Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Adoption of the Upland Woodland Strategy for Wicklow Mountains National Park in accordance with Regulation 42A EC (Birds and Natural) Habitats Regulations 2011-2021

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

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1. Introduction

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

On the 2nd December 2023, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 42A(3) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('the Minister') furnished the EAU with a request for a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) determination for an Upland Woodland Strategy which proposes the restoration and protection of upland riparian woodlands at locations within Wicklow Mountains National Park, and area dual designated as the Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation (SAC) [Site Code: 002122] and the Wicklow Mountains Special Protection Area [Site Code: 004040], Co. Wicklow. Hereafter referred to as "the strategy".

On the 19th December 2023, the EAU was also kindly provided with an independently commissioned report titled *Strategy for Upland Tree Planting in the Wicklow Mountains National Park*. On the 30th January the EAU was also provided with spatial information on the suitable areas identified for tree planting through the strategy.

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

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

2. Background

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

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

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

3. Legislation and Guidance

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

3.1. Guidance and Data Sources

- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- European Commission. (2001) Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodical Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- European Commission. (2007) Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities;
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;
- European Commission. (2018) Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- Office of the Planning Regulator. (2021) Practice Note PN01 - AA Screening for Development Management;
- Official Journal of the European Union. (2021) Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Volume 64; 2021/C 437/01); and,
- A Strategy for Upland Tree Planting in the Wicklow Mountains National Park (2023). A report prepared by Purser Tarleton Russell Ltd for the National Parks ANSD Wildlife Service.

3.2. Assessment Methodology

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

- National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Designations Viewer[2]; and,
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) Maps[3].

3.3. Legislative Background

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

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

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

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

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

[2] National Parks & Wildlife Service Designation Viewer. Accessed at ArcGIS Web Application 30/01/2024

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 30/01/2024

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

> "Any plan or project not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public".

Article 6(4) states:

> "If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.
>
> Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

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

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

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

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

Stage 3 – Assessment of alternative solutions - the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

Stage 4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain - an assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

Under Regulation 42A(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011-2021 (S.I. 293 of 2021), the Ecological Assessment Unit is the competent authority in relation to screening for AA of projects and plans (such as the proposed strategy) which the Minister proposes to undertake or adopt.

4. Overview of the Project

The proposed strategy identifies suitable areas for upland tree planting within the Wicklow Mountains National Park. This strategy will entail a trial of riparian and gully planting across 40 locations. The land covered under the strategy lies within the Wicklow Mountains SAC (Figure 1) and SPA (Figure 2).

Wicklow Mountains SAC is a complex of upland areas in Counties Wicklow and Dublin, flanked by the Blessington reservoir to the west and Vartry reservoir in the east, Cruagh Mountain in the north and Lybagh Mountain in the south. Most of the site is over 300 m, with much ground over 600 m.

Wicklow Mountains is important as a complex, extensive upland site. It shows great diversity from a geomorphological and a topographical point of view. The vegetation provides examples of the typical upland habitats with heath, blanket bog and upland grassland covering large, relatively undisturbed areas. In all, twelve habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive are found within the site. Several rare or protected plant and animal species occur, adding further to its value.

The vegetation over most of Wicklow Mountains SAC is a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and upland grassland (mostly on peaty soil, though some on mineral soil), stands of dense Bracken (Pteridium aquilinum), and small woodlands mainly along the rivers. Mountain loughs and corrie lakes are scattered throughout the site. The two dominant vegetation communities in the area are heath and blanket bog. Heath vegetation, with both wet and dry heath well represented, occurs in association with blanket bog, upland acid grassland and rocky habitats.

4.1. Purpose

Restoring and enhancing the habitat connectivity increase species robustness. A healthy natural landscape is essential, for clean water, vibrant ecosystems, healthy communities and economies, climate resilience, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, and a sense of place. Conserving compromised landscapes means working together, at a large scale makes enduring difference.

Overall protecting and enhancing the Qualifying Interests ensures long term conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services and sustainable development of Europe’s most valuable threatened species and habitats.

The wider benefits are numerous and include.

- Opportunity for national, European and International collaboration and information exchange between the various stakeholders, (landowners, Gov Agencies, NGO’s and local community). Increasing the collective effort in conserving Europe and the worlds natural heritage.

