

[REDACTED]
Foreshore Unit
Department of Housing, Local Government and
Heritage
Newtown Road,
Wexford,
Co Wexford

SSE Renewables
Red Oak South
South County Business Park
Leopardstown
Dublin 18
D18 W688

6 March 2023

Sent via email: [REDACTED]@housing.gov.ie

Dear [REDACTED]

SSE Renewables submitted an application to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning (now known as the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) in March 2019 to undertake geophysical, geotechnical and environmental site investigation works off Bunmahon Bay, County Waterford and Bannow Bay, County Wexford. This letter responds to the public submission that was received in relation to our Foreshore Licence Application (Reference: FS006983) and in response to the statutory consultation that was undertaken between 30 November 2022 and 9 January 2023 (in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Habitats) Regulations 2011).

We would like to thank this opportunity to thank the respondent that took the time to review our Foreshore Licence Applications and provide this submission during the statutory consultation period. We welcome the observations made and provide our responses as follows:

The public submission that was received had two main concerns: namely,

- 1) The proposed plan or project is likely to adversely affect the integrity of a unique cluster of Natura 2000 sites (also known as 'European sites') on the south Wexford heritage coastline by virtue of its in-combination impact; and,
- 2) The application is premature with regard to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

In answer to these concerns:

- 1) Consideration was given to all other planned activities in the area (at the time of application) that could interact with the proposed survey to cause cumulative impacts (which the response has referred to as in combination impacts). The assessment identified the potential for a cumulative effect with regards to underwater sound but concluded the cumulative effect would be temporary and slight. Further as part of the mitigation proposed, it was noted that efforts will be made to coordinate survey activities in a manner that reduces cumulative effects. From the time of submission to the time of consultation, additional Foreshore Licence Applications have been made which could result in a cumulative effect should works occur concurrently. It should be noted that concurrent site investigations in effective proximity are unlikely due to the risk of equipment interference. The public

submission noted six Foreshore Licence Applications and referenced the Marine Adviser Environment Screening Stage Report for this application.


Notwithstanding, all proposed mitigation will be implemented including coordination of survey activities in a manner that reduces cumulative effects and implementation of the DAHG 'Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made sound sources in Irish Waters'. It is also noted that any applications (i.e. for planning permission or for a foreshore licence application) that have been submitted after this foreshore licence application (Reference: FS006983) will have assessed the cumulative effect of that proposal in relation to this proposal.

The Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage will conduct an Appropriate Assessment of the activities proposed in this Foreshore Licence Application. Information to assist the assessment has been provided in Appendix A and Appendix B of the supporting document. The Screening Determination that has been signed by the Minister along with the Screening Report from the Independent Environmental Consultant, (Roughan O'Donovan were appointed on behalf of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) and the supporting statement from the Marine Advisor has also been published on the webpage for this Foreshore Licence Application (available on the DHLGH application page under FS006983: SSE Renewables Celtic Sea).

- 2) The supporting document assessed the potential effects of the proposed site investigations on designated sites, protected under European and national legislation. At the time of responding, pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Marine Protected Areas Bill 2022 is ongoing. Once enacted MPAs could be selected and designated under the Marine Protected Areas Act 2023 subject to the relevant legislative provisions. Given the timing of the application that was made and noting that this legislation has not yet been ratified, MPAs could not therefore be considered within the assessment that was undertaken. Notwithstanding, it is noted that the submission has stated that 'Natura sites are de facto Marine Protected Areas' and it should be considered that the impacts on those European sites have been assessed as part of the documentation submitted to support the Foreshore Licence Application.

We would like to thank the Department for their ongoing support with this Foreshore Licence Application. We look forward to hearing from you and thank you for taking the time to consider these responses and the submissions that have been received.

Yours sincerely,



Consents Manager