

Submission HLG 00527-22: Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination on Foreshore Licence Application FS007161 Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta (FST) for Site Investigations of the offshore array area at Sceirde Rocks, Co. Galway

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

AUTHOR:
OWNER:
REVIEWERS:



DIVISION: Foreshore
DECISION BY:

Final comment

Approved by Minister Burke

Action required

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

Executive summary

Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta (FST) have applied for a Foreshore Licence under the Foreshore Act to conduct site investigations off County Galway to inform the engineering and design of a potential Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm.

As part of the assessment 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, 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 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.

Detailed information

Green Investment Group Ltd (GIG) are the new owners of Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta (FST) and are progressing the development of the Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm.

Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm is a fixed bottom offshore wind farm off the West Coast of Ireland and under the Transitional Protocol is recognised as a Relevant or Phase One project. As such, Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm is a high priority project and it is anticipated that this project will be prioritised through the Foreshore License process, the MAC award process and subsequently will be one of the first projects eligible for the first ORESS-1 auction. Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm will be targeting an accelerated delivery programme for this offshore project to meet government renewable energy targets pre-2030.

This application specifically relates to a foreshore license for site investigation activities in the wind farm array area only. The objective of the proposed Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm site investigations is to determine geotechnical, geophysical, metocean, wind resource and benthic characteristics within the Foreshore Licence Area. Details of the site investigations, and indicative locations, can be found in the 'Schedule of Activities' document submitted with this application.

If the Foreshore Licence Application activities, together with desktop studies and stakeholder engagement indicate the feasibility of developing an offshore wind farm, the project will be progressed at that point in accordance with the National Marine Planning Framework and other relevant legislation including the new consenting regime for offshore renewable energy being legislated for through the Maritime Area Planning Act (MAP).

This Foreshore Licence Area in this application covers only the offshore array area. An additional foreshore licence application for the required offshore export cable route has been submitted separately (FS007543 Link to Department website: [gov.ie - FS007543 Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta - Site Investigations for the proposed Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm \(Export Cable Corridor\) \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/foreshore-notice/7a077-fuinneamh-sceirde-teoranta-site-investigations-for-the-proposed-sceirde-rocks-offshore-wind-farm/))

Environmental Assessment

As part of the assessment of this foreshore licence application, the Department's Marine Advisor (Environment) undertook a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (stage 1 screening) of the likelihood of significant impact on European sites from the application for a Foreshore Site Investigation Licence.

Application documents submitted by Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta (FST) were examined by Department's Marine Advisor and informed the Screening for Appropriate Assessment. These are:

- Application Form (**Tab 04**)
- Foreshore Licence Map (**Tab 05**)
- Schedule of Activities (**Tab 06**)
- Report to inform AA Screening (**Tab 07**)
- Environmental Assessment and EIA Screening Report (**Tab 08**)

The Department's Foreshore Notice website, currently containing the Application Form and the Map is at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/foreshore-notice/7a077-fuinneamh-sceirde-teoranta-site-investigations-for-the-proposed-sceirde-rocks-offshore-wind-farm/>

Environmental Report

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report was completed by the Department's Marine Advisor (Environment) on the 8th November 2022. It concluded that likely significant effects as a result of this project, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, on the conservation objectives of European sites cannot be excluded and therefore an Appropriate Assessment is required.

The following recommendation has been made in relation to the Screening for Appropriate Assessment 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 Site Investigation surveys off the coast of County Galway individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effects on any European site.

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 the integrity of European sites, in view of the said sites' conservation objectives.

This determination is based on the location, scale, extent and duration of the proposed site investigations, and has not taken account of measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species

Article 12 of Directive (92/43/EE) (as amended) (Habitats Directive): Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species likely to occur in Irish waters.

The applicant provided a Risk Assessment for Annex IV species in its Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report. The Risk Assessment has been extracted and shown at **Tab 9** This report stated that the protocols in the Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made Sound (DAHG 2014) will be followed at all times. It therefore concluded that it is very unlikely that any Annex IV species will be injured or disturbed as a result of the proposed works.

The Department's Marine Advisor (Environment) reviewed the this report and stated that having considered the application by Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta and the applicant's Risk Assessment of Annex IV species agrees with and accepts this conclusion.

It should be notes that this risk assessment is not part of the Article 6.3 assessment and therefore identification and inclusion of mitigation measures within the risk assessment is appropriated at this stage.

A copy of all the material which informed the Screening for Appropriate Assessment report is contained in the tabs below.

Tab 01 contains the **Screening for Appropriate Assessment Determination** statement, prepared by the Department's Marine Advisor (Environment), for **Ministerial Determination and signing**.

Tab 02 contains the **Marine Advisor Screening Stage Environmental Report**, prepared by the Department's Marine Advisor (Environment) recommending the adoption of the above report.

Tab 03 contains the **Screening for Appropriate Assessment**, prepared by Department's Marine Advisor (Environment)

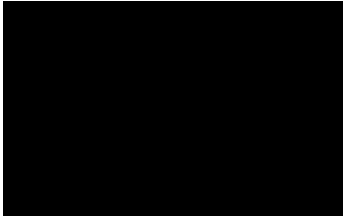
Submitted for Decision and Signature.

Related submissions

There are no related submissions.

User details

INVOLVED:



READ RECEIPT:

