



Arklow Bank Wind Park 2

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume III, Appendix 3.1: Consultation Report

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Statement of Authority

| Name | Qualifications | Experience |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Ellen MacMahon | BA (Hons), MSc | Principal Consultant with various project management and advisory roles. 10 years' experience in marine spatial planning, the Irish offshore planning regime and associated policies and legislation. Extensive experience in stakeholder engagement from various previous roles. |
| Deborah Coleman | BA (Hons) UCD 2003 Árd Díplóma i gCumarsáid Fheidhmeach NUIG 2004 | Deborah Coleman is an External Affairs Manager at SSE Renewables with responsibility for public affairs and stakeholder engagement across their Irish offshore portfolio. Her background is in communications with over 15 years' experience working with regional newspaper titles in local communities. |

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Glossary

| Term | Meaning |
|---|--|
| Arklow Bank Wind Park 1 | Arklow Bank Wind Park 1 consists of seven wind turbines, offshore export cable and inter-array cables. Arklow Bank Wind Park 1 has a capacity of 25.2 MW. Arklow Bank Wind Park 1 was constructed in 2003/04 and is owned and operated by Arklow Energy Limited. It remains the first and only operational offshore wind farm in Ireland. |
| Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 – Offshore Infrastructure | “The Proposed Development”, Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Offshore Infrastructure: This includes all elements under the existing Maritime Area Consent. |
| Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) (The Project) | <p>Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) (The Project) is the onshore and offshore infrastructure. This EIAR is being prepared for the Offshore Infrastructure. Consents for the Onshore Grid Infrastructure (Planning Reference 310090) and Operations Maintenance Facility (Planning Reference 211316) has been granted on 26th May 2022 and 20th July 2022, respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Offshore Infrastructure: This includes all elements to be consented in accordance with the Maritime Area Consent. This is the subject of this EIAR and will be referred to as ‘the Proposed Development’ in the EIAR. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Onshore Grid Infrastructure: This relates to the onshore grid infrastructure for which planning permission has been granted. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF): This includes the onshore and nearshore infrastructure at the OMF, for which planning permission has been granted. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 EirGrid Upgrade Works: any non-contestable grid upgrade works, consent to be sought and works to be completed by EirGrid. |
| Array Area | The Array Area is the area within which the Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs), the Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs), and associated cables (export, inter- array and interconnector cabling) and foundations will be installed. |
| Benthic ecology | Benthic ecology encompasses the study of the organisms living in and on the sea floor, the interactions between them and impacts on the surrounding environment. |
| Cable Corridor and Working Area | The Cable Corridor and Working Area is the area within which export, inter-array and interconnector cabling will be installed. This area will also facilitate vessel jacking operations associated |

| Term | Meaning |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| | with installation of WTG structures and associated foundations within the Array Area. |
| Competent Authority (CA) | The authority designated as responsible for performing the duties arising from the EIA Directive as amended. For this application, the Competent Authority is An Bord Pleanála (ABP). |
| Cumulative Impacts | ‘The addition of many minor or significant effects, including effects of other Projects, to create larger, more significant effects’ (EPA, 2022). |
| Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) | An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a statutory process by which certain planned projects must be assessed before a formal decision to proceed can be made. It involves the collection and consideration of environmental information, which fulfils the assessment requirements of the Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (EIA Directive). |
| Environmental Impact Assessment | An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a statutory process by which certain planned projects must be assessed before a formal decision to proceed can be made. It involves the collection and consideration of environmental information, which fulfils the assessment requirements of the Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private Projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (EIA Directive) and the regulations transposing the EIA Directive (EIA Regulations). |
| EirGrid | State-owned electric power transmission system operator (TSO) in Ireland and Transmission Asset Owner (TAO) for the Project’s transmission assets. |
| Maritime Area Consent (MAC) | A consent to occupy a specific part of the maritime area on a non-exclusive basis for the purpose of carrying out a Permitted Maritime Usage strictly in accordance with the conditions attached to the MAC granted on 22 nd December 2022 with reference number 2022-MAC-002. |
| Non-statutory stakeholder | Organisations with whom the regulatory authorities may choose to engage who are not designated in law but are likely to have an interest in a Proposed Development. |

| Term | Meaning |
|--------------------------|---|
| Permitted Maritime Usage | The construction and operation of an offshore windfarm and associated infrastructure (including decommissioning and other works required on foot of any permission for such offshore windfarm). |
| The Application | The full set of documents that will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála in support of the consent. |
| The Developer | Sure Partners Ltd. |

Acronyms

| Term | Meaning |
|-------|---|
| AA | Appropriate Assessment |
| ABP | An Bord Pleanála |
| ADD | Acoustic Deterrent Devices |
| AIS | Automatic Identification System |
| Cefas | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science |
| CEM | Community Engagement Manager |
| CEMP | Construction Environmental Management Plan |
| CNMP | Construction Noise Management Plan |
| CRM | Collision Risk Modelling |
| DAA | Dublin Airport Authority |
| DAERA | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs |
| DECC | Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications |
| DEFA | Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture |
| EA | Environment Agency |
| ECMG | East Coast Monitoring Group |
| EHS | Environment, Health and Safety |
| EI | Enterprise Ireland |
| EIAR | Environmental Impact Assessment Report |
| EPA | Environmental Protection agency |
| ERCoP | Emergency Response Cooperation Plan |
| FID | Financial Investment Decision |
| FLO | Fisheries Liaison Officer |

| | |
|--------|---|
| FMMS | Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy |
| GSI | Geological Survey Ireland |
| HWM | High Water Mark |
| IDA | Industrial Developments Authority |
| IRCG | Irish Coastguard |
| JNCC | Joint Nature Conservation Committee |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LAWPRO | Local Authority Waters Programme |
| LMP | Lighting and Marking Plan |
| MAC | Maritime Area Consent |
| MEC | Maximum Export Capacity |
| MGN | Marine Guidance Note |
| MMO | Maritime Management Organisation |
| MPCP | Marine Pollution Contingency Plan |
| MSO | Marine Survey Office |
| NIEA | Northern Ireland Environment Agency |
| NORRI | Native Oyster Reef Restoration Ireland |
| NPWS | National Parks and Wildlife Service |
| NRW | Natural Resources Wales |
| NTM | Notice To Mariners |
| OGI | Onshore Grid Infrastructure |
| OMF | Operations Maintenance Facility |
| ORESS | Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme |
| OSP | Offshore Substation Platform |

| | |
|--------|---|
| PAM | Passive Acoustic Monitors |
| PAMO | Passive Acoustic Monitor Operatives |
| PPN | Public Participation Networks |
| PREMAR | Préfecture Maritime de la Manche et de la Mer du Nord |
| RESS | Renewable Electricity Support Scheme |
| RNLI | Royal National Lifeboat Institution |
| RWMP | Resource and Water Management Plan |
| SAM | Static Acoustic Monitoring |
| SAR | Search and Rescue |
| SEAI | Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland |
| SEC | Sustainable Education Centre |
| SEPA | Scottish Environmental Protection Agency |
| SEPCA | South East Coastal Protection Alliance |
| SFPA | Sea Fisheries Protection Agency |
| SID | Strategic Infrastructure Development |
| SPA | Special Protection Area |
| SSER | SSE Renewables |
| TII | Transport Infrastructure Ireland |
| TD | Teachta Dála (Dáil member) |
| TTS | Temporary Threshold Shift |
| UAU | Underwater Archaeology Unit |
| UKHO | United Kingdom Hydrographic Office |
| UNECE | United Nations Economic Commission for Europe |
| VMP | Vessel Management Plan |

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| WBSAC | Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club |
| WMO | World Meteorological Organisation |
| WTG | Wind Turbine Generator |

Units

| Term | Meaning |
|------|-----------|
| km | kilometre |
| m | metre |
| MW | Megawatt |

1 Consultation Report

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1.1 This Consultation Report provides a summary of the public consultation and record of stakeholder engagement carried out by Sure Partners Ltd (SSE) ('the Developer') for the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) Offshore Infrastructure ('the Proposed Development').
- 1.1.1.2 A Maritime Area Consent (MAC) (Ref: 2022-MAC-002) was granted for the Proposed Development in December 2022. This report forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), which supports the planning application to An Bord Pleanála (ABP).
- 1.1.1.3 The Developer recognises the importance of engaging the relevant stakeholders in the development of the EIAR for the Proposed Development, and the Developer has therefore sought to engage openly and transparently with the key stakeholders during the consultation period.
- 1.1.1.4 It should be noted that this report summarises the public awareness raising and sets out records of stakeholder engagement and the feedback received on the first and second Scoping Reports that were issued for public consultation in 2020 and 2023 respectively. Engagement with stakeholders and the public will continue throughout the planning application process.
- 1.1.1.5 The feedback gathered during this process is presented in this report. All feedback received has been reviewed by the Project Team to ensure that the feedback has been considered as part of the Proposed Development process.
- 1.1.1.6 As the Developer issued a first Scoping report for consultation in 2020 and a second Scoping Report for consultation in 2023, the description of the project at both stages is outlined in the relevant sections.

1.2 Background to the Project

- 1.2.1.1 ABWP2 is a proposed offshore wind farm project situated on and around Arklow Bank in the Irish Sea, approximately 6 to 15 km to the east of Arklow in County Wicklow. Consent for the Onshore Grid Infrastructure (OGI) (Case Reference: 310090) and Operations Maintenance Facility (OMF) (Planning Reference: 21/1316) was granted in May and June 2022, respectively.

1.3 Purpose of this Report

- 1.3.1.1 The purpose of this report is to detail the public awareness raising and consultation process and to record the feedback given during consultation on the Scoping Reports for ABWP2 in 2020 and 2023. The public awareness campaign aimed to generate awareness of the Project with the local communities in coastal areas, the fishing community and interested stakeholders. It also aimed to allow for feedback from stakeholders regarding the Proposed Development, and the Developer has reviewed this feedback in the development of the EIAR. This dialogue between the Project Team and stakeholders will continue throughout the development process and over the lifetime of the Project.

1.4 Guiding Principles

- 1.4.1.1 Public participation is an essential element of the development of any infrastructure project, and the Developer is committed to continuous and responsive two-way communication with all stakeholders, at every stage of the Proposed Development. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders has taken place since the Developer began developing the Proposed Development.
- 1.4.1.2 The Developer commits to providing communications and public consultation that is accessible, meaningful, transparent, proportionate, and accountable for all stakeholders including those

without a technical background. These principles have underpinned the approach the Developer has taken to the communications and public consultation for the Proposed Development.

1.4.1.3 Table 3.1.1 sets out the guiding principles for communications and public consultation that the Developer observes in the development of ABWP2.

Table 3.1.1: Guiding principles of consultation

| Principle | Explanation |
|---------------|--|
| Accessible | Information should be easy to access, it should be communicated in a manner that is appropriate to the stakeholder group and should avoid the use of industry jargon. The consultation process should be inclusive, and it should be straight forward to participate in the process. This includes making submissions, asking questions and attending events. |
| Meaningful | Consultation is a two-way process and should be viewed as a genuine opportunity for stakeholders to influence outcomes. The Project Team should be prepared to consider all submissions that are received through the consultation process. Consultation should take place at identified stages in the development process in advance of key decisions being made and feedback should be used to inform those decisions. |
| Transparent | Core to all engagement and communications on a decision-making process is that the process is transparent, that people can understand the process by which decisions were made and how their input was considered. They may not agree with a decision, but they should have full access to the fair and objective process by which these decisions were made. |
| Proportionate | Undertaking communications activities that are appropriate for the specific Project and circumstances. Ensuring the Developer uses its resources and is flexible in our approach in order to respond to the complexities as the Project develops. |
| Accountable | Accountable project decision making ensures that the Project has taken on board relevant feedback, has responded to the feedback provided in a fair and transparent manner and that the Project moves forward once feedback has been reported on. Careful record keeping of submissions and the review process are features of this principle. |

1.4.1.4 Throughout the development of the Project, the Developer has consulted with members of the public and all interested stakeholders in accordance with the following legislative, planning and best practice requirements, which are further described in sections 1.5 to 1.7:

- Aarhus Convention requirements;
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive requirements;
- Irish legislation requirements; and
- International best practice.

1.5 Aarhus Convention

1.5.1.1 The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, commonly referred to as the 'Aarhus Convention', was signed in Aarhus, Denmark in June 1998 and came into force in October 2001.

- 1.5.1.2 The Aarhus Convention sets down basic rules to promote the participation of the public in environmental matters and to improve the enforcement of environmental law. The European Union has been a party to the Aarhus Convention since May 2005 and the Aarhus Convention is now an integral part of the EU legal order. Ireland ratified the Aarhus Convention in June 2012.
- 1.5.1.3 A guide to the requirements of the Convention was published by UNECE in 2000 entitled *The Aarhus Convention: An Implementation Guide*. The second edition of the implementation guide was published in draft versions in 2010, 2011 and 2012 with the final version published in 2014.
- 1.5.1.4 The UNECE documents, *The Aarhus Convention: An Implementation Guide* (2011 and 2014 versions) represent best practice in respect of how to consult with members of the public on major projects.
- 1.5.1.5 The provisions of the Aarhus Convention are divided into three pillars as follows:

1.5.2 Access to information

- 1.5.2.1 The right of members of the public to request environmental information that is held by public bodies and these bodies are obliged to maintain this information. The Access to Information pillar has been implemented in EU Directive 2003/4/EC on Public Access to Environmental Information and in Ireland by the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007-2011.

1.5.3 Public participation in environmental decision making

- 1.5.3.1 The right of the public to participate in decision making in environmental matters and for public authorities to enable the public to comment on proposals which affect the environment. Article 6 of the Aarhus Convention establishes the right of “the public concerned” to participate in environmental decision-making procedures and sets out detailed rules governing public participation in decision making involving the activities listed in Annex I to the Convention and activities that are not listed in the Annex but may have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.5.3.2 In the European Union, this part of the Aarhus Convention has been implemented by Directive 2003/35/EC on public participation (‘the Public Participation Directive’), which is now incorporated into *inter alia* the Consolidated EIA Directive 2011/92/EU.

1.5.4 Access to justice

- 1.5.4.1 The right of members of the public to review procedures to challenge decisions relating to the environment, made by public bodies or private persons that have been made without regard to the two aforementioned pillars of the Convention. In Ireland, the requirement to provide a mechanism to challenge the substantive and procedural legality of a decision of a public body is ultimately met by way of judicial review.

1.6 EIA Directive

- 1.6.1.1 A number of amendments have been introduced to the text of the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) to reflect the Aarhus Convention public participation requirements. For example, the definitions of ‘the public’ and the ‘public concerned’ as set out in Articles 2(4) and 2(5) of the Aarhus Convention are incorporated into the Consolidated EIA Directive by Articles 1(2)(d) and (l), respectively. In addition, amendments made to Article 6 of the EIA Directive set out the minimum requirements for effective public participation. The aim of Articles 6(2) and 6(3) of the Consolidated EIA Directive is to ensure that the public shall be informed of matters early in the environmental decision-making procedure, and that the relevant information and documents are made available to the public concerned.

- 1.6.1.2 The substantive provisions ensure that the public concerned shall be given "early and effective opportunities to participate" in environmental decision-making procedures for consent to projects and, for that purpose, the public concerned is entitled to express comments and opinions when all options are open to the competent authority before the decision on the request for development consent is taken.

1.6.2 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidance

- 1.6.2.1 The EPA guidelines state that 'Good practice in preparing EIARs involves clear and focused consultation with various parties at key stages in the assessment process' and requires that compliance with the Aarhus Convention is implemented in relation to the arrangements for public access and dissemination of the information contained in the EIAR. The core objective of public consultation is to ensure that the public is made as fully aware as possible of the likely environmental impacts of projects prior to a decision being made by the Competent Authority.

1.7 Good Practice communications

- 1.7.1.1 Article 6, paragraph 5 of the Aarhus Convention states that:

"Each Party should, where appropriate, encourage prospective applicants to identify the public concerned, to enter into discussions, and to provide information regarding the objectives of their application before applying for a permit."

- 1.7.1.2 The Aarhus Implementation Guide (UNECE 2014) notes the advisory nature of paragraph 5 and that the Convention does not require Parties to oblige prospective applicants to take these steps. However, in line with the spirit of the Convention and the principles of best practice consultation, SPL committed at the outset of the Project to:

- providing information on the Project;
- providing early opportunities for the public concerned to put forward interests; and
- ensuring that all communication, engagement, and consultation was accessible, meaningful, transparent, proportionate and accountable.

- 1.7.1.3 The Developer has significant in-house expertise in public consultation and project communications and draws from a team with considerable industry experience. The Project Team is experienced in the development of major infrastructure projects and the associated consultation and engagement elements required to successfully deliver such projects. The Developer has put in place a team to ensure that communications on projects such as ABWP2 are consistent and accessible.

1.8 Stakeholder Engagement Campaign

- 1.8.1.1 Following the publication of the Climate Action Plan in 2019, and the Government's commitment to the offshore wind, the Developer embarked upon a Stakeholder Engagement Campaign. This was delivered in the five phases described in 1.8.1.2. It must be noted however that no phase was ever concluded, despite the initiation of a subsequent phase. Once a stakeholder was engaged, the Developer sought to maintain an open and ongoing dialogue with them throughout the Project development process and to ensure an opportunity for continuous feedback is maintained.
- 1.8.1.2 **Phase 1** Strategic Engagement: this included but is not limited to engaging relevant Government Departments, state and semi-state bodies, TDs, Senators and County Councillors for Co. Wicklow, and North Wexford, members of the Executive Team in Wicklow and Wexford County Councils.

- 1.8.1.3 **Phase 2 National Engagement:** this phase included engagement with state and semi-state bodies, including many deemed as statutory stakeholders. In addition, non-statutory stakeholders with a keen interest in marine activities were engaged.
- 1.8.1.4 **Phase 3 Regional Engagement:** at this point in the engagement process the Developer sought to brief regional stakeholders on the Project on the benefits of offshore wind and to secure feedback. This engagement comprised outreach to Chambers of Commerce, Municipal Districts, Town Teams, Public Participation Networks (PPN), local offices for Industrial Developments Authority (IDA) and Enterprise Ireland (EI), etc. At this stage the media were also briefed.
- 1.8.1.5 **Phase 4 Public Information Campaign:** once the above stakeholders were informed, and feedback was secured, the Developer progressed to increase awareness of the Project locally to the general public, through public meetings, specific fisheries engagement, schools engagement and the development of project materials. During this phase a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) was appointed.
- 1.8.1.6 **Phase 5 Consenting Process:** this represents the process of engagement that has been underway, since 2020. During this phase a Community Engagement Manager (CEM) was appointed. During this phase the Developer sought to engage and hear from the widest range of stakeholders, including all those engaged during earlier phases. This phase continues until all consents are achieved, then the developer will move into the construction phase.

1.8.2 Community Engagement Manager

- 1.8.2.1 A dedicated CEM facilitates engagement with the community. The CEM is available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or alternatively by appointment outside of these hours. The CEM can be reached via mobile phone or email and is the point of contact for the local community.
- 1.8.2.2 The currently appointed CEM, is from Arklow, lives locally and is familiar with the community and the various stakeholder and community groups. The CEM has an established network on social media and provides updates via personal social media accounts including Facebook, Linked-In and Instagram. Articles are regularly carried in local press to update the community on project developments and on how SSE Renewables provides support to communities through its Sponsorship and Fisheries Funds (Annex A).

1.8.3 Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO)

- 1.8.3.1 A locally based FLO has been engaged on the Project since January 2019. As a skipper for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and former fisherman, the FLO is well placed to engage with and be the point of contact for the fishers, vessel users and, vessel owners around the Project area.

1.9 Summary of Early Stakeholder Engagement

- 1.9.1.1 Since 2018 the Developer has been engaging with stakeholders through various methods such as one-to-one briefings, group presentations, email and phone correspondence as well as through online channels including website and social media. This engagement has enabled the Developer to advise the stakeholders that the ABWP2 project was being revived as well as the presentation for the need for ABWP2 project, the overview of the project, the advantages to the wider community from the project, and the project's timeline.

1.9.2 Early Engagement

- 1.9.2.1 A summary of the main components of the Proposed Development at the time of the first Scoping Report issued in 2020 are provided in section 1.10.2. Although revisions to the Proposed

Development were made in 2023, the spirit of this early engagement is an important factor in the overall development of the Proposed Development.

1.9.2.2 During the Scoping consultation in 2020 the main components of the Proposed Development were as follows:

- Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of 520MW;
- Up to 76 Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) (each comprising a tower section, nacelle and three rotor blades) and associated foundations (steel monopiles, steel tripod or gravity bases);
- Up to two Offshore Substation Platform(s) (OSPs) and associated foundations (steel monopiles, steel tripod or gravity bases);
- A network of inter-array cabling; and
- Up to two offshore export cables.

1.9.2.3 The decision-making process for changes to the Proposed Development between 2020 and 2023 is set out in Volume II; Chapter 3: Consideration of Alternatives.

1.10 Public Consultation 2020

1.10.1.1 Public consultation for ABWP2 was carried out in 2020 with a focus on the offshore and onshore elements. Consultation ran from 14 October to 11 November 2020. The terms of reference of the consultation sought to gather feedback and local knowledge to inform the Project and also to inform the public of project details. The terms of reference of the consultation were set out in the feedback form that the public were encouraged to complete and included topics such as:

- Climate Change;
- Offshore infrastructure;
- Onshore Grid Infrastructure;
- Further Feedback or Thoughts;
- Public Information; and
- ABWP2 Proposals.

1.10.1.2 A public consultation event was held the 4 November 2020, at 7pm, live streamed via YouTube. As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, the event was held online only. A recording of the online event was available on the website afterwards.

1.10.1.3 Public exhibitions were erected at four locations in County Wicklow and County Wexford. Due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time, these exhibitions were unmanned and self-guided. As no public gatherings were permitted, these exhibitions were of even greater importance. The exhibitions were located at:

- Bridgewater Shopping Centre North Quay, Arklow, County Wicklow;
- Arklow Library, Main Street, Arklow, County Wicklow;
- Town Hall, Market Square, Wicklow Town, County Wicklow; and
- Seamount/Main Street, Courtown, County Wexford.

1.10.1.4 During the weeks leading up to the launch of the public consultation, and during Level 3 COVID-19 restrictions, the CEM, conducted a door knock, on homes located within 1 km of the proposed locations for the landfall and the onshore substation. Feedback was gathered from householders available to engage. In all homes, including those where householders were unavailable, a letter was left for the occupants. This correspondence introduced ABWP2 at a high level, and encouraged contact with the CEM, whose details were also enclosed. The onset of Level 5 COVID-19 restrictions prevented similar outreach to residents living within 2 km of both the landfall and substation location.

1.10.2 Scoping Consultation 2020

- 1.10.2.1 As noted in paragraph 1.9.2.1, in 2020 the Developer issued the first Scoping Report for public consultation. The responses received in relation to the first Scoping Report are summarised below. Although changes to the Proposed Development were made post 2020, the principle of the issues raised are still considered to be of importance to the Developer.

Coastal Processes

- 1.10.2.2 It was stated by a stakeholder that a pollution plan must be in place if oil is being used in operations as per the Sea Pollution Acts (1994, 1999 and 2006) as well as an Emergency Plan. Both plans could be agreed with the Irish Coast Guard Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations Manager.

A Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (MPCP) and Emergency Response Cooperation Plan (ERCoP) have been submitted with the Application. Please refer to Volume III, Appendix 25.1 Environmental Management Plan, Annex 2 and Appendix 25.5 respectively.

- 1.10.2.3 It was also highlighted by stakeholders that there is no section regarding the impact of chemical use in the offshore construction of the Project. It was recommended that the chemicals to be used offshore are identified and quantified, and that potential impacts of discharge and spillage be considered in the EIAR.

A Resource and Waste Management Plan and MPCP have been submitted with the Application. Please refer to Volume III, Appendix 25.1 Environmental Management Plan, Annex 4 and Annex 2 respectively.

Airborne Noise

- 1.10.2.4 Noise pollution from the construction of the Project was cited as a concern by a number of stakeholders living in the area. Several stakeholders had commented that the construction of ABWP1 was very noisy, and they did not want a repeat of this. One stakeholder expressed a concern regarding night-time noise as it had caused a lot of personal disruption during ABWP1.

- 1.10.2.5 It was requested that residents would be notified in advance of noisy works commencing and plans of works would be disseminated to residents. One stakeholder felt there was not sufficient information on the expected noise levels and would like a noise assessment carried out.

Impacts on Airborne Noise have been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 8 Airborne Noise. A Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) has also been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 25.8.

Subsea Noise

- 1.10.2.6 Noise modelling specific to the Project was strongly suggested by stakeholders where a range of species would be considered. Suggestions of noise mitigation models were put forward including Acoustic Deterrent Devices (ADDs) and bubble curtains.

An Underwater Noise Assessment has been carried out for the Proposed Development, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 11.1 Underwater Noise Assessment. The impacts of underwater noise on species has also been carried out in Volume II, Chapters 9 Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology, 10 Fish, Shellfish and Sea Turtle Ecology and 11 Marine Mammals.

Climate

- 1.10.2.7 Stakeholders commented on the benefit of the Project with regards reducing Ireland's carbon emissions. Some stakeholders noted that this Project was not an effective way to lower carbon emissions and offshore wind is a very expensive method for Ireland to lower its emissions.

The impact of the Proposed Development on carbon emissions has been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 20 Air Quality and Climate. The assessment also includes calculations of the 'payback' period for the Proposed Development.

Benthic Ecology

1.10.2.8 The importance of oyster reefs was raised by stakeholders because of their many benefits including their ability to mitigate damage to the sea floor when laying cables and allow for best use of space for biodiversity, benthic ecology and aquaculture.

1.10.2.9 A query was submitted about the rock used for the construction and protection of the project, if it would be similar in nature to that present naturally in the vicinity, especially if the rock is going to be left permanently in place at the end of the project rather than being removed.

The assessment provided in Volume II, Chapter 9 Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology examines the potential disturbance to habitats and species, including habitats of conservation importance (e.g. reefs) during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The assessment also examines the potential impact of colonisation of hard structures including rock cable protection.

Marine Mammals

1.10.2.10 Much advice was given by stakeholders with respect to the impact of noise on marine mammals. It was advised that predictive noise modelling for piles shall be carried out with, and without, the use of noise abatement systems. It was requested that the studies be carried out with areas larger than the baseline data area of 4 km, because it is known that the displacement of harbour porpoise occurs over 20 km (and up to 80 km in some cases) from piling without noise abatement systems. Additionally, the study area for baseline data shall include areas further from the Proposed Development where no impact as a result of wind farm development can occur. It was noted that the baseline data appears to be principally based on aerial data only and therefore lacks acoustic data which would provide diurnal variation information and can more reliably detect species such as harbour porpoise which can be difficult for observers to see in choppy sea. It was highlighted that mitigation measures shall also include Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM), with a minimum of two Passive Acoustic Monitoring Operators (PAMOs).

1.10.2.11 It was noted that the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) guidelines (Anon 2017; 2018) recommend Static Acoustic Monitoring (SAM) for ideally at least two years. Following these guidelines, it was highlighted again that robust data must be captured and not just related to aerial capture.

1.10.2.12 Concerns were raised over the quality of aerial data in the identifying of 'seal species', 'cetacean' or 'seal/small cetacean'. In the case of difficulty identifying a species it was denoted as the most common type, which is not necessarily true.

An assessment of the potential impact of noise on marine mammals is contained in Volume II, Chapter 11 Marine Mammals. Sources of data are presented in Tables 11.4 and 11.5 of the Marine Mammals Chapter. Relevant guidance and legislation which informed the assessment is presented in sections 11.2 and 11.7 of the Marine Mammals Chapter.

Fish and Shellfish

1.10.2.13 The effects of water borne particles and sediment as a result of construction work were highlighted for two reasons. The first regarding the changing nature of the seabed and thus the impact on fish, shellfish, spawning and vegetation growth. The second reason is because cloudy waters deter predatory fish, thus altering the fish population.

1.10.2.14 Various concerns and queries regarding fish, including migratory fish, and shellfish were raised. The displacement of fishermen and the subsequent impact on fish and fish stocks was noted as an issue by some.

- 1.10.2.15 Many concerns over the consequences of construction on fish were raised. Stakeholders are concerned that construction noise and vibrations will damage fish. Pile driving and drilling were singled out as the most potential significant impact on fish. Stakeholders stated that the noise and vibration could injure fish, disrupt migration patterns and affect the food-chain.

Potential impacts on Fish and Shellfish have been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 10 Fish, Shellfish and Sea Turtle Ecology. This includes an assessment on migratory fish, the potential impacts of temporary and permanent habitat loss and increased suspended sediments and associated deposition during all phases of the Proposed Development. Potential impacts on Commercial Fisheries have been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 14 Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Ornithology

- 1.10.2.16 The most cited ornithological concern was the mortality rate of birds due to collision, especially migratory birds. Terns, kittiwakes and non-seabird migratory species were singled out though most comments referred to birds in the general sense.

- 1.10.2.17 It was recommended that in modelling the collision risk of birds, estimates derived from both the stochastic version of the Band model (as per McGregor et al 2018) and the standard Band model are presented. Moreover, the recommended avoidance rates shall follow Bowgen & Cook (2018) and where possible, estimates of collision mortality during the breeding season shall be apportioned to source SPA populations and, outside the breeding season, to contributing biogeographical populations.

Collision Risk Modelling (CRM) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development, including CRM for migratory non-seabird species. Please refer to Volume III, Appendices 12.1 – 12.11. An assessment of potential impacts to birds' species has been carried out for the Proposed Development, please refer to Volume II, Chapter 12 Offshore Ornithology. Data sources and methods for defining the baseline are presented in section 12.5.2 of the Offshore Ornithology Chapter.

Commercial Fisheries

- 1.10.2.18 Many concerns were raised over the impact the Project may have on fishing access and fishing livelihoods during the survey works, construction and while operational. Some stakeholders queried the development of a Fisheries Fund, the potential for employment in the renewables industry and what skills are transferrable and what qualifications would be required.

- 1.10.2.19 Locally, the displacement of local fishermen to other waters was cited by many as a concern. It was raised that previously displaced fishermen were now in the project area and must also be consulted with. On a national level, space in Irish waters is becoming more of a premium and Brexit is causing additional worries as European fishermen will be moving out of UK waters and into Irish waters. Stakeholders are concerned that the project would further effect the areas where Irish fishermen can fish.

Potential impacts on commercial fisheries, including displacement are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 14 Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture. A Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy (FMMS) has also been submitted with the Application (Volume III, Appendix 25.3). The FMMS includes information on the co-existence and disruption payment strategy.

Shipping and Navigation

- 1.10.2.20 The presence of the wind turbines was indicated to help mariners identify the sand bank more easily. Some stakeholders said that the Project shall act as an aid to navigation and make sailing less treacherous around the banks. Furthermore, stakeholders noted that there may be possible constraints on navigation at the northern end of the Project. It was stated that much of the traffic

to/from the south within the project area is to/from Dublin Port and thus will be affected by the Project.

1.10.2.21 Queries were submitted asking if access within the project area would be permitted. Some stakeholders are keen for exclusion zones to be implemented around the project, however many are concerned of the negative impact on fishing if exclusion zones are put in place. One stakeholder noted that if an exclusion zone extends far out to the east then the traffic staying inside of the Arklow Bank will increase dramatically and subsequently impact on sailing events.

1.10.2.22 It was advised that a Notice To Mariners (NTM) should be created prior to commencement of any construction. Each NTM should indicate any restrictions around the area during construction, including a minimum restricted proximity to the site. Ideally a restricted access area should be signalled by the Coast Guard (similar to filming on Skelligs) if this is to be enforceable.

Potential impacts on Shipping and Navigation are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 15 Shipping and Navigation. A Navigational Risk Assessment has also been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 15.1 Navigational Risk Assessment. Promulgation of information via NtM and other appropriate means are included as factored in mitigation measures, implemented through the Vessel Management Plan (VMP), Volume III, Appendix 25.7.

Military and Civil Aviation Radar

1.10.2.23 It was raised that the moving turbines can affect weather radar data due to a varying Doppler signature. These affects can interfere with accurate weather warnings of severe weather events which is of concern by stakeholders. It was requested that the guidance document on weather radar and wind turbines as prepared by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) be consulted.

Potential impacts on radar are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 16 Civil and Military Aviation.

Seascape, Landscape and Visual

1.10.2.24 Several stakeholders requested that a visual assessment be carried out and that more detailed visual representations be shared with the public, in particular views from beaches and iconic and/or tourist locations.

Potential impacts on the seascape and landscape are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 17 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Photomontages have been developed and are included in Volume III, Appendices 17.3 and 17.4.

Population (Socio-Economics)

1.10.2.25 Many stakeholders were supportive of the project and its employment opportunities and community benefit funding.

1.10.2.26 The benefit of the project on tourism and development was raised. However, some felt the project would negatively impact tourism and recreational water pursuits due to the visual and physical impact of the project – during surveying, construction and once operational.

Potential impacts on tourism are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 21 Population and Human Health. Socioeconomic information regarding employment and expenditure associated with the Proposed Development is contained in Volume III, Appendix 21.1 Socioeconomic Impact Report. For information on the community benefit fund, please see Annex A of this Appendix.

Archaeology

1.10.2.27 One stakeholder noted that they were satisfied with the assessment approach for marine archaeology.

This response has been noted.

Bats

1.10.2.28 It was raised that the impact of similar projects has been noted to impact bats more than originally thought. Most bat species in Ireland are not known to migrate, however one species does. Therefore, it was put forward that this species should be monitored at Phase 1 to help inform this project.

Potential impacts on offshore bats are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 13 Offshore Bats.

The Proposed Development is committed to participating in the 'East Coast Monitoring Group' (ECMG), to discuss and agree potential strategic monitoring initiatives in relation to offshore bats. The need for strategic monitoring and the level of participation by individual projects will be determined by the conclusions of the EIAR process, in consultation with statutory and technical stakeholders, and with a focus on validation and evidence gathering.

1.10.3 Public Consultation 2021/2022

1.10.3.1 Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the Developer made considerable efforts to promote this public consultation during the pandemic, which focused on the OMF, to ensure stakeholders and the community were aware of ABWP2 at this stage. This included delivering over 22,000 leaflets and promoting the consultation in local media. In addition, a Notice to Mariners (NTM) was issued to publicise ABWP2.

1.10.3.2 The terms of reference of the consultation in 2021 sought to gather feedback and local knowledge to inform the Project and to also to inform the public of project details. The public consultation ran from 7th to 25th June 2021.

1.10.3.3 A virtual exhibition was made available to access online throughout the second public consultation period. The online exhibition contained a welcome video, information displays, a video of the proposed OMF and feedback form. The virtual consultation room was accessible on all browsers and devices.

1.10.3.4 A public consultation event was held the 16 June 2021, at 7pm, hosted via YouTube. As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, the event was held online only. A recording of the online event was available on the website afterwards.

1.10.3.5 Public exhibitions and information points were erected at two locations, one in County Wicklow and one County Wexford. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, these exhibitions were unmanned and self-guided. The exhibitions were located at:

- Bridgewater Shopping Centre, North Quay, Arklow, County Wicklow; and
- Seamount/Main Street, Courtown, County Wexford.

1.10.3.6 The Bridgewater exhibition was accessible seven days a week and in accordance with the opening hours of the Bridgewater Shopping Centre. The information point in Courtown was accessible from the street, and thus available at all times.

1.10.3.7 A booklet and a leaflet were produced as part of the OMF consultation period. These printed materials were available at the Bridgewater Shopping Centre stand, by post and the content was replicated on the panel displays in the virtual consultation room for consistency. The booklet outlined ABWP2 as a whole but focused in on the aspects of the OMF including the Sustainable Education Centre (SEC) as well as how the Developer is supporting the local community. Information was provided under the follow headings:

- Our Vision;
- Operations and Maintenance Facility;
- Supporting the Community;
- Have Your Say;

- Find Out More; and
- About SSE Renewables.

1.10.3.8 The OMF announcement and consultation period received a high level of media coverage. A variety of local and national news outlets published the story. A variety of different sized adverts were prepared in order to be employed in different settings. A short video depicting the entire Project but focusing on the OMF was created and used throughout the consultation period. The video showed a computer-generated illustration of the proposed wind farm, crew transfer vessel bays, the SEC and buildings associated with the facility.

1.10.3.9 A LinkedIn social media campaign was previously run for the Project where native and organic and sponsored or paid content was prepared and issued on the SSE Renewables LinkedIn page. For the sponsored content, local businesses and individuals based in Arklow and Wexford were targeted. The campaign reached 108,624 people (impressions) in total. The engagement across native and sponsored content was consistent, with an engagement rate of 1.65% for sponsored and 2.29% for native. The sponsored content resulted in 420 clicks on the Project webpage. SSE Renewables continue to maintain their LinkedIn page with relevant and up to date material relating to ABWP2.

1.11 Public Consultation 2023

1.11.1 Public consultation campaign 2023

1.11.1.1 Following revisions to the Proposed Development between 2020 and 2023, the Developer re-launched a public consultation campaign.

1.11.1.2 In March 2023, the Developer published a Project virtual showroom accessible via the project's website which featured an overview of ABWP2 and offered the public an opportunity to share their views and feedback. The offshore infrastructure was the focus of this public consultation.

1.11.1.3 The virtual room replicated the updated Project brochure and included information boards under the following categories:

- About SSE Renewables;
- About the Project;
- Project Timeline;
- Public Consultation;
- Components of an Offshore Wind Farm;
- Consenting Process;
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report;
- Community Engagement;
- Commercial Fisheries Engagement;
- Find Out More

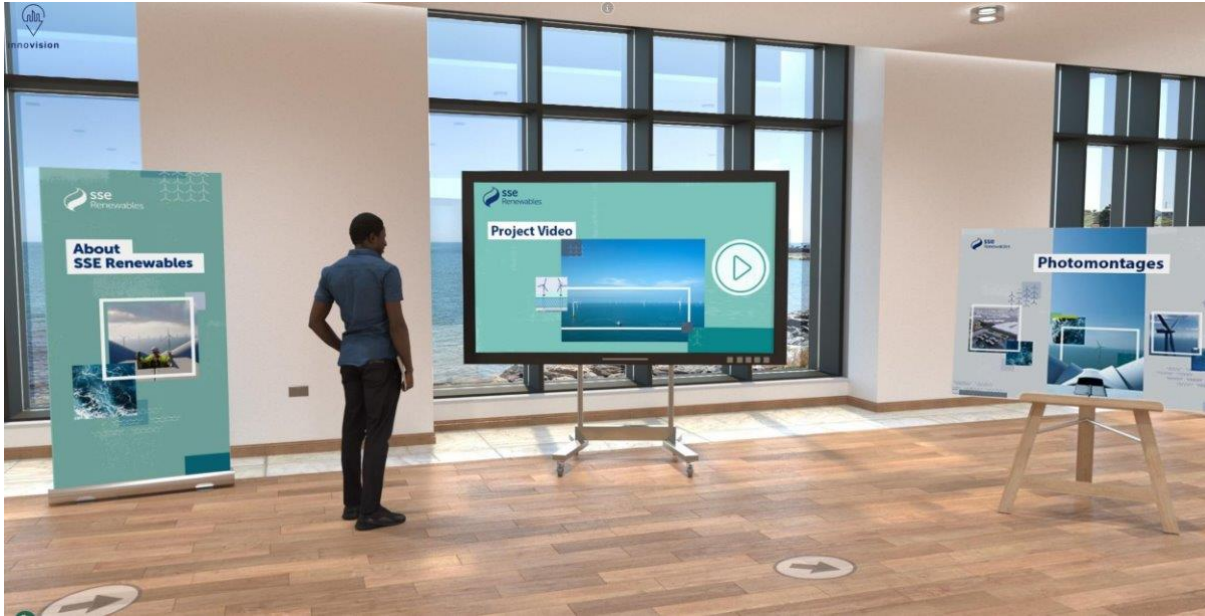


Figure 3.1.1: ABWP2 virtual showroom

1.11.1.4 The exhibition hosted a welcome video, project video, photomontages of project site, a virtual feedback facility and downloadable brochure.

1.11.1.5 In-person events were scheduled where the Developer was present to meet members of the local community. Events were scheduled as follows:

- 16 March 2023: 5 - 8pm - Arklow Bay Conference and Leisure Hotel, Sea Road, Arklow, Co. Wicklow Y14DX02;
- 21 March 2023: 5 - 8pm - Wicklow Sailing Club, South Quay, Wicklow, Co. Wicklow A67WV82; and
- 29 March 2023: 5 - 8pm - Courtown Sailing Club, South Beach, Courtown, Co. Wexford Y25X9D0.

1.11.1.6 The in-person events featured an exhibition of the latest Project information including local media engagement evidence, a 3D simulation experience and printed photomontage displays of the project site at key coastal vantage points and the most up to date printed assets such as brochure, newsletter and fisheries report were made available in hard copy to visitors. Feedback forms were also available, and guests were invited to complete a form and share their views with SSE Renewables. They were also invited to sign up to the Project mailing list to receive relevant future updates.



Figure 3.1.2: 3D Simulation of the Proposed Development from the Arklow in person event, March 2023

1.11.1.7 In addition to in-person events, an online webinar took place on 5 April 2023 at 7:30pm. This featured a presentation from members of the Developer's Project Team, a demonstration of a 3D simulation of the site hosted by a member of the Consents team and a question-and-answer session.

1.11.1.8 The key themes and queries raised during the public consultation events which are relevant to the development of the EIAR are summarised below. General queries that were raised about the Project are not captured here but have been considered by the Developer internally.

Project Timeline

1.11.1.9 General queries were raised on the timeline for the Proposed Development from Construction to Operation

A timeline for construction through to operation of the Proposed Development is contained in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development, Figure 4.29 High-level construction programme.

Employment

1.11.1.10 There was support for the Proposed Development especially with regard to employment opportunities in the local area. General queries were raised about recruitment, transferable skills from other industries such as fishing and the level of jobs that may become available.

Information relating to employment opportunities can be found in Volume III, Appendix 21.1 Socio Economic Impact Report.

Location and Description of the Proposed Development

- 1.11.1.11 Queries were raised on the near-shore location of the Proposed Development and why the infrastructure could not be located further offshore 22-30 km.
- 1.11.1.12 Queries were also received on the number of WTGs, including height and distances between the WTGs.
- 1.11.1.13 More information on decommissioning was also raised during the public events.
- 1.11.1.14 The visual impact of the existing ABWP1 WTGs and future WTGs as part of ABWP2 was raised as a concern by some locals.
- 1.11.1.15 A query was raised on the lighting requirements and if the lights would only be operational if an aircraft or boat were to come close to the infrastructure.

A constraints analysis has been submitted with the Application for the Proposed Development, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 3.4 Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Constraints Analysis. An assessment of alternatives has also been carried out for the EIAR and can be found in Volume II, Chapter 3 Consideration of Alternatives.

Information such as the number of WTGs, heights and minimum spacing between WTGs can be found in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development.

Information on decommissioning can be found in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development. In addition, a Rehabilitation Schedule has been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 4.1. The Rehabilitation Schedule sets out how SPL will, before the expiration of the MAC, rehabilitate the consent area and any other part of the maritime area adversely affected by the Proposed Development.

The visual impacts of the proposed ABWP2 WTGs with the existing ABWP1 WTGs have been assessed in Volume II Chapter 17 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Photomontages have also been produced to depict the proposed ABWP2 in combination with the existing ABWP1 WTGs, please refer to Volume III, Appendices 17.3 and 17.4.

The lighting requirements for the Proposed Development are set out in Volume III, Appendix 25.6 Lighting and Marking Plan.

Environmental Impacts

- 1.11.1.16 Concerns were raised about the impacts of the development on the sandbank and nearby beaches.

Potential impacts upon seabed morphology and coastal processes are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 6 Coastal Processes.

- 1.11.1.17 A query was raised about the carbon emissions for construction.

The impact of the Proposed Development on carbon emissions has been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 20 Air Quality and Climate. The assessment also includes calculations of the 'payback' period for the Proposed Development.

Commercial Fisheries

- 1.11.1.18 Concerns were raised about the cumulative impact of ABWP2 alongside other planned developments along the East coast.
- 1.11.1.19 Concerns over loss of fishing grounds were raised and queries on whether there will be fisheries exclusion zones implemented.
- 1.11.1.20 Pre and post construction surveys of fish stocks was requested.
- 1.11.1.21 The impact of the Proposed Development on angling was queried.

1.11.1.22 One stakeholder queried if impacts to elasmobranchs will be considered in the EIAR.

Potential impacts on commercial fisheries, including displacement are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 14 Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture. A FMMS has also been submitted with the Application (Volume III, Appendix 25.3). The FMMS includes information on the co-existence and disruption payment strategy.

Potential impacts on recreational activities including angling are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 19 Infrastructure and Other Users.

Potential impacts on elasmobranchs are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 10 Fish, Shellfish and Sea Turtle Ecology.

1.11.2 Advertising Campaign

1.11.2.1 To promote the public consultation for the Proposed Development, the Developer deployed the use of media adverts.

1.11.2.2 A two-week radio campaign was launched in March 2023 this included 40 advert spots on South East Radio and 40 on East Coast FM, reaching 58.3% of all adults in the Wexford Area and 51% of all adults in the Wicklow area, respectively.

1.11.2.3 Social media was utilised to promote the consultation via Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. The total reach, impressions and link clicks per platform is summarised in Table 3.1.2.

Table 3.1.2: Reach, impressions and link clicks per platform

| Platform | Reach | Impressions | Link Clicks |
|---|---------|--------------|-------------|
| Meta (Facebook and Instagram) | 646,000 | 1.3 Million | 769 |
| LinkedIn | 48,000 | 107,000 | 426 |
| Digital campaign across programmatic displays and internet searches | 210,000 | 1.08 million | 3,460 |

1.11.2.4 Printed press adverts were also published by the Developer with numerous full page and half page adverts. These adverts and reach are summarised in Table 3.1.3.

Table 3.1.3: Printed adverts and reach

| Publisher | Date | Readership figures (number of people) |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Wicklow Times | February 28 th | 44,200 |
| | March 7 th | |
| | March 14 th | |
| Wicklow People | March 1 st | 33,786 |
| | March 8 th | |
| | March 15 th | |
| Gorey Guardian | February 1 st | 23,424 |
| | March 8 th | |
| | March 15 th | |



Figure 3.1.3: Full page public consultation advert from the Wicklow Times, March 2023

1.11.2.5 Billboards were also deployed by the Developer in locations across the local area, these are summarised in Table 3.1.4.

Table 3.1.4: Billboard locations

| Type of display | Number of displays | Location |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 48 Sheet | 2 | Dublin Road, Arklow Abbey St. Wicklow Town |
| AdShel Live | 6 | Bridgewater Shopping Centre, Arklow |
| Tesco Live | 1 | Wicklow Town |
| Adbox | 2 | Courtown, Wexford |
| Admobile | 2 | St. Patrick's Day Parades: Arklow and Wicklow |

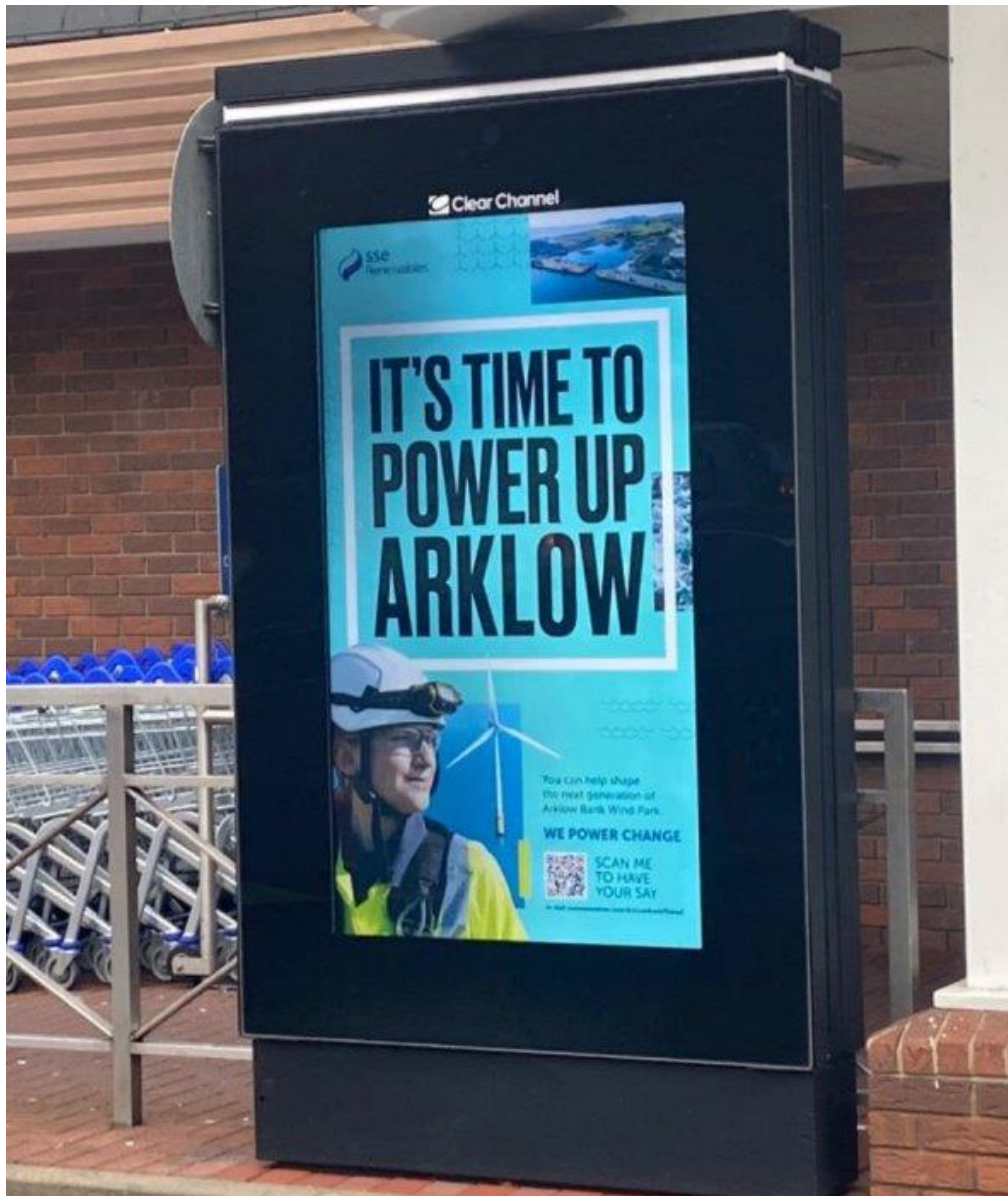


Figure 3.1.4: Tesco live display, Wicklow Town

- 1.11.2.6 The consultation phase was promoted through various means as with previous consultation campaigns for the Project e.g., local radio and newspapers, local online news platform, adverts out of home displays, A3 posters in community locations, social media, public relations, direct stakeholder outreach etc. The public consultation outreach benefitted hugely from the use of a 3D interactive tool which allowed the public to view impressions of the Proposed Development from key vantage points both onshore and offshore. The 3D tool also included details of the consented OGI and OMF. It facilitated meaningful public engagement and the time invested in developing the tool and demonstrating it at the in-person events and online webinar proved very worthwhile. The tool added an authenticity and transparency to the offshore project plans and was very positively received by the public.

1.11.3 Stakeholder Engagement

- 1.11.3.1 An extensive process of stakeholder engagement has been carried out by the Project Team to date. This has included correspondence featuring updates and invitations to engage with the Project Team. Meetings with key stakeholders were facilitated to ensure that the Project Team

was cognisant of the views of the various organisations and that stakeholders were informed and up to date on the Project's development.

Outreach to political representatives

- 1.11.3.2 SSE Renewables seeks to maintain close relationships with all elected representatives, and stakeholders, in all of the constituencies within which they have a presence. We have sought to maintain an open dialogue with all elected representatives in Wicklow and North Wexford. SSE Renewables also recognise that public representatives can act as important disseminators of information through their own social media channels and distribution lists. At key points throughout the lifecycle of the project their views have been sought, and they have been continuously briefed in relation to all important announcements.
- 1.11.3.3 Email outreach, advising the launch of the public consultation campaign, was circulated to TDs, Senators, and Councillors in Wicklow and North Wexford and a briefing meeting offered. Elected representatives were also contacted directly to advise them of the upcoming community webinar. Newsletters, communiques including invitations to events are circulated regularly to political representatives.

Outreach to community stakeholders

- 1.11.3.4 Email and postal outreach were circulated to community stakeholders, fishers and residents in proximity to the landfall and cable route, advising on the upcoming launch of the public consultation campaign in-person events and online webinar. Feedback was gathered at in-person events, online via the live webinar and via email and phone communication.

Engagement with Statutory Consultees

- 1.11.3.5 Engagement with statutory consultees has been an important element of the Proposed Development's engagement strategy to date. A summary of this engagement during 2023 is provided in Table 3.1.5.

Table 3.1.5 Engagement in 2023 with Statutory Consultees

| Consultee | Key issue |
|--|---|
| National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) | Details on liaison with ABP to date. Also included update on EIA Scoping/Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and liaison with NPWS on engaging with NPWS on site pressures (east coast SPAs). |
| An Bord Pleanála | Formal pre-application meetings commenced the 13 th of June 2023 and concluded on the 11 th of December. |
| Irish Coastguard (IRCG) | <p>Noted that accommodation and rescue facilities for the OSPs would assist if any rescue operations were required or if workers were unable to return to shore.</p> <p>Noted that non-Automatic Identification System (AIS) data should be considered in the assessment.</p> <p>Indicated that lighting provisions and additional SAR mitigations are likely to resemble that within the UK Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 654 guidance.</p> <p>Noted that Irish guidance is likely to closely resemble MGN 654.</p> |

| Consultee | Key issue |
|---|---|
| Marine Survey Office (MSO) | <p>Noted content with the data collected given that it aligns with MGN 654.</p> <p>Noted content for project to use advisory safe passing distances in lieu of safety zones, but noted that this should be clear in the promulgation of information.</p> <p>Noted that SSE should keep the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) informed throughout the consenting process.</p> <p>Noted that the VMP should be circulated to shipping and navigation stakeholders.</p> |
| Irish Lights | <p>Noted that they are content with the data collection process following that set out in MGN 654.</p> <p>Noted there may be a need for a cardinal mark for the gap between the Proposed Development and Codling.</p> <p>Noted they would be looking for two to three AIS aids to navigation but that this would depend on the layout.</p> <p>Stated that sound signals are not commonly used but could be discussed as part of the Lighting and Marking Plan (LMP) process.</p> <p>Stated content with the use of construction buoyage and temporary lighting for construction phase mitigations, noting that the final plans would need to be agreed via the LMP.</p> <p>Indicated a buoy could be used to mark the reduction in underkeel clearance resulting from cable protection but that this would depend on the reduction.</p> |
| Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage: Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU) | <p>Review of archaeological aspects of the area and survey data to date.</p> <p>Noted the importance of archaeological mitigation and monitoring associated with the Proposed Development.</p> |

1.11.4 Scoping consultation 2023

Overview of the Proposed Development

1.11.4.1 The Proposed Development includes all offshore infrastructure in the maritime area up to the High Water Mark (HWM). The key components of the Proposed Development which were consulted on during the 2023 scoping consultation included:

- Either 56, 47, 42 or 37 WTGs using monopile or jacket foundations with each WTG comprising a tower section, nacelle and three rotor blades;
- One or two OSPs using (monopile or jacket foundations)
- A network of inter-array cabling between WTG and OSP locations within the Array Area which shall be used to transmit power from the WTGs to the OSPs
- Up to two export cable corridors; and
- Scour protection and cable protection, if required.

1.11.4.2 All feedback provided throughout the Proposed Development's updated scoping consultation was captured by the Project Team. Feedback was provided by email to the bespoke ABWP2 scoping consultation email address and all records of engagements have been maintained. The feedback has been assessed by the Project Team and is summarised below.

1.11.4.3 The list of organisations consulted on the EIAR scoping for the Proposed Development included:

Ireland Organisations

- An Bord Pleanála – Maritime Unit
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council)
- An Taisce
- Arklow Sailing Club
- Arklow Port
- Belfast Harbour
- Dublin Port
- Birdwatch Ireland
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- Carlow County Council
- Casement Military Aerodrome
- CHC Helicopters
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Commissioners of Irish Lights
- ComReg
- Dublin Airport Authority (DAA)
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Defence – Naval and Aer Corps
- Department of Transport (Marine Survey Office)
- Development Applications Unit – NPWS
- Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council – Dun Laoghaire Port
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
- Eirgrid
- Enterprise Ireland
- Gas Networks Ireland
- Geological Survey Ireland
- Harland and Wolff
- Health and Safety Authority
- Health and Safety Executive
- Heritage Council
- IDA Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Irish Coast Guard
- Irish Mussel Seed Company
- Irish Rail
- Irish Sailing Association
- Irish Water
- Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
- Irish Wildlife Trust
- NPWS
- Marine Institute
- Met Eireann
- Office of Public Works
- Port of Cork
- RNLI
- Rosslare Port
- SEAI
- Sea Fisheries Protection Agency (SFPA)
- South East Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
- Underwater Archaeology Unit
- Weston Aerodrome
- Wexford County Council
- 2RN
- Wicklow Boat Charters
- Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club (WBSAC)
- Wicklow Sailing Club
- Wicklow Port
- Wexford Port
- Wicklow County Council
- Arklow Sea Scouts
- Arklow RNLI
- Arklow Rowing Club
- Native Oyster Reef Restoration Ireland (NORRI)
- South East Coastal Protection Alliance (SEPCA)

- Wicklow Rowing Club
- Wicklow Sub Aqua Club
- Wicklow Swimming Club
- Wicklow Regatta Festival
- Courtown Sailing Club
- Seal Rescue Ireland
- East Coast Rivers c/o Local Authority (LA) Waters Programme (LAWPRO)
- Arklow & District Chamber of Commerce
- Wicklow & District Chamber of Commerce
- Arklow Municipal District
- Wicklow Municipal District
- ASL Safety & Training
- Arklow Shipping
- O'Toole Shipping
- Arklow Marine Services
- Roadstone, Arklow

Transboundary Organisations

Northern Ireland

- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Department for Infrastructure
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency

England, Wales and Scotland

- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Energy
- Maritime Management Organisation (MMO)
- Marine Scotland
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- The Environment Agency (EA)
- Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas)
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
- Natural England
- Scottish National Heritage

Isle of Man

- Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA)
- Department of Infrastructure
- Cefas

France

- Ministère des Affaires étrangères
- Armateurs de France
- Préfecture Maritime de la Manche et de la Mer du Nord (PREMAR)
- Secrétariat Général de la Mer
- CRPMEM Nord
- Fédération Nationale de la Pêche
- FROM Nord
- CME Organisation de Producteur

1.11.4.4 For the purpose of this consultation report, all feedback has been anonymised and is presented below. The feedback has been grouped under headings that relate to specialist topics presented in the EIAR. In some cases, the feedback may relate to multiple topics and is repeated wherever relevant.

Marine Water (Coastal Processes)

1.11.4.5 Stakeholders recommended that the EIAR include provision for a stability monitoring programme to identify early signs of potential slides on the seabed. The EIAR should also include the impact construction work may have on the future stability of the seabed.

A seabed mobility assessment has been undertaken for the Proposed Development: Partrac, 2022. Arklow Bank Wind Park Morphodynamic Study Interpretative Report.

Airborne Noise

1.11.4.6 Consider the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (SI 140 of 2006) and, in particular, how the development will affect future action plans by the relevant competent authority. The developer may need to consider the incorporation of noise barriers to reduce noise impacts (see Guidelines

for the Treatment of Noise and Vibration in National Road Schemes (1st Rev., National Roads Authority, 2004))

- 1.11.4.7 The stakeholders recommended that noise from any existing turbines in the area is not included as part of the background levels.
- 1.11.4.8 The potential impacts from noise and vibration from the Proposed Development on all noise sensitive locations must be clearly identified in the EIAR.
- 1.11.4.9 The EIAR should consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of all proposed mitigation measures to minimise noise and vibration.
- 1.11.4.10A baseline noise monitoring survey should be undertaken to establish the background noise levels.
- 1.11.4.11 Stakeholders also recommended complying with the revised draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines published in December 2019 for airborne noise and vibration.

Impacts on Airborne Noise have been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 8 Airborne Noise. The guidance used to inform this assessment can be found in Table 8.2 of Chapter 8.

A CNMP has also been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 25.8.

Shadow Flicker

- 1.11.4.12A stakeholder recommended that a shadow flicker assessment is undertaken to identify any dwellings and sensitive receptors which may be impacted by shadow flicker.

Shadow flicker assessment best practice and policy (where available) generally confirms that shadow flicker effects may be experienced within 10 rotor diameters of turbine locations. A distance of 10 rotor diameters is accepted as the study area for onshore wind in Ireland and the UK. ABWP2 is located approximately 6 – 15km from shore, for this reason a shadow flicker assessment has not been carried out.

Air Quality

- 1.11.4.13 Stakeholders suggested that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is included in the EIAR which details dust control and mitigation measures.

As outlined in Table 20.12 of Volume II, Chapter 20 Air Quality and Climate, the Proposed Development relates to the construction of the offshore infrastructure only. As such, there is no potential for dust impacts on nearby sensitive receptors due to the distance between the Array Area and the shore.

Climate Change

- 1.11.4.14 Stakeholders stated that the EIAR should detail the proposed methodology to be used for the disposal of the materials forming the offshore development. It suggested that the EIAR should indicate the proposed future use of the development site at the end of the planning permission period.

A Resource and Waste Management Plan (RWMP) has been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 25.1 Environmental Management Plan, Annex 5.

Information on decommissioning can be found in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development. In addition, a Rehabilitation Schedule has been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 4.1.

Marine Mammals

- 1.11.4.15 Stakeholders suggested that there is an intrinsic value to establishing the baseline noise level to determine accurately the additional operational noise in the marine environment from the windfarm.

- 1.11.4.16 Stakeholders recommended that a recent study by Thomsen et al. (2013) which indicated that operational noise from larger turbines (i.e. 20 MW) may result in TTS ranges of 700 m from source, potentially overlapping with TTS zones from other turbines and forming a barrier to cetaceans across entire windfarm sites, should be taken into account in the EIAR.

The potential impact of the Proposed Development on marine mammals is assessed in Volume II, Chapter 11 Marine Mammals. Relevant guidance and legislation used to inform the assessment is set out in section 11.2 of Chapter 11.

Shipping and Navigation

- 1.11.4.17 In addition to impacts on shipping and navigation, stakeholders suggested that the EIAR should take account of the impact on the commercial functionality of local ports and the impact of the cable route on future development on the local harbours, port shipping, port operations and port related traffic.

Potential impacts on Shipping and Navigation are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 15 Shipping and Navigation. A Navigational Risk Assessment has also been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 15.1 Navigational Risk Assessment.

Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impacts

- 1.11.4.18 Stakeholders stated that particular attention needs to be given to effects on views from existing purpose-built tourism facilities, as well as views from touring routes, walking trails, scenic viewing points, greenways etc. as these have the potential to be particularly affected by infrastructure related developments which are located within viewing distance from the coast.

Potential impacts on the seascape and landscape are assessed in Volume II, Chapter 17 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Photomontages have been developed and are included in Volume III, Appendices 17.3 and 17.4. A range of viewpoints, including beaches, tourist locations and roads (national and local) have been included and assessed within the visual impact assessment.

Decommissioning

- 1.11.4.19 Stakeholders suggested that the EIAR should detail the eventual fate of all ABWP2 infrastructure as well as the proposed future use of the development site at the end of the planning permission period.
- 1.11.4.20 Stakeholders stated that decommissioning process should include an independent seabed debris clearance survey to verify that debris clearance has been completed.

Information on decommissioning can be found in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development. In addition, a Rehabilitation Schedule has been submitted with the Application, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 4.1.

Details of the Development

- 1.11.4.21 The EIAR should include a map and description of the proposed location of each of the ABWP2 infrastructure components. The distance of the wind turbines from the coast should also be set out.
- 1.11.4.22 Details of the foundations for the wind turbines, including depth, quantity and material to be used should be included in the EIAR.
- 1.11.4.23 Details of the O&M facility, including locations and construction method should be assessed in the EIAR.

Details of the Proposed Development are set out in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development.

In June 2022, the Developer received planning permission for the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) (Planning Register Reference: 21/1316). The OMF has been assessed in the cumulative impact assessment section of certain chapters of the EIAR where there is potential for a cumulative impact between the Proposed Development and the OMF.

Alternatives

1.11.4.24 The EIAR should consider an assessment of alternatives. The EHS recommends that alternative measures should be assessed as part of the EIAR.

An assessment of alternatives has been submitted with the Application. Please refer to Volume II, Chapter 3 Consideration of Alternatives.

Cumulative Impacts

1.11.4.25 All existing or proposed wind farm developments in the vicinity should be clearly identified in the EIAR. The impact on sensitive receptors of the proposed development combined with any other wind farm/ renewable energy developments in the vicinity should be considered.

Relevant EIAR chapters include a cumulative impact assessment. Where there is potential for a cumulative effect between the Proposed Development and other renewable energy developments, this has been assessed.

Roads

1.11.4.26 A number of comments were received in relation to the works impacts on national road structures, safeguarding of proposed road schemes, haul route identification and methods proposed for any works traversing/in proximity to the national road network.

This EIAR is for the ABWP2 Offshore Infrastructure only, these comments have not been incorporated within the EIAR. A separate EIAR was submitted for the onshore infrastructure, namely the OGI and OMF. In May 2022, the Developer received planning approval for the OGI Case Reference: 310090). In June 2022, the Developer received planning permission for the OMF (Planning Register Reference: 21/1316).

Biodiversity

1.11.4.27 The stakeholders acknowledged the potential to ensure a new benefit to the marine ecosystem through biodiversity enhancement such as artificial reef installation and careful choice of materials for scour protection to provide a three-dimensional environment suitable for colonisation.

Colonisation of hard structures has been assessed in Volume II, Chapter 9 Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology.

Waste

1.11.4.28 A detailed Resource and Waste Plan should be prepared and submitted in the EIAR for assessment. Emissions from material flows can be minimised by using a waste hierarchy approach consistent with the Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC; establishing where there is scope for equipment and material re-use and recycling, with disposal only taking place where no feasible alternative is available.

A Resource and Waste Management Plan (RWMP) has been submitted with the Application for the Proposed Development, please refer to Volume III, Appendix 25.1 Environmental Management Plan, Annex 5. The RWMP is aligned to the Waste Framework Directive, enacted in Ireland via the Waste Directive Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 126 of 2011).

Ancillary Facilities

1.11.4.29 The EIAR should include details of the location of all site offices, operational and maintenance activities, construction compound, fuel storage depot, sanitary accommodation, canteen, First Aid facilities, disposal of waste water and the provision of a potable water supply to the site canteen

This EIAR is for the ABWP2 Offshore Infrastructure only, these comments have not been incorporated within the EIAR. A separate EIAR was submitted for the onshore infrastructure, namely the OGI and OMF. In May 2022, the Developer received planning approval for the OGI (Case Reference: 310090). In June 2022, the Developer received planning permission for the OMF (Planning Register Reference: 21/1316).

Geotechnical and Seabed Assessment

1.11.4.30A detailed assessment / sampling of the current ground stability of the seabed to confirm seabed sediment type, existing contamination status and faunal community type for the Proposed Development. The assessment should include the impact construction may have on the future stability of the seabed, taking into consideration scouring and extreme weather events and potential erosion.

1.11.4.31 All proposed mitigation measures should be detailed in the EIAR. Information should be provided on the make and model of turbines and on construction details for the turbine foundations, including the depth and volume of concrete required in the seabed. An accurate assessment of the potential impacts of the foundations on water quality and seabed stability cannot be undertaken without this information.

1.11.4.32 The EIAR should include provision for a stability monitoring programme to identify early signs of potential slides.

A seabed mobility assessment has been undertaken for the Proposed Development: Partrac, 2022. Arklow Bank Wind Park Morphodynamic Study Interpretative Report.

A summary of the mitigation measures proposed for the Proposed Development is included in Volume II, Chapter 25 Summary of Factored in Measures, Mitigation and Monitoring.

Information on the infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development, including construction details are contained in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development.

Surface and Ground Water Quality

1.11.4.33 All drinking water sources, both surface and ground water must be identified. Public and Group Water Scheme sources and supplies should be identified in addition to any private wells supplying potable water to houses in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Measures to ensure all sources and supplies are protected should be supplied.

1.11.4.34 Water quality and soil contaminants should be assessed in the EIAR that may affect drinking and bathing water quality.

1.11.4.35 Installation of infrastructure and construction activities that may affect water and bathing water quality, such as trenching of the offshore export cables and activities at the landfall must be assessed in terms of the Water Framework Directive.

1.11.4.36 Recommendation that a walk-over survey of the site is undertaken in addition to a desktop analysis for GSI (Geological Survey Ireland) data in order to identify the location of private wells used for drinking water purposes.

All sites designated under the Water Framework Directive that fall under the Marine Water and Sediment Quality Study Area are identified and assessed in Volume II, Chapter 7 Marine Water and Sediment Quality. In regard to drinking, surface and ground water quality, in May 2022, Sure Partners Ltd. (the Developer) received planning approval for the Onshore Grid Infrastructure (OGI) (Case Reference: 310090). In June 2022, the Developer received planning permission for the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) (Planning Register Reference: 21/1316). Therefore, potential Impacts to Onshore surface and ground water quality were covered in ABWP2 Onshore Grid Infrastructure EIAR, Volume II, Chapter 10: Water.

1.12 How feedback informed the Proposed Development

- 1.12.1.1 All feedback received from stakeholders has been reviewed by the Developer and the Project Team. Each Chapter of the EIAR sets out how the feedback received to date has been taken into consideration.
- 1.12.1.2 Following engagement with stakeholders and pre application meetings with ABP in 2023, the Developer has reduced the design optionality for the Proposed Development. The Developer is seeking consent for one of two discrete Project Design Options. A full description of both Project Design Options is included in Volume II, Chapter 4 Description of Development.

2 References

UNECE, 2014. Aarhus Implementation Guide. <https://unece.org/info/Environment-Policy/Public-participation/pub/2289> [Accessed December 2023].

Annex A

Community Benefit Fund

SSE Renewables (SSER) has a long and proud history of sharing economic value from its renewable assets with communities. SSER owns and operates 29 onshore wind farms on the island of Ireland and to date has invested over €16m on a voluntary basis in the surrounding communities. SSER has direct experience of administering community benefit funds with a total lifetime value of €367m across Ireland and Great Britain. The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) and Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS) community benefit schemes developed by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) were informed by SSER's best practice.

Arklow's Community Support to Date

SSER has been engaging with local communities near the proposed Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) site since 2018, and to date, has invested over €500,000 on a voluntary basis across County Wicklow and North Wexford.

This investment has been made through two separate Sponsorship and Fisheries Funds. The Sponsorship Fund has supported more than 80 community initiatives under themes of marine-based activities, environmental and social sustainability and energy efficiency. The Fisheries Fund has sought to provide direct benefit to locally registered commercial fishery operators and in 2023, in collaboration with Wicklow County Council, delivered a new 16 berth commercial pontoon at Arklow Harbour. SSER has committed to the continuation of these voluntary funds throughout the development phase in order to demonstrate its commitment to the local region and support for communities in the vicinity of the ABWP2 project.

ABWP2 was not successful in the first round of the Government's ORESS scheme, however, SPL remains fully committed to delivering the project, and through SSER, providing a community benefit fund. Without an ORESS support contract, ABWP2 is not in a position to deliver a community fund in line with the ORESS scheme. However, SPL is committed to providing a fund of €3m per annum for the duration of an alternative route to market (corporate power purchase agreement) contract.

The ABWP2 Community Benefit Fund will be administered in line with SSER's 29 existing community benefit funds in Ireland, and align with the fundamental principle of the ORESS community benefit guidelines, namely community participation and community-led decision-making. In administering the community benefit fund for ABWP2 SSER will:

- Ensure community participation in fund decision-making via the establishment of a local Fund Committee;
- Develop a Funding Strategy and Development Delivery Plan which will be approved by the Fund Committee;
- Raise awareness and ensure effective promotion of the application process in line with the Funding Strategy;
- Ensure that applications for funding are assessed in a fair, non-discriminatory and transparent manner;
- Publish an annual report detailing the performance of the fund and ensure transparency;
- Maximise the impact of the fund by supporting communities to deliver their priorities with measurable and sustainable benefits;
- Ensuring that communities benefit from funding during the construction of ABWP2. Following Financial Investment Decision (FID), SSER will make prepayments available during the three years preceding Commercial Operations as follows:
 - 1st Early Contribution Year - €0.5m
 - 2nd Early Contribution Year - €1m

- 3rd Early Contribution Year - €1.5m

The early contribution payments would be offset at a rate of €0.5m per annum from the funds during subsequent years, or at an amount as agreed with the Fund Committee.

In the event that ABWP2 does manage to secure a future government-backed subsidy arrangement or an alternate arrangement which provides additional support to the project, then the level of this fund would be reviewed and increased as appropriate.