

Bord na Móna

Gowla Bog

**Cutaway Bog Decommissioning and
Rehabilitation Plan**

2024

This document seeks to address the requirements of Condition 10.2 of IPC Licence Ref: P0502-01:

“The licensee shall prepare, to the satisfaction of the Agency, a fully detailed and costed plan for permanent rehabilitation of the cutaway boglands within the licensed area.”

This licence condition requires Bord na Móna agree with the EPA the measures that will provide for rehabilitation, i.e., stabilisation of Gowla Bog upon cessation of peat production and compliments the licence requirement to decommission the site.

Rehabilitation generally comprises site stabilisation with natural colonisation with or without targeted management.

Industrial peat production has now fully ceased at Gowla Bog.

In addition, to preparing this document to comply with Condition 10 of IPC Licence Ref. P0502-01, due regard was also given to the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme (PCAS) announced by the Minister. This Scheme will see the Minister support, via the Climate Action Fund and Ireland’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Bord na Móna in developing a package of measures, ‘the Scheme’, for enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration of cutaway peatlands referred to as, the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme’. However, only the additional costs associated with the additional and enhanced rehabilitation, i.e., measures which go beyond the existing standard mandatory decommissioning and rehabilitation requirements arising from Condition 10 will be eligible for support. The additional costs of the Scheme will be supported by Government through the Climate Action Fund and Ireland’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan, administered by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), while the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will act as the Scheme regulator.

While this document outlines the enhanced rehabilitation measures planned for the Gowla Bog, activities which goes beyond that required by Condition 10 in the Licence, rehabilitation necessary to comply with the ‘standard’ requirement of Condition 10 (in the absence of the Scheme) is also included, to estimate costs. The inclusion of the ‘standard’ rehabilitation together with the enhanced rehabilitation in this document allows the Scheme Regulator to distinguish and objectively determine the specific activities (and their associated costs) eligible for support under the Scheme.

Bord na Móna have defined the key rehabilitation outcome at Gowla Bog as environmental stabilisation, re-wetting and setting the bog on a trajectory towards development of naturally functioning peatland and wetland habitats.

Any consideration of any other future after-uses for Gowla Bog will be conducted in adherence to the relevant planning guidelines and consultation with relevant authorities and will be considered within the framework of this rehabilitation plan.

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Note: This finalised version of the Rehabilitation Plan has been updated to take account that several planning actions listed in Section 8.1 have been completed and have been incorporated into the plan. This includes an Appropriate Assessment of the rehabilitation plan. See Gowla Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan – Addendum 1 for more details.

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- Bord na Móna is planning to rehabilitate part of Gowla Bog, located in east Co. Galway, approximately 4km southwest of Ballyforan.
- Gowla is part of the Derryfadda Bog sub-group, within the overall area covered by the IPC licence (Ref. P0502-01) for the Blackwater Bog group.
- The total area of Gowla bog is 650 ha, however the extent included in the PCAS rehabilitation is 113 ha (hereafter referred to as the 'PCAS extent'). This is the area of Gowla that overlaps the Castle Ffrench East Bog NHA boundary.
- Industrial peat production by BnM commenced at Gowla Bog in 1970's. Development for sugar production was in place at Gowla since the 1950's. This bog still retains residual deep peat. Much of the former production areas of the bog (including within the PCAS extent) currently comprises bare peat. Industrial peat harvesting has now finished at Gowla Bog since 2020.
- There is some remaining stock still on the bog. It is envisaged extant stock will be removed prior to rehabilitation.
- Bord na Móna are obliged to carry out peatland rehabilitation via an IPC Licence issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, the Government has agreed to support peatland rehabilitation via the establishment of the Peatland Climate Action Scheme (PCAS). This is funded via the government and by Bord na Móna.
- The key objective of peatland rehabilitation is environmental stabilisation. This means developing habitats and vegetation back onto the bare peat (putting a "skin" back onto the peat), and minimising effects to downstream waterbodies. Gowla bog was previously drained to allow peat production. Better results for water quality improvements, climate action, the reduction of carbon emissions and biodiversity are achieved when the remaining peat is re-wetted. This means drain-blocking and other measures to raise water levels to the surface of the bog and to encourage the natural colonisation of vegetation.
- In general, soggy ground conditions are preferred. This means the remaining peat is wet and that plants that prefer wetter conditions, like Bog Cotton will thrive.
- Some sections with deeper residual peat have the capacity to regrow *Sphagnum* moss again, where there are suitable hydrological conditions. *Sphagnum* is a key species for restoring naturally functioning raised bog conditions.
- Many Bord na Móna bogs cannot be restored back to raised bog in the short-term, as so much peat has been removed and the environmental conditions have been modified. However other peatland habitats with Heather, Bog Cotton, Rushes, Purple Moor-grass, Bog-mosses and scattered trees will develop, and in time a naturalised peatland can be restored.
- The development or succession of a range of habitats within PCAS extent at Gowla Bog will support biodiversity including plants, insects, birds and mammals. This includes some species that are rare and protected in the wider landscape. It will increase the national area of native woodland. Many peatland and wetland habitats in the wider landscape have been reclaimed for agriculture and other uses and peatland rehabilitation is an opportunity to create new peatland and wetland habitats.
- Measures proposed include drain blocking and additional measures required to raise water levels to the surface of the peat (cell bunding for example).
- Bord na Móna plan to carry out this work in 2024.

- These rehabilitation measures will be planned by a team consisting of expert ecologists, hydrologists and engineers. It is a guiding principle of Bord na Móna rehabilitation planning that no actions or activities will be undertaken that would negatively impact on adjacent land. No boundary drains will be blocked. Water will still leave the bog via the existing outlets.
- It will take some time for vegetation and habitats to fully develop within the rehabilitated area, and for a peatland ecosystem to be restored. However, it is expected that the rehabilitated area will be developing pioneer habitats after 5-10 years.
- This is a peatland rehabilitation plan. This plan does not consider future after-use or development. Bord na Móna continually reviews its land-bank to consider future commercial or industrial developments, such as renewable energy. Gowla Bog is under consideration for a potential renewable energy project. This potential project is in the pre-planning stage. The PCAS rehabilitation footprint does not overlap the potential renewable energy development footprint. In advance of this review of renewable energy potential, it is planned to rehabilitate the area of Gowla Bog that is not constrained, under PCAS in 2024. The remaining area of Gowla Bog will be rehabilitated in future as part of a proposed renewable energy development or when the renewable energy review process is complete. Any other proposed development will be planned in adherence to relevant planning guidelines and will consider the rehabilitation and the condition of the site.
- Peatland rehabilitation of this bog will bring a range of benefits to the local community via improvements to the local landscape and is also important for supporting national policies and strategies in relation to reduction of carbon emissions from these peatlands, supporting biodiversity and improvements to water quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bord na Móna operates under IPC Licence issued and administered by the EPA to extract peat within the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group (Ref. P0502-01). As part of Condition 10.2 of this license, a rehabilitation plan must be prepared for permanent rehabilitation of the bog within the licensed area. Gowla Bog is part of the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group (see Appendix II for details of the bog areas within the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group). Gowla Bog is located in east Co. Galway.

This plan is a specific rehabilitation plan for the bog and outlines:

- Description of site management and status.
- Main issues and approaches to rehabilitation.
- Consultation to date with interested parties.
- Interaction with other policy and legislative frameworks (Appendix VI).
- The planned rehabilitation goals and outcomes.
- The scope of the rehabilitation plan.
- Criteria which define the successful rehabilitation and key targets to validate rehabilitation.
- Proposed rehabilitation actions.
- Proposed timeframe to implement these measures.
- Budget and Costings.
- Associated aftercare, maintenance, and monitoring.

Note: This plan should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Map book.

It is proposed by Government that Bord na Móna carry out a Peatlands Enhanced Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme on its peatlands. Note this proposal is also known colloquially as the 'Peatlands Climate Action Scheme' (PCAS). The additional costs of the Scheme will be supported by Government through the *Climate Action Fund* and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan administered by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), while the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will act as the Scheme regulator. Bord na Móna have previously identified a footprint of 33,000 ha as peatlands suitable for this scheme. This Scheme will significantly go beyond what is required to meet rehabilitation and decommissioning obligations (Appendix VII & IX) under existing EPA IPC licence conditions. Improvements supported by the Scheme will ensure that environmental stabilisation is achieved (meaning IPC obligations are met), and importantly, significant additional benefits, particularly relating to climate action and other ecosystem services, will also be delivered. The Scheme commenced in 2021.

Only the costs associated with the additional, enhanced and accelerated rehabilitation, i.e., those measures which go beyond the existing decommissioning and rehabilitation requirements arising from Condition 10, will be eligible for support under the Scheme. Bord na Móna announced the complete cessation of industrial peat production across its estate in January 2021.

It is expected that the Scheme (PCAS) will have benefits accruing from biodiversity provision, water quality and storage attenuation as well as increased carbon storage, reduced carbon emissions and acceleration towards carbon sequestration. The Scheme will also facilitate monitoring of carbon fluxes (Greenhouse Gases and fluvial carbon) in selected areas (in addition to other established Research programmes), to monitor changes in where the interventions will accelerate the trajectory towards a naturally functioning peatland ecosystem.

It is envisaged that the Rehabilitation Scheme will support activities, interventions, or measures across the Bord na Móna cutaway peatlands which accelerate the original timelines. Selected rehabilitation measures will take account of site environmental conditions, which can vary significantly. These measures potentially include:

- more intensive management of water levels through pump management, drain-blocking and cell bunding;
- re-profiling that will deliver suitable conditions for development of wetlands, fens and bog habitats;
- targeted fertiliser applications,
- seeding of targeted vegetation; and
- proactive inoculation of suitable peatland areas with *Sphagnum*.

These are collectively designed to optimise hydrological conditions (ideally and where possible water-levels <10 cm) for climate action benefits and to accelerate the trajectory of the site towards a naturally functioning ecosystem, and eventually a reduced carbon source/carbon sink again. In some areas of dry cutaway this trajectory will be significantly longer, and it is not feasible in the short-term to re-wet some areas. These areas will develop other habitats. The key to optimising climate action benefits is the restoration of suitable hydrological conditions and more intensive intervention means that the extent of suitable hydrological conditions can be optimised.

These measures are designed to encourage the development of peat-forming habitats, where possible. They are also designed to further slow the movement of water across the site (with the site acting similarly to a constructed wetland), slowing the release of water (improving local water attenuation) and water quality is also expected to improve as the site returns to a naturally functioning peatland ecosystem. The measures will also accelerate the development of new habitats for a range of species under pressure in the wider landscape and will have the potential to develop habitats (e.g., Annex I raised bog, wetlands that support wader water birds of conservation interest) that will contribute towards the delivery of national biodiversity objectives.

A portion of Gowla Bog is now proposed to be part of this Scheme (PCAS), and this rehabilitation plan outlines the approach that will be taken.

1.1 Constraints and Limitations

This document seeks to address the requirements of Condition 10.2 of IPC Licence Ref. P0502-01:

“The licensee shall prepare, to the satisfaction of the Agency, a fully detailed and costed plan for permanent rehabilitation of the cutaway boglands within the licensed area.”

It also seeks to outline measures to optimise climate action and other ecosystem services benefits, mainly through hydrological management.

This document covers an area of 113 ha of **Gowla Bog** (the ‘PCAS extent’), located within the northwestern section of the wider Gowla Bog boundary. This is the area of Gowla that overlaps the Castle Ffrench East NHA boundary.

The remainder of Gowla Bog is under consideration for a potential renewable energy project. In advance of this review of renewable energy potential, it is planned to rehabilitate the area of Gowla Bog that is not constrained, under PCAS in 2024. The PCAS rehabilitation footprint does not overlap the potential renewable energy development footprint. The remaining area of Gowla Bog will be rehabilitated in the future as part of the potential renewable energy project or after the renewable energy review is complete. Any other proposed

development will be planned in adherence to relevant planning guidelines and will consider the rehabilitation and the condition of the site.

Industrial peat extraction at Gowla Bog permanently ceased in 2020 (having commenced in the 1970's). Currently the former peat production area comprises largely bare peat along with some pioneering cutaway habitats, in addition to marginal¹ habitats. There is some remaining stock still on the bog. It is envisaged extant stock will be removed prior to scheme activities.

Rehabilitation in parts of the bog may be constrained due to property issues or archaeological features.

2. METHODOLOGY

This rehabilitation plan was developed with a combination of desktop and field surveys, consultations with internal and external stakeholders and cognisance of the Scheme (PCAS). The development of this rehabilitation plan considered **recently published** guidance issued by the EPA in 2020 – **Guidance on the process of preparing and implementing a bog rehabilitation plan**.

The ecological information and site information collected during the Bord na Móna ecological baseline survey, additional confirmatory site visits (covering the period 2012 to 2023 inclusive) and monitoring and desktop analysis forms the basis for the development of the rehabilitation plan for the bog, along with:

- Experience of 40 years of research on the after-use development and rehabilitation of the Bord na Móna cutaway bogs (Clarke, 2010; Bord na Móna, 2016);
- Significant international engagement during this period with other counties in relation to best-practise regarding peatland rehabilitation and after-use through the International Peat Society and the Society for Ecological Restoration (Joosten & Clarke, 2002; Clarke & Rieley, 2010; Gann *et al.*, 2019);
- Consultation and engagement with internal and external stakeholders;
- GIS Mapping;
- BNM drainage surveys;
- Bog topography and LIDAR data;
- Previous research studies on site;
- Hydrological modelling; and
- The development of a Methodology Paper ²outlining the Scheme (PCAS). This rehabilitation includes enhanced measures defined in the Methodology Paper which are designed to exceed the standard stabilisation requirements as defined by the IPC Licence and to enhance the ecosystem services of Gowla Bog, in particular, optimising climate action benefits.

2.1 Desk Study

The desk study involved collecting all relevant environmental and ecological data for the study area. The development of the rehabilitation plan also takes account of research, experience and engagement with other

¹ Marginal land is defined as land around the margin of the industrial peat production area. This margin generally contains a range of habitats including scrub, Birch woodland, cutover bog and raised bog remnants.

² [Supporting Material - BNM Peatlands Climate Action Scheme \(bnmpcas.ie\)](https://www.bnmpeas.ie)

peatland restoration and rehabilitation projects and peatland research including Irish, UK, European and International best-practise guidance (full citations are in the References Section):

- Anderson *et al.* (2017). An overview of the progress and challenges of peatland restoration in Western Europe.
- Barry, T.A. et al (1973). A survey of cutover peats and underlying mineral soils. Soil Survey Bulletin No. 30. Dublin, Bord na Móna and An Foras Taluntais.
- Bonn *et al.* (2017). Peatland restoration and ecosystem services- science, policy and practice.
- Carroll *et al.* (2009). *Sphagnum* in the Peak District. Current Status and Potential for Restoration. Moors for the Future Report No 16.
- Clark & Rieley (2010). Strategy for responsible peatland management.
- Eades *et al.* (2003). The Wetland Restoration Manual.
- Farrell & Doyle (2003). Rehabilitation of Industrial Cutaway Atlantic Blanket Bog, NW Mayo, Ireland.
- Gann *et al.* (2019). International Principles and Standards for the practice of Ecological Restoration.
- Hinde *et al.* (2010). *Sphagnum* re-introduction project: A report on research into the re-introduction of *Sphagnum* mosses to degraded moorland. Moors for the Future Research Report 18.
- Joosten & Clarke (2002). Wise Use of mires and peatlands – Background and Principles including a framework for Decision-making.
- Lindsay (2010). Peatbogs and Carbon: a Critical Synthesis to Inform Policy Development in Oceanic Peat Bog Conservation and Restoration in the Context of Climate Change.
- Mackin *et al.* (2017). Best practice in raised bog restoration in Ireland. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 99. National Parks and Wildlife Service,
- McBride *et al.* (2011). The Fen Management Handbook (2011), Scottish Natural Heritage.
- McDonagh (1996). Drain blocking by machines on Raised Bogs. Unpublished report for National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- NPWS (2017a). National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation management plan. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- Pschenyckj et al., 2021, Optimising Water Quality Returns from Peatland Management while Delivering Co-Benefits for Climate and Biodiversity. An Fóram Uisce.
- Quinty & Rochefort (2003). Peatland Restoration Guide, second edition. Canadian *Sphagnum* Peat Moss Association and New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy.
- Regan, *et al.* (2020). Ecohydrology, Greenhouse Gas Dynamics and Restoration Guidelines for Degraded Raised Bogs. EPA Research Report. Prepared for the Environmental Protection Agency by Trinity College Dublin.
- Renou-Wilson *et al.* (2011). BOGLAND - Sustainable Management of Peatlands in Ireland. STRIVE Report No 75 prepared for the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Schouten (2002). Conservation and Restoration of Raised Bogs: Geological, Hydrological and Ecological Studies. Dúchas - The Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, Ireland;
- Thom (2019). Conserving Bogs – Management Handbook.
- Wheeler & Shaw (1995). Restoration of Damaged Peatlands – with Particular Reference to Lowland Raised Bogs Affected by Peat Extraction.
- Wittram *et al.* (2015). A Practitioners Guide to *Sphagnum* Reintroduction. Moors for the Future Partnership.

Additional on-line resources were also incorporated into the desk study, including:

- Blackwater Integrated Pollution Control Licence;
- Blackwater Annual Environmental Reports;
- Review of the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) webmapper;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Reports;
- Environmental Protection Agency database (www.epa.ie);
- EPA Guidance on Requests for Alterations to a Licensed Industrial or Waste Activity;
- BirdWatch Ireland online data (including I-WeBS and CBS datasets; www.birdwatchireland.ie);
- Geological Survey of Ireland - National Draft Bedrock Aquifer map;
- Geological Survey of Ireland - Groundwater Database (www.gsi.ie);
- Historic Environment Viewer at <https://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>
- National Parks & Wildlife Services Public Map Viewer (www.npws.ie);
- Water Framework Directive catchments.ie/maps/ Map Viewer (www.catchments.ie);
- OPW Indicative Flood Maps (www.floodmaps.ie);
- CFRAM Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) maps (www.cfram.ie);
- River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 – 2021;
- Bord na Móna Annual Report 2023
- Spatial data in respect of Article 17 reporting, available online at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/habitat-and-species-data/article-17>.

2.2 Consultation

A number of stakeholders have been identified during the course of Bord na Móna's rehabilitation and Biodiversity Action Plan activities and are contacted during the rehabilitation planning process for their views. See Section 4.

2.3 Field Surveys

Bord na Móna carried out a baseline ecological survey of all of its properties in 2009-2012 and developed habitat maps. As part of this exercise, Gowla Bog was surveyed in 2010. Additional ecological walk-over surveys and visits have taken place at Gowla between 2012-2023, with the most recent visit in December 2023. Habitat maps have been updated, where required. This rehabilitation plan is informed by the original baseline survey as well as subsequent confirmatory site walk-over surveys and visits, and updates to baseline data.

Habitat mapping followed best-practise guidance from Smith *et al.* (2011). Map outputs including all habitat maps and target notes were produced using GIS software application packages (ArcGIS). General marginal habitats and other habitats that had not been modified significantly by industrial peat extraction were classified using Fossitt *et al.* (2000). Plant nomenclature for vascular plants follows Stace (2010), while mosses and liverworts nomenclature follows identification keys published by the British Bryological Society (2010). A more detailed Bord na Móna classification system was previously developed for classifying pioneer cutaway habitats as Fossitt categories were deemed not to be detailed enough for cutaway bog (much of cutaway bog could be classified as Cutover Bog - PB4). Much of the pioneer cutaway vegetation is still at an early stage of its development and cannot be assigned to Fossitt Level 3 categories yet. Site visits have been used to categorise any changes in habitat extent at Gowla Bog in 2023.

A detailed ecological survey report for the Gowla Bog is contained in Appendix II.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

Gowla Bog is located in east Co. Galway, approximately 4 km southwest of Ballyforan. Gowla is part of the Derryfadda Bog Group, within the overall area covered by the IPC licence for the Blackwater Bog group.

Gowla Bog is somewhat unusual in that it is located adjacent to Castle Ffrench East Bog NHA and the NHA designation significantly overlaps with the former industrial production bog area and cutaway (probably in error as the site synopsis³ refers to an area of intact raised bog only and the former production area was developed and used originally for sugar production and then for industrial peat extraction). The total area of Gowla bog is 650 ha, however the extent included in the PCAS rehabilitation is 113 ha. This is the area of Gowla that overlaps the Castle Ffrench East Bog NHA boundary. This sub section of Gowla is located in the west of the wider Gowla boundary.

The surrounding landscape is a mosaic primarily consisting of low-lying agricultural land (pasture) interspersed with a network of cutover bogs that have also been managed by Bord na Móna for industrial peat production within the Derryfadda Bog Group. There are several raised bogs in the wider area, some of which are largely intact, although most have been utilised for domestic turf cutting and planted with commercial conifer crops in part.

Gowla forms part of the Upper Shannon Catchment (Catchment ID: 26D) as defined by the EPA under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and is situated primarily within the Suck_SC_070 sub-catchment. A small section of Gowla is mapped by the EPA as falling within the Suck_SC_050 which flows to the north-west into the Shiven River. However, more detailed analysis of flow paths in this area reveals the area to drain to the south/south-east before joining the Kilderry Stream.

The majority of Gowla Bog drains to the east into a drainage channel which leads to the Kilderry Stream (EPA code: 26K05) which is mapped to the south-east of the boundary of the rehabilitation area. The Kilderry Stream flows to the south-east and into the River Suck. An unnamed watercourse is mapped by the EPA as flowing through the western section of Gowla Bog towards the north-west where it eventually joins the River Shiven. However, more detailed analysis of LiDAR data reveals this area to drain to the south/south-east and eventually drain into the Kilderry Stream.

Lough Gowla is a former lake that was located in the west of the site (mapped on the historical six-inch maps). This area has been heavily drained since the 19th century and the lake has now disappeared, and the former lake is in an area that it is now largely comprised of scrub.

Castle Ffrench East NHA has been selected by NPWS to be included in the Peatlands and People Integrated LIFE Project. [Home | Ireland's Climate Action Catalyst | Peatlands & People \(peatlandsandpeople.ie\)](#). NPWS are planning restoration measures for the intact raised bog area as part of this project.

See Drawing number *BNM-DR-25-06-01: Gowla Bog Bog Site Location*, included in the accompanying Mapbook⁴, which illustrates the location of Gowla in context to the surrounding area.

³ [SITE SYNOPSIS \(npws.ie\)](#)

⁴ Gowla Bog Rehab Plan GIS Map Book 2023

3.1 Status and Situation

3.1.1 Site history

Gowla Bog was originally developed by the Irish Sugar Company in the 1950's. Much of the bog was developed into grassland for the production of grass-meal (agricultural food supplement – cattle nuts). The conifer plantation found on the site dates back to 1956. Turf was also harvested from part of the bog to supply the industrial furnace. Ownership was transferred from the Irish Sugar Company to Bord na Móna in the late 70's-1980's and Bord na Móna began to develop the bog for milled peat production.

Industrial peat production by BnM commenced at Gowla Bog in 1970's. Gowla Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. This bog still retains residual deep peat. Much of the former production areas of the bog currently comprises bare peat. Industrial peat harvesting has finished at Gowla Bog since 2020.

3.1.2 Current land-use

The extent of the PCAS rehabilitation at Gowla comprises 113 ha. This area is entirely within the boundary of the Castle French East NHA. Approximately 70 ha of Gowla Bog within the PCAS extent comprises cutover bare peat, with the remaining 43 ha having revegetated with scrub, birch woodland and grassland. This revegetated section was previously drained but never put into peat production. There is some remaining stock still on the bog. It is envisaged extant stock will be removed prior to scheme activities.

There is no known turbary around the margins of Gowla within the PCAS extent.

3.1.3 Socio-Economic conditions

Bord na Móna has historically been a vital employer for the rural community of the Midlands of Ireland. Bord na Móna compiled a report on the role of peat extraction in the midlands historically in which they report that in 1986, by the end of Bord na Móna's Third Development Programme, a total of twenty-three work locations had been established around the country. The company had an average employment of approximately 4,688 in the mid 1980's, with a peak employment of 6,100 during the production season, which placed it among the country's largest commercial employers. The importance of such levels of employment were largely due to its regional concentration in the Midlands and the lack of alternative employment opportunities at the time.

According to the Energy Crop Socio-Economic Study undertaken by Fitzpatrick Associates in 2011, there were an estimated 1,443 jobs supported by the peat-to-power industry in Ireland at the time, some 81% of which were located in the catchment areas of the three peat-fired generating stations (Lough Ree, West Offaly, and Edenderry Power Stations). These constituted jobs in the plants and in peat extraction, jobs indirectly supported in upstream supply industries and jobs induced through the trickle-down effects of the wages and salaries of those supported directly or indirectly.

In respect of Gowla Bog, jobs would have included those around activities to prepare the bog for Milled horticultural peat and fuel peat production, along with site oversight and management.

As the primary employer in many Midland counties, Bord na Móna played a central role in building communities through several initiatives, including Education bursaries, support of local sporting clubs, the provision of community gain funds, charity programmes and the provision and building of amenity areas.

These job numbers have now declined with the cessation of peat extraction at this bog. It is anticipated that the scheme (PCAS) will provide some employment for a team of workers at this site for a period of time (> 1 year).

There are approximately 1400 people working in Bord na Móna at present. There are approximately 225 roles directly involved in PCAS.

3.2 Geology and Peat Depths

3.2.1 Sub-soil geology

The underlying geology at Gowla Bog is Visean Limestones and Lucan Formation bedrock⁵. The underlying soils and sub-soils are classed as 'Raised Bog Cutover Peat'.

3.2.2 Peat type and depths

The majority of Gowla Bog comprises "red peat" or *Sphagnum* peat and significant depth reserves remain at the bog. Detailed information on peat depths across Gowla is available from coring carried out by RPS combined with GPR data. Estimated peat depths are provided in figure BNM-DR-25-06-04: Peat depths.

The majority of Gowla Bog has deep deposits of peat remaining, with an estimated peat thickness of 2-7m. RPS piezometer peat depth data indicates peat depths in excess of 10m at nests GLA_001 - GLA_003. Shallower deposits (2-4m) are associated with areas underlain by limestone till, while the very deep basins (4-7m) occur in areas underlain by lacustrine clay.

