

## Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland (ZEVI)

# National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028

## AA Screening Report

Reference:

Draft | 20 February 2026

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland (ZEV I) is in the process of preparing the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028. The Strategy sets out the national direction for the development of Ireland's public electric vehicle (EV) charging network over the 2026-2028 period. It provides a high-level framework detailing how charging infrastructure may evolve in response to continued growth in EV adoption. The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 is informed by current patterns of EV usage, anticipated increases in charging demand, and the need for accessible, reliable and equitable charging provision across the State. It builds upon the earlier National EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025 and aligns with national and EU policy measures that support the transition to zero-emission transport.

ZEV I has commissioned the preparation of this Report for the Purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening with regard to the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028.

Specifically, this report contains information required by the competent authority to undertake an AA Screening Assessment of the Strategy. The aims of this report are to:

- Provide information on, and assess the potential for, the proposed Strategy to significantly affect Natura 2000 Sites (also known as European Sites);
- Determine whether the proposed Strategy is directly connected with, or necessary to, the conservation management of any Natura 2000 sites; and
- Determine whether it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information and beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that the proposed Strategy, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 sites in view of their conservation objectives.

### 1.1.1 The Purpose of Appropriate Assessment

The purpose of Appropriate Assessment is to identify the possible effects of implementing a plan (or project) on the conservation status of designated Natura 2000 sites within the sphere of influence of the plan (or project).

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna – the 'Habitats Directive' provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Habitats Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of interest to the EU in a favourable condition. The Directive was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, SI 94/1997.

Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken for any plan or program that is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. Article 6 paragraph 3 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.”*

Therefore, an AA is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude adverse effects. In a situation where it is not possible to fully demonstrate that adverse effects on the site integrity would occur, options must be explored so that any risk of damaging designated sites is avoided.

Plans can only be adopted after having ascertained that there will be no significant adverse effects on the integrity of the sites in question.

## **1.2 Appropriate Assessment Methodology**

In the preparation of this Report for the Purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening which provides the information required by the competent authority to carry out an AA Screening Assessment, the following documents have been reviewed:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009);
- European Commissions: Managing Natura 2000 Sites. The provisions of Article 6, of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC;
- European Commission: Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC; and
- Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) Circular letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 dated 15 February 2008.

A full bibliography of material referenced and researched in preparation of this report is included in the references section at the end of this report.

The European Commission’s Methodological Guidance recommends a four-stage approach to Appropriate Assessment:

### **Stage 1 Screening:**

Determining whether the plan ‘either alone or in combination with other plans or projects’ is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

### **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment:**

Determining whether, in view of the site’s conservation objectives, the plan ‘either alone or in combination with other plans or projects’ would have an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of the site. If not, the plan can proceed.

### **Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions:**

Where it has not been proven that measures considered will not avoid or mitigate the adverse effect on the Natura 2000 site, then an assessment of the alternatives will be required; and if none are acceptable then stage 4 is required to be considered.

### **Stage 4: Assessment where no Alternative Solutions Exist and where Adverse Impacts Remain**

This will involve assessment where the Plan is considered to result in adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 site and no alternative solutions remain; the imperative reasons of overriding public interest

(IROPI) test must be met before authorisation, permission or adoption of the Plan is agreed. This includes the agreement of compensatory measures.

This is based on available ecological information and an adequate description of the plan and its likely effects. It also takes into account any policies or proposals that will set the terms for future development. The AA Screening Assessment determination by the competent authority, will also be recorded and made available to the public.

If screening shows, or cannot rule out, that the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026 - 2028 (or any amendment to it) may affect the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, then, following the precautionary principle, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment must be carried out. In addition, if a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, one must also be undertaken.

When the results of the Stage 2 AA under Article 6(3) indicate that there is a likelihood for adverse environmental effects, or where the findings are uncertain, then the provisions of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive apply. That is, where:

- The plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site; and,
- Doubts remain as to the absence of adverse effects on the integrity of the site linked to the plan or project concerned.

