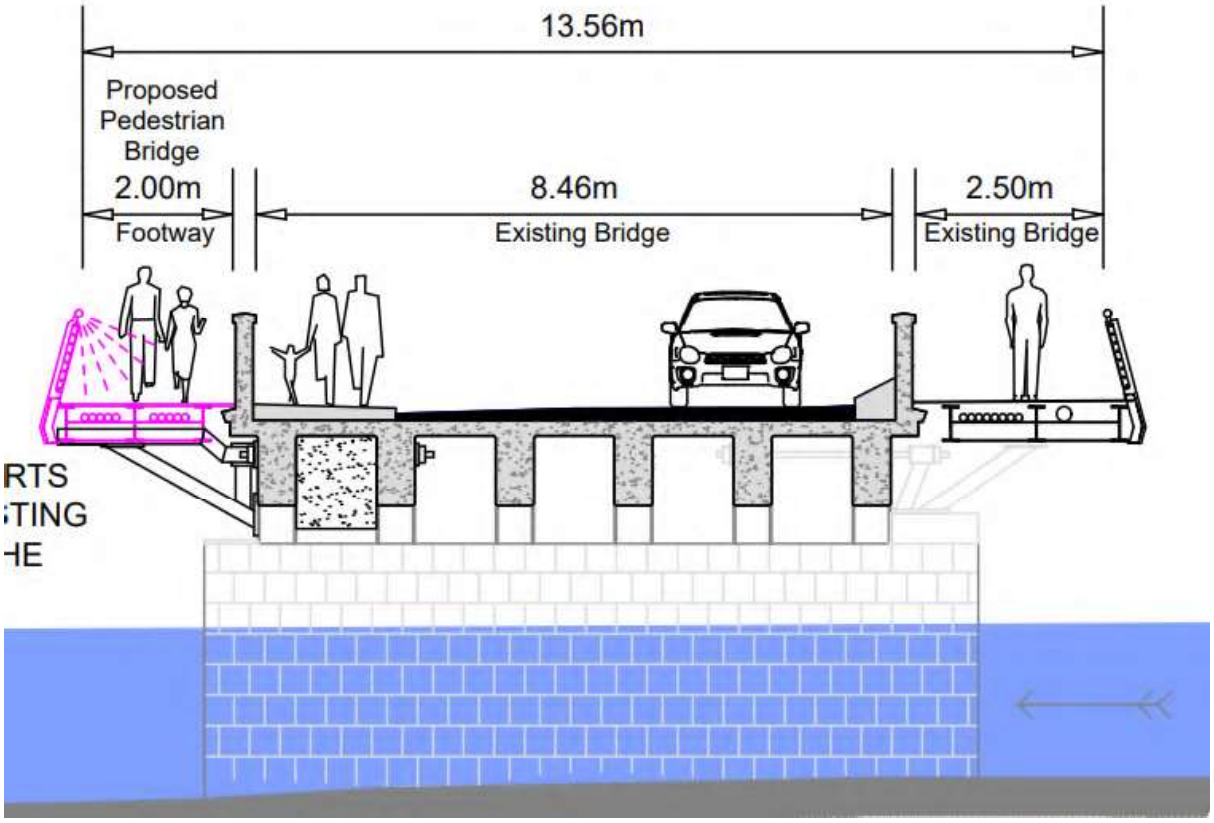

Figure 3.3 – Proposed Footbridge Design

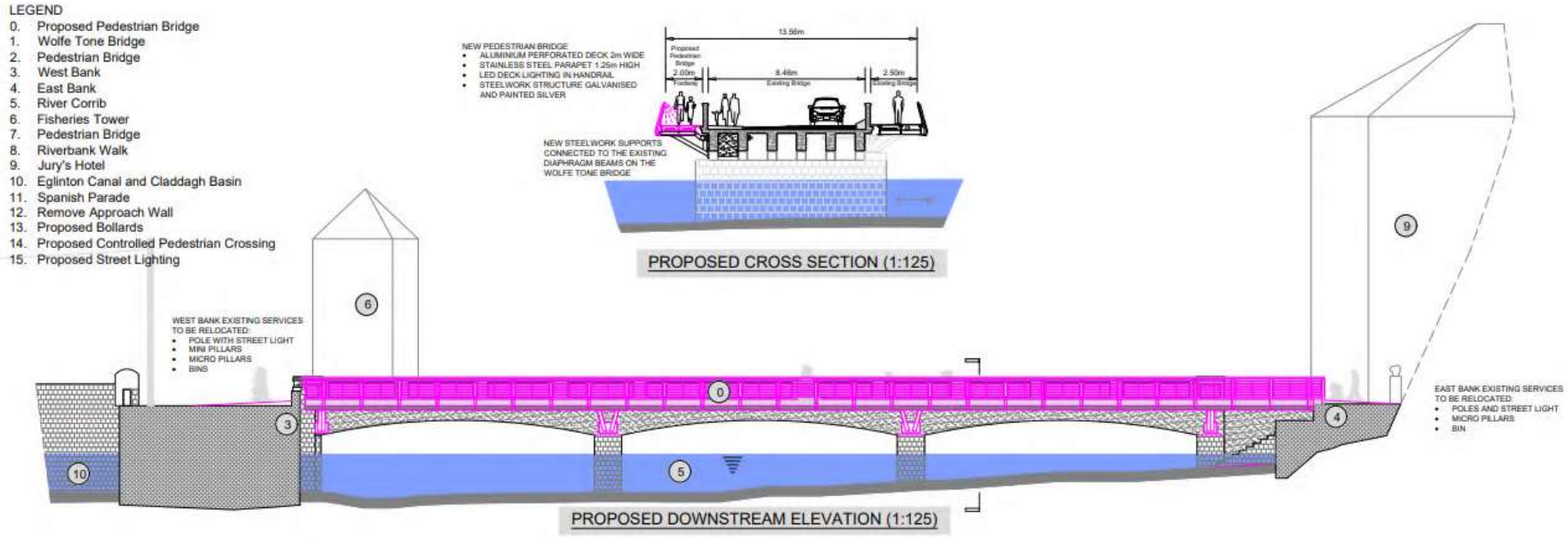

Figure 3.4 – Proposed Footbridge Design and Wolfe Tone Bridge

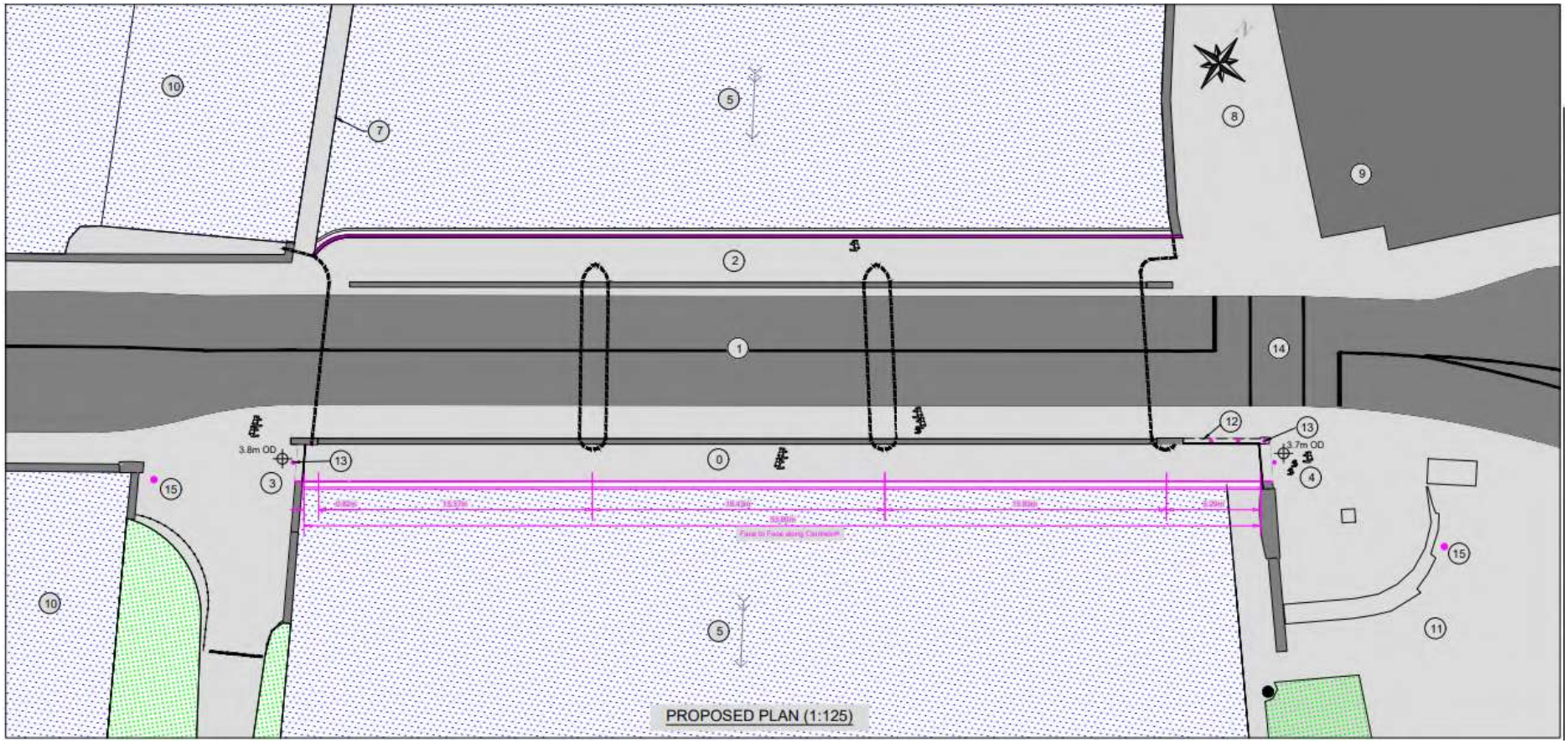

Figure 3.5 – Proposed Footbridge Design (pink).

4 EUROPEAN SITES

4.1 DESIGNATED SITES IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT

Section 3.2.3 of the Guidance for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2010) states a screening assessment should include any European site within or adjacent to the project area and any European site within the likely zone of impact of the project. A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans (derived from UK guidance; (Scott Wilson *et al.*, 2006)). For projects, the Guidance states this distance could be much less than 15km and in some cases less than 100m (DoEHLG, 2010), 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.

Given the size, scale and nature of this project and the proposed construction methodology it is considered for the purpose of this screening exercise that the likely zone of impact is the zone immediately around the construction site and any connected sites downstream of the works, where distances would be dependent on the qualifying interests of the site. European sites within 15km of the works have also been reviewed. Figure 4.1 displays European sites within a 15km buffer zone of the proposed works.

