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**STATUTORY  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ASSESSMENT  
APPROPRIATE  
ASSESSMENT  
SCREENING REVIEW  
FOR SITE CLEARANCE  
SURVEYS OF THE  
KINSALE HEAD AND  
SEVEN HEADS GAS  
FIELDS**

# STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REVIEW FOR SITE CLEARANCE SURVEYS OF THE KINSALE HEAD AND SEVEN HEADS GAS FIELDS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ramboll UK Limited (herein referred to as Ramboll) has been commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (herein referred to as DECC) to provide assistance with regards to the statutory assessment of an application by PSE Kinsale Energy Limited (referred to herein as the applicant) for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination, submitted in respect of site clearance surveys required as part of the Kinsale Area Decommissioning Project (KADP).

The applicant has submitted an application for consent to carry out surveys to confirm seabed status on various sites following completion of decommissioning of subsea wells and associated facilities within the Kinsale Head and Seven Heads gas fields as part of the KADP.

The competent authority (DECC) is required to consider the potential effects of such activities on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, with respect to Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC which is transposed in to Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-21 as amended (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations).

This report provides an assessment of the AA Screening Report and Fisheries Assessment Report submitted by the applicant. Public consultation on the application has been undertaken by DECC. All submissions and observations received by the DECC have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this report.

The report provides a conclusion that can be used by the DECC to issue an AA screening determination. The information provided by the applicant is considered to be adequate and up to date for the DECC to issue an AA Screening determination, and no other information is required.

Table 1.1 summarises the overall screening conclusion.

**Table 1.1: Recommendation of Screening Determination**

<b>Outcome of Screening Report Assessment</b>	<b>Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?</b>
No Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, or project is directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site.	<b>No likely significant effects on European Sites have been identified, with regard to the potential connectivity with sites, relevant conservation objectives and the potential for in combination effects. No significant disturbance will be made to Annex IV species described. Appropriate Assessment is not required.</b>
Likely or Potential Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, and project is not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site.	Appropriate Assessment is required because it cannot be excluded, on the basis of the initial assessment (AA screening) provided by the applicant, that the project will have either individually or in combination with other plans or projects a likely significant effect on European sites.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ramboll UK Limited (herein referred to as Ramboll) has been commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (herein referred to as DECC) to provide assistance as competent experts for the statutory assessment of an application by PSE Kinsale Energy Limited (herein referred to as the applicant). The authors hold undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in environmental science (or related disciplines), professional qualifications including chartered status with the Society for the Environment and full membership of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and have long standing experience as expert practitioners within the fields of offshore development, environmental impact assessment and the appraisal of applications in the context of the Birds and Natural Habitat regulations.

This report provides an assessment of the AA Screening Report and Fisheries Assessment Report submitted by the applicant, prepared and approved by Ramboll as competent experts having relevant qualifications and experience.

### 1.1 Documents Reviewed

The following documents have been reviewed to inform this report:

- Kinsale Area Installations - Site Clearance Surveys Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Article 12 Assessment Report. February 2022;
- Kinsale Area Installations - Site Clearance Surveys Pre-survey Fisheries Assessment Report. February 2022;
- Kinsale Area Installations - Site Clearance Surveys Environmental Impact Assessment Screening/Environmental Risk Report. February 2022;
- Letter to Minister. Kinsale Area Decommissioning Project: Application to Conduct Site Clearance Surveys – Kinsale Head & Seven Heads Gasfields. Dated 14 February 2022;
- Application to Conduct Site Survey. Kinsale Area Installations - Site Clearance Surveys; and
- Responses to Request for Further Information - Screening for Appropriate Assessment. Dated 25 May and 14 July 2022.

This report provides a review of the Appropriate Assessment Screening and Pre-survey Fisheries Assessment reports submitted by the applicant, prepared and approved by Ramboll as competent experts having relevant qualifications and experience.

