

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ACP-323953-25 (OC)

Case Reference / Description	The proposed installation of the Beaufort sub-sea fibre optic cable system from the terminus of works under the granted Foreshore Licence [FS007361] at the 12 nautical mile (nM) limit to the extent of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Kilmore Quay, County Wexford		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	15 January 2026	Start Time	10:30am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	12:20pm

Representing An Coimisiún Pleanála
Stephen Kay (Assistant Planning Director) Chair
Jimmy Green (Senior Planning Inspector)
Conor Donnelly (Senior Ecologist)
Ellen Moss (Executive Officer)

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Brian Minogue (Tom Phillips & Associates)
Hugh Kelly (Tom Phillips & Associates)
Jim McMahon (MDM)
Gearoid Walsh (MDM)
Tom McMahon (MDM)
Kevin Whyte (MDM)
Bryan Deegan (Altamar)
Dec Wallace (Amazon Beaufort cable project manager)

Introduction

The Commission referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 5th December 2025, requesting pre-application consultations under section 287 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and advised the prospective applicant that the meeting constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Commission; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters that it wished to receive advice on from the Commission. The Commission's representatives mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process:

- The Commission will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Commission once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record, which will form part of the case file.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- In accordance with section 287(3) of the Act, the decision to close pre-application consultations rests with the Commission. At the conclusion of the pre-application process, the case file, including the record of meetings held and the report of the reporting inspector detailing the issues arising in the consultation, will be forwarded to the Commission. The Commission will issue a direction/order clarifying that the consultation has closed and that the prospective applicant may make an application for permission under section 291 in the event that all relevant requirements are satisfied.
- Any recording of this meeting is strictly prohibited. The record which will issue after the meeting is the only record of the meeting.

The Commission's representatives noted that the presentation was not received in advance of this meeting and that therefore there had not been any chance to review the presentation to prepare for full engagement on any issues that could be raised. In the event that there are significant new issues that require further consideration by the Commission, it will reserve the right to take those away and to convene a further meeting if considered appropriate.

Presentation made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant began the presentation with an overview of topics covered in their presentation.

The site context was presented for the provision of the Beaufort sub-sea fibre optic cable on a site that extends from a point at the 12nM marine limit to the extent of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The overall site is approximately 38.5km in length. The subject site starts from the end point of the previously approved foreshore licence (secured in December 2023, with 39 conditions attached under reference FS004585).

Information regarding the Maritime Area Consent (MAC) application was presented. The MAC was applied for by the applicant on the 5th November 2024 and issued by the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) on the 26th November 2025, bearing the reference MAC24030.

On the 29th January 2025, a Section 5 (exempted development) referral under Section 314 of the Act (relating to works partly or wholly in the outer maritime area) was submitted to An Bord Pleanála in relation to the subject section of sub-sea cable. The Board concluded that these works were development that is not exempted development, (reference ABP-321898-25).

The prospective applicant noted that onshore works have been permitted by Wexford County Council on 11th June 2025 from the high-water mark at Kilmore Quay Beach to the existing infrastructure behind the dune, (Wexford County Council Planning reference 20250330) and that a full Appropriate Assessment of those works was conducted. These works will facilitate the Beaufort Cable System at landfall at Kilmore Quay.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development is fully consistent with the objectives and ambitions of the National Planning Framework (NPF), National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and Wexford County Development Plan in respect of supporting the establishment/improvement of telecommunication networks in Ireland and between Ireland and other countries.

The proposed method of works for providing the sub-sea cabling was presented. The fibre optic cable is approximately 33mm in diameter and is proposed to be laid using

a specialist Cable Installation Vessel. The cable would be simultaneously laid and buried beneath the seabed using a jetting trencher. Dredging will not be required. Works are targeted to commence in May/June 2027. It is envisaged that the works will take approximately three weeks to place the entire cable length from Ireland to the UK.

