

**REPORT OF THE MARINE LICENCE VETTING COMMITTEE (MLVC)**

**on**

**FORESHORE LICENCE APPLICATION FOR GEOTECHNICAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SITE INVESTIGATION WORKS (FS006811).**

**APPLICANT: EIRGRID**

**Mr. Barry McDonald M.Eng.  
Marine Licence Vetting Committee  
11 May 2018**

## **EirGrid– Foreshore Licence application for geotechnical and environmental site investigations (FS006811).**

### **Project Description**

EirGrid has submitted an application for a Foreshore Licence to carry out geotechnical and environmental site investigation surveys on the foreshore along 2 No. routes off the south coast of Ireland with landfall at Ballinawilling Strand, Redbarn Beach and Claycastle Beach, Co. Cork.

The proposed site investigation surveys form part of the works investigating the feasibility of installing a subsea power cable interconnector between Ireland and France.

As part of this project, geophysical, geotechnical and environmental site investigation surveys in this area were carried out during 2014 and 2015 by the applicant under separate Foreshore Licences (FS 006243 & FS 006446). Following a review of the findings of these surveys, it was determined by EirGrid that further geophysical, geotechnical and environmental marine surveys along additional routes were required to provide further options for the proposed cable route.

Geophysical site investigation surveys along the additional routes were completed in October 2017 under Foreshore Licence FS 006722 and the current proposal relates to the carrying out of geotechnical and environmental surveys along these same route corridors to complete the site investigations.

It is proposed to carry out the surveys seaward of the three landfalls, at Ballinawilling Strand, Redbarn Beach and Claycastle Beach in east Cork, within two survey corridors which converge with the previous survey corridors close to the 12nm limit. The survey corridors are shown on the following Drawing submitted by the applicant:

- Drawing No. XDN-MAP-GP0002-002 “Celtic Interconnector Geotechnical & Environmental Survey FS006811 Site Location Map”, Rev 0, dated 20/12/2017.

The proposed geotechnical and environmental survey is identical in nature and methodology to the previous geotechnical and environmental survey carried out in 2015. The proposed survey methodology is set out in the “Schedule of Works” presented at Appendix A of the Application form and includes:

- Drilling of a total of 9 bore holes and / or excavation of 9 trial pits in the intertidal area at the landfall locations. The maximum depth of the boreholes and trial pits would be 5m and 3m respectively. The trial pits will typically be 3m x 1m in size whilst bore hole will be approximately 10cm in

diameter. The trial pits will be backfilled using only native material and the borehole will not be backfilled but instead will re-fill naturally. Thermal resistivity / conductivity testing would be carried out at these locations.

- Vibrocoring and Cone Penetration Testing (CPT) at approximately 1000m intervals in the area from the LWM to the 10m LAT depth contour. It is anticipated that a minimum of 7 vibrocores and 7 CPTs would be collected in this area. The cores would have a nominal diameter of 75mm with a maximum depth of 5m. The penetrometer would have a maximum depth penetration of 5m. In the event of a failure to achieve sample recovery using Vibrocoring or Cone Penetration Testing methodology a rock corer may be deployed in order to obtain samples of the required length and quality at or in close proximity to the site of any failed sampling. In the shallow water survey area, rock coring may be performed using a drilling rig deployed upon a Jack up barge which would typically have an operating water depth limit of 16m. Thermal resistance/conductivity testing is required upon soil horizons identified during the geotechnical shallow water survey. Grab sampling and still / video photography will also be carried out in this area at a total of 3 locations. Grab samples will be collected as required for aiding side scan sonar interpretation.
- Vibrocoring and Cone Penetration Testing (CPT) at approximately 1500m intervals in the area from the 10m LAT depth contour to the 12nm limit. It is estimated that a total of 39 vibrocores and 39 CPTs would be collected in this area. In the event of a failure to achieve sample recovery using Vibrocoring or Cone Penetration Testing methodology a rock corer may be deployed in order to obtain samples of the required length and quality at or in close proximity to the site of any failed sampling. In this survey area any rock coring may be performed using a compensated drilling rig operating from a dedicated vessel or by way of a seabed drilling rig. Thermal resistance/conductivity testing is required upon soil horizons identified during the geotechnical offshore survey Grab sampling at approximately 15 – 20Km intervals will also be carried out in this area at a total of 6 locations.

Indicative locations for Vibrocoring, Cone Penetration Testing (CPT), borehole drilling and trail pit excavation are shown in the following drawings submitted by the applicant

- “Celtic Interconnector Foreshore Licence Map 1 Redbarn Beach & Claycastle Beach”, dated 20/12/2017
- “Celtic Interconnector Foreshore Licence Map 2 Ballinwilling Strand”, dated 20/12/2017
- “Celtic Interconnector Foreshore Licence Map 3 Offshore Survey Area”, dated 20/12/2017

It is anticipated that the site investigations would be completed within approximately 30 days, subject to suitable weather conditions.

The project is not of a class that requires the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement.

