SAC
Environmental Assessments

366A Seacoast Road, Bellarena

Ulster Gliding Club Ltd

HRA Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

February 2024

Notice

This document and its contents have been prepared and are intended solely as information for **Ulster Gliding Club Ltd** and use in relation to **366A Seacoast Road, Bellarena**.

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This document does not purport to provide legal advice.

This document has 22 pages including the cover.

Client signoff

Client	Ulster Gliding Centre Ltd
Project	366A Seacoast Road, Bellarena
Job number	P2301
Client signature/ date	

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1. SAC Environmental Assessments were commissioned by Ulster Gliding Club Ltd to produce a Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (sHRA) Stage 1: Screening Report[1] for the proposed removal of concrete blocks from the beach at 366A Seacoast Road, Bellarena, hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Scheme'.

1.1.2. The HRA Stage 1: Screening Report was completed and determined that Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment was required as it identified potential likely significant effects (LSE) 'alone' on seven European designated sites; namely:

- Lough Foyle SPA
- River Roe and Tibutaries SAC
- Skerries and Causeway SAC
- River Faughan and Tributaries SAC
- River Foyle and Tributaries SAC
- Owenkillew River SAC
- Lough Foyle Ramsar site

1.1.3. This document should be read in conjunction with the HRA Stage 1: Screening report.

1.2. Background to Habitat Regulations Assessment

1.2.1. This sHRA Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment has been prepared to satisfy requirements under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) to ascertain if the potential LSE identified in the Stage 1: Screening would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European sites and whether these can be negated through mitigation.

12.2. This sHRA report is to be made available to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Shared Environmental Services (SES) for consultation and the competent authority (Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council) should give due regard to their views.

1.3. The Site

1.3.1. The Proposed Scheme is located at land approximately 0.6 kilometres (km) north-west of The Ulster Gliding Club, 366A Seacoast Road, Bellarena, Limavady, County Londonderry, BT49 0LA, at Irish Grid Reference: C 65548 33171 (Easting 265548, Northing 433171) as shown in Appendix A (hereafter referred to as the Site).

1.3.2. Works in relation to the Proposed Scheme will occur above the mean high-water springs (MHWS); however, access from the foreshore of Lough Foyle is required.

1.3.3. No ecological field surveys have been undertaken in relation to the Proposed Scheme; however, from a study of satellite imagery and video evidence, the Proposed Scheme appears to be located between semi-fixed dune and fixed dune habitat, adjacent to the boundaries of Lough Foyle SPA.

[1] SAC Environmental Assessments (2024) 366A Seacoast Road, HRA Stage 1: Screening

1.4. The Proposed Scheme

1.4.1. Large concrete blocks, partially buried along the shore for approximately 41 metres (m) are deemed to be an unauthorised sea defence installation. These concrete blocks were installed 15 to 18 years ago in an attempt to arrest subsidence / erosion.

1.4.2. Large concrete blocks, partially buried along the shore for approximately 41 metres (m), are deemed to be an unauthorised sea defence installation. These concrete blocks were installed 15 to 18 years ago in an attempt to arrest subsidence / erosion.

1.4.2. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council served Ulster Gliding Club Ltd with an enforcement notice (Planning Reference: LA01/2021/0032/CA), dated 8th August 2023, instructing Ulster Gliding Club Ltd to:

- Permanently remove the unauthorised sea defence installation (concrete blocks) that run north from Irish Grid Ref: C 65544 33163 to C 65552 33195;
- Permanently remove any rubble or materials associated with the permanent removal of the unauthorised sea defence installation (Concrete blocks);
- Comply with the above points by acquiring a marine licence from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Marine and Fisheries Division (MFD) before commencing any of the required works; and,
- To comply within 154 days (now extended to 221 days) from the date on which the notice takes effect (22nd September 2023).

1.4.3. Ulster Gliding Club Ltd therefore propose to use a telehandler with attachments and a tractor and trailer to remove the concrete blocks from their current location. The vehicles will access the blocks from the beachside via the gate at Irish Grid Reference: C 65498 33080 to reduce the risk of further destabilising the dune system.

