

Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm

Planning Report





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1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm ('the Proposed Development') consists of 30 no. Wind Turbine Generators (WTG) with a tip height of 324.9m, a hub height of 178.9m, and associated infrastructure to facilitate the connection of the WTGs to the national electricity grid at Moneypoint, Co. Clare. The Proposed Development site is located within the Atlantic marine area off the coast of Counties Galway and Clare. The WTGs are located between 5 km and 11.5 km off the coast of Connemara, Co. Galway, between Slyne Head and Inishmore (Aran Islands). The closest settlement is Carna, Co. Galway, which is located approximately 8 km to the north-east. The Proposed Development will have a maximum export capacity of 450MW.

This Planning Report has been prepared in support of a planning application to An Bord Pleanála under Section 291 of the Planning Act. The development application is accompanied by an EIAR and NIS. Pre-application consultation was opened with An Bord Pleanála in June 2023 (Pre-planning ref: OC07.317409) and three pre-application consultation meetings were held under Section 287 of the Planning Act. Pre-application consultation was closed by An Bord Pleanála in accordance with Section 287(3) of the Planning Act on the 24th September 2024. Pre-application consultation has also taken place with the relevant Coastal Planning Authorities, Galway and Clare County Council.

There is a clear strategic need for the Proposed Development as it delivers on key goals and ambitions of the Irish government. Most pertinently, the Proposed Development will increase the State's renewable energy generation capacity by 450 MW and will contribute to critical renewable energy and climate targets such as the Climate Action Plan 2024 offshore wind energy target of 5 GW by 2030. As a one of six 'Phase 1' offshore wind projects, which are the only offshore wind projects capable of being constructed by 2030 and contributing to 2030 targets, there is an urgent need to deliver offshore wind projects such as the Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm.

There is also a renewed urgency on a European level to deliver renewable energy projects, with major increases in offshore wind targets following the REPowerEU strategy to reduce the EU's energy import dependency and reduce fossil fuel use. In 2022, EU member states committed to installing 111 GW of offshore renewable energy by 2030. As part of this agreement, the Irish government has agreed to contribute 0.5 – 1 GW of offshore renewable energy towards the overall 2030 goal for the Atlantic Sea Basin. The critical need for renewable energy is underscored by European legislation. RED III¹ contains a presumption in favour of renewable projects being in the "overriding public interest and serving public health and safety". This presumption was introduced prior to the enactment of RED III in the Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 (laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy). The prioritisation of renewable energy projects in European law has been acknowledged by the Irish judicial system, most recently in the Carrownagowan Wind Farm judgement ([2024] IEHC 549), the Toole II judgment ([2024] IEHC 610) and in particular the Coolglass Wind Farm judgement ([2025] IEHC 1) which emphasises the importance of national climate and renewable energy policy when assessing renewable energy projects.

The Proposed Development is also strongly supported by planning policy. The Proposed Development is supported by and in compliance with the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), which is demonstrated in Appendix 1 of this report. The Proposed Development is supported by the OREDP, which has identified Assessment Area 5 – West Coast as having the capacity to house 500MW of fixed bottom offshore wind energy without likely significant adverse effect on the environment. The Proposed Development is also supported by regional and local planning policy.

¹ Directive (EU) 2023/2413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652.

An Bord Pleanála will be aware of certain legal obligations, under the Climate Act, in respect of the processing of certain planning applications relating to renewable energy developments. In particular, the mandatory obligation on the Board to exercise its decision-making functions “*in a manner consistent with*” national climate policies and objectives.

2. INTRODUCTION

This Planning Report has been prepared by MKO on behalf of the Applicant, Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta. The purpose of this report is to support the development application documentation for the proposed Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm ('the Proposed Development') and demonstrate the Proposed Development's compliance with all relevant planning policy. This Planning Report accompanies the development application documentation being made directly to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) under the provisions of Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) ('the Planning Act').