3.3 Key Biodiversity Features of Interest

3.3.1 Current habitats

The most common vegetation communities⁶ present in the former production areas at within the PCAS rehabilitation extent at Gowla include:

- Bare peat (0-50% cover) (BP) (*Codes refer BnM classification of pioneer habitats of production bog*⁷).
- Emergent *Betula*-dominated community (eBir) and open *Betula*-dominated community (oBir) (along headland and highfields)
- Pioneer dry heather dominated vegetation (dHeath)
- Pioneer *Juncus effusus* community (pJeff)
- *Molinia caerulea*-dominated community (gMol)
- Pioneer *Eriophorum angustifolium* community (poor fen)
- Silt ponds (Silt) with Gorse/Birch scrub and Purple Moorgrass-dominated grassland (gMol)

The most common habitats around the bog margins include:

- Birch woodland (WN7)
- Scrub (WS1) – Birch scrub
- Conifer plantation (WD4)
- Wet grassland (GS4)

⁵ <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/Bedrock.aspx>

⁶ Codes refer BnM classification of pioneer habitats of production bog or Fossitt habitats where relevant.

⁷ See Appendix II – "An Overview of the Bord na Móna Habitat Classification" of the BnM [Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2021](#)

- Raised Bog (PB1)

The majority of the former production area of Gowla Bog comprises a mosaic of bare peat along with developing pioneer habitats, predominantly along the high fields, which have developed pioneer dry Heather dominated vegetation (dHeath), pioneer *Juncus effusus* community (pJeff) and *Molinia caerulea*-dominated community (gMol) (see Plate 3-1 – Plate 3-3).

The southwestern extent of Gowla was drained, however it was never put into peat production. This area has developed as dry Birch woodland (WN7), with more open areas dominated by wet grassland (GS4) (see Plate 3-4 – Plate 3-7). The understory is quite open with frequent Willow (*Salix* sp.), patches of Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The woodland is grazed by Fallow Deer. A strip of conifers demarcates the boundary between the former production area and the Birch woodland.

An area of bog woodland (WN7) (Plate 3-8) and raised bog (PB1) occurs along the western margins, adjacent to the raised bog at Castle Ffrench East NHA. This area of bog woodland had a high-water table and a high degree of flushing, with several indicator species of Annex I Bog Woodland (91D0) including Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), an extensive Purple Moorgrass (*Molinia caerulea*) understory, and occasional Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex Panicea*), Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*), *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *Hylocomium splendens* and *Polytrichum commune*. However, the bog woodland had low *Sphagnum* cover, and did not meet the required >25% *Sphagnum* cover threshold to qualify as EU HD Annex I habitat (91D0) Bog woodland.

Other marginal habitats along the western boundary of Gowla include Conifer Plantation (WD4) and Scrub (WS1).

Photos of Habitats at Gowla (2023)



Plate 3-1 Vegetated high fields in the centre of the bog, with abundant dry Heather dominated vegetation, emergent Birch (eBir) and pioneer Eriophorum angustifolium (PEang).



Plate 3-2 View of bare peat dominated cutover in the former production area, pioneer vegetation communities beginning to develop including Juncus effusus community (pJeff) and dry heather dominated vegetation (dHeath).



Plate 3-3 Aerial View of Cutaway in the former production area (looking northwest).



Plate 3-4 Aerial view of Birch woodland/wet grassland in the AW2 area in the SW of Gowla, with view of the raised bog at Castle Ffrench East NHA in the background.

Photos of Habitats at Gowla (2023)



Plate 3-5 Wet grassland in the AW2 area in the SW of Gowla.



Plate 3-6 Birch Woodland in the AW2 area in the SW of Gowla.



Plate 3-7 Marginal Birch woodland (WN7) in the western part of the bog.



Plate 3-8 Bog Woodland (WN7) along the western margins, grades into raised bog (PB1) habitat.

See Drawing number *BNM-DR-25-06-17 Current Habitat Map*, included in the accompanying Mapbook, which illustrates the habitats at the Bog.

3.3.2 Species of conservation interest

A number of species of conservation concern utilize the habitats available at Gowla Bog. The following is a summary of the records of species available within both BnM records and those of the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The Birch woodland holds a relatively large population of Fallow Deer and is a significantly large refuge area.

Numerous bird species are known to use the cutover bogs in Ireland's midlands as breeding grounds, wintering grounds or both. NBDC Records for red-listed⁸ bird species of conservation concern recorded from the 2km grid square M74X include Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), Swift (*Apus apus*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Snipe - (*Gallinago gallinago*), Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*), Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). The Annex I listed species of the EU habitats directive, Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) and Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) have also been recorded within this 2km grid square. Note limited habitat is available for some of these species, such as Red Grouse, within the PCAS extent.

During the most recent site walkover in December 2023, Fallow Deer were recorded grazing within the Birch woodland along the western margins of the bog. In addition, an active Badger sett was recorded in the conifer woodland strip along the north-western boundary, that separates the area of Birch woodland in the SW of the bog from the raised bog in Castle Ffrench East NHA to the north.

Peatland rehabilitation may result in positive quality effects on the relative abundance or proportion of species of conservation concern utilising bogs post rehabilitation. This may include Red or Amber listed species of breeding wader along with wintering species including Swans and other wildfowl⁹.

3.3.3 Invasive species

A relatively large population of Fallow Deer have been recorded at Gowla bog. No high impact invasive plant species occur within the area of Gowla Bog that is within the PCAS extent, however *Rhododendron ponticum* has been recorded in the wider area of Gowla Bog, along the railway to the southeast. A broad range of common garden escapes are occasionally present around the margins of Bord na Móna bogs, and although spatial overlap with the PCAS extent is expected to be limited, these are, where necessary, to be treated in line with best practice during PCAS activities.

3.4 Statutory Nature Conservation Designations

There are no European Sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA), located within or adjacent to Gowla bog. The nearest EU Designated sites to Gowla bog are as follows:

- River Suck Callows SPA (site code: 004097) – 2.2 km east
- Four Roads Turlough SAC (site code: 001637) – 6.9 km northeast
- Four Roads Turlough SPA (site code: 004140) – 6.9 km northeast
- Ballygar (Aghrane) Bog SAC (site code: 002199) – 6.9 km northeast
- Killeglan Grassland SAC (site code: 002214) – 7.9 km to the southeast

Gowla Bog partially overlaps Castle Ffrench East Bog (NHA) (Site Code 001244), with the entire PCAS rehabilitation extent (113 ha) within its boundary. Castle Ffrench East Bog NHA is ca. 200Ha in size and is considered a site of considerable conservation significance as it does comprise a relatively intact raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U.

⁸ Gilbert G, Stanbury A and Lewis L (2021), "Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020–2026". Irish Birds 9: 523–544

⁹ Scheme Year 1 Monitoring and Verification Report - <https://www.bnmpcas.ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2023/08/Annual-Monitoring-Report-Final-Rev-A-Redacted.pdf>

and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. This site supports a range of raised bog habitats including pool systems, flushes, swallow holes and is showing signs of active regeneration. The presence of woodland and dry grassland adds to the diversity of the site.

A number of additional designated sites also occur in the wider area around Gowla bog including:

- Castle Ffrench West Bog (NHA) (site code: 000280) - overlapping
- Suck River Callows NHA (site code: 000280) – 2.2 km east
- Ballygar Bog NHA (site code: 000229) – 6.9 km northeast

3.4.1 Other Nature Conservation Designations

The Ramsar Convention entered into force in Ireland on 15th March 1985. Ireland currently has 45 sites/wetlands designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). These cover a surface area of 66,994ha. There are no Ramsar Sites in the local vicinity of Gowla Bog (i.e., within 3km).

3.5 Hydrology and Hydrogeology

Gowla forms part of the Upper Shannon Catchment (Catchment ID: 26D) as defined by the EPA under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and is situated primarily within the Suck_SC_070 sub-catchment which flows to the south via the Killaderry stream_010 which eventually flows into the River Suck. A small section of Gowla is mapped by the EPA as falling within the Suck_SC_050 which flows to the north-west into the Shiven River. However, more detailed analysis of flow paths in this area reveals the area to drain to the south/south-east before joining the Kilderry Stream.

The majority of Gowla Bog drains to the east into a drainage channel which leads to the Kilderry Stream (EPA code: 26K05) which is mapped to the south-east of the boundary of the rehabilitation area. The Kilderry Stream flows to the south-east and into the River Suck. An unnamed watercourse is mapped by the EPA as flowing through the western section of Gowla Bog towards the north-west where it eventually joins the River Shiven. However, more detailed analysis of LiDAR data reveals this area to drain to the south/south-east and eventually drain into the Kilderry Stream.

This unnamed watercourse has been assigned 'good' status as part of the River Waterbody WFD Status 2016-2021 water quality assessments. The Killaderry Stream_010 (EPA code: 26K05) has been assigned 'moderate' status as part of the River Waterbody WFD Status 2016-2021 water quality assessments. This assessment was based on modelling rather than monitoring. The section of the River Suck_130, into which the Killaderry Stream_010 discharges has been assigned 'good' status in WFD River Waterbody assessments 2016-2021.

Drainage from the bog is generally directed into the low-lying basin in the central section of the bog, which discharges via pipes to drainage channels that lead to the Killaderry stream_010 to the south. Gowla bog has a gravity-based drainage system.

GSI data indicates that Visean Limestones (undifferentiated) underlies the northern section of Gowla Bog, and Lucan Formation underlies the southern section. Visean Limestones (undifferentiated) is classified as a regionally important aquifer - karstified (conduit). Lucan Formation is classified as a locally important aquifer - bedrock which is moderately productive only in local zones. A south-west to north-east trending fault line is located to the west of Gowla.

No data exists concerning depth to bedrock. No mapped bedrock outcrop occurs in close proximity to the bog. Mapped karst features within the surrounding area show four karst features including a spring, enclosed depression, swallow hole and a turlough.

Quaternary sediment maps show Gowla is underlain by peat, with some pockets of lake marl in the southern section of the bog. Gowla is surrounded by inorganic deposits, including till derived from limestones. GSI groundwater mapping indicates that there is generally low vulnerability in the surrounding area with a higher vulnerability area at the north-west extent.

3.6 Emissions to surface-water and watercourses

Gowla Bog has 3 treated surface water outlets from a previously active peat extraction catchments, all which discharge to the River Suck (IE_SH_26S071200 SUCK_130) via the Killaderry Stream (IE_SH_26K050940 Killaderry stream_010).

The Killaderry Stream is classed as at Moderate water quality status with the downstream Suck at Good Status (Ecological Status or Potential SW 2016-2021) – Water Framework Directive. (BNM-DR-25-06-WQ01: Water Quality Map)

Details of silt ponds, associated surface water emission points and those being monitored and sampled as part of the PCAS scheme are detailed on the attached water quality map (BNM-DR-25-06-13: General Drainage Map) Details of any surface water emission points and those being monitored and sampled as part of the PCAS scheme are detailed on the water quality map in the accompanying mapbook. See Drawing number *BNM-DR-25-06-02: Structures and Sampling*, along with Drawing number *BNM-DR-25-06-WQ01: Water Quality Map* included in the accompanying Mapbook, which illustrate the various drainage and water quality infrastructure present at Gowla.

There is a robust monitoring program to track and verify any changes in baseline water quality conditions pre and post decommissioning and rehabilitation so that the success or otherwise can be tracked and verified for the National Parks & Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and Local Authority Water Program, amongst a range of stakeholders.

Peat extraction was not identified as pressure in the second cycle of the river basin management plan is indicated as remaining so in the third cycle, currently under preparation. The main emission limit value associated with this bog is 35mg/l suspended solids, with trigger levels for ammonia of 4.27mg/l and COD 100mg/l.

From an analysis of any results over number of years of the IPC licence environmental monitoring of some of the discharges from this bog, these indicate that results were under the Emission Limit Value for Suspended Solids and under the trigger level for Ammonia and COD. Ammonia averaged 0.35mg/l and ranged from 0.04 to 1.1mg/l with Suspended Solids ranging from 2 to 10 mg/l and averaging 5.0mg/l.

Bog	SW	Monitoring	pH	SS mg/l	TS mg/l	Ammonia mg/l	TP mg/l	COD mg/l	Colour
Gowla	SW-125	Q4 22	7	<2	204	0.189	<0.05	72	299
Gowla	SW-127	Q4 22	7.3	<2	208	0.058	<0.05	69	304
Gowla	SW-128	Q4 22	7.3	<2	194	0.04	<0.05	71	303
Gowla	SW-125	Q3 19	6.6	10	206	0.17	0.11	87	424
Gowla	SW-127	Q3 19	6.7	5	142	0.21	0.08	99	372
Gowla	SW-128	Q3 19	6.7	6	178	0.23	0.06	95	354
Gowla	SW-125	Q2 18	7.2	5	132	1	0.19	95	337
Gowla	SW-127	Q2 18	7.5	5	182	0.29	0.17	84	277
Gowla	SW-128	Q2 18	7.6	5	206	0.35	0.09	73	231
Gowla	SW-127	Q1 17	7.6	5	216	0.32	0.08	67	214
Gowla	SW-125	Q4 16	7.3	9	324	0.3	0.02	73	206
Gowla	SW-128	Q4 16	7.5	5	176	1.1	0.03	58	130

Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Programme Water Quality Monitoring.

Rehabilitation of cutaway peatland is closely linked with control of emissions. One of the criteria for successful rehabilitation is stabilisation through re-vegetation, which will stabilise all substrates and in turn remove the need for further silt control measures. Re-wetted peat also aids the primary objective of stabilizing peat, as when peat is re-wetted it is not vulnerable to wind erosion. Re-wetted peat and the development of wet peatland habitats can also act as sinks for silt and mobile peat, and increases additional retention time for solids, and the peatland vegetation can quickly stabilise this material within blocked drains on site (by acting like constructed wetlands).

Water quality of water discharges from restored peatlands normally improves as a result of bog restoration measures and the restoration of natural peatland processes (Bonn *et al.*, 20017). Bog restoration is also expected to improve water attenuation of the site as the drains are blocked, slowing water movement and water release from the site. Restored peatlands help slow the release of water and aid the natural regulation of floods downstream (Minayeva *et al.*, 2017). The National River Basin Management Plan (NRBMP) 2018-2021 (DHPCLG, 2017) is the key national plan for Ireland to achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The NRBMP outlines how key actions such as the Bord na Móna peatland rehabilitation is expected to have a positive impact on water quality and help the NRBMP deliver its objectives in relation to the WFD.

Water will still discharge from designated emission points when rehabilitation at Gowla Bog has been completed. This discharge will have improving water quality and there will be increased wetland attenuation, meaning slower release of water. It is the expectation of BnM that rehabilitation measures should positively impact the water quality in receiving water bodies through enhancing the water attenuation across rehabilitated sites. The robust water monitoring programme implemented as part of PCAS will be used to assess water quality leaving rehabilitated sites at designated points. While water quality improvements assist in meeting water frameworks directive ambitions and targets, they can also improve drinking water sources in applicable catchments with drained peatlands and the potential for associated reduction in treatment requirements at drinking water treatment facilities.

The licence obligation of quarterly sampling regime on a selected number of ponds to be sampled over a 3-year cycle would not be sufficient to be able to appropriately track the changing water chemistry that will occur as part of this enhanced rehabilitation programme, so this sampling regime will occur monthly.

To assist in monitoring surface water quality from this bog, it was agreed to increase the existing licence monitoring requirements of the IPC Licence, to sampling for the same parameters every month.

This new sampling programme commenced in January 2023 and is enabling a baseline to be established, with sampling to progress during the scheduled works, and for a period of up to 2 years post rehabilitation. Depending on the period required to confirm that the main two parameters, suspended solids, and ammonia as remaining compliant with the licence emission and trigger limit values and there is an improving trajectory in these two parameters i.e., reduction in concentration, the monitoring programme and intensity will be periodically reviewed and amended.

Initial monthly results are included in Appendix XIII, for Gowla bog. These results cover the period from November 2022 to November 2023 and are from some of the surface water outlet from the sections of bog to be rehabilitated in 2024. Peat extraction ceased in this bog in 2020 and as expected some of the key water quality parameters that can impact water quality from peat extraction activities, remain on a relatively static trajectory, with suspended solids indicating a level trend from all three outlets during the period, all well below any limits of concern. During this same period there was a slight downward trend in Ammonia for all three emission points, with all other parameters fluctuated slightly, most likely influenced by normal weather patterns, including rainfall.

Monthly ammonia concentrations from both emission points for November 2022 to November 2023 had a range of 0.005 to 0.634 mg/l with an average of 0.237 mg/l. Results for suspended solids for the same period indicated a range of 2 to 6mg/l with an average of 2.5 mg/l.

In the preparation of this monitoring programme, Bord na Móna have been providing the Local Authority Water Programme (LAWPRO) with details of the surface water emissions points associated with these bogs and will be amending some of the proposed monitoring locations on foot of this engagement. LAWPRO have in turn provided details of their monitoring programme and these are included in the water quality map.

This is necessary to ensure that there is alignment with the WFD monitoring programme and that where possible, the monitoring programme will enable any improvements in water quality or establishing trends to be quantified against any available WFD monitoring data. It will also enable the periodic sharing of data which will inform the monitoring reports, success criteria and enable LAWPRO under the Water Framework Directive to track any changes in pressures and be aware of changes in water chemistry.

Monitoring results will be maintained, trended every six months and reported on each year and as required, as part of the requirement to report on Condition 10.1 of the IPC Licence on Bog Rehabilitation in the Annual Environmental Report, and will be provided to LAWPRO and the EPA as required to inform progress and national monitoring requirements under the WFD. These results will also be available in April each year as a requirement of the Annual Environmental Report at www.epa.ie.

The parameters to include as per condition 6.2 of the IPC Licence include monthly monitoring for pH, Flow, Suspended Solids, Total Solids, Total Phosphorus, Total Ammonia, Colour & COD. In addition, DOC has been included as a parameter to try and identify any changes in carbon in the surface water, and where required by LAWPRO, to assist in investigating other changes in water chemistry, the series of parameters can be reviewed and amended.

3.7 Fugitive Emissions to air

None.

The bog is no longer in industrial peat production. Rehabilitation of the cutaway peatland will seek to re-wet the dry peat where possible, and re-vegetate all areas (whether wet or dry). Collectively, ceasing industrial peat production, re-wetting and re-vegetating will minimise any risk of emission to air from dust.

3.8 Carbon emissions

Irish peatlands are a huge carbon store, containing more than 75% of the national soil organic carbon (Renou-Wilson et al. 2012). Peatland drainage and extraction transforms a natural peatland which acts as a modest carbon sink into a carbon source (Waddington & McNeil, 2002; Alm *et al.*, 2007; Wilson *et al.*, 2007, Wilson *et al.*, 2015). A natural peatland can take in 0.1 to 1.1 t of carbon as CO₂-C /ha/yr while drainage and extraction can create large source of carbon dioxide releasing 1.3 to 2.2 t of carbon as CO₂-C /ha/yr (based on Tier 1 Emission factors, Evans et al. 2017). Renou-Wilson et al. (2018) reported losses of between 0.81 – 1.51 CO₂-C /ha/yr from drained peatlands located in Ireland.

Re-wetting of dry peatlands will increase methane emissions (Gunther et al. 2020) as a consequence of the anoxic conditions within the peat body that provide a suitable environment for the microbial breakdown of plant litter and root exudates. Tanneberger et al. (2021) describes how peatland management has to choose between CO₂ emissions from drained peatlands or increased methane (CH₄) emissions from rewetted industrial peatlands. However, when radiative effects and atmospheric lifetimes of both GHG gases are considered and modelled, postponing rewetting increases the long-term warming effect of continued CO₂ emissions (Gunther et al. 2020). This means the increase in methane due to rewetting of dry peatlands is still negated by the CO₂ emissions reductions. Degraded peatlands also release carbon/GHG emissions via the fluvial/aquatic pathway (Dissolved Organic Carbon – DOC, Suspended Solids/Particulate Matter, degassing of GHGs from water).

The EPA-funded CarbonRestore Project (Renou-Wilson et al. 2012) found that rewetting of drained peatlands can lead to restoration of functional peatland, such as the return of typical plant and animal species, which in turn may lead to the restoration of peat-formation and the C-sink function. The EPA NEROS project carried out GHG flux research at Moyarwood Bog and found that Moyarwood Bog was overall a Carbon sink (sink for CO₂ and a source for Methane) 6 years after bog restoration was carried out (Renou-Wilson et al. 2018). Further, Wilson et al. (2022) confirmed the benefit of rapid rewetting at this site to achieve strong carbon reductions and potentially altering the warming dynamics from warming to cooling depending upon the climate scenario.

It is expected that Gowla bog will become a reduced carbon source following rehabilitation. The potential of any cutaway site to develop as a carbon sink in the longer-term depends on the success of the rehabilitation measures, the extent of development of *Sphagnum*-rich or other peat-forming habitats, the balance of carbon fluxes from different cutaway habitats and future climatic conditions. Much of this site is expected to develop ***Sphagnum*-rich regenerating wet deep peat vegetation** on deep peat areas. Birch woodland is expected to develop on the drier mounds and peripheral headlands.

3.9 Current ecological rating

(Following NRA (2009) Evaluation Criteria)

Overall Gowla Bog can be rated as having a low local ecological value (E) as it is dominated by bare peat. The Birch woodland, bog woodland (WN7) and the small area of raised bog (PB1), provide semi-natural habitat and provide refuge for wildlife. These areas can be rated as nationally important, as they lie within the Castle Ffrench East NHA.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation to date

Consultation to date

Consultation seeks to engage an audience of relevant stakeholders and interested parties at both a national and local level. National stakeholders have been identified from varied bog restoration and rehabilitation efforts undertaken by BnM over the past 40 years, with particular emphasis on engagement with stakeholders during their Biodiversity Action Plan programme, since 2010. National Stakeholders includes relevant government departments and agencies, relevant semi-state bodies, NGOs and other environmentally focused groups with a national remit.

There has been ongoing consultation about rehabilitation, biodiversity and other general issues over the years about Blackwater (Derryfadda) group bogs including Gowla Bog with various stakeholders in relation to:

- Foss, P.J., Crushell, P. & Gallagher, M.C. (2017). Counties Longford & Roscommon Wetland Study. Report prepared for Longford and Roscommon County Councils.
- Midlands & East Regional WFD Operational Committee (River Basin Management Plans).
- Sub-committee on Shannon Flooding Work Programme and Measures (OPW, Waterways Ireland, ESB, LA's, Fisheries Ireland, NPWs etc).
- Archaeological Liaison Committee (National Museum of Ireland & Dept of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht).
- General consultation with range of stakeholders at annual BnM Biodiversity Action Plan review days 2010-2018.
- Midlands & East Regional WFD Operational Committee (River Basin Management Plans).
- Ballyforan local community group – in relation to the development of a walkway amenity across Derryfadda Bog (2020-2021).

To inform the current Plan, both national and local stakeholders, including neighbours residing within 1Km of Gowla Bog and local representatives of national bodies (such as Regional National Parks and Wildlife Service staff), local farming organisations (IFA, ICMSA and relevant offices in County Councils (such as the Heritage or Environmental Offices) will be contacted. Any identified local interest groups were sought and informed of the opportunity to engage with this rehabilitation plan, and when identified, they were invited to submit their comments or observations in relation to the proposed rehabilitation at Gowla Bog.

All correspondence received was acknowledged and evaluated against the rehabilitation work proposed here, and the final draft of the Gowla Bog Rehabilitation Plan will contain a review of the consultation.

4.2 Issues raised by Consultees

To date, a number of issues have been raised by consultees during the consultation process for both the current and previous drafts of the rehabilitation plan for Gowla Bog – these are summarised below. A number of general submissions in respect of previous PCAS consultation are also referenced where applicable.

4.2.1 Consultation

During the initial commencement of PCAS, a number of consultees including: the Irish Farmers Association (IFA), the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA) and Trinity College Dublin have raised concerns regarding the duration and scope of consultation period. Stakeholders suggested that the consultation period should be extended to allow all potential stakeholders to make submissions where required.

4.2.2 Assessments of rehabilitation

Queries on pre-rehabilitation assessments were raised by NPWS and the National Museum of Ireland relating to the finalisation of several bog rehab plans in 2021 in relation to Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

4.2.3 Restoration scope

Restoration/rehabilitation of marginal habitats was raised by the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) and Butterfly Conservation Ireland (BCI) relating to the finalisation of several bog rehab plans in 2021 and 2022 as worthy of consideration within the rehabilitation measures to support carbon sequestration and biodiversity objectives.

4.2.4 Monitoring

Further details on monitoring of ecological metrics, and how and where reporting on this monitoring would take place, was raised by the IPCC, University College Dublin and Trinity College researchers in their respective submissions relating to the finalisation of several bog rehab plans in 2021. Uisce Éireann (formerly Irish Water) reiterated the requirement of a strong monitoring program with respect to water quality during and post rehabilitation.

4.2.5 Flooding, drainage or other impacts on adjacent land.

The Irish Farmers Association (IFA), The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, individual local residents and ICMSA queried likely impacts relating to the finalisation of several bog rehabilitation plans in 2021 and 2022. They raised concerns based on the proposed re-wetting in relation to flooding on adjoining lands and, specifically, with regards to the maintenance of drains. In previous submissions, the IFA also raised the issue of Health and Safety in relation to raising water levels as well as possible impacts on land and property prices.

4.2.6 Amenity

Since the beginning of consultation by BnM relating to Peatlands Climate Action Scheme funded, several consultees including various politicians, have requested information regarding the development of amenities on BnM bogs.

4.2.7 Water Quality

A number of consultees have contacted BnM to express their concerns regarding the potential impact of PCAS related activities on water quality within waterbodies that are hydrologically connected to BnM bogs. Uisce Éireann have expressed their support for PCAS in general but have also requested information regarding the potential hydrological repercussions of PCAS.

4.2.8 *Future management*

In submissions made on earlier PCAS plans the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) expressed concerns regarding the future ownership of the BnM bogs subject to rehabilitation. They expressed a desire for contingency planning for potential future ownership of designated bogs so as to ensure no negative impacts arise on adjacent properties from any new ownership.

4.2.9 *Other issues*

Other issues (raised by IPCC) during the finalisation of several bog rehab plans in 2021, 2022 and in 2023 included after use of the bog and turf cutting on the margins of the bog (outside of the area owned by BnM). The IPCC have also requested information regarding the resilience of rehabilitation measures to climate change induced climatic alterations.

In the early stages of PCAS archaeological end of life survey of all the bogs were requested by National Museum of Ireland and National Monuments Unit. The National Museum of Ireland also requested that due diligence be taken during works to protect any archaeologically significant findings or areas. They also reiterated the importance of peatlands for the preservation of archaeology and requested they be consulted as part of any EIA undertaken.

A local landowner with a holding adjacent to Gowla bog made an enquiry regarding the perceived use of BnM lands for grazing by a third party.

A separate local landowner expressed concerns over the perceived potential increase in flood risk arising due to PCAS activities.

For a complete summary of submissions received and replies, see Appendix XI.

