FLYNN FURNEY
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Clare Glens River Walk Enhancement Plan, Co. Tipperary

Document Details

Client: Tipperary County Council
Scheme Name: Clare Glens River Walk Enhancement Plan
Document Title: Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Rev	Status	Date	Author(s)	Approved by
01	Completed	08/04/2025	CP	DMcC
02	Final	15/05/2025	CP	CP
03	Final – Amended meters figure to 1665m.	16/02/2026	CP	CP

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This report comprises information in support of screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in line with the requirements of Article 6[3] of the EU Habitats Directive (EC 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010; and the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, for the proposed improvement of the River Walk in Clare Glens in Newport, Co. Tipperary.

This screening exercise aims to determine whether the proposed works have the potential to significantly impact upon the conservation objectives and overall integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. This assessment is based upon a desk study and field work carried out by suitably qualified ecologists. Also included is a general assessment of the ecological status of the site and the potential impacts of the proposed works on the ecology of the surrounding area, including Designated Sites.

The following definitions are used for the terms “impact” and “effect”:

Impact – Actions resulting in changes to an ecological feature, e.g. the construction activities of a development removing a hedgerow.

Effect – Outcome to an ecological feature from an impact, e.g. the effects on an animal population from loss of a hedgerow.

The Competent Authority is obliged to examine the likely significant effects individually or in combination, of the proposed development on European Designated Sites in light of their specific Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Conservation Objectives (COs). If AA screening determines that there is likely to be significant effects on one or more of these sites, or the impacts are uncertain, then full AA must be carried out for the proposed development, including the compilation of a Natura Impact Statement to inform the decision making.

For the purposes of this assessment, a “significant effect” is:

“...an effect that either supports or undermines biodiversity conservation objectives for ‘important ecological features’ ... or for biodiversity in general. Conservation objectives may be specific (e.g. for a designated site) or broad (e.g. national/local nature conservation policy) or more wide-ranging (enhancement of biodiversity).

Effects can be considered significant at a wide range of scales from international to local. A significant effect is an effect that is sufficiently important to require assessment and reporting so that the decision maker is adequately informed of the environmental consequences of permitting a project.

> In broad terms, significant effects encompass impacts on structure and function of defined sites, habitats or ecosystems and the conservation status of habitats and species (including extent, abundance and distribution)."
>
> - CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (2018)

Sections 4 and 5 of the report comprises the AA Screening that specifically focuses on the potential for impacts on Natura 2000 sites deemed to be at risk from the proposed development.

2. Background to Screening for Appropriate Assessment

2.1. European Designated Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature in Ireland include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs);
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and;
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)

SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of sites. It is these sites that are of relevance to the screening process for this Appropriate Assessment Screening.

SPAs and SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. SPAs and SACs are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended.

Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is the basic designation for wildlife in Ireland. These are areas considered important for their habitats or species of plants and animals whose habitat requires protection and are protected by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act of 2000.

All European Designated Sites (henceforth simply referred to as “Designated Sites”) that are connected to the proposed development were considered during the desktop study in order to assess the potential for significant effects upon their QIs and COs. This stage of the process is used to determine whether any of the Designated Sites can be regarded as not being relevant to the process of Appropriate Assessment of the project, having no potential to be significantly affected.

2.2. Legislative Context

The methodology for this screening statement is clearly set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled ‘Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6 paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC’ (Oxford Brookes University, 2001). This report and contributory fieldwork were carried out in accordance with guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009, amended February 2010).

The assessment process is given in Articles 6[3] and 6[4] of the Habitats Directive and is commonly referred to as “Appropriate Assessment” or AA.

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Article 6[3] and 6[4] of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6[3] establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

> "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. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after 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] continues:

> "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.
>
> It is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project to provide the relevant information (ecological surveys, research, analysis etc.) for submission to the 'competent national authority'. If satisfied that the information is complete and objective, the competent authority will use this information to screen the project, i.e. to determine if an AA is required and to carry out the AA, if one is deemed necessary. The competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned."

The appropriate assessment process has four stages. Each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no

significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site, there is no requirement to proceed further. The four stages are:

1. Screening to determine if an appropriate assessment is required;
2. Appropriate assessment;
3. Consideration of alternative solutions, and;
4. Imperative reasons of overriding public interest/derogation.

Stage 1: Screening for AA

This report provides a stage one Screening for Appropriate Assessment. It aims to establish whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of Designated Sites; or in view of best scientific knowledge, if the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a Designated Site. This is done by examining the proposed plan or project and the COs of any Designated Sites that might potentially be affected.

The study is based on a preliminary impact assessment using both publicly available data and data collected during site surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could significantly impact any Natura 2000 sites, and if so an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required. The need to apply the precautionary principle in making any key decisions in relation to the tests of AA has been confirmed by European Court of Justice case law. Therefore, where significant effects are likely, possible or uncertain at screening stage, a stage two AA will be required.

3. Methodology

3.1. Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out as part of this screening process to gain an understanding of the surrounding human and natural environments. This included a review of available data from a range of sources on the site and its immediate environs.

3.2. Data Used To Carry Out The Assessment

The following sources of data were employed:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Appropriate Assessment Tool;
- EPA Maps (to identify watercourses, hydrology and Natura 2000 site boundaries);
- NPWS protected species database and online mapping;
- The Geological Survey of Ireland hydrological and lidar data and map viewer;
- The National Biodiversity Data Centre archives;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland, and;
- An Bord Pleanála's online database

3.3. SPR Model

This assessment was carried out using the source-pathway-receptor (SPR) approach, a standard tool in environmental assessment. The SPR concept in ecological impact assessment relates to the idea that for the risk of an impact to occur, a source is needed (e.g. a development site); an environmental receptor is present (a lake); and finally, there must a pathway between the source and the receptor (a watercourse linking the development site to the lake). Even though there might be a risk of an impact occurring, it does not necessarily mean that it will occur, and in the event that it does occur, it may not have significant effects on the receiving environment. Identification of a risk means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor.

In this instance, the most relevant receptors are any relevant Natura 2000 sites with connectivity of the proposed works. These were considered during the desktop study stage of this screening assessment in order to assess the potential for significant effects upon their QIs and COs.

3.4. Field Survey

Field work was carried on three separate days, on the 11th and the 25th of March and the 1st of April 2025 by a team of suitably experienced ecologists from Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd. Baseline ecological conditions were assessed. Habitats were classified according to A Guide to Habitats in Ireland (Fossitt, 2000). Where applicable, the habitat types and species usage were recorded (Smith et al. 2011; Scannell and Synnott, 1987; Wyse Jackson et al. 2016). Habitats were classified and dominant plant species noted according to the guidelines given by the JNCC (2010) with reference to best practice guidance for habitat survey and mapping (Smith et al., 2011) and Census Catalogue of the Flora of Ireland (Scannell & Synnott, 1987).

4. Screening of Designated Sites

4.1. Site Location

The proposed works area is located within Clare Glens, in Co. Tipperary, situated approximately 2.5km from the town of Newport. The length of the proposed path to be upgraded is approximately 1665 m, with starting point at Grid reference: R 72996 59956 in proximity of Clare Glens Playground, and finishing point at grid reference R 74024 59071 where the bridge links the path to the existing trail on the Limerick side of Clare Glens. Works are intended to follow the existing path on the Tipperary side.

4.2. Receiving Environment

Habitats of significant ecological value that were observed within the immediate surroundings of the works area are further described below in Table 1, with descriptions adapted from "A Guide to Habitats in Ireland" by Julie A. Fossitt, 2000.

Table 1. Description of habitats of significant ecological value found within and adjacent to the site.

Habitat Type	Species Occurring
Mixed Broadleaf/Conifer Woodland (WD2)	This is the predominant habitat type across Clare Glens. The woodland canopy includes native species such as oak (*Quercus sp*.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), and a variety of non-native species such as Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) dominates the understory; however, the non-native Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) are abundant throughout the woodland. The ground vegetation includes species such as Greater Woodrush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*). Killarney fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) is also recorded in several locations throughout this habitat.
Oak- Ash-Hazel-Woodland (WN2)	A narrow strip of this habitat exists in the north east corner of the site (Fig. 2). This habitat is dominated by Oak (*Quercus spp*.), with Ash (*F. excelsior*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) also present. Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus)* are prominent in the understory.
Willow-Alder-Ash Woodland (WN6)	This habitat occurs outside the footprint of the works area, on the eastmost and westernmost sides of Clare Glens. Species present are typical of this habitat, with Grey Willow (Salix cinerea) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) present in the canopy, and species such as Wood Anemone (*A. nemorosa*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), and Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) carpeting the ground layer.
Upland Eroding River (FW1)	The Annagh River runs along the project area within Clare Glens. The river in Clare Glens is fast flowing and has a steep gradient, with several waterfalls and rapids. The riverbed is characterized by exposed bedrock, and loose rock, with rare areas of deposition. The moss *Fontinalis antipiretica* is found across exposed rocks.
Stonewalls and Other Stonework (BL1)	This habitat borders the northern edge of the site. Remnants of old stone walls are also located within the woodland itself. This habitat supports a diverse bryophyte community, with species such as *Thamnobryum alopecurum*, *Hypnum cupressiforme, Atrichum undulatum.*

Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1)	This highly modified habitat surrounds the areas around Clare Glens, and it is dominated by Rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Fescue (*Festuca spp*.) and Cocksfoot Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*).
Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)	Highly modified habitat. Low diversity.