Each European site was assessed to determine potential interactions with the proposed rehabilitation works (Table 4.1). Any connectivity (e.g., hydrological or ecological linkage) with other sites not within the 15km radius was also considered.

Table 4.1 below details European sites within 15km of the proposed rehabilitation works and whether a potential interaction has been identified.

Table 4.1 European sites within 15km of the proposed development and potential for interaction with the proposed works.

European Site Name	Site Code	Distance from Works	Potential Interaction
Galway Bay Complex SAC	000268	Adjacent/beneath bridge	Yes, owing to this European site being within the boundary of the works area
Lough Corrib SAC	000297	6m north	No, as this site is located upstream of the proposed works. However, migrating fish species of Salmon and Sea Lamprey may be impacted and thus will be considered further
Inner Galway Bay SPA	004031	570m south	No, owing to the distance and lack of ecological connectivity interactions are not likely
Lough Corrib SPA	004042	3.7km north	No, owing to distance/lack of hydrological or other connectivity interactions are not likely

Cregganna Marsh SPA	004142	8.3km south-east	No, owing to distance/lack of hydrological or other connectivity interactions are not likely
Lough Fingall Complex SAC	000606	13.5km south-east	No, owing to distance/lack of hydrological or other connectivity interactions are not likely
East Burren Complex SAC	001926	13.5km south	No, owing to distance/lack of hydrological or other connectivity interactions are not likely
Connemara Bog Complex SAC	002034	13.9km west	No, owing to distance/lack of hydrological or other connectivity interactions are not likely
Ross Lake and Woods SAC	001312	14.2km northwest	No, owing to distance/lack of hydrological or other connectivity interactions are not likely

As evident in Table 4.1 above, there is potential for interaction to occur between the proposed works and Galway Bay Complex SAC, with potential for interaction to arise on migratory fish species associated with Lough Corrib SAC.

Due to the nature of the proposed works taking place above a waterbody, the River Corrib and Corrib Estuary, there is potential for interaction to occur from the construction phase of the works primarily relating to the potential for effect on water quality, disturbance of species due to noise and vibration and disturbance to the riverbed during the deployment and removal of scaffolding instream, if utilised.