### **1.3 Overview of Screening Approach**

The Screening Stage of the report is used to identify whether the Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. This report follows European Commission (2001) guidance which recommends that screening should follow a four-step process as outlined below:

- Determine whether the plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site. If it is, then no further assessment is necessary;
- Describe the plan and other plans and projects that, ‘in combination’, have the potential to have significant effects on a European site;
- Identify the potential effects on the European site; and
- Assess the significance of any effects on the European site.

The key to deciding if an AA of a plan would be required is determined by an assessment of whether the plan and its policies and objectives are likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The decision should not be determined by the size of the plan area alone. It will also be influenced by the nature and extent of the development likely to be proposed in the plan, and the plan area’s *in situ*, *ex situ* and in combination relationship to adjoining Natura 2000 sites and the wider Natura 2000 network.

When screening the plan and its policies and objectives there are two possible outcomes:

- the plan poses no risk of a significant effect and as such requires no further assessment; and
- the plan has potential to have a significant effect (or this is uncertain) and AA of the plan is necessary.

Screening can be used to establish which policies and objectives have potential to have significant effects, and therefore the ones that require further attention at the AA stage.

An important element of the AA process is the identification of the “Conservation Objectives”, “Qualifying Interests” (QIs) and/ or “Special Conservation Interests” (SCIs) of European sites requiring assessment. QIs are the habitat features and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive for which each European site has been designated and afforded protection. SCIs are wetland habitats and bird species listed within Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive.

It is also vital that the threats to the ecological/environmental conditions that are required to support QIs and SCIs are considered as part of the assessment.

Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) have been designed to define favourable conservation status for a particular habitat or species at that site. According to the European Commission interpretation document ‘Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC’, paragraph 4.6(3) states:

*“The integrity of a site involves its ecological functions. The decision as to whether it is adversely affected should focus on and be limited to the site’s conservation objectives.”*

The screening stage of the AA takes account of the elements as relevant with regard to the details and characteristics of the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 to determine if potential for significant effects on European sites is likely.

## **1.4 Data Sources**

This Report for the Purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening in relation to the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 is based on a review of information relating to relevant European and Natura sites and to the habitats and species that they support. Information relied upon includes the following information sources, which included maps, ecological and water quality data:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from [www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie);
- Online data available on European sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie);
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government <http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>;
- Information on water quality in the area available from [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie);
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area available from [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie);
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats in Ireland (National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2013a and 2013b);
- National Biodiversity Data Centre - Biodiversity Maps.

## 2. Description of the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 and other Plans and Projects

### 2.1 Legislative Background

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 is prepared by Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland (ZEVl) and sits within a well-defined European and national regulatory framework. At EU level, the Strategy is principally shaped by the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (EU) 2023/1804 (AFIR), which mandates the widespread availability, interoperability and transparent operation of EV charging infrastructure, including distance-based requirements on the TEN-T network, minimum power-per-electric-vehicle obligations, ad-hoc payment availability and open-data requirements.

Complementary EU legislation, including the Energy Efficiency Directive (EU) 2023/1791, the Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2023/2413, updated CO<sub>2</sub> performance standards, and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EU) 2024/1275, reinforces charging-readiness, data integration and energy-system efficiency.

At national level, the Strategy aligns with the Climate Action Plan, the National Development Plan, ZEVl's National Road EV Charging Network Plan (2024) and the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan (2025), which collectively define the policy direction for an accessible, reliable and equitable public charging network across the State.

### 2.2 Plan Overview

#### 2.2.1 Electric Vehicle Trend in Ireland

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 responds to rapidly increasing EV uptake and evolving user needs. It builds upon previous national strategies (e.g., the 2022-2025 Strategy) and uses updated evidence on charging behaviour across different use cases, including apartment dwellers, rural commuters, taxis, tourists, commercial fleets and heavy-duty vehicle operators. The Strategy aims to ensure charging infrastructure availability, reliability and accessibility in line with user experience expectations and universal design principles.