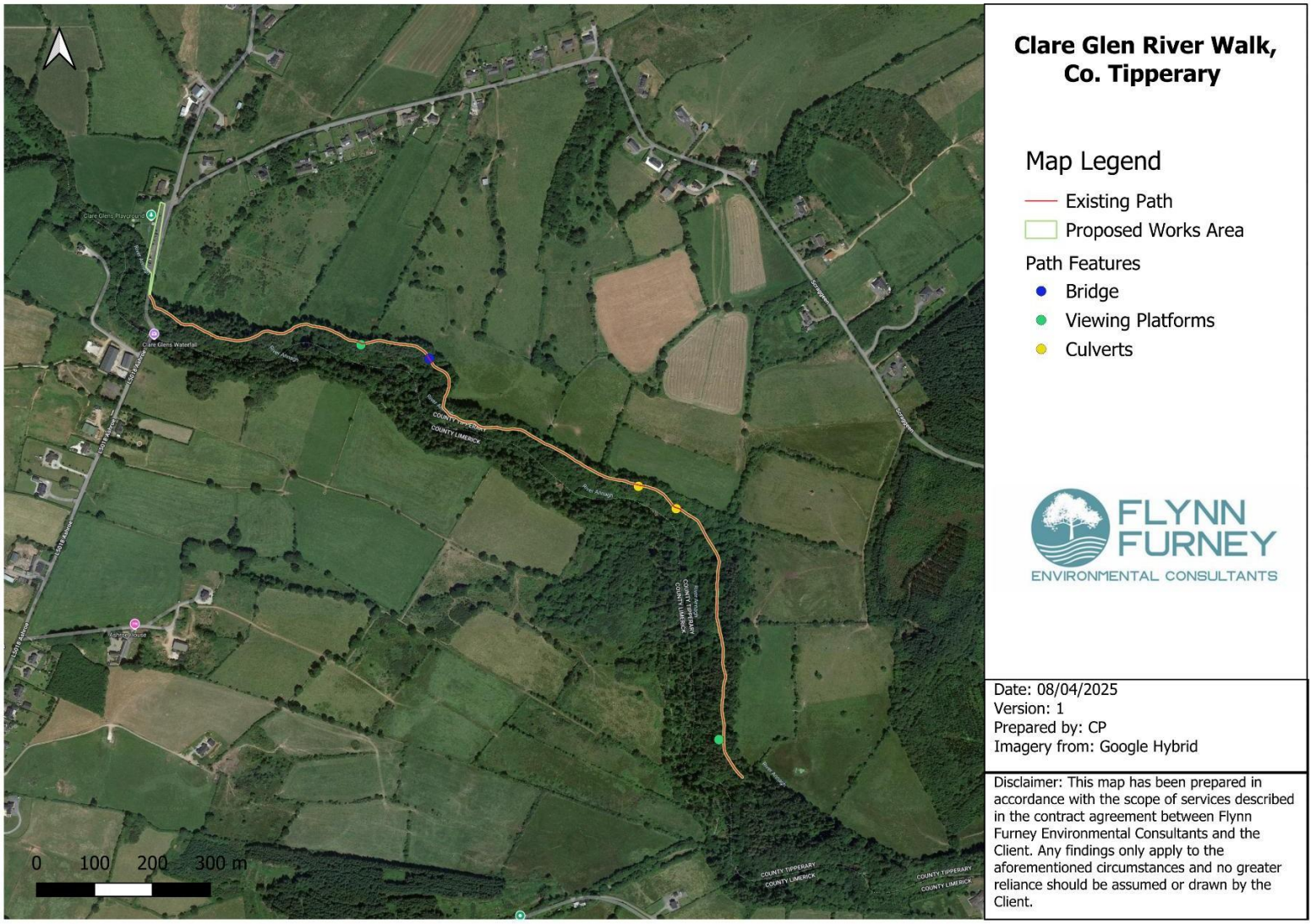

Figure 1. Overview of works area – detailed drawings of each path section further depicted in Fig.10-15 in Appendix 1.

4.2.1. Surface water and groundwater

The area is hydrologically important, with several recognised EPA watercourses located in proximity of the proposed works area. The most notable is River Annagh (EPA CODE: 25A020), which splits Clare Glens across its length, running westward to the south of the project area. (Figure 2). This river falls within the WFD sub catchment Kileengarrif_SC_010 (25D_4). From its source on the Mauherslieve and Foilduff mountains, the Annagh River links to the Shannon Catchment via the Killengarriff and the Mulkear Rivers, and it eventually discharges into the Shannon Estuary after flowing westward for approximately 24.5 km. Table 2 below reports on the status of River Annagh as well as other relevant watercourses as collated from the EPA map viewer under WFD 2016-21 and river flow databases.

Table 2. Summary of the status of relevant watercourses.

EPA segment name	Relation to proposed works area	WFD risk	Latest Status (2016-21)	Notes on Pressures
ANNAGH (TIPPERARY)_030	Adjacent to works area	Not at Risk	Q Value 4 - Good	No threats
ANNAGH (TIPPERARY)_020	Upstream of the works area	Not at Risk	Q Value 4 - Good	No threats
KILLEENGARRIFF_010	Downstream of the works area	Not at Risk	Q Value 4 - Good	No threats

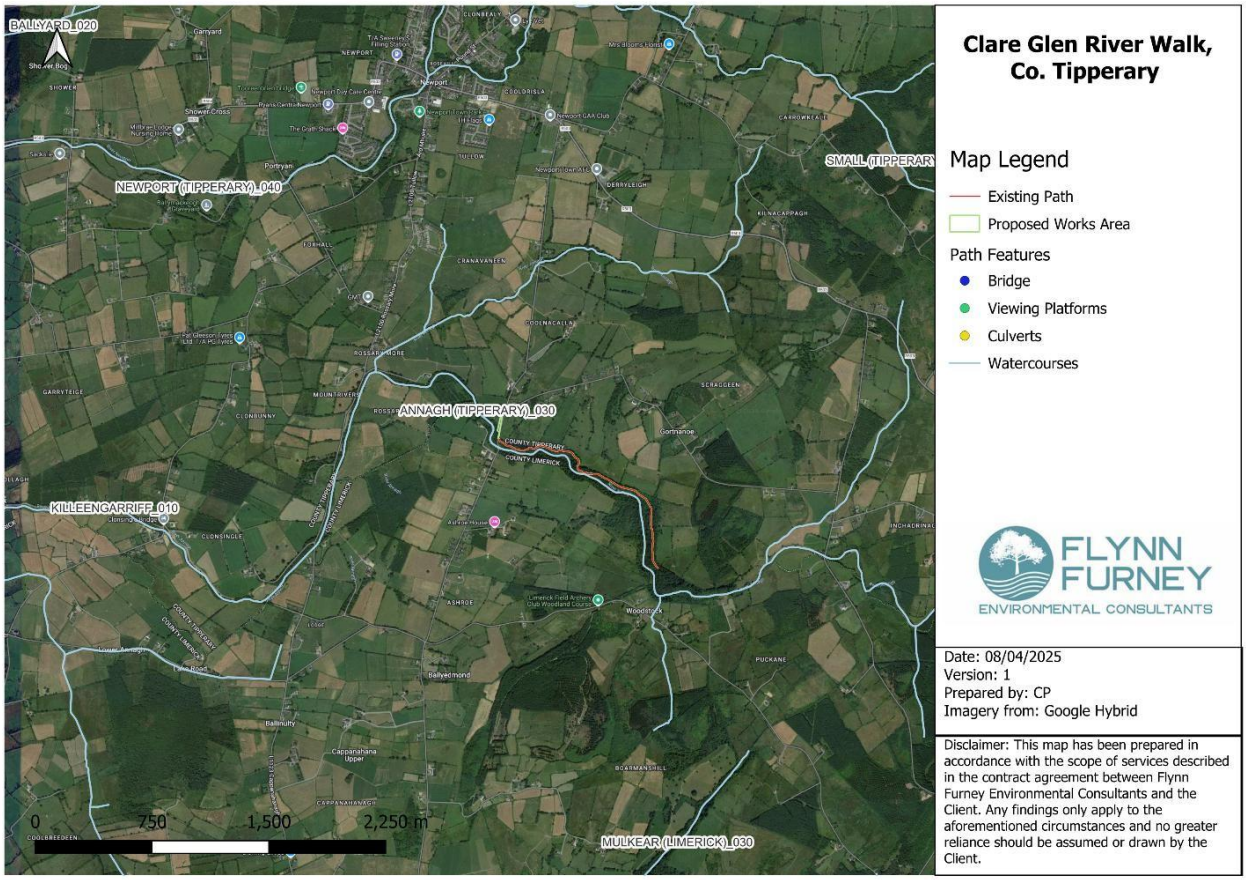

Figure 2. Overview of the local water courses.

Groundwater vulnerability under the works is described as “rock at near surface” throughout the project area, with the surrounding areas being described as “extreme”. (Figure 3). Subsoil permeability not yet been mapped for the project area (Figure 4). Given the lack of works at depth, no risk to any designated or local site is predicted as a result of possible impacts to groundwater.

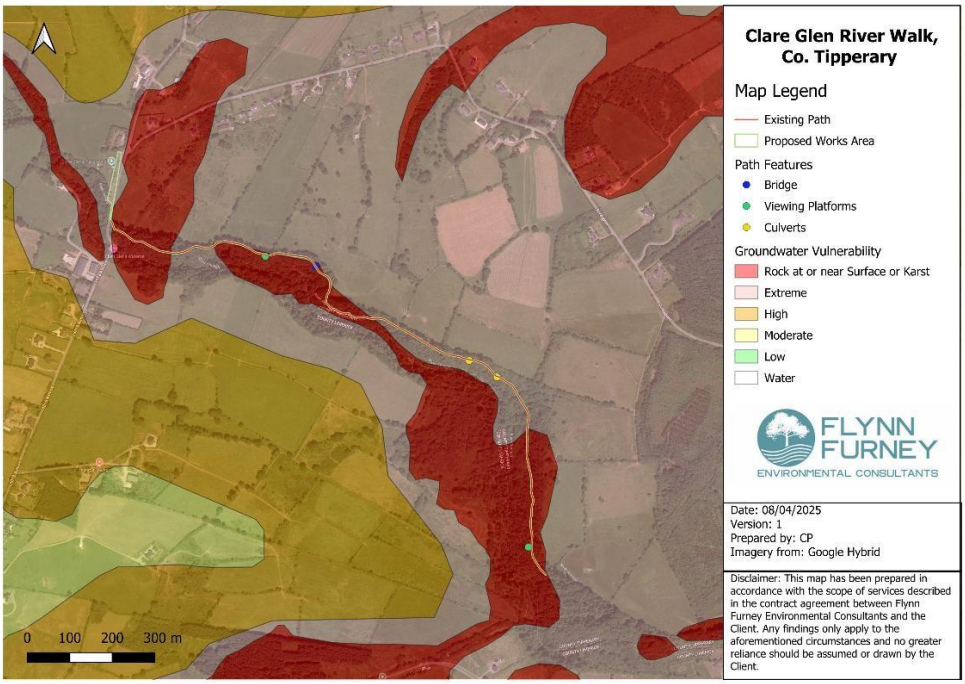

Figure 3. Overview of the groundwater vulnerability in the Proposed Works Area.