4.3 **Bord na Móna response to issues raised during consultation**

4.3.1 *Consultation*

BnM are carrying out consultation as part of the process of developing the rehabilitation plan for Gowla Bog. This is ongoing with a dedicated Community Liaison Officer communicating with affected and interested parties. A website has been developed to make information available. This will be continually updated. Some PCAS Bogs have been used as demonstration sites so that interested stakeholders can come to organised visits and observe the measures on the ground.

4.3.2 *Assessments of rehabilitation*

Appropriate Assessment screening will be undertaken on all the bogs as part of PCAS. This was undertaken by external consultants for Gowla Bog. See addendum 1.

Implementation of rehabilitation measures including machine access across the bog will be carried out in conjunction with BnM Ecology Department. Seasonal and other restrictions will be put in place to mitigate against any impacts on biodiversity.

An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) has been undertaken on Gowla Bog (Appendix XII). The aim for known archaeology on these bogs is to accomplish preservation in situ and we are taking steps to identify and avoid all known archaeology. BnM aim to achieve this through including all known archaeology in the planning process of rehabilitation works and implementing and exclusion or buffer zone around these features. These measures should sufficiently protect any archaeology in these areas, during any ground works in the final plan. It is anticipated that any archaeology will benefit from the ultimate remit of the rehabilitation, in that water tables will be raised thereby preserving in-situ. There is also an identified procedure for managing reports of stray finds that may arise during rehabilitation works.

4.3.3 *Restoration scope*

As part of PCAS, all restoration/rehabilitation options have been developed to support climate action and biodiversity objectives. Other issues such as existing amenity, social impacts, industrial history, archaeology were not part of the direct scope of PCAS but were considered when developing the rehabilitation plan. After-use of the bog is outside the scope of PCAS. Rehabilitation will lead to the development of a stable diverse re-wetted cutaway landscape that will have added benefits for amenity in the future.

As part of PCAS, one of the objectives for the rehabilitation of bogs is to promote the development of a naturally functioning peatland system. BnM would envisage benefits to biodiversity on these bogs as a result of rehabilitation. The most intensive peatland re-wetting will be applied to bare peat areas. Where there are diverse habitats already present, less intensive, targeted drain-blocking will be applied. While the overall objective is to make the bog wetter and increase the footprint of wet peatland habitats, there will still be a mosaic of habitats present, including a transition from wet to drier areas of peat, in areas that cannot be re-wetted.

The local environmental conditions of Gowla Bog means that deep peat measures combined with some additional works measures are the most suitable rehabilitation approach for this site to optimise benefits for desirable climate-based emissions reductions. Gowla Bog is predominantly a deep, bare peat bog. At present, there is very little development of pioneer cutaway habitats within the main PCAS area of the bog. The majority of area proposed for rehabilitation is expected to develop as deep peat habitat. A key expected habitat is raised bog type vegetation on deeper residual peat. Peatland habitats within the site will improve in overall condition. Gowla Bog has a gravity-based drainage system.

4.3.4 *Monitoring*

As part of the PCAS, a monitoring and verification plan has been developed to support climate action and biodiversity objectives. This will include stratified monitoring of bog condition, habitats and biodiversity at several different scales. It is proposed to monitor the improvement of some biodiversity ecosystem services. The appearance of key species such as *Sphagnum* moss will be monitored during walk-over surveys and general monitoring visits. It is not proposed to carry out any additional monitoring of biodiversity ecosystem services at this site. Biodiversity monitoring for PCAS planned for a stratified approach with different targeted monitoring at different sites based on the site characteristics.

It is the expectation of BnM that rehabilitation measures should positively impact the water quality in receiving water bodies through enhancing the water attenuation across rehabilitated sites. The robust water monitoring programme implemented as part of PCAS will be used to assess water quality leaving rehabilitated sites at designated points.

An overview of the Water Quality Monitoring plan was provided to Uisce Eireann , and confirmation given that water flow and dissolved organic carbon (DOC) is being monitored.

BnM also advised that decommissioning of silt ponds will only be carried out when the EPA are satisfied that adequate stabilisation of the bog has been achieved and silt ponds are no longer required. This decommissioning will be determined by water quality results and EPA approval.

It was also confirmed that rehabilitation of bogs in the same catchment is likely to result in beneficial impacts on water quality in the catchment. This will be captured by the results from EPA monitoring stations in the vicinity of the bogs.

4.3.5 *Flooding, drainage or other impacts on adjacent land.*

It is the intention of BnM that the re-wetting of the bogs will be carried out in such a manner that does not impact on third party lands. Where it is deemed that blocking of a shared drain would cause any adjoining lands to be adversely affected, this will be avoided, and alterations made to the rehabilitation plan. In general, drains around the margins of the bog will not be blocked.

External consultants have been appointed to carry a hydrological assessment to identify any potential impacts to neighbouring lands and to mitigate against any such impacts. There is no potential for direct impacts on arterial drainage downstream.

The rehabilitation measures proposed at Gowla Bog will generally result in increased water attenuation across the site and reduce the speed of drainage from the existing peat fields through a mixture of techniques including

drain blocking, cell bunding and re-profiling. This will arrest active drainage systems and enable the return of the peatland to its natural, water retention functionality. It is intended that these measures will not significantly alter the existing topographical catchments and that the spine of the drainage networks, those which the upstream catchments drain through, will be retained by BnM.

4.3.6 *Amenity*

Creating amenity developments such as walking tracks is not included within the scope of PCAS. However, PCAS rehabilitation will enable and support potential amenity future amenity developments.

4.3.7 *Water Quality*

It is the expectation of BnM that PCAS rehabilitation should positively impact the water quality of surrounding water bodies through enhancing water attenuation across rehabilitated sites. The robust water quality monitoring programme implemented as part of the of PCAS will be used to assess the water quality leaving rehabilitated sites at designated points.

4.3.8 *Future management*

BnM will continue to manage their land bank into the future. As peat production has now ceased on BnM lands and rehabilitation measures will be carried out, a regular drainage maintenance programme will not be required or carried out as would have been the case in the past. However, if issues arise with the BnM internal drainage system that affects upstream or downstream landowners, then these issues will be addressed by BnM .

BnM considers issues regarding estate security, fire risk, invasive species and water pollution of utmost importance. BnM intends to maintain security and manage fire risk over the entirety of the estate. In this regard, PCAS activities, should have no detrimental impact on these issues. Regarding water pollution, BnM is regulated by the EPA and as such adheres to the strict water pollution measures laid out by the same.

4.3.9 *Other issues*

Other issues, including after-use and management issues outside the boundary of Gowla Bog, are acknowledged but are specifically outside the scope of this rehabilitation plan.

As part of the consultation process, The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) and the National Monuments Service (NMS) were included in the stakeholder consultation process. Where available at the time of the submission of the rehabilitation packages to NPWS, the Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) was included. Where it was still in preparation, it was subsequently provided. Both bodies acknowledge the AIA desk-based process and associated outputs designed to ensure any known archaeology was identified and protected during the implementation process, and the Project Archaeologist's recommendations regarding buffering and ongoing vigilance and reporting of any stray finds to NMI. NMS requested that the AIA be supplemented with walking field surveys and that monitoring of rehabilitation measures was undertaken when the work commences. Subsequent to this, NMI commissioned initial surveys of some of the high priority peatlands, and on foot of the findings of these reports, have commissioned full field surveys to be undertaken on some of these bogs. NMS's contracted archaeologists have since applied for surveys licences and it is expected that once issued, these surveys will be commenced.

Security: It is the intention of BnM to keep secure the estate and ensure that any anti-social behaviour that occurs within the estate is reported and dealt with by the appropriate authorities.

A number of local land-owners expressed a variety of concerns, within submissions on Gowla Bog (see above). These queries were addressed through contact with the BnM land liaison officer.

4.3.10 *Concluding statement*

- No specific issues were raised during consultation that required significant changes to the substance of the rehabilitation plan.
- Marginal drains will not be blocked to avoid impacts on adjacent lands or lands under the ownership of third parties or turf-banks. This does not change the overall rehabilitation goals and

outcomes and can be integrated with the other rehabilitation measures to allow cutaway re-wetting.

- Turbary rights, if present, will remain unaffected.
- BnM intend to continue management of this site into the future and issues such as security and trespass will be addressed on an ongoing basis in association with other stakeholders.
- BnM intends to maintain a “No Shooting” policy on Gowla Bog.

5. REHABILITATION GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The rehabilitation goals and outcomes outline what Bord na Móna want to achieve by implementing the rehabilitation. These include:

- Meeting conditions of IPC Licence.
- Stabilisation or reduction in water quality parameters of water discharging from the site (e.g., suspended solids).
- Reducing pressure on receiving waterbodies that have been classified as ‘*at risk*’ from peatlands and from peat extraction, via stabilization or improving water-quality from this bog, and therefore, reducing pressures.
- Optimising hydrological conditions for **climate action benefits as part of PCAS**.
- Carrying out an intensive rehabilitation measures in including drain-blocking to encourage ***Sphagnum*-rich regenerating wet deep peat vegetation** on deep peat.
- Integrating rehabilitation measures with current land-use.
- Optimising hydrological conditions for the protection of any exposed archaeological structures, their retention in situ and preservation into the future, where possible.
- The main goal and outcome of this plan is the successful rehabilitation (environmental stabilisation) of peatlands used for industrial peat production at the bog in a manner that is acceptable to both external stakeholders and to Bord na Móna and which optimise climate action and other ecosystem service benefits.

The rehabilitation goals and outcomes take account of the following issues:

- It will take some time for stable naturally functioning habitats to fully develop at Gowla Bog. This will happen over a longer timeframe than the implementation of this rehabilitation plan.
- Re-wetting residual peat will initially maintain and enhance the carbon storage capacity of the bog. There is scientific consensus that restoration of hydrology in damaged bog can improve carbon storage, water storage and attenuation and help support biodiversity both on the site and in the catchment (See Section 3.8). This will reduce carbon emissions from the site from a larger carbon source to a smaller carbon source. In time, the site has the capacity to develop in part as a carbon sink. PCAS is expected to deliver significant contributions to Ireland’s climate action.
- It is not expected that the site has the potential to develop active raised bog (ARB) analogous to the priority EU Habitats Directive Annex I habitat within the foreseeable future (c.50 years). Furthermore, only a proportion of the bog has potential to develop *Sphagnum*-rich habitats in this timeframe. Nevertheless, re-wetting across the entire bog, as part of the scheme, will improve habitat conditions of the whole bog. Other peatland habitats will develop in a wider mosaic that reflects underlying conditions.
- Rehabilitating former industrial peat production bog will also in the longer-term support other ecosystem services such as such the development of new habitat to support biodiversity and local attenuation of water flows from the bog.
- WFD status in receiving water bodies can be affected by peatlands and peat extraction but is also affected by other sources such as agriculture. In addition, receiving water bodies that are assessed as ‘*At Risk*’ from peatlands and from peat extraction are likely to have several contributory sources of impacts (private peat extraction and Bord na Móna). Reducing pressures due to former peat extraction activities at Gowla Bog will contribute to stabilising or improving water quality status of receiving water bodies in

general. Ultimately, improving the WFD status of the receiving water body will depend on reducing pressure from a range of different sources, including peatlands in general (private and Bord na Móna).

- Bord na Móna are also planning rehabilitation measures in some adjacent bogs (e.g., Newtown/Loughgore) in 2024, and rehabilitation has taken place in several nearby bogs between 2021-2023, including Turrur-Derrymore, Derryfadda and Castlegar bogs. There are expected to be cumulative water quality and other ecosystem service benefits to receiving water bodies from rehabilitating more than one bog in the same catchment.
- Re-wetting in general will benefit the future preservation of most known and unknown archaeological features. An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) is to be carried out under the PCAS scheme.

6. SCOPE OF REHABILITATION

The principal scope of this enhanced rehabilitation plan is to rehabilitate the bog. This is defined by:

- The area of Gowla Bog.
- EPA IPC Licence - Ref. P0502-01. As part of Condition 10.2 of this license, a rehabilitation plan must be prepared for permanent rehabilitation of the boglands within the licensed area. Gowla Bog is part of the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group.
- The Scheme is designed to exceed the stabilisation requirements as defined by the IPC Licence. This scheme is designed to enhance the ecosystem services of Gowla bog, in particular, optimising **climate action benefits**. The proposed interventions will mean that environmental stabilization is achieved (meaning IPC obligations are met) and, in addition, significant other ecosystem service benefits particularly for climate action will be accrued.
- The local environmental conditions of Gowla Bog mean that deep peat measures are the most suitable rehabilitation approach for this site. Gowla Bog has residual deep peat.
- The key objective of rehabilitation, as defined by this licence, is **environmental stabilisation** of the bog. Bord na Móna have defined the key goal and outcome of rehabilitation at Gowla Bog as **environmental stabilisation** of the site via **optimising climate action benefits, where possible**, and integrating rehabilitation with the existing land-uses. The re-wetting of residual peat in the area recently out of peat extraction will be optimised, **setting the site on a trajectory towards the development of *Sphagnum*-rich regenerating wet deep peat vegetation**.
- Rehabilitation of Gowla Bog will support multiple national strategies of climate action, biodiversity action and other key environmental strategies such as the Water Framework Directive.
- The time frame for the delivery of the planned rehabilitation will be undertaken according to available resources and appropriate constraints.

6.1 Key constraints

- **Bog conditions.** Rehabilitation outcomes of sites are constrained by the environmental characteristics of these particular areas. For example, there is potential for raised bog restoration at some sites where there has not been significant industrial peat extraction and the peat body is largely intact (deep peat sites that are drained). At other sites, most of the peat mass has been removed, the environmental characteristics of these areas have therefore changed radically (peat depths, hydrology, water chemistry, substrate type, nutrient status, etc.) and there will therefore be different habitat outcomes (wetlands, fen, heathland, grassland and Birch woodland).
- Remaining peat depths are generally between 2 - 5m + remain at the bog. Some small packets of shallower peat (1-2m) remain toward the southwestern section of the PCAS rehabilitation boundary.
- **Surrounding landscape and neighbours.** Another key constraint is the interaction between the Bord na Móna sites and the surrounding landscape. Care has to be taken that no active rehabilitation management is carried out that could negatively and knowingly impact on surrounding land. This includes any hydrological management on neighbouring farmland. It is anticipated that the work proposed here (blocking drains and re-wetting cutaway peatlands) will not have any flooding impacts on adjacent land.
- Castle Ffrench East NHA has been selected by NPWS to be included in the Peatlands and People Integrated LIFE Project. [Home | Ireland's Climate Action Catalyst | Peatlands & People \(peatlandsandpeople.ie\)](#). NPWS are planning restoration measures for the intact raised bog area as part

of this project. Rehabilitation and re-wetting of the former industrial peat production area within Gowla Bog will support the restoration of Castle Ffrench East Raised Bog NHA.

- **Archaeology.** The discovery of monuments or archaeological objects during peatland rehabilitation may potentially constrain the rehabilitation measures proposed for a particular area. While the rehabilitation will optimise hydrological conditions for the protection of exposed archaeological structures, their retention in situ and preservation into the future, any new archaeology may require rehabilitation measures will be reviewed and adapted. If this occurs, rehabilitation measures will be reviewed and adapted. An Archaeological Impact Assessment (Appendix XII) will be carried out to mitigate against any impact on found archaeology at Gowla Bog. In the worst-case scenario works affecting the surface and sub-surface of the bog might disturb previously unknown archaeological deposits or artefacts without preservation by record taking place. Should any previously unknown archaeological material be uncovered during the rehabilitation works, it should be avoided and reported to Bord na Móna Archaeological Liaison Officer and the National Museum of Ireland.
- **Public Rights of Way.** There are no known rights of way at Gowla bog. Where a public right of way or similar burden exists on Bord na Móna property, consideration will be given to ensuring that this remain intact where possible. In some instances, depending upon previous land uses and management, alternative solutions may be required. These will be explored in consultation with local communities and statutory bodies during the consultation work associated with the decommissioning and rehabilitation work described here.
- **Land-use.** The sub-section of the former industrial peat production area of Gowla Bog that is proposed for rehabilitation as part of this plan is part of Castle French East NHA. Additional consent will be required from NPWS to complete the proposed rehabilitation. Rehabilitation and re-wetting of the former industrial peat production area within Gowla Bog will support the conservation objectives and the restoration of Castle Ffrench East Raised Bog NHA.
- **Potential land-use.** The remainder of Gowla Bog is under consideration for a potential renewable energy project. In advance of this review of renewable energy potential, it is planned to rehabilitate the area of Gowla Bog that is not constrained, under PCAS in 2024. The PCAS rehabilitation footprint does not overlap the potential renewable energy development footprint. The remaining area of Gowla Bog will be rehabilitated in the future as part of the potential renewable energy project or after the renewable energy review is complete.
- Bord na Móna remain committed to rehabilitating **all** of Gowla Bog and to meeting IPC Licence conditions for this bog. The remaining area will be rehabilitated after the renewable energy review is complete. The peatland rehabilitation of the remaining area will **either** be in association with a potential renewable energy project, with peatland rehabilitation integrated into the proposed project, **or** will be completed in the future in the absence of any proposed renewable energy project. Phasing rehabilitation in way has the potential to support additional climate action measures (integrating renewable energy).

6.2 Key Assumptions

- It is assumed that Bord na Móna will have all resources required to deliver this project.
- It is expected that weather conditions will be within normal limits over the rehabilitation plan timeframe. Long periods of wet weather have the capacity to significantly affect ground conditions and constrain drain blocking and other ground activities.

6.3 Key Exclusions

The scope of this rehabilitation plan does not cover:

- The longer-term development of stable naturally functioning habitats to fully develop at Gowla Bog. The plan covers the short-term rehabilitation actions and an additional monitoring and after-care programme to monitor the rehabilitation and to respond to any needs.
- This plan is not intended to be an after-use or future land-use plan for Gowla Bog.
- The small isolated parcels of land to the west of the former industrial peat production bog that are part of Castle French East Raised Bog NHA.
- The longer-term management of this site, potentially as a nature conservation site, or for amenity, or for other uses in the future.

7. CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATION

This section outlines what criteria will be used to indicate successful rehabilitation and what key criteria/targets will be used to mark the achievement of the rehabilitation goals and outcomes and validate the completion of the rehabilitation.

The key objective of this enhanced rehabilitation plan is **environmental stabilisation** and the stabilisation of any emissions from the site that related to the former industrial peat extraction activities.

Rehabilitation is generally defined by Bord na Móna as

- stabilisation of bare peat areas via targeted active management (e.g., drain-blocking/re-wetting) slowing movement of water across the site and encouraging natural colonisation; and
- mitigation of potential key emissions (e.g., suspended solids).

7.1 Criteria for successful rehabilitation to meet EPA IPC licence conditions

- Rewetting of residual peat in the former area of industrial peat production to offset potential run off of suspended solids and to encourage and accelerate development of vegetation cover via natural colonisation, and reducing the area of bare exposed peat. See Table 7.1 for a summary of the criteria for successful rehabilitation and associated monitoring. The target will be the delivery of measures and this will be measured by an aerial survey after rehabilitation is completed.
- That there is a stabilizing/improving concentration of suspended solids and ammonia in discharges from Bord na Móna sites, associated with the measures undertaken to stabilize the peat surface by the blocking of the internal drainage system and the maximized rewetting of the peat surface.
- Receiving water bodies have been classified under the River Basin Management Plan and this classification includes waters that are ‘At Risk’ from peatlands and peat extraction. The success criteria will be that the ‘At Risk’ classification will see improvements in the associated pressures from this peatland or if remaining ‘At Risk’, that there is an improving trajectory in the pressure from this peatland.

With regard to predicting and estimating likely trends that might materialize or could be considered as a target, monitoring of surface water ammonia emissions from Longfordpass bog in Littleton over 3 yrs., post cessation of peat extraction with ongoing rehabilitation, were considered. These indicate a downward trend in Ammonia concentrations (Figure 7.1).

Similarly monitoring of surface water ammonia emissions from a Corlea bog in Mountdillon over the past 3 yrs. post cessation of peat extraction with ongoing rehabilitation, indicate downward trends.

As the monthly monitoring program at Gowla Bog continues in 2023 and 2024 and during the rehabilitation works planned for 2024, further trending will be produced to verify any ongoing trends.

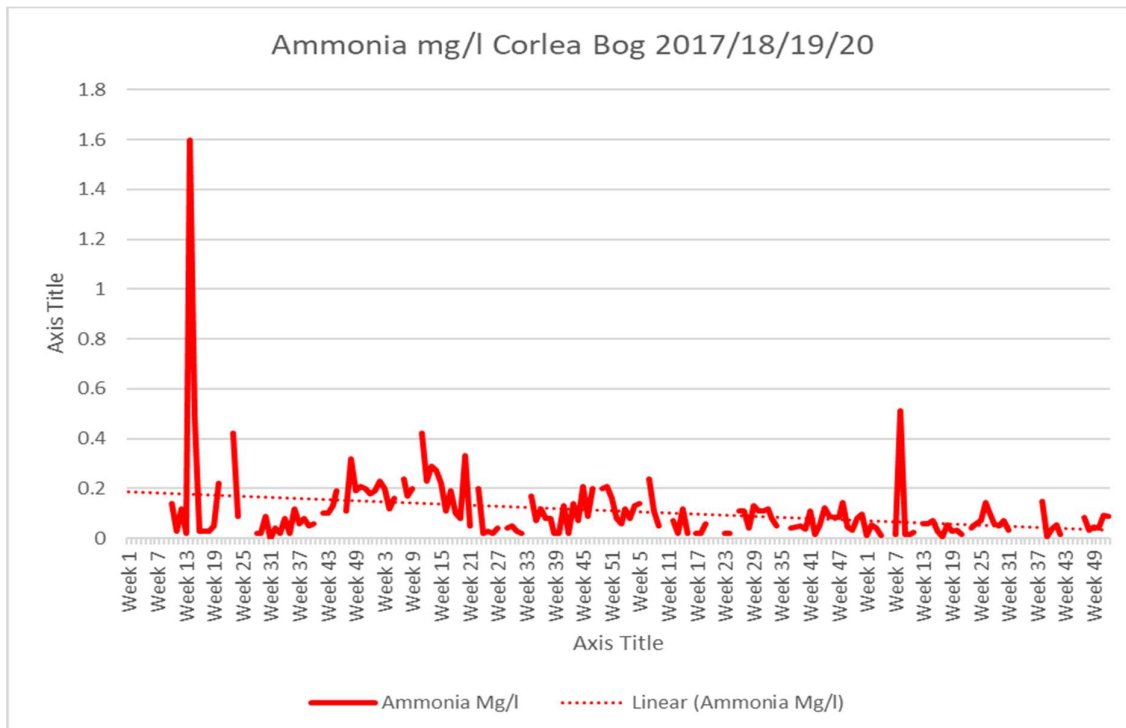
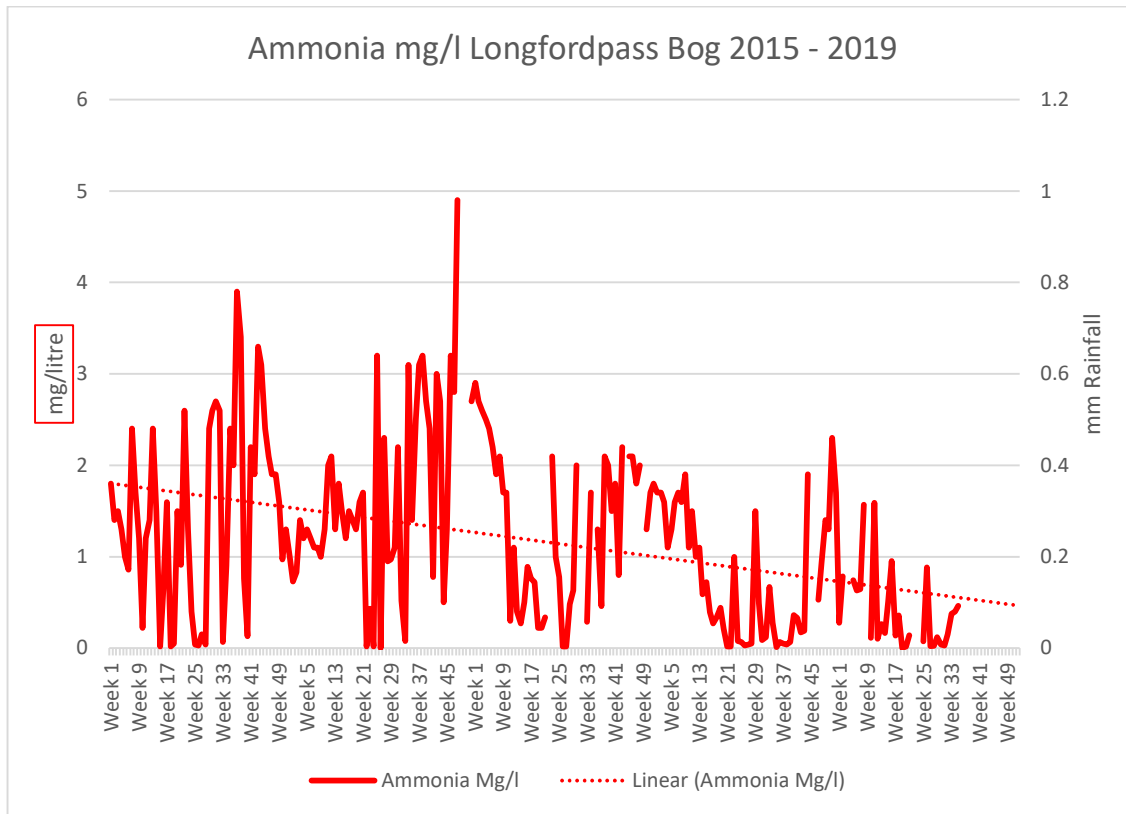


Figure 7.1. Ammonia levels over the period 2015-2019/2020 at Longfordpass and Corlea.

