

Habitats Regulations Assessment



Habitats Regulations Assessment

Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance

Name of Project or Plan.	Tern Raft Installation in Strangford Lough
Reference (if available)	
Name and location of <i>National Site Network</i> site(s)	Strangford Lough, N.I.
<p>National Site Network site features:</p> <p>Refer to JNCC website for further information. Http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ Note: ensure that you assess all features that are classified as A, B, C. You may make mention of any site features of lesser presence i.e. D or E but this is mostly where they are connected to the existence of A, B, C features. Features that are of a presence or distribution below this are not considered European Site. See Data Form on the JNCC web page for the site.</p>	<p>Strangford Lough SAC 1140- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1150- Coastal lagoons 1160- Large shallow inlets and bays 1170- Reefs 1210- Annual vegetation of drift lines 1220- Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1310- Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330- Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1365 - <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Qualifying Feature Grade C)</p> <p>Strangford Lough SPA A674- <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> A143- <i>Calidris canutus</i> A193- <i>Sterna hirundo</i> A194- <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> A191- <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> A162- <i>Tringa tetanus</i> WATR- Waterbird assemblage</p> <p>Strangford Lough MCZ- awaiting consultation process on MCZ features, management options and socio-economic impact assessments</p> <p>Strangford Lough Part 1 ASSI</p> <p>Management Principles for: Seagrass (<i>Zostera</i> Beds) Coastal Saltmarsh Intertidal Rock Common Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i> Wintering Waterbirds Breeding Terns Coastal Processes</p> <p>Strangford Lough RAMSAR Site</p>

<p>National Site Network site features:</p> <p>Refer to JNCC website for further information. Http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/</p> <p>Note: ensure that you assess all features that are classified as A, B, C. You may make mention of any site features of lesser presence i.e. D or E but this is mostly where they are connected to the existence of A, B, C features. Features that are of a presence or distribution below this are not considered European Site. See Data Form on the JNCC web page for the site.</p>	<p>North Channel SAC (located ~29.5km away, designated for Harbour porpoise),</p> <p>Murlough SAC (located ~40km away, designated for Harbour Seals)</p> <p>The Maidens SAC (located ~93.5km away, designated for Grey seals)</p> <p>are also included for consideration of potential impacts to these mobile marine mammal features.</p>
<p>Description of the Project or Plan</p> <p>Suggested topics to be covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size and scale • Land-take • Distance from National Site Network site or keyfeatures of the site • Resource requirements (water ab- Straction etc.) • Emission (disposal to land, water or air) • Excavation requirements • Transportation requirements • Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc. • Other 	<p>Size and Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The installation of Tern Rafts to support Tern recovery in Strangford Lough. <p>The sites within scope are:</p> <p>South of Daragh Island https://w3w.co/rebel.amphibian.koala 54.466082, -5.632122</p> <p>South of Pawle Island (Preferred First Deployment) https://w3w.co/swells.goodnight.movie 54.440505, -5.626877</p> <p>West of Taggart Island https://w3w.co/doing.deck.campus 54.427784, -5.635081</p> <p>Land Take</p> <p>This will attach one mooring initially to the seabed which has been analysed using an ROV for any priority species and habitats. The seabed in the area surveyed was mudflat/stony bed.</p> <p>Distance for NSN sites or key features</p> <p>This project will occur, directly within Strangford Lough SPA/SAC/RAMSAR/ASSIsites. (See maps)</p> <p>Resource requirements</p> <p>There will be one mooring initially deposited on the seabed, no extraction of water or sediment.</p> <p>Emission</p> <p>Other than emissions associated with the use of a boat for installation there should be limited other emissions beyond disturbing the sediment in the limited area where the mooring will be installed.</p>

Emission (cont..)

National Trust and any contractors hired to complete the works shall adhere to the appropriate pollution prevention guidelines including [DAERA Pollution Standing Advice](#) To prevent adverse impacts to Marine Protected Areas, Habitats and Species, as required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.)

Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, The Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

and also [DAERA Marine Wildlife Disturbance Standing Advice](#) To prevent marine mammal disturbance as required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995(as amended) and The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended).

In addition, National Trust and the Contractors will ensure invasive non-native species biosecurity measures are in place for all stages of the project and all equipment used. This is to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species as required under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended).

Excavation Requirements

The contractors will not be using percussive equipment such as rock breakers or piling on site therefore there should not be significant marine mammal disturbance.

DAERA Marine Wildlife Disturbance Standing Advice will be adhered to.

Transportation requirements

One boat will be used to install the mooring and to tow the Tern Raft into position. All assembly of the Tern raft will take place on shore away from the Site in the least damaging and disturbing way possible.

The Tern raft will be installed in early May in order to allow for the second round of breeding of Tern Species to nest. This is on the Lough and we will minimise the impact on over-wintering and breeding birds, and avoid disturbance to breeding seals and to minimise the impact on soils and vegetation.

The sites have been surveyed for protected species and habitats and there is no known impacted priority species where the mooring will be installed to prevent impact on ASSI features of local coastal processes and Eelgrass (*Zostera*) beds that are important feeding areas for Brent Geese.



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Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to management of the site for conservation of European Site features?	Yes
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<p>Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the National Site Network site.</p>	<p>The aim of this project is to install a Tern raft (potentially followed by further Tern rafts aligned with the attached report on short, medium and long term options for Tern recovery in Strangford Lough subject to DAERA agreement). Therefore there should be a net benefit to Strangford Lough.</p> <p>NT have consulted with the Marine Conservation Team (sharing the ROV footage) in Marine Division and Stephen Fyfe in NIEA as well additional knowledgeable stakeholders such as RSPB, WWT and Sterna Environmental and Crown Estate with regards to the mooring. The first site has been chosen to be away from any potential to be a navigational hazard.</p>
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<p>EUROPEAN SITE Feature: Mention all features</p> <p>Only for EF also consider ASSI Features.</p>	<p>Describe any likely direct or indirect effects to the EUROPEAN SITE features arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss; • Reduction of habitat area; • Disturbance; • Habitat or species fragmentation; • Reduction in species density; • Changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. Water quality, climate change). 	<p>Effect significant / not significant? Explain why?</p> <p><u>Loss/not significant – This will remove marine debris from the area as long as it does not disturb nesting birds.</u></p> <p><u>Reduction of habitat area – slight decrease in subtidal mudflat for the size of one mooring installation, however there will be a gain of habitat availability for breeding Terns which will be less susceptible to predation, wave overtopping, storm surges and king tides.</u></p> <p><u>Fragmentation/none</u></p> <p><u>Reduction in species density/not significant</u></p> <p><u>Changes in key indicators/none</u></p> <p>It is anticipated that there will be a slight decrease in subtidal mudflat habitat availability with the installation of the Tern Raft, however there will be an increase in habitat availability for breeding Terns.</p>
<p>Strangford Lough SAC Features;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coastal Lagoons 2. Large shallow inlets and bays 3. Annual Vegetation of drift lines 	<p>The project is NOT likely to have any significant negative effects on any of the features on this site in regards to loss, reduction of habitat area, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of conservation value.</p>	

<p>4. Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</p> <p>5. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>6. Perennial vegetation of stony banks</p> <p>7. <i>Phoca vitulina</i></p> <p>8. Reefs</p> <p>9. <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand</p>	<p>The project is NOT likely to have any significant negative effects on any of the features on this site in regards to loss, reduction of habitat area, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of conservation value.</p>	<p>Not significant.</p> <p>The project aims to improve site integrity and condition in Strangford Lough and increase the range of sites available for Terns in Strangford Lough.</p> <p>Not Significant as all works will take place outside of the breeding season of wintering birds in early May and will increase the viability for the second round of breeding for Terns.</p>
<p>Strangford Lough SPA (and component assis)</p> <p>1. <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i></p> <p>2. <i>Calidris canutus</i></p> <p>3. <i>Sterna hirundo</i></p> <p>4. <i>Sterna paradisaea</i></p> <p>5. <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i></p> <p>6. <i>Tringa tetanus</i></p> <p>7. Waterbird assemblage (wintering waterfowl)</p>		