The Strategy does not authorise site-specific development. Instead, it provides the direction, delivery structures, funding envelopes and enabling measures (such as standards, data requirements and universal design) to guide implementing bodies, local authorities and private charge point operators.

#### 2.2.2 Future Forecasts

Consistent with AFIR requirements and national targets for 2030, the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 identifies the scale of infrastructure deployment required over 2026-2028. This includes anticipated growth in EV ownership; increasing demand for high-power en-route charging hubs; expansion of destination and neighbourhood charging; and integration with renewable energy, grid-flexibility services and digital data systems.

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 outlines a mid-term review in 2027 to account for technological, behavioural and market developments.

AFIR and national targets require a large-scale expansion of EV infrastructure. Ireland is targeting approximately ~712,000 kW of publicly accessible light-duty vehicle (LDV) charging capacity by 2030, a significant increase compared to current levels (~150,000 kW, as of September 2025).

The Strategy prioritises:

- Rapid deployment of high-power hubs (typically 150–350 kW chargers) on the national road network.
- Expansion of neighbourhood and destination charging to support residential and workplace needs.
- Upgrades to grid capacity and data systems to support increasing power demand.
- A formal mid-term review in 2027 to recalibrate deployment volumes based on EV fleet growth and demand modelling.

### 2.2.3 Positioning of the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028

The Strategy forms part of a broader national planning and implementation ecosystem for EV infrastructure, alongside the National Road EV Charging Network Plan (2024) and the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan (2025). Government schemes underway, such as shared-island programmes, destination charging pilots and regional demonstration projects, inform rollout of innovative models, tariff structures, renewable integration and inclusive design.

### 2.2.4 Plan Area

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 applies state-wide, covering all public-charging deployment on national roads (TEN-T core/comprehensive, motorways, primary and secondary national roads), regional and local roads, urban centres, towns and villages, and strategic destinations such as mobility hubs, commercial centres and tourism locations.

It sets high-level spatial principles but does not pre-determine the exact locations of future charge points; these emerge through local authority plans and private-sector delivery.

### 2.2.5 Plan Programme

The Strategy covers the period from 2026-2028 and will be updated as required to reflect evolving EU legislation, national climate policy, market conditions and changes in EV technology. A mid-term review will take place in 2027 to recalibrate targets and programme delivery.

## 2.3 Capital Investment Proposals

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 outlines capital programmes to deliver a nationally coherent EV charging network. These include delivery of high-power charging hubs on national roads (via ZEVI LDV1-3 grant schemes); support for destination and neighbourhood charging in partnership with local authorities; and regional pilot schemes testing innovative approaches such as behind-the-meter solutions, flexible tariffs and renewable integration.

As a strategic, high-level plan, the Strategy does not prescribe exact project locations. Instead, individual projects brought forward under the Strategy whether by local authorities, state agencies or private operators will be subject to their own planning consents, environmental assessments and AA requirements, where applicable.

## 3. Natura 2000 Sites

### 3.1 Zone of Influence

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 defines a national framework for EV charging infrastructure, and the Zone of Influence (ZoI) comprises the area within which its measures may potentially affect the conservation objectives, Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of a Natura 2000 site. NPWS guidance does not prescribe a fixed ZoI and recommends that distance be assessed on a case-by-case basis considering project scale, location, ecological sensitivities and potential for in-combination effects. For national-level plans, a 15 km ZoI is generally applied.

Natura 2000 sites are only at risk of significant effects where a source-pathway-receptor link exists. Such links may be direct (e.g., works within a designated site) or indirect (e.g., impacts on water quality, hydrology or disturbance). This assessment therefore considers the potential for such linkages between measures arising from The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 and any Natura 2000 site.

### 3.2 Natura 2000 Sites within the ZoI

As the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 is a national plan, all European Sites in the Republic of Ireland, and those within 15 km of the border, fall within the ZoI. Within this area there are approximately 440 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 166 Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

NPWS datasets for each European Site, including site-specific conservation objectives and QIs were reviewed for the purposes of this AA Screening. The number and boundaries of Natura 2000 sites are subject to ongoing updates; verification was undertaken based on the most current NPWS data.