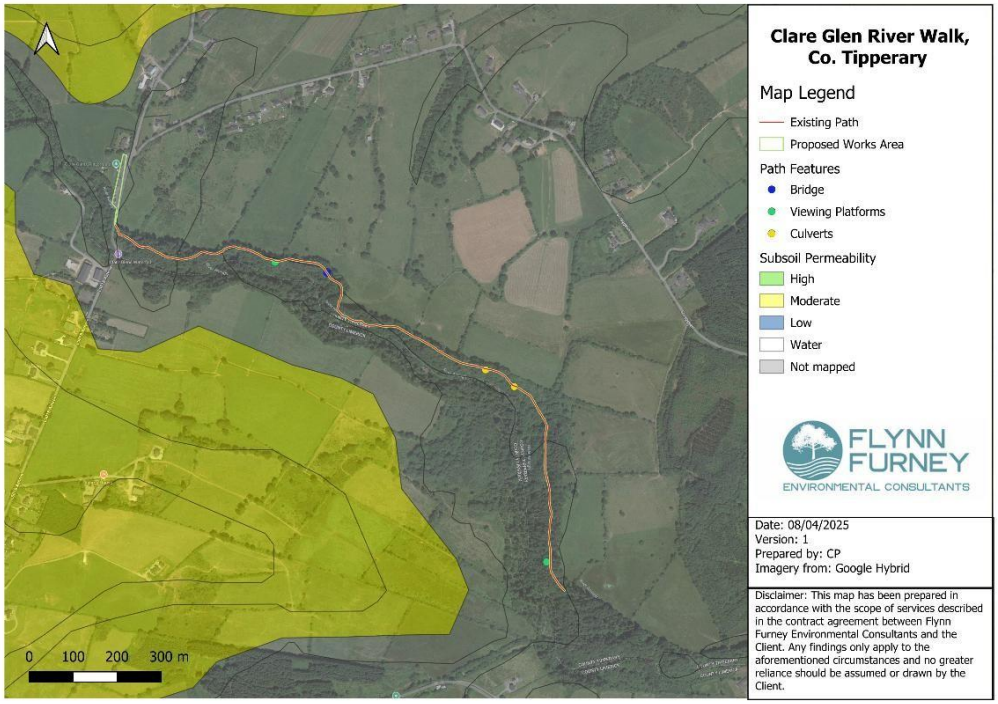

Figure 4. Overview of the Subsoil Permeability in the Proposed Works Area

4.2.3. Breeding Birds

All species of wild bird that occur naturally in Ireland are fully protected at all times by the Wildlife Act and relevant amending legislation. Similarly, all birds naturally occurring in the wild state are afforded a measure of protection by the EU Birds Directive but derogations may reduce protection for specific reasons. As such, any vegetation clearance must be carried out outside of the bird nesting season (March 1st - August 31st). A dedicated breeding bird survey was not carried out. However, all birds seen and heard were recorded and are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. List of bird species observed during the survey

Species name	Scientific name	Conservation Status
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	Green
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	Green
Common Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*	Green
Dipper	*Cinclus cinclus*	Green
European Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	Green
Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	Red
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	Green
Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*	Green
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	Green

4.2.4. Amphibians

While suitable habitat for both common frog (Rana temporaria) and smooth newt (Lissotriton vulgaris) was noted during the survey in the wetter areas of the woodland, no spawning was discovered within the works area. Frog spawn was however recorded in the adjacent green field (Grid reference: R 73197 59914). This is however located outside of the footprint of the works area. This reflects the NBDC records for the area encompassing the project site, which reports one record for Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*) within 2km of the project area.

4.2.5. Mammals

The NBDC records for the 2km grid squares encompassing the project area were examined. These were tetrads R75P, R75J[1]. Mammal species reported are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Mammal records in proximity of the proposed works area

Tetrads	Species name	Title of dataset	Designation
R75P, R75J	Eurasian Badger (*Meles meles*)	Badger Setts of Ireland Database	Protected species: Wildlife Acts
R75P, R75J	European Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	Atlas of Mammals of Ireland 2016-2025	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive || Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex II || Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV || Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
R75J	Eurasian Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)	Atlas of Mammals in Ireland 2016-2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
R75J	Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)	Atlas of Mammals in Ireland 2016-2025	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive || Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex V || Protected Species: Wildlife Acts

Notably, While burrows were noted along the boundary wall these were considered to be unsuitable for badgers (*Meles meles*), and it was determined that no badger activity occurs in this area. Similarly, no badger sett was recorded within the footprint of the works area. No signs of Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) were recorded; however, Pine Marten (*Martes martes*) droppings were recorded at several locations, indicating the presence of the mammal within the woods. Similarly, Otter (*Lutra lutra*) droppings were recorded at two locations along the Annagh River, indicating that the species likely uses the river for foraging. No holts, couches or slides were recorded. Records of mammal evidence are reported in Figure 5 below.

[1] NBDC tetrad R75P, R75J. Online available at: https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map Accessed March 2025.

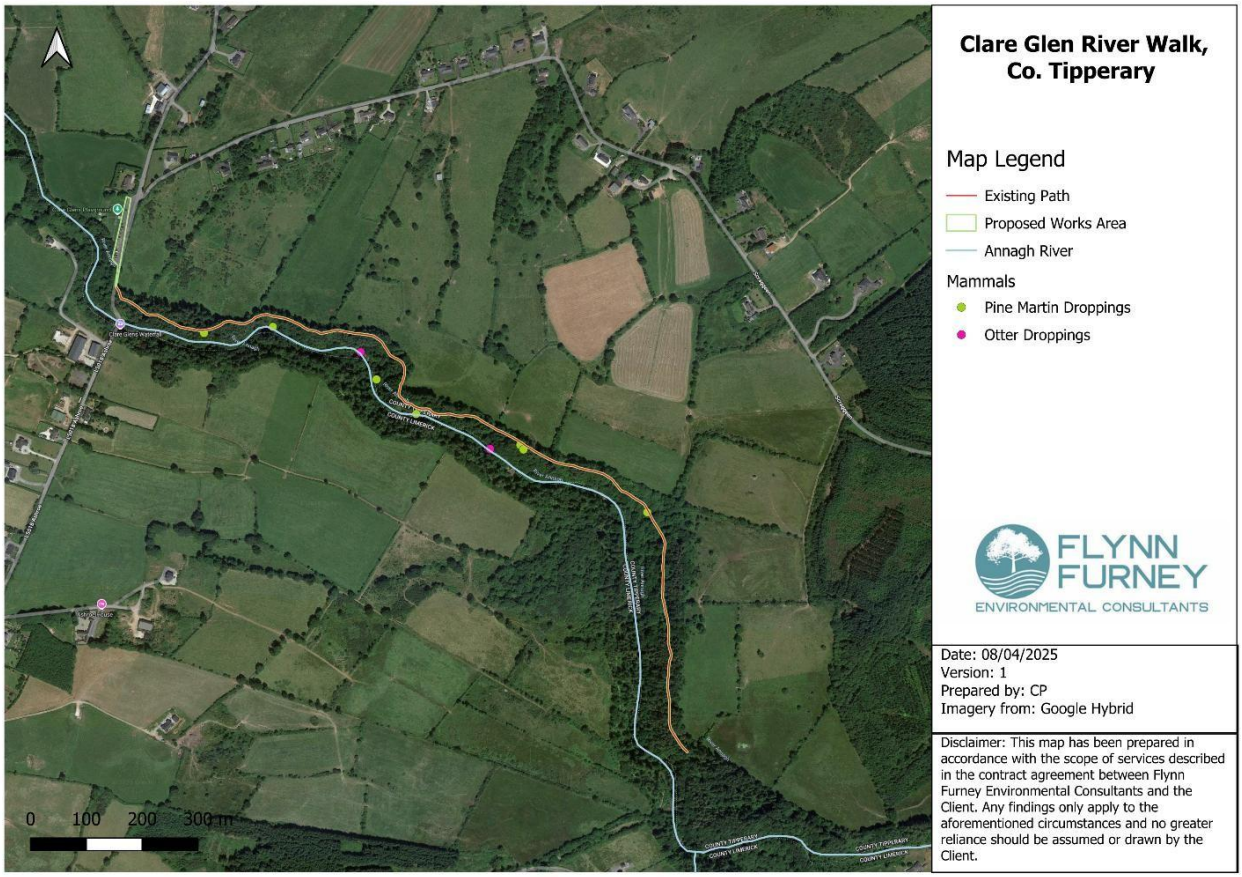

Figure 5. Records of mammal evident in Clare Glens

4.2.6. Bats

The NBDC records for the 2km grid squares encompassing the project area were analysed for bats as part of the desk survey. No Bats were recorded for Square Grids R75P, and R75J.

Overall, the suitability index for this area has been assigned a score of 33.89 Specific suitability for each species is described in the table below:

Table 5. Bat habitat suitability index of the proposed works area

Common name	Scientific name	Suitability Index
Lesser horseshoe bat	*Rhinolophus hipposideros*	4
Brown long-eared bat	*Plecotus auritus*	47
Natterer's bat	*Myotis nattereri*	40
Whiskered bat	*Myotis mystacinus*	42
Soprano pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	45
Leisler's bat	*Nyctalus leisleri*	44
Common pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	50
Nathusius' pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus nathusii*	1
Daubenton's bat	*Myotis daubentonii*	32
All Bats	//	33.89

4.2.7 Invasive Species

The Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000, contain a number of provisions relating to invasive non-native species (INNS), covering several sections and subsections of the Acts. It is prohibited, without licence, to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state, in any place in the State, any species of flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of invasive flora.

In July 2024, new regulations were enacted to address the shortcomings of previous legislation on Invasive Alien Species. The European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No. 374 of 2024) introduce significant measures aimed at tackling the issue of invasive species. These regulations establish a list of Invasive Alien Species of National Concern, referred to as First Schedule List. The regulations specify various offenses under section 17(1), which prohibit individuals from engaging in certain activities. These activities include the introduction of invasive species into the State, breeding, importing, exporting, or transporting these species within the State—except when such transportation is part of an eradication effort. Additionally, the regulations forbid placing these species on the market, using, exchanging, or offering them for exchange, allowing them to reproduce or cultivate, and releasing them into the environment.

During the survey, two invasive species were recorded. These are Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*). The former is listed amongst the First Schedule species. The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) classes both species as having "High Risk of Impact". The extent of Rhododendron ponticum on site is reported below in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Invasive Species recorded adjacent to the proposed works area

4.2.8. Significance of Flora and Fauna

Evidence of protected mammals is detailed in section 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 above. While all bird species are protected to some extent under Irish legislation, no (Birds Directive) Annex species was recorded during the survey. One plant species from the Flora Protection Order list, Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*), was found during the field survey. Similarly, the woodland was classed as being an Annex Quality habitat, and it is found within the footprint of the site. These two features will be explored further in section 5.

4.3. Proposed Works

The works propose the upgrade of approximately 1665 m of existing path within Clare Glens. The upgrades include adding a 50mm layer of blinding to path as well as 60mm layer of clause 804. Where the path is currently waterlogged, works will further include the addition of Terram geotextile membrane and the use of large stone >100mm with a minimum depth of 300m to facilitate drainage. In sections where the path is adjacent to the river, proposed works include the addition of reclaimed log from existing forestry, which will be fixed into edge of path where path edge and bank need to be secured. Timber peg will be used to support the logs. Timber used will be larch or similar approved species, with a diameter of 900mm ctrs. Gravel stabilization grid is proposed to be utilized where required in order to limit wash out of path. Existing culverts will be upgraded, with new piping (pipe diameter to be specified), and adding a layer of blinding path and clause 804. A Rock Armour of single sized large stone will be laid around the inlet pipe to restrict the incoming flow, while large loose stones will be placed around the outlet to prevent any blockage.

Signage posts and fencing throughout the River Walk will be upgraded and fixed with gen 3 concrete or quick setting concrete as approved. Fencing will be made up of treated timber rails and posts and fixed with 3.5mm Dia x 90mm galvanized ring shank nails.
The existing mass concrete bridge present at Grid Ref: R 73475 59750 will be removed and any waste generated will be removed from site and recycled. New galvanized steel bridge beams, new formed steel handrail with 8mm capping plate, and a new bridge deck will be installed on the existing abutments. The bridge deck will consist of timber treated with anti-slip coating. The level and gradient of the existing path will be updated to suit the revised bridge levels.