- Restoration of degraded or fragmented habitats enhances habitat connectivity, supports recovery of declining species and improves ecological functionality.
- Sustainable land use and development in the Wicklow Mountains is important as the site overlaps with areas of human activity including agriculture, forestry and tourism and socio-economic development is a local and national need.
- Education & research, as a living laboratory the protected area is valuable for studying ecological process, monitoring and understanding impacts of different practices fostering deeper understanding.
- Ecosystem services that the Wicklow Mountains SAC provides benefit local communities and wider society including the improvement of water quality, regulation of potential flooding, and the recreational opportunities they create.

4.2. Project Description

The primary objective of this project is enhanced planting in upland gullies to replace and expand moribund trees along stream margins that have been denuded through over-grazing by livestock and wild deer. Due to grazing pressures, regeneration from these trees has not been able to successfully develop for a number of decades and this is associated with a loss of diversity in the uplands both at from ecological and landscape perspectives. These trees contribute to stream bank protection, erosion control and reduced acidification in an acid sensitive catchment and will increase upland prey diversity and nesting opportunities for Merlin. This project aims to reverse this decline and to identify opportunities for the restoration of trees in the uplands across 40 trial locations (See Section 11 for list of suitable locations and a sample of maps). Not all trial location maps are provided and further information can be requested from the Ecological Assessment Unit (EAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). Correspondence address by email: eau@npws.gov.ie.

5. Part 1: Necessary conservation measures

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

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

Wicklow Mountains SAC [Site code: 002122].

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Wicklow Mountains SAC 002122. Version 1. Accessed 30th January 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002122.pdf

Qualifying Interests

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

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Inadequate

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

European dry heaths [4030]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae [6130]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Inadequate

Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

- Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110]

- ~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Inadequate

Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]

- ~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Inadequate

Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]

- ~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Inadequate

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

- ~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Bad

Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]

- ~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: Favourable

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Interests.

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

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Typical species
- Vegetation composition: characteristic zonation
- Vegetation distribution: maximum depth
- Hydrological regime: water level fluctuations
- Lake substratum quality
- Water quality: transparency; nutrients; phytoplankton biomass; phytoplankton composition; attached algal biomass; and, macrophyte status.

- Acidification status.
- Water colour
- Dissolved organic carbon (DOC)
- Turbidity
- Fringing habitat (area and condition)

Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

European dry heaths [4030]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alpine and Boreal heaths in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Community diversity
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes; positive indicators species; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; and, non-native species.
- Vegetation structure: signs of grazing; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae [6130]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: bare ground
- Soil toxicity: copper content
- Vegetation structure: height and cover
- Vegetation composition: metallophyte bryophytes.

Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas [6230]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Community diversity
- Vegetation composition: positive indicators species; high quality indicator species; species richness; non-native species; negative indicator species; Sphagnum cover; Polytrichum cover; and, shrubs bracken and heath cover.
- Vegetation structure: forb to graminoid ratio; sward height; litter cover; disturbed bare ground; and, grazing or disturbance.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Blanket bogs (* if active bog) in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; positive indicator species; grass species and dwarf shrubs; and, bracken, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing; and, disturbance;
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator fern and Saxifraga species; positive indicator species; non-native species; bracken, and, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; non-native species; bracken, and, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

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

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

Otter Lutra lutra [1355]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Wicklow Mountains SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

Wicklow Mountains SPA [Site code: 004040].

NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Wicklow Mountains SPA [004040]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Accessed 30th January 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004040.pdf

Special Conservation Interests[4]

Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098]

~ Article 12 Reporting for the period 2013-2018 indicate the long-term and short-term population trend directions (based on expert opinion and extrapolation of limited data respectively) are Uncertain.

Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]

~ Article 12 Reporting for the period 2013-2018 indicate the long-term and short-term population trend directions (based on complete survey/statistically robust estimates) are Increasing / Favourable.

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

[4] See online Article 12 web tool: https://nature-art12.eionet.europa.eu/article12/summary

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

Under Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive, DHLGH is required to ensure the favourable conservation status of all Annex I habitats and Annex II species within SACs.

The Conservation Objectives seek to maintain protected SAC feature(s) where evidence exists that it is in favourable condition in the site, or where there is uncertainty concerning the assessed condition of a feature but no reason to suspect deterioration in condition since designation.

Where evidence exists that a feature is declining and/or damaged and therefore not in a favourable condition in the site, the Conservation Objectives will seek to restore the protected feature.