The prospective applicant stated that it was their opinion that the proposed works would enhance key infrastructure consistent with National and Local planning objectives and would not result in significant impacts on protected sites.

The prospective applicant provided a slide on the contents of any future application, which will be accompanied by a Planning Report, Ecological Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement, Assessment of Impact of Maritime Usage, Annex IV (species) Assessment, Marine Archaeological Assessment, and relevant drawings.

The prospective applicant concluded the presentation with draft wording for the site notice. The Commission's representatives recommended that the prospective applicant review the location description within the previous Section 5 recommendation and to provide more descriptive context in terms of any future consent forming a part of a larger overall cable which is subject to other consent processes as well as providing for rehabilitation, decommissioning and/or maintenance works which may be required.

Discussion:

The Commission's representatives began the discussion by noting that the prospective applicant has provided limited documentation in relation to the project to date. The Commission can only consider the details on the pre-application (and any future substantive planning application) file to inform its decision and conclusions/recommendations. Documentation associated with other procedures/decisions by other bodies cannot be relied upon or referenced for the Commission's consideration unless the relevant documentation is submitted to the file.

The Commission's representatives reminded the prospective applicant that for marine projects the decision to conclude the pre-application consultation rests solely with the Commission. In this regard, while it was acknowledged that no assessment is undertaken by the Commission at the pre-application consultation stage, the onus is on the prospective applicant to ensure that the Commission has sufficient detail on file to ensure that a comprehensive planning application and all associated documentation, methodologies and supporting reporting/surveys/assessments can be lodged.

The Commission's representatives queried the level of engagement with relevant statutory bodies, to which the prospective applicant stated that statutory consultees were involved in the previous foreshore licence and survey licence applications. The Commission's representatives advised that the prospective applicant should re-engage with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of the proposed development and the consenting process that it is now undergoing. A list of prescribed bodies that may be invited to make submissions/observations in relation to any future application is available in Appendix A of the Planning and Development (Maritime Development) Regulations, 2023. Engagement with stakeholders is important to identify and address issues before the application is lodged, to avoid assessment delays.

The Commission's representatives noted that transboundary engagement will be required due to the location and nature of the proposed development. In response to queries from the Commission's representatives the prospective applicant stated that the consenting process for that part of the cabling within the UK's functional area remain under consideration and that consents are expected to be in place in Q3 2026. The Commission's representatives advised that it would be of benefit to have the details of any such consents (or the consenting process involved) included within the current pre-application consultation documentation, as well as any future planning application.

The Commission's representatives queried whether seabed preparation works are required and noted that no detail had been provided in this regard, prior to the meeting presentation which showed some detail of the seabed conditions. The prospective applicant confirmed that the proposed construction methodology and technology proposed does not require seabed preparatory works and a one-pass technique will be used to lay and bury the cable. Furthermore, the prospective applicant stated that due to their familiarity with the area (and data available from other sub-sea cables that have been laid within the vicinity) they are confident that the bathymetry in the area is suitable to accommodate the proposed development with minimal environmental disturbance and that the proposed construction methodologies are well suited to the areas characteristics.

The Commission's representatives advised that any future application should be fully supported by all required documentation independent of any previous applications or consideration and noted for example that if the prospective applicants position is that EIA is not required then detailed screening/discussion of this should be provided.

The Commissions representatives advised that the Appropriate Assessment (AA) documentation must be robust and consider the proposed development, the entirety of the project, and any in-combination effects, noting recent changes to the Natura

2000 network in the vicinity in terms of new QI's and a new cSPA. The prospective applicant was also advised that all measures that would minimise impacts on QIs and Natura sites should be considered for inclusion as mitigation within any AA documentation (vessel speed management was referenced as an example). In this regard the prospective applicants confirmed that the Seas off Wexford cSPA will be assessed in the Natura Impact Statement (NIS), and it was noted that the proposed location is a high-traffic area for vessels.