1.5. Summary of Screening Assessment

1.5.1. With due consideration, given the information provided above for the Stage 1 – Screening, it is considered that the Proposed Scheme has the potential to lead to significant effects 'alone' on seven European sites, as summarised in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF SCREENING ASSESSMENT

European Sites	Potential for LSE						
	Land Take	Noise	Vibration	Water Pollution	Air Pollution	Dust	Introduction of Invasive Species
Lough Foyle SPA	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
River Roe and Tributaries SAC	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Skerries and Causeway SAC	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
River Faughan	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

and Tributaries SAC							
River Foyle and Tributaries SAC	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Owenkillew River SAC	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Lough Foyle Ramsar	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

1.5.2. An assessment of in-combination effect concluded that the Proposed Scheme was unlikely to have an effect on any European site when considered in-combination with other plans and projects.

2. Methodology

2.1.1. For European designated sites where an LSE is predicted, or it cannot be concluded that there is no LSE, a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken. The purpose of the Appropriate Assessment is to establish whether there are elements of the project which could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European designated sites. The integrity of a European designated site is defined as:

> "the coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/ or the populations of the species for which the site is, or will be, designated."[2]

2.1.2. European Commission guidance on the provisions of Article 6 emphasises that site integrity involves its ecological functions, and that the assessment of adverse effect should focus on and be limited to the site's conservation objectives.[3]

2.1.3. Where necessary, mitigation measures will be put forward to address any adverse effects on integrity of the European designated sites. These may need to be considered during the designing of the development and when the sHRA process is revisited for this Proposed Scheme.

2.1.4. Therefore, the Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment will:

- Outline the elements of the Proposed Scheme that were identified as having an LSE on one or more qualifying features of a European designated site;
- Obtain additional desk study data as necessary and characterises the LSEs, e.g. whether short/ long-term, reversible or irreversible, and in relation to the proportion /importance of the interest affected, and the overall effect on the European site's conservation objectives. This has been done in sufficient detail to ensure all impacts have been considered and sufficiently appraised;
- Assess the effects of the Proposed Scheme on the conservation objectives of the relevant qualifying features;
- Determine whether or not the integrity of the European Site(s) will be affected, taking into account proposed mitigation measures.

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[2] Natural England (2019) MPA Conservation Advice Glossary of Terms. Available at: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6042656250789888

[3] European Commission (2018) Managing Natura 2000 Sites. The Provision of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.

3. Appropriate Assessment

Each impact pathway identified in the Stage 1: Screening assessment, and measures to mitigate the potential LSE, will be discussed in turn below:

3.1 Land Take

3.1.1. Land take (habitat loss and disturbance) was identified as a potential LSE to the qualifying features of Lough Foyle SPA and Lough Foyle Ramsar site.

TABLE 2: QUALIFYING FEATURES AFFECTED BY LAND TAKE

European Sites	Qualifying Features	Potential Effect
Lough Foyle SPA	ARTICLE 4.1 Qualification (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Whooper swan Bar-tailed godwit	Loss of inter-tidal habitat is a critical issue as this is the feeding zone for the majority (numbers and species) of birds.
	ARTICLE 4.2 Qualification (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Light-bellied brent goose	
	ARTICLE 4.2 Qualification (79/409/EEC) An internationally important assemblage of birds.	
Lough Foyle Ramsar site	The site qualifies under Criterion 1a of the Ramsar Convention by being a particularly good representative example of a wetland complex including intertidal sand and mudflats with extensive seagrass beds, saltmarsh, estuaries and associated brackish ditches.	Loss of a particularly good representative example of a wetland complex (intertidal sand habitats).

Pathway

3.1.2. The concrete blocks to be removed are located adjacent to Lough Foyle SPA and Ramsar site; however, the access route for the excavator may include land within the boundaries of Lough Foyle SPA and Ramsar site. There is therefore the potential for some temporary habitat loss/disturbance.

3.1.3. The tidal flats of Lough Foyle have been little studied but several localised sites of interest from a morphodynamic perspective are known. These include the inner margin of Magilligan foreland where a series of transverse bars extends between the Roe estuary and Magilligan Point. North of the Roe Estuary mouth the tidal flats are sandy and are periodically covered by shore-oblique sand waves backed by a narrow, high intertidal beach. The western margin of

Magilligan foreland the intertidal flats have a smooth planar profile backed by a steep, upper intertidal beach and an eroding cliffline in Holocene beachridge deposits.[4]

3.1.4. Sandy tidal flats are supporting habitats for the qualifying species of Lough Foyle SPA and are listed under Criterion 1 of Lough Foyle Ramsar site.

