

## **Appendix 12.3**

### **Mammal Surveys**



## A1 Introduction

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Dixon.Brosnan Environmental Consultants assessed the impact of the proposed development of the Ringaskiddy Resource Recovery Centre at Ringaskiddy, County Cork on mammals utilising the Indaver site and the coastal habitats in proximity to it. The information in this report was used to determine the impacts on mammals in **Chapter 12**(*Biodiversity*) of the EIS.

## A2 Methodology

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A desktop review was carried out to identify designated Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding landscape and to assess information from other surveys in this general area. DixonBrosnan previously prepared the Flora and Fauna chapter for a similar EIS submitted in 2008 and an addendum to the EIS prepared in 2010. The closest cSAC is the Great Island Channel cSAC, which is 5.6km from the proposed development site. The closed proposed Natural Heritage Area is the Lough Beg pNHA (Site code 001066) which is located 0.3km south of the study area. No mammal species are listed as qualifying interests for either of these sites. Based on the characteristics of the Indaver site and the results of previous surveys, it was considered necessary to carry out more detailed surveys for otter, badger and bats.

## A3 General site characteristics

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The Indaver site runs east-west parallel to the L2545 Ringaskiddy Road, an extension of the N28, which leads to Haulbowline Island and runs along the northern boundary of the site. To the south, the study area is bordered by agricultural land dominated by intensive pasture. A Martello Tower is located on the crest of a small hill (43m approx.) in agricultural land to the south of the study area.

To the east, the site reaches to the edge of the Cork Harbour West Channel that separates the mainland from Spike Island. The shoreline here is characterised by shingle beach with steep earthen cliffs. To the west, the site adjoins agricultural land (tillage and pasture) and a small group of residential dwellings.

The majority of the proposed development area is located in the eastern section of the study area. . A rectangle of land, used as a public car park, to the northeast of the site is not included in the development area, but is included in the study area.

Due to an absence of agricultural management, a high proportion of the study area, including the proposed development site, is covered in scrub which has become more dominant over time. The remainder of the site consists of pasture and tillage fields that remain under conventional agricultural management. The following habitats were recorded within the Indaver site; Hedgerow WL1/Treelines WL2, Dry meadow and grassy verge GS2/Wet grassland GS4, Scrub WS1, Immature woodland WS2, Broadleaved woodland WD1, Improved agricultural grassland GA1, Conifer woodland WD3, Dense bracken HD1 and Arable crops BC1.

## A4 Otter surveys

The proposed development site is located in proximity to the coast and coastal protection works are proposed above the foreshore of Gobby Beach along the eastern boundary of the Indaver site. Thus potential impacts on otter, which is relatively common in Cork Harbour, could occur.

1976, as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000. Otters have additional protection because of their inclusion in Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. Otters are also listed as requiring strict protection in Appendix II of the Berne Convention on the *Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats* and are included in the Convention on International Trade of Endangered species (CITES). Although rare in parts of Europe, they are widely distributed in the Irish countryside in both marine and freshwater habitats.

Otters are solitary and nocturnal and as such are rarely seen. Thus surveys for otters rely on detecting signs of their presence. These include spraints (faeces), anal gland secretions, paths, slides, footprints and remains of prey items. Spraints are of particular value as they are used as territorial markers and are often found on prominent locations such as grass tussocks, stream junctions and under bridges. In addition they are relatively straightforward to identify and these signs of Otter presence are considered an acceptable basis for Otter surveys.

Otters occasionally dig out their own burrows but generally they make use of existing cavities as resting places or for breeding sites. Suitable locations include eroded riverbanks, under trees along rivers, under fallen trees, within rock piles or in dry drainage pipes or culverts, etc. If ground conditions are suitable, the holt may consist of a complex tunnel and chamber system. Otters often lie out above ground especially within reedbeds where depressions in the vegetation called "couches" are formed. Generally holts or resting areas can be located by detecting signs such as spraints or tracks. In contrast natal holts which are used by breeding females can be extremely difficult to locate. They are often located a considerable distance from any aquatic habitats. In addition, natal holts are usually carefully hidden and without obvious sprainting sites. Otters do not have a well defined breeding season.

Signs of otter activity were recorded during surveys for the Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment EIS (Port of Cork/RPS 2014). These included the following:

- *Signs of otter were noted along the ADM Training Wall, including old spraints and an active trail*
- *Otter activity was widespread at the base of the ADM Jetty.*
- *A single sighting of an otter leaving the eastern side of the ADM Training Wall*
- *A large amount of fresh spraint and three well-used sprainting sites were identified at the point where the existing ADM Jetty leaves the land.*
- *The spaces between boulders to the north of the existing ADM Jetty are extremely large and well-connected right down to low water level. An otter couch is likely present within these boulders.*
- *The most likely holt location was identified off-site, further to the west of Paddy's Point, where boulders were larger. This off-site area was surveyed in 2014 and a potential temporary holt/lying-up site was identified here within rocks at sea level.*

- *It was noted in 2012 that, despite human disturbance at Ringaskiddy East (the area being regularly used for boating, swimming and dog walking), evidence of otter presence was widespread along the shoreline; however, a holt was not identified.*

It is noted that these areas are a considerable distance from the proposed development site. Paddy's Point and the ADM jetty are located approximately 550m and 1500m respectively from the Indaver site boundary.