The implementation of the restoration measures within the site as outlined above will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives. Notably:

Otter Lutra lutra [1355]

- Extent of terrestrial habitat
- Extent of freshwater (river) habitat
- Couching sites and holts
- Barriers to connectivity

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

- Water quality: transparency

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

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Woodland structure: cover and height; community diversity and extent; natural regeneration; and, indicators of local distinctiveness.
- Vegetation composition: native tree cover; and, typical species

The implementation of the project as outlined above will improve and directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives for Wicklow Mountains SPA. Notably:

Merlin and Peregrine:

- **sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis**

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

The effect on all QI and SCI features of the SAC & SPA have been considered.

Both SPA SCI species (Merlin and Peregrine) will benefit from the enhanced upland planting of trees within the Wicklow Mountains, improving conditions for small to medium sized prey species.

No significant adverse impacts on the QI or SCI features of the SAC or SPA are anticipated.

Yes ☐ No ☑

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

Yes ☐ No ☑

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

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

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

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

7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects

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

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

Tick all the boxes below which may apply.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Explain the effects:

_____

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

8. Part 4: In Combination Effects

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

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

_____

_____

No ☑ **Yes** ☐ **Uncertain** ☐

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

9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA

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

Likely significant effects are expected or uncertain.

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

Likely significant effects are NOT expected.

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

Signature: Ryan Wilson-Parr, Head of Ecological Assessment

Date: 16th February 2024

10. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the activity, the EAU determines[5], in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011 Regulations, that upland planting of trees within targeted riparian zones within Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation and Wicklow Mountains Special Protection Area are entirely comprised of activities that directly support the Conservation Objectives of these European sites.

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

[5] Ryan Wilson-Parr (Head of Ecological Assessment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 16th February 2024.

11. Supplementary Information

Figure 1. (below): Location of Wicklow Mountains SAC as per the NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Wicklow Mountains SAC 002122. Version 1.

