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Sent: Friday 19 June 2020 11:19

To: <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: FS007062 SAIPEM-SEAI Site Investigations for AFLOWT test at AMETS site

A chara,

Please find the heritage recommendations of the Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht for the above mentioned application.

Nature Conservation

The proposed development would occur within and adjacent to West Connacht Coast SAC (Site Code: 002998) amongst others. This site is designated for the Annex II species bottlenose dolphin.

The documentation included in the application indicates that a screening assessment was undertaken. It should be noted that in *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities* published by this Department in 2009, that the first test is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. This is termed AA screening or Natura Impact Statement Screening. Its purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of the site's conservation objectives. Therefore, where significant effects are likely, uncertain or unknown at screening stage, AA will be required.

In the screening assessment included in this application a likely impact is inferred from acoustic survey techniques albeit localised and temporary. It also included some measures which should be considered mitigation in respect of the qualifying interest bottlenose dolphin (ensuring they were not in the vicinity during start-up). This application would consequently require a full appropriate assessment. The currently circulated document is deficient in fully acknowledging a potential interaction with qualifying interests of the site and does not provide adequate detail in relation to the mitigated measures that would be applied around acoustic survey techniques.

It is recommended that the applicants be invited to reconsider the findings of the appropriate assessment screening document and develop appropriate mitigation with respect to the conservation objectives of the site in a full appropriate assessment. The applicant should in particular consider the noted mitigating measures with respect to acoustic sources in relation to bottlenose dolphins and the guidance document generated by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht around acoustic surveys in the marine environment https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/Underwater%20sound%20guidance_Jan%202014.pdf.

Mise le meas,

[REDACTED]

An Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Aonad na nIarratas ar Fhorbairt
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