

# Submission HLG 00085-22: FS007062 Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination re Site Investigations for a Floating Offshore Wind demonstration project at AMETS test site, Mayo

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

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DIVISION: Foreshore  
DECISION BY:

## Final comment

Read and approved by Minister Burke 8 March 2022

## Action required

For Determination on Appropriate Assessment Screening and Signing of Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination (Tab 01)

## Executive summary

SEAI have applied for a Foreshore licence to carry out site investigations relating to a floating offshore wind (FOW) demonstration project at the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) off the coast of Mayo.

As part of the assessment of this application the Minister is required to make a Screening for Appropriate Assessment 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 materials a recommendation has been made that the Minister adopts the Screening for AA report and reaches the following Screening for AA determination:

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 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 European sites. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites 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

For Determination on Appropriate Assessment Screening and Signing of Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination (Tab 01)

### Background

The AFLOWT (Accelerating market uptake of FLoating Offshore Wind Technology) project - a consortium with Interreg North West

Europe (NWE) funding, has a main objective of demonstrating high survivability, cost competitive, Floating Offshore Wind (FOW) technology.

SEAI is a lead partner of the project in Ireland and holds an existing Foreshore Lease for the AMETS test site.

SEAI was granted a Foreshore Lease in November 2015 to test for wave energy devices on the AMETS site. Subsequent pipeline analysis by the applicant of wave energy projects worldwide suggests that there will be no wave technologies suitable for testing at this site until the mid-2020s. However, due to water depth and weather conditions, the applicant considers the site suitable for floating wind technologies.

### **Licence Application**

This application is for a Site Investigation (SI) Licence to inform the detailed design of a 6MW FOW turbine, cable and associated infrastructure.

SI activities proposed include:

- Multi-Beam Echo Sounder (MBES)
- Side-Scan Sonar (SSS)
- Sub-Bottom Profiling (SBP)
- Cone Penetration Testing (CPT)
- Benthic sampling of the subtidal and the intertidal sediment

These SI activities (geophysical and geotechnical) are required in order to provide information on the make-up of the various layers of sediment and / or rock under the seafloor and the soils / sediments and stratigraphy of the seabed.

### **Public Consultation**

Following an initial Public Consultation in March/April 2020 and the provision of further information by the applicant in support of the application, a second consultation was held between 17 August and 16 September 2020.

One submission **(Tab 02)** was received in the first consultation and three submissions **(Tab 03)** were received on the second consultation.

The applicant provided responses to both consultations **(Tab 04 and Tab 05)** respectively)

### **Prescribed Bodies Consultation (PBC)**

Prescribed Bodies Consultations were carried out in conjunction with the Public Consultations.

For both consultations, observations were sought from the Marine Survey Office (MSO), the Marine Institute (MI), the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Water and Marine Advisor (WMA), Underwater Archaeology Unit and NPWS Development Applications Unit (DAU), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Consultation 1: Observations were received from MSO, IFI, MI, NPWS DAU and WMA **(Tab 06)**. NPWS DAU advised that the appropriate assessment screening document be revisited to reconsider the findings of the appropriate assessment screening document as submitted and develop appropriate mitigation with respect to the conservation objectives of the site and provide for appropriate assessment. This resulted in the submission of amended supporting documents and the second public and prescribed body consultations.

Consultation 2: Observations were received from IFI, MI, MSO and DAFM **(Tab 07)**

The applicant provided a consolidated response to PBC Consultations 1 and 2 **(Tab 8)**

### **Independent Environmental Consultant (IEC) - AA Screening**

As part of the assessment of the Foreshore Licence application, RPS consultants were commissioned to prepare an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening (stage 1 screening) Report on the likelihood of significant impact on Natura 2000 sites.

RPS examined the following documents:

- Application Form **(Tab 09)**
- Foreshore Licence Map **(Tab 10)**
- Site Location Map **(Tab 11)**

- Schedule of Works (**Tab 12**)
- AMETS Distance Summary (**Tab 13**)
- Support Document (**Tab 14**)
- Natura Impact Statement (**Tab 15**)

RPS examined the submissions from the public and prescribed body consultations and the applicant responses to both. RPS also requested further information from the applicant in order to complete the Report (**Tab 16**), to which the applicant provided a response (**Tab 17**).

The resulting IEC report (**Tab 18**) contained the following Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Conclusion:

*Based on the information available on the project, it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information, following screening under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, that the proposed project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects will have a significant effect on the following European sites:*

- West Coast Connacht SAC
- Inishkea Islands SAC
- Duvillaun Islands SPA

*It can therefore be determined that an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the project is required. A Natura Impact Statement has been provided by the Applicant to inform the AA and is reviewed by RPS in the Appropriate Assessment report, submitted with this Screening for AA Technical Review.*

#### **Marine Advisor - Ecology (DHLGH)**

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment report along with all relevant materials to date were considered by the Department's Marine Advisor (MA) - Ecology. The MA in the AA Screening Environmental Report (**Tab 19**), agrees with and accepts the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report and its conclusions and a recommendation has been made that the Minister adopts the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report and reaches the following Screening for 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'), 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 which includes a site investigation requiring the use of Sub-bottom Profiling and Core Penetration Testing, bathymetric and benthic surveys would be likely, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect (s) on a European site(s).

In accordance with Regulation 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 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 any European sites. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites 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.

A copy of all the material which informed the Screening for Appropriate Assessment prepared by the Independent Environmental Consultants is linked in the Tabs above. The Screening for Appropriate Assessment report prepared by the Independent Environmental Consultants, RPS is attached at Tab 18, and the adoption of the report is recommended. The Environmental Report prepared by the Departments Marine Advisor (environment) is attached at Tab 19 recommending the adoption of the above report. The Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination prepared by the Departments Marine Advisor (environment), for Ministerial Determination, is attached at Tab 1 for signing.

Submitted for Decision and Signature.

#### **Related submissions**

There are no related submissions.

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