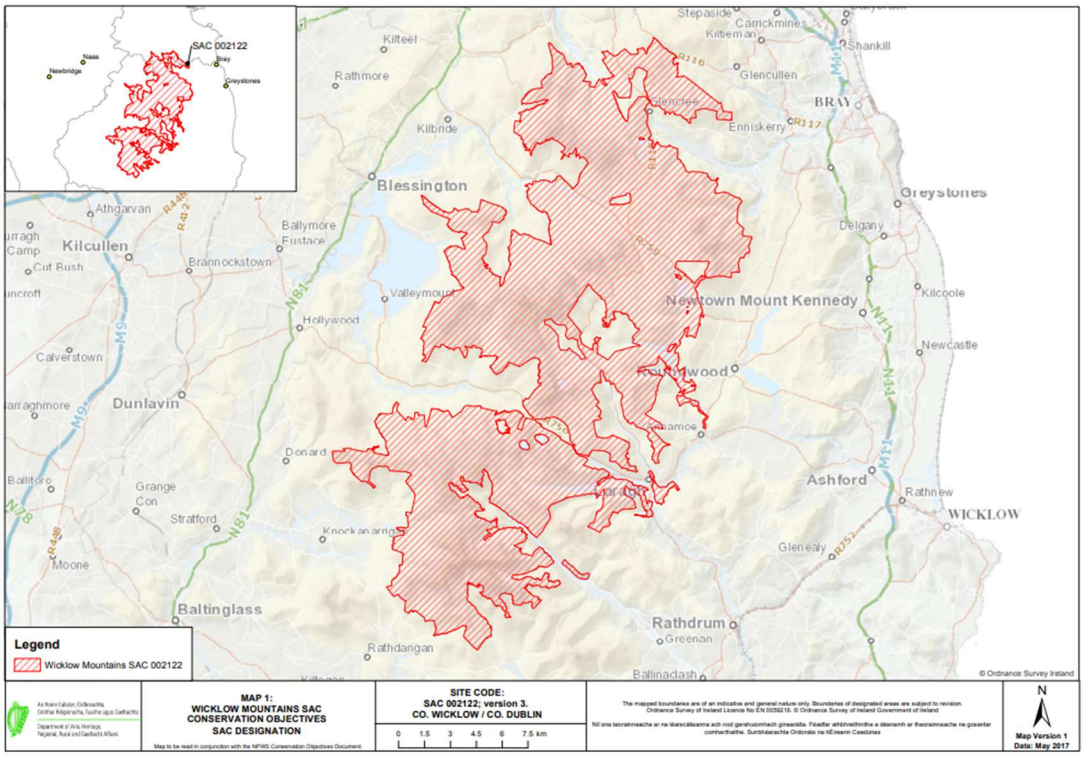
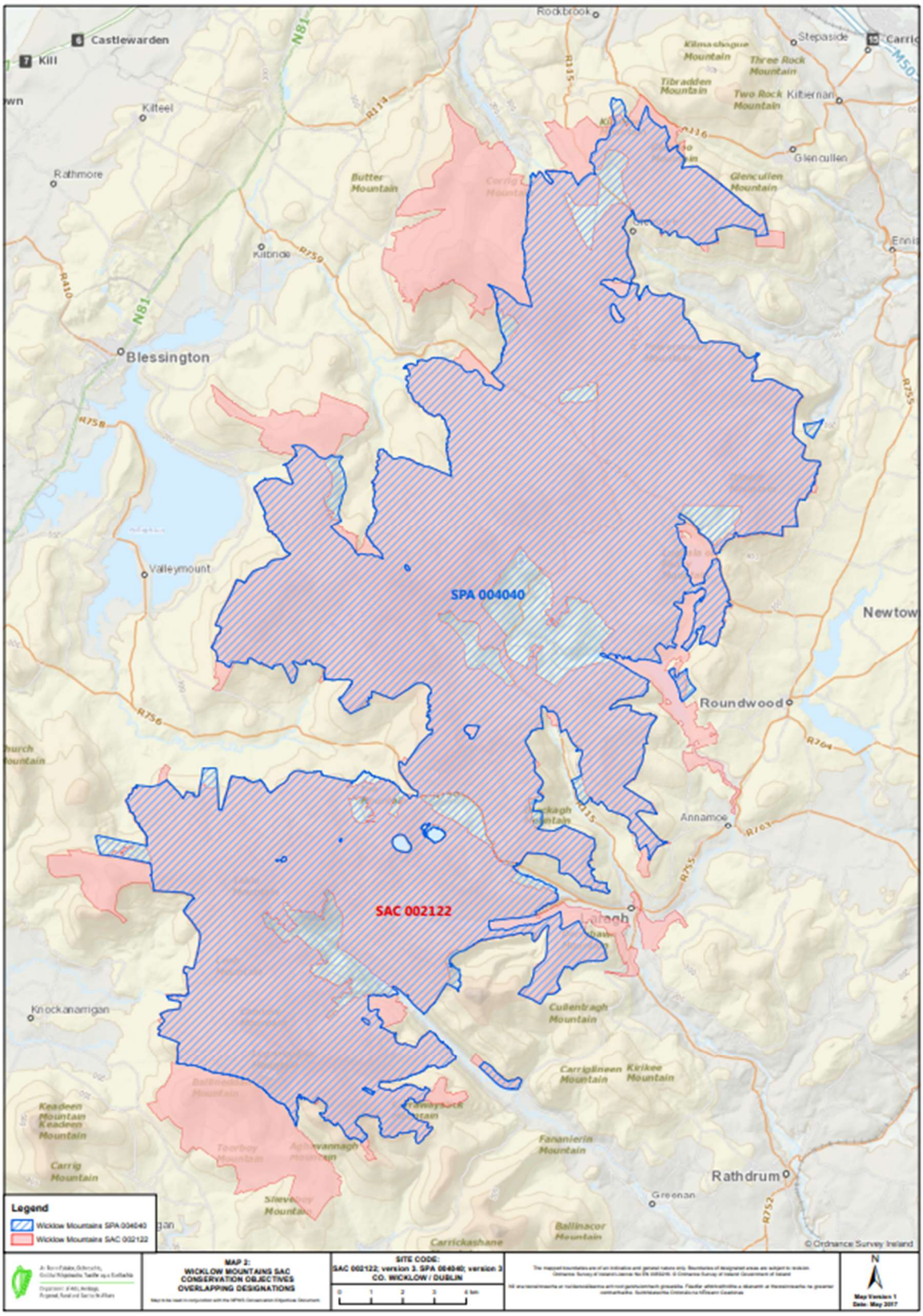


Figure 2. (below): Location of Wicklow Mountains SPA as per the European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds (Wicklow Mountains Special Protection Area 004040)) Regulations 2012. (S.I. No. 586/2019) as shown in NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Wicklow Mountains SAC 002122. Version 1.