### 1.2 Project Background

The applicant has submitted an application for consent to carry out decommissioning of certain facilities of the Kinsale Head, including Southwest Kinsale and Ballycotton gas fields (referred to as Kinsale Head gas fields), and an application for consent to carry out decommissioning of certain facilities of the Seven Heads gas field. The Kinsale Head gas fields and facilities, together with the Seven Heads gas field and facilities, form part of the greater Kinsale Area gas fields and facilities. Together the decommissioning of the entirety of the Kinsale Area gas fields and facilities is collectively referred to as the Kinsale Area Decommissioning Project (KADP). The applications for the KADP have been supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and three subsequent EIAR Addenda.

In the EIAR for the KADP, Kinsale Energy committed to undertaking a post-decommissioning survey of the wellsites and platform locations for debris clearance. While the effects of this survey were considered in the EIAR for the KADP, greater definition is now available on the

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nature of the equipment that may be used, which is the subject of this application and assessment. Other surveys (covered under Kinsale Head application no. 3 and Seven Heads application no. 2) will confirm the final position and status of the pipelines and umbilicals so that they can be accurately depicted on navigation charts.

Areas which have been subject to decommissioning works as part of the KADP e.g. well sites, platform locations, pipeline and umbilical end locations, will be surveyed to identify any materials which could be hazardous to other sea users and in particular fishing activities. This information will be used to define the scope for any debris clearance required. Survey data will mainly be collected using multibeam echo sounder (MBES) and side scan sonar (SSS), though other equipment including standard vessel echo sounder, and ultra-short baseline acoustic positioning (USBL) either will, or may, be used to assist in the positioning of the vessel and equipment such as a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) deployed from it. The clearance survey will take approximately 14 days and is planned for Q3 / Q4 2022 following the completion of various subsea intervention works. However, the survey could slip to between Q2 and Q3 2023 due to the potential for delays.

All of the survey equipment is non-intrusive and there will be no seabed interaction associated with the survey works. The vessel to complete the survey programme has not yet been selected. For the purposes of this assessment, a representative vessel has been assumed e.g. RV Celtic Explorer, RV Ocean Researcher or equivalent for the offshore survey.

The competent authority (DECC) is required to consider the potential effects of such activities on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, with respect to Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC which is transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-21 as amended (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations). Additionally, as required by Article 12 of the Habitats Directive, the potential impact on the favourable conservation status of species listed in Annex IV of the Directive must also be assessed.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 2.1 Legislative context

This report has been prepared having regard to EC Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (commonly referred to as the Birds Directive) and EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (commonly referred to as the Habitats Directives), the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-21 (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) as amended and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts.

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Article 12 Assessment Report submitted by the applicant confirms that the Project has been screened having regard to the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Birds and Natural Habitats regulations and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts.

### 2.2 Relevant guidance

This report has been prepared having regard to guidance on appropriate assessment for planning authorities, published by the Department for Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in 2009<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the structure and content of this report is based upon the methodology published by the European Communities in 2002<sup>2</sup> and Commission notice C (2021)<sup>3</sup>.

### 2.3 Consultation

#### 2.3.1 Notified Bodies

The following bodies were notified of the application:

- Commissioners of Irish Lights;
- Department of Defence;
- Department of Transport;
- Development Applications Unit, National Parks and Wildlife Service (part of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage);
- Irish Coast Guard (& National Maritime Operations Centre);
- Irish Maritime Administration, Department of Transport;
- Marine Institute, Marine Environment and Food Safety Services;
- Mission Support Facility, Irish Air Corps;
- Naval Headquarters;
- Sea Fisheries Policy Division, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- Sea Fisheries Protection Authority; and
- Ship Source Pollution Prevention Unit, Irish Maritime Administration, Department of Transport.

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<sup>1</sup> DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects - Guidance for Planning Authorities, Revision Notes added 2010, URL: <https://www.npws.ie>

<sup>2</sup> European Communities (2002) Assessment of Plans and Projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EE, URL: <http://ec.europa.eu>

<sup>3</sup> C (2021) 6913 final "Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive: <https://op.europa.eu>

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Five responses were received from the notified bodies:

- Response from the Commissioners of Irish Lights received by the applicant on 4 April 2022 and received by the DECC on 21 April 2022;
- Response from the Irish Maritime Administration Ship Source Pollution Prevention Unit received by the applicant on 2 March 2022 and received by the DECC on 21 April 2022;
- Response from the Development Applications Unit (DAU) received by the applicant on 5 May 2022 and received by the DECC on 14 June 2022;
- Response from the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority received by the DECC on 10 June 2022;
- Response from the Department of transport received by the applicant and the DECC on 5 May 2022. The Department of Transport had no observations to provide in respect of this project.