3.1.5. The access route is yet to be defined but is unlikely to be more than 150m, impacting a maximum area of circa 300m2. This represents 0.001% of the total Lough Foyle SPA site area (2194.22 hectares).

3.1.6. As large areas of similar habitat are available in other areas, and habitat loss is not considered significant in scale, the effect of land take on qualifying habitats and qualifying species is also considered not significant.

3.1.7. In addition, habitats are predicted to quickly recover and re-establish, following the implementation of the Proposed Scheme.

Mitigation

3.1.8. In order to minimise the risks associated with land take the following measures are proposed.

3.1.9. The Contractor, in consultation with a suitably qualified ecologist, will design and describe within a Method Statement, full details of a single access route across the least ecologically sensitive habitats in the inter-tidal area. The access route and works area will be confined to a specified area and minimised as far as possible and will be clearly defined to ensure the area impacted and the resultant habitat loss is kept to a minimum.

3.1.10. All compounds and materials storage will be kept onshore and away from (minimum buffer of 10m) sensitive inter-tidal habitats.

3.1.11. Areas of temporary habitat loss during construction will be reinstated as soon as reasonably practicable.

Conclusion

3.1.12. Provided the above mitigation is adhered to, it is concluded that no adverse effect on the integrity of the Lough Foyle SPA and Ramsar site and their qualifying features will occur.

3.2 Water Pollution

3.2.1. Water pollution during implementation of the Proposed Scheme was identified as a potential LSE to the qualifying features of Lough Foyle SPA, River Roe and Tributaries SAC, Skerries and Causeway SAC, River Faughan and Tributaries SAC, River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, Owenkillew River SAC and Lough Foyle Ramsar site.

TABLE 3: QUALIFYING FEATURES AFFECTED BY WATER POLLUTION

European Sites	Qualifying Features	Potential Effect
Lough Foyle SPA	ARTICLE 4.1 Qualification (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Whooper swan	Indirectly affecting qualifying species through reduced feeding resources.

[4] Earth Science Conservation Review: Lough Foyle Intertidal Flats (1997) Available at: https://www.habitas.org.uk/escr/site.asp?item=1132

	Bar-tailed godwit	
	ARTICLE 4.2 Qualification (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Light-bellied brent goose	
	ARTICLE 4.2 Qualification (79/409/EEC) An internationally important assemblage of birds.	
River Roe and Tributaries SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: Atlantic salmon	Accidental pollution events resulting in fish kills at important stages in the life cycle. Indirectly affecting qualifying species through reduced feeding resources.
Skerries and Causeway SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: Harbour porpoise	
River Faughan and Tributaries SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: Atlantic salmon	
River Foyle and Tributaries SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: Atlantic salmon	
Owenkillew River SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: Atlantic salmon	
Lough Foyle Ramsar site	Criterion 1 This is a particularly good representative example of a wetland complex including intertidal sand and mudflats with extensive seagrass beds, saltmarsh, estuaries and associated brackish ditches.	Alteration of habitat quality through diminution of water quality.
	Criterion 2 The site supports an appreciable assemblage of rare, vulnerable or endangered species or sub-species of plant and animal.	
	Criterion 3 The site supports a diverse assemblage of wintering waterfowl which are indicative of wetland values, productivity and diversity.	
	Criterion 5	

The site supports about 29,000 migrating birds.
Criterion 6 Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Pathway

3.2.2. Water pollution pathways refer to the routes through which contaminants enter water bodies, compromising the quality of water. These pathways can vary depending on the type of pollutants, hydrological linkages, the surrounding environment, and human activities.

3.2.3. The qualifying features of Lough Foyle SPA, River Roe and Tributaries SAC, Skerries and Causeway SAC, River Faughan and Tributaries SAC, River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, Owenkillew River SAC and Lough Foyle Ramsar site are sensitive to water pollution either directly or through the degradation of functionally-linked land.

3.2.4. The accidental releases of oil/fuel from construction activities within or upstream of European sites can lead to widespread biodiversity loss and habitat degradation.

Mitigation

3.2.5. There are a range of guidelines that detail measures to be taken to ensure that the potential for water pollution incidents and impacts are minimised. However, with any construction project there is the potential for water quality incidents to occur.