Suitable Locations for Upland Tree Planting Within Wicklow Mountains National Park and Wicklow Mountains SAC.

1. Cot Brook Gully, Upper Dodder, Castlekelly

2. Mareens Brook Gully, Upper Dodder, Castlekelly

3. Slade Brook Gully, Upper Dodder, Castlekelly

4. Bracken slopes at Bryan's Hill, Cot Brook, Upper Dodder, Castlekelly

5. Bracken slopes at Glassavullaun, north slope of Corrig Mountain

6. Cloghoge Brook Gully, Luggala

7. Lugnalee Brook Gully, Coronation Plantation

8. Upper reaches of River Liffey

9. Coronation Plantation – enrichment planting in existing woodland

10. Inchavore River

11. Glasnamullan stream and wider bracken area, east slope of Djouce Mountain

12. Upper reaches of River Dargle / Glensoulan

13. Frauchan Glen, Lugnaquilla

14. Gleneelo stream, Glendalough

15. North facing gullies below the Spinc, Glendalough

16. Amongst lower scree, above Miners Village, Glendalough

17. Upper reaches of Glenmacnass River

18. Lough Ouler Gully Stream

19. Upper Ballinagee / Glasnagollam reaches – south west side of Mullaghcleevaun

20. Bracken slopes at Glensoulan, beside Wicklow Way on north-east side of Djouce Mountain

21. Ballycoyle Gully Stream, Powerscourt Mountain townland, north side of Tonduff

22. Bracken slopes at Ballynabrockey, western end of Coronation Plantation

23. Upper reaches of River Slaney, Glen of Imaal

24. Bracken slopes on west side of Camara Hill, Glen of Imaal

25. Lugduff Brook Gully, Gravale

26. Lavarney Brook Gully, between Gravale and Duff Hill

27. Upper reaches of Clohogue River, running into War Hill

28. All along Upper reaches of Glandassan River, including tributary gullies

29. North facing bracken Slopes in upper Glandassan

30. Bracken slopes on Camaderry Mountain – eastern end

31. Bracken slopes on south-east shoulder of Brockagh Mountain

32. Bracken slopes on all sides of Derrybawn Mountain

33. Bracken slopes, either side of Wicklow Way on Paddock Hill

34. Enrichment planting Drummin Wood (Moribund Larch Wood) on east side of Scarr Mountain

35. Bracken slopes at Carrigeenshinnagh, on northern side of Drummin stream, east side of Scarr Mountain

36. Along Gleenreemore Brook and Asbawn Brook Gullies north of Arts Cross (Knocknadroose / Oak Wood)

37. Glenavore Brook gully, Knocknadroose, north of Table Mountain

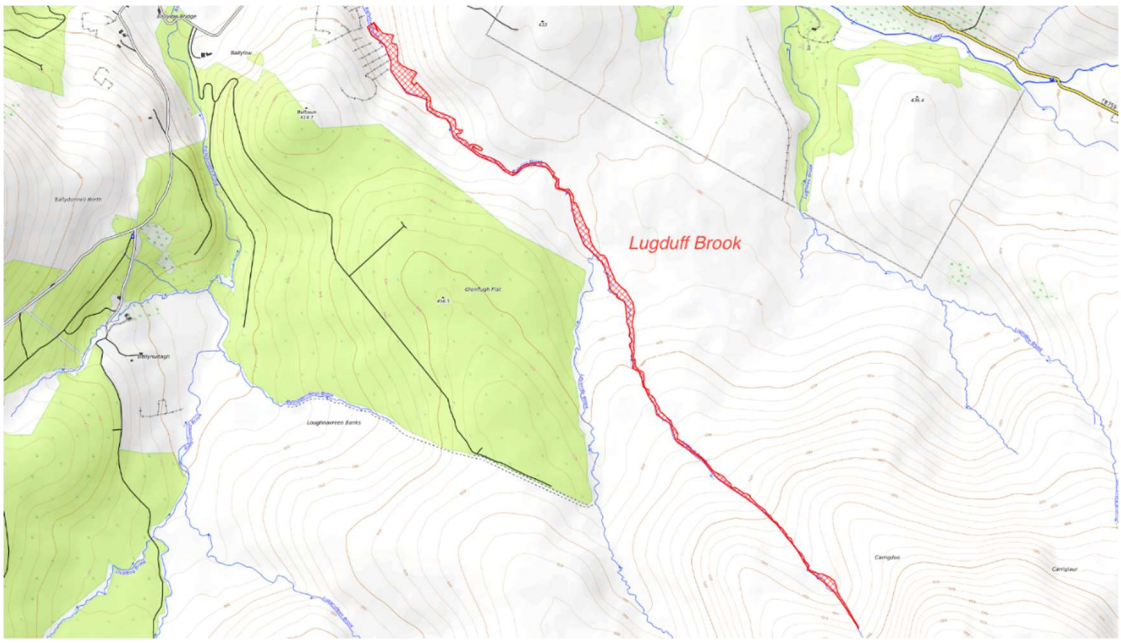
38. Bracken slopes around Upper Lough Bray