Surveys by DixonBrosnan in 2014 and 2015 did not record the presence of otter within a radius of 150m from the study area, although some sprainting activity was recorded 300m north of the site (See **Figure 1**). It is noted that the upper shore of the beach, which adjoins the site, is extensively used by the general public, and that usage is highest in proximity to the car park that is located immediately adjacent to the proposed development site. These circumstances, particularly where dogs are also present, may reduce usage of the area by otter. Whilst otters may use the shore areas in proximity to the site on occasions, no holts were noted in this area, nor are they likely to occur in the area affected by beach nourishment works in the future.



**Figure 1 showing closest signs of otter activity (sprainting site).**

## **A5 Bat surveys**

All bat species in Ireland are protected under the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended, and the Habitats Directive and Irish implementing legislation. Ireland is also a signatory to the Bonn convention (Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals, Bonn 1979) and the Bern convention, 1982 (The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats), and it has a commitment to the “Eurobats” agreement (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, 1991).



Bat surveys were undertaken in 2012 for the Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment EIS (Port of Cork/RPS, 2015). Three bat species were recorded; Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat. Both Pipistrelle species were recorded foraging within woodland areas at the base of the ADM training wall and jetty and along hedgerows, treelines and scrub habitats in Ringaskiddy East, 1500m from the Indaver site.

Bat activity was assessed at the DePuy site in 2011, in relation to the provision of a wind turbine. This site is located approximately 240m south of the Indaver site. Three species of bat were recorded within the DePuy site, namely Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat. However activity within the site was relatively low (DePuy Ireland, 2011)

Dixon.Brosnan carried out night-time bat activity surveys using standard heterodyne bat monitors (Batbox III and Batbox Duet) at different areas within the site in May 2008. The survey recorded foraging Common Pipistrelle and commuting activity at different areas within the site, including the hedgerows/treelines along northern, western and southern site boundaries. As expected, most activity occurred close to better quality hedgerows. No other species were detected.

DixonBrosnan resurveyed the site in September 2014 and August 2015. A transect was walked along the perimeter of the site and bat activity monitored using a Bat Box Duet heterodyne/frequency division detector. The following were recorded (See **Figure 2**):

- Common Pipistrelle were recorded feeding along the hedgerow which runs along the southern boundary (2014 and 2015).
- Common Pipistrelle feeding along the southern boundary in the southwest corner of the site and along the woodland boundary. (2015).
- Soprano Pipistrelle fly-over along the shoreline boundary (2015)
- Common Pipistrelle flyover/feeding over the proposed development site close to the boundary with Hammond Lane (2015).



**Figure 2 showing general bat activity patterns. Red indicates Common Pipistrelle, Yellow indicates Soprano Pipistrelle.**

The highest level of activity was along the external hedgerow along the southern boundary and the scrub/woodland in the western section of the site. These results are broadly similar to those obtained in 2008. The surveys found that bat activity was low, with only limited Common and Soprano Pipistrelle activity recorded. Only small numbers of individuals were recorded.

Surveys by DixonBrosnan in 2014 indicated that there were no suitable roosting sites for bats within the Indaver site boundary. There are no structures which could potentially support roosts, and the trees are all relatively young and lack the structural complexity (i.e. rotten wood, holes etc), that would provide suitable roosting sites for bats. Inspections of the Martello tower suggest that, although it does not appear to provide suitable conditions for bats, the presence of roosting habitat cannot be excluded. The EIS prepared for the Hammond Lane development (Doherty Environmental, 2012) likewise did not record any high value roosting habitat. In conclusion, the hedgerows and treelines on external boundaries are of some local value for feeding bats, but do not provide roosting habitat.

## A6 Badger surveys

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Badgers and their setts are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended and it is an offence to intentionally, knowingly or unknowingly kill or injure a protected species, or to wilfully interfere with or destroy the breeding site or resting place of a protected wild animal. Badger setts are formed by a complex group of interlinked tunnels, and therefore works in proximity to setts can potentially cause damage. The presence of badgers is indicated by readily identifiable signs including prints, trails, latrines, feeding signs and trapped hairs.

A survey of the study area in 2001 recorded an active badger sett to the west of the Hammond Lane facility (**See Figure 3**). A survey by DixonBrosnan in 2008 found that this sett remained in active use although the adjoining field had been changed from pasture to arable land. Evidence of activity was recorded at this sett, with one large latrine located in close proximity to an active burrow entrance. A short distance to the west of the active sett, there were further entrances. A disused sett entrance was also located to the south of the active sett, and signs of badger activity including tracks, feeding signs and a latrine were recorded in pasture in the southern section of the site.