For this reason, the potential for adverse effects on Galway Bay Complex SAC and Lough Corrib SAC are considered further in terms of their Conservations Objectives and Qualifying and/or Special Conservation Interests. Due to the distance at which all other European sites are located, as listed in Table 4.1, there is no potential for interaction to occur and thus these sites are screened out and not assessed further.

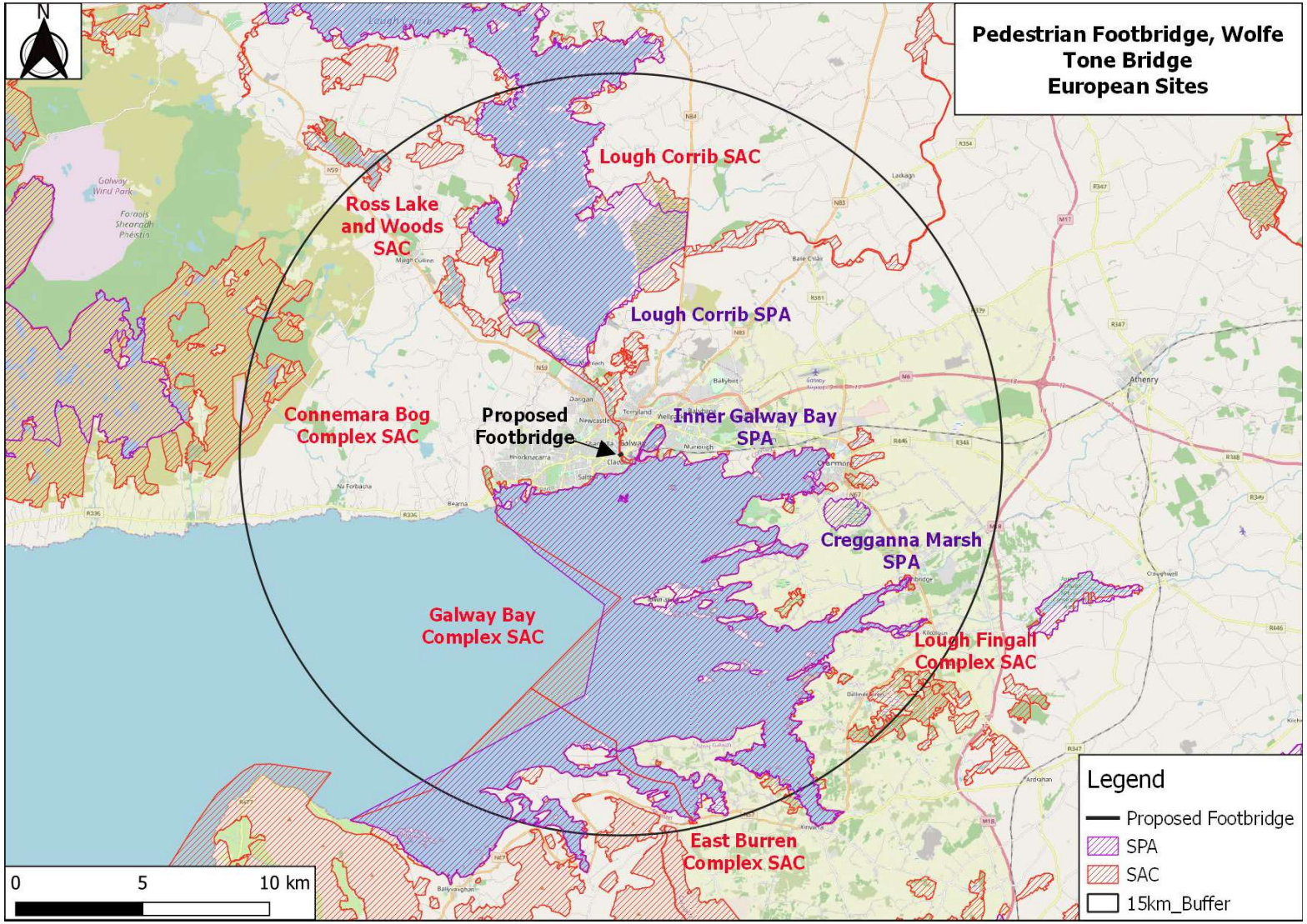

Figure 4.1 - Designated Site Location

Galway Bay Complex SAC

Galway Bay Complex SAC is located adjacent to Wolfe Tone Bridge and thus directly beneath the proposed footbridge location. Galway Bay Complex SAC comprises the inner, shallow part of a large bay which is partially sheltered by the Aran Islands. A diverse range of marine, coastal and terrestrial habitats exist within this SAC, including several listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, making the area of high scientific importance.