39. Leough, Cawrawn and Roundhill brook (part of Granamore Suas project)

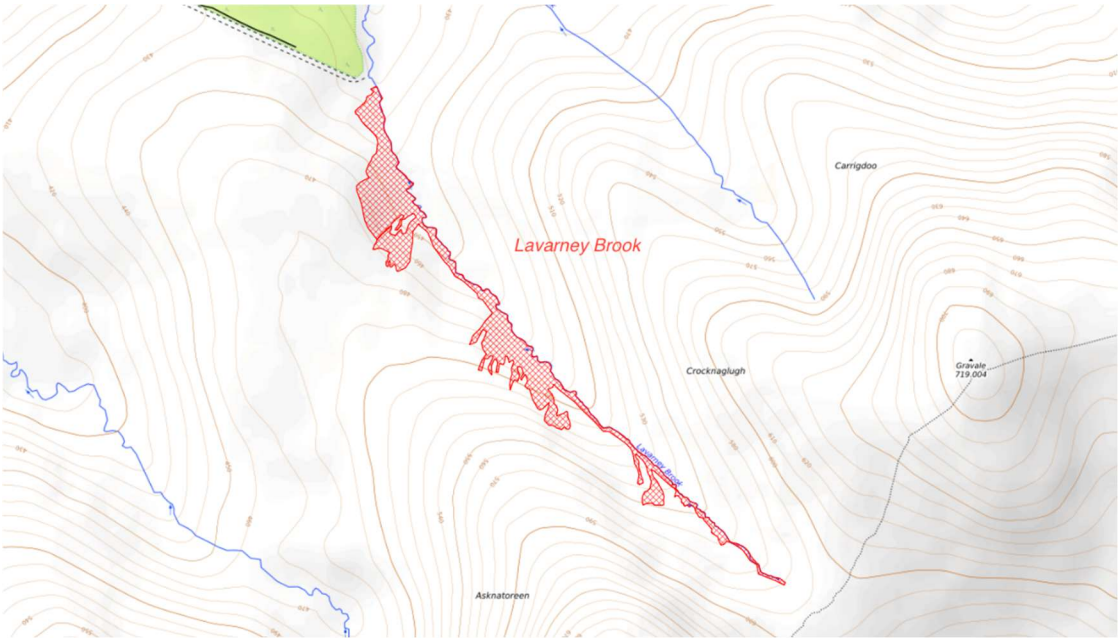
40. Lyres Brook, Trommawnmacarta Brook, and Corrig brook of the Ow river

Selected examples of map locations of suitable sites. These are indicative only and the exact extent of tree planting and protection at each location will be based on NPWS Regional Management.