In response to queries from the Commissions representatives the prospective applicant noted that a Marine Mammal Observer (MMO) would be used as a standard mitigation measure to minimise impacts on sensitive marine mammals. In response to further queries from the Commissions representatives, the prospective applicant also clarified that an ecologist would be involved during works in any sensitive areas deemed higher risk for ecological impact, which the prospective applicant clarified would include reefs. Although it was acknowledged that these are generally purposely avoided for the safety of habitats and to ensure the longevity of the cables. The prospective applicant also stated that the areas of reef are generally located in closer proximity to the coastline (within the 12nm boundary) and reef areas are not anticipated within the subject site. The prospective applicant's confidence in this assertion arises from experience of (and data available from) existing cables that were previously laid running parallel to, and in the vicinity of, the proposed cable as well as information available from Infomar data. While no details were provided within the pre-application documentation the prospective applicant is confident that the baseline data available is robust.

The prospective applicant queried whether any external consultants could be involved in the review of the future application; the Commission was unable to confirm at this stage but clarified that the same inspector would not be involved at the application stage.

In relation to the Annex IV species risk assessment the prospective applicant was advised that due to a recent court judgment, if there is a requirement for a derogation licence arising from a proposed development, the Commission cannot make a decision until it is received. Accordingly, engagement with the NPWS was strongly advised, noting that they would be a prescribed body in any future application. Having regard to the NPWS guidance on marine mammal mitigation, the prospective applicant was advised to note, consider and adhere to any new guidance which may be issued in relation to ecological considerations for developments at sea.

The Commission's representatives queried whether the application boundary matches the MAC boundary, noting that the layout maps submitted with the pre-application documentation were not clear on this issue. The MAC boundary is c.400 metres wide, however, this does not appear consistent with the submitted layout maps. The prospective applicant stated that the planning application boundary would be consistent with the established MAC boundary. The Commission's representatives advised that more detailed mapping should be provided as part of the pre-application process to confirm the extents of both the MAC and application boundaries in the interests of clarity.

The Commission's representatives advised that clarification on maintenance should be provided and if required any future planning application documentation should provide for and consider the effects/impacts of any ongoing routine and/or non-routine maintenance/repair methodologies required for the subsea cable. The prospective applicant stated that maintenance measures would be considered within the application documentation and that it would be included in any assessments provided.

The prospective applicant was advised that any future application should include a detailed Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) outlining in detail how the proposed development will be carried out, any associated construction methodologies and incorporate the implementation of all relevant mitigation measures.

A discussion on planning context compliance was held. The Commission Representatives noted the provisions of the pre-application documentation submitted but highlighted that the most relevant planning policy documents to be considered are the NMPF and the south coast D-MAP. In this regard the prospective applicants were advised that the onus would be on the applicant to fully demonstrate compliance with all the policies and objectives of the NMPF, not just those related to telecommunications, but also others including objectives and policies related to biodiversity, water quality, sea-floor and water column integrity, ocean-health, co-existence. . In this regard the applicant was advised any future application should include a planning report providing a detailed review of all the NMPF objectives, policies and headings confirming how the proposed development complies, given the restrictive provisions of Section 293(2)(a) and (b) of the Act. Similarly, the provisions of the South Coast DMAP needs to be considered in full,

The prospective applicant was advised that a rehabilitation plan is required to be included within any future planning application as required by the issued MAC.

When questioned by the Commissions representatives the prospective applicant confirmed sections of the existing ESAT-1 cable (a previous telecommunications link connecting Ireland to the UK from Kilmore quay) have already been removed, and the new cable can be installed with the remaining existing cable left in place. The prospective applicant stated that the jetting installation technology can respond in real time to any obstructions and can move around and/or avoid any cables where necessary. The prospective applicant confirmed that some cable crossings will be necessary including a crossing of the Greenlink. The prospective applicant was advised that any measures and/or construction methodologies required to cross other seabed (/or similar) infrastructure should be set out in detail within the application documentation, fully assessed within any environmental or ecological studies and ideally agreed with all relevant stakeholders in advance of lodging any future application. Any ecological effects associated with crossing methodologies such as the use of concrete mattresses etc. need to be assessed and included in the application documentation and considered in the NIS or any other supporting environmental reporting.