This report should be read in conjunction with the accompanying plans and particulars submitted to ABP, including the Planning Drawing Pack, the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

2.1 Report Structure and Contents

This planning report is structured as follows:

- **Introduction** – The Applicant and Project Team, Project summary, Application Documentation & Planning Report Findings.
- **Background** – Offshore wind energy in Ireland, Strategic Need for the Proposed Development, and the Site Consenting History.
- **Consultation** – EIAR Consultation, Consultation with An Bord Pleanála, Consultation with Local Authorities (Galway County Council & Clare County Council), Consultation with the Public.
- **Proposed Development**– Site Location, Description of the Proposed Infrastructure, Description of Development Phases, and the Design Process.
- **Planning Policy and Legislative Context** – An overview of the planning, renewable energy, and climate policy context relevant to the Proposed Development.
- **Planning Appraisal** – An evaluation of the Proposed Development against the relevant policy framework.

2.2 The Applicant and Project Team

The Applicant

The Applicant for the Proposed Development, Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta (FST), is an Irish and Gaeltacht-based company that was established in 2002. The Applicant initiated the offshore wind farm development off the coast of Carna in the early 2000s. The Applicant was acquired by Macquarie's Green Investment Group (GIG) in September 2021 and is now a joint venture led by specialist offshore wind developer Corio Generation, a Green Investment Group portfolio company, and the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan.

The Project Team

MKO of Tuam Road, Co. Galway acted as lead Planning Consultant and EIAR lead for the Project, alongside EIAR partner Xodus of The Capitol Building, 431 Union St, Aberdeen, Scotland.

The planning drawings were prepared by MKO, FST, Malachy Walsh and Partners, and H&MV Engineering.

2.3

Summary of the Proposed Development

The proposed offshore renewable energy development will comprise 30 No. Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) and all associated works. The proposed WTGs will have a tip height of 324.9m, a hub height of 178.9m, and a rotor diameter of 292m. The Proposed Development will have a Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of 450 megawatts (MW). As the Proposed Development is located partly in the outer maritime area, partly in the nearshore areas of more than one coastal planning authority, and partly on land, the legislative provisions of Chapter III of the Planning Act applies. A Maritime Area Consent (MAC) was granted for the purposes of the Proposed Development on the 23rd of December 2022 (2022-MAC-007); thus the Proposed Development is eligible to apply for development permission to the Board under section 291 of the Planning Act. The Proposed Development is a 'Phase 1' offshore wind farm (previously termed a "Relevant Project") designated pursuant to the Transition Protocol for Relevant Offshore Wind Farms in 2020 and was successful in the first ORESS auction.

The Offshore Export Cable will comprise approximately 63.5km of grid connection cabling to be buried in or on the seabed. The Offshore Export Cable will come ashore in the townland of Killard, Co. Clare and run underground predominantly in the public road network. A proposed 220kV onshore compensation compound (OCC) will be built as part of the Proposed Development and will connect to the national grid via the existing Moneypoint 220kV Substation, Co. Clare. A detailed description of the Proposed Development is provided in chapter 5 of the EIAR.

2.4

Proposed Development as set out in the Public Notices

The Proposed Development as set out in the public notices is as follows:

Offshore Development:

- I. 30 no. offshore Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) with gravity based fixed-bottom foundations with the following details:
 - Tip height of 324.9m above Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT),
 - Rotor diameter of 292m;
 - Hub height of 178.9m above LAT;
- II. 1 no. 220kV offshore substation (OSS) of 55 m in height above LAT (including crane and communications mast) with a gravity based fixed bottom foundation. The OSS consists of an offshore electrical substation platform with multiple decks accommodating the electrical and communications plant and equipment, ancillary components and welfare facilities;
- III. A network of inter-array electrical and communication cables, of approximately 73 km in length, connecting the 30 WTGs to the OSS;
- IV. A 220kV offshore export cable complete with communication lines, of approximately 63.5 km in length, laid in and on the seabed from the OSS to landfall in the townland of Killard, Co. Clare;
- V. Seabed preparation for WTG, OSS and cable installation including rock placement, dredging and disposal;
- VI. Cable protection including trenching and burial, rock berms, and concrete mattresses.