3.2.6. To ensure the Proposed Scheme does not result in a reduction in water quality that could have an adverse impact on identified designated sites, works will take place with strict adherence to the guidelines for pollution prevention and the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) guidance on the control of water pollution from construction sites.

3.2.7. These detail good practice advice for undertaking works that have the potential to cause water pollution and must be detailed in a CEMP, which will be provided by the Contractor to the team working on site prior to the commencement of work on site to avoid the risk of incidental pollution into the water environment.

3.2.8. The CEMP is likely to include the following measures; however, this is not an exhaustive list:

- All spoil will be stored a minimum of 10 m away from any watercourse and all earthworks will be managed in such a way to minimise the risk of pollution from sediment.
- In order to minimise the erosion of bare soils, as much existing vegetation as possible will be left in place during construction. Existing vegetation will filter sediment polluted run-off and soils will be held together to prevent erosion.
- All re-fuelling of plant will take place in an appropriate area i.e. preferably one that has an impervious base and is bunded or provided with interceptor drains. Vehicles and equipment are never to be left unattended during re-fuelling. All staff are to be trained in refuelling procedures and what to do in the event of an emergency.
- A spill kit will be kept on site. All staff will be trained in the proper use of spill kits. If a spill has entered a drain, the drain will be blocked to stop further spillage entering the system.

- All pumps, generators and similarly fuelled equipment are to be placed on drip trays or in a bunded area and no vehicles or equipment will be allowed to enter any watercourse (or any associated drains) at any stage. Drip trays will be positioned away from any watercourse or drain.
- All valves, hoses and associated re-fuelling equipment will be regularly inspected to ensure that they are still in a suitable condition. This equipment is to be protected from vandalism and unauthorised interference and should be turned off and securely locked when not in use.
- All tanks or drums of fuel, oil, grease, chemicals and all other hazardous material will be kept in a secure, bunded area. Any spillages or leaks are to be dealt with promptly and all waste disposed of in an appropriate manner. All tanks, drums and other containers will be clearly marked as to their contents and are only ever to contain the substance for which the tank was designed or supplied. Before any tank is removed or perforated, all contents and residues will be emptied by a competent operator for safe disposal.
- All bunds or interceptors will be adequate for the amount of spillage that could happen in a worst-case scenario and should be designed to applicable standards. All bunds will have a capacity of at least 110 % of the tank volume. Note also the requirements of the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

Conclusion

3.2.9. Provided the above mitigation is adhered to, it is concluded that no adverse effect on the integrity of the Lough Foyle SPA, River Roe and Tributaries SAC, Skerries and Causeway SAC, River Faughan and Tributaries SAC, River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, Owenkillew River SAC and Lough Foyle Ramsar site and their qualifying features will occur.

3.3 Spread of Invasive Species

Pathway

3.3.1. There is a risk that construction activities could result in the introduction/ spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) within the SAC. The dynamic nature of the environment means that the risk is slight.

TABLE 4: QUALIFYING FEATURES AFFECTED BY SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES

European Sites	Qualifying Features	Potential Effect
Lough Foyle SPA	ARTICLE 4.1 Qualification (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Whooper swan Bar-tailed godwit	Range of threats from loss of habitat, feeding competition, disease, hosting species presenting a threat outside of the site. Principle threat is through spread of Spartina, a genus of plants in the grass family, frequently found in coastal salt marshes.
	ARTICLE 4.2 Qualification (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Light-bellied brent goose	
	ARTICLE 4.2 Qualification (79/409/EEC) An internationally important assemblage of birds.	

Lough Foyle Ramsar site	The site qualifies under Criterion 3b by regularly supporting substantial numbers of individuals from particular groups of waterfowl which are indicative of wetland values, productivity and diversity.	
	The site qualifies under Criterion 3c by regularly supporting internationally important numbers of whooper swan, light-bellied brent geese and bar-tailed godwit.	

Mitigation

3.3.2. The Contractor will describe within the CEMP the biosecurity strategy to be implemented for the appropriate control of INNS. The strategy will set out appropriate construction procedures to prevent the introduction and/ or spread of INNS in line with recognised best practice.