<p>Describe any potential effects on the <i>National Site Network</i> site as a whole in terms of: interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site</p>	<p>There are no potential negative effects on the NSN as a whole, as the installation of a mooring and Tern raft will be localized and any pollution risk will be minimized. This will not have a significant effect on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the sites in Strangford Lough as long as National Trust and the Contractors follow the plans they have set out and liaise appropriately with DAERA and relevant authorities.</p>

<p>Provide details of any other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could (directly or indirectly) affect the site.</p>	<p>There are no other projects (to my knowledge) that could interact in a significant way to affect the installation of a mooring for the Tern Raft in Strangford Lough.</p>
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<p>Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant? :</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Alone?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>In-combination with other projects of plans?</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>List of Agencies / Organisations Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address.</p>	
<p>Habitats Regulations Assessment Summary</p>	<p>The project is not likely to have any significant negative effects on any of the sites across the Strangford Lough. Conversely, the aims of the project are to improve site condition. As such, the project is likely to have an overall positive effect on the ecological status of the Strangford Lough and NSN sites.</p>

<p>Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on a EUROPEAN site?</p>	<p>No</p>

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?	this updated Shadow HRA was completed by Dr. Jade Berman, Coastal Advisor National Trust, 21/03/2026
Sources of data	<p>DAERA ASSI/SAC/SPA Citation, Reasons for Designation and Conservation Objectives documents for Strangford Lough, Outer Ards, Ballymacormick Point, and Ballyquintin Point; DAERA Marine Map Viewer; DAERA Coastal Observatory National Trust site maps relating to proposed conservation work across Strangford Lough and Outer Ards areas; National Trust Implementation of the NT Strangford Lough and Outer Ards conservation action plans documents; JNCC National Site Network Standard Data Forms for Strangford Lough and Outer Ards SPAs; JNCC Summary of Strangford Lough SAC; Consultation with DAERA/NIEA personnel regarding seals, birds, coastal change and potential duplication of work. Coastal Observatory</p>
Level of assessment completed	Test of Likely Significance
Where can the full results of assessment be accessed and viewed?	
Summary of Findings.	<p>The project is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on site/feature integrity/condition across the Strangford Lough and Outer Ards ASSI/SAC/SPA designations. Conversely, the project is likely to have a positive effect across Strangford Lough, enhancing the overall ecological health of these areas and improving site/feature condition.</p>



<p>Grade 7 Sign Off (only if not progressing to stage 2)</p>	
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Island Taggart debris

Description Concrete coated polystyrene cubes, 2x old fishing boats, old powerboat, metal pontoon.

History 10+ years old, owner deceased.

Land Ownership NT leased lands.

Location

Structure	What Three Words ref
One	preoccupied.swatting.sporting
Two	flitting.remains.stuns
Three	gains.tissue.serenade



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Google link <https://maps.app.goo.gl/LnwqkqW75qfz548A>



Figure 1: Sites Surveyed underwater as potential Tern Raft Locations (red areas) - South of Darragh Island; South of Pawle Island (Preferred first Location yellow circle) and West of Taggart Island.

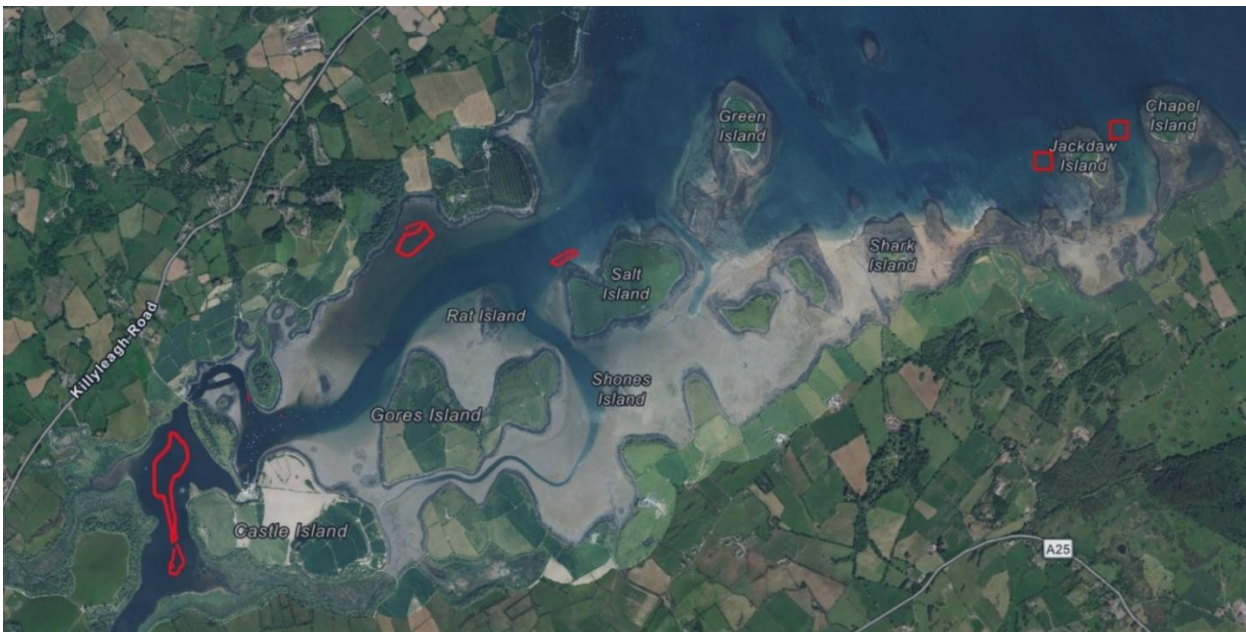


Figure 2: Potential future sites for Tern Rafts as identified within the Tern recovery report for Strangford Lough. These sites have not yet been surveyed underwater however are included for completeness for developing a network of sites for potential future Tern Raft sites.

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 Google Link <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Jkz6EHYSrqSAW3xx6>

**DO NOT PROCEED FURTHER IF YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT
THIS PROPOSAL IS UNLIKELY TO IMPACT A EUROPEAN SITE
AND NO MITIGATION IS REQUIRED**

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Fig 1 Assessment of Effects of the Project or Plan on the Integrity of the Site

<p>Describe the elements of the project or plan (alone or in combination with other projects or plans) that are likely to give rise to significant effects on the site (from screening assessment)</p>	
<p>Set out the Conservation objectives of the site</p>	
<p>Describe how the project or plan will affect key species, key habitats and the integrity of the site (determined by structure and function and conservation objectives). Acknowledge uncertainties and any gaps in information.</p>	
<p>Describe what mitigation measures are to be introduced to avoid or reduce the adverse effects on the integrity of the site. Acknowledge uncertainties and any gaps in information</p>	

Fig 2 Appropriate Assessment: Mitigation Measures

<p>List measures to be introduced</p>	<p>Explain how the measures will avoid the adverse effects on the integrity of the Site.</p>	<p>Explain how the measures will reduce the adverse effects on the integrity of the Site.</p>	<p>Provide evidence of how they will be implemented and by whom.</p>
<p>(i)</p>			

If there cannot be appropriate mitigation conditioned at this point then please refer the assessment to the EF Grants Team.