

1. Ms Dunne, A.P.O.
2. Mr Harrington, Principal
3. Runai Aire Stait

Recommended for approval 27/11/2017
RH 27/11/17

Re : BioAtlantis Aquamarine Ltd

Foreshore Licence to mechanically harvest seaweed in Bantry Bay

Monitoring Programme and Baseline Study

1. Purpose

The approval of the Minister is sought for the attached monitoring programme (Tab 1) and associated baseline study (Tab 2) submitted by the Licencee (BioAtlantis) in accordance with conditions attached to their licence approved in principle in 2011 and finalised in 2014.

2. Background

Bioatlantis applied in 2009 for consent to mechanically harvest kelp seaweed in Bantry Bay. The application was processed in the normal way and was approved in principle in 2011 by Minister John Gormley. The legal instrument giving effect to the decision was finalised in 2014, by Minister Alan Kelly, granting a ten year trial licence. The proposal was the subject of an episode of the R.T.E. environmental issues programme Eco-Eye in early 2017 which lead to a campaign to suspend or rescind the licence. A group of campaigners who threatened to initiate legal proceedings have recently confirmed that they will not be pursuing this course. Officials will meet with representatives of the group on 28th November. The Minister has made it clear in correspondence and in the Dail that there are no plans to suspend or rescind the licence as it is envisaged that the experience and data gathered will prove valuable in future policy formation.

One of the conditions attached to the licence was that prior to commencement the licensee shall submit a detailed monitoring programme for approval, the parameters of which were also set out in the licence (Tab 3).

3. What is in the Monitoring Plan and baseline report

The monitoring programme includes test vs. control locations i.e. areas of kelp harvesting vs. areas where no harvesting takes place, near and far field effects, timing and seasonal aspects of recovery/impact. The baseline report was required to characterise the biota in advance of harvesting as a baseline for future comparison with invertebrates, algae, fish and birds sampled in each of two tracts within each licenced area.

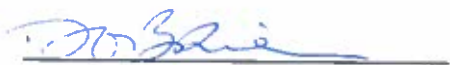
Drafts of both the monitoring programme and baseline report were submitted, however the Department in consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland (I.F.I.) and the Marine Institute (M.I.) required amendments to both documents to ensure conformity with the parameters set out in the licence and to optimise the scientific, particularly fish related, data that would be provided through monitoring. Both I.F.I. and M.I. have indicated that the monitoring programme and baseline report

are now suitable. Further engagement between the licensee and the bodies will be required to finalise the exact location of some proposed control areas.

Approval of the monitoring programme and associated baseline report will allow for harvesting to commence. I.F.I. and M.I. have both indicated they are satisfied that the reports are now suitable. It is recommended that the Minister approve the monitoring programme and baseline report filed herewith.

4. Next Steps

If the Minister approves the monitoring programme and baseline report, the licensee will be advised of the approval and will be in a position to commence harvest activities. It is anticipated that, weather permitting, some harvesting will begin almost immediately.



Marine Planning and Foreshore

27 November 2017

Approved
Daniel English
30/11/17