



MILTOWN COMPOSTING - APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

For the Proposed Increase in Compost
Throughput at Existing Miltown Composting
Facility & Re-construction of Agricultural
Sheds for use as Maturation Sheds



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1. Introduction

The following is an Appropriate Assessment (AA) or Natura Impact Statement (NIS) that is designed to assess the potential impacts a proposed development might have on any Natura 2000 site.

1.1. Aim of this Report

This report is the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AA) or NIS of a proposal to increase the throughput of an existing composting facility and to re-construct two old agricultural sheds as maturation sheds and associated biofilter system in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2010 (the Act).

1.2. Background

This AA was completed as part of a proposed development of an increase of throughput of organic material through the existing Miltown Composting facility at Miltownmore, Co. Tipperary from 50,000 tonnes per year to 75,000 tonnes per year. The proposed development also includes for the re-construction of two old agricultural sheds as maturation sheds (with associated biofilter system) which will allow for increased production. The additional area will allow for an increase in composting activities.

2. Appropriate Assessment

2.1. Requirement for an Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

The requirement for an Appropriate Assessment is set out in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The aim of the European Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) is to create a network of protected wildlife sites in Europe, maintained at a good conservation status. The network of sites is referred to as Natura 2000 sites. In Ireland, the Natura 2000 network of European sites comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's, including candidate SACs), and Special Protection Areas (SPA's, including proposed SPA'S). SACs are selected for the conservation of vulnerable and threatened habitat types and species (other than birds). SPA's are selected for the conservation of vulnerable and threatened species of birds and other regularly occurring migratory birds, and their habitats.

The European Habitats Directive (EHD) (Council of the European Communities 1992) was transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997. The Directive specifies the scientific criteria on the basis of which Natura 2000 sites must be selected and sets out various procedures and obligations in relation to the nature conservation management which must be undertaken for the purpose of ensuring the protection of the Natura 2000 sites.

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 or 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 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.

Furthermore, 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.*

2.2. Appropriate Assessment Guidance

The preparation of this Assessment has been informed by reference to the following guidance documents:

- EU Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission 2007)
- MANAGING NATURA 2000 SITES. The provisions of Article 6, of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, (European Commission 2000).
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2009)
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission 2002)

2.3. Stages in the Process

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive provides a strict assessment procedure for any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but which has the potential to have implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Draft Variation to the County Development Plan 2009-2015, therefore, falls under the remit of Article 6.

According to the European Commission's guidance document, it has become generally accepted that the assessment requirements of Article 6 establish a stage by stage approach. The stages proposed by the guidance document are:

Stage One: Screening. The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment. The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

Stage Three: 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 Four: 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.

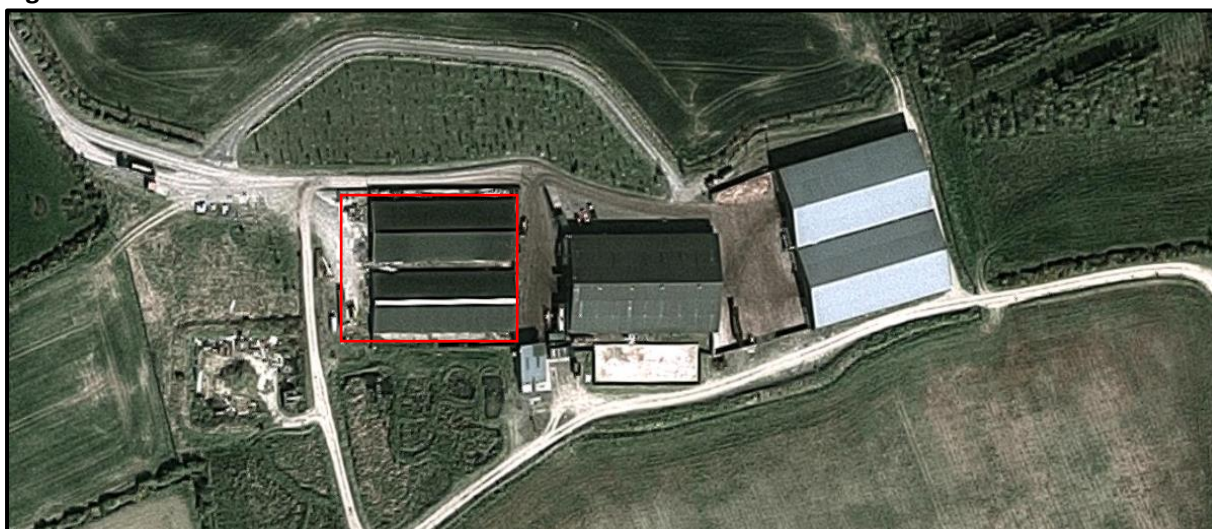
3. Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria/Screening Matrix

3.1. Description of the Proposed Development

This AA is being conducted as part of a proposed increase in throughput of organic waste at the existing Miltown composting facility from 50,000 tonnes to 75,000 tonnes per annum. The proposed maturation sheds 2B and 3B will cover an area of approximately 3,560 m² and will be built mainly on the footprint of old agricultural sheds, see area outlined in red in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Site Area



3.2. Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15km of the proposed enclosure

The zone of examination in respect to Natura 2000 Sites has been taken as a 15km radius from the site, Table 1.