Onshore Development:

- I. An underground Transition Joint Bay (TJB) at the landfall point in the townland of Killard, Co. Clare connecting the offshore export cable to the onshore grid connection cable. The TJB consists of an underground concrete chamber (20m x 5m wide, with a depth of 2.5m), where the proposed offshore export cable will be connected to the onshore grid connection cable;
- II. 220kV onshore grid connection and communications cables laid underground, primarily in the public road corridor with small sections in third party lands, for approximately 19.3

- km between the TJB in the townland of Killard, Co. Clare and the new 220kV Onshore Compensation Compound (OCC) in the townland of Ballymacrinan, Co. Clare;*
- III. *220kV onshore grid connection and communication cables laid underground, primarily in the public road corridor with small sections in third party lands, for approximately 3 km between the new 220kV OCC in the townland of Ballymacrinan, Co. Clare and the existing Moneypoint 220kV substation in the townland of Carrowdotia South, Co. Clare;*
 - IV. *43 no. joint bays complete with communication chambers and link box chambers along the onshore grid connection route between the TJB in the townland of Killard, Co. Clare to the existing 220kV Moneypoint substation in the townland of Carrowdotia South, Co. Clare;*
 - V. *A 220kV Onshore Compensation Compound located in the townland of Ballymacrinan, Co. Clare. The 220kV onshore compensation compound consists of:*
 - *Eirgrid 220kV GIS Building (49m x 18.5m, with a total height of 16.7m above Finished Floor Level (FFL));*
 - *ESB 220kV GIS Building (49m x 18.5m, with a total height of 16.7m above FFL);*
 - *Customer SCADA and MV power building (18.4m x 8.7m, with a total height of 6.15m above FFL);*
 - *Statcom building (30.5m x 22m, with a total height of 7.59m above FFL);*
 - *Upgrade of existing entrance onto the L-6150 including the removal of a small portion of existing stone wall and hedgerow;*
 - *All associated electrical and communications plant and equipment, welfare facilities, 3 no. foul water holding tanks, 3 no. bored wells, 3 no. attenuation tanks, access roads, car parking, security fencing and gates, rail and post fencing, telecommunications pole, lightning masts, signage, safety bollards, landscaping, drainage infrastructure and all other ancillary works and associated site development works;*
 - VI. *3 no. temporary construction compounds along the onshore grid connection cable route:*
 - *1 no. temporary construction compound at the landfall point in the townland of Killard Co. Clare;*
 - *1 no. temporary construction compound at the Kilrush Golf Club in the townland of Parknamoney, Co. Clare;*
 - *1 no. temporary construction compound at the new 220kV OCC in the townland of Ballymacrinan, Co. Clare;*
 - VII. *Reinstatement of the road or track surface above the proposed onshore grid connection cable trench along existing roads and tracks;*
 - VIII. *New and upgraded access tracks above the proposed onshore grid connection cable trench in third party lands;*
 - IX. *Temporary entrances from public roads to facilitate construction of the onshore grid connection for construction phase only;*
 - X. *Provision of 3 no. passing bays and the widening of the L-6150 road in the townland of Ballymacrinan to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads for the construction of the proposed OCC;*
 - XI. *All works associated with spoil management;*
 - XII. *All associated site works and ancillary development above and below ground including hard and soft landscaping, habitat enhancement and drainage infrastructure.*

A 10-year development permission and a 38-year operational life of the proposed development from the date of commissioning of the proposed development is sought.

2.5

Application Documentation

Planning Documents

The planning particulars submitted as part of this application include the following:

- › Cover Letter (including 2 no. Appendices)
- › Application Form (including 6 no. Appendices)
- › Planning Report.

Planning Drawings

The planning drawings submitted as part of this application include the following:

- › Drawing Schedule
- › Site Location Maps
- › Offshore Site Layout Maps
- › Onshore Site Layout Maps
- › Onshore Infrastructure Drawings
- › Onshore Compensation Compound
- › Onshore Grid Connection Detailed Drawings

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

The EIAR submitted as part of this application includes 3 no. of volumes, which are as follows:

- › Volume 1A: NTS and Introductory Chapters
- › Volume 1B: Offshore Chapters
- › Volume 1C: Onshore Chapters
- › Volume 1D: Whole Project Chapters
- › Volume 2: Photomontage Booklets
- › Volume 3: Appendices

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report & Natura Impact Statement

The NIS submitted as part of this application includes the following:

- › NIS Volume 1 – Offshore Main Report (including AASR) and Appendices
- › NIS Volume 2 - Onshore Main Report (including AASR) and Appendices

2.6

Summary of Findings

This planning report assesses the Proposed Development against the relevant planning policy and legislation and demonstrates how it complies with same (refer to Sections 6,7 & 8). The main findings of the report are outlined as follows:

- › The Proposed Development is strongly supported by climate and energy policy and law at a European, national, regional and local level that seeks to transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient and energy secure economy.
- › The Proposed Development is strongly supported by and in compliance with all of the relevant policies and objectives of the National Marine Planning Framework, as demonstrated by the NMPF Policy Compliance table included in Appendix 1.

- › Policy Objective ORE 2 of the National Marine Planning Framework directly supports the implementation of the ‘Relevant Projects’ (now called ‘Phase 1’ projects) and places a priority on the assessment of applications for these projects.
- › The Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan’s Strategic Environmental Assessment found that 500MW of offshore fixed-bottom wind turbines could be installed on the west coast without likely significant adverse effects on the environment.
- › As a ‘Phase 1’ project, the Proposed Development is crucial for the achievement of Ireland’s legally binding emission reduction target of 51% under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended. Under Section 15 the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, it is the obligation of An Bord Pleanála to perform its functions in a manner that is consistent with the National Climate Policies and Objectives.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 **Offshore Wind Energy in Ireland**

Ireland is recognised as having one of the strongest offshore wind energy resources in the world. With an extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) approximately seven times the size of the country's landmass and a consistent, strong wind resource, Ireland's position on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean is favourable for offshore wind energy. This fact is reflected in the country's ambitious offshore wind energy targets of at least 5 GW by 2030 plus an additional 2 GW of non-grid connected offshore wind.

By 2040, there is a target to deliver 20GW of offshore renewable energy, rising to 37 GW by 2050. The 2050 offshore renewable energy target of 37 GW represents approximately 6 times the country's current energy demand. Despite abundant resource, Ireland's offshore wind energy industry is underdeveloped. Since the completion of the 25MW Arklow Bank offshore wind demonstration project in 2004, no further offshore wind energy projects have been developed in Irish Waters.

Maritime planning policy in Ireland has evolved significantly in recent years, driven by the offshore renewable energy targets and the development of a wider EU maritime spatial planning framework. Central to the reshaping of the Irish maritime spatial planning system was the introduction of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the 'MAP Act') and the publication of the National Marine Planning Framework in 2021. The MAP Act created a new public body, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), responsible for awarding Maritime Area Consents (MACs).

In December 2022, Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta was granted a MAC under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. The Proposed Development is part of the first phase of the government's offshore wind energy programme and is referred to as a 'Relevant Project' or 'Phase 1' project. Obtaining a MAC is a prerequisite for applying for development permission from An Bord Pleanála. The Phase 1 projects were eligible to participate in the first offshore wind auction under the Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, ORESS 1. Four of the six Phase 1 projects were successful in ORESS 1 including the Proposed Development, which exceeded expectation both in terms of the volume of offshore wind energy procured and the low price at which it has been secured. Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm was one those 4 projects successful in ORESS 1. If consented and constructed, the Proposed Development will be one of the first offshore wind projects to be operational in Irish waters since 2004 and the first off the west coast.

3.2 **Strategic Need for the Proposed Development**

3.2.1 **Contribution to Energy & Climate Targets**

National Renewable Energy Targets

The most recent iteration of the Climate Action Plan ('CAP'), CAP 24 builds on the climate action targets set out in CAP 23 and provides an updated roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate ambition. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022 following the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (the Climate Act). The Climate Act commits Ireland to a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050, and a reduction of 51% by 2030.

To achieve a 51% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, the electricity sector has been assigned the target of achieving an 80% share of renewable electricity by 2030. Central to achieving this goal is the deployment of at least 5GW of offshore wind energy. These measures to achieve an 80% renewable electricity share are vital not only for reducing electricity sector emissions but also for enabling the broader electrification of other sectors, thus multiplying the impact on overall emissions reductions.

At present, Ireland's offshore wind energy capacity stands at only 25.2 MW. The six 'Phase 1' offshore wind projects offer the potential to install approximately 4.2 GW of additional capacity, meaning that the development of the Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm is essential if the State is to have any chance of meeting the CAP24 target of achieving at least 5 GW of offshore wind energy capacity. If consented, the Proposed Development is intended to enter into construction in 2026 and to be operational by 2030.

