

Ornithological Survey

At

Ducking Stool Public Amenity,

The Lawn and lands at Willow Avenue,

Belturbet,

Co. Cavan.



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June 2026

1.0 Introduction

Joseph Adamson MCIEEM was appointed by Traynor Environmental Ltd. to conduct an ornithological survey of lands and river bank at the Ducking Stool Jetty, Willow Avenue, Belturbet, Co. Cavan. The purpose of the site visits was to survey the site and record species of birds that are frequenting the area within the proposed development area.

1.1 Survey Area

The survey area is located along the River Erne at Creeny, within the town of Belturbet, Co. Cavan. The area to be surveyed extended from the existing jetty known as the Ducking Stool Jetty to Belturbet Marina along Willow Avenue.

The area surrounding the Ducking Stool Jetty in Belturbet is a riverside setting on the River Erne where the town edge meets the waterfront. It includes the existing jetty and adjoining river-edge structures (timber decking/boarding and older quay/edge elements) with sections of worn/aged timbers visible, and a mix of hard surfaces and vegetated margins right up to the waterline. Immediately adjacent is a road/footpath corridor (Willow Avenue side) with open green areas and mature trees, giving views across the river toward nearby residential buildings, while parts of the waterfront edge are bounded by retaining walls and fenced sections that define the riverside access route

Site Location Map.



2.0 Methodology

The proposed site was surveyed on the 13th of November 2025. Weather conditions were favourable for survey work with dry, dull and overcast conditions with a light south-westerly breeze. All areas within the parcel boundaries were surveyed by systematically walking and recording birds heard and observed. A list of birds observed during the site visit was then compiled for the entire site (Table 1).

3.0 Proposed Development

Cavan County Council propose to undertake the following development at the Ducking Stool Jetty, The Lawn and lands at Willow Avenue, Belturbet, Co. Cavan.

The proposal is for the upgrade and realignment of the existing jetty and slipway at the Ducking Stool Jetty and the creation of a carpark on lands at Willow Avenue

Details of the works include:

- removal of the existing timber jetties,
- realignment and widening of the slipway providing access to the River Erne,
- reconfiguration and extension of the existing pier, including amended levels,
- installation of floating jetties and jetty access ramp,
- construction of hard landscaped, public recreational open space,
- reconfiguration and upgrade of existing gravelled area to create new carpark (7no. spaces),
- installation of public lighting and refuse storage,
- installation of bike stands
- installation of wayfinding signage
- reconfiguration and upgrading of existing drainage and all associated site development works.

3.1 Site Location

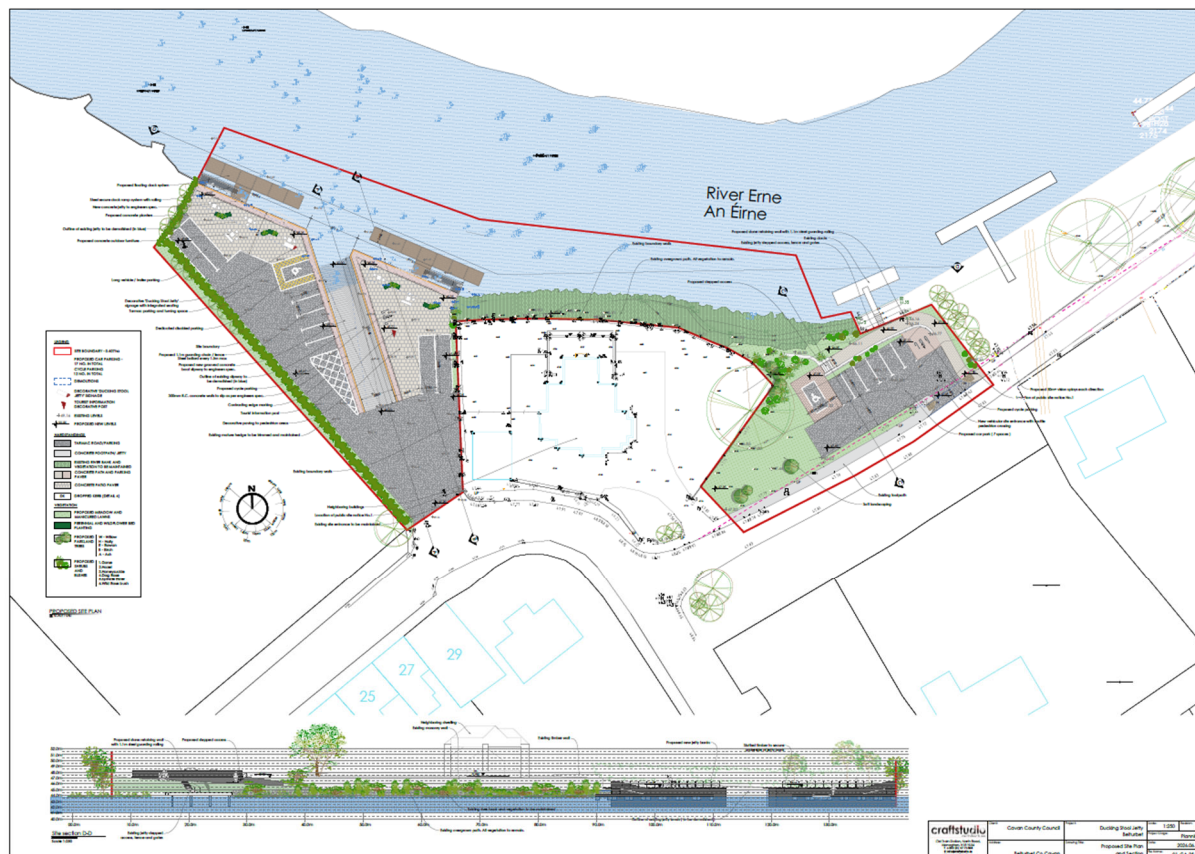
The site in question is approximately 0.407 ha and is located within Belturbet town, approximately 155m north of the town centre. The site is accessed via Lana an Uisce just off the Main Street in Belturbet. The proposed works will take place at the ducking stool and the surrounding lands which is off the southern shore of Lough Erne. The site is zoned as 'Flood Zone A' & 'Flood Zone B' in the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028. Any developments within each flood zone are subject to the following: 'Undeveloped land in Flood Zone A&B that is the subject of any zoning objective shall only be developed for *water compatible uses* as identified in the Guidelines.' The proposed development at the Ducking Stool would be considered as water compatible as the existing jetty is being enhanced and upgraded.