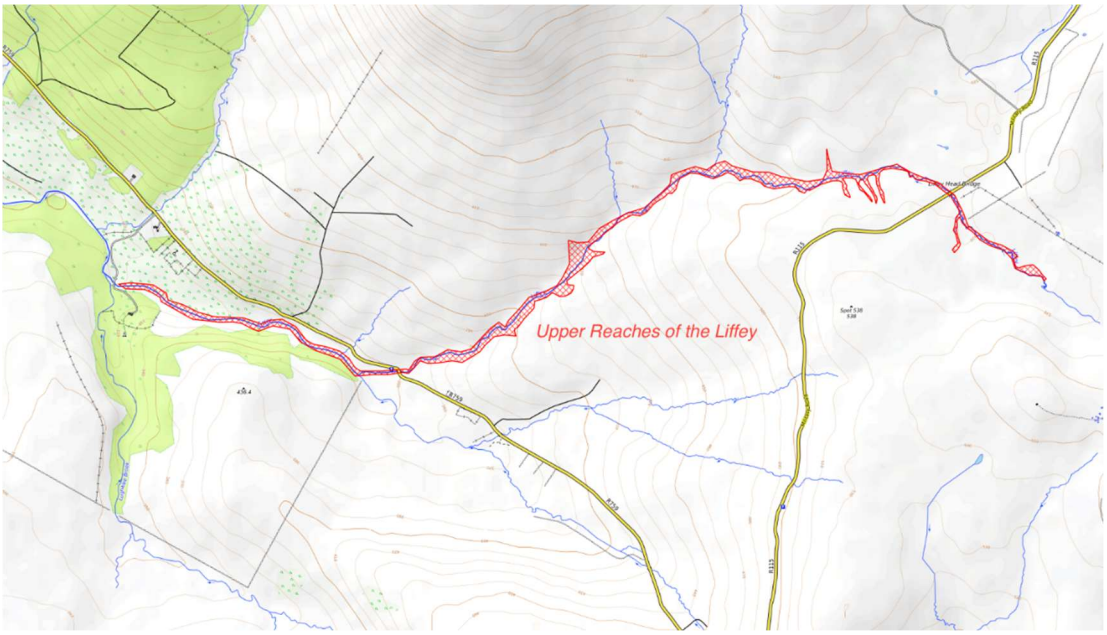
Lugduff Brook Gully, Gravale



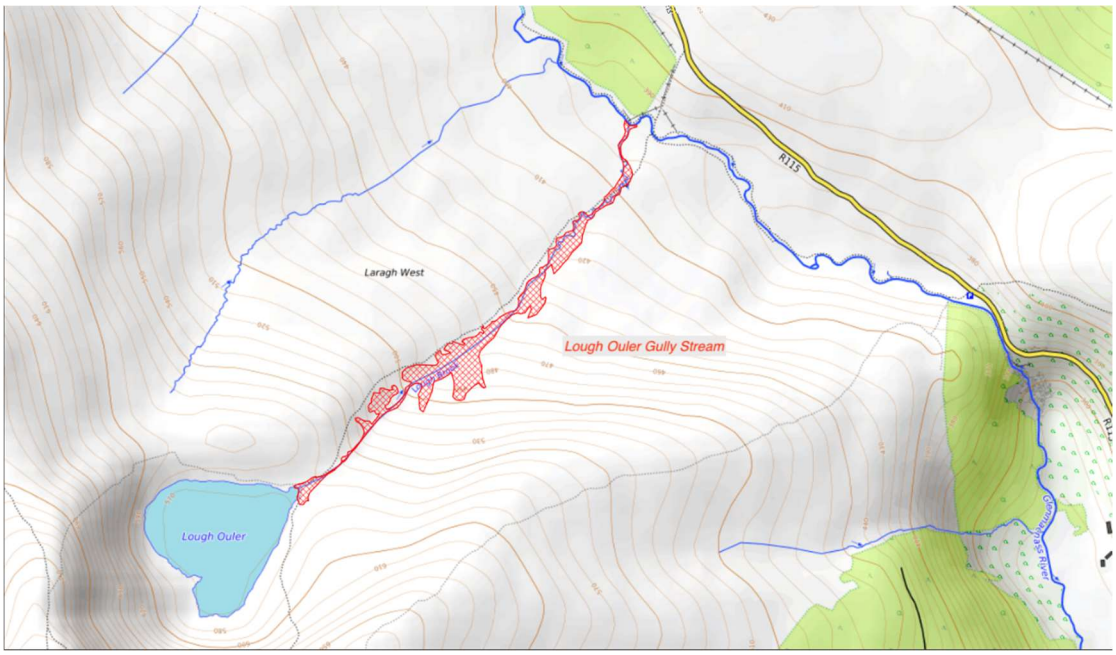
Lavarney Brook Gully, between Gravale and Duff Hill