3.3.3. The following mitigation measures are to be implemented to avoid negative impacts in relation to INNS, in consultation with a suitably qualified invasive species specialist:

- The risks associated with INNS, and the mitigations in place, to be communicated to Contractor's on-site via a Toolbox Talk. The CEMP will incorporate a Biosecurity Plan which will be implemented by the Contractor on the Site during works;
- All plant, cabins and equipment brought onto the Site will be inspected and cleaned to ensure no INNS are transported onto or off the Site.

Conclusion

3.3.4. Provided the above mitigation is adhered to, it is concluded that no adverse effect on the integrity of the Lough Foyle SPA and Lough Foyle Ramsar site and their qualifying features will occur.

4. Conclusion

4.1.1. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was completed to determine whether the Proposed Scheme would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site, taking into consideration appropriate mitigation.

4.1.2. Given the information provided above for the Appropriate Assessment, it is considered that the Proposed Scheme will not adversely affect the integrity of Lough Foyle SPA, River Roe and Tributaries SAC, Skerries and Causeway SAC, River Faughan and Tributaries SAC, River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, Owenkillew River SAC and Lough Foyle Ramsar site either alone or in-combination.

4.1.3. This conclusion is dependent on the mitigation measures outlined in Section 3 being implemented.

Appendix A - Site Location Plan

Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Legend

0 50 100 m

Original scale: 1:1,000 | Version: 1.0

Base Mapping: © OpenStreetMaps and its contributers

Appendix B – European Sites

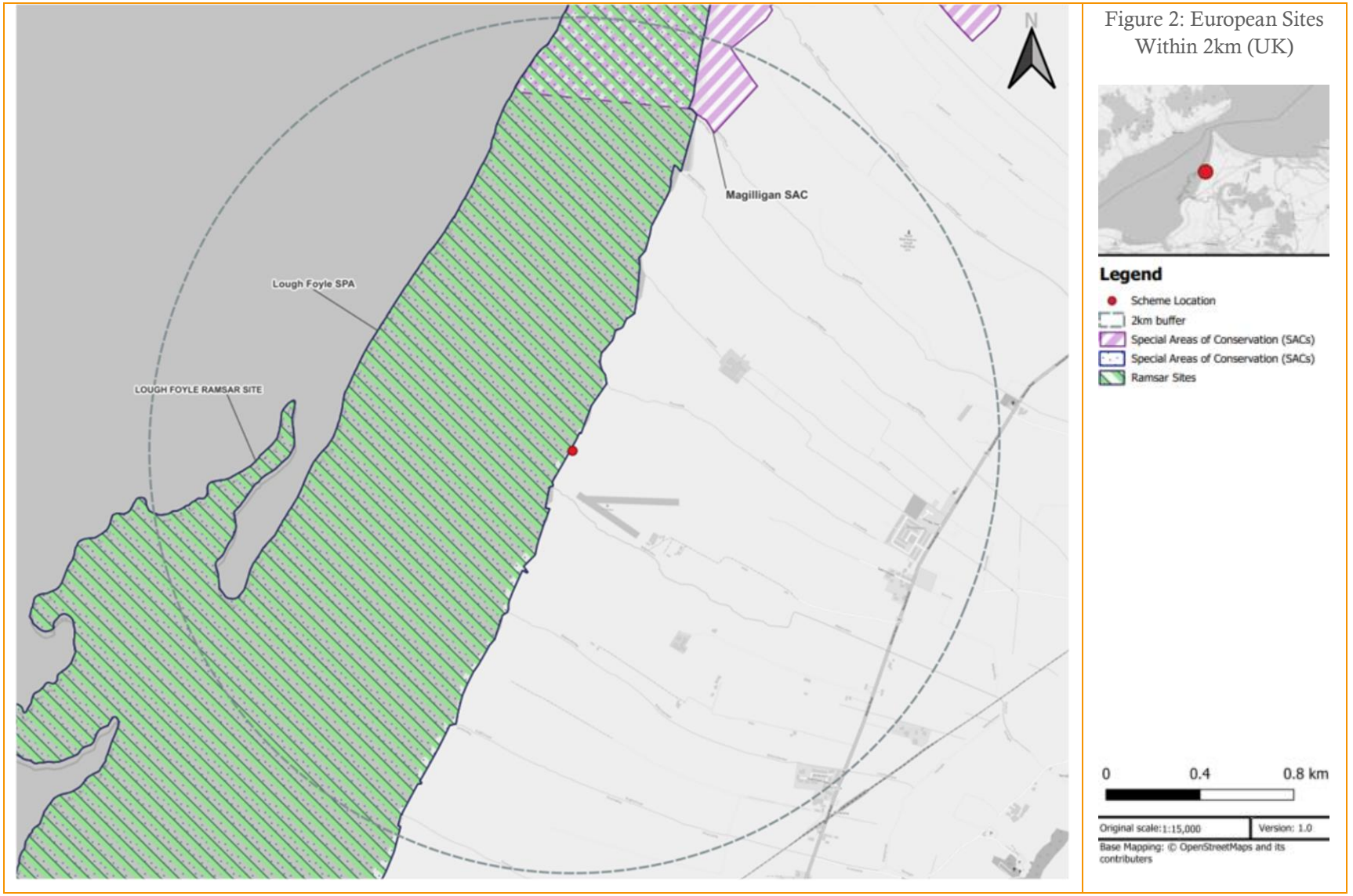

Figure 2: European Sites Within 2km (UK)