The land-use surrounding the application site is mixed. The urban/sub-urban lands of Belturbet town largely surround the wider area around the site to the south. These areas are predominantly residential, industrial and amenity and the dominant habitats associated with these areas include buildings and artificial surfaces, and amenity grasslands and gardens.

In the rural areas beyond Belturbet town, agriculture is the dominant land use and improved / semi-improved agricultural grasslands are the dominant habitats. Habitats immediately surrounding the site include the River habitats which is the transitional area where land and River Erne meet, functioning as an ecosystem that includes the water, the land (banks and shore), and the vegetation along the water's edge. It encompasses features like rocks, soil, aquatic and terrestrial plants, and various animal species. The overall topography of the surrounding area is generally flat, with the proposed marine works development situated at the edge, and within the extents of the ducking stool area.

3D Renders of the proposed project.



Figure 1 Proposed Site Layout.

3.2 River Habitat in the Area

Along the River Erne near Belturbet, the river corridor typically supports a mosaic of open water, reed and sedge fringes, wet grassland, scrub and mature riparian trees (notably willow/alder), creating a sheltered linear habitat used by both waterbirds and woodland-edge species.

The channel and calmer margins can attract wildfowl and water-associated birds such as Mallard, Mute Swan, Grey Heron, and often Cormorant, while dippers/kingfishers may occur where banks, perches and clear shallows provide feeding opportunities. Reed and rank bankside vegetation provide cover and foraging for small passerines (e.g., wren, robin, dunno, reed bunting where suitable), and the scrub/treeline supports common farmland/woodland birds such as blackbird, song thrush, chaffinch, blue tit, great tit, with corvids frequently present.

Overhead, the river acts as a commuting route for gulls and bats, and can be used by raptors such as buzzard or sparrowhawk for hunting. Overall, this stretch functions as an important foraging, shelter and movement corridor, with bird use varying by season and water levels, and highest activity generally occurring at dawn and during calmer weather.

the River Erne functions as a movement and foraging corridor for waterbirds and riparian species recorded during the survey, and that construction activities should comply with the Wildlife Act and avoid impacts on nesting birds.

4.0 Results of the site survey

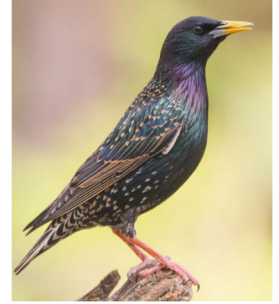
The ornithological survey recorded a range of common bird species associated with riparian, scrub, amenity grassland and urban-edge habitats present within and immediately adjacent to the survey area. Observations were made through a combination of direct visual sightings and the identification of bird song and calls during the site walkover survey.

The River Erne and its associated riparian habitats provide a valuable ecological corridor within the local landscape, supporting a variety of bird species for foraging, shelter, roosting and movement between habitats. The mature trees, scrub vegetation and riverside habitats present within and adjacent to the survey area offer suitable habitat for a range of common resident bird species. Overall bird activity recorded during the survey was typical for the time of year and prevailing weather conditions, with the majority of species observed utilising habitats adjacent to the proposed development area rather than the site itself.