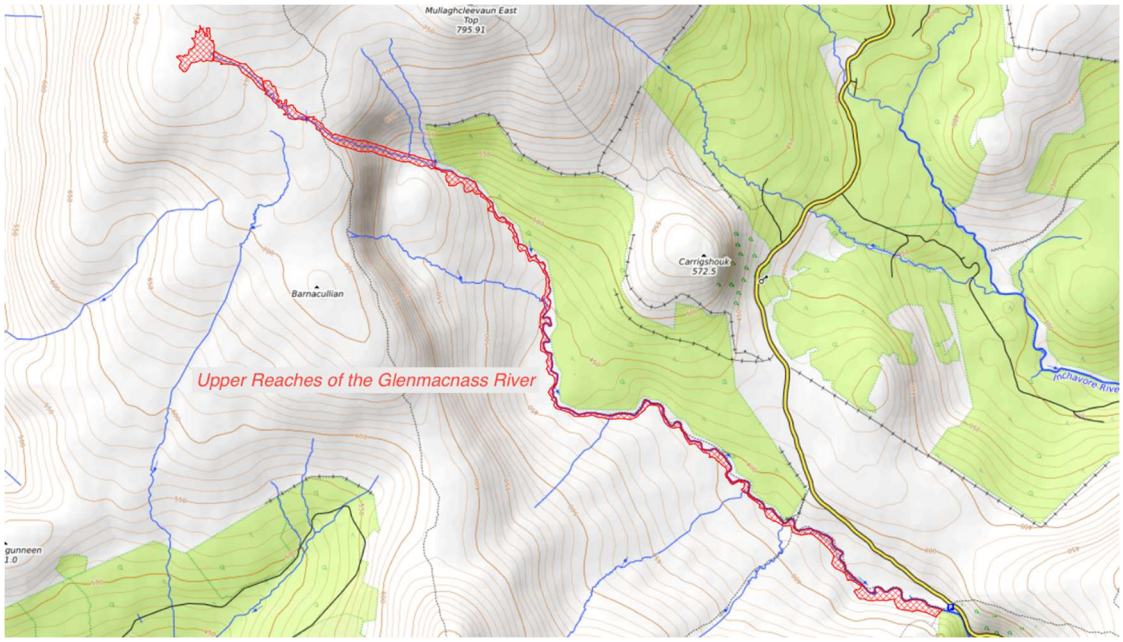
Upper reaches of River Liffey



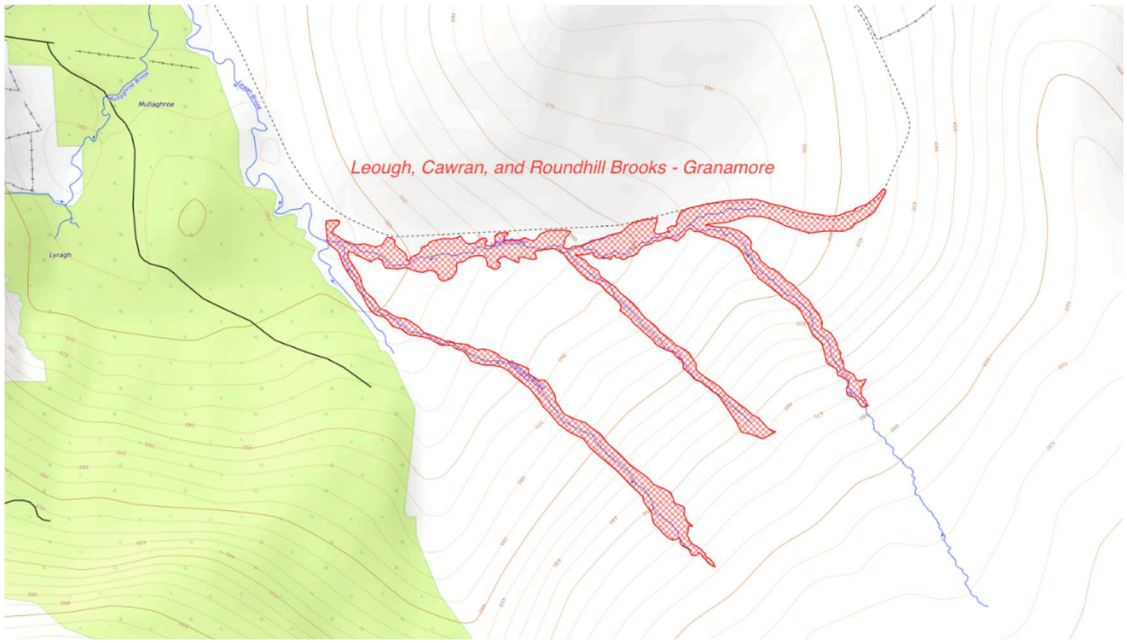
Lough Ouler Gully Stream



Upper reaches of Glenmacnass River



Leough, Cawrawn and Roundhill brook



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