The following observations were made by the Commissioners of Irish Lights:

- Irish Lights has reviewed this application and have no observations with respect to the project from a safety of navigation perspective.
- A marine notice should be issued detailing the works, duration and vessels involved in works.

The following observations were made by the Irish Maritime Administration Ship Source Pollution Prevention Unit:

- I wish to inform you that (prospective) licensees and their employees and contractors are reminded that they should be aware of ship-source pollution prevention provisions which are in place to protect human health and the marine environment and apply to all shipping activity. These provisions are obligatory independently of particular licence terms and conditions. Under the MARPOL Convention and EU law, as applicable in national law, ships may not cause pollution either by discharge to water or emissions to air, when at sea or when at berth in port. Ships include Floating Production, Storage and Offloading vessels (FPSOs), also called a "unit" or a "system"; and Floating Storage Units, (FSUs). Ships berthed at terminals at sea are also obliged to conform to the law.
- Management of ship waste (mainly oil, hazardous and polluting substances, sewage, garbage and polluting emissions to air) and of all cargo residues must be ensured as required under international (IMO), EU and national law. Under existing provisions ships are obliged to discharge waste and cargo residues at port and ports are obliged to provide adequate facilities for their reception from ships.

The following observations were made by the DAU:

- The proposed clearance and decommissioning survey for Kinsale Field and environs, Co Cork has been evaluated by a Natura Impact Screening document. This assessment does not identify any potential significant effects on the conservation objectives of Natura sites, listed under the European Habitats and Birds Directives, from the operations. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage concurs with this conclusion. The applicant has generated an Article 12 risk assessment for marine mammals likely to be present in the survey area, and concluded that the risk of disturbance or injury is very low and significant effects are not likely for relevant species of marine turtle and cetaceans. The National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage concurs with these conclusions.

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The following observations were made by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. These observations were received in response to the decommissioning application, however they are understood to also be intended for the site clearance surveys application and have therefore been included in this report for completeness:

- SFPA believe that there are no recognisable possible impacts on existing wild fisheries around or adjacent to the proposed area specified in application number FW.8.98 / S0035-01. Kinsale Energy has received consent to decommission the Kinsale Head gas fields and facilities, which are at the end of their productive life. There is no actual material being dumped, instead, the proposed 'dumping at sea' activity as described in application number FW.8.98 / S0035-01 is to retain in place the redundant gas export pipeline, the in-field gas pipelines, the in-field umbilicals and umbilical contents at the locations in which they were installed. The gas wells are being plugged, the pipelines filled with seawater and the platforms and subsea structures are being removed. One of the final decommissioning activities will be the placement of rock protection (rock berms) on the ends of the pipelines and umbilicals which might form a hazard to fishing activities.
- There are no shellfish growing areas within the proposed area or adjacent to the area. SFPA believe that there are no recognisable possible impacts on shellfish growing areas around or adjacent to the proposed area specified in application number FW.8.98 / S00
- SFPA believe that there are no recognisable possible impacts on seafood safety due to the activities involved in the process of decommissioning the Kinsale Head Gas fields and facilities described by Kinsale Energy in application number FW.8.98 / S0035-01 35-01

Appropriate regard has been given to the issues raised in these submissions, and relevant provisions are included in the mitigation and management commitments in section 5 of this report.

### 2.3.2 Public Consultation

The application was advertised by the DECC on their website on 4 March 2022 following receipt of the application on 14 February 2022. Following subsequent receipt of all required documentation the application completed validation on 28 February 2022. Invitations for submissions were advertised by DECC to be received by close of business on 20 April 2022 to ensure consideration by the Minister. No responses were received from the public in response to this consultation.

Following review of the application documents the DECC submitted requests for further information to the applicant. Further consultation was held on the Responses to Request for Further Information from 30 May 2022 to 15 June 2022 and 20 July to 4 August 2022. Commissioners of Irish Lights provided a response (dated 03 August 2022) that it had no observations to provide in respect of this consultation. No other responses were received in respect of this consultation.