Ireland has a high density of Natura 2000 sites particularly in Galway, Mayo and Donegal due to extensive blanket bogs, semi-natural grasslands and water-dependent habitats. Significant clusters also occur along major catchments such as the Barrow and Slaney (Carlow), along the Wicklow and Waterford coasts, and throughout the southeast.

The species-protection provisions of the EU Nature Directives apply regardless of site boundaries, meaning strictly protected species (e.g., raptors, otter, cetaceans) must be considered both inside and outside Natura 2000 sites.

### 3.3 Assessment of the Likely Effects on Natura 2000 Sites

The National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 provides a national direction for EV charging deployment and does not identify precise locations or detailed project designs. Similar to other high-level policy documents referenced in Article 6(3) guidance, it does not allocate resources to specific sites, nor does it authorise any project.

While the Strategy includes national targets such as approximately 2,500 public chargers by 2025 increasing to over 6,000 high-power chargers by 2028, and the delivery of a nationwide rapid-charging network these aims are strategic and will be implemented through separate plans and individual projects.

Consistent with EU and NPWS guidance, where a plan contains broad future actions without site-specific detail, the plan-level AA does not exempt future projects from further assessment.

Based on its high level strategic and non-spatial nature, and that the downstream plans of the National Road EV Charging Network Plan and the Regional and Local EV charging Network Plan were subject to AA, no potential for significant effects on any Natura 2000 site was identified arising from the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028 itself.

### **3.4 Potential for Cumulative Effects**

The potential for cumulative effects should also be taken into consideration when determining the impacts on Natura 2000 sites, as required by Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive. Other relevant plans are considered below. It is considered extremely unlikely that significant in-combination or cumulative effects arising from interaction with other plans or projects could arise as each plan or project has either been subject to the Appropriate Assessment process or provides for appropriate biodiversity protection. Each Stage 2 AA or Stage 1 AA Screening concluded that significant effects on Natura 2000 sites arising from the plan or project in question would not occur with the implementation of mitigation measures (where relevant).

#### **Revised National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040), 2025**

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), a report for Appropriate Assessment of the National Planning Framework (NPF) was prepared. It was determined that the NPF is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of a European Site. Notwithstanding this, it could not be concluded at this early stage, on the basis of objective scientific information, that the NPF would not, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, have a significant effect on a European site. As such, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were required. Both the pre-consultation and post-consultation NIS concluded that, subject to mitigation proposed within the NPF, there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European Site.

Given the above conclusions, no in-combination impacts with the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 are predicted as a result of its implementation.

#### **National Road EV Charging Network Plan, 2024**

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), a report for Appropriate Assessment of the National Road EV Charging Network Plan was prepared. It was determined that the National Road EV Charging Network Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of a European Site. Notwithstanding this, it could not be concluded at this early stage, on the basis of objective scientific information, that the National Road EV Charging Network Plan would not, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, have a significant effect on a European site. As such, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were required. Both the pre-consultation and post-consultation NIS concluded that, subject to mitigation proposed within the National Road EV Charging Network Plan, there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European Site.

Given the above conclusions, no in-combination impacts with the ZEVI National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 are predicted as a result of its implementation.

#### **Climate Action Plan, 2025**

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), the Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP) underwent Screening for Appropriate Assessment. The screening process determined that the CAP is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of any European Site. Based on the available objective scientific information, it was concluded that the implementation of CAP would not be likely to

result in significant effects on European Sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

As a result, neither Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment nor the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was required for CAP.

Given these conclusions, no in-combination impacts with the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 are predicted to arise from the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2025.

### **Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan, 2025**

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan (2025) underwent Screening for Appropriate Assessment. The screening process determined that the Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of any European Site.