Additional criteria for successful rehabilitation to optimise climate action and other ecosystem service benefits:

- Optimising the extent of suitable hydrological conditions to optimise climate action and other ecosystem service benefits (optimising and maximising residual peat re-wetting). This will be measured by an aerial survey after rehabilitation has been completed.
- Accelerating the trajectory of the bog towards becoming a reduced carbon source/carbon sink. This will be measured through habitat mapping and the development of cutaway bog condition assessment. This cutaway bog condition assessment will include assessment of environmental and ecological indicators such as vegetation cover, vegetation communities, presence of key species, *Sphagnum* cover, bare peat cover and water levels (similar to ecotope mapping). Baseline monitoring will be carried after rehabilitation is completed (during the scheme). It is proposed that sites can be monitored against this baseline in the future.
- Reduction in carbon emissions. This will be estimated via a combination of habitat condition assessment and application of appropriate carbon emission factors derived from other sites. Baseline monitoring (habitat condition) will be carried after rehabilitation is completed (during the scheme). It is proposed that sites can be monitored against this baseline in the future.
- Setting the site on a trajectory towards establishment of a mosaic of compatible habitats including ***Sphagnum*-rich regenerating wet deep peat** communities, poor fen, heath, scrub, and Birch woodland, where conditions are suitable. It will take some time for stable naturally functioning habitats to fully develop at Gowla bog. This will be demonstrated and measured via aerial photography, habitat mapping and cutaway/habitat condition assessment. Baseline monitoring will be carried after rehabilitation is completed (during the scheme). It is proposed that sites can be monitored against this baseline in the future.
- Improvement in biodiversity and ecosystem services. This will be demonstrated by metrics outlined in Section 9.1 that can be used to measure changes in ecosystem services (e.g., water quality parameters, development of pioneer habitats, breeding bird monitoring). This will be measured by collecting a range of scientific data that can then quickly be adapted and into metrics that can be used to measure changes in various ecosystem services. Baseline monitoring will be carried after rehabilitation is completed (during the scheme). It is proposed that sites can be monitored against this baseline in the future.

Table 7-1 Summary of Success criteria, targets, how various success criteria will be measured and expected timeframes.

Criteria type	Criteria	Target	Measured by	Expected Timeframe
IPC validation	Rewetting in the former area of industrial peat production	Delivery of rehabilitation measures Reduction in bare peat.	Aerial photography after rehabilitation has been completed – to demonstrate measures (drain-blocking) Establishment of a baseline for future monitoring of bare peat, vegetation establishment and habitat condition.	2024-2025
IPC validation	Key water quality parameters Ammonia, Phosphorous, Suspended solids, pH and conductivity	Reduction or stabilisation of key water quality parameters associated with this bog	Water quality monitoring for a period after rehabilitation has been completed	2024-2025
IPC validation	Reducing pressure from peat production on the local water body catchment (WFD)	No decline in the WFD status of the local river catchment related to this bog	EPA WFD monitoring programme	WFD schedule
Climate action verification	Reduction in carbon emissions.	Reduction in carbon emissions	Carbon emissions – estimated using a bog condition assessment and appropriate carbon emission factors.	2024-2025
Climate action verification	Setting the site on a trajectory towards establishment of a mosaic of compatible habitats	Establishment of compatible cutaway habitats	Habitat map, Cutaway bog condition map Baseline monitoring to be carried out during the scheme when rehabilitation is complete. Sites can be re-monitored in the future and	2024-2025

Criteria type	Criteria	Target	Measured by	Expected Timeframe
			compared against this baseline.	

Meeting climate action verification criteria and monitoring of these criteria after the scheme has been completed is dependent on support from the *Climate Action Fund* and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan or other sources of funding. Note that monitoring and verification of the overall scheme will be stratified – not all these criteria will be measured at each individual site. Baseline monitoring to be carried out during the scheme when rehabilitation is complete. Sites can be re-monitored in the future and compared against this baseline.

7.2. Critical success factors needed to achieve successful rehabilitation as outlined in the plan

The achievement of successful rehabilitation as outlined in the plan requires:

- **Funding to pay for resources required to deliver the planned rehabilitation (Bord na Móna and external).** Bord na Móna maintains a Provision on its balance sheet to pay for these future costs when industrial peat extraction ceases. Bord na Móna is fully committed to meeting its obligations relating to rehabilitation and decommissioning under the Integrated Pollution Control Licence. It is expected that additional costs of enhanced rehabilitation will be supported by Government through the Climate Action Fund and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan.
- **Bord na Móna to have sufficient resources (staff and training) to deliver the planned rehabilitation with required associated skills and competencies.**
- **Bord na Móna to have sufficient resources (suitable machinery) and staff to maintain this machinery.**
- **Weather conditions to be within normal limits over the rehabilitation plan timeframe.** Long periods of wet weather have the capacity to significantly affect ground conditions and constrain the delivery of rehabilitation. The potential impact of wet weather on ground conditions can be reduced by appropriate planning and management. Bord na Móna have significant experience of managing these issues through 70 years of working in these peatland environments.
- **Rehabilitation measures to be effective.** The rehabilitation measures proposed in this plan are based on 40 years of Bord na Móna experience of peatland management and best practise applied internationally in peatland management. Measures proposed in this plan have already been shown to be effective at other sites. Bord na Móna will apply a flexible and adaptable approach to the more innovative rehabilitation measures proposed in this plan. If measures are not initially effective, Bord na Móna will review any requirement for additional practical rehabilitation.
- **Natural colonisation of vegetation to develop semi-natural habitats at a rate within the normal limits.**
- Rehabilitation measures have been designed to accelerate and work with natural colonisation and other natural processes. Bord na Móna experience of rehabilitation has shown that re-wetting improves conditions for natural colonisation and that natural colonisation is accelerated where the environmental conditions are most suitable. Rehabilitation measures have been designed to modify the conditions of areas within sites where conditions are less suitable for natural colonisation (modifying hydrology, topography, nutrient status or availability of potential seed sources).
- **Monitoring to be robust and effective.** Rehabilitation Monitoring will be established to validate the success of rehabilitation as required by Condition 10 of the IPC Licence and to verify the benefits of the

proposed enhanced measures to optimise climate action. This will focus on a collecting a range of scientific data that can then quickly be adapted and into metrics that can be used to measure changes in various ecosystem services.

8. REHABILITATION ACTIONS AND TIME FRAME

Peatland rehabilitation requires detailed planning and the use of data from desktop surveys and field surveys. This data in association with topographical and hydrological modelling will be important in planning the future peatland landscapes and planning the use of the most appropriate rehabilitation methodologies to maximise climate action benefits. Hydrological modelling indicates those areas that are likely to re-wet when drains are blocked, based on the current topography, and areas where water levels may have to be modified, where needed. Enhanced rehabilitation measures will look to optimise hydrological conditions for re-wetting peat in other areas. This planning is also essential for matching the most sustainable rehabilitation methodology to the most suitable cutaway environment to maximise the benefits of the resource outlay (maximising cost/benefit).

A number of illustrative figures have been produced to inform Rehab Planning and Design, including Aerial Photography, Peat Depths, LiDAR Surface Maps, and Depression Analysis modelling; these are included in the accompanying Mapbook as the drawings referenced below:

BNM-DR-25-06-22: Aerial Imagery 2020

BNM-DR-25-06-04: Peat Depths

BNM-DR-25-06-03: LiDAR Map

BNM-DR-25-06-09: Depression Analysis

The rehabilitation actions themselves will be a combination of PCAS measures to re-wet peat. The distribution of these measures is provisionally outlined in drawing titled *BNM-DR-25-06-05: Rehabilitation Measures* in the accompanying Mapbook (note that the actual distribution of these measures may be subject to change in response to stakeholder consultation and refinement of the enhanced rehabilitation measures.)

These enhanced measures for Gowla Bog will include (see Table 8.1):

- Deep Peat measures including field re-profiling, creation of cells (45m x 60m cells) suitable for *Sphagnum* inoculation, on deeper peat; intensive drain blocking (max 7/100 m) and modifying outfalls, and management of water levels with overflow pipes and blocking of internal outfalls;
- Seeding of vegetation and inoculation of *Sphagnum* will be undertaken in deep peat areas where required.
- Dry cutaway measures include blocking of outfalls and management of water levels. Vegetation has developed on dry cutaway areas and therefore fertiliser application is not required.
- Targeted drain blocking to optimise hydrological conditions/rewet the residual peat in targeted marginal raised bog, Birch woodland and wet grassland areas. Re-wetting, where possible, using an excavator to install peat blockages.

Table 8-1 Types of and areas for enhanced rehabilitation measures at Gowla bog.

Type	Code	Enhanced Rehabilitation Measure	Extent* (Ha)
Deep Peat	DPT2	More intensive drain blocking (max 7/100 m), modifying outfalls and managing overflows	32.2
Deep Peat	DPT3	More intensive drain blocking (max 7/100 m), field reprofiling, modifying outfalls and managing overflows	23.3

Type	Code	Enhanced Rehabilitation Measure	Extent* (Ha)
Deep Peat	DPT4	Berms and field re-profiling (45x60m cell), modifying outfalls and managing overflows & drainage channels for excess water & <i>Sphagnum</i> inoculation.	9.5
Dry Cutaway	DCT2	Regular drain blocking (3/100m) +modifying outfalls and managing water levels with overflow pipes + targeted fertiliser treatment	2.9
Additional Work	AW2	Targeted Drain Blocking	35.8
Marginal land	MLT1	No work required	7.9
Silt Ponds	Silt ponds	Silt ponds	0.02
Other	Constraint	Constraints	1.7
Total			113.4

*Note that the types of rehab and areas of rehab may change in response to stakeholder consultation and refinement of the enhanced rehabilitation measures.

8.1 Short-term planning actions (0-1 years)

- Seek formal approval of the enhanced plan, noting the alternative standard plan should funding from the Scheme not materialise from the EPA.
- Agree an *ex ante* budget of eligible costs (based on the approved enhanced plan) with the Scheme regulator.
- Develop a detailed site plan with engineering drawings outlining how the various rehabilitation methodologies (The Scheme PCAS) will be applied to Gowla Bog. This will take account of peat depths, topography, drainage and hydrological modelling. (See map for an indicative view of the application of different rehabilitation methodologies).
- A drainage management assessment of the proposed enhanced rehabilitation measures will be carried out, any issues identified resolved and the rehabilitation plan adapted.
- A review of unknown archaeology and an archaeological impact appraisal of the proposed rehabilitation will be carried out. The results of this assessment will be incorporated into the rehabilitation plan to minimise known archaeological disturbance, where possible.
- A review of issues that may constrain rehabilitation such as known rights of way, turbary and existing land agreements will be carried out.
- An ecological appraisal of the potential impacts of the planned rehabilitation on the presence of sensitive ground-nesting bird breeding species (e.g., breeding waders) will be carried out. The scheduling of rehabilitation operations will be adapted, where required.
- Ensure all activities comply with the environmental protection requirements of the IPC Licence.
- An Appropriate Assessment of the Rehabilitation Plan will be carried out.
- Track implementation and enforcement of the relevant IPC Licence conditions, and other environmental control measures during the implantation of the rehabilitation plan.
- There is some remaining stock still on the bog. A review of remaining milled peat stocks is to be carried out. It is envisaged extant stock will be removed prior to scheme activities.

8.2 Short-term practical actions (0-2 years)

- Carry out proposed measures as per the detailed site plan. This will include drain blocking, in addition to additional measures in cutover bog. All rehabilitation will be carried out with regard to best practice environmental control measures (Appendix IV).
- Monitor the success of rehabilitation measures in relation to developing suitable hydrological conditions.
- Carry out the proposed monitoring, as outlined.
- While natural colonisation has commenced since peat production ceased, Phase 2 actions will be carried out in targeted areas to accelerate re-vegetation and colonisation of target species. Phase 2 actions may include seeding of targeted vegetation and inoculation of *Sphagnum*.
- Silt ponds (if added) will be monitored during this period and there will be continued maintenance and cleaning to prevent potential suspended solids run-off from the site during the rehabilitation phase.
- Submit an ex post report to the Scheme regulator to verify the eligible measures to be carried out in year 1 of the Scheme, and an ex ante estimate for year 2 of the Scheme; and so on for each year of the Scheme.

8.3 Long-term (>3 years)

- Evaluate success of short-term rehabilitation measures outlined above and remediate where necessary.
- Delivery of a monitoring, aftercare and maintenance programme (See section 10.2 below).
- Decommissioning of silt-ponds will be assessed and carried out, where required.
- Reporting to the EPA will continue until the IPC Licence is surrendered.

8.4 Timeframe

- **2023-2024:** Short-term planning actions.
- **2024-2025:** Short-term practical actions.
- **2025-2026:** Long term practical actions. Evaluate success of short-term rehabilitation measures outlined above and remediate where necessary.
- **2025-2026:** Decommission silt-ponds, if necessary.

8.5 Budget and costing

Bord na Móna (BnM) appreciates the Minister's intention to support Bord na Móna in developing a package of measures, 'the Scheme', for enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration of cutaway peatlands referred to as, the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme'. *However, only the additional costs associated with the additional and enhanced rehabilitation, i.e., measures which go beyond the existing standard mandatory decommissioning and rehabilitation requirements arising from Condition 10 will be eligible for support.*

The enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration of the peatlands funded by the Scheme will deliver benefits across climate action (GHG mitigation through reduced carbon emissions and acceleration towards carbon sequestration), enrich the State's natural capital, increase eco-system services, strengthen biodiversity, improve water quality and storage attenuation as well as developing the amenity potential of the peatlands.

Bord na Móna maintains a provision on its balance sheet to pay for the future costs of **standard** rehabilitation and decommissioning when industrial peat extraction ceases. This is updated every year - for more information see the Bord na Móna Annual Report (Bord na Móna 2023). Bord na Móna is fully committed to meeting its obligations relating to rehabilitation and decommissioning under the Integrated Pollution Control Licence.

At this time, a 'standard' rehabilitation provision (sufficient to discharge the requirement of Condition 10 in the licence) has been allocated to the site based on the area of different cutaway types across the site (See Appendix I).

9. AFTERCARE AND MAINTENANCE

9.1 Programme for monitoring, aftercare and maintenance

This programme for monitoring, aftercare and maintenance has been designed to meet the Conditions of the IPC Licence. This is defined as:

- There will be **initial quarterly monitoring assessments** of the site to determine the general status of the site, the condition of the silt ponds (if added), assess the condition of the rehabilitation work, monitoring of any potential impacts on neighbours land, general land security, boundary management, dumping and littering.
- The number of these site visits will reduce after 2 years to bi-annually and then after 5 years to annual visits.
- These monitoring visits will also consider any requirements for further practical rehabilitation measures.
- The **baseline condition of the site will be established** post-rehabilitation implementation by using an aerial survey to take an up to date aerial photo, when rehabilitation is completed. This will be used to verify completion of rehabilitation measures. The extent of bare peat will be assessed using this baseline data, and habitat maps will be updated, if needed. It is proposed that sites can be monitored against this baseline in the future.
- **Water quality monitoring** at the bog will be established. The main objective of this water quality monitoring will be to establish a baseline and then monitor the impact of peatland rehabilitation on water quality from the bog.
- In order to assist in monitoring surface water quality from this bog, it is planned to increase the existing licence monitoring requirements to sampling for the same parameters to every month during the scheduled activities and for a period up to two years. post rehabilitation, depending on the period required to confirm that the main two parameters, suspended solids and ammonia are remaining compliant with the licence emission and trigger limit values and there is an improving trajectory in these two parameters i.e., reduction in concentration.
- Enhanced water quality monitoring will aim to include up to 70% of a bogs drainage catchments.
- Monitoring results will be maintained, trended and reported on each year as part of the requirement to report on Condition 10.1 of the IPC Licence on Bog Rehabilitation in the Annual Environmental Report, which will be available in April each year at www.epa.ie.
- The parameters to be included (as per condition 6.2 of the IPC Licence) include monthly monitoring for pH, Suspended Solids, Total Solids, Total Phosphorus, Total Ammonia, Colour, and COD and DOC.
- This monthly sampling regime on a selected number of silt ponds (if added) will be carried out over a two-year cycle. The original (licence) requirement was for a quarterly sampling regime but this has been increased to a monthly regime to appropriately track the changing water chemistry that will occur as part of this enhanced rehabilitation. In addition, DOC will be included as a parameter to try and identify any changes in carbon in the surface water.
- If, after two years, key criteria for successful rehabilitation are being achieved and key targets are being met, then the water quality monitoring will be reviewed, with consideration of potential ongoing research on site. The water quality data, the aerial surveys and the habitat mapping will be collated and will be submitted to the EPA as part of the final validation report.
- If, after two years, key criteria for successful rehabilitation have **not** been achieved and key targets have **not** been met, then the rehabilitation measures and status of the site will be evaluated and enhanced, where required. This evaluation may indicate no requirement for additional enhancement of

rehabilitation measures but may demonstrate that more time is required before key criteria for rehabilitation has been achieved. Monitoring of water quality will then also continue for another period to be defined.

- Where other uses are proposed for the site that are compatible the provision of biodiversity and ecosystem services, these will be assessed by Bord na Móna in consultation with interested parties. Other after-uses can be proposed for licensed areas and must go through the required assessment process and planning procedures.

Additional monitoring measures are also proposed to monitor ecosystem service benefits that have been derived by enhanced rehabilitation. These proposed monitoring measures will be funded by the proposed *Climate Action Fund* and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan or additional other funding. Monitoring of climate action and other ecosystem service benefits will be designed to take account of the requirements of monitoring benefits of the overall Scheme and will be stratified; that is not all monitoring will be carried out in each site. These are defined as:

- Vegetation and habitat monitoring. It is proposed that sites can be monitored against this baseline in the future.
- The condition of the bog can be assessed using the condition assessment and suitable Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission factors can be assigned to different habitats. GHG emission factors have been determined for various peatland habitats in Ireland (Wilson *et al.*, 2015) and are constantly being refined with more and more research. BnM is actively supporting research into GHG fluxes in different rehabilitated peatland habitats. This means that potential GHG emissions can be estimated from the site, as the site continues along its trajectory towards a naturally functioning peatland ecosystem.

9.2 Rehabilitation plan validation and licence surrender – report as required under condition 10.4

IPC Licence Condition 10.4. *A final validation report to include a certificate of completion for the Rehabilitation Plan, for all or part of the site as necessary, shall be submitted to the Agency within six months of execution of the plan. The licensee shall carry out such tests, investigations or submit certification, as requested by the Agency, to confirm that there is no continuing risk to the environment.*

Reporting to the EPA will continue until the IPC Licence is surrendered. The bog will be included in the full licence surrender process as per the Guidance to Licensees on Surrender, Cessation and Closure of Licensed Sites EPA, 2012, when:

- The planned rehabilitation has been completed;
- The key criteria for successful rehabilitation has been achieved and key targets have been met;
- Water quality monitoring demonstrates that water quality of discharge is stabilising or improving; and
- The site has been environmentally stabilised.

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ADDENDUM 1 - APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT REPORTING FINDINGS

Gowla Bog is located in in east Co. Galway and is part of the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group (Ref. P0502-01). Bord na Móna operates under IPC Licence issued and administered by the EPA to extract peat within the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group (Ref. P0502-01). As part of Condition 10.2 of this license, a rehabilitation plan must be prepared for permanent rehabilitation of the boglands within the licensed area.

This addendum outlines the findings of the Appropriate Assessment reporting carried out in respect of proposed PCAS activities at Gowla Bog.

An Appropriate Assessment Report¹⁰ was commissioned by Bord na Móna to inform whether the proposed PCAS activities at Gowla Bog had the potential to result in Likely Significant Effects on European Sites.

The concluding statement of this report reads as follows:

'The proposed decommissioning and rehabilitation at Gowla Bog supports remote hydrological connectivity with the River Suck Callows SPA and more remotely downstream areas of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC. The majority of the proposed decommissioning and rehabilitation within Gowla Bog will be retained to the cutover bog footprint. There may be minor maintenance works to in-situ and nearby silt pond areas and marginal hydraulic breaks, but such works will not generate or spread excessive pollutant sources such as particulate matter and sedimentation downstream. Any impacts arising from such works are not expected to exceed the de-minimis impact threshold of the receiving and downstream aquatic environment and by extension, receiving European Sites. To that end the proposed decommissioning and rehabilitation will not result in indirect loss, reduction or degradation of downstream terrestrial or aquatic habitats or their reliant species.

In particular, no potential for significant effects are identified with respect to European Sites within the project zone of influence, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. There are no impact pathways arising from the proposed project which could interact with the Special Conservation Interests or Qualifying Interests with the potential to give rise to significant effects. Therefore, taking account of the nature and specific, standardised works practices, the potential for significant effects via hydrological impact pathways and other environment pathways are excluded.

Following screening it can reasonably be concluded that there is no likelihood of significant effects to the above European Sites because of the proposed project, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, the potential for significant effects these European Sites has been excluded, the Project has been 'Screened Out' from the Appropriate Assessment process, no Appropriate Assessment is required'.

Therefore, following screening, Appropriate Assessment is not required for the project as it is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Site(s) and as it can be concluded, on the basis of objective information, that the project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is not likely to have a significant effect on any European Site(s).

¹⁰ Delichon Ecology (2024). Cutaway Bog Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan Screening For Appropriate Assessment Gowla Bog, Co. Galway.

APPENDIX I. A STANDARD PEATLAND REHABILITATION PLAN TO MEET CONDITIONS OF THE IPC LICENCE

In the event that the Scheme (PCAS) is not supported by additional funding, Bord na Móna is still obligated to carry out peatland rehabilitation to meet the conditions of the IPC Licence. Under its EPA licences and following cessation of peat extraction, BnM is mandated to 'decommission' its operations by removing materials 'that may result in environmental pollution' and establish that 'rehabilitation' measures have environmentally stabilised peat production areas.

This proposed standard peatland rehabilitation plan is outlined here to **estimate potential costs**. Bord na Móna will still be expected to cover the costs that would have accrued from standard decommissioning and rehabilitation activities, as part of its original obligations. The existing costs associated with both the removal of potentially polluting materials and the environmental stabilisation of the peatlands resides with Bord na Móna. However, the expenditure necessary to deliver the additional and enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration and the benefits that flow from these measures and interventions/improvements will be eligible for funding by government through the Climate Action Fund and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The same process as outlined in Section 2 will be followed.

Scope of rehabilitation

The principal scope of this rehabilitation plan is to rehabilitate the bog. This is defined by:

- The area of Gowla bog (within the Castle Ffrench East NHA).
- EPA IPC Licence - Ref. P0502-01. As part of Condition 10.2 of this license, a rehabilitation plan must be prepared for permanent rehabilitation of the boglands within the licensed area. Gowla bog are part of the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group.
- The current condition of Gowla bog.
- The key objective of rehabilitation, as defined by this licence, is **environmental stabilisation** of the bog.
- To minimise potential impacts on neighbouring land. Some boundary drains around Gowla bog will be left unblocked as blocking boundary drains could affect adjacent land.

Rehabilitation goals and outcomes

The key rehabilitation goal and outcome for Gowla bog is environmental stabilisation of the site via wetland creation. This is defined as:

- Carrying out drain blocking to re-wet peat and slow runoff.
- Stabilising potential emissions from the site (e.g., suspended solids).
- Environmental stabilisation.

The outcome is setting the site on a trajectory towards establishment of natural habitats.

Criteria for successful rehabilitation:

- Rewetting of areas formerly drained for industrial peat extraction to offset potential run off of suspended solids and to encourage development of vegetation cover via natural colonisation and reducing the area of bare exposed peat.

- That there is a stabilising/improving concentration of suspended solids and ammonia associated with the measures undertaken to stabilise the peat surface by the blocking of the internal drainage system and the maximised rewetting of the peat surface. This will be demonstrated by developing a stable or downward trajectory of water quality indicators (suspended solids and ammonia) towards what would be typical of a re-wetted cutaway bog. This will be measured via water quality monitoring (suspended solids and ammonia).
- Receiving water bodies have been classified under the River Basin Management Plan and this classification includes waters that are 'At Risk' from peatlands and peat extraction. The success criteria will be that the 'At Risk' classification will see improvements in the associated pressures from this peatland or if remaining 'At Risk', that there is an improving trajectory in the pressure from this peatland.

Rehabilitation targets

- Demonstrating the delivery of the rehabilitation through site visits and through updated aerial photography (indicating presence of peat blockages and re-wetting). This will be demonstrated by a post rehab aerial survey.
- Stabilising potential emissions from the site (e.g., suspended solids). The key target will be developing a stable or downward trajectory of water quality indicators (suspended solids and ammonia) towards what would be typical of a re-wetted cutaway bog. This will be demonstrated by water quality monitoring results.

Rehabilitation measures:

- Blocking field drains in drier sections of the former industrial production area using a dozer to create regular peat blockages (three blockages per 100 m) along each field drain to re-wet peat.
- No measures are planned for the other surrounding marginal peatland habitats.
- Evaluate success of short-term rehabilitation measures and enhance where necessary.
- Decommissioning of silt-ponds will be assessed and carried out, where required.

Timeframe:

- 2024. 1st phase of rehabilitation. Field drain blocking.
- 2024-2026. Evaluate success of short-term rehabilitation measures outlined above and remediate where necessary.
- 2025-2026. Decommission silt-ponds, if necessary.

Table AP-1. Rehabilitation measures and target area.

Type	Code	Description	Area (Ha)
Deep Peat	DPT1	Regular drain blocking (3/100 m) + blocking outfalls and managing water levels with overflow pipes	65.4
Dry Cutaway	DCT	Modifying outfalls and managing water levels with overflow pipes	2.24

Type	Code	Description	Area (Ha)
Additional Works	AW2	Targeted drain blocking	30
Marginal land	MLT1	No work required	13.7
Constraint	Constraint	Other Constraints	1.6
Total			112.96

See Drawing number *BNM-DR-25-06-20: Standard Rehab Measures* included in the accompanying Mapbook which illustrates the standard rehab measures to be applied.

Monitoring, after-care and maintenance

- There will be initial quarterly monitoring assessments of the site to determine the general status of the site, the condition of the silt-ponds, assess the condition of the rehabilitation work, assess the progress of natural colonisation, monitoring of any potential impacts on neighbouring land and general land security. The number of site visits will reduce after 2 years to bi-annually. These site visits will assess the need to additional rehabilitation.
- Water quality monitoring will be established.
- Monitoring results will be maintained, trended and reported on each year as part of the requirement to report on Condition 10.1 of the IPC Licence on Bog Rehabilitation in the Annual Environmental Report, which will be available in April each year at www.epa.ie.
- The parameters to be included (as per condition 6.2 of the IPC Licence) include monthly monitoring for pH, Flow, Suspended Solids, Total Solids, Total Phosphorus, Total Ammonia, Colour, and COD.
- This sampling regime on a selected number of silt ponds will be carried out over a two-year cycle. The original (licence) requirement was for a quarterly sampling regime.
- Where other uses are proposed for the site, these will be assessed by Bord na Móna in consultation with interested parties. Other after-uses can be proposed for licensed areas and must go through the required assessment and planning procedures.

Validation and IPC Licence surrender

Reporting to the EPA will continue until the IPC Licence is surrendered. The bog will be included in the full licence surrender process as per the Guidance to Licensees on Surrender, Cessation and Closure of Licensed Sites (EPA, 2012) when:

- The planned rehabilitation has been completed;
- Water quality monitoring demonstrates that water quality of discharge is stabilising or improving; and
- The site has been environmentally stabilised.