The Commission's representatives queried other marine activities in the area and whether co-existence is feasible. The prospective applicant confirmed that a fishing liaison officer has been appointed and continues to engage with fishers in the area. There are busy fishing grounds in the area, however, existing subsea cables are in place in the vicinity, and the proposed cable will be buried beneath the seabed to a sufficient depth to ensure impact on fishers is minimised. Accordingly temporary disturbance during the works has been the main issue raised.

The Commission's representatives questioned the properties of the seabed at the site given the extent of sandwave fields to the northeast. The prospective applicant stated that data and surveys previously conducted for other cabling in the vicinity area indicates that the seabed has limited mobility and is stable at the location of the cabling, and accordingly it is considered that the proposed cable route is highly suitable for the provision of the subsea cable as well as the construction methodology proposed.

The duration of work was queried; and the prospective applicant stated that work would be completed in approximately three weeks, but that obviously weather could be a factor in the schedule having regard to the nature of the works. It is envisaged that the works will be undertaken in the summer months. No seasonal restrictions have been identified at this stage, and it is envisaged that the cable will be laid in one go from one end to the other.

When questioned as to the operational life of the cable the prospective applicant advised that the cable becomes economically unviable after approximately 35 years due to advances in technology. The prospective applicant was advised that decommissioning/rehabilitation details and approach should be addressed in the application documentation and that the MAC clearly notes that a rehabilitation plan should be incorporated into any future application. In this regard it should be noted that the MAC is for a 35-year period and accordingly any rehabilitation works would have to be completed within that timeframe.

The Commission's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to review the conditions set out in the MAC as well as the foreshore licence granted for that part of the cable route within the 12nM limit and engage fully with any issues. When asked if there were any issues arising from the need to comply with the conditions already imposed the prospective applicant advised that they did not envision any issues in this regard but would review as part of any future application. The applicant was also advised that MARA will be the enforcement authority in relation to conditions attached to any grant of permission.

When queried by the Commissions representatives the prospective applicant confirmed that EMF issues are not anticipated as the cable is unpowered and does not have repeaters. The prospective applicant was advised to make any such findings, and the evidence informing such conclusions clear in any future application.

The Commission's representatives requested detailed plans, including the width of the cable laying corridor in the context of the MAC and red line boundaries to be provided for inclusion in the pre-application documentation.

The presentation is to be forwarded by the prospective applicant following the meeting.

The Commission's representatives reminded the prospective applicant that there is a tab on our website under Infrastructure that outlines the documentation to be included with a Marine pre-application for future reference.

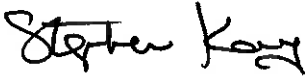
The Commission's representatives provided information on the procedural queries raised in the presentation. There is no requirement for a site notice under Part 21;

however, it is good practice to erect a site notice. Regarding the newspaper notice, the description of the proposed development should be elaborated, and the information schedule should reference the rehabilitation plan, design flexibility, and NIS. The Commission is open to reviewing drawing scales; the legislation does not provide prescribed scales, and drawings should be legible. It was advised that the Commission requires two hard copies and eight soft copies of the application documentation; Coastal Planning Authorities should be contacted to ensure sufficient copies are provided.

Conclusion:

The Commission's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued in due course, and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing or alternatively bring any comments for discussion at the time of any further meeting. The applicant was again reminded that the decision to close the pre-application consultation rests solely with the Commission, however, it is open to the applicant to forward their own consideration on this matter, should for example additional stakeholder engagement result in a requirement for further discussion or an alteration to the proposed development, correspondence to this effect can be submitted.

The Meeting concluded at 12:20pm.

 28.1.2026.

Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning