codling wind park

Ecological Vessel Management Plan


codling
wind park

Table of contents

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term in full
CWP	Codling Wind Park
DCMNR	Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EVMP	Ecological Vessel Management Plan
IACs	Inter-array cables
IWDG	Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
MAP	Maritime Area Planning
MW	Megawatts
O&M	Operations and maintenance
OfTI	Offshore transmission infrastructure
OSS	Offshore substation structures
OTI	Onshore transmission infrastructure
PDA	Planning and Development Act
SPA	Special Protection Area
TJB	Transition joint bay
WTGs	Wind turbine generators

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The CWP Project

1. Codling Wind Park Limited (hereafter 'the Developer') is proposing to develop the Codling Wind Park (CWP) Project, which is located in the Irish sea approximately 13–22 km off the east coast of Ireland, at County Wicklow.

2. The Developer is applying for permission for all components of the CWP Project under Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act (PDA) 2000, as amended (as inserted by the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act 2021). This includes:

   - The generating station, which comprises the wind turbine generators (WTGs), inter array cables (IACs) and interconnector cables;
   - The offshore transmission infrastructure (OfTI), which comprises the offshore substation structures (OSSs) and offshore export cables;
   - The landfall which describes the point at which the offshore export cables are brought onshore; and
   - The onshore transmission infrastructure (OTI) which comprises the onshore export cables, the onshore substation and and network cables to a planned extension to the existing ESB Networks 220 kV substation.

3. A detailed description of the CWP Project is provided in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) **Chapter 4 Project Description**.

1.2 Purpose of the Ecological Vessel Management Plan

4. The Ecological Vessel Management Plan (EVMP) has the following primary objectives:

   - Reduce the risk of vessel collisions to marine mammals;
   - Reduce the risk of vessel disturbance to marine mammals; and
   - Reduce the risk of vessel disturbance to red throated diver.

5. This EVMP supports the consent application for the CWP Project.

6. The purpose of this EVMP is to provide a framework for the final EVMP, which is anticipated to be required under conditions of the planning consent, to ensure appropriate controls are in place to manage environmental risks associated with the construction and operation of the offshore components of CWP Project. The EVMP is intended to be a live document which will be updated as project development progresses and will be submitted to the relevant authority for approval, prior to the start of construction. A revised document will also be submitted prior to the commencement of operation.

1.3 Scope of the EVMP

7. This EVMP covers all vessel activity between the relevant port and the array site associated with the CWP Project, during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.

2 MARINE MAMMALS

8. Under the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011–2021, it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly injure or disturb a cetacean species (whale, dolphin or porpoise). Therefore, this EVMP describes the guidance and codes of conduct relevant to vessels in Irish waters to minimise the risk of vessel collisions and disturbance from vessel presence.

2.1 Guidance

9. The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) released a Marine Notice (No. 15 of 2005) for the correct procedures when encountering whales and dolphins in Irish coastal waters (DCMNR, 2005). Alongside this Marine Notice, the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) provided a Code of Conduct for all watercraft encountering whales and dolphins (IWDG, 2005).

10. The Developer acknowledges that these guidelines were drafted specifically for the interactions between small vessels and marine mammals (e.g. whale-watching passenger vessels), however the key principles will be followed by all Project vessels where safe to do so to minimise the risk of vessel collisions with marine mammals, and to reduce the risk of disturbance to marine mammals. These are detailed within the commitments section below.

11. The DCMNR (2005) guidelines include the following recommendations:

- *When whales or dolphins are first encountered, craft should maintain a steady course.*
- *Boat speed should be maintained below 7 knots.*
- *Do not attempt to pursue whales or dolphins encountered*
- *Maintain a distance of at least 100 m from whales.*
- *Maintain a distance of 200 m between any other boats in the vicinity.*
- *Attempt to steer a course parallel to the direction whales or dolphins are taking.*
- *Do not corral whales or dolphins between boats.*
- *Special care must be taken when young calves are seen – do not come between a mother and her calf.*
- *Successive boats must follow the same course.*