Ireland is also bound by renewable energy targets at a European level. The latest revision of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) introduced a binding EU-wide target for overall RES of at least 42.5% by 2030 and requires Member States to set their national contributions to the EU-wide target. In accordance with RED III and the revised RES target, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) have published an updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 in July 2024. The updated NECP committed to achieving a 43% share of renewable energy in total energy consumption by 2030. In the trajectories set out in the updated NECP, it states that Ireland's proposed trajectory will not be in line with the desired trajectory set out in the Governance Regulation (Regulation 2018/1999).

If permitted, it is intended that Proposed Development will be installed and operational before the end of the decade, adding 450MW of renewable, clean energy to our national wind energy capacity. This will not only contribute to the decarbonisation of the electricity sector but will play a role in the decarbonisation of the other sectors and the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient economy. Thus, projects such as the Proposed Development are of strategic importance to the State.

National Climate Targets

The Climate Act was signed into law on the 23rd of July 2021. The legislation legally binds Ireland to achieve net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030. The legislation also requires public bodies to, in so far as practical, perform their functions in a manner consistent with the national climate action plan, national long term climate action strategies, and other national climate adaption and mitigation objectives.

The latest annual projections published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) were released in May 2024. The EPA's report, compiled on an annual basis to comply with EU reporting obligations, makes the following conclusions based on two projected scenarios. The first scenario, '*with existing measures*' (WEM), is based on any measures and actions committed to by government by the end of 2022. The second scenario, the '*with additional measures*' (WAM) scenario, is the projection of future emissions based on the measures outlined in the latest Government plans at the time projections are compiled. The key findings of the report, outlined below, predicts that Ireland will fail to meet critical climate targets.

- Ireland is not on track to meet the 51 per cent emissions reduction target (by 2030 compared to 2018) based on these projections which include most 2024 Climate Action Plan measures.
- The first two carbon budgets (2021-2030), which aim to support achievement of the 51 per cent emissions reduction goal, are projected to be exceeded by a significant margin of between 17 and 27 per cent.
- Sectoral emissions ceilings for 2025 and 2030 are projected to be exceeded in almost all cases, including Agriculture, Electricity, Industry and Transport.
- Ireland will not meet its Non-Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) EU targets of a 42 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 in WAM even with both the ETS and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) flexibilities.

To achieve the 51% emissions reduction target, the Climate Act requires the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) to recommend a proposed programme of economy-wide 5-year Carbon Budgets to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications. The first national carbon budget programme proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council, approved by Government and adopted

by both Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2022 comprises three successive 5-year carbon budgets². The total emissions allowed under each budget are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3-1: Carbon Budgets of the Climate Change Advisory Council

| | 2021 – 2025 Carbon Budget 1 | 2026 – 2030 Carbon Budget 2 | 2031 – 2035 Provisional Carbon Budget 3 |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | All Gases | | |
| Carbon Budget (Mt CO ₂ eq) | 295 | 200 | 151 |
| Annual Average Percentage Change in Emissions | -4.8% | -8.3% | -3.5% |
| The figures are consistent with emissions in 2018 of 68.3 Mt CO ₂ eq reducing to 33.5 Mt CO ₂ eq in 2030, thus allowing compliance with the 51% emissions reduction target by 2030. | | | |

Based on the EPA's WEM and WAM projections the following exceedances are predicted across the budget periods:

- Budget 1 from 2021-2025 has been proposed at 295 Mt CO₂ eq. In the WEM scenario this is projected to be **exceeded** by 26 Mt CO₂ eq and in the WAM scenario by 19 Mt CO₂ eq.
- Budget 2 from 2026-2030 has been proposed at 200 Mt CO₂ eq. In the WEM scenario this is projected to be **exceeded** by 109 Mt CO₂ eq and in the WAM scenario by 67 Mt CO₂ eq.
- Budget 3 from 2031-2035 has been proposed at 151 Mt CO₂ eq. In the WEM scenario this is projected to be **exceeded** by 143 Mt CO₂ eq and in the WAM scenario by 86 Mt CO₂ eq.