Table 1; Natura 2000 sites within 10km of the proposed storage facility

Distance	Site	No.
5km	Powers Wood PNHA	000969
5.16km	Money Park PNHA	000966
5.3km	Grove Wood PNHA	00954
6km	The Lower River Suir SAC	002137
9.15km	Rockwell College Lake PNHA	000970
10.3km	Quarryford Bridge PNHA	001526
10.9km	Slievenamoon Bog NHA	002388

As can be seen from Table No 1 there are a number of sites within this zone, however there are no sites located within 5 km of the site.

The following provides a brief description of all the Natura 2000 sites found within 15km of the proposed storage shed in Wicklow Port. Full site descriptions and conservation objectives of each of the sites can be found at <http://www.npws.ie>.

3.2.1. Powers Wood PNHA 000969

The Natura 2000 site in closest proximity to the proposed enclosure, Powers Wood is approximately 5km North West of site. Powers wood and the surrounding area are frequently used for fox hunting.

3.2.2. Money Park PNHA 000966

Money Park is a town bordering with Fethard in Co Tipperary. It is located approximately 5.16 km west of the Milltown Composting Facility. It cover an area of 0.15 km². The water treatment plant for the town of Fethard is located in Moneypark.

3.2.3. Grove Wood PNHA 00954

Grove Wood is a forest located approximately 5.3 km east of the proposed enclosure at Milltown composting. The forest is adjacent to the Clashawley River which is a tributary of the river Anner and the river falls under the Lower River Suir SAC.

3.2.4. The Lower River Suir SAC 002137

Lower River Suir SAC consists of the freshwater stretches of the River Suir immediately south of Thurles, the tidal stretches as far as the confluence with the Barrow/Nore immediately east of Cheekpoint in Co. Waterford, and many tributaries including the Clodiagh in Co. Waterford, the Lingaun, Anner, Nier, Tar, Aherlow, Multeen and Clodiagh in Co. Tipperary. The Suir and its tributaries flow through the counties of Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford. The river Clashawley is a tributary of the river Anner and is located approximately 6km southeast of the site.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

- 1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows
- [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows
- [3260] Floating River Vegetation
- [6430] Hygrophilous Tall Herb Communities
- [91A0] Old Oak Woodlands
- [91E0] Alluvial Forests*
- [91J0] Yew Woodlands*
- [1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)
- [1092] White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)
- [1095] Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*)
- [1096] Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*)
- [1099] River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*)
- [1103] Twait Shad (*Alosa fallax*)
- [1106] Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)
- [1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

The site is of particular conservation interest for the presence of a number of Annex II animal species, including Freshwater Pearl Mussel (both *Margaritifera* and *M. margaritifera* subsp. *durrovensis* occur), White-clawed Crayfish, Salmon, Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax fallax*), three species of Lampreys - Sea Lamprey, Brook Version date: 13.12.2013 5 of 6 002137_Rev13.Doc .Lamprey and River Lamprey, and Otter. This is one of only three known spawning grounds in the country for Twaite Shad. The site also supports populations of several other animal species. Those which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book include Daubenton's Bat, Natterer's Bat, Pipistrelle Bat, Pine Marten, Badger, Irish Hare, Smelt and Common Frog. Breeding stocks of Carp are found in Kilsheelan Lake. This is one of only two lakes in the country which is known to have supported breeding Carp. Carp require unusually high summer water temperatures to breed in Ireland. As the site is therefore unusual in this regard, it may also support interesting invertebrate populations.

Parts of the site have also been identified as of ornithological importance for a number of Annex I (E.U. Birds Directive) bird species, including Greenland White fronted Goose (10), Golden Plover (1,490), Whooper Swan (7) and Kingfisher

3.2.5. Rockwell College Lake PNHA000970

The lake at Rockwell College is approximately 9.15 km South West of the proposed enclosure. The lake is man-made and covers roughly 23 acres.

3.2.6. Quarryford Bridge PNHA 001526

Quarryford Bridge is in the lower river Suir catchment area

3.2.7. Slievenamoon Bog NHA 02388

Slievenamoon Bog NHA consists primarily of upland blanket bog and is located approximately 10.9 km South East of Milltown Mor Composting. The site is situated within fifteen different town land areas, including Ballyknockane, Ballypatrick, Brenormore, Tober, Killusty North, Killavally, and Killurney. The mountain ranges in altitude from 300 m to 721 m and it stands as an isolated feature, surrounded by the low-lying landscape of South Tipperary. Granites and sandstones form the underlying geology.

Slievenamoon Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance. It contains a good example of upland blanket bog. The site is reasonably diverse in terms of species and communities due to local variation. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.

3.3. Assessment Criteria

Appropriate assessments identify and outline the impacts that might, either alone or in combination with another plan or project, adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

3.3.1. Individual elements likely to impact Natura 2000 sites

Considering the limited and contained nature of the proposed development at Milltown Composting it is envisaged that there will be no individual elements that are likely to impact on any Natura 2000 sites in the direct vicinity or within 15km radius.