Two viewing platforms will be installed along the path. This will involve the removal of no. 1 tree, and the installation of the viewing platform foundations, a galvanized steel frame, a deck made of treated timber with anti-slip coating, and a woven steel handrail. The level and gradient of the existing path will be revised to suit the viewing platform levels. Detailed drawings of the proposed works are reported in figures 10-15 in Appendix 1.

4.4. Works, Site Characteristics And Risks To The Environment

The principal risks posed from the project proposal relate to the potential alteration/disturbance of Annex Quality habitats, the decline or loss of the Killarney Fern populations present within the SAC, as well as the potential spread of invasive species within designated sites as a result of this project.

4.5. Nearby Designated Sites

The nearest designated sites to the works area are listed below along with distances of the designated sites to the proposed site of works.

Table 6. List of designated sites in the vicinity of the proposed works site

No.	Site Name & Designation	Avg. distance from works area
1	Clare Glen SAC - 000930	0 km
2	Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA - 004165	0.2 km
3	Lower River Shannon SAC - 002165	0.4 km
4	Glenstal Wood SAC – 001432	2.3 km
5	Keeper Hill SAC - 001197	9.9 km
6	Silvermines Mountains West SAC – 002258	11.4 km
7	Silvermine Mountains Sac - 000939	11.5 km
8	Bolingbrook Hill SAC - 002124	14.9 km
9	Glenomra Wood SAC - 001013	15.1 km
10	Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA - 004058	16.3 km
11	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA - 004077	17.3 km
12	Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC - 002312	17.5 km

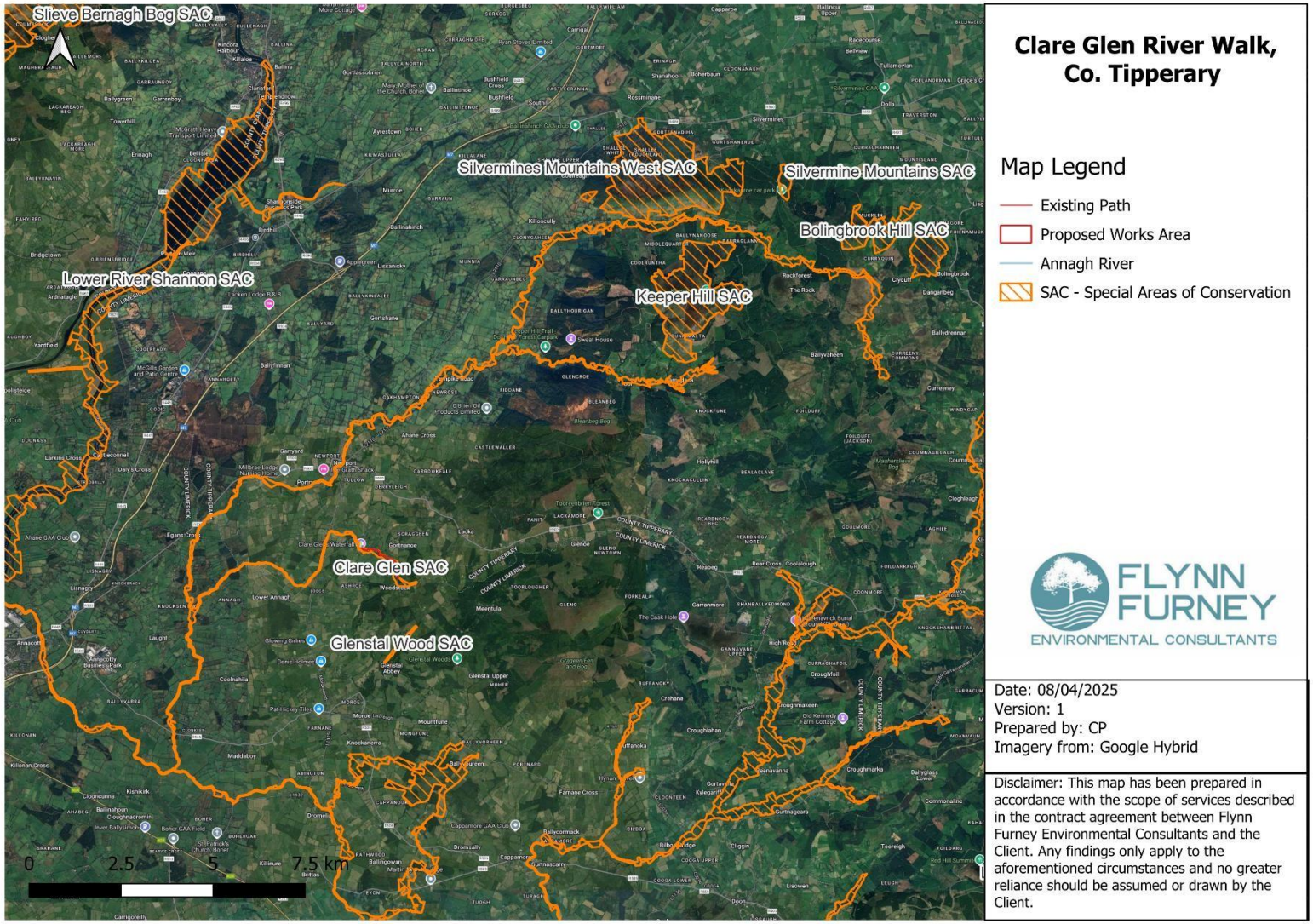

Figure 7. Proximity of the works to the nearby Special Areas of Conservation.

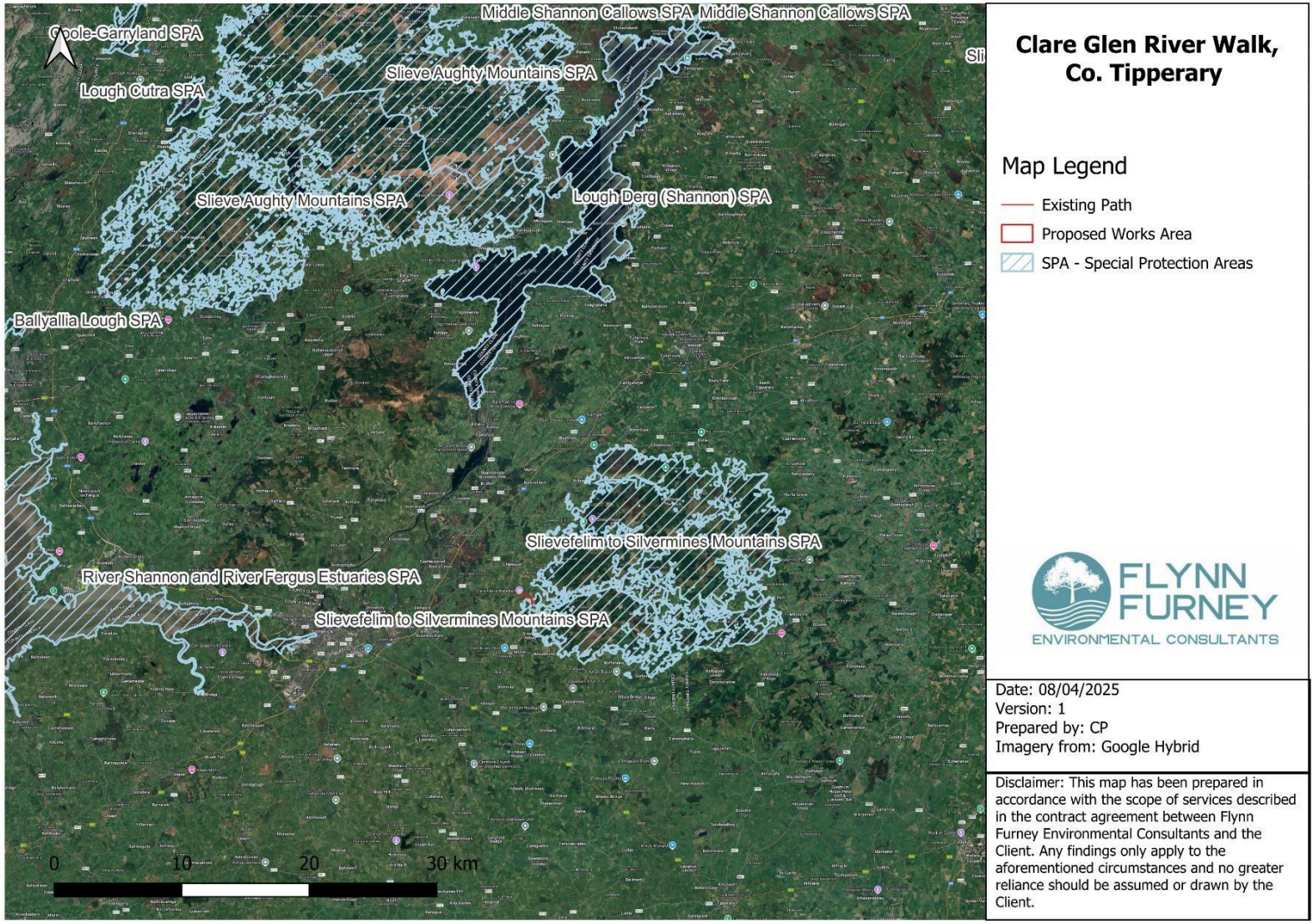

Figure 8. Proximity of the works to the nearby Special Protection Area.

Table 7. Designated Sites near the proposed project.

Site Name	Qualifying Interests (* denotes a priority habitat)	Distance (km)	Source-Pathway-Receptor Link	Rationale
Clare Glen SAC - 000930	• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] • Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]	0	A source-pathway-receptor link exists for this SPA.	Connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area was identified as there is special overlap between these two. **Possible impacts that could adversely influence this Qualifying Interest cannot be excluded.**.
Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA - 004165	• Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]	0.2	A source-pathway-receptor link exists for this SPA.	As connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area was identified due to the proximity of this designated site to the proposed works area. **Possible impacts that could adversely influence this Qualifying Interest cannot be excluded.**
Lower River Shannon SAC - 002165	• Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] • Estuaries [1130] • 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]	0.4	A source-pathway-receptor link exists for this SAC.	As connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area was identified due to the proximity of this designated site to the works area. **Possible impacts that could adversely influence this Qualifying Interest cannot be excluded.**

	• 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] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] • Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] • Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] • Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] • Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] • Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] • Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] • Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] • Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] • Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]			

Glenstal Wood SAC – 001432 (different catchment)	• Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]	2.3 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**
Keeper Hill SAC - 001197	• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] • Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]	9.9 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**
Silvermines Mountains West SAC – 002258	• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] • European dry heaths [4030] • Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae [6130]	11.4 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**

Silvermine Mountains Sac - 000939	• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] • Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]	11.5 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**
Bolingbrook Hill SAC - 002124	• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] • European dry heaths [4030] • Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]	14.9 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**
Glenomra Wood SAC - 001013	• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	15.1 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**

Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA - 004058	• Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] • Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061] • Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067] • Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	16.3 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA - 004077	• Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] • Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038] • Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] • Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048] • Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] • Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] • Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054] • Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056] • Scaup (Aythya marila) [A062] • Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] • Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] • Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] • Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] • Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143] • Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] • Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]	17.3 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**

	• Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] • Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] • Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] • Greenshank (Tringa nebularia) [A164] • Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC - 002312	• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] • European dry heaths [4030] • Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]	17.5 km	No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of a likely significant effects identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.	Lack of connectivity between the proposed works area and the designated area. No works or activities proposed could conceivably impact upon the species or the habitats described in the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 site. **This site will not be considered further.**

It must be noted that there may be inaccuracies with some of the boundaries of Designated Sites on NPWS digital mapping, therefore the SAC and SPA boundaries used for this assessment are interpreted based on available data.