### 3. REVIEW OF APPLICANT AA SCREENING REPORT

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the key project information.

**Table 3.1: Project Information**

Project Title:	Kinsale Area Installations - Site Clearance Surveys
Project Type:	Post-Decommissioning Site Clearance Surveys
Applicant:	PSE Kinsale Energy Limited
Exploration Licence Reference:	Kinsale Head Petroleum Lease (OPL 1) Seven Heads Petroleum Lease
Date AA Screening Report Received:	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2022

#### 3.1 Determining whether a Project should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment

Under Paragraph 42(6) of the Habitats Regulations, the DECC (as the relevant competent authority) shall determine that an AA is required, where it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening, that the project, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would have a significant effect on a European Site.

Where it is determined that AA is required for the project, the applicant must submit a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

#### 3.2 Description of the Project

The AA screening process involves describing the individual elements of the project that are likely to give rise to impacts on the conservation objectives and/or qualifying features of a Natura site.

Table 3.2 provides a review of the applicant's description of the project.

**Table 3.2: Description of Project AA Checklist**

<p><b>Brief Project Description:</b></p> <p>Areas which have been subject to decommissioning works as part of the Kinsale Area Decommissioning Project e.g. well sites, platform locations, pipeline and umbilical end locations, will be surveyed to identify any materials which could be hazardous to other sea users and, in particular, fishing activities. This information will be used to define the scope for any debris clearance required. Survey data will mainly be collected using multibeam echo sounder (MBES) and side scan sonar (SSS), though other equipment including standard vessel echo sounder, and ultra-short baseline acoustic positioning (USBL) either will, or may, be used to assist in the positioning of the vessel and equipment such as a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) deployed from it. The clearance survey will take approximately 14 days and is planned for Q3 / Q4 2022 following the completion of various subsea intervention works. However, the survey could slip to between Q2 and Q3 2023 due to the potential for delays.</p> <p>All of the survey equipment is non-intrusive and there will be no seabed interaction associated with the survey works. The vessel to complete the survey programme has not yet been selected. For the purposes of this assessment, a representative vessel has been assumed e.g. RV Celtic Explorer, RV Ocean Researcher or equivalent for the offshore survey.</p>
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Project Element	Have these features of the project been identified by the applicant? (If not, please provide details)
Spatial Extent (size, scale, area etc)	<p><b>Yes</b> – The survey area has been described as located off the coast of Co. Cork, extending from the landfall of the export pipeline at Powerhead to a distance of up to 47km from the nearest coast. Areas which have been subject to decommissioning works e.g. well sites, platform locations, pipeline and umbilical end locations, will be surveyed to identify any materials which could be hazardous to other sea users. The area and spatial extent of seabed clearance surveys, in relation to pipelines, umbilicals and platforms, is presented as Figure 2.1.</p> <p>Figures presenting the location and coordinates of the site clearance surveys have been provided by the applicant in the application documents (Application to Conduct Site Survey – Appendix A)..</p>
Supporting Infrastructure	<p><b>Not applicable</b> – no supporting infrastructure is directly required for this project.</p>
Transportation Requirements	<p><b>Yes</b> – One survey vessel will be used. The vessel to complete the survey programme has not yet been selected. For the purposes of the assessment, a representative vessel has been assumed e.g. RV Celtic Explorer, RV Ocean Researcher or equivalent for the offshore survey.</p> <p>It is recommended that the applicant provide the specifications of the survey vessel and equipment once selected, to ensure that the assumptions used in the AA Screening Report remain valid.</p>
Physical changes that will result from the project (e.g. from excavation, dredging)	<p><b>Not applicable</b> - All of the survey equipment is non-intrusive and there will be no seabed interaction associated with the survey works. Therefore, the potential for physical disturbance effects has been discounted.</p>
Emissions and Waste	<p><b>Yes</b> - The main output from the surveying equipment and vessel is underwater noise emissions, which have been detailed for the potential survey equipment; no waste is expected to be released into the marine environment and will be appropriately disposed of onshore; leakages / spillages are highly unlikely to occur. There will be minor and temporary atmospheric emissions from the survey vessel during transit and working in the field.</p> <p>The applicant has noted that small quantities of vessel waste (litter) will be generated and will be controlled appropriately on board and disposed of on shore. Any waste generated aligns with MARPOL requirements and an adequate description of handling, management, and reduction measures is provided</p>
Resource Requirements (e.g. water abstraction)	<p><b>Yes</b> – the resource requirements are standard for survey vessel operations and are considered to be minimal.</p>
Duration of each phase e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Construction</li> <li>• Phase 2 Operation</li> <li>• Phase 3 Decommissioning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes</b> - The clearance survey will take approximately 14 days and is planned for Q3 / Q4 2022 following the completion of various subsea intervention works. However, the survey could slip to between Q2 and Q3 2023 due to the potential for delays.</p>