3.3.2. Direct, indirect or secondary impacts on any Natura 2000 site:

a) size and scale, area and land-take

The size, scale, area and land take of the proposed development will be nil as the proposed maturation sheds would be constructed on the footprint of old agricultural sheds and existing yard area at Milltownmore, County Tipperary.

b) Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature of the site

There are eight Natura 2000 sites located within 15km of the proposed development at Milltownmore ranging from 5km northwest (Powers Wood PNHA) and 11.5 km south of the Site (Marlfield Lake PNHA). Considering the limited and contained nature of the proposed developments at Milltownmore it is envisaged that there will be no adverse impact on any Natura 2000 sites in the direct vicinity or within a 15km radius.

c) Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.)

There are no water abstraction requirements for the proposed development.

d) Emissions and Waste (disposal to land, water or air).

The only discharge to water from the facility will be from surface water runoff from the facility roof. The water will be directed to the on-site integrated constructed wetland (ICW) located in the southwest of the site that will physically and biologically treat any surface water prior to discharge from the site at SW1a. There are no emission limits values to water in the site Industrial Emissions licence but Milltown are required to carry out bi-annual monitoring of surface waters and annual monitoring of groundwater's. The water discharges to a surface water drain that then travels for almost 1km before entering the Sillimitty Stream a tributary of the Moyle River. It is unlikely due to the low volume of discharge from the ICW and the distance from the site to the closest surface water receptor that the operation of the site and the proposed development would have a negative impact on the surface water quality qualifying interests in the closest Natura 2000 sites.

There is potential for air emissions from the site related to the increased throughput and the use of the new sheds for maturation purposes. The proposed new maturation sheds will have air extraction and treatment in a dedicated biofilter included as part of the development. Emission limit values are outlined in the licence for emission at the bio filter to ensure that there are no impacts to the surrounding environment. Monitoring completed at the site indicated no breaches of licence limits for the past 3 years of monitoring results reviewed and it is considered that the inclusion of a third biofilter at sheds 2B and 3B would treat exhausted air to a similar level as is currently completed at the site. Due to distance from the site to the closest Natura 2000 sites, and the low emission concentrations from air emissions from a third biofilter, the proposed development would have no impact on qualifying interests in the closest Natura 2000 sites

e) Transportation Requirements

There will be limited increase in transportation requirements above what already exists at Milltown Composting site. The increase in traffic would be between 10% and 20% increase but would not impact on Natura 2000 qualifying interests.

f) Duration of Construction, operation, decommissioning

The proposed re-construction of the agricultural sheds as maturation sheds 2B and 3B and associated biofilter unit. The construction of the sheds may cause a temporary disturbance in terms of noise but will be limited.

3.3.3. Likely changes to a Natura 2000 site;

The following, a) to f), describe potential impacts that a proposed development within or in close to a Natura 2000 site could have;

- a) Reduction of habitat area
- b) Disturbance to key species
- c) Habitat or species fragmentation
- d) Reduction in Species Density
- e) Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.)
- f) Climate change

It is considered that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant changes or pose any adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

3.3.4. Likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole:

In terms of;

- a) Interference with the key relationship that define the structure of the site

The proposed development at Milltownmore will not impact on the relationships that define the structure of any Natura 2000 sites.

- b) Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site

The proposed development at Milltownmore will not impact on the relationships that define the function of Natura 2000 sites.

3.3.5. Indicators of significance

As a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of;

- a) Loss
- b) Fragmentation
- c) Disruption
- d) Disturbance
- e) Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).

The proposed maturation sheds at Milltownmore will not give rise to any significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

3.3.6. Overall impacts on the Natura 2000 sites.

The proposed development at Milltownmore will not give rise to any significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

4. Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix

Proposed Development	To increase waste throughput at the existing in-vessel composting facility and re-construct maturation sheds 2B and 3B on the footprint of old agricultural sheds .
Name & Location of Natura 2000 sites	Powers Wood PNHA (5km) Money Park PNHA (5.16km) Grove Wood PNHA (5.3km) The Lower River Suir SAC (6km) Rockwell College Lake PNHA (9.15km) Quarryford Bridge PNHA (10.3km) Slievenamoon Bog NHA(10.9km)
Description of the project	To expand throughput of waste at the facility
Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site	It is directly connected with the management of the site if an increase in production is gained
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project plan being assessed could affect the site	No

4.1. Assessment of Significance of Effects

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 sites	It is considered that the proposed development will have no significant adverse impact on the Natura 2000 network.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	The proposed development is to be contained within a currently operational site. The closest Natura 2000 site is located approximately 5km northwest of the site. There will be construction work but will have no impact. Given the sites location and current monitoring events the site will not have significant effects
Information Sources	National Parks & Wildlife Services Biodiversity Ireland National Biodiversity Data Centre

5. Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed development and increase in production at the Milltown Composting facility will not give rise to any significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site, alone or in combination with any other plan or project in the area. The site is already in existence and operates under the regulation of an EPA Industrial Emissions licence. There are no significant emissions to water and emissions to atmosphere are all below the emission limit values set in the site licence.