

Volume 2: Introductory Chapters

Chapter 1
Introduction

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

North Irish Sea Array Windfarm Limited (Ltd) (hereafter referred to as ‘the Developer’) is proposing to develop the North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the proposed development). The proposed development is an offshore wind farm located off the east coast of Ireland, off counties Dublin, Meath, and Louth. The proposed development is comprised of onshore and offshore infrastructure. The location of the proposed development is illustrated in Figure 1.1 (Volume 7 of the EIAR).

The Developer has submitted an application for approval to An Bord Pleanála under Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the “Planning Acts”) to carry out the proposed development.

Ove Arup & Partners Ireland Ltd (Arup) has been appointed by the Developer, to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

This EIAR is a “statement of the effects, if any, which the proposed development, if carried out, would have on the environment” (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, 2022)). This EIAR details the consideration of alternatives, consideration and assessment of likely significant effects, mitigation and monitoring measures to reduce significant adverse effects and assessment of residual effects. It has been prepared in compliance with Council 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 (the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive).

This EIAR supports the statutory consent application to An Bord Pleanála for the proposed development, which if granted, will enable the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the proposed development as described herein.

This chapter provides an outline of the proposed development and summarises the statutory consent process. This chapter provides information on the Developer and summarises the consultations which have been carried out by the Developer to date. In addition, information on the competent experts who prepared the EIAR is included in Appendix 1.1 of Volume 8 of the EIAR.

The approach to EIAR preparation, structure, methodology is presented in Volume 2, Chapter 2: EIA and Methodology for the preparation of an EIAR (hereafter referred to as EIA and Methodology for the preparation of an EIAR chapter).

1.2 Marine Area Consent and ORESS

The Developer is the holder of a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) Ref: 2022-MAC-005 granted for the occupation of a maritime area for the permitted maritime usage, namely the construction and operation of an Offshore Wind Farm and associated infrastructure (including decommissioning and other works) off counties Dublin, Meath, and Louth. The location of the MAC boundary is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

The proposed development was successful in the first Offshore Renewable Energy Support Scheme (ORESS 1) auction in May 2023. ORESS 1 is the first Offshore Auction run under the Government of Ireland’s Renewable Electricity Support Scheme and is a pivotal component of the Programme for Government and the Climate Action Plan 2024. This is a seminal moment in the delivery of offshore wind and achieving Ireland’s target of at least 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and reaching net zero no later than 2050.

1.3 Overview of the Proposed Development

The proposed development, the subject of this EIAR and the associated consent application, is an offshore wind farm with a proposed export capacity of 700 MW.

It will comprise both onshore and offshore infrastructure. Having regard to the nature and extent of the relevant development and any other material consideration, the Developer requests An Bord Pleanála to specify a 10-year appropriate period within the meaning of section 40 of the Planning Acts, in respect of the proposed development, as provided for by Section 41(1) of the Planning Acts.

The proposed development boundary, within which the proposed development is located, will include offshore infrastructure off the coast of Counties Dublin, Meath and Louth and onshore infrastructure within County Dublin (Fingal and Dublin City Council administrative areas). The location of the proposed development is illustrated in Figure 1.1. of Volume 7 of this EIAR.

A high-level overview of the proposed development is provided below, with more detailed descriptions provided in Chapter 6: Description of the Proposed Development - Offshore and Chapter 7: Description of the Proposed Development – Onshore. Those chapters are accompanied by figures (Volume 7 of the EIAR) which provide an overview of the onshore and offshore infrastructure. Refer also to the onshore and offshore planning drawings which are included together in Appendix 7.1 of Volume 8 of this EIAR.

Offshore Infrastructure (located within and Array area and export cable corridor (ECC)):

- Offshore wind turbine generators (WTGs) and their associated foundations
- Inter-array cables which will connect the WTGs to the Offshore Substation Platform (OSP)
- An OSP and associated foundations; and
- Offshore export cable(s) which will deliver the generated power from the OSP to the high-water mark (HWM) as defined by Ordnance Survey Ireland mapping, (the HWM being the transition point between the offshore and onshore infrastructure).