APPENDIX II. BOG GROUP CONTEXT

The Blackwater Bog Group IPC Licensed area is made up of three sub-groups (Attymon, Blackwater and Derryfadda) and have been in industrial peat production for several decades. The majority of sites are situated alongside the Shannon and Suck Rivers within counties Roscommon, Galway, Westmeath and Offaly and cover an overall area of 15,515 ha. Each bog area further comprises a range of habitats from bare milled peat production areas to re-colonising cutaway to workshops areas and transport infrastructure. Industrial peat extraction from these sites mainly supplied ESB power stations at Shannonbridge (WOP) and Lanesborough (LRP).

Industrial peat extraction in the Blackwater Bog Group ceased in 2019. Remaining milled peat stocks were supplied to Shannonbridge (WOP) and Lanesborough (LRP) during 2020. Both power stations closed at the end of 2020. Decommissioning and rehabilitation for the Blackwater Bog Group at part of PCAS started in 2021. Several bog had been rehabilitated in previous years.

A number (6) of bogs were initially drained but have never been used for industrial peat production (three former development bogs (Kellysgrove, Tirrur-Derrymore and Newtown-Loughgore), Cloonboley, Killeglan and Derrydoo-Woodlough). The latter three bogs are classed as restored raised bogs, still contain active bog habitat (that qualifies as the Annex I EU Habitats Directive habitat) and now form the core of the Bord na Móna Raised Bog Restoration Project due to their high biodiversity value and bog restoration potential. NPWS have identified the Cloonboley bog cluster as having high ecological value within the recent assessment of raised bog SACs, NHAs and non-designated sites (NPWS 2014¹¹).

Several sections of Tirrur-Derrymore bog have been leased to NPWS for domestic turf cutting as part of the SAC turf-cutting compensation scheme. Turf-cutters from neighbouring SACs have been relocated to this site by NPWS. Several other bogs are being assessed for similar use.

The depth of remnant peat within Blackwater bog units will have a very significant impact on the development of these sites, with deeper peat (Derryfadda milled peat production bogs) having potential for the establishment of embryonic peat-forming (*Sphagnum*-rich) vegetation communities. Milled peat cutaway (such as at Blackwater) develops in a somewhat different way as in places the underlying gravel is exposed, there is significant alkaline influence on the water chemistry and in many of these cutaway bogs will develop fen and wetlands due to the local topography, hydrology and water chemistry.

A breakdown of the component bog areas for the Blackwater Bog Group IPC Licence Ref. PO502-01 is outlined in Table Ap-2.

Table Ap-2a: Blackwater Bog Group names, area and indicative status (Attymon sub-group)

Bog Name	Area (ha)	Stage of development	Land-Use and History	Peat Production Cessation	Rehab Plan Status
Attymon	336	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Attymon Bog in 1941 and ceased in 2019. Attymon is a deep peat cutover bog.	Attymon Bog formerly supplied fuel sod peat. Coillte have developed a portion of the former production area for conifer forestry. Rehabilitation ongoing	2109	Draft 2024

¹¹ <http://www.npws.ie/peatlandsturf-cutting/nationalraisedbogsacmanagementplan/>

Bog Name	Area (ha)	Stage of development	Land-Use and History	Peat Production Cessation	Rehab Plan Status
Cloonkeen	252	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Cloonkeen Bog in 1953 and ceased in 2019. Cloonkeen Bog is a deep peat cutover bog.	Cloonkeen Bog formerly supplied fuel sod peat. Coillte have developed a portion of the former production area for conifer forestry. Rehabilitation ongoing	2019	Draft 2024
Derrydoo-Woodlough	452	Development Bog Derrydoo-Woodlough Bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No industrial peat harvesting ever took place.	Bog restoration was carried out in 2013-2014 Rehabilitation (bog restoration) now complete.	N/A	Finalised 2012
Tirrur-Derrymore	422	Development Bog This bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No industrial peat harvesting ever took place.	This bog has significant raised bog restoration potential. Section leased to NPWS as a SAC turf-cutting relocation site.	N/A	Finalised 2023
Newtown-Loughgore	448	Development Bog This bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No industrial peat harvesting ever took place.	Some sod turf production Bog restoration was carried out in 2019-2020 Rehabilitation (bog restoration) nearly complete.	2020	Draft 2024
Killeglan	581	Development Bog This bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No industrial peat harvesting ever took place.	Bog restoration was carried out in 2013-2014 Rehabilitation (raised bog restoration) complete 2 nd phase of rehabilitation planned for 2023	N/A	Finalised 2023
Cloonboley 1	675	Development Bog This bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No industrial peat harvesting ever took place on the main section.	A small sub-section has been used for sod turf production. Bog restoration was carried out in 2013-2014 Rehabilitation (raised bog restoration) complete	2020	Draft 2024
Cloonboley2	203	Development Bog This bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No industrial peat harvesting ever took place.	Bog restoration was carried out in 2013-2014 Rehabilitation (raised bog restoration) complete	N/A	Draft 2016

Table Ap-2b: *Blackwater Bog Group names, area and indicative status (Blackwater sub-group)*

Bog Name	Area (ha)	Stage of development	Land-Use and History	Peat Production Cessation	Rehab Plan Status
Ballaghurt	597	Cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Ballaghurt Bog in 1981. The majority of the site is cutaway with some residual deeper peat	Ballaghurt Bog formerly supplied a range of commercial functions including horticultural peat and fuel peat. Pioneer cutaway vegetation communities are naturally developing on some cutaway areas.	2020	To be finalised 2023
Belmont	316	Cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Belmont Bog during the 1950's. The majority of the site is cutaway.	There are some areas of pioneer cutaway vegetation communities naturally colonising cutaway sections. Coillte have developed a portion of the bog for forestry. Rehabilitation has been completed	2020	Finalised 2021
Blackwater	2,303	Cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Blackwater Bog during the 1950's. The majority of the site is cutaway.	Bloomhill Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. There is extensive development of emergent cutaway vegetation communities across the former production area. The site has been used for experimental forestry (BOGFOR) and other conifer plantations. Part of the site was rehabilitated with lake and wetland creation. An ash facility took ash from Shannonbridge Power station Rehabilitation ongoing	2020	Finalised 2022
Bloomhill	883	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Bloomhill Bog during 1981. The majority of the site still has relatively deep residual peat.	Bloomhill Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former peat production area is bare peat. Rehabilitation ongoing	2020	Finalised 2022
Bunahinly-Kilgarvan	389	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Bunahinly-Kilgarvan Bog during the 1990's. Residual Deep peat remains on these bogs.	Bunahinly-Kilgarvan formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area is bare peat. Part of Bunahinly has been re-wetted.	2020	Finalised 2022
Glebe	132	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Glebe Bog during the 1990's. Residual deep peat remains on these bogs.	Glebe Bog formerly supplied milled; horticultural peat and fuel peat. Glebe bog is still listed as a pNHA. Much of the former production area is bare peat.	2020	To be finalised 2023
Clooniff	523	Cutover & cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Clooniff Bog during the 1970's. A mosaic of variable peat depths remains on this bog.	Clooniff Bog formerly milled fuel peat. Much of the former production area is bare peat or wetland. Some emergent vegetation communities are naturally colonising cutaway areas. Reduced	2020	Finalised 2021

Bog Name	Area (ha)	Stage of development	Land-Use and History	Peat Production Cessation	Rehab Plan Status
			pumping has created a large wetland in one area. Rehabilitation ongoing		
Cornafulla	460	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Cornafulla Bog in 1987. This bog still retains relatively deep residual peat.	Cornafulla Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area or cutaway is bare peat.	2020	Draft 2017
Cornaveagh	492	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Cornaveagh Bog in 1970's and ceased in 2020. This bog still retains relatively deep residual peat.	Cornaveagh Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area footprint or cutaway is bare peat.	2020	Draft 2017
Culliaghmore	442	Cutover Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Culliaghmore Bog in 1960's and ceased in 2020. Much of this bog is cutaway, with some pockets of deeper residual peat.	Culliaghmore Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area footprint or cutaway is bare peat. Some pioneer cutaway vegetation communities are naturally colonising cutaway areas.	2020	Draft 2017
Garryduff	970	Cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Garryduff Bog in 1960's. The majority of this bog is cutaway.	Much of the former production area footprint or cutaway is bare peat. Extensive natural development of pioneer cutaway vegetation communities is present on cutaway areas. Rehabilitation ongoing.	2020	Finalised 2021
Kellysgrove	201	Development Bog Kellysgrove Bog was drained in the 1980s in anticipation of industrial peat production. No peat harvesting ever took place.	The site retains degraded raised bog vegetation. Kellysgrove Bog retains significant raised bog restoration potential. A way-marked walking trail is positioned along the old Ballinasloe Canal. Rehabilitation measures have been completed at Kellysgrove in 2021.	2020	Finalised 2021
Kilmacshane	1,294	Cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Kilmacshane Bog in 1960's. The majority of this bog is cutaway with some pockets of deeper peat remaining.	Kilmacshane Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Some pioneer cutaway vegetation communities are naturally colonising cutaway areas and water levels have risen as pumping reduced, creating wetlands. Rehabilitation measures have commenced at Kilmacshane in 2021.	2014	Finalised 2021
Lismanny	449	Cutaway Bog Industrial peat production commenced at Lismanny Bog in 1960's. The majority of this bog is cutaway with some pockets of deeper peat remaining.	Lismanny Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area footprint is bare peat. Some pioneer cutaway vegetation communities are naturally colonising cutaway areas.	2020	Draft 2021

Table Ap-2c: Blackwater Bog Group names, area and indicative status (Derryfadda sub-group)

Bog Name	Area (ha)	Stage of development	Land-Use and History	Peat Production Cessation	Rehab Plan Status
Derryfadda	610	Cutover bog Industrial peat production commenced at Derryfadda Bog in 1980's. This bog still retains residual deep peat.	Derryfadda Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area is bare peat. Some pioneer cutaway vegetation communities are naturally colonising cutaway areas. Rehabilitation ongoing.	2020	Finalised 2022
Boughill	415	Cutover bog Industrial peat production commenced at Boughill Bog in 2008. This bog still retains residual deep peat.	Boughill Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area footprint or cutaway is bare peat.	2020	Draft 2017
Castlegar	517	Cutover bog Industrial peat production commenced at Castlegar Bog in 2001. This bog still retains residual deep peat.	Castlegar Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area is bare peat. The adjacent Annaghbeg Bog NHA is an intact undrained raised bog Rehabilitation measures have commenced at Castlegar in 2021.	2019	Finalised 2021
Gowla	650	Cutover bog Industrial peat production by BnM commenced at Gowla Bog in 1970's. Development for sugar production was in place at Gowla since the 1950's. This bog still retains residual deep peat.	Gowla Bog formerly supplied milled horticultural peat and fuel peat. Much of the former production area footprint is bare peat.	2020	Finalised 2024

See Drawing number *BNM-DR-25-06-24: Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) Bog Group*, included in the accompanying Mapbook which illustrates the location of Gowla bog and the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) Bog Group in context to the surrounding area.

APPENDIX III. ECOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Note this ecological survey report refers to the entirety of Gowla Bog. The area described under ‘western cutaway section’ falls within the PCAS footprint.

Ecological Survey Report			
<i>Note: This report outlines an ecological survey of the bog. This report should not be taken as a management plan for the site as other land-uses may still be considered. Information within this report may inform the development of other land-uses and identify areas with particular biodiversity value.</i>			
Bog Name:	<u>Gowla</u>	Area (ha):	665ha
Works Name:	Derryfadda	County:	Galway
Recorder(s):	DF	Survey Date(s):	9 th December 2011
Habitats present (in order of dominance)			
The most common habitats present at this site include:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bare peat (BP) (Codes refer BnM classification of pioneer habitats of production bog. See Appendix I). • Dry Heath (dheath) • Dry grassland dominated by Purple Moorgrass (gMol) • Disturbed vegetation (DisWill, DisCF) • Access routes (rail lines and tracks including gravel embankments and associated habitats such as dry grassland communities (GS2) and scrub) • Silt-pond areas (Silt) with silt ponds and associated spoil heaps and access tracks 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Codes refer to Heritage Council habitat classification, Fossitt 2000), See Appendix I.) • Birch woodland (WN7) (Codes refer to Heritage Council habitat classification, Fossitt 2000), See Appendix I.) • Scrub (WS1) – Birch scrub • Conifer plantation (WD4) • Wet grassland (GS4) • Raised bog remnants (PB1) • Cutover bog (PB4) (industrially harvested area adjacent to the BnM property) 			
Description of site			
<p>Gowla Bog is located in east Galway along the River Suck. It is part of the Derryfadda bog group and is located 3 km west of Ballyforan. The site is divided into two main sections by a minor road between Mountbellew Bridge and Ballyforan. The majority of the bog is in active milled peat production. There is also a relatively old large area of cutaway associated with the site as well as some other features, such as conifer plantation and blocks of scrub and other marginal habitats. The site is somewhat unusual in that it is located adjacent to Castle Ffrench East Bog NHA and the NHA designation significantly overlaps with the production bog area and cutaway (probably in error).</p>			

Gowla Bog also has an unusual history. It was originally developed by the Irish Sugar Company in the 1950's. Much of the bog was developed into grassland for the production of grass-meal (agricultural food supplement – cattle nuts). The conifer plantation found on the site dates back to 1956. Turf was also harvested from part of the bog to supply the industrial furnace. Ownership was transferred from the Irish Sugar Company to Bord na Móna in the late 70's-1980's and Bord na Móna began to develop the bog for milled peat production. The 2000 series aerial photos indicate that much more of the site had developed typical pioneer cutaway vegetation and that it was not all in full production at this time. However, much more of the site now is in full production. The current condition of the site reflects its older history as the bare peat fields quickly naturally develop a grassy sward if they are left unmanaged for some time.

The bog can be divided into several main sections by the natural topography and land-use around the site. The northern section is divided from the rest of the bog by a minor road. A BnM railway is situated along the east side of the bog and provides access between Derryfadda and Boughill. This railway divides a small area of recently developed high bog from the rest of the site. A small Works area with some derelict workshops and a newer hut is located towards the centre of the site and there are also a series of silt ponds through the centre along a channelized stream. A large area of cutaway is located to the west of the site with a narrow band of conifers marking the boundary of this area. There are several other small marginal areas with no active management where there are developing habitats.

Northern section

The majority of the northern section is in active peat production. Much of the peat production area is being quickly vegetated by a grassy sward (germinated in August). This is an ongoing problem for peat production and is likely to be due to the unusually high nutrient levels within the peat as a result of the previous development as grassland. The northern section contains the former lake, Lough Aunaculskye. This area was never developed although drains were cut through the area. This area is described as a seasonal lake although the aerial photo indicates that it contains scrub, Birch woodland, wetland habitats and wet grassland. It was not surveyed. There is no indication that it still becomes inundated to any great extent. However, there may be potential for some transitional mire type habitats or wet bog woodland.

Western cutaway section

This is a large area of cutaway bog located in the western part of the site that has developed typical cutaway habitats. It is somewhat unusual in that it is quite old and sections seem to be developed similarly to the Birch woodland at Turraun (Co. Offaly). It was originally developed as grassland by the Sugar Company. This area was developed in the past by BnM with regular peat production fields separated by typical field drains. However, there was never any peat production within this section. The woodland has developed from the grassland. A small hill in the southern part of the cutaway was never developed as grassland and likely had developed scrub. Scrub was cleared from the southern section in 1984 but it was never re-developed and was left fallow after this period. This section now contains some dense Birch woodland dominated by even-aged Birch. This type of woodland has developed on the former central travel path and in some other areas around this section and along the margins.

Natural regeneration is typically poor fen and Birch. There are no indications of significant pioneer dry heath formation, which is what would be expected on an area where there has only been a short period of peat production.

Other parts of this section have mature Willow and Birch lining the former field drains and forming rows of mature trees while the central sections are grassy or contain Soft Rush-dominated poor fen. This is likely to be in part due to intensive grazing by a large herd of Fallow Deer resident in the area. (Also likely to have developed as the original site was grassland and the new drains allowed Birch and Willow to invade). Heavy grazing is likely to have slowed down natural succession and colonisation by Birch and Willow, while keeping relatively large areas grassy and 'lawn' like. It may also be due to the former history of the site. This section may have been partially vegetated by grassland when its development/management was abandoned. The grassy areas contain Creeping Bentgrass, Sorrel, Yorkshire Fog, Nettle,

and Creeping Buttercup. Other sections have varying amounts of Soft Rush developing in association with the grassy areas. There are also patches of Brambles, Nettle and Raspberry that are the first step to scrub development.

Further south there is more typical scrub development of cutaway bog. Birch and Willow have developed along the drains and also within the central zones forming scrub and woodland of various densities. The ground cover is dominated by Brambles with Broad Buckler Fern prominent. Heather and Purple Moorgrass were both present with Heather appearing along the old field drains. Most of the scrub was closed but there are still some sections within the southern half where there is an open Birch scrub mosaic with grass/Soft Rush-dominated poor fen.

Eastern dry heath area

This section is located to the east of the railway and the Works area. It is a small area of high bog that has been developed prior to 2004 when drains were initially cut. The drains have been re-ditched recently but this area of bog does not seem to have been screw-levelled yet. The current vegetation seems to be a degraded form of the original high bog vegetation. It is quite similar to pioneer dry heath and is dominated by Heather and also contains Deergrass, Bog Asphodel, Hare's-tail Bog Cotton and Common Bog Cotton. The *Sphagnum* layer is quite degraded and has almost disappeared, although there are some remnant small hummocks still present. A narrow band of mature Scot's Pine (WD4) is located along the eastern margin of this area, adjacent to the railway.

Works area, production bog and silt pond complex

The active production bog around then site is somewhat unusual in that a grassy sward is developing in places. This seems to be developing since production ceased in August and consists of newly germinated grasses. These seem to be dominated by *Poa* sp., but there is likely to be other species present such as Reed Canary grass. This sward is likely to be destroyed in the spring when peat production begins again. Headlands and stockpiles revegetate in this way. It is somewhat unusual in that the re-vegetation occurs so quickly and is not dominated by Soft Rush or Bog Cotton, like it does at other sites. This may be due to the initial development of the site as grassland. This development probably involved the use of fertilisers and/or liming agents. The higher nutrient status may be one reason why this bog develops this type of initial pioneer vegetation.

Grassy areas dominated by rank Reed Canary grass are found around the Works area and the silt-pond complex (see pictures). Much of this Reed Canary grass was probably planted and these sections are likely to be relics of the former grassland development. There are also several small areas and tree-lines around the site planted with conifers (Sitka Spruce), which are maturing.

Southern section

The majority of this area is dominated by bare peat with stockpiles, at the time of the ecological survey temporary rail lines were in use for extracting peat from the stockpiles. The south western corner of the site contained some mature cutaway and a section of raised bog that is only partially in BnM ownership. The cutaway had revegetated with a section of mature woodland (Birch dominated) and poor fen with soft Rush, Reed Canary Grass with some *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *Aulacomnium palustre*.

Another section of mature cutaway is located in the south eastern corner of the site and this area was dominated by a mix of Birch woodland and wet willow woodland.

A small area section of conifer plantation is located along the south western boundary of the site and is of similar quality to the sections of conifer plantation already mentioned to the north of the site.

Designated areas on site (cSAC, NHA, pNHA, SPA other)

<p>Castle Ffrench East Bog NHA</p> <p>This raised bog NHA is located adjacent to the west side of Gowla. Some small sections of the intact raised bog are in Bord na Móna ownership, although there has been no development for peat production.</p> <p>However, there are also 113 ha of overlap between the NHA designation and Gowla production bog and the cutaway area. This section has possibly been designated in error. It would have been developed for peat production in the 1990's when the NHA was originally designated. The site synopsis for the site does not include any description of this section.</p>
<p>Adjacent habitats and land-use</p> <p>Habitats around the margins of the site include conifer plantation, intact high bog, scrub (WS1), Birch woodland (WN7), improved grassland (GA1) and wet grassland (GS4).</p>
<p>Watercourses (major water features on/off site)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This site is located in the River Suck catchment. • The site is drained by several main drains or channelized streams. The main area is drained by an un-named small stream that formerly rose on the bog, but has now been channelized and has also been developed to flow through silt-ponds. It flows south out of the site and directly to the River Suck. • A small stream also flows along the western boundary. This unnamed stream flows north to the Killeen River, which is a tributary of the River Suck. • Lough Aunaculskey is a former lake that was located to the north of the site. This area has been heavily drained since the 19th century and the lake has now disappeared. It is mapped on the discovery map as a seasonal lake but aerial photos indicate that it is largely comprised of scrub, wet grassland and wetland (un-surveyed).
<p>Peat type and sub-soils</p> <p>The majority of the peat exposed at the site seems to be fen peat. There is some newly developed high bog to the east of the site that has been recently ditched and is likely to go into production soon. This area still has acidic moss peat and there is still remnant high bog vegetation on the surface.</p>
<p>Fauna biodiversity</p> <p>Birds</p> <p>Several bird species were noted on the site during the survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meadow Pipit, Jay, Mallard (2), Wren, Pheasant (4), Blackbird, Blue Tit, Grey Crow, Chaffinch and Woodpigeon were recorded on the site during the site. <p>Mammals</p> <p>Signs of several mammal species were noted on the site during the survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fallow Deer were spotted in the large area of cutaway. Signs around the site indicate that there is a relatively large population and that they roam over the production bog and through the conifer plantation. Intensive

deer-grazing may be one reason why the large area of cutaway is still relatively open and grassy in places. Local staff report a herd of about 40 deer in the cutaway.

APPENDIX IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MEASURES TO BE APPLIED TO BOG REHABILITATION

- Bog restoration/rehabilitation measures will be restricted to within the footprint of the proposed rehabilitation area.
- The proposed rehabilitation will have due regard to noise limits and hours of operation (i.e. dusk and dawn) to minimise any potential disturbance on resident and local fauna that utilise the site and immediate environs.
- All plant and equipment for use will comply with the Construction Plant and Equipment Permissible Noise Levels Regulations (SI 359/1996).
- The proposed activities will be restricted to daylight hours and there will be no requirement for artificial lighting.
- Silt ponds will be inspected and maintained as per the IPC Licence.
- During periods of heavy precipitation and run-off, activities will be halted.
- Measures will be carried out using a suitably sized machine and, in all circumstances,, excavation depths and volumes will be minimised where possible.
- All machines will be regularly checked and maintained prior to arrival at the site to prevent hydrocarbon leakage.
- Hoses and valves will be checked regularly for signs of wear and will be closed and securely locked when not in use.
- Fuelling and lubrication of equipment shall only be carried out in designated areas away from surface water drainage features and ecologically sensitive areas.
- Waste oils and hydraulic fluids will be collected in leak-proof containers and removed from the site for disposal or re-cycling.
- Vehicles will never be left unattended during refuelling.
- No direct discharges to waters will be made. No washings from vehicles, plant or equipment will be carried out on site.
- All plant refuelling will take place using mobile fuel bowsers. Only dedicated trained and competent personnel will carry out refuelling operations.
- Mobile storage such as fuel bowsers will be banded to 110% capacity to prevent spills. Tanks for bowsers and generators shall be double skinned. When not in use, all valves and fuel trigger guns from fuel storage containers will be locked. All pumps using fuel or containing oil will be locally and securely banded where there is the possibility of discharge to waters.
- Potential impacts caused by spillages etc. during rehabilitation will be reduced by keeping spill kits and other appropriate equipment on-site.
- Site activities will be carried out in accordance with 'best practice'. In order to ensure compliance and implementation of 'best practice', these measures will be communicated to relevant Bord na Móna staff and updated as required.

APPENDIX V. BIOSECURITY

The potential for importation or introduction of non-native plant species (such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, etc.) during future rehabilitation management, such as drain-blocking using excavators, has the potential to result in the establishment of invasive species within the site. Section 49 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 prohibits the introduction and dispersal of invasive alien species (particularly plant species) listed on Part 1 (third column) of the 'Third Schedule'.

This section aims to reduce the risk from, and impacts of, invasive species and protecting biodiversity on lands under Bord na Móna ownership. Rehabilitation and decommissioning in the bog will have due regard to the relevant biosecurity measures outlined below:

- Records of problematic invasive species within the various bog units will be marked out with signs to highlight areas of infestation to personnel.
- All plant machinery will be restricted from disturbing known colonies of invasive species.
- All plant machinery will avoid unnecessary crossings to adjoining lands.
- Good site hygiene will be employed to prevent the introduction and spread of problematic invasive alien plant species (i.e., Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Himalayan Knotweed (*Persicaria wallichii*), etc.) by thoroughly washing vehicles prior to entering the area.

The biosecurity measures outlined above are in line with best practice guidelines issued by the National Roads Authority (NRA, 2010) – The Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-native Invasive Plant Species on National Roads and broadly based on the Environment Agency's (2013) – The Knotweed Code of Practice: Managing Japanese Knotweed on Development Sites (Version 3, amended in 2013, accessed on the Environment Agency's website on the 11th of July 2016).

In addition to the above, best practice measures around the prevention and spread of Crayfish plague¹² will be adhered with throughout all rehabilitation measures and activities.

¹² <https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/crayfish-plague/>

APPENDIX VI. POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Bord na Móna Plc is a publicly owned company, originally established in 1934 to develop some of Ireland's extensive peat resources for the purposes of economic development and to support energy security. In the decades since its establishment the company has employed tens of thousands of people in its fuel, energy, and horticultural growing media businesses. For much of its history the company's support of important national policy aims has been enabled and encouraged in a variety of ways by Government.

Today, Bord na Móna is undertaking a number of highly significant actions in support of climate policy. These actions involve a radical transformation and decarbonisation of nearly the entire Bord na Móna business. This transformation will be driven by unlocking the full potential of our land and creating significant value for Ireland and the Midlands in particular.

Bord na Móna is an integral part of the economic, social, and environmental fabric of Ireland and Irish life. As a key employer in the Midlands, the company is conscious that its obligations go beyond purely commercial and environmental – there is also a social responsibility to employees and the communities served by Bord na Móna. It is the company's role and absolute priority to ensure that its long-term strategy delivers on all of these important areas in a robust and balanced way.

There are a wide range of policies, plans, legislation and land designations that inform the development of this Bord na Móna peatland rehabilitation plan. Bord na Móna have also developed and operate various policies and strategies that also inform the development of this rehabilitation plan.

1 EPA IPC Licence

Bord na Móna operates under IPC Licence issued and administered by the EPA to extract peat within the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group (Ref. PO-502-01). As part of Condition 10.2 of this license, a rehabilitation plan must be prepared for permanent rehabilitation of the boglands within the licensed area. The bog is part of the Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) bog group. This regulatory requirement is the main driver of the development of this rehabilitation plan.