A survey in 2012, during the preparation of the EIS for the Hammond lane facility (Doherty Environmental, 2012), did not record any signs that this sett was active although badger activity was noted in dense bracken further west within the Indaver site. Surveys in 2014 and 2015 by DixonBrosnan did not record any signs of badger activity, and the previously identified sett is no longer in active use (**See Figure 3**). The reasons for this change are uncertain. However it is possible that over time the site has become less valuable for badgers due to the incremental change from large areas of grassland to a predominance of tillage and scrub, which is of less value as feeding habitat. As the originally recorded sett was small it may have been a subsidiary sett which was used sporadically as an adjunct to a main sett. Any impacts on badger from the proposed development are predicted to be negligible.

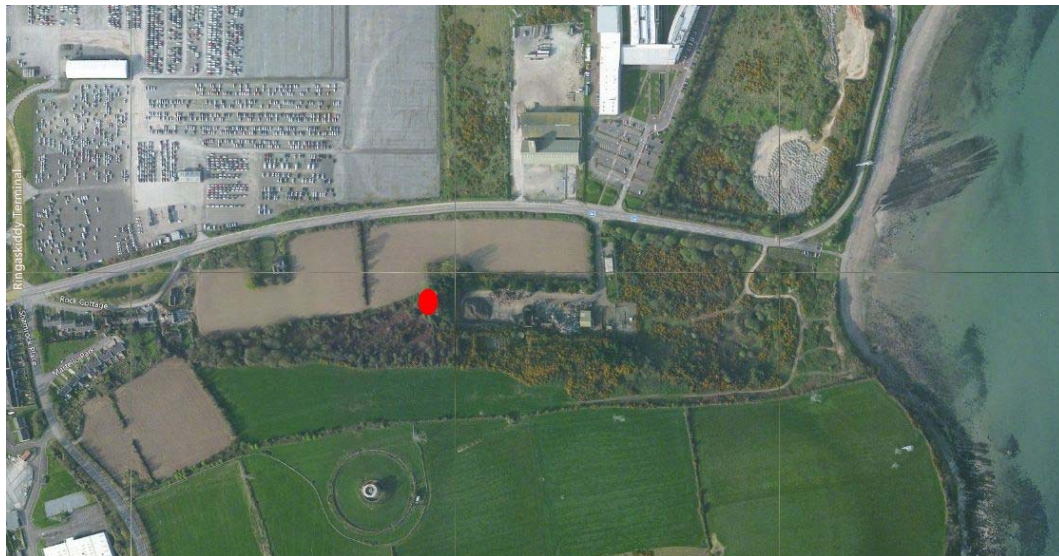


Figure 3. Location of badger sett recorded in 2001 and 2008 denoted by red circle.

## A7 Other mammals

### A7.1 Seals

Harbour Seal and Grey Seal are listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive, and both are known to occur within Cork Harbour. There are no known haul-out sites for Grey Seal in Cork Harbour. Generally this species uses more exposed sites although Grey Seals are known to feed within the overall Cork Harbour.

Haul-out sites for harbour seals may occur inshore, for example on estuaries, coves, islands etc. and this species tends to forage within a relatively short distance of such haul-out sites. Over half of foraging trips may be within 5km of the haul-out sites. Although there is no evidence for significant haul-out sites or breeding sites in Cork Harbour, there are several small haul-out sites in this general area, as noted below. The beach adjoining the proposed development site is not of value as a haul-out site due to high levels of disturbance by walkers and dogs.

*A small haul-out site near Haulbowline Island (RPS, Port of Cork, 2014)*

*An adult Harbour Seal occasionally uses a partially submerged tyre to haul-out on at mid-high tide approx. 10m from the shoreline adjacent to the National Maritime College in Ringaskiddy*

*Approximately six Harbour Seals were recorded using the slipway at the National Maritime College (DixonBrosnan, 2014, RPS/Port of Cork, 2014)*

*During winter bird counts by DixonBrosnan in 2014/2015, four Harbour Seals were recorded in the channel between the mainland and Spike Island*

Although there is nothing to indicate that the area in the immediate vicinity of the Indaver site is of particular value for seals, it is within the feeding range for local Harbour Seal populations that forage within this general area.



## A7.2 Cetaceans

Species that have been recorded by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group within the overall harbour include Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*), Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*) and Minke Whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*). Of these, it is the smaller species such as Harbour Porpoise which are most likely to occur in the channel offshore from the site.

## A7.3 Other mammals

Pygmy Shrew, Hedgehog and Stoat were not recorded, but may be present but were not recorded during surveys. Rabbits are numerous and signs of fox were noted on site. Small mammal surveys in the study area in 2001 and 2008 recorded the presence of Field Mouse, Bank Vole and Brown Rat. Such species are common in the Irish countryside.

## A8 Conclusions

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No otter activity was recorded in proximity to the Indaver site. The badger sett, which was previously active within the Indaver site, is no longer in use. Some limited usage of the Indaver site by Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle bat was recorded. Although there is nothing to indicate that the area in the immediate vicinity of the Indaver site is of particular value for seals, it is within the feeding range for local Harbour Seal populations that forage within this general area

## A9 References

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Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment EIS (Port of Cork/RPS, 2014)  
DePuy (Ireland) Wind Energy Project Environmental Impact Statement April 2011  
Hammond Lane Metal Co, Ringaskiddy EIS Flora and Fauna Chapter (Doherty Environmental 2012).