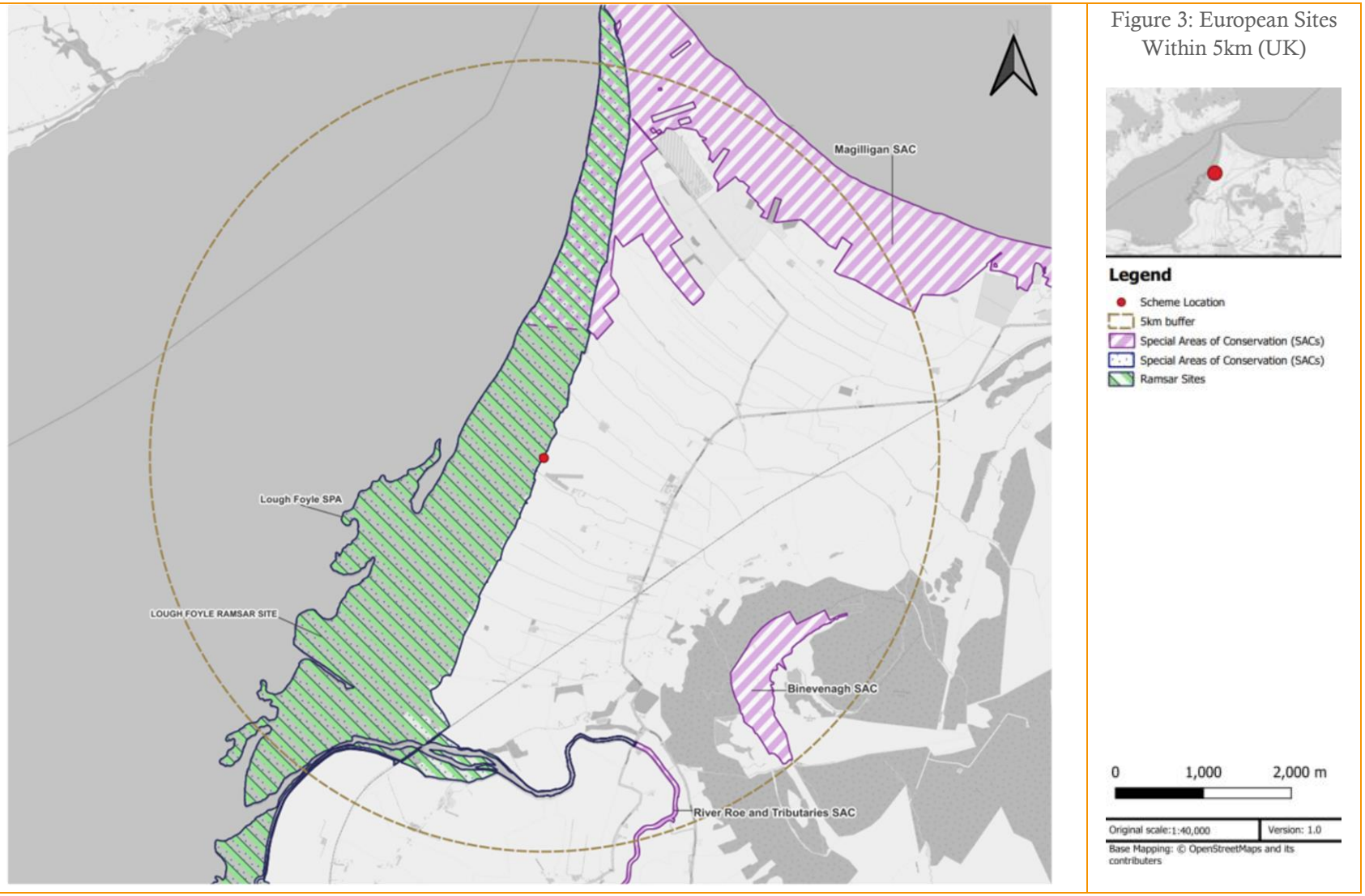

Figure 3: European Sites Within 5km (UK)