The proposed works will take place within the *Clare Glen SAC*. The *Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA* and the *Lower River Shannon SAC* are also located in close proximity to the proposed works, located at 0.2 and 0.4 km from the site respectively. Therefore, potential connectivity was identified between these designated sites and the proposed site of works, and there is thus a potential pathway for impacts. **Possible impacts that could adversely influence the Qualifying Interests of these designated sites cannot be excluded.**

No risk to the conservation objectives of any other Natura 2000 designated sites is considered likely due to one or more of the following:

• Lack of connectivity between the works areas and any designated area
• Distance between the designated area and the works area and/or;
• No likely significant change to chemical or physiological condition of any designated site as a result of the proposed development.

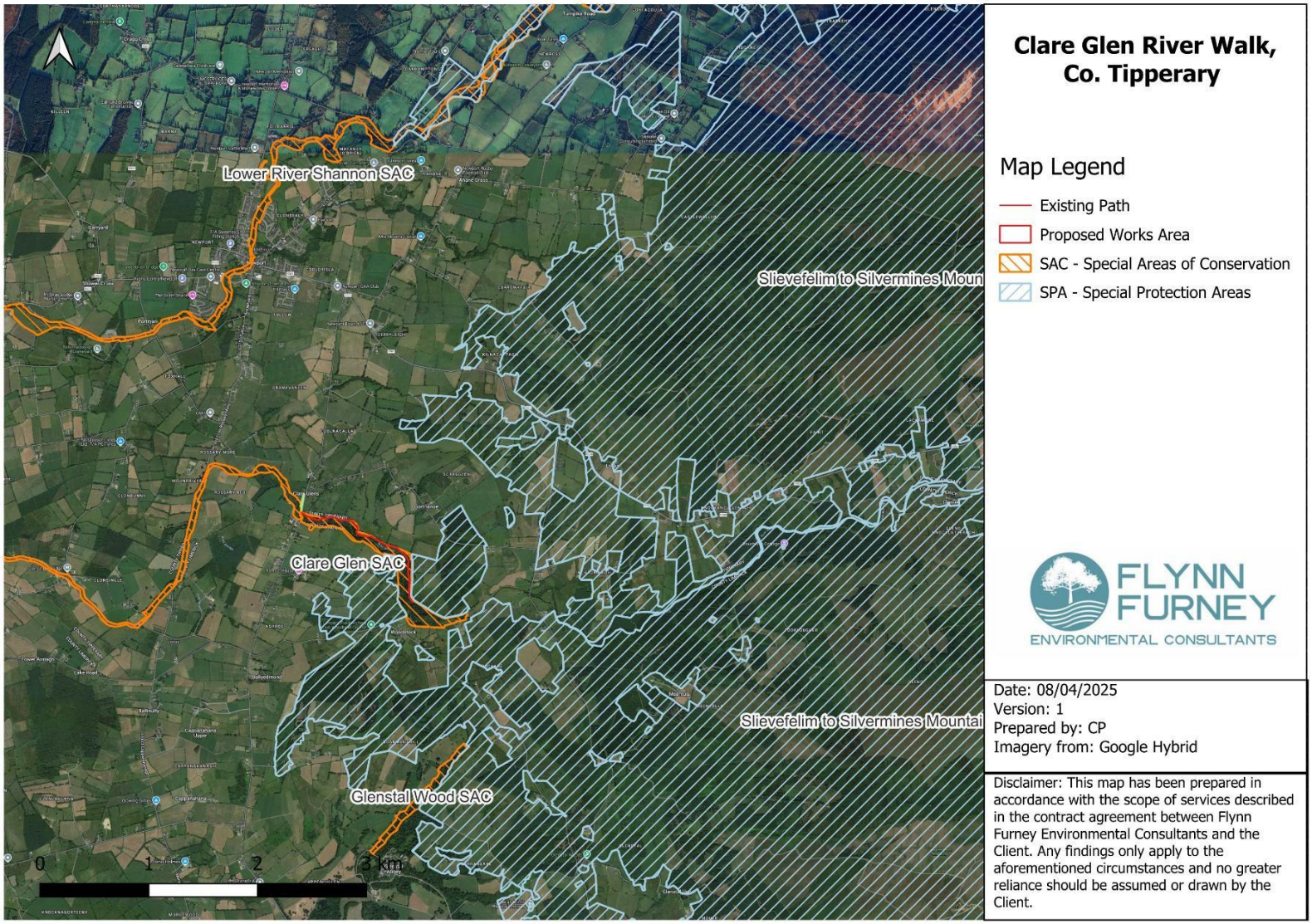

Figure 9. Details of the proximity of the proposed works to the abovementioned designated sites.

5. ARTICLE 6(3) SCREENING ASSESSMENT

This section of the report focuses solely on the potential for the proposed works to impact upon Natura 2000 sites. Section 4.5 of this report excluded any direct impacts or pathways for impacts on any Natura 2000 sites. This was based upon the proximity of the designated sites to the proposed development. The potential for impacts on the Natura 2000 sites is considered below.

6.1. Article 6(3) Assessment Criteria

6.1.1 Description of the individual elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

None of the individual elements of the proposed development as planned are likely to give rise to significant impacts on the Natura 2000 sites, given the limited scale of the works and location of the works as planned.

6.1.2 Description of any Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Site.

Any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans or projects, on any Natura 2000 sites by virtue of the following criteria: size and scale, land take, distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature thereof, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the works are detailed in the table below.

Table 9. Assessment of Likely Impacts.

Assessment of Likely Effects	
Size and scale	The proposed site has an approximate length of 1665 m. Owing to size and scale of the proposed works there will be no impact on any Natura 2000 Sites.
Land-take	The works will take place within the designated site Clare Glen SAC. However, works aim to improve on an existing path, widening the path. Hence land-take, although minimal will occur as a result of this project.
Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;	The proposed works area is located within the Clare Glen SAC (000930). Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (004165) and Lower River Shannon (002165) are the nearest designated site at a remove of 0.2 km and 0.4 km from the site respectively. Other Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence are Glenstal Wood SAC (001432) located at 2.3 km from the site, Keeper Hill SAC (001197) located at 9.9 km from the site, Silvermines Mountains West SAC

	(0002258) located at 11.4 km from the site, Silvermine Mountains SAC (00939) located at 11.5 km from the site, Bolingbrook Hill SAC (002124) located at 14.9 km from the site, Glenomra Wood SAC (001013) located at 15.1 km from the site, Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (004058) located at 16.3 km from the site, River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077) located at 17.3 km from the site, and Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC (002312) located at 17.5 km from the site.
Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);	No water will be abstracted from the site during the construction or operation of the site. Hence, there will be no impact on the Natura site as a result of resource requirements.
Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);	There will be no additional emissions from the site. No emissions are predicted that will impact upon any Natura 2000 site. Noise will not be significant. No in-stream works are planned.
Excavation requirements;	No excavations will take place within any Natura 2000 Site.
Transportation requirements;	Site has existing access via local road -Hillcrest Manor Rd. No other means of access will be required during any phase of the project.
Duration of construction, operation, etc.;	Duration of works not known at time of writing. However, these works are expected to be completed in Q4 of 2025.
Timing of works	Works shall be timed to minimise disturbance to native species. No woody vegetation will be cleared during the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive).
Cumulative or In-combination Impacts with other Projects and Plans	A number of other projects have been considered as part of the screening process. A search of National Planning Application Database and the Tipperary County Council planning web portal was carried out as part of this desktop study. A number of planning applications were reviewed, the majority of which for the retention and modifications of private residences. The closest to the proposed works area is App. 20991 for the construction of an entrance, dwelling house, garage, domestic waste water treatment system with polishing filter together with all associated site works, granted in 2020. Granted in 2023, application 23257 is the most recent in the areas surrounding the proposed works site, for the construction of two storey extension to the rear of house. In terms of large-scale developments, App. 16600472 for the extension of duration of a wind farm established in 2011 was granted in 2016 to 2022. This development is located approx. 3.2 km from the proposed works area. No other application relative to this particular development exists at the time of writing. No other application was considered for the purpose of this screening exercise. No application was found likely to create cumulative or in combination effects that will impact Natura 2000 sites.

6.2. Description of any Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Sites

Any likely changes to the Natura 2000 site are described in the table below with reference to the following criteria: reduction of habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, changes in key indicators of conservation value and climate change.

Table 10. Likely changes to the Nature 2000 site.

Assessment of Likely Changes	
Reduction of habitat area	There will be no loss of habitat within any Natura 2000 site as a result of the proposed works.
Disturbance to key species	All works associated with the proposed development will take place within the Clare Glen SAC. No loss of or impacts upon habitats of the qualifying interests of the nearest Natura 2000 site is considered likely. Evidence of Otter activity was noted during the field survey. Interference with riparian otter habitat present and impacts to water quality that may affect its prey availability cannot be excluded. Direct noise or vibration disturbance on Otter and Hen Harrier as a consequence of the proposed works cannot be excluded. Indirect impacts to the Annex II Alluvial Woodland present immediately downstream of the works area cannot be excluded.
Habitat or species fragmentation	Impact within any Natura 2000 sites with regard to habitat or species fragmentation cannot be excluded.
Reduction in species density	Reduction in species density is considered unlikely within any SAC or SPA as a result of the proposed works but cannot be excluded.
Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.)	Habitat integrity is the most relevant of the key indicators of conservation value with regard to the nearest Natura 2000 site. The risk of any significant impacts on Habitat integrity within this site during the construction phase cannot be excluded due to nature of the works and the hydrological connection to other adjacent Natura 2000 sites.
Climate change	No damage to any Natura 2000 site as a result of or in combination with enhanced climate change is predicted as a result of the proposed development.

6.2.1 Likelihood of Interference with the key relationships that define the structure and function of the Natura 2000 site as a whole

It is not considered likely that the proposed development will interfere with any of the key relationships of any Natura 2000 site. It is considered that there will be no long-term residual impacts from the proposed works upon the key relationships that define any Natura 2000 sites.

6.2.2 Indicators of Significance as a Result of the Identification of Effects

Indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects as set out below in terms of loss, fragmentation, disruption, disturbance and changes to the key elements of site.

Table 11. Indicators of significance.