The AA screening must consider the effects of the project in combination with other plans and other projects in making the screening assessment.

Table 3.3 provides a review of the in-combination assessment undertaken by the applicant.

**Table 3.3: In-combination Assessment**

<b>Brief Description of identified plans / projects that might act in-combination (Operational, Consented and Proposed projects) with the proposed project:</b>		
<p>The applicant’s AA screening report considers the following projects that might act in-combination with the proposed project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Foreshore Licences have been applied for in relation to offshore wind farm site investigation work in the territorial waters off Cork. The application most of relevance to the survey is for the Emerald project, though there is also some overlap with the survey area and the Inis Ealga project area. However, duration and scale of the surveys means there is considerable scope to avoid interactions;</li> <li>• Future development associated with the Barryroe oil discovery. An application was made to conduct a site survey within the Barryroe licence area (EL 1/11), which was completed in September 2019 and a further subsequent survey application was made in August 2019 for an area covering a proposed appraisal well ('K'), which overlaps parts of the Seven Heads field. The survey was completed in November 2021 and thus interactions are not considered possible.</li> </ul>		
<b>Project Element</b>	<b>Is the predicted magnitude / extent of identified likely in-combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Spatial Extent (define boundaries for examination of in-combination effects)	Yes	<p>The applicant has not explicitly defined the spatial boundaries for examination of in-combination impacts. Applicant makes reference to Figure 3.9 showing the overlap between the survey area and the Inis Ealga project area, however this is not included within the AA Screening Report (it is included in the EIA Screening Report).</p> <p>The applicant has stated that the duration and scale of the surveys is such that there is considerable scope to avoid interactions with other projects which could give rise to in-combination effects.</p> <p>Applicant has stated that they will maintain awareness and dialogue with the developers of both wind farms, and any further proposals in relation to the Barryroe field, to ensure that activities do not proceed in a matter which could lead to cumulative impacts</p>
Impact Identification (e.g. noise, chemical emissions etc.)	Yes	<p><b><u>Future Developments –</u></b></p> <p>The applicant has considered the potential for in-combination and cumulative effects associated with relevant future planned developments.</p> <p><b><u>Existing Activities –</u></b></p> <p>Within Section 4.3 In-combination effects, the applicant has not explicitly identified the impacts that would arise from other projects that may act in-combination. However, impacts have been identified elsewhere</p>

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		<p>(e.g. Section 4.2.2), and it has been recognised that there is potential for in-combination effects arising from activities such as fisheries and shipping in the wider Kinsale area.</p> <p>Following receipt of further information requested from the applicant, the applicant has concluded that the addition of one survey vessel to the area for a period of up to two weeks, in the context of existing levels of traffic in the area, is considered negligible and is unlikely to represent a significant source of in-combination effect in the wider area. As such, the information provided is considered sufficient.</p> <p>It should be acknowledged that unclear presentation (i.e. not within the dedicated Section 4.3 In-combination effects) of the consideration/assessment of the potential for cumulative effects arising from the site clearance surveys in-combination with existing activities within the area hinders the ability of a reader to clearly consider the likely cumulative effects.</p>
<p>Pathway Identification (e.g. via water, air etc)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><b><u>Future developments –</u></b></p> <p>The applicant has considered the potential for in-combination and cumulative effects associated with relevant future planned developments.</p> <p><b><u>Existing Activities –</u></b></p> <p>Within Section 4.3 In-combination effects, it has been recognised that there is potential for in-combination effects arising from activities such as fisheries and shipping. However, no pathways have been specifically mentioned in reference to activities in the wider Kinsale area.</p> <p>Following receipt of further information from the applicant, it is determined that although impact pathways have only been very briefly discussed, when considering the report as a whole, the consideration of potential pathways for effects arising from the site clearance survey activities acting in-combination with existing activities in the wider Kinsale area by the applicant and considered and presented in the wider Section 4 are considered sufficient.</p> <p>It should be acknowledged that unclear presentation (i.e. not within the dedicated Section 4.3 In-combination effects) of the consideration/assessment of the potential pathways for in-combination effects arising from the site clearance surveys in-combination with existing activities within</p>

