
Beaufort Cable Project OA26.324230 DAFM Response

From Erridge, Jessica <Jessica.Erridge@agriculture.gov.ie>

Date Thu 6/18/2026 11:01 AM

To Marine <marine@pleanala.ie>

Cc SeafoodClimate <SeafoodClimate@agriculture.gov.ie>

 3 attachments (1 MB)

BIM observations - Beaufort Subsea Cable.pdf; MI observations - Beaufort Subsea Cable.pdf; DAFM Response Letter Beaufort Cable.pdf;

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Good Morning All,

Please see DAFM return on the planning application for ACP Case Reference Beaufort Cable Project OA26.324230. Attached are also observations from our agencies, BIM and the MI.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt for our records.

Regards,

Jessica

Jessica Erridge

Assistant Principal, Climate Unit, Inshore and Seafood Climate and Environment Division

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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Tá an t-eolas sa ríomhphost seo, agus in aon cheangaltáin leis, faoi rún agus tá sé dírithe ar an bhfaighteoir/na faighteoirí beartaithe amháin agus níor cheart ach dóibh siúd é a úsáid. D'fhéadfadh an t-eolas seo a bheith faoi réir pribhléid dhlíthiúil agus ghairmiúil. Mura tusa faighteoir beartaithe an ríomhphost seo, níor cheart duit an teachtaireacht seo, nó aon chuid di, a úsáid, a nochtadh, a chóipeáil, a dháileadh nó a choinneáil. Má fuair tú an ríomhphost seo go hearráideach, cuir an seoltóir ar an eolas láithreach agus scríos gach cóip den ríomhphost seo ó chóra(i)s do ríomhaire, le do thoil.



18 June 2026

marine@pleanala.ie

RE: Beaufort Cable Project OA26.324230

A Chara,

The Marine Divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed installation of the Beaufort Sub-sea Fibre Optic Cable at the 12 nautical mile (nM) limit to the extent of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), off the coast of Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford

DAFM wishes to stress at the outset that commercial sea fishing is a long standing, pre-existing, and traditional activity in the marine environment. The evaluation of potential impacts of the proposed installation of the Beaufort Sub-sea Fibre Optic Cable on commercial sea fishing activities and the seafood sector as a whole need to be considered within the context of the requirements set out under the Maritime Area Planning Act and the National Marine Planning Framework.

The principles in the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) of ***avoiding, minimising, or mitigating impacts on access to existing activities*** (including specific policies on fisheries and aquaculture) should be followed and any proposed development activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas. ***Please note, to comply with the NMPF, it should be stressed that avoidance of adverse impacts on existing fisheries should always be the default position when implementing cable connections to land, and where this is absolutely not possible, actions to minimise and mitigate adverse effects, in that order, should follow.***

To inform the DAFM comments, the observations of the Marine Institute (MI) and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) on the application were requested. These have been summarised below.

Marine Institute (MI) Response

The MI note that the overall impact of the proposed cable on fisheries is expected to be minimal, given the limited spatial and temporal extent of the works assuming necessary Marine Notices are made. There will be temporary disruption during installation: Fishing activity may be temporarily displaced during pre-lay, main-lay and post-lay operations. Impacts are where the works overlap with offshore beam trawl activity or established vessel transit routes. Once

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installed and buried, the cable is expected to have minimal long-term influence on fishing activity, provided there is appropriate fisheries liaison, engagement with relevant fleets and Marine Notices issued before works commence. The MI do point to cumulative impacts that should be given consideration regarding similar activities proposed/planned to take place in close spatial and temporal proximity.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Response

BIM note that the route of the cable will impact some inshore pot fishermen as it approaches land at Kilmore Quay, and more offshore trawling and dredging. It is important that adequate notice of all works be communicated adequately. BIM also advise monitoring of the cable after installation to avoid it being exposed and snagged by fishing gear is also essential.

Seafood sector and food security

Fishers and aquaculture site holders are primary food producers dependent upon certain marine areas which are particularly important for food production. This primary production is critical to supplying the downstream indigenous seafood processing and export industries and in sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities. The importance of these primary and secondary food production activities is reflected in the Government's Food Vision 2030 policy.

Food Vision 2030 recognises and values the role of primary food producers. The contribution of the seafood sector to food security is of high importance.

Seafood as a source of protein is vital to our food security and the sustainable management of the sector will also contribute to reducing our carbon emissions. The importance of our seafood sector should be taken into consideration when individual projects are being implemented and adverse effects on the sector avoided as much as possible.

It is important to note that primary seafood production is critical to supplying the downstream indigenous seafood processing and export industries and in sustaining the livelihoods of rural coastal communities. Ireland's seafood sector contributed €1.24 billion to the Irish economy in 2024 (Source: [BIM, The Business of Seafood 2024](#)). More than 16,870 people are employed around the coast, both directly and indirectly, in the sector. In the Southeast, 1,579 people are employed (directly and indirectly) in the seafood sector, accounting for a 4% share of coastal employment. The report also highlights that Kilmore Quay is an important fishing harbour, with 4,100 tonnes of fish landed there in 2024, with a value of €15 million.



Engagement

The Department welcomes the engagement that has taken place to date and would encourage further ongoing engagement at all stages of this process, especially that an experienced Fishery Liaison Officer (FLO) is appointed as a liaison with the local fishing industry.

While this proposal is not anticipated to impact unduly on inshore fishers, relevant local fishing organisations should nevertheless be included on the provision of any Notices to Mariners in this respect and be made aware of proposed works at the earliest opportunity.

A challenge for the inshore fleet is that vessels under 12 metres are mostly not required to carry Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS). This means their activities are less visible in official data, and the true scale and patterns of inshore fishing are not fully captured. The possible displacement of the inshore fleet, although likely to be localised and limited, is a concern. Potential impacts also include increased steaming times to fishing grounds, potential restrictions on fishing grounds, gear conflicts and restricted access to the harbour. Relevant local fishing organisations should be engaged with at the earliest opportunity, to avoid potential disruption. Organisations representing inshore vessels (<12 metres in length operating within six nautical miles of the shore) include:

- The National Inshore Fisheries Forum (NIFF): <https://inshoreforums.ie/niff/>
- The Southeast Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum (SERIFF): <https://inshoreforums.ie/south-east-overview/>
- The National Inshore Fishermen's Association (NIFA): <https://inshore.ie/>

Conclusion

Finally, and as stated earlier, the MI and BIM have provided detailed observations on the **Beaufort Sub-sea Fibre Optic Cable** application, which have been attached to the DAFM submission. DAFM supports the advice and recommendations provided in these documents and reminds again that it is critical that development is informed by the specific intensity of fishing in the proposed area, and that the developers need to work closely and constructively with our seafood sector to ensure **that any adverse impacts are avoided, minimised or mitigated**, in that order, in accordance with requirements set out under the Maritime Area Planning Act and the National Marine Planning Framework.

Yours sincerely,

Marine Divisions

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara

Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

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FEAS Observations on Beaufort Cable Project (MI.Ref-102-2026)

Megan Shipton, Hayley Campbell, Graham Johnston, Jonathan White – Marine Institute

Version 1.0– 25/05/2026

Summary

- The application relates to the installation of the Beaufort subsea fibre optic cable offshore section, from the Irish 12 nautical mile limit to the Irish EEZ boundary.
- The overall impact of the proposed cable on fisheries is expected to be minimal, given the limited spatial and temporal extent of the works assuming necessary Marine Notices are made.
- Temporary disruption during installation: Fishing activity may be temporarily displaced during pre-lay, main-lay and post-lay operations. Impacts are most likely where the works overlap with offshore beam trawl activity or established vessel transit routes.
- Once installed and buried, the cable is expected to have minimal long-term influence on fishing activity, provided there is appropriate fisheries liaison, engagement with relevant fleets and Marine Notices issued before works commence.
- Cumulative impacts should be given consideration with regard to similar activities proposed/planned to take place in close spatial and temporal proximity.

Background

Fisheries Ecosystems Advisory Services (FEAS) at the Marine Institute were requested by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to provide observations on an application submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála. The application relates to the proposed installation of a subsea fibre optic cable system offshore of Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford, extending from the 12 nautical mile limit to the outer extent of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The offshore installation corridor is 400 m in width and 38.5 km in length, encompassing an approximate total area of 15.38 km² (Figure 1).

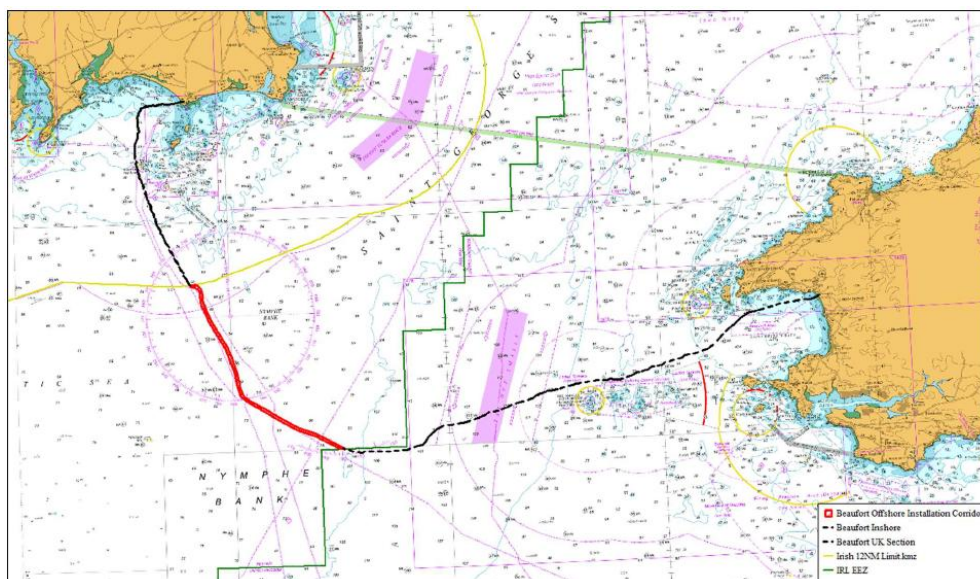


Figure 1. Beaufort Offshore Installation Corridor (Source: Ecological Impact Assessment; EclA Report).

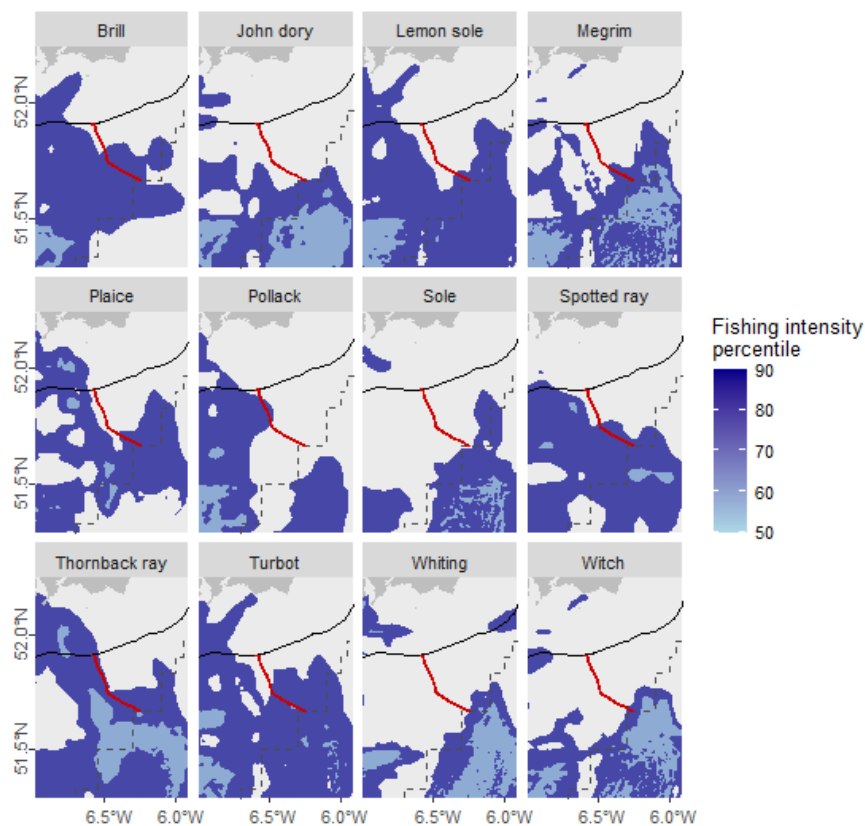
The following observations consider the potential impacts on sea fisheries and the wider seafood sector.

Impact on Fisheries

Available fisheries activity data for the period 2019–2024, including Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data, within and adjacent to the proposed cable route was reviewed to assess potential interactions between the installation works and the fisheries sector. Supporting environmental documentation was also examined to confirm that relevant fishing interests have been appropriately considered.

Overall Impact

There is some fishing activity in the vicinity of the proposed cable route, primarily comprising low

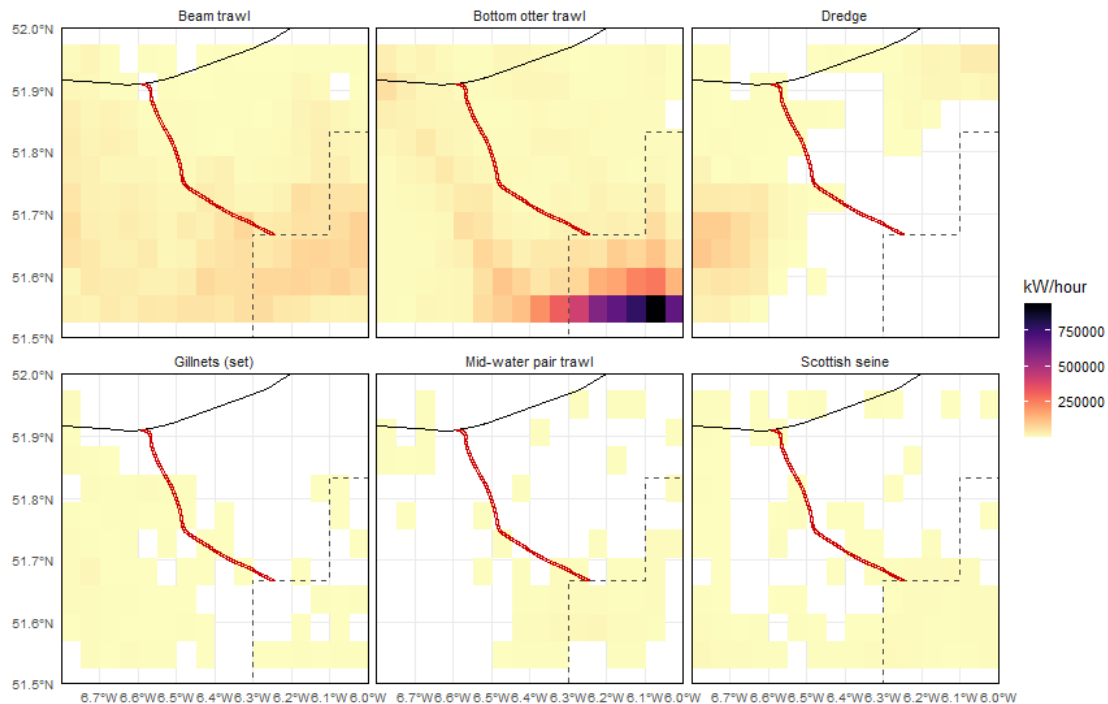


levels of demersal trawl effort, including otter bottom trawl (OTB) and beam trawl (TBB). Additional activity is limited, with some dredge (DRB), gillnet (GNS) and seine (SSC) effort in parts of the wider area (Figure 2 and 3). Overall, fishing intensity along the route is low.

Figure 2. Irish Vessels Fishing Grounds by Species and the Beaufort Offshore Installation Corridor. Depth of shading proportional to fishing intensity. Source: Marine Institute, VMS data, 2020-2024.

Impacts from cable installation are expected to be low, with any effects likely confined to short-term displacement. Pre-lay, main-lay and post-lay activities may require fishing vessels to temporarily avoid the immediate works area. This could result in short-term displacement of fishing activity or route adjustments for vessels transiting to and from fishing grounds. However, the disruption is expected to be limited because the main offshore cable-lay works are anticipated to take less than two weeks in total, within a wider two-month programme.

For seabed-contact fisheries, there is some potential for interaction with the cable, particularly in areas where burial depth may be reduced or where the cable is surface-laid. However, given the low



intensity and dispersed nature of fishing activity, any such interaction is expected to be localised and limited. The level of impact will depend on gear type, fishing intensity, and the extent to which the cable is buried along the route.

Figure 3. Irish Effort Data by Gear in the Vicinity of the Beaufort Offshore Installation Corridor (Source: Marine Institute, VMS data, 2020-2024).

The works may cause localised seabed disturbance, sediment plumes, and short-term behavioural disturbance to fish. However, due to the limited spatial and temporal scale, impacts on target species are expected to be minor, localised, and temporary, with no significant effect on stock levels.

Once installed, the cable is expected to have little ongoing influence on fishing activity where it is buried. The cable is un-repeated, inert and does not generate operational noise. Long-term effects are therefore expected to be neutral or minimal, although surface-laid sections, cable crossings, maintenance works or decommissioning activities may require further consideration and communication with the fishing sector.

Spawning and Nursery Areas

The Beaufort offshore cable route overlaps with known spawning and nursery areas for commercially important species including haddock, horse mackerel, mackerel, megrim, and whiting (Figure 4).

These sensitivities are considered in the EclA. Given the temporary and localised nature of installation activities, impacts are expected to be short-term and not significant, provided works do not coincide with peak spawning periods where feasible.

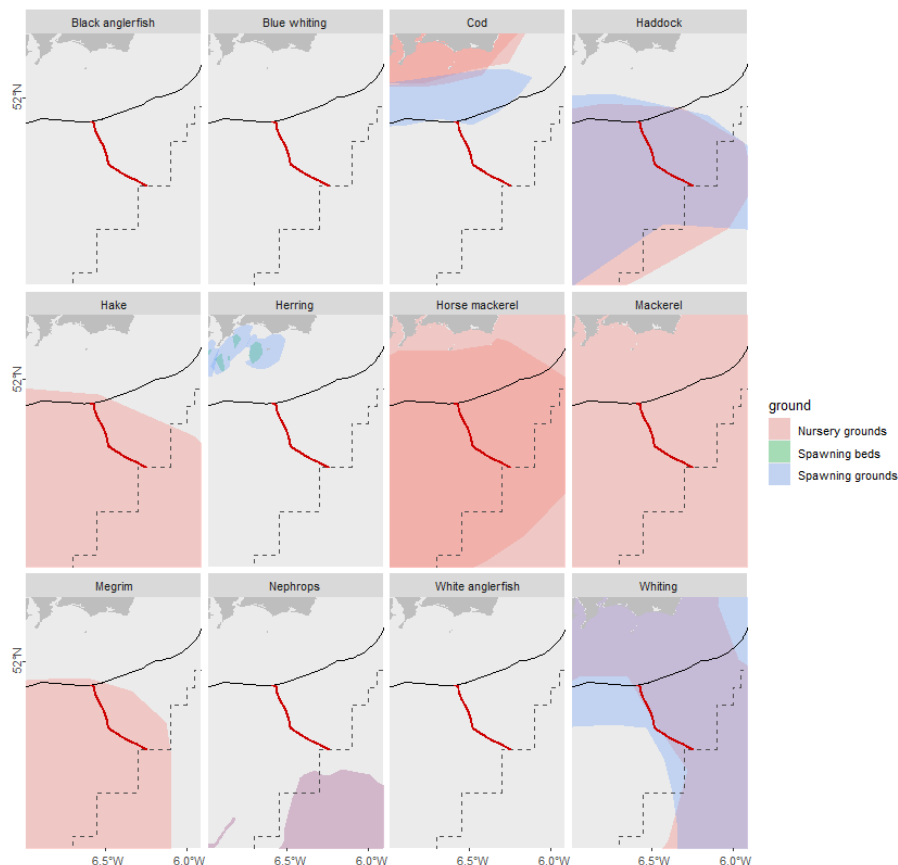


Figure 4. Spawning and Nursery Grounds in the Vicinity of the Beaufort Offshore Installation Corridor (Source: Marine Institute, VMS data, 2020-2024).

Protected Areas

Natura sites were considered within the EclA report. The proposed works are not located within designated sites, with the nearest SAC is the Saltee Islands SAC, located approximately 16.5 km from the proposed works. The Seas off Wexford SPA is located (~1 km) to the proposed works near the 12 nm limit (Figure 5).

Given these distances and the short duration of activities, no significant impacts on designated habitats or species are anticipated.

Other Considerations

Noise generation

Cable installation and burial operations generate relatively low levels of underwater noise, comparable to typical vessel and fishing activity.

While the use of USBL positioning systems and installation equipment may extend detectable noise beyond the immediate works area (potentially up to ~2 km), these levels are not expected to exceed those associated with normal marine activity and are unlikely to result in significant ecological effects.

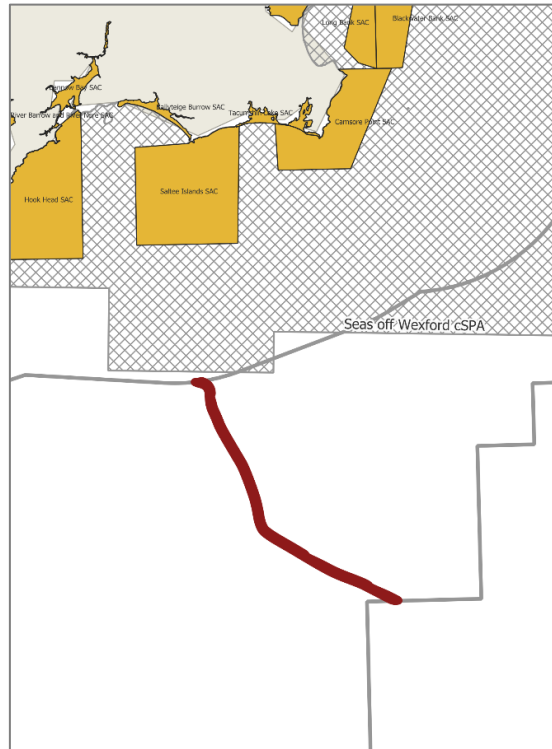


Figure 5. Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation in the Vicinity of the Beaufort Offshore Installation Corridor. (Source: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage: Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) boundary datasets, updated 03 March 2026. Contains Government of Ireland data licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Electromagnetic field effects

The Beaufort cable constitutes a passive, unenergized fibre-optic system and does not transmit electrical power. As such, the cable will not generate electromagnetic fields during operation. No EMF-related effects on electrosensitive species such as demersal sharks, skates and rays are therefore anticipated.

Cumulative impacts

These activities, and others taking place in spatial and temporal proximity, should not be considered in isolation, with potential for cumulative impacts unassessed.

An Coimisiún Pleanála - Marine Planning Application - Beaufort Sub Sea Cable.

Proposed activity:

Marine Planning application to a proposed Sub-sea Fibre Optic Cable System off the coast of Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford.

BIM Comments:

25.05.2026

There is no aquaculture close enough to the proposed development to be impacted.

However, the route of the cable will impact some inshore pot fishermen as it approaches land at Kilmore Quay, and more offshore trawling and dredging. It is important that adequate notice of all works be communicated adequately.

Chapter 5.4.7 of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) document sets out a process for a Fisheries Management & Mitigation Plan (FMMP). Consultation with fishery interests is stated to take place between June and August 2026, where it states that an experienced Fishery Liaison Officer (FLO) has already been appointed. Talking to some fishermen in the area, it is not known who the FLO is. A local fisherman did carryout an FLO in 2025 when attempts were made to remove the original outdated cable that this project is replacing, but he is no longer involved. It would be important that the local fishing/seafood community are made aware as soon as possible who the FLO is, and that the FLO ensure to contact directly all fishermen in the catchment area of the project, with the potential for displacement of fishing effort to be adequately considered/catered for. Using some recent infrastructural project examples in the proximity of this project, where surveys and installation works were being undertaken it was claimed that some fishermen were not aware of meetings taking place. This needs to be avoided.

It is vital that when fishermen get in touch with the FLO by whatever means (such as phone call, text, email or WhatsApp messages) that the FLO responds in a timely fashion, to avoid gear being placed in an area of concern to the project.

While different fishermen will be impacted to different degrees due to the extent of fishing activity they have within the impacted area of the project, the methodology for establishing any compensation payments for moving fishing gear must be transparent. For example, the basic rate, how an end figure is calculated, the evidence required/acceptable to show fishing activity etc. Contingency plans for delays in the project being completed within the anticipated timeframe need to be agreed in advance.

Monitoring of the cable after installation to avoid it being exposed and snagged by fishing gear is also essential.

The Beaufort Planning Report document in section 1.7 details consultation with local community interests and states that funding of €125,000 has gone to 15 projects in the local community (such as a literary festival, a scout's group, conservation group, soccer & GAA clubs, parish journal, memorial garden etc.) with talks for further funding in 2026. Some fishermen have stated that they are annoyed that no funding has made its way to the fishermen who are likely to be directly impacted. There was mention one to two years ago of funding going towards encouraging more v notching of lobsters (with a locally based fishermen's association ideally placed already carrying out v notching) but this has not been mentioned since then or developed further. While

money has gone to community initiatives in the area with talks of more in 2026, fishery projects that enable the sustainability of fishermen who will be directly impacted are not been seen to be included. BIM mention this as the optics of good early engagement with fishermen to bring them with you can be lost. There is already negative sentiment from the fishing/seafood industry towards Community Benefit Funds with ORE/offshore windfarm projects that benefit land-based community and other entities, but not those at sea that are being impacted directly at sea.