

Finding of no significant effects report

Name of project or plan:

CETO Wave Energy Ireland Ltd– site investigations between Freagh Point and Spanish Point, Co. Clare (MS51/11/238).

Name and location of Natura 2000 site

The project is not located within a Natura 2000 site but is adjacent to the Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (Site Code 00102) and the Mid-Clare Coast SPA (Site Code 004182).

The Conservation Objectives of the Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (Site Code 00102) are¹:

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:

- **Coastal lagoons*
- *Reefs*
- *Perennial vegetation of stony banks*
- **Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)*

The Conservation Objectives of the the Mid-Clare Coast SPA (Site Code 004182) are².

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:

- Cormorant (breeding)
- Ringed Plover (wintering)
- Sanderling (wintering)
- Purple Sandpiper (wintering)
- Dunlin (wintering)
- Turnstone (wintering)
- Barnacle Goose (wintering)
- Wetlands & Waterbirds

¹ NPWS (2011) Conservation objectives for Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC [001021]. Generic Version 3.0. Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.

² NPWS (2011) Conservation objectives for Mid-Clare Coast SPA [004182]. Generic Version 4.0. Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.

Description of the project or plan

The proposed works include geophysical, archaeological and ecological surveys. The geophysical surveys would include the use non-intrusive multibeam echosounder, sidescan sonar, sub-bottom profiler and magnetometer. The archaeological and ecological investigations would include the use of drop down video surveys, sediment grab sampling, surface visual observations and passive acoustic monitoring to detect and monitor cetacean vocalisations. It is anticipated that the surveys would be completed within a 2 month period. It is also intended to deploy a wave monitoring buoy and an acoustic current meter for a period of 1 – 2 years at one or both of the locations shown on Drawing No. IBE0506-01 Rev. 1.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?

No.

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?

None identified

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

Given the non-intrusive nature of the methods to be used during the surveys and that the proposed surveys will not take place within any Natura 2000 site and there will be no direct or indirect impact upon the qualifying features (habitats and /or species) within the adjacent designated areas as a result of the proposed survey activities. Key species or habitats are not likely to be impacted and the integrity of the site will not be adversely affected. Potential disturbance to birds species listed as Special Conservation Interests for the SPA will not be significant as the surveys will be carried out outside the winter months.

There is the potential to disturb/impact cetacean species during acoustic and seismic survey operations. The survey operations will be conducted according strict guidelines set out in the NPWS Code of Practice for the Protection of Marine Mammals during Acoustic Seafloor Surveys in Irish Waters - Version 1.1 (NPWS, 2007). These guidelines outline a series of measures to be carried out in order to minimize disturbance to cetacean species. The guidelines provide for the presence of marine mammal observer (MMO) at all times during operations, as well as employing a soft start procedures following MMO scan of area. These guidelines will provide sufficient mitigation of impacts on cetaceans.

On the basis of the above it is concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects as a result site investigation works on the Conservation Objectives of the Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (Site Code 00102) or the Mid-Clare Coast SPA (Site Code 004182).

Who carried out the assessment?

Marine Institute, on behalf of the MLVC, 6th March 2012