A total of eight bird species were recorded during the survey. All species observed are commonly occurring and widespread within Ireland and are typical of riparian and urban-edge environments. The species recorded are summarised in Table 1 below, together with their conservation status and notes on their observed behaviour and habitat use.

Table 1: Bird species recorded in the Survey Area.

Species	Qualification Criteria	Comments	Photograph of Species
Grey Heron – (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)	Green	One observed flying along the River Erne, in an easterly direction. There is no suitable breeding habitat within and around the survey area. A common resident in Ireland of wetland habitats.	
Woodpigeon - (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)	Green	A small flock of 5 birds flew high in a northerly direction over the River Erne. A common resident in Ireland.	
Pied Wagtail – (<i>Motacilla alba yarelli</i>)	Green	One observed at the Ducking Stool jetty. A common resident in Ireland.	

Species	Qualification Criteria	Comments	Photograph of Species
Robin – (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	Green	Heard frequently along the opposite bank Of the River Erne. A common resident in Ireland.	
Blackbird – (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	Green	Heard and observed along the opposite bank of The River Erne. A common resident in Ireland.	
Wren - <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Green	Frequently heard at the opposite bank of the River Erne. A common resident in Ireland.	
Hooded Crow- <i>Corvus cornix</i>	Green	Two observed flying over the proposed jetty site. A common resident in Ireland.	
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Amber (BoCCI 4) SPEC 3	Observed overhead. A common resident and winter visitor in Ireland.	

4.1 Conservation Status

The conservation status of bird species recorded during the survey has been assigned in accordance with *Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020–2026* (BoCCI 4). Under this classification system, bird species are assigned to Red, Amber or Green lists according to their conservation status and population trends. Qualifying criteria: Amber-list Criteria - SPEC 3 (species for which the global population is concentrated outside of (Europe)).

Of the eight species recorded during the survey, seven are classified as Green-listed species, indicating that they are currently considered to be of least conservation concern in Ireland. One species, Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), is classified as Amber-listed, reflecting moderate conservation concern due to population declines and other conservation criteria identified within the BoCCI assessment. Starling may breed in residential buildings outside of the survey area.

No Red-listed species were recorded during the survey and no Annex I bird species listed under the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) were observed within the survey area.

5.0 Legislative and Policy Context

Birds and their habitats are afforded protection under European and Irish legislation. The principal legislative instruments relevant to this ornithological assessment are outlined below.

5.1 European Union Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)

The Birds Directive provides a framework for the conservation of all naturally occurring wild bird species within the European Union. The Directive requires Member States to maintain populations of wild birds at levels corresponding to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements while taking account of economic and recreational needs.

The Directive provides for:

- Protection of all wild bird species, their nests and eggs;
- Protection of habitats used by bird species;
- Designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for rare, vulnerable and migratory bird species listed under Annex I of the Directive;
- Regulation of activities that may result in the disturbance, injury or killing of wild birds.

5.2 Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

The Habitats Directive establishes a framework for the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna throughout the European Union. Together with the Birds Directive it forms the Natura 2000 network of protected sites, comprising Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Projects and plans with the potential to affect European sites are subject to Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Directive.

5.3 Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended)

The Wildlife Act 1976, as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, is the principal national legislation protecting wild birds in Ireland. Under the Act:

- All wild birds are protected.
- It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or disturb protected wild birds except under licence or where otherwise permitted by law.

- Nests and eggs of wild birds are protected.
- Vegetation clearance and other activities with the potential to affect nesting birds should avoid the main bird breeding season where possible.

5.4 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011–2021

These Regulations transpose the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives into Irish law. The Regulations provide legal protection for Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Protected species and their habitats. The Regulations also establish requirements for Appropriate Assessment of projects that may have the potential to affect European sites.

5.5 Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI)

The conservation status of bird species recorded during the survey has been assessed with reference to *Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020–2026* (Gilbert et al., 2021). This assessment classifies species into:

- **Red List** – species of highest conservation concern;
- **Amber List** – species of medium conservation concern;
- **Green List** – species of least conservation concern.

The BoCCI classification is widely used in ecological impact assessments and planning applications to identify species of conservation importance.

6.0 Discussion

Habitats observed at the proposed development site during the survey are typical of the habitats that are present, namely hedgerows, trees and a watercourse. Very few bird species were observed during the survey as the survey area was very small. Most of the birds observed were flying over the site.

The River Erne corridor is considered to provide local ecological value as a movement and foraging corridor for common bird species. However, the survey did not identify any ornithological features of national, regional or county-level significance within the proposed development area. The bird species recorded are typical of the habitats present and are unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed development, provided that standard mitigation measures, including compliance with the Wildlife Acts and avoidance of vegetation clearance during the bird nesting season where practicable, are implemented.

The proper management of the existing vegetation during the construction period will have a positive effect on the birds likely to be present.

7.0 Reference

Ref. 1 Gilbert, G, Stanbury, A. & Lewis, I K. Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 4: 2020–2026. Irish Birds 43: 1-23.