Assessment of Likely Changes	
Loss	Loss of habitat or species of conservation interest cannot be excluded as a result of the proposed works.
Fragmentation	Habitat fragmentation of any Natura 2000 site cannot be excluded as a result of the proposed works.
Disruption	Significant risk of disruption to any Natura 2000 sites cannot be excluded as a result of the proposed works.
Disturbance	Significant risk of disturbance to any Natura 2000 sites cannot be excluded as a result of the proposed works.
Changes in key elements of the site (water quality etc.)	While unlikely, long-term changes to any key elements of any Natura 2000 site cannot be excluded as a result of the proposed works..

6.2.3 Description of any Likely Significant Impacts or Indeterminate Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Site

Based on a consideration of the likely impacts arising from the proposed works and a review of their significance in terms of the conservation interests and objectives of the Natura 2000 Sites screened, no significant impacts have been identified on the Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed development.

6.3 Screening Conclusions

This report presents the information for the relevant authority, Tipperary County Council, to carry out a screening for AA. A recommendation that a stage II is/is not required is made below, based on the findings of this assessment, which are summarised in Table 7. It is for the relevant authority to reach one of the following conclusions:

(i) A stage II AA of the proposed development is required if it cannot 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 any European Designated Sites.

(ii) (ii) A stage II AA 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 any European Designated Sites.

Name of project or plan:
Improvement of Clare Glens River Walk, County Tipperary.

Name and location of Natura 2000 Site:
Clare Glen SAC (within the works area), Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (0.2 km away) and Lower River Shannon (0.4 km away)

Description of project or plan:
Improvement of the existing Clare Glens River Walk trail.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?:
The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site.

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?:
On the basis that the proposed project will have no impacts on any Natura 2000 sites and no other project or plan that could have significant effects has been identified, no cumulative or incombination impacts are predicted.

6.3.1 Assessment of Significance of Effects

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site:

Significant direct impacts to the QI of Clare Glen SAC, Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA, and Lower River Shannon SAC cannot be excluded as a result of the proposed works.
The works encroach, although minimally, on the Annex I habitat Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles. They also encroach upon two colonies of Killarney Fern; hence the loss of these colonies is possible. The accidental introduction of pollutants into surface waters due to the works could directly impact Annex I habitats located downstream, and Annex II species, leading to significant effects on aquatic ecosystems that may impact their prey availability. Additionally, noise and vibration disturbances may affect species' breeding, forage, and migration, requiring appropriate measures to minimize losses. Therefore, impacts that could adversely influence these three designated sites cannot be excluded.

6.3.2 Data collected to carry out the assessment

The following sources of data were employed:
• Environmental Protection Agency mapping database
• National Biodiversity Data Centre databases
• Historical OSI Maps
• NPWS protected species database and online mapping
• Tipperary County Council Planning Database (ePlan)

Level of assessment completed.
• Desk Study
• Site visit & Surveys in March and April 2025
• JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Assessment
• Fossitt Level III Habitat Recording

6.4 Overall Conclusions

In view of the best and objective scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites reviewed in the screening exercise, i**mpacts resulting from** the proposed development **that could adversely influence the Qualifying Interest of Clare Glen SAC, Slievefelim and Silvermines Mountain SPA and Lower River Shannon SAC cannot be excluded.**

Therefore, it is recommended that Appropriate Assessment is required.

7. References

CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester. https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Combined-EclA-guidelines-2018-compressed.pdf

European Commission DE (2021). Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

Environmental Protection Agency, Appropriate Assessment Tool: https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool

Fossitt, J.A. (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

Geological Survey of Ireland (accessed 2025) Maps and Data: https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/default.aspx

JNCC (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, UK.

Tipperary County Council Planning Web Portal (Accessed March 2025). https://tipp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=460724c4b3de413cbbeb853111df588a

National Biodiversity Data Centre (accessed March 2025) Biodiversity Maps: https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/

National Planning Application Map Viewer: https://myplan.ie/national-planning-application-map-viewer/

National Roads Authority (2009) Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected flora and fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes. NRA (now Transport Infrastructure Ireland), Dublin.

NPWS (2009) Threat Response Plan: Otter (2009-2011). National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Dublin.

Rich, T.C.G., Fitzgerald, R., 2002. Life cycle, ecology and distribution of Schoenoplectus triqueter (L.) Palla (Cyperaceae), Triangular Club-rush, in Britain and Ireland. Online, available at: https://archive.bsbi.org.uk/Wats24p57.pdf

Scannell, M J P and Synott, D M, 1987, Census Catalogue of the Flora of Ireland. Stationary Office, Dublin.

Smith, G.F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hora, K. and Delaney, E., 2011. Best practice guidance for habitat survey and mapping. The Heritage Council: Ireland.

Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M. (2016) Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dublin, Ireland.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Maps

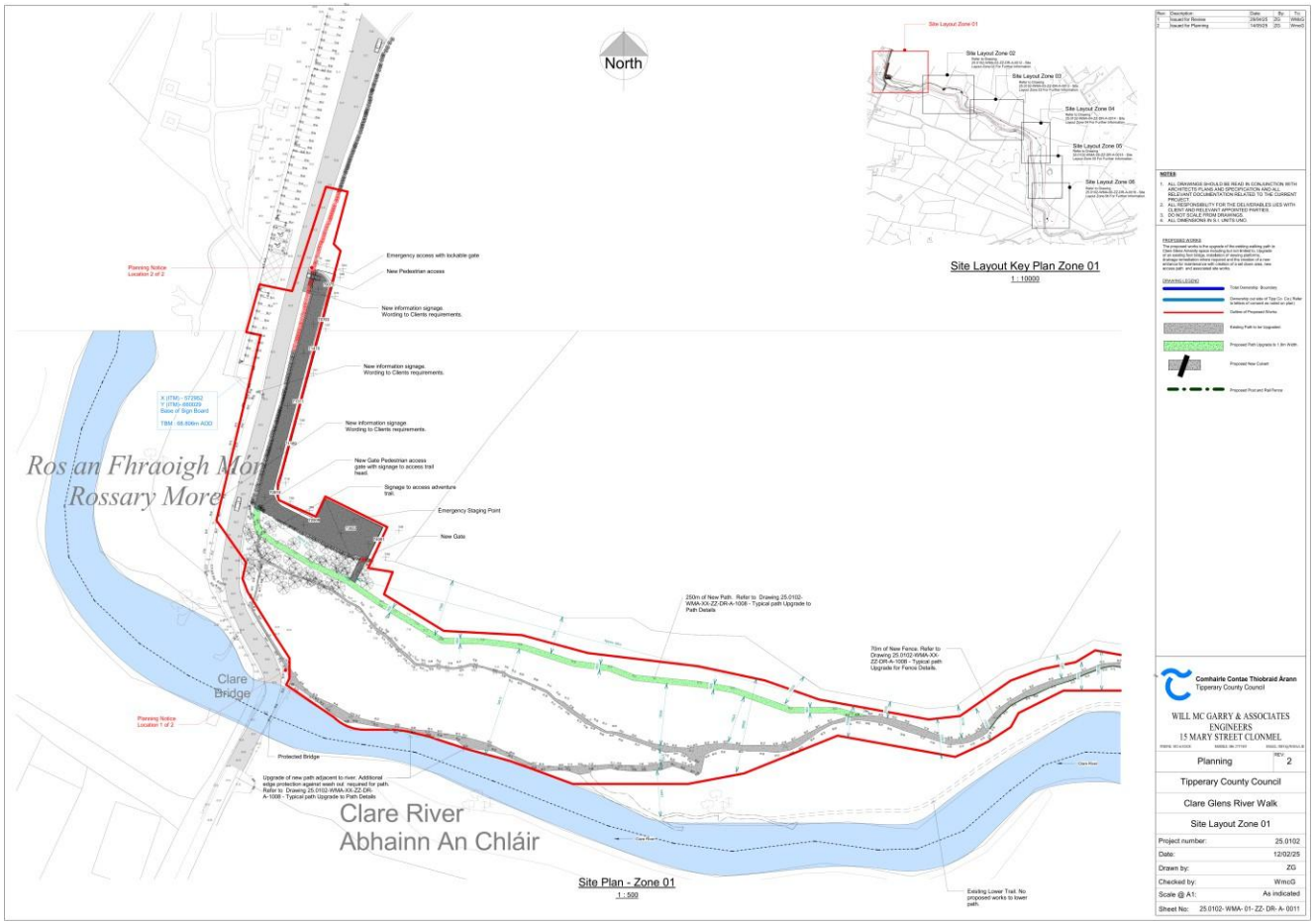

Figure 10. Site drawing - details of section 1 (compound and entrances)

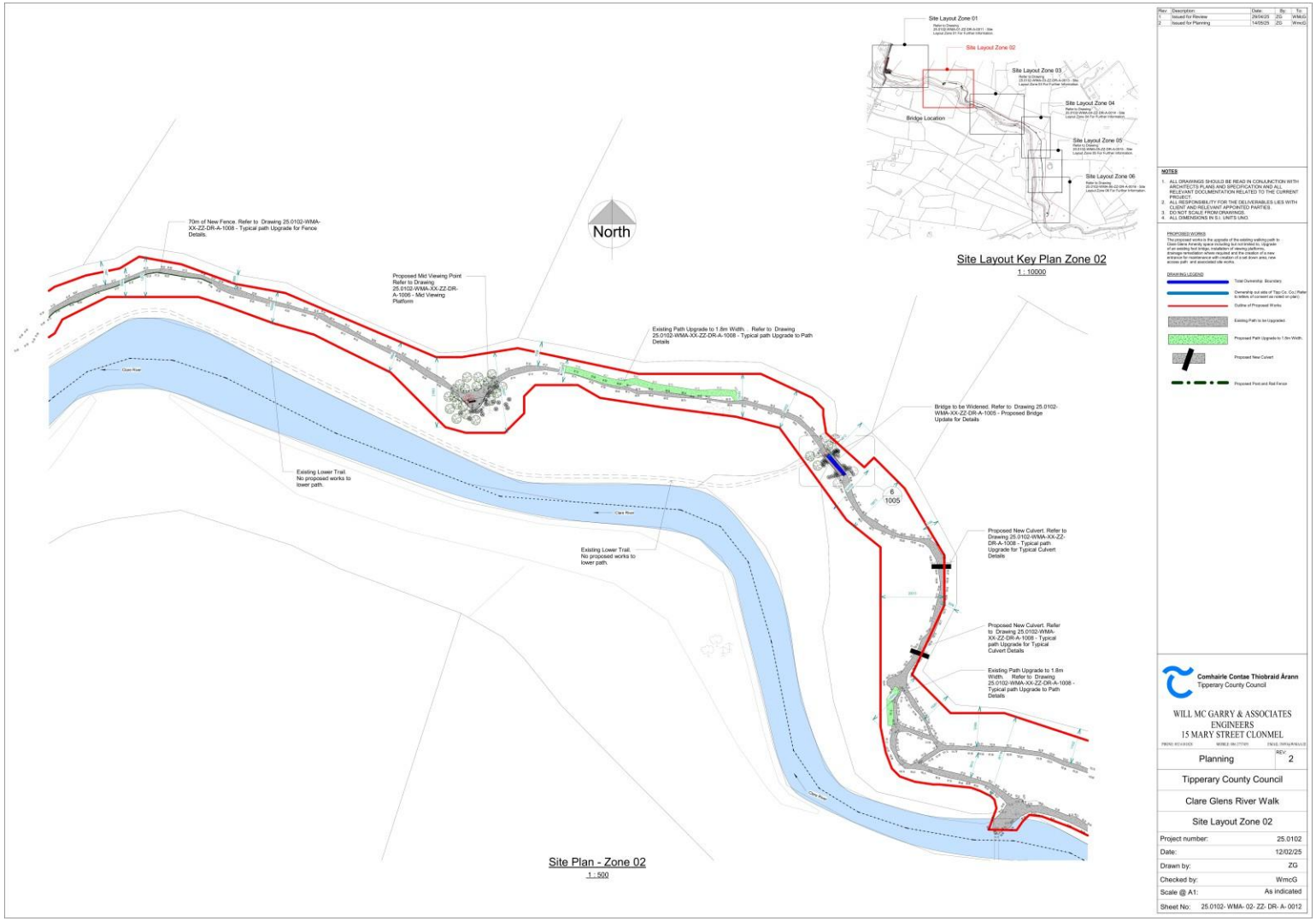

Figure 11. Site drawing - details of section 2 (viewing platform 1 and bridge)