		<p>the area hinders the ability of a reader to clearly consider the likely in-combination effects.</p> <p>Kinsale Energy have stated that they will maintain awareness and dialogue with developers and any further proposals to ensure activities will not proceed in a way that cumulative impacts could occur.</p>
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**3.3 Identification of relevant European sites and species**

The applicant’s AA screening report considers the designated European sites that may be impacted by the project, including consideration of direct, indirect and in combination effects. As projects that lie out with European sites may still have an impact upon their integrity, particularly in a marine environment where the environment is extremely dynamic and species may be highly mobile, identifying potential zones of influence surrounding the European sites is a key component.

Appendix 1 identifies the relevant European Sites and species that might be impacted by the project. The relevant sites in the report have been reviewed and the applicant meets the requirements of:

- Identifying the Natura Site / Annex IV species;
- Listing the qualifying interests / Annex IV species;
- Considering direct impacts to the Natura site / Annex IV species;
- Considering indirect impacts to the Natura site / Annex IV species;
- Considering potential zones of influence on the Natura site / Annex IV; and

The consideration of in combination effects.

Appendix 1 identifies the relevant European Sites and species that might be impacted by the project.

**3.4 Screening for Appropriate Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on Natura sites and adverse effects on Annex IV species.**

Table 3.5 provides a summary of the likely significant effects identified for the project alone and in combination with other projects considering, *inter alia*, the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the sites concerned by the relevant project and the project location.

**Table 3.5: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects AA Screening**

<p><b>Summary of likely significant effects</b></p>
<p>The applicant’s AA Screening Report identified the following impact sources for further consideration in the determination of likely significant effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical presence of the survey vessel;</li> <li>• Underwater noise including from the vessel and survey equipment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do you agree with the applicant’s AA screening assessment? Why?</b></p>
<p>Yes. We agree with the applicant’s AA screening assessment for the following reasons:</p>

- No LSE was concluded based on low to moderate sensitivities to shipping traffic in the relevant species, and short/low magnitude effects that would represent negligible disturbance over other vessels in the area based on data for ISOEA4;
- We agree with the premise that additional vessel traffic would be negligible over that already present in the region based on ISOA4 data;
- We agree with the use of the revised Southall (2019) criteria in regard to underwater noise and marine mammals. We further agree with the determination that PTS is highly unlikely. The proportion of marine mammal populations likely to be within a close enough distance of the noise source at which the threshold for PTS would be exceeded is likely to be minimal. This is well-founded, following additional clarification from the applicant in relation to distance of potential disturbance from the noise source. Based on harbour porpoise having the lowest threshold criteria of species/functional hearing groups for the onset of PTS at 202dB re 1µPa it is considered that given the source characteristics and evidence of propagation presented above, the potential sources in the planned site clearance surveys will either not generate source levels of this amplitude, or will not result in received sound levels exceeding this threshold beyond more than a few metres from the source and/or not overlap frequencies of greatest sensitivity.

### 3.5 Screening Determination

If significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain then the DECC must request the applicant provides a NIS in order for the DECC to undertake an AA as the competent authority.

The applicant may also choose to recommence the screening process with a modified project that removes or avoids elements that posed risks of likely significant effects and triggered the need for an AA.

Tables 3.6 and 3.7 provide a summary of Ramboll’s recommendation to enable DECC to make a screening determination.