12. The IWDG Cetacean Welfare Policy (IWDG, 2014) provides the following guidelines:

- *Where possible, areas identified as being of highest relative risk should be subject to specific management measures. Imposition of these measures could be seasonal, or year-round and limited to a specific high-risk area based on historical occurrence. These measures may include re-routing ships around high-risk areas, routing ships through high-risk areas to minimise travel distances and restricting ship speed through high-risk areas to reduce the potential for serious injury or death from collisions. In areas of high risk, particularly critical habitat areas, re-routing of ships in order that they travel outside of the sensitive habitat is the preferred option. Changes to routing and provision of alternative routes to reduce the impact on cetaceans and avoid biologically important areas require extensive information on cetacean movements to be effective.*
- *The reduction of speed can significantly mitigate the impact of ship-strike on cetaceans. Reducing speed through high-risk areas increases the possibility of cetaceans detecting and avoiding a ship, provides ship operators the opportunity to sight cetaceans in time to avoid them and reduces the force of blunt impact if a collision does occur.*
- *Observers should be trained in cetacean observation techniques and placed on ships to aid in the spotting of cetaceans and avoiding possible collisions. This is particularly important in areas of high collision risk.*

- *In areas where collision rates are high, it may be possible to avoid travelling at night or in bad weather, when sightings are likely to be much reduced.*
- *In the event of a potential collision with a large cetacean it is recommended where possible to determine the direction and speed of travel of the cetacean. If a collision can be avoided by slowing down and maintaining the same course this should be done. If, however, a collision is otherwise unavoidable it is recommended to turn away from the cetacean, in the opposite direction to the direction that the cetacean is travelling.*

13. Additionally, the IWDG (2005) code of conduct states that if dolphins approach a vessel to 'bow ride', vessels should '*maintain a steady course and speed'.*

2.2 Commitment

14. The Developer acknowledges that these guidelines were drafted specifically for the interactions between small vessels and marine mammals (e.g. whale-watching passenger vessels), however the key principles will be followed by all Project vessels, where it is safe to do so, to minimise the risk of vessel collisions with marine mammals, and to reduce the risk of disturbance to marine mammals.

15. CWP will commit to the aspects of the above guidance that are applicable to construction and operation of an ORE project. Noting certain aspects such as maintenance of distance and successive boat management is directly applicable to a tourist operation targeting marine mammal experiences rather than a construction / operation project which sees vessels transiting the area.

16. Therefore, CWP commits to:

- Maintain vessels on a steady course when whales or dolphins are first encountered;
- Reduce vessel speed to 7 knots when whales or dolphins are encountered;
- Not attempting to pursue whales or dolphins encountered;
- Not corralling whales or dolphins between boats;
- Take special care when young calves are seen – do not come between a mother and her calf;
- In the event of a potential collision with a large cetacean, where possible the direction and speed of travel of the cetacean will be determined. If a collision can be avoided by slowing down and maintaining the same course, this will be done. If, however, a collision is otherwise unavoidable the vessel will, where possible, turn away from the cetacean, in the opposite direction to the direction that the cetacean is travelling;
- Maintain a steady speed and course if dolphins approach a vessel to bow ride;
- Brief vessel crew on the purpose and implications of these vessel management practices (through, for example, toolbox talks).

3 ORNITHOLOGY

17. This document provides a best practice protocol to minimise disturbance to non-breeding red-throated diver which is a qualifying feature of the Murrough Special Protection Area (SPA).

18. Once further information is available about the port(s) that will be used for construction, operations and maintenance (O&M), appropriate vessel traffic management measures including, where relevant, the following best practice examples, will be included in an update to this EVMP in agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service:

- Restricting vessel movements to existing navigation routes (where the densities of red-throated divers are typically relatively low), where practicable and safe to do so, during the most sensitive time period for red-throated divers between November and 1 March inclusive;
- Where it is necessary to go outside of established navigational routes, selecting routes that avoid known aggregations of birds;
- Maintaining direct transit routes where practicable and safe to do so (to minimise transit distances through areas used by divers);
- Avoidance of over-revving of engines (to minimise noise disturbance); and
- Briefing of vessel crew on the purpose and implications of these vessel management practices (through, for example, toolbox talks).

3.1 Commitment

19. The Applicant acknowledges that these commitments are currently not specifically associated with a construction or O&M port, however the key commitments will be followed by all Project vessels to reduce the risk of disturbance to red-throated divers.

20. The measures identified are in accordance with best practice in other jurisdictions and ensure that any potential for an adverse effect on site integrity that may arise as a result of the temporary vessel disturbance is avoided. In following this best practice, the mitigation can be considered effective beyond reasonable scientific doubt.

4 REFERENCES

21. DCMNR. (2005) Marine Notice No 15 of 2005 – Guidelines for Correct Procedures When Encountering Whales and Dolphins in Irish Coastal Waters.

22. IWDG. (2005) Code of Conduct foraAll Watercraft Encountering Whales and Dolphins.

23. IWDG. (2014) Cetacean Welfare Policy. Published by The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, ISBN 0-9540552-8-4.