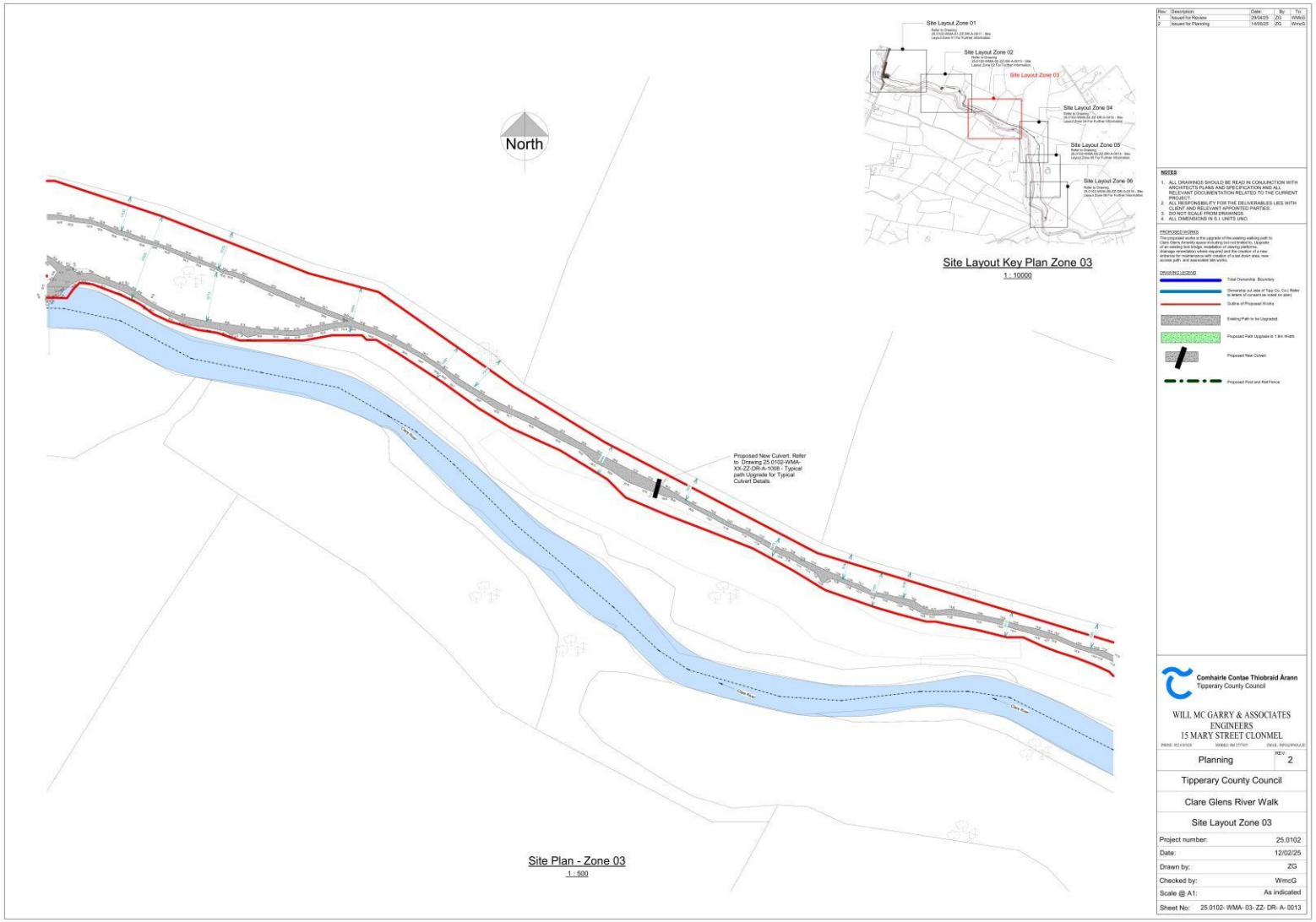

Figure 12. Site drawing - details of section 3

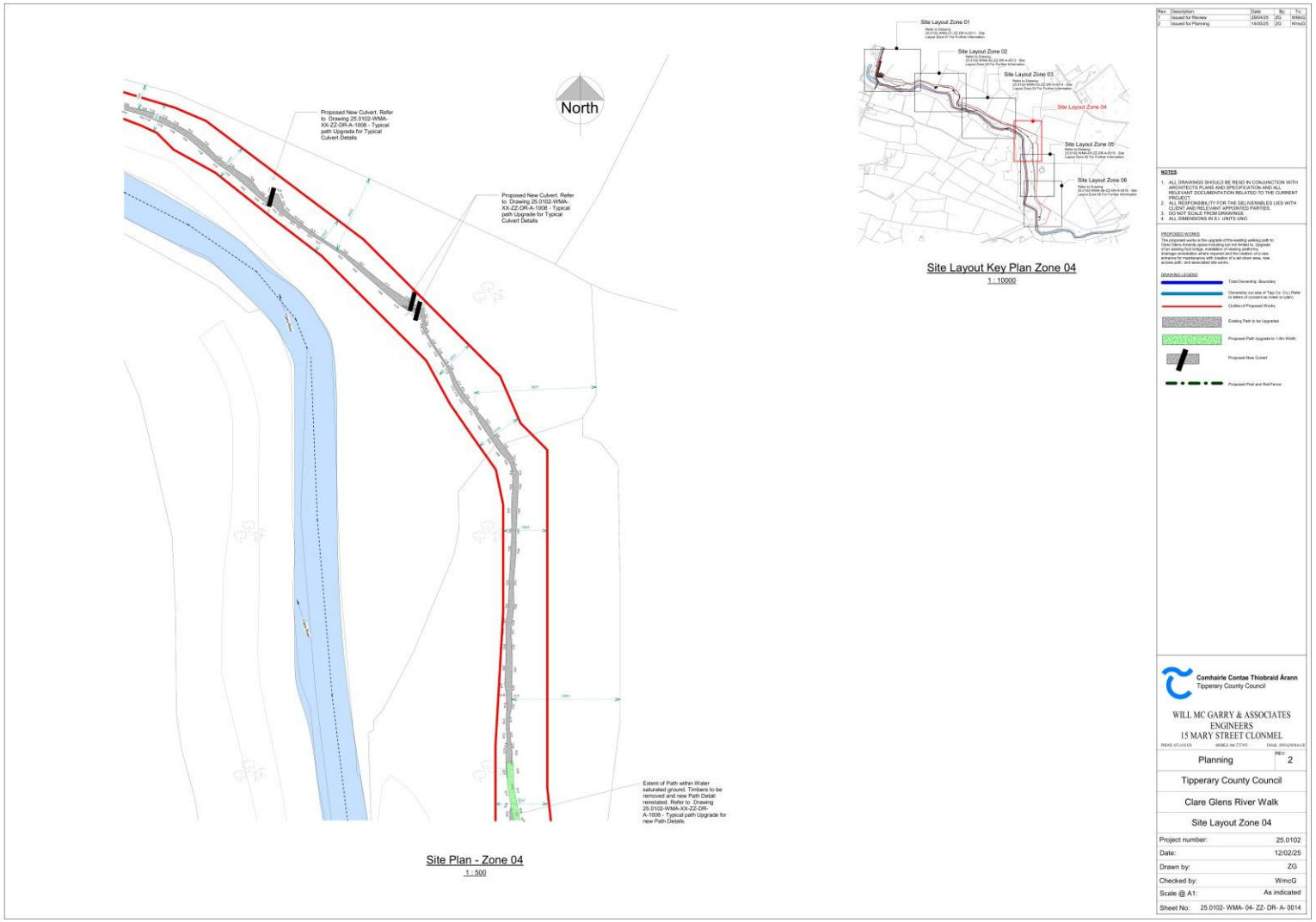

Figure 13. Site drawing - details of section 4

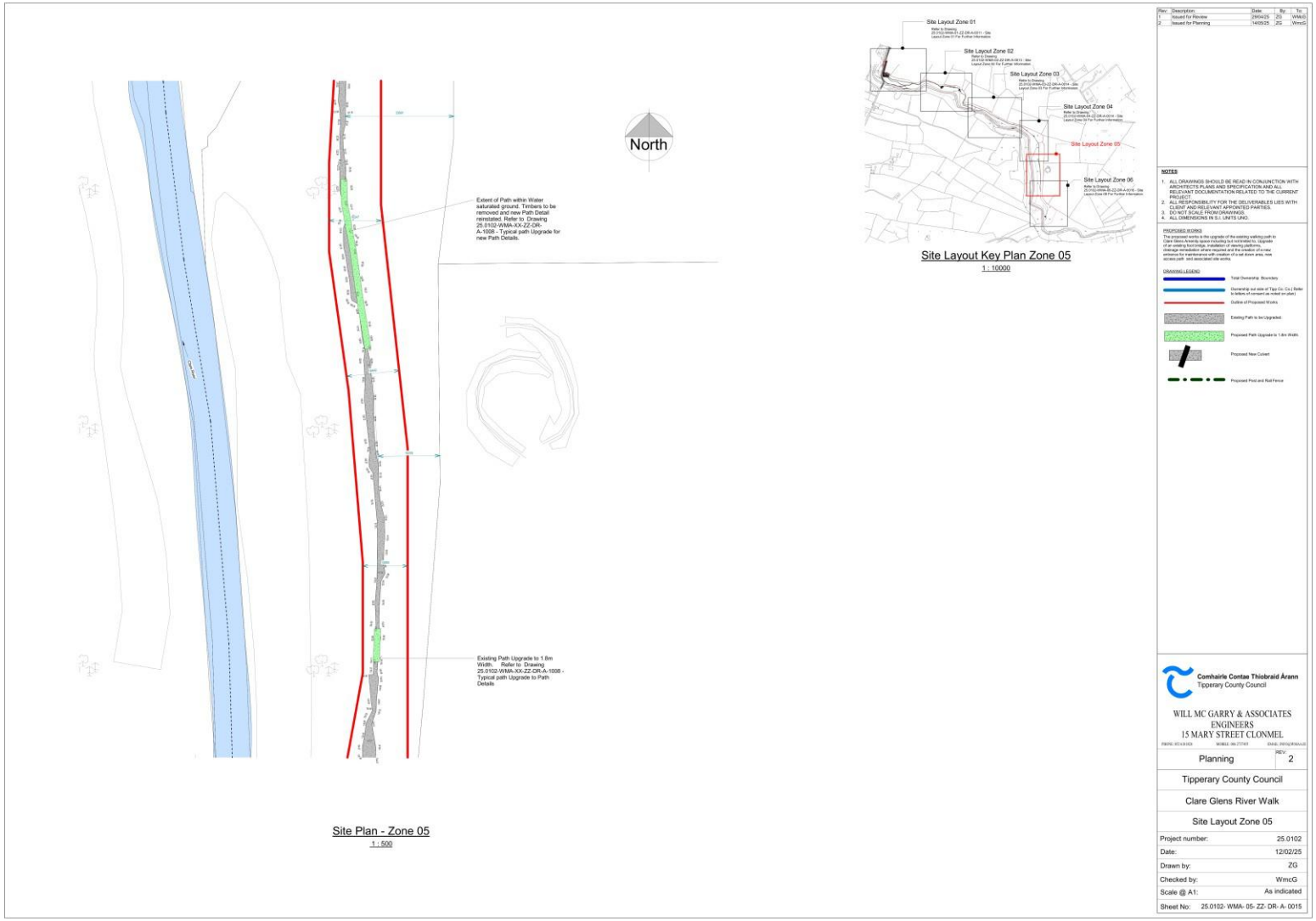

Figure 14. Site drawing - details of section 5

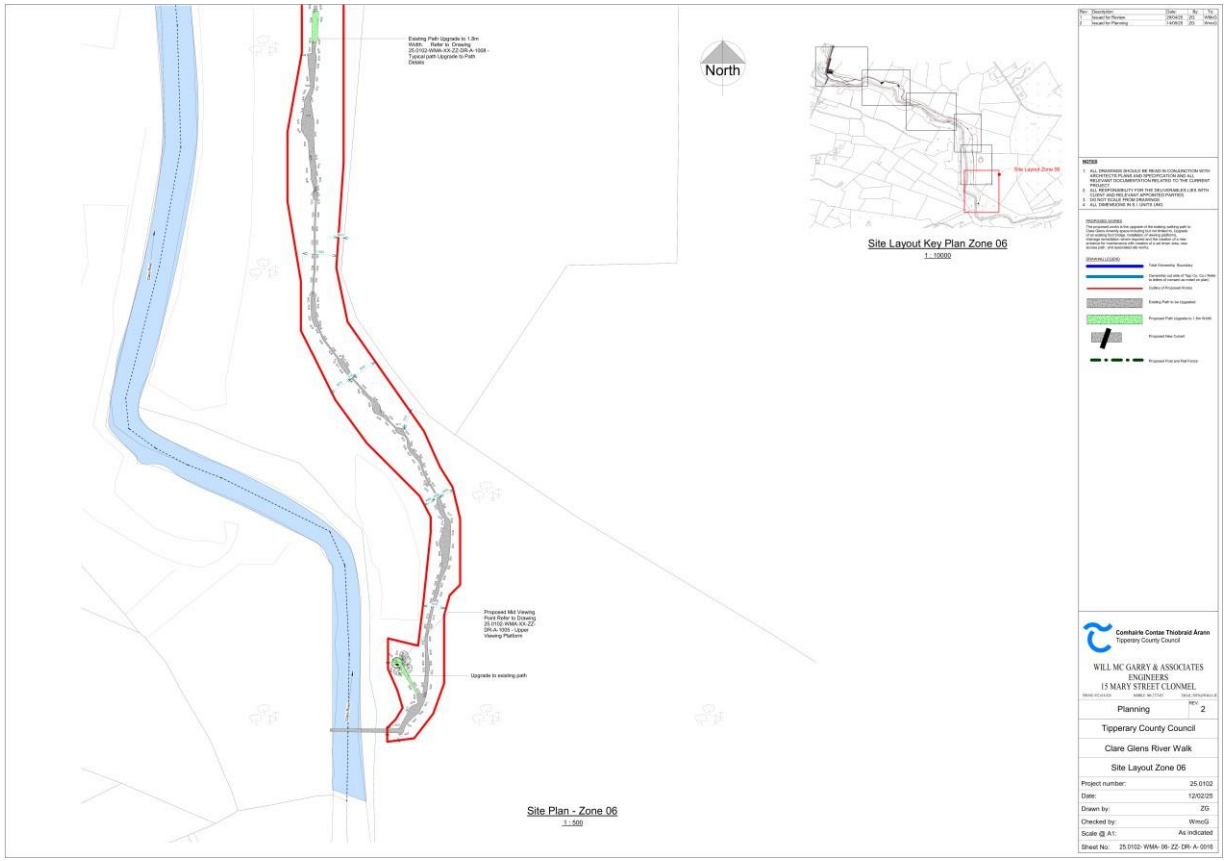

Figure 15. Site drawing - details of section 6 (viewing platform 2 and end of trail)

Figure 16. Location of tetrad R75P containing Proposed Works Area. Taken from National Biodiversity Data Centre Database