**Table 3.6: Summary of Applicant’s Screening Report Review**

Is the plan or project directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site?	<b>No</b>
Is the project or plan likely to have significant effects on the environment?	<b>No</b>
Is an AA required? (Yes / No / More Information Required?)	<b>No</b>
What further information is required to inform AA Screening Opinion (if any)?	<b>N/A</b>

**Table 3.7: Recommendation of Screening Determination**

<b>Outcome of Screening Report Assessment</b>	<b>Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?</b>
No Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, or project is directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site.	<b>No likely significant effects on European Sites have been identified, with regard to the potential connectivity with sites, relevant conservation objectives and the potential for in combination effects. No significant disturbance will be made to Annex IV species</b>

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Outcome of Screening Report Assessment	Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?
	<b>described. Appropriate Assessment is not required.</b>
<p><del>Likely or Potential Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, and project is not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site.</del></p>	<p><del>Appropriate Assessment is required because it cannot be excluded, on the basis of the initial assessment (AA screening) provided by the applicant, that the project will have either individually or in combination with other plans or projects a likely significant effect on European sites.</del></p>

## APPENDIX 1: IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES/SPECIES AA SCREENING CHECKLIST

<b>Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor</b>	<b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b>	<b>Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b>
<b>Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC (000101)</b>	73 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Blasket Islands SAC (0002172)</b>	188 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (0003000)</b>	260 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Bandon River SAC (0002171)</b>	69 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (0002170)</b>	26 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>River Barrow and River Nore SAC (0002162)</b>	92 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>

<b>Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor</b>	<b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b>	<b>Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b>
<b>Lower River Suir SAC (0002137)</b>	52 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Slaney River Valley SAC (0000781)</b>	123 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Bristol Channel Approaches/Dynesfeydd Môr Hafren SAC (UK0030396)</b>	185 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>North Anglesey Marine /Gogledd Môn Forol SAC (UK0030398)</b>	294 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>West Wales Marine/Gorllewin Cymru Forol SAC (UK0030397)</b>	166 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>North Channel SAC (UK0030398)</b>	368 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Ballymacoda Bay SPA (0004023)</b>	21 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>

<b>Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor</b>	<b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b>	<b>Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b>
<b>Ballycotton Bay SPA (0004022)</b>	11 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Courtmacsherry Bay SPA (IE0004219)</b>	31 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Cork Harbour SPA (0004030)</b>	5 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Dungarvan Harbour SPA (0004032)</b>	47 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (0004192)</b>	39 km	<b>39 km</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Old Head of Kinsale SPA (0004021)</b>	25 km	<b>25 km</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Saltee Islands SPA (0004002)</b>	112 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>

<b>Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor</b>	<b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b>	<b>Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b>
<b>Puffin Island SPA (0004003)</b>	150 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Cliffs of Moher SPA (0004005)</b>	310 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Skelligs SPA (0004007)</b>	160km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Blasket Islands SPA (0004008)</b>	187 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>The Bull and The Cow Rocks SPA (0004066)</b>	136 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Lambey Island SPA (0004069)</b>	282 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Magharee Islands SPA (0004125)</b>	238 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>

<b>Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor</b>	<b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b>	<b>Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b>
<b>Dingle Peninsula SPA (0004153)</b>	196 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Iveragh Peninsula SPA (0004154)</b>	147 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Beara Peninsula SPA (0004155)</b>	123 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Deenish Island and Scariff Island SPA (0004175)</b>	146 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Kerry Head SPA (0004189)</b>	254 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Skomer, Skokholm and the Seas off Pembrokeshire / Sgomer, Sgogwm a Moroedd Penfro SPA (UK9014051)</b>	131 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>

<b>Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor</b>	<b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b>	<b>Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b>	<b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b>
<b>Grassholm SPA (UK9014041)</b>	174 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Irish Sea Front SPA (UK9020328)</b>	315 km	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements.</b>
<b>Copeland Islands SPA (UK9020291)</b>	422 km	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements. Arctic tern not included; however, it is recognised this is due to the distance of the Project site from the SPA.</b>
<b>Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA (UK9013121)</b>	254 km	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Consideration meets minimum requirements. Chough not included; however, it is recognised this is due to the distance of the Project site from the SPA.</b>

