

# Submission HLG 00033-22: Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination on Foreshore Application FS007246 IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system

TO:  
STATUS:  
PURPOSE:

AUTHOR:  
OWNER:  
REVIEWERS

DIVISION: Foreshore  
DECISION BY: 03/02/2022

## Final comment

Approved by Minister 01/02/2022

## Action required

Ministerial determination on the Screening for Appropriate Assessment and signing of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination Statement if approved.

## Executive summary

Farice ehf submitted an application for the main lay and construction works for the installation of the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system from a landfall in Ballyloughane Strand, Renmore, Galway Bay.

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 material the following recommendation has been made in relation to Appropriate Assessment Screening for decision by the Minister:

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

### Detailed Information

Farice ehf has submitted a Foreshore Licence Application for the proposed installation of the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system with a landfall at Ballyloughane Strand, Renmore, Galway Bay through the South Sound to the 12nm limit southwest of the Aran Islands. The proposed development will connect Iceland to Ireland through a high-speed sub-sea fibre optic internet cable.

The proposed development comprises the following:

- Installation of landfall at Ballyloughane Strand by means of a Horizontal Directional Drill (HDD);
- Cable installation at the landfall at Galway (Ballyloughane Strand);
- Pre-Lay Grapnel Run (PLGR);

- Subsea cable installation by means of a sea-plough.  
The location of the proposed development is at Ballyloughane Strand at Renmore in Galway City, c. 1 km southeast of Galway city centre. Ballyloughane Strand is sheltered from sea conditions and the south by Mutton Island, Hare Island and their respective causeways connecting them to the shoreline. The site of the proposed development is situated within the Inner Galway Bay SPA and Galway Bay Complex SAC.

## Environmental Assessment

As part of the assessment of the foreshore licence application ROD consultants 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 site investigation Licence.

A number of application documents submitted by Farice ehf informed the AA Screening Conclusion by ROD included:

[/Application Form /Foreshore Licence Maps and Drawings / Marine Archaeology Assessment Report /AA Screening and Natura Impact Statement / Ecological Impact Assessment Report / Farice ehf Registration /Grant of Planning /Cable System Planning Report / FS007246 Consolidated Prescribed Body Observations / FS007246 Public Submission / FS007246 Response to Prescribed Bodies and Public Submission](#)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/foreshore-notice/80172-iris-fibre-optic-cable-system-co-galway/>

[Prescribed Bodies Observations / Applicant's Response to PBC](#)

## Public Consultation

The application for the main lay and construction works for the installation of the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system from a landfall in Galway to the 12nm limit of the coast was open for public consultation from 07 July 2021 to 01 August 2021 The Public Submission can be viewed at link above.

## Prescribed Bodies Consultation

Observations were sought and received from the Marine Survey Office, the Marine Institute, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Water and Marine Advisor, Underwater Archaeology Unit and NPWS Development Applications Unit, Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine the Environment Protection Agency, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and Galway City Council. The Consolidated Prescribed Body Observations can be viewed at link above.

The applicant provided a response to the Prescribed Bodies Observations which can be viewed at link above.

## Independent Environmental Report

ROD Consultants were engaged as consultants and completed the supporting documents for Appropriate Assessment (**Tab 3**) and (**Tab 4**) on the main lay and construction works for the installation of the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system from a landfall in Galway to the 12nm limit. It was concluded that two European sites screened in for AA at Stage 1, therefore, in accordance with Article 6(3), the project alone is likely to affect the integrity of one or more European sites.

In addition supporting document for Appropriate Assessment (**Tab 5**) was carried out by ROD and it concluded that the proposed project for the "main lay and install the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system " does not fall within the classes defined under Annex I or Annex II of the EIA Directive. Therefore, it is not subject to the provisions of the EIA Directive.

This Appropriate Assessment supporting document (**Tab 3**) 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 main lay and install the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely 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 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.

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination prepared by the Department's Recommending Officer, for Ministerial Determination, is attached at **(Tab 1)** for signing and the EIA Pre-Screening is attached at **(Tab 2)**

Supporting Documents for AA (FI) **(Tab 6)** and **(Tab 7)**

## Related submissions

There are no related submissions.