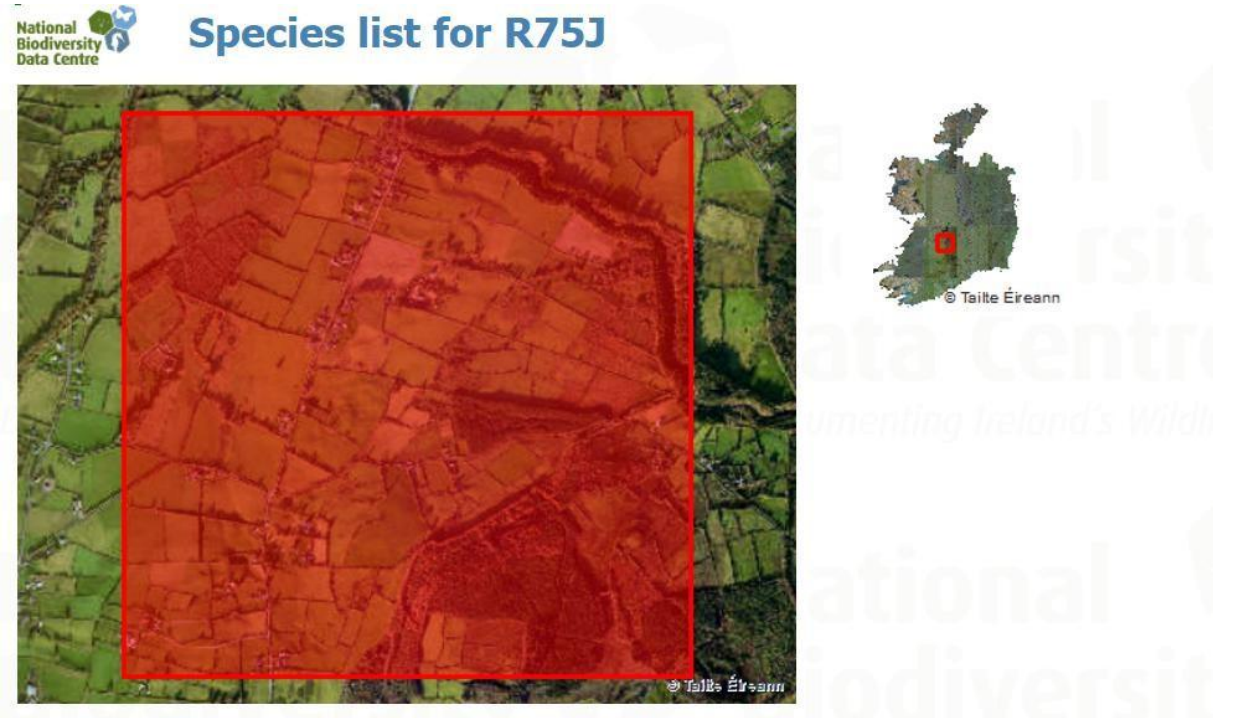

Figure 17. Location of tetrad R75J containing Proposed Works Area. Taken from National Biodiversity Data Centre Database

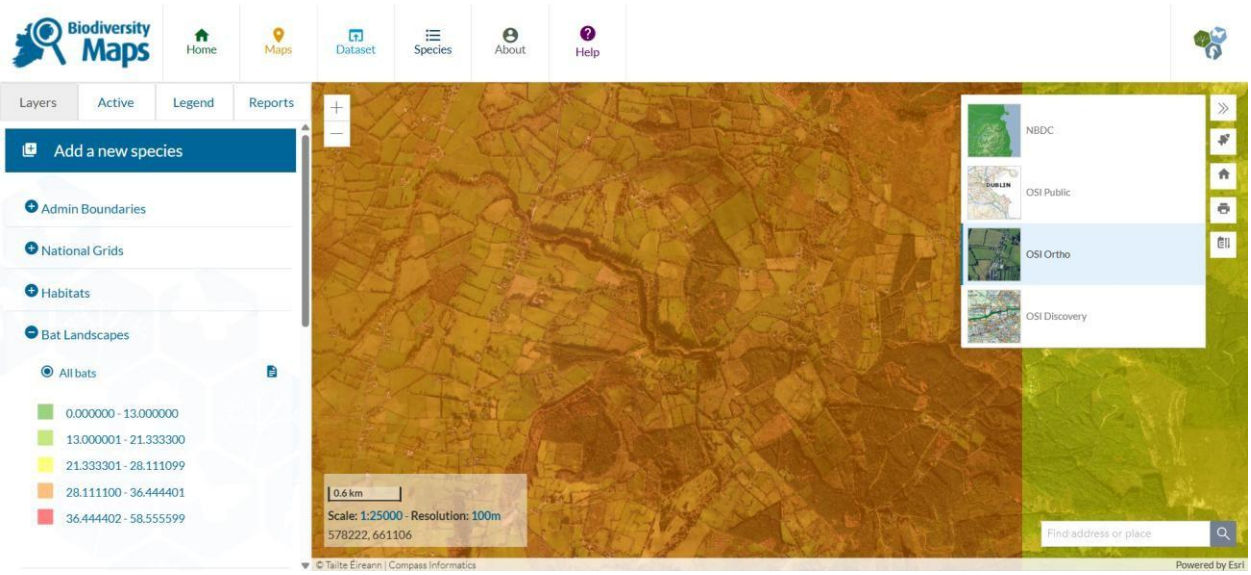

Figure 18. Bat suitability index in the proposed works area. Taken by National Biodiversity Centre Database

Appendix 2 – Photos

Figure 19. WD2 Mixed Broadleaf/Conifer Woodland.

Figure 20. Large rhododendron infestation

Figure 21. Typical habitat of Killarney Fern