As a high-level, non-spatial framework, the Plan does not identify specific sites, does not authorise development, and does not prescribe physical works. Instead, it sets out the national structure through which local authorities will prepare regional and local EV charging strategies and deliver destination and neighbourhood charging infrastructure. All infrastructure arising from the Plan will therefore be subject to project-level AA Screening or Stage 2 AA, where required, at the consent stage.

The AA Screening Report concluded that, on the basis of objective scientific information, the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan would not be likely to result in significant effects on any European Site, whether alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Consequently, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were not required. [gov.ie]

Given these findings, and taking into account the Plan’s strategic, non-spatial nature, no in-combination effects arising between the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan and the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 are predicted.

### **National Adaptation Framework, 2024**

The National Adaptation Framework (NAF) (2024) sets out Ireland’s national strategy for climate change adaptation and provides the overarching policy direction for the preparation of sectoral and local adaptation plans. The NAF does not identify specific locations, projects or physical interventions, nor does it authorise works or prescribe activities that could give rise to environmental effects. An AA Screening of the NAF was undertaken by the then Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, which concluded that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was not required, as the Framework is a high-level policy document that will be implemented through subsequent sectoral and local adaptation plans. These downstream plans are required to undergo their own environmental assessment, including AA where relevant, prior to adoption.

Given the strategic, non-spatial nature of the NAF, and the absence of any mechanism by which it could, alone or in combination with the ZEVI Strategy, result in effects on European Sites, no in-combination impacts with the ZEVI National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 are predicted.

## **3.5 Potential Transboundary Effects**

As previously outlined, the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 is a high-level, non-spatial strategy that sets out a national framework for the delivery, coordination and governance of publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure across Ireland. The Strategy does not

identify specific sites, locations or development proposals, nor does it prescribe works or interventions that could give rise to physical impacts. As such, the ‘plan area’ comprises the jurisdiction of the State in an administrative rather than geographical or infrastructural sense.

Northern Ireland contains multiple SACs and SPAs; potential for transboundary effects is considered in principle, recognising hydrological and ecological linkages. No specific mechanisms for significant effects arise at Strategy level.

No potential for significant transboundary effects on Natura 2000 sites or species as a result of the ZEVI Strategy has been identified. This conclusion arises for the same reasons described in Section 3.3 relating to the characteristics of the Strategy, namely its high-level, strategic nature, the absence of concrete actions or location-specific proposals, and its position in the wider hierarchy of national EV charging policy. Accordingly, the Strategy does not introduce any mechanism by which emissions, land-use changes, disturbance, or other impact pathways could result in effects on European sites in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the UK.

## 4. Screening Statement and Conclusion

The likely impacts that may arise from the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028, both alone and in combination with other plans and programmes, have been examined in the context of factors that could potentially give rise to significant effects on Natura 2000/European Sites. As a national, non-spatial strategy, the ZoI encompasses all European Sites within the State and those within 15 km of the Northern Ireland border; this includes approximately 440 SACs and 166 SPAs, based on the most recent NPWS datasets.

Section 4.4.2 of the European Commission document *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Communities, 2000) states that “*it does not seem appropriate to treat policy documents, which show the general political will or intention of a ministry or lower authority as ‘plans’ for the purpose of Article 6(3)*”. This is particularly relevant where any initiatives arising from such policy documents must subsequently pass through intermediary land-use or sectoral plans that themselves trigger Article 6(3) assessment.

Having reviewed the characteristics of the ZEVI National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028, it is considered that the Strategy constitutes one such high-level, non-spatial policy document. It does not identify or designate specific sites, nor does it provide for, authorise, or enable physical works. It therefore does not function as a “plan” in the Article 6(3) sense with respect to triggering direct effects on European Sites. Nonetheless, applying the precautionary principle, and given that the Strategy provides the national framework under which future programmes and site-specific projects will be brought forward, it is considered prudent to screen the Strategy as a whole for its potential to give rise to significant effects.