Onshore Infrastructure:

- Offshore export cable(s) from the HWM to the landfall transition joint bays (TJBs)
- Transition joint bays (TJBs) where the offshore and onshore export cables are joined.
- Onshore export cable(s) from the TJBs to the grid facility
- A Grid Facility, comprising a compensation substation and Bremore substation, together within ancillary infrastructure.
- Onshore cable(s) from the grid facility to the Belcamp Substation; and
- A connection from the onshore cable(s) to the national electricity transmission network at Belcamp Substation.

The landfall will comprise both onshore and offshore infrastructure, with the HWM being the point of transition between the two. The export cables come ashore and transition to onshore cables at the TJBs close to the shoreline at Bremore Bay beach in Bremore, north of Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Image 1.1 below illustrates the offshore and onshore infrastructure of the proposed development and the interface between each.

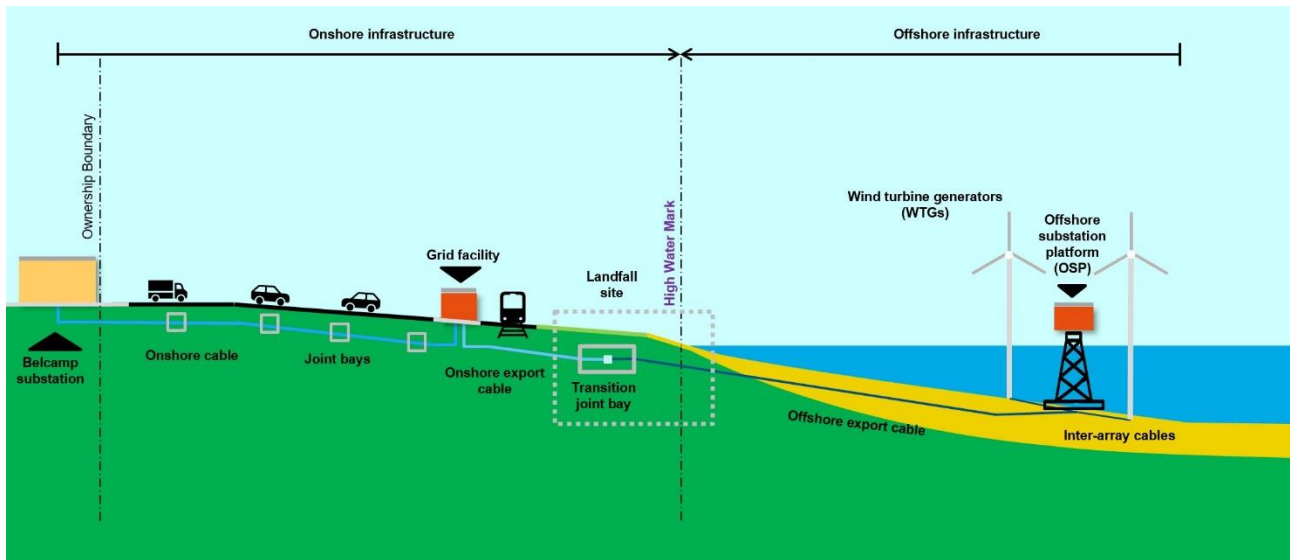


Image 1.1 Infrastructure of the proposed development (not to scale)

The proposed development boundary is the area within which all offshore and onshore infrastructure will be located and is the ‘red line’ boundary for the purposes of the consent application is illustrated in Figure 1.1 of Volume 7 of this EIAR. For ease of reference, within this EIAR, the area within the proposed development landward of the HWM associated with onshore infrastructure is referred to as the ‘onshore development area’ and the area within the proposed development boundary seaward of the HWM associated with offshore infrastructure is referred to as the ‘offshore development area’. Both the onshore and offshore development areas are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

1.4 Profile of the Proposed Developer

1.4.1 Introduction

The Developer is a 50/50 joint venture between Statkraft Ireland Ltd and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners P/S.

As noted previously in Section 1.2, the Developer is the holder of a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) Ref: 2022-MAC-005, granted for the occupation of a maritime area for the permitted maritime usage, namely the construction and operation of an Offshore Wind Farm and associated infrastructure (including decommissioning and other works).

1.4.2 Statkraft Ireland Ltd

Statkraft is a leading company in hydropower internationally and Europe’s largest generator of renewable energy. Statkraft produces hydropower, wind power, solar power, gas-fired power, and supplies district heating. Statkraft is a global company in energy market operations. Statkraft has 5,700 employees in 21 countries.

Statkraft develops a wide range of renewable energy projects to facilitate the transition to decarbonisation and is currently working to develop offshore wind projects in Norway, UK, and Sweden. Statkraft also has previous experience of offshore wind development, having been involved in the development, construction, and operation of projects in the UK including Triton Knoll, Sheringham Shoal, Dudgeon, and Dogger Bank.

Statkraft entered the Irish market in 2018 and since then has tripled both its workforce and development portfolio. Statkraft Ireland Ltd. develops, owns, and operates renewable energy projects across the technologies of onshore wind, offshore wind, solar, battery storage and grid services.

1.4.3 Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners P/S

Founded in 2012, Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners P/S (CIP) today is the world’s largest dedicated fund manager within greenfield renewable energy investments and a global leader in offshore wind.

The funds managed by CIP focus on investments in offshore and onshore wind, solar photo voltaic (PV), biomass and energy-from-waste, transmission and distribution, reserve capacity, storage and advanced bioenergy. CIP manages 11 funds and has to date raised approximately EUR 25 billion for investments in energy and associated infrastructure from more than 150 international institutional investors.

CIP has more than 400 employees and offices in Copenhagen, London, Hamburg, Utrecht, New York, Tokyo, Singapore, Seoul, Munich, Luxembourg, and Melbourne.

CIP has previous experience of offshore wind development, having been involved in the development, construction, and operation of projects in Germany, Taiwan and the US. These included Veja Mate, Beatrice, Changfang & Xidao and Vineyard Wind.

CIP's project development activities are being led by CIP's development partner, Copenhagen Offshore Partners (COP). COP is a leading and experienced provider of project development, construction management, and operational management services to offshore wind projects.

1.4.4 Approach to Sustainability

Sustainability can be defined as “*meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*” (United Nations, 1987). Annex IV (5) of the EIA Directive sets out that the EIAR should include a description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment resulting from “*...the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources*”. Consideration of the implications of the proposed development for ‘proper planning and sustainable development’ is embedded throughout the Planning Acts and the requirement to consider sustainability is also reflected in the relevant EIA guidance, including for example EPA (2022). This section briefly describes the approach to sustainability, both in the context of the EIAR and the wider delivery of the proposed development.

As Europe's largest renewable energy producer and an experienced developer of renewable energy facilities across the world, Statkraft is already playing a leading role in the transition to a low carbon future. Statkraft's Sustainability Strategy (Statkraft, 2023) encompasses the Company's approach to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and focuses on four strategic pillars of climate, biodiversity, human rights and circular economy. The strategy embeds sustainability across the lifecycle of Statkraft's projects from design to decommissioning to create value for society, the environment, and the Company. As a fund manager, CIP has a dedicated Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework for integrating ESG into the development and investment process. The framework defines how ESG is governed and executed across and within CIP's projects. It is designed with a focus on facilitating long-term sustainable value creation and contributing with ESG impacts across the six strategic ESG focus areas of climate action, nature & resource stewardship, safe & inclusive working environment, local community impact, supply chain accountability, and responsible business practices (CIP, 2022).

With regard to the consenting and planning process, the EIAR identifies the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development, evaluates the magnitude and significance of likely effects and proposes appropriate measures to mitigate (i.e. avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset) potential adverse effects (see EIA and Methodology for the preparation of an EIAR chapter). In this manner it serves as a tool in the promotion of sustainable development across the project, considering the range of sustainability topics including, for example: effects on biodiversity (e.g. Chapter 15 Offshore Ornithology and Chapter 23 Biodiversity); use of natural resources (e.g. Chapter 22 Water, Chapter 31 Resource and Waste Management); human health (Chapter 32 Population and Human Health); and climate change (Chapter 28 Climate). The proposed development will also be the subject of the appropriate management plans (e.g. the Offshore Environmental Management Plan and Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan), which are submitted with the consent application, and which will ensure that the works and mitigation are carried out in the manner permitted.

Prior to the commencement of the construction phase, a Project Sustainability Manager (PSM) will be appointed. The PSM will be responsible for managing and delivering sustainability requirements across the Project and will track performance against the relevant strategic targets summarised above.

1.5 Overview of Statutory Consent Process

Statutory pre-application consultations have been undertaken by the Developer with An Bord Pleanála (as detailed in Section 2.7 and Appendix 1.2 of Volume 8 of the EIAR).

The Developer sought an opinion on design flexibility under section 287A of the Planning Acts. In January 2024, An Bord Pleanála issued its opinion on design flexibility, (the “DF Opinion”). Full detail regarding the DF Opinion and how this is reflected in the EIAR is provided in Sections 2.7 and 2.8 of the EIA and Methodology for the preparation of an EIAR chapter.

The Developer has submitted an application for approval to An Bord Pleanála under Section 291 of the Planning Acts to carry out the proposed development.

An Bord Pleanála will carry out an EIA of the proposed development as required under the Planning Acts and the EIA Directive. A decision on the application will be made by An Bord Pleanála under Section 293 of the Planning Acts.

1.6 EIA Portal and Project Website

The application plans and particulars, the EIAR, the NIS and public notices can be viewed or downloaded from the following website: <https://northirishsearraysid.ie/>

A copy of the confirmation notice in relation to the EIA portal is included in the planning application package.

1.7 Details of Competent Experts

This EIAR has been compiled on behalf of the proposed Developer by a multi-disciplinary consultancy team of competent experts led by Arup with input from specialist sub-consultants.

Arup has been awarded an EIA Quality Mark by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) in recognition of its excellence in EIA activities. All technical leads are qualified and competent experts in their fields in accordance with Article 5(3) of the EIA Directive because of their academic qualifications, professional affiliations, and professional experience on other EIARs for major infrastructure projects. Details of the competent experts are provided in Appendix 1.1 of Volume 8 of the EIAR.

1.8 Consultation Undertaken

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders during the development of the EIAR and statutory consent application in order to:

- Provide information on the proposed development.
- Ascertain and understand the views of stakeholders; and
- Seek input from stakeholders on the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning assessment aspects of the proposed development.

In addition to statutory pre-application consultations with An Bord Pleanála, consultation has also been undertaken with the relevant coastal and planning authorities, the public, other statutory bodies and stakeholders. The coastal planning authorities for the proposed development include Fingal County Council (FCC), Louth County Council (LCC), Meath County Council (MCC), and Dublin City Council (DCC).

Consultation is detailed further in Appendix 1.2 of Volume 8 of the EIAR, which describes project-wide consultation that has been undertaken in addition to the statutory pre-application consultations with An Bord Pleanála.

1.9 Difficulties Experienced during the preparation of the EIAR

No particular difficulties were encountered during the assessment process.

1.10 Structure of the EIAR

Section 2.5 of the EIA and Methodology for the preparation of an EIAR chapter sets out the structure of the EIAR and is repeated below for the benefit of the reader.

This EIAR has been prepared in 12 volumes as follows:

- Volume 1 contains the non-technical summary which summarises the findings and conclusions of the EIAR in a clear, understandable manner in non-technical language with relevant figures. The non-technical summary is presented with an overview of the proposed development, the existing environment and any likely significant effects, mitigation measures and relevant aspects of the EIAR in a way which can be easily understood.
- Volume 2 contains the ‘introductory chapters’ (Chapters 1-9) which include the EIAR methodology, policy context, need for the development, a description of the reasonable alternatives and the project description and construction strategy for both offshore and onshore infrastructure of the proposed development. Details of the Competent Experts are provided in Appendix 1.1 of Volume 8 of the EIAR.
- Volume 3 contains the ‘offshore chapters’ (Chapters 10-20) which assess various aspects of the marine environment seaward of (below) the High-Water Mark (HWM).
- Volume 4 contains the ‘onshore chapters’ (Chapters 21-26) which assess various aspects of the terrestrial environment landward of (above) the HWM.
- Volume 5 generally contains the ‘wider scheme chapters’ (Chapters 27-34) which assess elements of the proposed development which encompass both onshore and offshore infrastructure. Whilst strictly not “wider scheme”, Offshore Bats (Chapter 35) are also included within Volume 5.
- Volume 6 contains the ‘summary chapters’ (Chapters 36-38) which summarise the mitigation, monitoring measures and likely significant residual effects of the assessments described in Volumes 3-5, transboundary effects and a summary of cumulative and inter-related effects.
- Volume 7A contains all figures prepared for the EIAR.
- Volume 7B1 contains all the offshore photomontages prepared for the EIAR.
- Volume 7B2 contains all the onshore photomontages prepared for the EIAR.
- Volumes 8-12 contain all technical appendices for introductory chapters, offshore chapters, onshore chapters, wider-scheme chapters and summary chapters, respectively. This includes modelling outputs, background reports and / or supporting documents.
- The Preface, which is provided at the beginning of Volumes 2, 3, 4 and 5 includes the overall EIAR table of contents (including appendix list) and glossary.

Further information on the structure of the EIAR is provided in the EIA and Methodology for the preparation of an EIAR chapter.

1.11 Community Benefit Fund

In accordance with the Offshore Renewable Energy Support Scheme (ORESS), it is a requirement that all renewable energy projects invest money into local areas <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/abb38-oress-1-community-benefit-fund-rulebook-for-generators-and-fund-administrators/>

In response, the Developer will set up a Community Benefit Fund which will commence once the proposed development is in construction. This will be established and administered in accordance with ORESS 1 Community Benefit Fund Rulebook with an independent Fund Administrator appointed to facilitate and support the local community to maximise the opportunities of the Community Benefit Fund.

It is estimated that the funding will be approximately €4 million per annum for 20 years. Since 2019, the project team has been engaging with local community groups on the process with a view to aggregating information, feedback and submissions which could guide the direction of the Community Benefit Fund, once established.

1.12 References

Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (2022). ESG Report 2022, available at:

<https://www.cip.com/media/sywkk0u/cip-esg-report-2022.pdf>

Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2017) Transposition of 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) in the Land Use Planning and EPA Licensing Systems; and

Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2017) Circular PL 1/2017 – Implementation of Directive 2014/52/EU on the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (EIA Directive): Advice on the Administrative Provisions in Advance of Transposition.

Environmental Protection Agency (2022) Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (May 2022) (EPA Guidelines).

Environmental Protection Agency (2003) Advice Notes for Preparing Environmental Impact Statements.

European Commission (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

Statkraft (2023). Statkraft's sustainability strategy, available at: <https://www.statkraft.com/sustainability/our-approach-to-sustainability/sustainability-strategy/>

United Nations (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (the 'United Nations Brundtland Commission' dated March 1987, available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>