2 The Peatlands Climate Action Scheme (PCAS)

Bord na Móna (BnM) understand that it is the Minister's (DECC) intention to impose an obligation on Bord na Móna to develop a programme of measures, 'the Scheme', for the enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration of boglands previously used to supply peat for electricity generation within the State. The enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration of the peatlands funded by the Scheme (PCAS) will deliver benefits across climate action (GHG mitigation through reduced carbon emissions and acceleration towards carbon sequestration), enrich the State's natural capital, increase eco-system services, strengthen biodiversity, improve water quality and storage attenuation as well as developing the amenity potential of the peatlands.

It is envisaged that Bord na Móna carry out an enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration, under the Scheme (PCAS), and supported by the Climate Action Fund and Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan across a footprint of 33,000 ha. This scheme will significantly go beyond what is required to meet rehabilitation and decommissioning obligations under existing EPA IPC licence conditions. Interventions and measures supported by the Scheme will ensure that environmental stabilisation is achieved (meaning IPC obligations are met), and importantly, significant additional benefits, particularly relating to climate action and

other ecosystem services, will also be delivered. *However, only the additional costs associated with the additional and enhanced rehabilitation, i.e., those activities which go beyond the existing decommissioning and rehabilitation requirements arising from Condition 10 will be eligible for support under the Scheme.*

The proposed enhanced rehabilitation detailed in this document, are predicated on the understanding that the element of the activities, over and above the ‘standard’ rehabilitation necessary to comply with pre-existing Condition 10 IPC Licence requirements, will be deemed eligible costs by the Scheme regulator and funded by the Climate Action Fund and Ireland’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

For the avoidance of doubt, should the Scheme and the associated statutory obligation on Bord na Móna not materialise, Bord na Móna will not carry out the enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration measures described in this plan. Bord na Móna will instead plan to complete an adapted standard decommissioning and rehabilitation measures required under Condition 10 and outlined in Appendix I.

3 National and EU Climate and Biodiversity Policy

The National Policy Position establishes the fundamental national objective of achieving a transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. It sets out:

- the context for the objective;
- clarifies the level of GHG mitigation ambition envisaged; and
- establishes the process to pursue and achieve the overall objective.

The evolution of climate policy in Ireland will be an iterative process based on the adoption by government of a series of national plans over the period to 2050. GHG mitigation and adaptation to the impacts of climate change are to be addressed in parallel national plans – respectively through the National Climate Action Plan. The plans will be continually updated, as well as being reviewed on a structured basis at appropriate intervals and, at a minimum, every five years. This will include early identification and ongoing updating of possible transition pathways to 2050 to inform sectoral strategic choices.

Bord na Móna is following a decarbonisation programme aimed at reducing the carbon emissions from its activities. Industrial peat production has now ceased, and several other decarbonisation measures are being implemented. The company aims to further develop renewable energy and resource recovery markets with a key objective of reducing the carbon intensity of all products. In addition, the carbon emission mitigation benefits associated with the post-peat extraction rehabilitated peatland following re-wetting, revegetation and colonisation of significant areas with native woodland will make a significant contribution to achieving the State’s carbon emission reduction targets.

Peatlands rehabilitation and restoration is referenced in Section 17.3.3 of the Land Use, Land Use Change, Forestry and Marine Chapter of the National Climate Action Plan 2021 as follows:

“The rehabilitation of degraded peatlands to a condition in which they regain their ability to deliver specific ecosystem services has considerable potential for initial mitigation gains, and future carbon sequestration. Additional benefits of peatland restoration include positive socio-economic outcomes for the Midlands, increased natural capital, enriched biodiversity, improved water quality, and flood attenuation.”

The scheme is included as Action 33 in the Climate Action Plan 2021 Annex of Actions - Deliver the Enhanced Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration (EDRR) Scheme for Bord na Móna Peatlands.

EDRRS is also referenced in the Climate Action Plan 2021 as a measure to deliver a Just Transition in the Midlands.

International research and scientific understanding of peatlands is now reflected in key Irish national policy and strategy documents such as the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Management Plan 2017 - 2022 (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2017), The National Peatland Strategy (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2015), The National Biodiversity Action Plan (National Parks and Wildlife Service 2017), the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government 2018), the Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022) and the Biodiversity – Climate Change Sectoral Action Plan (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2019). Each of the national plans, which are also complemented with the recently published EU Green Deal communication on Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (COM 2020) have overlapping objectives and actions that focus on the restoration of peatlands damaged by turf-cutting, drainage and other impacts, as well as the re-wetting of Bord na Móna industrial peat extraction bogs.

While not specifically identified as a restoration implementor, EDRRS objectives are in line with those of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 of Preventing, Halting and Reversing the Degradation of Ecosystems worldwide.

EDRRS is also in line with the EU Commission proposal for a Nature Restoration Law which will apply legally binding targets for nature restoration in different eco-systems to every Member State. The aim is to cover at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 with nature restoration measures and eventually extend these to all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

4 National Peatlands Strategy

The National Peatlands Strategy (2015) contains a comprehensive list of actions, necessary to ensure that Ireland's peatlands are preserved, nurtured and become living assets within the communities that live beside them. It sets out a cross-governmental approach to managing issues that relate to peatlands, including compliance with EU environmental law, climate change, forestry, flood control, energy, nature conservation, planning, and agriculture. The Strategy has been developed in partnership between relevant Government Departments/State bodies and key stakeholders through the Peatlands Council.

The strategy recognises that Ireland's peatlands will continue to contribute to a wide variety of human needs and to be put to many uses. It aims to ensure that Ireland's peatlands are sustainably managed so that their benefits can be enjoyed responsibly. It aims to inform appropriate regulatory systems to facilitate good decision making in support of responsible use. It also aims to inform the provision of appropriate incentives, financial supports and disincentives where required. The strategy attempts to strike an appropriate balance between different needs, including local stakeholders like turf-cutters and semi-state bodies such as Bord na Móna.

In line with a National Peatlands Strategy recommendation, a Peatlands Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG), was established, assisted in the finalisation of the Strategy, is overseeing subsequent implementation and will report to Government on an annual basis on the implementation of the actions and principles contained within the Strategy.

Bord na Móna is a key stakeholder in the National Peatlands Strategy and the Peatlands Strategy Implementation Group. The strategy recognises the potential for some Bord na Móna sites to be restored and to contribute to the national SAC and NHA network of protected raised bog sites. The strategy (agreed in 2015) also recognises the various different values of cutaway bog and developed six key principles (with Bord na Móna) for the after-use of cutaway bog.

- Bord na Móna will continue to assess and evaluate the potential of the company's land bank, using a land use review system. The assessment will help prepare a set of evidence-based management plans for the various areas of peatland. These plans will also inform its cutaway bog rehabilitation.
- The policy of Bord na Móna is not to open up any undrained new bogs for peat production.
- Lands identified by Bord na Móna as having high biodiversity value and/or priority habitats will be reserved for these purposes as the principal future land use.
- Generally, Bord na Móna cutaway bogs that flood naturally will be permitted to flood unless there is a clear environmental and/or economic case to maintain pumped drainage.
- In deciding on the most appropriate afteruse of cutaway peatlands, consideration shall be given to encouraging, where possible, the return to a natural functioning peatland ecosystem.
- This will require re-wetting of the cutaway peatlands which may lead in time to the restoration of the peatland ecosystem.
- Environmentally, socially and economically viable options should be analysed to plan the future use of industrial cutaway peatlands, in conjunction with limiting factors as outlined in Bord na Móna's Strategic Framework for the Future Use of Peatlands.

The National Peatlands Strategy highlights the importance and value of developing peatland rehabilitation plans for Bord na Móna cutaway sites and implementing this peatland rehabilitation. Some of these principles have now been superseded by the company's decision to cease industrial peat extraction. The National Peatlands Strategy is currently being reviewed by Government.

5 Draft National River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 (Water Framework Directive)

The National River Basin Management Plan (Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government 2017) is the key national plan for Ireland to achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). In broad terms, the objectives of the WFD are (1) to prevent the deterioration of water bodies and to protect, enhance and restore them with the aim of achieving at least good status and (2) to achieve compliance with the requirements for designated protected areas.

The NRBMP 2018-2021 outlined how peat extraction can be a potentially significant pressure on various water quality parameters. Peatland rehabilitation of Bord na Móna cutaway (in addition to other measures) was part of the WFD (2018-2021) programme of measures. The NRBMP 2018-2021 takes account of the fact that Bord na Móna was in the process of phasing out the extraction of peat for energy production, that it set a target to rehabilitate 9,000 ha of cutaway bogs (covering 25 peatlands) by 2021 (in 2018) and will look to implement best-available mitigation measures to further reduce water quality impacts caused by peat extraction while the phasing-out process is taking place. This NRBMP 2018-2021 rehabilitation target was superseded by the acceleration of the Bord na Móna de-carbonisation programme and the Scheme (PCAS).

The development of site rehabilitation plans and the delivery of peatland rehabilitation by Bord na Móna was expected to have a positive impact on water quality and will help the NRBMP 2018-2021 deliver its objectives in relation to the Water Framework Directive and is one of the five key principle actions.

The draft NRBMP 2022-2027 describes how the number of waterbodies impacted by peat, industry and forestry have decreased by 10, 10 and 5 waterbodies, respectively since the second cycle. Impacts on water quality and river habitat arising from peat and peat extraction and associated drainage include the release of ammonium and

fine-grained suspended sediments, and physical alteration of aquatic habitats. Drainage of peatlands also results in changes to the hydromorphological condition of rivers.

The draft NRBMP 2022-2027 outlines how maintaining and restoring Irish bogs will lead to a decrease in waterborne carbon leaching to levels comparable with intact bogs as well as reducing losses of peat silt and ammonia. Vegetation on the surface of the peat can also slow the flow of water over the land surface. Based on the EPA's most recent reports, peat extraction and drainage is impacting on 106 water bodies across the country, with peat the single pressure on 28 of these water bodies. However, compared to the data in the second-cycle plan, the number of water bodies impacted by peat has decreased.

The cessation of industrial peat extraction by Bord na Móna in 2021 was expected to have a significant positive impact on water quality of receiving water courses by reducing the impact of peat extraction as a key pressure on particular water courses. This is now being supported by the results and conclusions of the draft NRBMP 2022-2027.

6 National Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2021

The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2022 has a vision that biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally. Ireland's 2nd National Biodiversity Action Plan outlines the main policies, strategies, actions and targets in relation to biodiversity. This plan has several Bord na Móna specific objectives and actions including implementing the BnM Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2021 and overlaps with both the National Peatlands Strategy and the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022.

The delivery of rehabilitation via PCAS is expected to significantly contribute in the future to actions and targets of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2021, particularly in relation to peatland restoration and creation of new habitats such as wetlands and woodlands.

A new National Biodiversity Action Plan is currently being developed.

7 National conservation designations

Bord na Móna operates in a wider landscape that also includes a network of European and National nature conservation sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), National Heritage Areas (NHAs, cNHAs) and National Nature Reserves). Bord na Móna will take account of this network of conservation objectives and their conservation objectives when developing these rehabilitation plans. It is expected that peatland rehabilitation will, in general, benefit the conservation objectives of this network of nature conservation sites.

8 National Raised Bog Special Area of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022.

The National Raised Bog Special Area of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 sets out a roadmap for the long-term management, restoration and conservation of protected raised bogs in Ireland. The Plan strikes an appropriate balance between the need to conserve and restore Ireland's raised bog network as part of Ireland's commitments towards the EU Habitats Directive, and the needs of stakeholders and gives recognition to the

important role that communities have to play in the conservation and restoration of raised bogs. The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Management Plan 2017-2022 is part of the measures being implemented in response to the on-going infringement action against Ireland in relation to the implementation of the EU Habitats Directive, with regard to the regulation of turf cutting on the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The then Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, also published a **Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network** in 2014.

Bord na Móna has played a key role in the development of the National Raised Bog Special Area of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 and the Review of the Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network. Several Bord na Móna sites were assessed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of the above Plan and Review and there is an expectation that several Bord na Móna sites will be designated as SACs and NHAs in the future. This will reinforce the network of protected raised bog sites and replace in part sites that will be de-designated as they have been deemed to be significantly damaged and are deemed to have no raised bog restoration prospects. PCAS is expected to restore several sites that will contribute to The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Management Plan 2017-2022 targets in relation to the restoration of raised bog habitat.

Bord na Móna has also responded to the needs of the NRBMP and provided several sites to the government for the relocation of turf-cutters from SACs. This is part of a suite of ongoing bog conservation measures in the NRBMP to manage turf-cutting in protected sites. Bord na Móna and the National Parks and Wildlife Service continues to engage regarding the ongoing relocation of turf-cutters from protected raised bog sites.

9 All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 outlines key objectives and actions to protect and support pollinating insects and the habitats they rely on. A Bord na Móna specific action in this plan includes the adoption of pollinator-friendly management within the Bord na Móna network of sites. One action to help achieve this objective is habitat rehabilitation and restoration, where possible, of pollinator-friendly habitats, including peatland habitats.

10 Land-use planning policies.

As Bord na Móna operates in many counties across Ireland, it is important to note the respective development plans in these counties. Many of the existing development plans recognise the potential that exists in the after-use of cutover/cutaway peatlands. Bord na Móna seeks to work with all of the relevant local authorities to ensure that the most appropriate after-uses are reflected in local planning policy. The following areas of consistent importance are of both direct and indirect relevance to Bord na Móna: heritage, tourism, biodiversity/conservation, landscape, renewable energy, and economy/enterprise.

11 National Archaeology Code of Practice

Bord na Móna operates under an agreed Code of Practice regarding archaeology with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Museum of Ireland which provides a framework to enable the Company to progress peat extraction whilst carrying out archaeological mitigation. (<https://www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/publications/cop-bord-na-mona-en.pdf>)

The Code replaced a set of Principles agreed with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in the 1990s. Under the Code Bord na Móna, the Minister and Director work together to ensure that appropriate archaeological mitigation is carried out in advance of peat extraction.

- BNM must ensure that any monuments or archaeological objects discovered during peat extraction are protected in an appropriate manner by following the Archaeological Protection Procedures.
- BNM must ensure that any newly discovered monuments on Bord na Móna lands are reported in a timely manner to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- BNM must ensure that any archaeological objects discovered on Bord na Móna lands are reported immediately to the Duty Officer of the National Museum of Ireland.
- Bord na Móna will adhere to the Archaeology Code of Practice relating to management of any archaeological finds that may arise during cutaway peatland rehabilitation and decommissioning.

12 Bord na Móna Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2021

Rehabilitation of industrial peatlands is a key objective of the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2021. This action plan outlines the main objectives and actions around biodiversity on Bord na Móna lands. The Bord na Móna Biodiversity Action Plan also outlines key International and European policy in relation to biodiversity. This includes the **United Nations Convention on Biodiversity 2011-2020 (CBD)** and **European Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**. Further details of these policies and Bord na Móna's responses can be found in the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Action Plan (Bord na Móna, 2016). Both policy documents highlight targets such as reducing pressure on biodiversity, promoting sustainability, habitat restoration and benefits of ecosystem services.

One example of a key CBD target is:

- *“Restore at least 15% of degraded areas through conservation and restoration activities.”*

The EU's headline target for progress by 2020 is to:

- *“halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU by 2020, restore them as far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.”*

This rehabilitation plan is aligned to the CBD target and the EU Biodiversity Strategy target and will help Ireland meet its commitment to these international Biodiversity policies.

13 Bord na Móna commitments

Bord na Móna made the commitment in 2009 not to develop any new peatland sites for industrial peat production. The company has continued to work with different stakeholders.

The company announced that industrial peat production would be cut by over 50 percent in 2019 and would entirely cease over most of its lands by the mid-2020s. Rehabilitation measures would continue to be carried out with the focus on re-wetting and rehabilitation of cutover and cutaway areas in line with national policies (such as the National Peatland Strategy, the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the Climate Action Plan 2019, the Water Framework Directive, etc.) and rehabilitation guidelines set down by the Environmental Protection Agency. To date, 15,000 hectares of cutaway and cutover bog have been rehabilitated using this approach with 5,000 hectares in active rehabilitation.

In line with Bord na Móna's accelerated decarbonisation programme, the company made a further commitment to a significantly larger rehabilitation target. This was reflected in our plans to rehabilitate a further 20,000 hectares of cutaway and cutover bog to wetland and woodland mosaics by 2025. In addition, we planned to restore a further 1,000 hectares of raised bog habitat by 2025.

The above commitments have now been followed by the decision by the company to cease industrial peat extraction and rehabilitate a target of 33,000 ha between 2021-2025.

These commitments outline the importance of peatland rehabilitation to Bord na Móna. The company will continue to demonstrate environmental responsibility and continue to deliver on these commitments in relation to peatland rehabilitation and in relation to the future management of these lands to maximise their benefits, particularly their ecosystem service benefits, along with the sustainable development of a portion of the land bank for other uses, such as renewable energy.

14 Bord na Móna Strategic Framework for the future use of cutaway peatlands 2020 (Draft)

The general after-use strategy of Bord na Móna is outlined in the Bord na Móna Strategic Framework for Future-Use of Cutaway Bogs 2020 (draft document). This document outlines how Bord na Móna's cutover peatland estate is complex in nature with great variability in terms of peat depths, peat types, drainage, subsoil condition and environmental value. Thus, future options require consideration on a site-specific basis, also bearing in mind the considerable internal variation within bogs. The development of the land-bank will also take account of national needs, while also taking account of the various national legislation, policies and plans related to the management of peatlands. In general, Bord na Móna will seek to balance and optimise commercial, social, and environmental value of these sites, and develop integrated land-uses, while taking account of the need for sustainability and their biodiversity value.

Any consideration of other future after-uses for Bord na Móna land such as development or other mixed uses will be conducted following the relevant planning guidelines and consultation with relevant authorities and will be considered within the framework of this peatland rehabilitation plan.

15 Bord na Móna Strategic Framework for the future use of cutaway peatlands 2020 (Draft)

The general after-use strategy of Bord na Móna is outlined in the Bord na Móna Strategic Framework for Future-Use of Cutaway Bogs 2020 (draft document). This document outlines how Bord na Móna's cutover peatland estate is complex in nature with great variability in terms of peat depths, peat types, drainage, subsoil condition and environmental value. Thus, future options require consideration on a site-specific basis, also bearing in mind the considerable internal variation within bogs. The development of the land-bank will also take account of national needs, while also taking account of the various national legislation, policies and plans related to the management of peatlands. In general, Bord na Móna will seek to balance and optimise commercial, social, and environmental value of these sites, and develop integrated land-uses, while taking account of the need for sustainability and their biodiversity value.

Any consideration of other future after-uses for Bord na Móna land such as development or other mixed uses will be conducted following the relevant planning guidelines and consultation with relevant authorities and will be considered within the framework of this peatland rehabilitation plan.

APPENDIX VII. DECOMMISSIONING

1. Condition 10 Decommissioning

This is a requirement of the applicable Integrated Pollution Control Licence issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. This condition 10.1 requires the following:

10.1 Following termination of use or involvement of all or part of the site in the licensed activity, the licensee shall:

10.1.1 Decommission, render safe or remove for disposal/recovery, any soil, subsoils, buildings, plant or equipment, or any waste, materials or substances or other matter contained therein or thereon, that may result in environmental pollution.

The main success criteria pertaining to successfully complying with this condition is ensuring that no environmental liability remains from this infrastructure and material and that the bog can be deemed suitable for surrender of the license under section 95 of the EPA Acts. This is achieved by Bord na Móna identifying and quantifying any mechanical and infrastructural resources that were installed in the bog to enable the development and production operation at the site. This list is then refined to identify any items that would be deemed as possibly resulting in environmental pollution, should they not be removed.

Typically, these items/infrastructures would be any remaining, unconsolidated plant, equipment and attachments, waste materials, unused raw materials such as land drainage pipes, remaining peat stockpiles, stock pile covering, pumps, septic tanks and fuel tanks.

In relation to this bog, the list and tasks would be as follows:

Item	Description	Gowla Decommissioning Plan
1	Clean-up of remaining or unconsolidated waste or materials located in Bogs, Yards, Buildings and Offices	Where relevant
2	Cleaning Silt Ponds	Where relevant
3	Decommissioning Peat Stockpiles	Peat stockpile removal
4	Decommissioning or Removal of Buildings and Compounds	Where relevant
5	Decommissioning Fuel Tanks and associated facilities	Where relevant
6	Decommissioning and Removal of Bog Pump Sites	Not Applicable
7	Decommissioning or Removal of Septic Tanks	Not relevant

In addition, condition 7 of the licence requires these now defined waste items to be disposed of or recovered as follows:

7.1 Disposal or recovery of waste shall take place only as specified in *Schedule 2(i) Hazardous Wastes for Disposal/Recovery* and *Schedule 2(ii) Other Wastes for Disposal/Recovery* of this licence and in accordance with the appropriate National and European legislation and protocols. No other waste shall be disposed of/recovered either on-site or off-site without prior notice to, and prior written agreement of, the Agency.

7.2 Waste sent off-site for recovery or disposal shall only be conveyed to a waste contractor, as agreed by the Agency, and only transported from the site of the activity to the site of recovery/disposal in a manner which will not adversely affect the environment.

7.3 A full record, which shall be open to inspection by authorized persons of the Agency at all times, shall be kept by the licensee on matters relating to the waste management operations and practices at this site. This record shall as a minimum contain details of the following:

7.3.1 The names of the agent and transporter of the waste.

7.3.2 The name of the persons responsible for the ultimate disposal/recovery of the waste.

7.3.3 The ultimate destination of the waste.

7.3.4 Written confirmation of the acceptance and disposal/recovery of any hazardous waste consignments sent off-site.

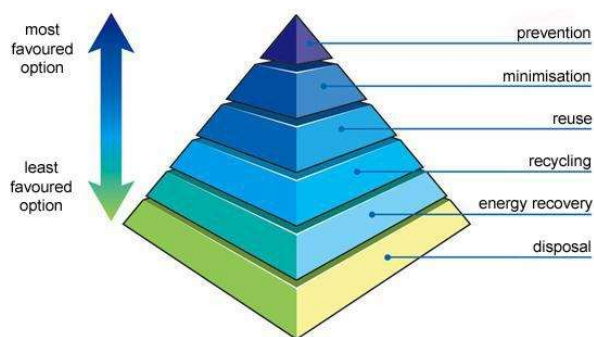
7.3.5 The tonnages and EWC Code for the waste materials listed in *Schedule 2(i) Hazardous Wastes for Disposal/Recovery* and *Schedule 2(ii) Other Wastes for Disposal/Recovery* sent off-site for disposal/recovery.

7.3.6 Details of any rejected consignments.

A copy of this Waste Management record shall be submitted to the Agency as part of the AER for the site.

As required by the licence, these waste items will be removed for recycling or disposal, using external contractors with the required waste collection permits, approved under 7.2, with waste records maintained as required under 7.3.

Where possible, Bord na Móna will utilize the appropriate waste hierarchy to identify waste that can reused or recycled ahead of disposal.



The validation of the success of condition 10.1 is carried out through an Independent Closure Audit (ICA), followed by and EPA Exit Audit (EA) and the eventual partial or full surrender of the licence.

2. Enhanced Decommissioning.

The remaining infrastructure does not constitute a risk to the environment and would not be a requirement of condition 10 of the licence. The removal of these are deemed as enhanced measures. These may enhance the future after use of the bog for amenity value, security against access for illegal and unsocial activities and general State and community benefit. In relation to this bog, this would include the infrastructure defined below:

Item	Enhanced Decommissioning Type	Gowla Decommissioning Plan
1	Removal of Railway Lines	Not Applicable
2	Decommissioning Bridges and Underpasses	Not Applicable
3	Decommissioning Railway Level Crossing	Not Applicable
4	Restricting Access (bogs and silt ponds)	Not Applicable
5	Removal of High Voltage Power Lines	Not Applicable

APPENDIX VIII. GLOSSARY

Cutaway Bog: A Bord na Móna site generally becomes cutaway when it is economically unviable to continue industrial peat extraction or when the majority of peat has been removed.

Deep peat cutover bog. Deep peat cutover bog is defined as former raised bogs that have been in industrial peat production, where production has ceased but the residual peat depth is typically in excess of 2m. *Sphagnum* mosses are key species of raised bogs and the majority of the peat mass is formed from these mosses. *Sphagnum* species and other raised bog species are a key part of raised bog habitat function and prefer more acidic, nutrient poor, water-logged conditions. Typical raised bog *Sphagnum* mosses and other bog species do not thrive with the more typical alkaline water chemistry of cutaway bog but do grow well in these more acidic conditions where peat has been re-wetted. There is potential to re-develop embryonic *Sphagnum*-rich plant communities in these conditions if the peat can be re-wetted. This brings the opportunity of re-developing embryonic *Sphagnum*-rich vegetation communities that are considered Carbon sinks or peat-forming habitats and restoring the carbon sequestration function of these sites.

Dry cutaway bog: Cutaway bog is categorised as dry cutaway where it is not practical or feasible to re-wet these areas completely. It is inevitable that some areas of cutaway will remain relatively dry due to the heterogenous topography of the cutaway, as well as requirements for continued drainage on site for identified after-uses, or off site in relation to neighbouring lands or other infrastructure. Ridges and mounds of glacial deposits can become exposed during peat extraction and form a heterogenous topographical mosaic separated by basins. Dry cutaway may have very thin or no residual peat where ridges and mounds have been exposed. The exposed sub-soils are a mix of glacial gravels, muds and tills that can be quite free-draining. Dry cutaway may also have deeper residual peat but in a location (ie. at the margin) where the peat cannot be re-wetted due to boundary constraints. Dry cutaway may also develop in situations where there a relatively steep slope that inhibits re-wetting. The majority of dry cutaway will develop towards grassland, heath, scrub and dry woodland habitats.

Enhanced decommissioning: This is defined as decommissioning carried out under Scheme, which is proposed to externally funded.

Enhanced rehabilitation: This is defined as rehabilitation carried out under Scheme, which is proposed to be externally funded. It is proposed by Government that Bord na Móna be obligated to carry out enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation and restoration on peatlands. This Scheme will significantly go beyond what is required to meet rehabilitation and decommissioning obligations under existing EPA IPC licence conditions. Interventions and activities supported by the Scheme will ensure that environmental stabilisation is achieved (meaning IPC obligations are met), and importantly, significant additional benefits, particularly relating to climate action and other ecosystem services, will also be delivered. However, only the costs associated with the additional, enhanced and accelerated measures, i.e., those interventions which go beyond the existing decommissioning and rehabilitation requirements arising from Condition 10 will be eligible for support under the Scheme.

Environmental stabilisation: The key objective of peatland rehabilitation is environmental stabilisation. This means developing habitats and vegetation back onto the bare peat, slowing water movement across the bog, minimising effects to downstream waterbodies and meeting the conditions of the IPC Licence. This is achieved by a combination of re-wetting, where possible, and natural colonisation of the former cutaway, with or without intervention. Habitats will develop that reflect the underlying environmental conditions. Other after-use development may also serve to act as environmental stabilisation.