While the Strategy establishes national direction, targets, structures, and enabling measures for EV charging infrastructure, it does not define the precise location, nature, size, operating conditions, or construction methods of any future EV charging proposals. It similarly does not allocate funding or resources to any specified geographic area. In accordance with European Commission guidance, “*where one or more specific projects are included in a plan in a general way but not in terms of project details, the assessment made at plan level does not exempt the specific projects from the assessment requirements of Article 6(3) at a later stage, when much more detail about them is known.*”

Future plans, such as ZEVI's National Road EV Charging Network Plan (2024) was subject to AA and the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan (2025) was subject to AA screening, in accordance with statutory requirements.

It can therefore be concluded that the Strategy, when considered as a whole, in itself, has no potential to give rise to significant effects on any Natura 2000 site, as no source–pathway–receptor linkages arise at Strategy level. The Strategy does not induce land-take, disturbance, emissions, hydrological changes, or other mechanisms capable of affecting the conservation objectives of any European Site.

This screening assessment has been carried out on the basis that any subsequent plans, programmes, or projects deriving from the Strategy that fall within the scope of Article 6(3) will undergo their own AA Screening or Stage 2 AA as required by law. As set out in Section 3.4 and Section 3.5, no potential for cumulative or transboundary effects has been identified at Strategy level.

On the basis of the findings of this Screening Report, and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded that the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 will not have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 network. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required.

## 5. References

*Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000); [hereafter referred to as MN 2000];

*Guidance on Energy Transmission Infrastructure and EU nature legislation* (European Commission, 2018);

*Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodical Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001);

*Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* (European Commission, 2007);

*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);

*Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;*

*Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive* (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011); and

*Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland, Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment, September 2018).

# Appendix A

## Findings of No Significant Effects

## A.1 Findings of No Significant Effects

### **Name of Project:**

National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026-2028

### **Names of Natura 2000 Sites of relevance to the proposed development:**

As this is a national, non-spatial strategy, all European Sites within the Republic of Ireland, and those within 15 km of the Northern Ireland border, fall within the ZoI. Site-specific conservation objectives and qualifying interests (QIs/SCIs) were reviewed using the most up-to-date NPWS datasets available at the time of assessment.

### **Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?**

No.

### **Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site?**

At the Strategy level, no potential in-combination effects may arise only at implementation stage, when specific projects are developed by local authorities, State bodies or private operators. All such projects will be subject to AA Screening/Stage 2 AA where required. No in-combination effects arise at Strategy level as no pathways for effects exist in the absence of project-level siting and design.

## **THE ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS**

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

It has been concluded by Arup that it is possible to rule out likely significant impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

### **Explain why these effects are not considered significant.**

According to European Commission guidance for Article 6(3), strategic-level policy instruments that lack geographic specificity or development parameters cannot, in themselves, give rise to significant effects on European Sites. The Strategy:

- does not introduce land-take or physical works;
- does not trigger emissions, hydrological changes, disturbance, or other impact pathways;
- is implemented only through future plans and projects, each requiring AA where applicable; and
- does not reduce existing environmental protections or override statutory obligations.

Accordingly, significant effects on European Sites can be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt at Strategy level.

## **DATA COLLECTED TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT**

### **Who carried out the assessment?**

The assessment was supervised, checked and completed by Sarah Danzaria of Arup.

### **Sources of Data:**

This report has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents, where relevant:

- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000); [hereafter referred to as MN 2000];
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodical Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001);
- *Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. (European Commission, 2007);
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;*
- *Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive* (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011); and
- *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland, Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment, September 2018).

Sources of information that were used to collect data on the Natura 2000 network of sites and on the existing ecological environment are listed below:

- Google aerial photography;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service online data on European Sites and ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie));
- National Parks and Wildlife Service online data on protected flora and fauna;
- Information on environmental quality data available from [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) (EPA Online Environmental Map Viewer); and
- Information on environmental water quality data available from (EPA, [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie)).

## **OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

On the basis of the information provided, and applying the precautionary principle, it can be excluded, on objective scientific information and beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that adoption of the National EV Infrastructure Charging Strategy 2026–2028 would be likely to have a significant effect on any European Site.

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required.