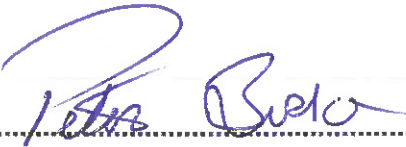


Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination on Foreshore Licence Application FS006983 SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd., Site Investigations for Export Cable Route for the proposed Celtic Sea Array

TO:	Minister of State Burke	AUTHOR:	[REDACTED] (Housing)
STATUS:	Review	OWNER:	eSub MOS Burke Office
		REVIEWERS:	[REDACTED] (Housing), [REDACTED] (Housing), [REDACTED] (Housing), [REDACTED] (Housing)

PURPOSE: For Decision and Signature DECISION BY:
DIVISION/OFFICE: Foreshore

SEEN AND APPROVED: 
DATE SIGNED: 31/8/22

Action required

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

Executive summary

SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd has submitted a foreshore licence application for site investigation works. The proposed investigation works aim to assess the suitability for installation of export cables associated with a potential offshore wind farm (Celtic Sea Array).

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 has undertaken Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

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

Detailed information

Overview

SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd have submitted a foreshore licence application to carry out site investigation (SI) surveys off the coast of Bunmahon Bay, Co. Waterford and Bannow Bay, Co. Wexford. These surveys will inform the suitability of the locations as potential export cable corridors, associated with a proposed offshore wind farm (Celtic Sea Array). The area of interest for the proposed wind farm is beyond the 12 nautical mile limit and is not the subject of this application.

The following SI surveys are proposed:

- Geophysical Surveys (Multibeam Echosounder, Side Scan Sonar, Magnetometry, Bathymetric, Sub-bottom Profiling)
- Geotechnical Surveys including Grab Sampling, Seabed Cone Penetrometer Tests, Vibrocoring and Boreholes
- Wind Resource and Metocean Characterisation including the use of floating LiDAR, deployment of Waverider Buoys, and ADCP to assess tidal currents
- Landfall Topographic Survey via traditional methods or via drone
- Environmental Surveys (Benthic sampling, Intertidal surveys)

The proposed works will enable detailed mapping of nearshore shallow geological and seabed character, along with reconnaissance level mapping of seabed archaeology and will provide greater understanding of wind resource and metocean conditions.

The Foreshore Licence application is solely for the purposes of completing these site investigation and monitoring activities.

Environmental Assessment

As part of the assessment of the foreshore licence application Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) were commissioned as *Independent Environmental Consultants* (IEC) to conduct a Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report (stage 1 screening) and if required, an Appropriate Assessment (stage 2), of the likelihood of significant impact on European sites from the application for a Foreshore Site Investigation Licence.

Application documents submitted by SSE Renewables (Ireland) were examined by ROD and informed the Screening for Appropriate Assessment. These are:

- Investigative Foreshore Licence Application Form (ORE) – Revised (**Tab 05**)
 - Foreshore Licence Map 1 – Revised (**Tab 06**)
 - Foreshore Licence Map 2 – Revised (**Tab 07**)
 - Foreshore Licence Map 3 – Revised (**Tab 08**)
 - Supporting Information Document – Revised (**Tab 09**)
 - Public Submissions (**Tab 10**)
 - Applicant Response to Public Submissions (**Tab 11**)
 - Prescribed Bodies Observations (**Tab 12**)
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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 carry out site investigation works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effects 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.

A copy of all the material which informed the IEC's Screening for Appropriate Assessment technical review is contained within the attached tabs.

Tab 01 contains the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report prepared by the IEC

Tab 02 contains the Marine Advisor Environment Screening Stage Report prepared by the Department's Marine Advisor (Environment)

Tab 03 contains the Screening Determination for Appropriate Assessment, prepared by the Department's Marine Advisor (Environment) for Ministerial Determination, for signing.

Submitted for decision.