Marginal land. Marginal land is defined as land around the margin of the industrial peat production area. This margin generally contains a range of habitats including scrub, Birch woodland, cutover bog and raised bog remnants. It has a variety of land-uses including turf-cutting (private turbary). The Scheme will consider potential rehabilitation and restoration actions (e.g. drain blocking) within marginal land zones, where appropriate.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation is defined in general by Bord na Móna as environmental stabilisation of the former cutaway. This is generally achieved via re-wetting, where possible, and natural colonisation of the former cutaway, with or without intervention. It is not possible to restore raised bog habitats on BnM cutaway in general in the short-term. In general, most of the peat mass has been removed from many BnM cutaway sites and the environmental characteristics of these areas have therefore changed radically (peat depths, hydrology, water chemistry, substrate type, nutrient status). This means there will therefore be different habitat outcomes (wetlands, fen, heathland, grassland and Birch woodland). Other after-use development may also serve to act as rehabilitation.

Restoration: Ecological restoration is defined as the process of re-establishing to the extent possible the structure, function and integrity of indigenous ecosystems and the sustaining habitats they provide" (SER 2004). Defined in this way, restoration encompasses the repair of ecosystems (Whisenant 1999) and the **improvement of ecological conditions in damaged wildlands** through the **reinstatement of ecological processes**. In general, Bord na Móna cutaway peatlands cannot be restored back to raised bog in a reasonable timeframe as their environmental conditions has changed so radically (with the removal of the acrotelem – the living layer and much of the peat mass). However, they can be returned to a **trajectory** towards a naturally functioning peatland system (Renou-Wilson 2012). **Raised bog restoration** is an objective of some BnM sites where there is residual natural raised bog vegetation and where the majority of the peat is still intact.

Standard rehabilitation: This is defined as rehabilitation that is designed to meet the conditions of the EPA IPC Licence. The key objective of rehabilitation is environmental stabilisation. This is achieved by a combination of re-wetting, where possible, and natural colonisation of the former cutaway, with or without intervention. Other after-use development may also serve to act as rehabilitation.

Standard decommissioning: This is defined as decommissioning that is designed to meet the conditions of the EPA IPC Licence. This is defined as to render safe or remove for disposal/recovery, any soil, subsoils, buildings, plant or equipment, or any waste, materials or substances or other matter contained therein or thereon, that may result in environmental pollution.

Wetland cutaway bog. Wetland cutaway bog is defined as former raised bogs that have been in industrial peat production, where production has ceased and the majority of peat has been cutaway, and where this cutaway has the potential to be re-wetted. A significant number of Bord na Móna sites have pumped drainage and these sites are likely to develop a mosaic of wetland habitats when pumping is reduced or stopped. The water chemistry of wetland cutaway frequently is strongly influenced by the more alkaline sub-soils that have been exposed during peat production. This means that pioneer vegetation is more typical of fen and wetland, rather than raised bog. Wetland cutaway will have a broad range of hydrological conditions depending on the local topography. In some cases, these wetlands may form deep water (> 0.5 m) whilst other areas may have the water table at or just below the surface of the ground.

APPENDIX IX. EXTRACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Minimisation, treatment, recovery and disposal)

Objective:

The objective of this generic plan is to comply with the requirements of regulation 5 of the Waste Management (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries) Regulations, and to prevent or reduce waste production and its harmfulness.

Scope:

This plan covers IPPC Licence's Ref P0502-01, Blackwater (Derryfadda subgroup) Group of Bogs in County Galway.

1.0 Extractive Waste:

Waste classified as extractive waste from peat extraction operations arise from three operations associated with this activity.

1.1 Silt Pond excavations and maintenance.

All peat extraction activities are serviced by a silt lagoons/ponds. During the excavation of these silt ponds, pre IPPC Licensing in 1999 and since licensing, the excavated material is stored adjacent to the silt pond, where it either remains in situ or levelled out. As required by condition 6.6, these silt lagoons are cleaned twice per annum or more often if inspections dictate. These silt cleanings are also deposited on the same location, adjacent to the silt pond, where they may be levelled periodically to allow room for subsequent cleanings. These mounds of silt pond excavation material and cleanings are generally no higher than 2-3 metres.

1.2 Power Station screenings:

Lough Ree Power Ltd screens the peat from the bogs prior to processing. This screening removes oversized peat, stones and bog timbers. Schedule 3 (ii) of the IPPC licence permits disposal of these peat screenings back to the bog, where it is levelled and graded into the surrounding peat landscape. These locations have been agreed with the Agency as per condition 7.4 of the IPPC Licence, and as per the attached locations.

1.3 Bog Timbers:

During peat extraction operations, bog timbers often arise in the bog surface and are required to be cleared. These timbers consist of bog pine, oak and some yew. Some of these timbers, such as the oak and yew are removed for use in the wood craft industry, with the remaining bog pine stockpiled in locations at the opposite end of each bog, where it generally becomes a habitat for flora and fauna. These piles of timber are generally no higher than 1-2 metres.

2.0 P0502-01 IPPC Licence Extractive Waste Conditions

2.1 Condition 7.5 Extractive Waste Management

The licensee shall draw up a Waste Management Plan (to be known as an Extractive Waste Management Plan) for the minimisation, treatment, recovery and disposal of extractive waste. This Plan shall meet the requirements of regulation 5 of the Waste Management (Management of Waste from the Extractive Industries) Regulations, 2009. The Plan shall be submitted for agreement by the Agency by the 31st December 2012. The Plan shall be reviewed at least once every five years thereafter in a manner agreeable to the Agency and amended in the event of substantial changes to the operation of a waste facility or to the waste deposited. Any amendments shall be notified to the Agency.

All extractive waste shall be managed in accordance with the Extractive Waste Management Plan. A report on the implementation of the Extractive Waste Management Plan shall be provided in the AER.

2.2 Condition 7.6 Waste Facility

(i) No new waste facility may be developed or an existing waste facility modified unless agreed by the Agency.

(ii) The licensee shall ensure that all existing waste facilities are managed and maintained to ensure their physical stability and to prevent pollution or contamination of soil, air, surface water or groundwater.

(iii) The licensee shall ensure that all new waste facilities are constructed, managed and maintained to ensure their physical stability and to prevent pollution or contamination of soil, air, surface water or groundwater.

(iv) Operational measures shall be continuously employed to prevent damage to waste facilities from personnel, plant or equipment.

(v) The licensee shall establish and maintain a system for regular monitoring and inspection of waste facilities.

(vi) All records of monitoring and inspection of waste facilities, as required under the licence, shall be maintained on-site in order to ensure the appropriate handover of information in the event of a change of operator or relevant personnel.

2.3 Condition 7.7 Excavation Voids

7.7.1 Unless otherwise agreed by the Agency, only extractive waste shall be placed in excavation voids.

7.7.2 When placing extractive waste into excavation voids for rehabilitation and construction purposes, the licensee shall, in accordance with regulation 10 of the Waste Management (Management of Waste from the Extractive Industries) Regulations, 2009, and the Extractive Waste Management Plan:

- Secure the stability of the waste
- Put in place measures to prevent pollution of soil, surface water and ground water.
- Carry out monitoring of the extractive waste and excavation void.

Condition 7.5. Extractive Waste Management Plan. 5 (1)

3.0 Minimisation.

3.1 Silt pond excavation material and cleanings.

IPPC Licence conditions require all production areas to be serviced by an appropriately designed silt pond based on storage volume and retention time. Condition 6.6 requires all ponds to be cleaned bi-annually and more often if inspections dictate, so the only opportunity for minimisation of same is through Standard Operating Procedures. These are required under condition 2.2.2 (i) regarding minimisation of suspended solids, and are in-place to minimise the generation of silt, which in-turn will minimise the generation of silt pond waste.

3.2 Power Station Screenings.

These screenings cannot be minimised as they are a consequence of peat production, stones, timbers and oversize peat materials are naturally occurring on the bog, and are required to be removed prior to processing.

3.3 Bog Timbers.

Bog timbers are also naturally occurring materials within a bog and are required to be removed prior for production. The volume of these bog timbers varies from bog to bog and as such their minimisation is not controllable or quantifiable.

4.0 Treatment

4.1 Silt pond excavation material and cleanings.

The silt pond excavation material and silt cleanings do not require any treatment for its end use which will be either backfilling these silt pond voids as per condition 7.7.1 above as part of the Bog Rehabilitation Plan, or reincorporated into the surrounding peatlands.

4.2 Power Station Screenings.

The factory screenings are permitted to be returned to the bog as they were naturally occurring materials from the bog, and as such do not require any treatment to serve this purpose.

4.3 Bog Timbers

As per 1.3 above, these timbers are stockpiled at two locations in each bog, as per the attached list of sites and become habitats for various flora and fauna.

5.0 Recovery

5.1 Silt pond excavation material and cleanings.

Condition 2.2.2 (vi) requires the reuse of silt pond waste to be examined. This was undertaken in 2006, the outcome of which was that this waste peat silt material, as a fuel, was contaminated with sub-soils, rendering it unsuitable for combustion. In addition, volumes are small compared to overall peat production volumes.

5.2 Power Station Screenings.

Given the nature of these screenings as outlined in 1.2 above, there is no further use identified and they are permitted to be disposed of back to the bog.

5.3 Bog Timbers

Investigations into processing these materials into smaller fractions for potential heating purposes did not yield any viable results. In addition, these older stockpiles are now classified as habitats and as such would not be considered for reuse as a fuel.

6.0 Disposal

6.1 Silt pond excavation material and cleanings.

Schedule 3 (ii) permits the disposal of silt pond cleanings (Lagoon Sediments) to the bog and these locations, adjacent to the silt pond site, are presented in the attached spreadsheet, with associated grid coordinates.

6.2 Power Station Screenings.

Schedule 3 (ii) permits the disposal of screenings (Peat Screenings) to the bog at designated locations agreed under Condition 7.4, and these locations, are presented in the attached spreadsheet, with associated grid coordinates.

6.3 Bog Timbers

These naturally occurring bog timbers are stockpiled at locations in each bog, grid coordinates attached.

7.0 Extractive Waste Management Plan

5 (2a)(i)

The vast majority of peat extraction bogs were all designed and drained for production prior to the 1960's and as such the production fields layout cannot be altered. Under our Cleaner Reduction Procedures, various design changes have been implemented to the production machines and process to reduce lost peat which eventually is captured in the silt ponds and requires removal as waste peat silt. This along with training and ongoing research and development will continuously reduce waste peat and subsequently waste silt pond cleanings. Bog timbers are present naturally in various volumes and quantities in different bogs and as peat production involves stripping peat in layers, the exposure, generation and removal of these timbers is unavoidable. Work has been undertaken recently into project looking at grinding of these bog timbers in situ using a timber miller, and if this project becomes viable it will contribute to the reduction of bog timbers.

5 (2a)(ii)

Given the nature and expanse of peat bogs, the stockpiling and storage of these waste materials do not present a visual, storage or stability problem. As required under Condition 10 of the IPPC Licence, the silt pond excavations and screenings will be utilised to backfill the silt pond voids once the bogs have finished and stabilised in accordance with our Bog Rehabilitation Plan. Storage of these wastes in the interim, open to the elements does not present a change on the nature of these wastes that will threaten the environment or prevent their reuse during the bog rehabilitation process.

5 (2a)(iii)

Under Condition 10 of the IPPC Licence, all silt ponds will be decommissioned once the bog surface has stabilised, in agreement with the Agency. This will involve the removal of weirs and flow controls, returning the silt pond back to its original drain or removing the silt pond from the drainage system. Both of these activities will involve placing the silt pond extraction and cleaning material back into the excavation void.

5 (2a)(iv)

The peat bogs do not contain any topsoil, so this is not required.

5 (2a)(v)

Peat mineral resources do not undergo any treatment.

5 (2b)

These three extractive waste are all being reused and recovered back to their original extraction points and have not undergone any physical, chemical, or biological change.

5 (2c)(i, ii & iii)

These three extractive wastes, stored on the bog for reuse or recovery during the bog rehabilitation phase, do not require any management or monitoring during the operation of these bogs. Silt pond excavations and cleanings are stored adjacent to the silt pond and quickly revegetated and stabilise, the screenings are graded back into the bog at the agreed locations upon disposal and the bog timbers do not prevent any water or airborne danger to the environment.

5 (3)

The three extractive wastes arising from peat extraction operations at this site are classified wastes from mineral non-metalliferous excavation, with an EWC code of 0101 02. The materials are not classified as hazardous under Directive 91/689/EEC20, and do not contain substances or preparations classified as dangerous under Directives 67/548/EEC5 or 1999/45/EC6 above a certain threshold.

The peat excavations and cleanings are stored in locations and in a manner that they could not collapse, and are remote in their nature. The stockpiles are located adjacent to silt ponds that are cleaned regularly and as such these stockpiles are managed and levelled to facilitate further cleanings.

Therefore the material stored at these waste facilities would not be considered to be a Category A waste facility.

Classification in accordance Annex II.

Waste Material	Description	Classification	Chemical Process treatment	Deposition description	Transport System
Silt Pond Excavations and cleanings	Peat and mineral soils associated with peatlands. Stored for reuse during bog rehabilitation, with no displacement of overburden	01 01 02	None	Excavated from silt ponds by excavator and deposited adjacent to the silt pond.	Excavator
Peat Screenings	Stones, timbers and oversized peat particles, reincorporated into low areas, agreed with the Agency, and stabilized under normal natural bog conditions	01 01 02	None	Removed by screen at the factory and transported by tractor and trailer to the designated and agreed locations	Tractor and trailer.
Bog Timbers	Pine, Oak and Yew species, stored at locations in each bog. Not subject to any stability issues due to exposure to atmospheric/meteorological conditions.	01 01 02	None	Removed from the bog surface by excavator and transported by tractor and trailer to the agreed locations	Tractor and Trailer

Description of operations.

Silt pond excavations arise from the requirement to have silt ponds treating all peat extraction sites. Silt pond cleanings arise from the removal of peat silt from silt ponds as required under IPPC Licence. Bog timbers arise from preparation of the bogs surface for peat production. Estimated quantities of materials are below:

Closure plan. (Bog Rehabilitation Plan).

Condition 10.1 – 10.3 of the IPPC Licence requires the following:

- 10.1 Following termination of use or involvement of all or part of the site in the licensed activity, the licensee shall:
 - 10.1.1 Decommission, render safe or remove for disposal/recovery, any soil, subsoils, buildings, plant or equipment, or any waste, materials or substances or other matter contained therein or thereon, that may result in environmental pollution.
 - 10.1.2 Implement the agreed cutaway bog rehabilitation plan (refer Condition 10.2).

10.2 Cutaway Bog Rehabilitation Plan:

- 10.2.1 The licensee shall prepare, to the satisfaction of the Agency, a fully detailed and costed plan for permanent rehabilitation of the cutaway boglands within the licensed area. This plan shall be submitted to the Agency for agreement within eighteen months of the date of grant of this licence.
- 10.2.2 The plan shall be reviewed every two years and proposed amendments thereto notified to the Agency for agreement as part of the AER. No amendments may be implemented without the written agreement of the Agency.

10.3 The Rehabilitation Plan shall include as a minimum, the following:

- 10.3.1 A scope statement for the plan; to include outcome of consultations with relevant Agencies, Authorities and affected parties (to be identified by the licensee).
- 10.3.2 The criteria which define the successful rehabilitation of the activity or part thereof, which ensures minimum impact to the environment.
- 10.3.3 A programme to achieve the stated criteria.
- 10.3.4 Where relevant, a test programme to demonstrate the successful implementation of the rehabilitation plan.
- 10.3.5 A programme for aftercare and maintenance.

10.4 A final validation report to include a certificate of completion for the Rehabilitation Plan, for all or part of the site as necessary, shall be submitted to the Agency within six months of execution of the plan. The licensee shall carry out such tests, investigations or submit certification, as requested by the Agency, to confirm that there is no continuing risk to the environment. This plan including maps and ecological classifications are available on file at the Blackwater IPPC Licence Coordinators office.

The location in relation to the silt pond excavations and cleanings are adjacent to the silt ponds, which are considered under the Shannon River Basin Management Plan in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2000/60/EC.

Screenings and bog timbers are all naturally occurring elements of peatland and their placement back to the bog in smaller concentrated designated waste facilities does not constitute a risk to the prevention of water compliance.

The lands under where these materials are deposited are peatlands and are un-effected by the placing of this material.

Review.

This plan will be reviewed every five years, the first review to take place in September 2017. This review will entail an inspection of these waste facilities to ensure their placing, management, maintenance and stability comply with the requirements of the Extractive Waste Management requirements and condition 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7 of the Blackwater IPPC Licence P0502-01.

APPENDIX X. MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE APPLICATION OF FERTILISER

- Any fertiliser used will be Rock Phosphate and will not be applied in the following conditions:
 1. The land is waterlogged;
 2. The land is flooded, or it is likely to flood;
 3. The land is frozen, or covered with snow;
 4. Heavy rain is forecast within 48 hours (forecasts will be checked from Met Éireann).
 5. The ground slopes steeply and there is a risk of water pollution, when factors such as surface run-off pathways, the presence of land drains, the absence of hedgerows to mitigate surface flow, soil condition and ground cover are taken into account.
- Buffer zones in respect of waterbodies, as specified on <https://www.epa.ie/about/faq/name,57156,en.html>, will be adhered with at all times with regard to fertiliser application.
- No fertiliser will be spread within or in proximity to European Sites. Fertiliser will not be spread within 25m of a hydraulic break (where slope indicates runoff potential); 25m of an area subject to annual winter inundation, 25m of a natural watercourse, or 25m of any drains where conveyance is to be retained through the proposed rehabilitation extent.
- Fertiliser will be applied to headlands and bare fields where the surface slope indicates runoff is directed away from the above areas, and to within 2m of internal drainage channels within the cutover high field areas. These drainage channels will be blocked in advance of fertiliser application, restricting potential run-off to downstream drainage channels

Water body / Feature	Buffer zone
Any water supply source providing 100m ³ or more of water per day, or serving 500 or more people	200 metres (or as little as 30 metres where a local authority allows)
Any water supply source providing 10m ³ or more of water per day, or serving 50 or more people	100 metres (or as little as 30 metres where a local authority allows)
Any other water supply for human consumption	25 metres (or as little as 30 metres where a local authority allows)
Lake shoreline	20 metres
Exposed cavernous or karstified limestone features (such as swallow holes or collapse features)	15 metres
Any surface watercourse where the slope towards the watercourse exceeds 10%	10 metres
Any other surface waters	5 metres*

APPENDIX XI. CONSULTATION SUMMARIES**Table APX -1 Consultees contacted**

Bog Name	Contact Organisation	Contact Name	Date of Issue	Format	Date Response Received	Response Format
Gowla	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Head of Ecological Assessment - NPWS	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage - NPWS	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	National Museum of Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Dept of Agriculture Food & the Marine	Environmental_Coordination@agriculture.gov.ie;	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Dept of Rural and Community Development	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications	General Email Contact	07/02/2024			
Gowla	Minister of state for Agriculture with responsibility for Land use and Biodiversity	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		

Bog Name	Contact Organisation	Contact Name	Date of Issue	Format	Date Response Received	Response Format
Gowla	Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email	08/02/2024	Email
Gowla	Oireachtas	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	An Taisce	heritage@antaisce.org;	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Environmental Protection Agency	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Inland Fisheries Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Local Authority Waters Programme (West and Border Region)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Local Authority Waters Programme	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Local Authority Waters Programme (Midlands and Eastern Region)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	NWRA	info@nwra.ie;	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Teagasc	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	The Heritage Council	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Waterways Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	An Forum Uisce (The Water Forum)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Coillte	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Water	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email	01/03/2024	Email

Bog Name	Contact Organisation	Contact Name	Date of Issue	Format	Date Response Received	Response Format
Gowla	Irish Water- Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Water	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Office of Public Works	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	CARO (Climate Action Regional Office) Eastern and Midlands	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	An Taisce	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Bat Conservation Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Birdwatch Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Butterfly Conservation Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Fisheries Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Friends of the Irish Environment	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	ICMSA (Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	ICSA (Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Environmental Network (Agriculture and Land Use Policy and Advocacy Officer)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		

Bog Name	Contact Organisation	Contact Name	Date of Issue	Format	Date Response Received	Response Format
Gowla	Irish Farmers Association	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Farmers Association (Senior Policy Exec)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Farmers Association (Galway/Leitrim/Longford/Rosc/Sligo)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Peatlands Conservation Council	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Raptor Study Group	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Rural Link (Community Wetlands Forum)	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Rural Link	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Irish Wildlife Trust	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	IWAI	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	National Association of Regional Game Councils	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	NPWS Rangers Mid-Western	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	NUIG Galway	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway Public Participation Network	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	ORNI	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Ranger Association Committee	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		

Bog Name	Contact Organisation	Contact Name	Date of Issue	Format	Date Response Received	Response Format
Gowla	Sustainable Water Action Network (SWAN)	http://www.swanireland.ie/	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Trinity College Dublin	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Turf Cutters and Contractors Association	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	UCD / Irish Rural Link	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	University College Dublin	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Waterways Ireland	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Woodlands of Ireland	info@woodlandsofireland	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	University of Galway	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Ferbane Tiday Towns	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway County Council	General Email Contact	07/02/2024	Email	07/02/2024	Email
Gowla	Galway County Council -Ballinasloe area	Cllr Tim Broderick	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway County Council -Ballinasloe area	Cllr Dermot Connolly	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway County Council -Ballinasloe area	Cllr Michael Connolly	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway County Council -Ballinasloe area	Cllr Declan Geraghty	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway County Council -Ballinasloe area	Cllr Peter Keaveney	07/02/2024	Email		
Gowla	Galway County Council -Ballinasloe area	Cllr Dr Evelyn Francis parsons	07/02/2024	Email		

Table APX -2 Response summary from Consultees contacted

Organisation	Summary of Response by Stakeholder	BnM Response
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage responded via email on 08/02/2024 to acknowledge receipt of the rehabilitation consultation email.	No response required.
Irish Farmers Association	The IFA have not made a submission on Gowla rehab plan but dialogue is ongoing regarding PCAS and consultation with IFA members in the vicinity of PCAS bogs	Dialogue is ongoing.
ICMSA (Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association)	The ICMSA have not made a submission on any specific PCAS rehab plan this year but dialogue is ongoing regarding PCAS and consultation with ICMSA members in the vicinity of PCAS bogs	Dialogue is ongoing.
IPCC	The IPCC have not made a specific submission on Gowla Bog in particular but have regularly made submissions on other PCAS rehabilitation plans throughout the duration of the project. A number of key points regarding climate resilience, biodiversity opportunities and issues, and hydrology have been discussed.	Dialogue is ongoing.

Organisation	Summary of Response by Stakeholder	BnM Response
Uisce Eireann/Irish Water	<p>Uisce Eireann/Irish Water emailed on the 07/03/24 with recommendations regarding water quality monitoring, silt ponds and cumulative effects.</p> <p>Outlining general support for PCAS,</p>	Dialogue is ongoing.
Local Landowner A	<p>A query was raised by a local landowner on 27/02/2024. In their submission, the individual who expressed concern regarding the grazing of livestock on BnM property. The stakeholder was contacted by BnM and their concerns were rectified.</p>	BnM community liaison officer spoke to this landowner on 27/02/2024 to discuss and resolve issues.
Local Landowner B	<p>A query was raised by a local landowner on 07/02/2024. The concerns of this stakeholder were based upon perceived potential impacts on their lands as a result of PCAS activities. Having discussed the issue with the BnM community liaison officer, the stakeholder's concerns were addressed.</p>	BnM landowner liaison met with landowners on site 23/02/2024.

APPENDIX XII. ARCHAEOLOGY

Role of the Archaeological Liaison Officer

1. To communicate this Code of Practice and the *Archaeological Protection Procedures* (Appendix IV) to all personnel operating on the bog.
2. To ensure that all notices relating to the *Archaeological Protection Procedures* are posted and maintained at appropriate locations on the bog.
3. To report any stray finds, presented to the Liaison Officer from his/her group of bogs, to the Duty Officer of the National Museum of Ireland.
4. To provide for the appropriate protection of the stray find, whether in-situ or removed from the bog, as directed by the Duty Officer of the National Museum of Ireland.



Code of Practice

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Code of Practice

5. To arrange for the delivery or collection of the stray find, as directed by the Duty Officer of the National Museum of Ireland.
6. To complete the Report of Discovery of Archaeological Object(s) in Bogs (Appendix V), as directed by the Duty Officer of the National Museum of Ireland.
7. To maintain a file of all stray finds and associated documentation and provide copies to the Project Archaeologist.
8. To provide assistance, where required, to the Department during archaeological surveys.
9. To provide assistance, where required, to Bord na Móna's Consultant Archaeologists, during investigation and mitigation of monuments.
10. To report to the Bord na Móna members on the Archaeology Management Liaison Committee any planned developments or new activities on cutaway peatland areas within his/her group of bogs.



Bord na Móna	Procedure: ENV017	Rev: 1
Title: Archaeological Findings	Approved: EM	Date:

1) Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to describe the arrangements in Bord na Móna for findings of Archaeological material (Stray Finds).

All objects, sites or monuments, no matter how fragmentary, are important elements of our heritage.

2) Procedure

1. Check whether there are any known archaeological monuments in your area.
2. Be vigilant at all times - objects or traces of structures can be found on the field surfaces, in the drain faces, on the bog margins or caught within the mechanics of machinery.
3. If an object is found leave it in place, if it is safe to do so, note its position and immediately contact your Archaeological Liaison Officer who will assess the situation and contact the Duty Officer of the National Museum of Ireland.
4. Resist the temptation to investigate the find spot as this may disturb fragile archaeological deposits.
5. If the object is already dislodged or is in imminent danger, remove it carefully, mark its find spot and report it immediately to your Archaeological Liaison Officer.
6. Objects made of wood, leather or textile, which are removed from peat should be kept in conditions similar to those in which they are found. This can be done by packing them in peat or, if waterlogged, placing them in a clean basin of water and sealing the container. Resist the temptation to clean or remove peat from the object.
7. If timbers or other materials, such as gravel or stones, which could be part of a man-made structure are noted on the bog, mark the location and report it immediately to your Archaeological Liaison Officer. If you suspect the find is of archaeological importance, resist the temptation to expose it any further as this could result in damage to the structure.
8. Report anything that looks unnatural in the bog – your Archaeological Liaison Officer will decide whether it should be referred to the appropriate authorities.

NOTE: Our archaeological heritage is a finite, non-renewable resource. Once a site is destroyed its information is lost forever and we have lost the chance to understand a little more about our past, where we have come from and perhaps the opportunity to learn for the future.