The Qualifying Interests for Galway Bay Complex include (* indicates priority habitat):

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140];
- Coastal lagoons [1150] *;
- Large shallow inlets and bays [1160];
- Reefs [1170];
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220];
- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230];
- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310];
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330];
- Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410];
- Turloughs [3180] *;
- Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130];
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites) [6210];
- Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae* [7210];
- Alkaline fens [7230];
- Limestone pavements [8240];
- Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355]; and
- Harbour Seal (*Phoca vituline)* [1365].

The Conservation Objective at Galway Bay Complex SAC is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I/II habitats and species for which Galway Bay Complex SAC has been selected (as detailed above).

A review of NPWS Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) data (SSCO data; NPWS maps and data, 2020) indicates that the estuary area close to (c. 9m) the site of the proposed works supports the Special Conservation Interest habitat and species: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Otter (*Lutra lutra*) habitat and Harbour seal (*Phoca vituline*).

Lough Corrib SAC

Lough Corrib SAC is located c. 6m upstream from the proposed footbridge location. Lough Corrib is situated to the north of Galway city and is the second largest lake in Ireland, with an area of approximately 18,240 ha (the entire site is 20,556 ha).

The Qualifying Interests for Galway Bay Complex include (* indicates priority habitat):

- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*) [3110];
- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea* [3130];
- Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140];
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation [3260];
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites) [6210];
- Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) [6410];
- Active raised bogs [7110] *;
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120];
- Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150];
- Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae* [7210];
- Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*) [7220] *;
- Alkaline fens [7230];
- Limestone pavements [8240] *;
- Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0];
- Bog woodland [91D0] *;
- Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera)* [1029];
- White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes)* [1092];
- Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus)* [1095];
- Brook Lamprey *(Lampetra planeri*) [1096];
- Salmon (*Salmo salar)* [1106];
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros)* [1303];
- Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355];
- Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis)* [1833]; and
- Slender Green feather-moss *(Hamatocaulis vernicosus)* [6216].

The Conservation Objective at Lough Corrib SAC is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (as detailed above).

As this European site is located upstream from the proposed works area, potential for interaction to arise on the above Qualifying Interests is not likely. However, fish species of Salmon (*Salmo salar)* and Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus)* will migrate upstream for breeding purposes and thus their movement may be impeded by the proposed works, particularly if scaffolding is deployed instream.

An evaluation of the potential for impacts to arise, particularly owing to the use of instream scaffolding within the riverbed, on the Galway Bay Complex SAC, and that of the two fish species associated with Lough Corrib SAC, will be assessed further in Section 5 below.

5 EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON EUROPEAN SITES

In order to determine whether the project is likely to have a significant impact, the project and its potential impacts are assessed and followed by a determination if the effect identified could be significant.

If the effects of a proposal are deemed to be significant, potentially significant or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated then the process must proceed to a full Appropriate Assessment and the provision of a Natura Impact Statement.

European sites have been assessed to determine the presence of Qualifying Interests for which conservation objectives exist within or in close proximity to or under the influence of the proposed project. Two sites have been identified as having the potential for being impacted by the proposed works: Galway Bay Complex SAC and Lough Corrib SAC.

An evaluation of the potential of the proposed footbridge and the use of instream scaffolding at Wolfe Tone Bridge to give rise to significant effects on the Qualifying Interests for the above European sites is detailed in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.1 Screening Assessment of Qualifying Interests of the Galway Bay Complex SAC

Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objective	Potential Impact	Screening
(1140) Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Intertidal mudflats and sandflats are submerged at high tide and exposed at low tide and are normally associated with inlets, estuaries or shallow bays. This habitat type is located 10m south of Wolfe Tone Bridge. Instream scaffolding may be located within intertidal mudflats and sandflats habitat, as they will be erected within the transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. However, the use of scaffolding will be temporary in duration and minor in scale (50mm diameter scaffolding). Therefore, there are no potential impacts on intertidal mudflats and sandflats as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1150) Coastal lagoons. To restore the favourable conservation conditions.	A coastal lagoon is a lake or pond that is fully or partially separated from the sea by a permeable barrier. This habitat type is located approximately 848m east. There is no potential for impacts on coastal lagoons as a result of the proposed works at Wolfe Tone Bridge. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to coastal lagoon habitats as they are located within transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on coastal lagoons as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1160) Large shallow inlets and bays. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Large shallow inlets and bays are located approximately 2.5 km downstream of the proposed works. Shallow bays and inlets are indentations of the coastline that have no freshwater input or only a low level i.e. small streams and/or local rainfall runoff. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to large shallow inlets and bays as they are located within transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on large shallow inlets and bays as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1170) Reefs. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Reef habitats are widespread marine features with immobile hard substrate available for colonisation by epifauna. Reef habitat is located approximately 650m downstream of the proposed works. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to reef habitat as they are located within transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on reefs as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out

(1220) Perennial vegetation of stony banks. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Stony banks are located approximately 5km SW from the proposed works. Perennial vegetation is associated with shingle beaches and banks. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to perennial vegetation of stony banks as they are located within transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on Perennial vegetation of stony banks as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1310) Salicornia and other annual colonising mud and sand. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Salicornia or grasses, periodically colonise inundated muds and sands of marine or interior salt marshes. This habitat type is located 6.3km SW from the proposed works. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to Salicornia habitat as they are located within the turbid transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on Salicornia grasses as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1330) Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*). To restore the favourable conservation conditions.	Atlantic salt meadows are located approximately 1km east of the proposed works. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to Atlantic salt meadows as they are located within the transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on Atlantic salt meadows as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1410) Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritime*). To restore the favourable conservation conditions.	Mediterranean salt meadows are located 3.6km west of the proposed works. The proposed scaffolding is not located within or in proximity to Mediterranean salt meadows as they are located within the transitional waters of the Corrib Estuary. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on Mediterranean salt meadows as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(3180) Turlough. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	There is no potential to arise on these terrestrial habitat types as the proposed works do not take place within a terrestrial environment, with instream scaffolding taking place on a riverbed. No Turloughs, grasslands or fen habitats occur within the proposed works area within the bay and these habitats are known to occur a significant distance from the works site. As a result, there will be no alteration to these habitat types as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding. No potential impacts.	Screened out
(5130) *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands. To restore the favourable conservation conditions.		
(6210) Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (*important orchid sites). To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.		

(7210) Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions. (7230) Alkaline fens. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.		
(1355) *Lutra lutra* (Otter). To restore the favourable conservation conditions.	Otter habitat has been identified 10m downstream of the proposed works area. The proposed instream scaffolding will be deployed at 3 separate locations and will be temporary in duration (2 weeks per location) and minor in scale (footprint consisting of 12 scaffolding legs, each with 50mm diameter). Insignificant disturbance will occur to the riverbed. The location of the works occurs in an urban environment with existing disturbance levels regarding noise and vibration already common. It is considered that the deployment of scaffolding will not impede on the surrounding otter habitat; no impact to fish biomass available for foraging or creating a barrier for connectivity and movement. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on otter to utilise the habitats during the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out.
(1365) *Phoca vituline* (Common Seal). To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Common seal has been identified 10m downstream of the proposed works area. There are no impacts on haul out, resting or breeding sites for seal as none of these sites occur within proposed works area. The proposed instream scaffolding will be deployed at 3 separate locations and will be temporary in duration (2 weeks per location) and minor in scale (footprint consisting of 12 scaffolding legs, each with 50mm diameter). The location of the works occurs in an urban environment with existing disturbance levels regarding noise and vibration already common. It is considered that the deployment of scaffolding will not impede on the surrounding seal habitat; no impact to fish biomass available for foraging or creating a barrier for connectivity and movement of seals. Therefore, there are no potential impacts on seal to utilise the habitats during the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out

Table 5.2 ***Screening Assessment of two Qualifying Interests of the Lough Corrib SAC***

Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objective	Potential Impact	Screening
(1095) Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*). To restore the favourable conservation conditions.	Sea lamprey migrate to sea as juveniles and return as adults to breed in freshwater. It is likely that this species will be present within the waters of the works area. However, the footprint of the scaffolding will be minor in scale (50mm diameter scaffolding) and temporary in duration (2 weeks per location). Construction phase activities will be restricted to occur outside of the regarding fishery spawning season (Oct – Jan) to ensure no impact to species occurs. For these reasons, there are no potential impacts on Sea lamprey as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out
(1106) Salmon *(Salmo salar)*. To maintain the favourable conservation conditions.	Salmon begin life in freshwater habitats, migrate to sea as juveniles and return as adults to breed in freshwater. It is highly likely that salmon will be present within the waters of the works area. However, the footprint of the scaffolding will be minor in scale (50mm diameter scaffolding) and temporary in duration (2 weeks per location). Construction phase activities will be restricted to occur outside of the regarding fishery spawning season (Oct – Jan) to ensure no impact to species occurs. For these reasons, there are no potential impacts on salmon as a result of the deployment, in situ use and removal of the scaffolding.	Screened out

5.1 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS WITH OTHER PLANS/PROJECTS

In order to fully assess the potential impact of the proposed development on European sites, the project must be assessed in combination with existing activities and proposed plans for the region. Myplan.ie, eplanning.ie and Galway City Development Plan 2017 - 2023 were consulted in order to determine if there were any other plans or projects in the area which could result in cumulative impacts.

Galway City Development Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of Galway City Council. As part of this, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and AA were conducted. The assessments identified whether changes brought about by the Plan were likely to cause any direct, indirect or secondary impacts (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on European sites. The resulting Environmental Report of the SEA found that potential environment effects arising from the proposed plan are appropriately mitigated so as not to result in a significant impact to the environment. The resulting Natura Impact Report (NIR) as part of the AA concluded that potential impacts to the integrity of European sites had the potential to occur, however the inclusion of mitigation measures will ensure such is avoided, and that no significant adverse effects will occur. Furthermore, lower-level plans and projects will be subject to individual AA screenings to ensure no impacts arise to European sites.

Local planning applications were also reviewed utilising eplanning.ie and myplan.ie. No recent planning applications were pending at the time of access, the most recent applications were for minor residential property upgrades in 2020.

Overall, it is concluded that other plans and projects in combination with the proposed pedestrian footbridge at Wolfe Tone Bridge will not have any adverse effects on the integrity of the qualifying or special conservation interests and conservation objectives of Galway Bay Complex SAC and Lough Corrib SAC.

6 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Potential significant effects of the proposed pedestrian footbridge at Wolfe Tone Bridge have been considered in the context of Galway Bay Complex SAC and two Qualifying Interests at Lough Corrib SAC.

The proposed works will be conducted within existing bridge infrastructure in a predominantly urban environment. The use of scaffolding during the construction phase of the works will be done so either via suspension from the bridge or via deployment instream. In the instance of this AA Screening, the potential for effects on European sites have been assessed via the use of instream scaffolding. If utilised, scaffolding will take place at three distinct locations, at the pier wall on the east bank and at the two bridge abutments. The scaffolding will be erected and utilised at one location at a time, and all three locations will not be deployed simultaneously. The scaffolding will be utilised over a short-term duration conducted for a period of 2 weeks at each location, equating to a total of 6 weeks. The footprint of the scaffolding will also be localised and of minor size, taking place at three distinct locations which will consisting of 12 legs in the riverbed, of which each are 50mm in diameter. Due to the temporary nature for which the scaffolding will be deployed, it is deemed that it will have an insignificant impact on the underlying riverbed and thus will not result in an impact on the Qualifying Interests of Galway Bay Complex SAC and Lough Corrib SAC.

Furthermore, due to the turbulent nature of the Corrib Estuary at this point, any construction phase activities which may result in the release of dust/particles, will not have the potential to settle or disrupt the surrounding water quality as the flow will be significant enough to flush out and disperse such substances if they were to enter the receiving waters.

Due to the nature of the works taking place within existing bridge infrastructure, bat surveys will be conducted prior to the commencement of construction works and if deemed necessary bat roosts will be erected, similarly to that conducted during the initial footbridge construction in 2004.

Overall, owing to the nature (alteration to existing infrastructure), location (existing bridge site in an urban environment), scale (localised) and temporary, short term nature of the works it is concluded that there will be no potential for impact to arise on the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Lough Corrib SAC

This Screening report evaluates the objective information presented in the Project Description, taking consideration of the proposed works elements; however, the evaluation does not presuppose that the construction requirements specified in the design, or to be implemented on site by the Contractor, are integral to avoid or reduce harmful effects on any European site. Therefore, it is considered that in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the proposed works at Wolfe Tone Bridge will have no significant effects and Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process (Natura Impact Statement) is not required.

7 REFERENCES

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