The project is not located within a Natura 2000 site. There are 5 Natura 2000 sites located within 10Km of the proposed survey area. These sites included:

- Ballycotton Bay SPA (Site Code 004022)
- Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (Site Code 000077)
- Ballymacoda SPA (Site Code 004023)
- Blackwater River (Cork / Waterford) SAC (Site Code 002170)
- Blackwater Estuary SPA (Site Code 004028)

A separate assessment of the impacts of the proposed site investigations on the Conservation Objectives of these Natura 2000 site has been carried out.

### **Public Consultation**

A public notice concerning this application was published in the “Irish Examiner” and “Evening Echo” on January 18<sup>th</sup> 2018. The application documents were made available for inspection at Ballycotton Garda Station, Ballycotton, Co. Cork, Youghal Garda Station, O’Brien’s Place, Youghal, Co. Cork and Midleton Garda Station, Midleton, Co. Cork for the required period of twenty one (21) working days (January 18<sup>th</sup> to February 16<sup>th</sup> 2018).

One (1) public submission was received on foot of the public consultation expressing concerns about possible impacts on shrimp gear.

### **Prescribed Bodies Consultation:**

Observations on the project were received from this Department’s Water and Marine Advisor, the Development Applications Unit of DCHG (Nature Conservation and Underwater Archaeology), Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division of DAFM, Marine Institute, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, Marine Survey Office, and Cork County Council.

There were no objections to the proposed site investigations. IFI commented on potential impacts on fish, including migratory salmon and lamprey species, and sea-angling.

### **Issues Considered**

The following documents were considered:

- Foreshore Licence Application submitted by EirGrid and accompanying Attachments including:
  - Attachment A: Schedule of Survey Works
  - Attachment B: Site Location Map
  - Attachment C: Foreshore Licence Map
  - Attachment D: Protected Sites with 10Km of the project site
  - Attachment E: Stage 1 – Screening for Appropriate Assessment
  - Attachment F: Marine Mammal Risk Assessment
  - Attachment G; EirGrid Company Information (for administrative use by Foreshore Section only).
  - Attachment H: Pre-application consultation with stakeholders
  
- Written submissions from the Water and Marine Advisory Unit of DHPLG, the Development Applications Unit of DCHG (Nature Conservation and Underwater Archaeology), Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division of DAFM, Marine Institute, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, Marine Survey Office and Cork County Council.
  
- Applicant’s responses to the Prescribed Body submissions.
  
- One (1) public submission and the Applicant’s response to the submission.

### **MLVC Conclusions**

On the basis of the information provided by the applicant and the observations provided by the State Bodies as listed above, the MLVC concludes that, subject to compliance with the specific conditions set out below, the proposed works would not have a significant negative impact on navigation, fishing, the marine environment or protected species, would not impact on other legitimate uses or users of the foreshore area in question and would not have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the adjacent Natura 2000 sites. The MLVC, therefore, recommends that a licence be granted.

### **Proposed Licence Conditions**

1. The Licensee shall use that part of the Foreshore the subject matter of this licence for the purposes as outlined in the application and for no other purposes whatsoever.
  
2. During the course of the works in the intertidal area public access onto and along the adjacent foreshore shall be maintained.
  
3. No refuelling of equipment, machinery or plant shall take place on the foreshore.

4. No storage of machinery or plant shall take place on the foreshore.
5. The works shall be conducted in accordance with Attachment A: Schedule of Survey Works, Dated: 20/12/2017 and all documents submitted with the application.
6. Intertidal and near-shore works shall be conducted outside of the bathing season (June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>) and on weekdays only. If works are required within the Bathing Season or on weekends the Licensee is required to get the prior consent of Cork County Council to ensure no undue impact on beach users.
7. The Licensee shall notify the following Departments of Cork County Council in advance of the survey works: the East Cork Municipal District; Divisional Services South Cork (Beach Management) and Environment Department.
8. The Licensee shall notify the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government at least 14 days in advance of the commencement of the works on the foreshore.
9. In addition to a Marine Notice, the Licensee shall forward a proposal of work to the Deputy Chief Surveyor of the Marine Survey Office which should include details of all vessels to be employed in the venture.
10. The Licensee shall ensure that all vessels/floating plant have appropriate certification from the Marine Survey Office.
11. The Licensee shall consult with the local Harbour Master prior to the commencement of any works.”
12. The Licensee shall be fully compliant with the requirements set out in Section 4.3.4 of the NPWS (2014) “Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made Sound sources in Irish Waters”. This document is available to download at: <http://www.npws.ie/marine/bestpracticeguidelines/>
13. The geotechnical investigation works on the intertidal foreshore shall be subject to full archaeological monitoring.
14. A suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist shall be engaged to carry out the monitoring.
15. An excavation licence shall be applied for from the Licensing Section, National Monuments Service, to cover the monitoring and a detailed method statement shall accompany the licence application.

16. No archaeological monitoring is required for the subtidal geotechnical investigation works as currently proposed, if the proposed locations for geotechnical investigation targets change so that they come within 30m of anomalies or wreck sites as identified, then archaeological monitoring shall be required as detailed at conditions 13,14 and 15 above.
17. In accordance with statutory obligations under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004 all discoveries that are cultural in nature or potential, including those of wrecks, shall be reported to the National Monuments Service or National Museum of Ireland within 4 days. A protocol for such reporting shall be put in place to satisfy this statutory requirement.
18. During the course of the works the Licensee shall comply with all relevant Health & Safety legislation.