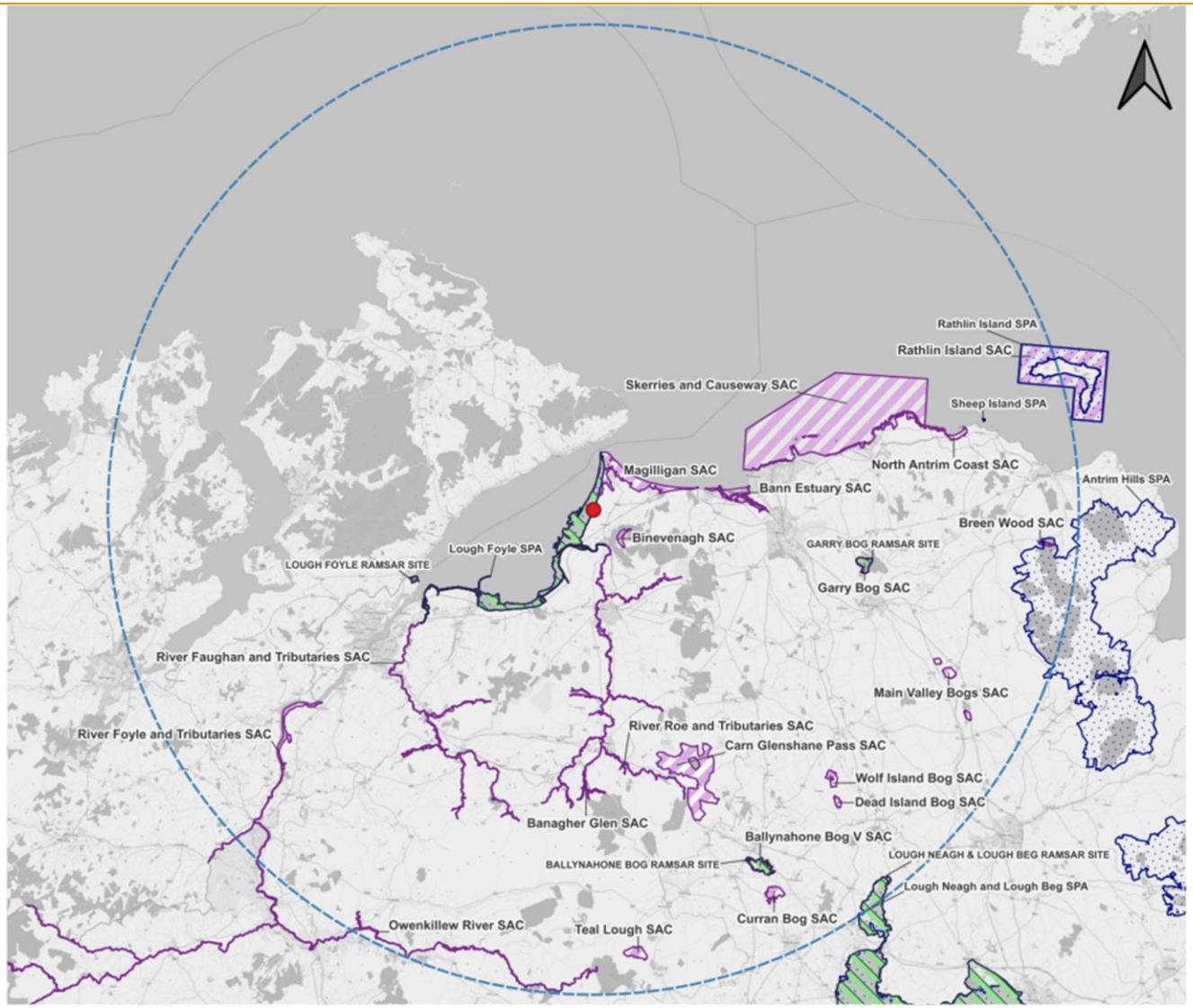

Figure 4: European Sites Within 50km (UK)

