

## **Appropriate Assessment Report**

### **Hibernian Wind Power Ltd - Marine Site Investigations in the Irish Sea off Kilmichael Point, Co. Wexford (FS006788)**

#### **Project Description:**

Hibernian Wind Power Ltd has submitted an application for a Foreshore Licence to carry out site investigations in the south-western Irish Sea in the general vicinity of Kilmichael Point, Co. Wexford. The location of the proposed site investigation area is shown in the following drawing submitted by the applicant:

- Drawing number QS-000247-01-D460-001, "Foreshore Licence Map Admiralty Chart", dated 05/01/2018.

It is proposed that the site investigations will include:

- Archaeological Survey – This will include a desk study, identification and assessment of metallic and other targets using magnetometer and identification and assessment of targets using side-scan sonar and diving as required.
- Geophysical Survey - This will involve the use of multi-beam echo sounder, magnetometer, sub-bottom profiler and side-scan sonar
- Geotechnical survey – This will involve cone penetration testing as well as the collection of grab samples and vibro-cores. It is proposed to carry out 200 cone penetration tests and collect 200 vibro-cores and 80 grab samples within the study area, the locations of which would be subject to the results of the geophysical and archaeological survey.
- Deployment of three wind measuring and three current measuring devices

The indicative location of cone penetration testing and the collection of vibro-cores, as well as the proposed locations for the deployment of wind measuring and current measuring devices are shown in the following drawings submitted by the applicant:

- Drawing number QS-000247-01-D460-002, Foreshore Investigation Licence – Study Area OSI Discovery Series, dated 05/01/2018.
- Drawing number QS-000247-01-D460-003, Foreshore Investigation Licence – Study Area Admiralty Chart, dated 05/01/2018.

It is intended that the Geophysical and Geotechnical Surveys would be of up to three (3) months duration. The Archaeological Survey would be of approximately one (1) month in duration. The wind measuring devices would be deployed for a minimum period of twelve (12) months and a maximum period of thirty-six (36) months. The current measuring devices would be deployed for a period of two (2) months.

It is noted that it is also intended to carry out non-intrusive marine mammal and bird surveys, as well as drop down video surveys in the area as part of the overall ecological investigations. The ecological surveys would be carried out seasonally and would be of 2 – 3 years in duration. Given the non-intrusive nature of these surveys it

is understood that a Foreshore Licence is not required for these elements of the overall site investigations.

The overall aim of the site investigations is to collect the necessary data and information required to optimise the layout and design of an offshore wind farm, finalise offshore foundation locations, select an optimum route for the submarine electricity cables from the wind farm, allow cable design and the development of cable installation methodologies and to acquire baseline data on the wind resource and baseline environmental information in the area.

There is commercial fishing activity within the proposed site investigation area and therefore some interaction with fishing activity may occur. It is considered that that such interaction will be limited and overall will not be significant. It is recommended, however, that the applicants be required to appoint a Fisheries Liaison Officer who will consult with the SFPA and relevant fishermen's groups in order that appropriate actions can be taken to avoid or minimise interactions with ongoing fishing activity in the area during the course of the site investigations.

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

#### **Natura 2000 sites**

The proposed marine site investigation works are not located within a designated Natura 2000 site. There are four (4) Natura 2000 Sites within 15 Km of the site investigation area including:

- Blackwater Bank SAC (Site Code 002953) – located circa 1Km from the site investigation area.
- Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC (Site Code 001742) – located circa 5Km from the site investigation area.
- Cahore Marshes SPA (Site Code 004143) – located circa 6Km from the site investigation area.
- Cahore Polder and Dunes SAC (Site Code 000700) – located circa 5.5Km from the site investigation area.

The Features of Interest of each of these sites is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Features of Interest of the three (3) Natura 2000 sites within 15Km of the proposed marine site investigation works in the vicinity of Kilmichael Point, Co. Wexford**

Features of Interest	Blackwater Bank SAC (Site Code 002953)	Cahore Marshes SPA (Site Code 004143)	Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC (Site Code 001742)	Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC (Site Code 000700)
Annual vegetation of drift lines			√	√
Embryonic shifting dunes			√	√
Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)			√	√
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)			√	√
Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes			√	
Humid dune slacks				√
Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	√			
Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> )		√		
Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> )		√		
Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> )		√		
Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> )		√		
Wetland and Waterbirds		√		

As no works will take place within the Natura 2000 sites there will be no direct impact on the features of interest within the sites. There will be no direct loss of habitat with no significant impacts on key species or habitats and habitat or species fragmentation will not occur. The integrity of the sites will not be affected.

Considering the nature and scale of the site investigation works and given the distance of the site investigation area from any of the Natura 2000 sites indirect impacts on the

sites are not considered likely. There is no likely "source – receptor pathway" through which indirect impacts could occur.

The integrity of the Natura 2000 sites will not be affected.

There is the potential of negative effects on marine mammals, including cetaceans and seals, as a result of noise producing works on the foreshore e.g. seismic survey, coring activity. It is considered that full compliance with the requirements set out in the NPWS "Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made Sound Sources in Irish Waters" (January 2014) in respect of all noise producing activities on the foreshore will minimise any potential impacts non marine mammals that may occur in the area.

Based on the above it is concluded that the proposed marine site investigation in the vicinity of Kilmichael Point, Co. Wexford will not have a significant negative impact on the Conservation Objectives of the Blackwater Bank SAC (Site Code 002953), Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC (Site Code 001742), Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC (Site Code 000700) and Cahore Marshes SPA (Site Code 004143). Significant impacts on marine mammals are not considered likely.

On the basis of the above it is considered that it is not necessary to proceed to a Stage 2 full Appropriate Assessment.

Mr. Edwin Mooney  
Marine Licence Vetting Committee  
15<sup>th</sup> November 2018