

Submission HLG 00271 -21: Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination. Foreshore Licence Application by Greenlink Interconnector Limited in respect of a subsea electricity interconnector cable between Irish and UK electricity grids, landing at Baginbun Beach, Co. Wexford

TO: Minister of State Burke
STATUS: Completed
PURPOSE: For Decision and Signature

AUTHOR: [REDACTED] (Housing)
OWNER: [REDACTED] (Housing)
REVIEWERS: [REDACTED] (Housing)
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DIVISION: Foreshore
DECISION BY: 27/07/2021

Final comment

Approved by minister, 26/07/2021

Action required

Ministerial determination on the Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Executive summary

Greenlink Interconnector Limited submitted a foreshore licence application to carry out associated works in connection with the laying of a new subsea electricity interconnector cable between Irish and UK electricity grids.

As part of the assessment of this application the Minister is required to make an Appropriate Assessment screening determination in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended ('The Regulations').

Having considered all relevant material a recommendation has been made that the Minister adopts the AA Screening Report and reaches the following AA Screening determination:

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, the Department has made a determination following screening that an Appropriate Assessment is required as the project individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on some European sites and Annex IV species. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites and Annex IV species cannot be excluded on the basis of objective evidence. This determination is based on the location, scale, extent and duration of the proposed development, including temporary works, and has not taken account of measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Detailed information

Greenlink Interconnector Limited submitted a foreshore licence application for the purpose of carrying out associated works in connection with the laying of a new Subsea electricity interconnector cable between Irish and UK electricity grids, landing at Baginbun Beach in Co. Wexford. These proposed works extend from the landfall at Baginbun Beach, County Wexford, out to the 12-Mile limit off the Wexford coastline (approximately 36km long). Included in the application is a horizontal direction drill (HDD) section beneath the Campile River (foreshore) associated with the Greenlink onshore cable.

The proposed development comprises:

- Two high voltage direct current (HDVC) electricity power cables;
- A smaller fibre-optic cable for control and communication purposes;
- All associated works required to install, test and commission and complete the aforementioned cables; and
- All associated works required to operate, maintain, repair and decommission the aforementioned cables, including five repair events of the 40 year lifetime of the Greenlink Interconnector Cable.

The Proposed Development is approximately 36km long and generally 500m wide, between Baginbun Beach, County Wexford and the 12nm limit.

The programme is expected to take approximately 36 months from start to finish. The project is envisaged to commence on-site construction in early 2022 and be fully operational in 2024.

As part of the assessment of the foreshore licence application RPS Group Plc were commissioned to conduct an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening (stage 1 screening) and if required, an AA (stage 2), of the likelihood of significant impact on Natura 2000 sites from the application for a Foreshore Licence.

A number of application documents submitted by Greenlink Interconnector Limited informed the AA Screening Conclusion by Greenlink Interconnector Limited including:

Application Form

Foreshore Licence Map

Foreshore Licence Map - Campile

Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

Summary of Onshore and Offshore Environmental Effects

Vol 1 Environmental Impact Assessment Report: Non-Technical Survey

Vol 2 Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Vol 3 Appendix A - Stakeholder Meetings

Vol 3 Appendix B - Competent Experts Table

Vol 3 Appendix C - Underwater Noise Assessment

Vol 3 Appendix D - Herring and Sandeel Assessment

Vol 3 Appendix E - Commercial Fisheries Assessment

Vol 3 Appendix F - Marine Archaeology

Vol 3 Appendix G - Cable Route Survey

Vol 3 Appendix H - Environmental Survey

Vol 3 Appendix I - Intertidal Habitat Survey Report

Vol 3 Appendix J - UXO Risk Assessment

Vol 3 Appendix K - Greenlink, Magnetic Fields and Induced Voltages

Vol 3 Appendix L - Landfall Selection

Consolidated Prescribed Body Observations (First Consultation)

Applicant Response to Prescribed Body Observations (First Consultation)

Request for Further Information in relation to the effects on the environment FS007050

Applicant's response to request for further information in relation to the effects on the environment FS007050

Public Submissions – 2nd Consultation on Further Information April 2021

Applicants Response to Public Submissions – 2nd Consultation on Further Information April 2021

Prescribed Bodies Observations - 2nd Consultation on Further Information April 2021

Applicants Response to Prescribed Bodies Observations - 2nd Consultation on Further Information April 2021

In addition, and with respect to the Habitats Directive, an Article 12 Assessment of the proposed investigative works is described in Section 5 of the report based on information provided in the Greenlink Interconnector application documents (chapter 10 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Reports). This examination is under Article 12 of the Habitats Directive and does not form part of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report which has examined the Natura 2000 sites and their qualifying interests.

The licence application was open for the first public consultation between 12th November 2019 and 08th January 2020 and second public consultation on further information furnished containing significant data in relation to the effects on the environment between 06th April 2021 and 06th May 2021.

Following an initial review of the above documents the consultants RPS Group Plc advised that further information would be required from the applicant under Regulation 42(3) of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* (as amended) on approximately four points to inform the final AA screening determination.

The consultants completed an updated final Appropriate Assessment Screening report in July 2021 which concluded that an Appropriate Assessment was required in this case.

This Appropriate Assessment Screening report along with all relevant material was considered by a Marine Biologist in the Department and the following recommendation has been made in relation to Appropriate Assessment Screening for decision by the Minister:

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended ('The Regulations'), the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has undertaken Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of relevant European sites, if the proposed project to lay subsea and underground electricity interconnector cable from the 12nm territorial limit to landfall in Co. Wexford, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect (s) on a European site(s).

The AA Screening Report prepared by RPS Group Plc is attached at **Tab 1**, and the adoption of the report is recommended. Attached at **Tab 2** is the Marine Licence Vetting Committee Report. The Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination prepared by the Department's Recommending Officer, for Ministerial Determination, is attached at **Tab 3** for signing.

A copy of all relevant material is attached and/or linked for consideration to inform the AA Screening determination, including the material considered by RPS Group Plc in preparing the AA Screening Report, the final AA Screening report prepared by RPS Group Plc, the report prepared by the Marine Licence Vetting Committee recommending adoption, and the AA Screening Determination prepared for this application.

Submitted for decision.

Related submissions

There are no related submissions.