Your Archaeological Liaison Officer is

3) Records

Revision Index			
Revision	Date	Description of change	Approved
1			
2			



**Archaeological Impact Assessment of Proposed Bog
Decommissioning and Rehabilitation at Gowla Bog, Co.
Galway**

Report For

Bord Na Móna Energy Ltd.

Author

Dr. Charles Mount

Bord Na Móna Project Archaeologist



Introduction

The EPA (2002) *Guidance on the process of preparing and implementing a bog rehabilitation plan* notes that the licensee should characterise the bog prior to embarking on detailed planning and implementation. This characterisation should detail how the land is classified in terms of statutory protections, e.g. as European sites, world heritage sites, RAMSAR sites, National Heritage Areas, national monuments, archaeological heritage, etc. This archaeological impact assessment report was prepared by Dr. Charles Mount for Bord na Móna Energy Ltd to fulfil this characterisation in relation to archaeological heritage. It represents the results of a desk-based assessment of the impact of proposed bog rehabilitation on c.113 hectares at Gowla bog, Co. Galway on the known archaeological heritage of the bog. The proposed rehabilitation actions will be a combination of measures to create wetlands and re-wet deep peat as outlined in the draft Methodology Paper for the proposed Bord na Móna Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme. These enhanced measures for Gowla bog will include:

- Deep Peat measures including field re-profiling, creation of cells (45m x 60m cells) suitable for Sphagnum inoculation, on deeper peat; intensive drain blocking (max 7/100 m) and modifying outfalls, and management of water levels with overflow pipes and blocking of internal outfalls;
- Seeding of vegetation and inoculation of Sphagnum will be undertaken in deep peat areas where required.
- Dry cutaway measures include blocking of outfalls and management of water levels. Vegetation has developed on dry cutaway areas and therefore fertiliser application is not required.
- Targeted drain blocking to optimise hydrological conditions/rewet the residual peat in targeted marginal raised bog, Birch woodland and wet grassland areas. Re-wetting, where possible, using an excavator to install peat blockages.

Gowla bog is located c. 2.5km west of Ballyforan, Co. Roscommon and south of an unclassified road which runs west off the R363. The bog rehabilitation area occupies the townlands of Ballinvoher South, Castle French East, Muckloon and Gowla on OS 6-inch sheets Galway No. 47.

Methodology

This is a desk-based archaeological assessment that includes a collation of existing written and graphic information to identify the likely archaeological potential of Gowla bog. The extent of the rehabilitation area is indicated in Fig. 1. This area was examined using information from:

- The Record of Monuments and Places
- The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) that is maintained by the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Peatland Survey
- The Excavations database
- Previous assessments

An impact assessment has been prepared and recommendations have been made.

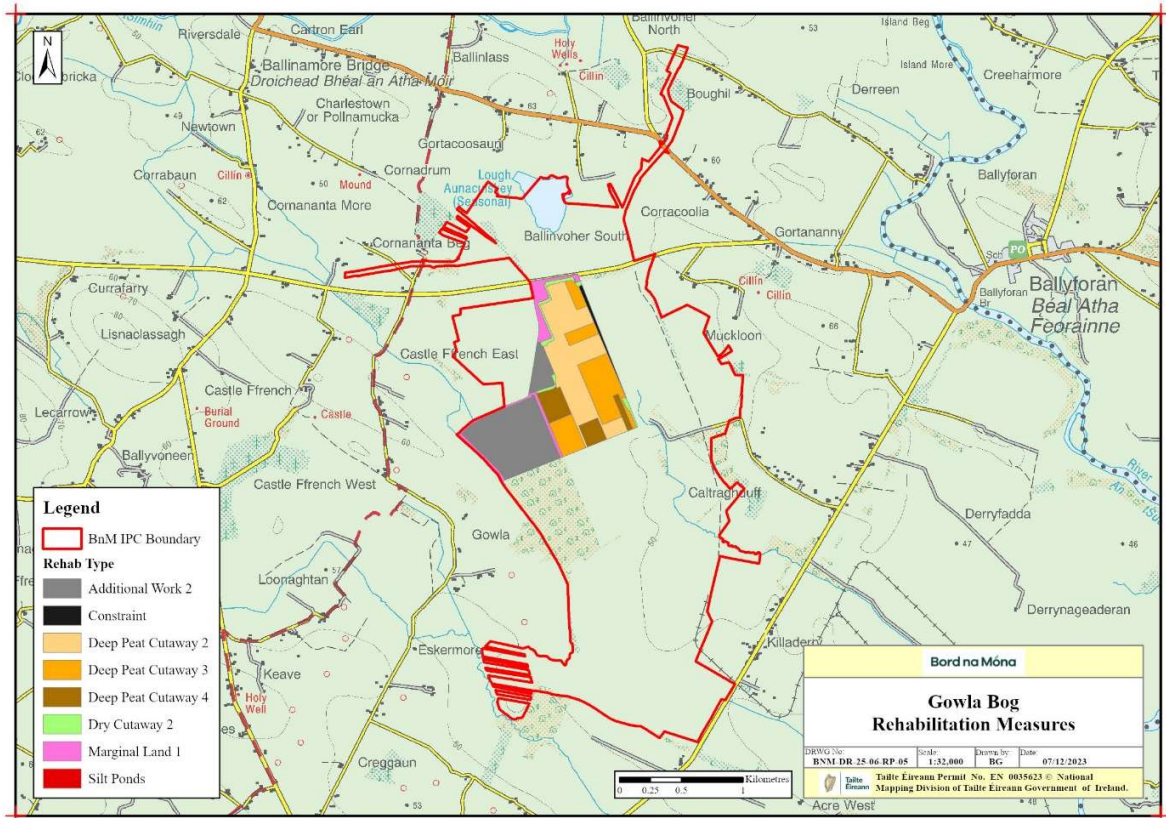


Fig. 1. Gowla bog, Co. Roscommon, the proposed rehabilitation measures.

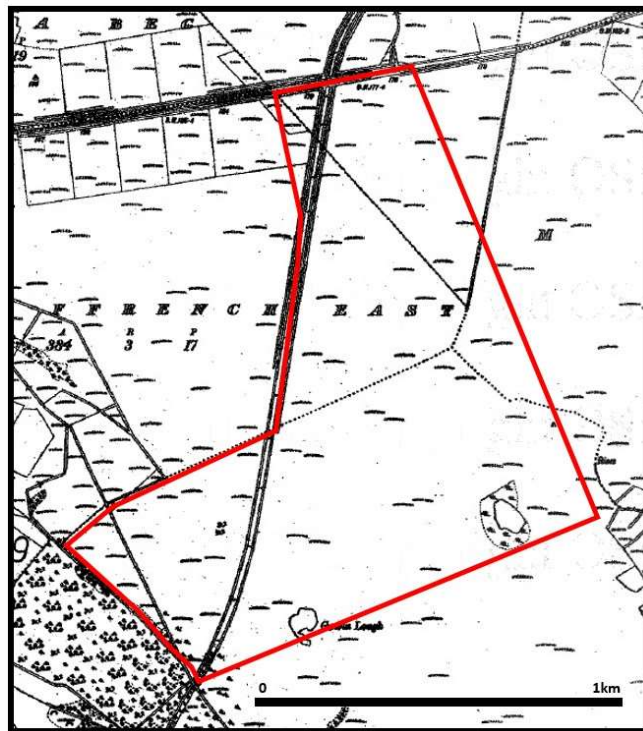




Fig. 2. Gowla bog, Co. Galway, detail of the Record of Monuments and Places map sheets Galway No. 47. The proposed rehabilitation area is outlined with the red line.

Desktop assessment

Recorded Monuments

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) for Co. Galway which was established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 was examined as part of the assessment (DAHGI 1997). This record was published by the Minister in 1997 and includes sites and monuments that were known in Gowla bog before that date. This review established that there are no RMPs located in the proposed rehabilitation area (see Fig. 2).

Peatland Survey 2007

There were 59 sightings of archaeological material made during the Peatland Survey 2007 field walking survey in the whole of Gowla bog (licence 07E0744) (Rohan 2009). Two of these sightings, dated to 180-50BC, are located in the proposed rehabilitation area (See Table 1). These archaeological sightings were notified to the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.

SMR No.	Catalogue code	Townland	Type	ITM E	ITM N	IG E	IG N	Max Depth BS m
GA047-061----	GA-GLA033a	Gowla	Togher (secondary)	578173.5	745489.56	178218	245465	0.40
-	GA-GLA033b	Gowla	Togher (secondary)	578180.5	745506.56	178225	245482	0.23

Table 1. Sightings of archaeological material made during the Peatland Survey 2007 in the proposed rehabilitation area.

Sites and Monuments Record

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which is maintained by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage was examined as part of the assessment on the 11th of January 2024. This review established that there is one SMR located in the proposed rehabilitation area (see Table 2 and Fig. 3). SMR GA047-061---- a Road – class 2 togher.

SMR No	SMR Class	Townland	ITM E	ITM N
GA047-061----	Road - class 2 togher	Gowla	578177	745499

Table 2. The SMR site in the proposed rehabilitation area.

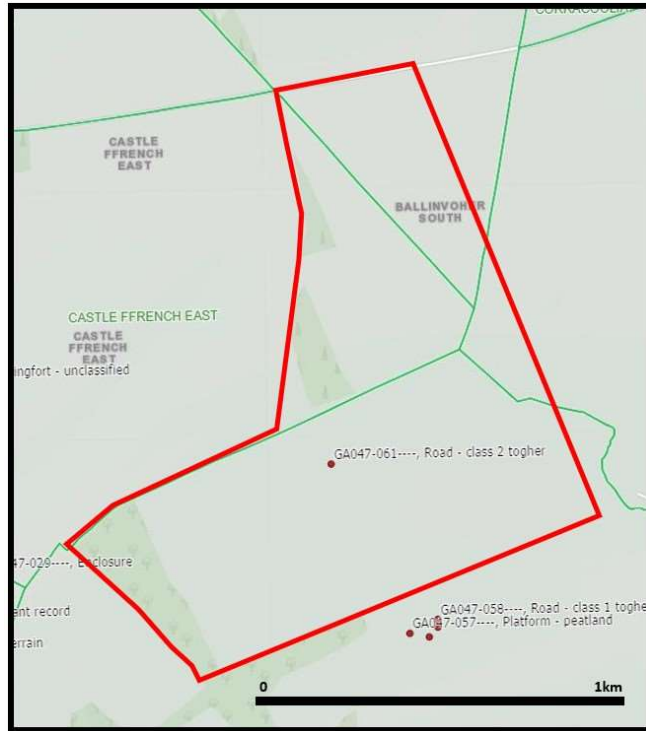


Fig. 3. Gowla bog, Co. Galway, detail of the Sites and Monuments Record. The proposed rehabilitation area is outlined with the red line.

Archaeological Excavations

A review of the excavations bulletin at excavations.ie and the report on the 2011 peatland excavations in Gowla bog (Whitaker 2021) indicated that there have been no archaeological excavations carried out in the proposed rehabilitation area

Previous assessments

Gowla bog has been the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) carried out by Irish Archaeological Consultancy LTD in 2018 for Bord na Móna Energy Limited in relation to IPC Licence P0502-01. This assessment included a review of the topographical files and finds registers of the National Museum of Ireland intended to identify all archaeological objects from the bog reported to the Museum by that date and these are included below in Table 1 (Pers Comm. Jane Whitaker). The assessment noted that there was a moderate to high potential for archaeological heritage to be uncovered during the course of any future development works in Gowla bog.

Reported finds

As noted above the EIAR carried out by Irish Archaeological Consultancy LTD in in relation to IPC Licence P0502-01 contains a complete list of known archaeological objects from Gowla bog reported to the National Museum of Ireland up to 2018 (see Table 3).

Townland	Museum No./ catalogue No.	Description
Muckloon	1934:5627	Stone axehead

Table 3. List of archaeological finds from Gowla bog reported to the National Museum of Ireland.



Impact assessment

There are two known sightings of archaeological material in the rehabilitation area. Both of these sightings have LiDAR peat depth data available for 2008 and 2020. This data indicated that these two sightings were probably removed by harvesting. (see Table 4).

SMR No	Cat No	Townland	Survey Class	ITM E	ITM N	Max Depth BSM	2020_Depth	2008_Depth	Peat_Removal	Status
GA047-061----	GA-GLA033a	Gowla	Road - class 2 togther	578173.5	745489.56	0.40	4.17	4.92	0.75	Removed
-	GA-GLA033b	Gowla	Road - class 2 togther	578180.5	745506.56	0.23	4.03	4.82	0.79	Removed

Table 4. Sightings of archaeological material in the proposed rehabilitation area with depth of bog removed at each location since 2008.

There is one archaeological object known from the bog that has been removed to the National Museum (see Table 3).

Recommendations

There are two known sightings of archaeological material in the rehabilitation area. Analysis of harvesting data indicated that neither of the sightings survive *in situ*. There is one archaeological object known from the bog that has been removed to the National Museum. Should any previously unknown archaeological heritage be uncovered during the rehabilitation works, it should be avoided and reported to the Bord na Móna Archaeological Liaison Officer and the National Museum of Ireland.

Conclusion

This is a desk-based archaeological assessment and includes a collation of existing written and graphic information to identify the likely archaeological potential of the proposed rehabilitation area. There are two known sightings of archaeological material in the rehabilitation area. Analysis of harvesting data indicated that neither of the sightings survive *in situ*. There is one archaeological object known from the bog that has been removed to the National Museum. Should any previously unknown archaeological heritage be uncovered during the rehabilitation works, it should be avoided and reported to the Bord na Móna Archaeological Liaison Officer and the National Museum of Ireland.

References

DAHGI 1997. Recorded Monuments Protected under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. County Galway.

EPA 2020. Guidance on the process of preparing and implementing a bog rehabilitation plan.

Mackin *et al.* 2017. Best practice in raised bog restoration in Ireland. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 99. National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Rohan, N. 2009. 2007 and 2008 Peatland Survey. Blackwater, Derryfadda, Coolnagun & Mountdillon Group of bogs, Counties Offaly, Galway, Longford, Westmeath and Roscommon. Unpublished report Bord na Móna.



Whitaker, J. 2021. Final excavation report for Gowla bog. Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd., 2021
Licence ref.: 11E0189, 11E0190, 11E0191. Licencee: Jane Whitaker. Unpublished report for Bord na Móna.

Dr. Charles Mount
12 January 2024

APPENDIX XIII. INITIAL WATER QUALITY DATA FROM GOWLA

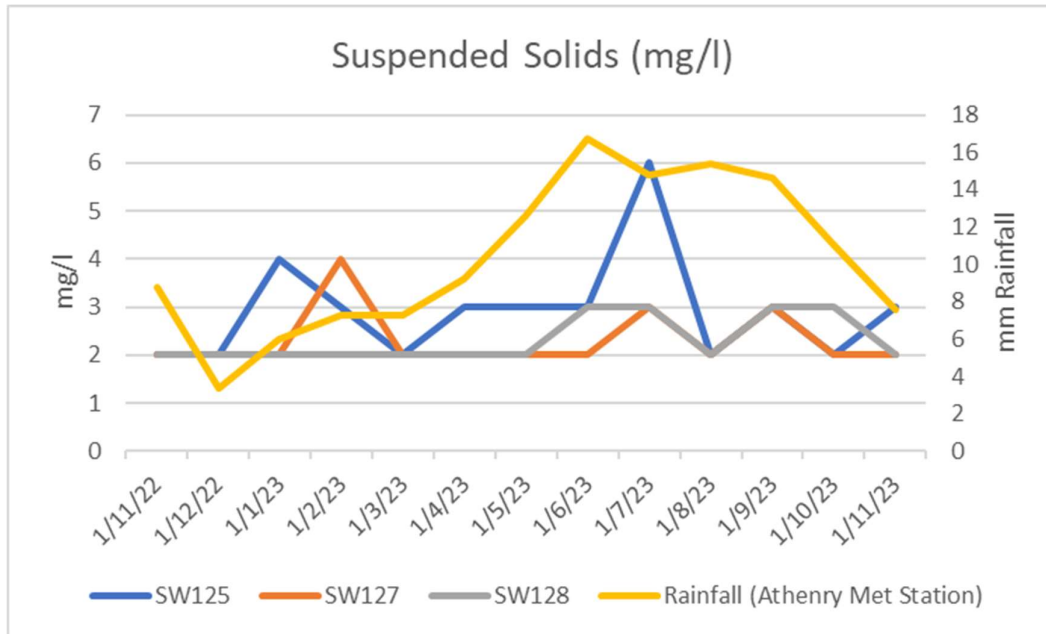


Plate APXIII-1 Gowla suspended solids sampling results

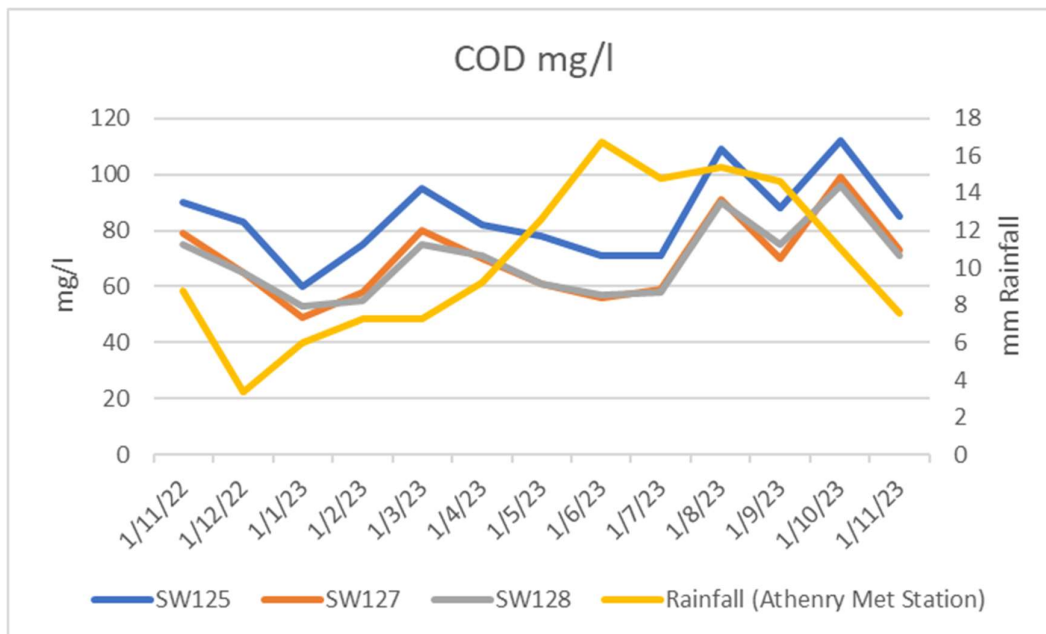


Plate APXIII-2 Gowla COD sampling results

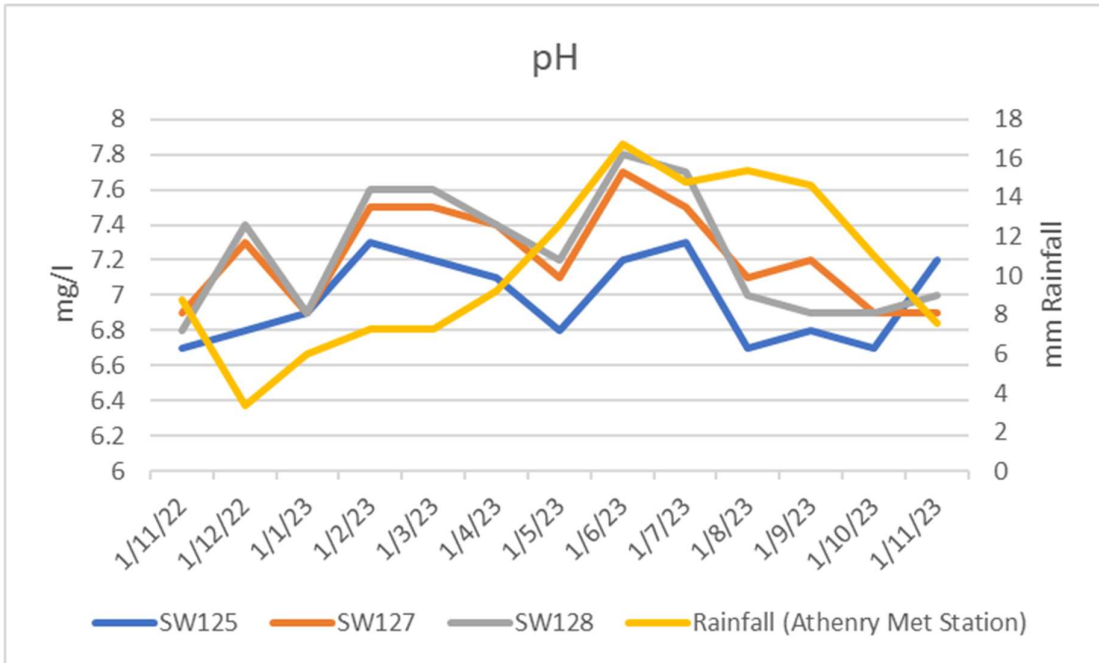


Plate APXIII-3 Gowla pH sampling results

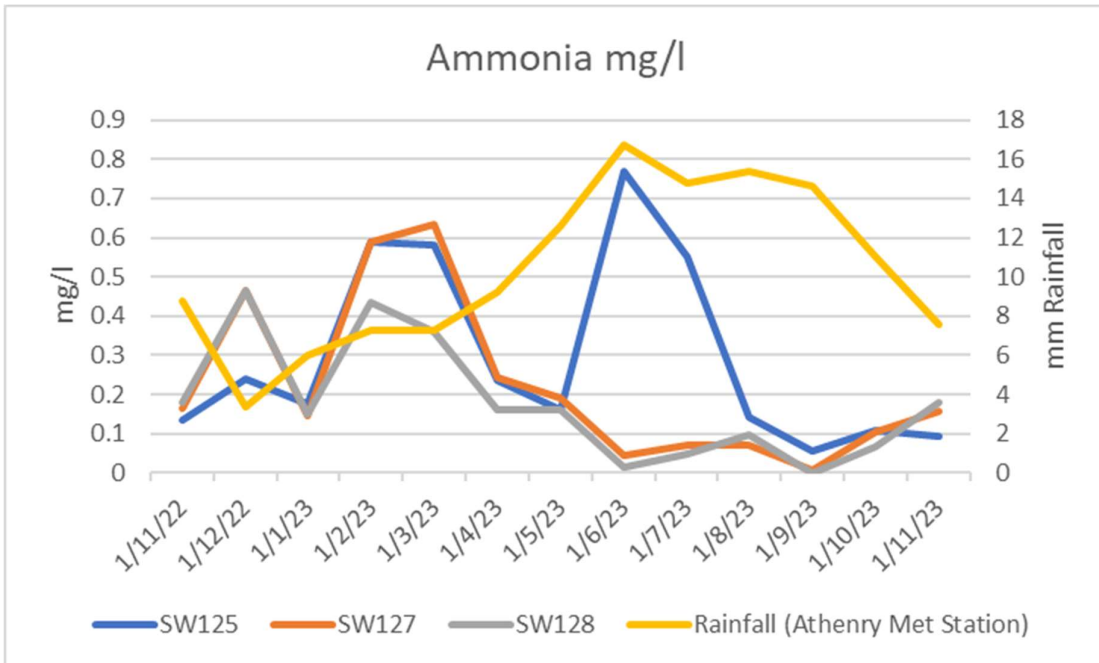


Plate APXIII-4 Gowla ammonia sampling results

Table APXIII-1 Water quality data from November 2022 to November 2023 at Gowla Bog.

PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids	Suspended Solids
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	2	2	4	3	2	3	3	3	6	2	3	2	3
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2
			Rainfall (A)	8.8	3.4	6	7.3	7.3	9.2	12.6	16.7	14.8	15.4	14.6	11	7.6
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co	mg/l Pt Co
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	355	305	273	249	225	369	435	194	219	497	333	502	463
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	317	268	246	206	189	319	358	145	194	446	324	463	420
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	316	257	248	201	191	321	337	164	174	449	323	456	420
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD	COD
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	90	83	60	75	95	82	78	71	71	109	88	112	85
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	79	65	49	58	80	70	61	56	59	91	70	99	73
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	75	65	53	55	75	71	61	57	58	90	75	96	71
			Rainfall (A)	8.8	3.4	6	7.3	7.3	9.2	12.6	16.7	14.8	15.4	14.6	11	7.6
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH	pH
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units	pH Units
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	6.7	6.8	6.9	7.3	7.2	7.1	6.8	7.2	7.3	6.7	6.8	6.7	7.2
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	6.9	7.3	6.9	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.1	7.7	7.5	7.1	7.2	6.9	6.9
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	6.8	7.4	6.9	7.6	7.6	7.4	7.2	7.8	7.7	7	6.9	6.9	7
			Rainfall (A)	8.8	3.4	6	7.3	7.3	9.2	12.6	16.7	14.8	15.4	14.6	11	7.6
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P	TP as P
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	0.08	<0.05	0.06	0.07	<0.05	0.08	0.08	<0.05	0.07	0.1	0.19	0.08	0.05
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.05	<0.05
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.06	<0.05
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS	TS
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	165	214	183	174	426	181	118	273	194	224	156	262	190
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	216	322	81	225	306	263	183	231	280	213	152	95	162
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	171	380	143	215	193	220	172	342	242	214	319	257	89
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N	Ammonia as N
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/4/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	0.135	0.238	0.176	0.59	0.581	0.235	0.162	0.770	0.550	0.140	0.056	0.109	0.093
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	0.166	0.463	0.144	0.589	0.634	0.243	0.190	0.046	0.071	0.070	0.007	0.106	0.156
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	0.18	0.463	0.151	0.436	0.360	0.160	0.159	0.013	0.049	0.098	<0.005	0.067	0.179
			Rainfall (A)	8.8	3.4	6	7.3	7.3	9.2	12.6	16.7	14.8	15.4	14.6	11	7.6
PCAS SW Sampling Scheme				DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC	DOC
Bog Group	Licence No	Bog Name	SW Code GIS	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l	mg/l
				1/11/22	1/12/22	1/1/23	1/2/23	1/3/23	1/5/23	1/5/23	1/6/23	1/7/23	1/8/23	1/9/23	1/10/23	1/11/23
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW125	33	32.1	24.7	25.5	25.6	29.4	32.3	24.7	26.4	39.9	30.5	42.8	38.5
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW127	28.4	25.6	19.6	20	20.3	24.8	28.4	20	22.1	33.1	26.9	36.6	34
Blackwater	P0502-01	Gowla	SW128	27.7	24.6	19.8	20.4	20.1	25.2	27.2	18.8	21.5	33.2	26	36.3	31.8