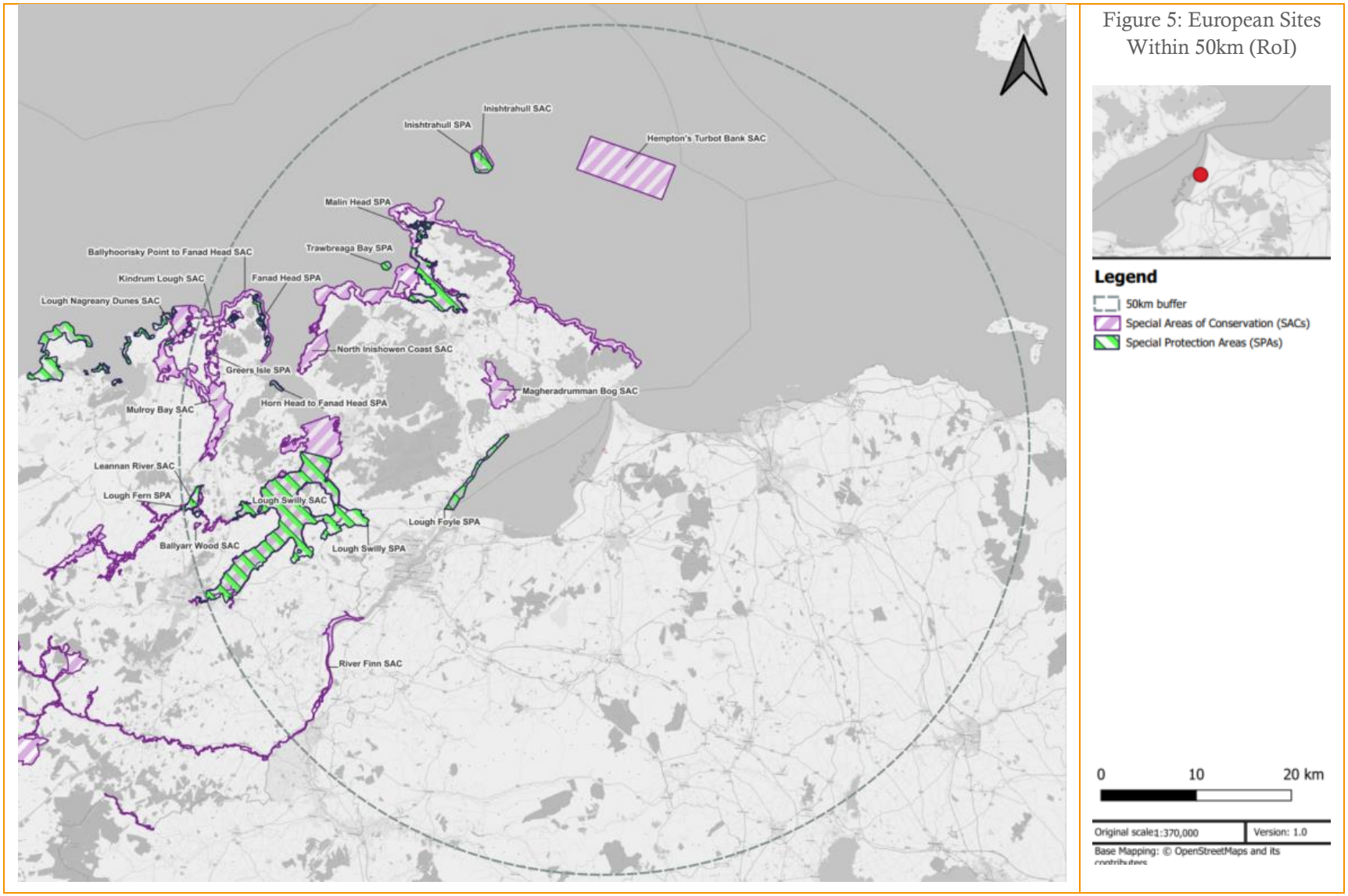

Figure 5: European Sites Within 50km (RoI)

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