The electricity sector is allocated a sectoral ceiling of 40 Mt CO₂ eq for the first budget (2021-2025) and a sectoral ceiling of 20 Mt CO₂ eq for the second budget period (2026-2030). The SEAI estimates that 68% of the sectoral emissions ceiling has now been used in the first 3 years of the first carbon budget period 2021–2025).³

The Quarterly Greenhouse Gas Emissions Indicator Report for Quarter 2, 2024 was released by the EPA in October 2024.⁴ This data shows an overall reduction of 2.2 per cent in the first three months of 2024 compared to the same quarter last year. The largest sectoral decrease in emissions was observed in electricity generation with a reduction of 16.7 per cent (-312 kt CO₂ eq).

As outlined in the previous section, the electricity sector is central to wider societal decarbonisation. Offshore wind energy will become one of the main drivers of decarbonisation in the electricity sector towards the end of the decade. It is therefore imperative that offshore wind energy developments are delivered to achieve critical climate targets.

² Climate Change Advisory Council Carbon Budget Technical Report (October 2021) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9af1b-carbon-budgets/>

³ Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, 'National Energy Balance' (September 2024) <https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/national-energy-balance>

⁴ <https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2024/epa-launches-new-quarterly-greenhouse-gas-emissions-for-ireland-which-show-greenhouse-gas-emissions-decreased-by-22-per-cent-in-quarter-1-2024.php>

3.2.2 Balanced Regional Development

As the only Phase 1 project located off the west coast of Ireland, the Proposed Development represents a significant opportunity for the Western Region, ensuring that the clean energy transition is regionally balanced. Balanced regional development is a core component of strategic planning policy at a national level. It forms a part of the National Planning Framework's strategy for guiding the country's growth. Currently, Ireland's growth is predominantly centred around Dublin and its neighbouring counties, which have experienced the highest increases in employment, housing, and population over recent decades. In contrast, regions such as the Western and Northern areas have not benefitted from the same level of growth, in comparison to Dublin and to a lesser extent, the Eastern and Midland region.

The national objective of achieving regionally balanced growth has given rise to initiatives aimed at facilitating growth in areas such as the Western and Northern region. The Atlantic Economic Corridor is a linear network along the Western seaboard, stretching from Kerry to Donegal, which has the potential to act as a key enabler for the regional growth objectives of the National Planning Framework. The initiative aims to maximise the provision of infrastructure in the region in order to attract investment, improve competitiveness, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for the people who live there. Further to the NPF's support for the development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor, the NPF outlines that '*Harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and wave energy*' is a key policy priority for the Northern and Western region.

The Proposed Development is a major energy infrastructure development, amounting to an overall investment of approximately €2.4 billion that will provide direct economic and social benefits, including employment opportunities and significant investment in the local supply chain. If consented, the Proposed Development will ensure that the western region will not be precluded from the economic and social benefits of offshore wind energy, given the concentration of Phase 1 projects located on the east coast.

3.2.3 Energy Security

In 2022, a substantial 82% of Ireland's energy needs were met through imports, marking an increase from the 77% recorded in the previous year of 2021⁵. Among the imported energy sources, 48% was derived from oil, while nearly 31% was sourced from natural gas. This heavy reliance on imported energy places Ireland as one of the most import dependent countries in the EU. This leaves Ireland critically exposed to the significant risks associated with being heavily reliant on other nations to supply our energy needs. The main risks associated with high energy importation are outlined below:

Economic vulnerability: A high dependence on imported energy makes Ireland economically vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy prices. Sudden spikes or disruptions in the supply chain can lead to increased costs, negatively impacting the overall economy.

Trade Imbalances: Importing a significant portion of energy can contribute to trade imbalances. The money spent on energy imports represents a substantial outflow of capital from the country. Ireland currently spends 1 million euro an hour importing fossil fuels⁶.

Geopolitical Risks: Relying on energy imports exposes Ireland to geopolitical risks. Political tensions, conflicts or natural disasters in the regions from which energy is sourced can disrupt the supply chain and lead to uncertainty in meeting domestic energy needs. This is evident by the impact of the war in Ukraine on the country's energy supply.

⁵ ENERGY IN IRELAND 2023 Report, SEAI, <https://www.seai.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2023.pdf>

⁶ <https://windenergyireland.com/policy/electrifying-ireland>

Environmental Impacts: The vast majority of Ireland's imported energy is fossil fuels. This increases Ireland's carbon emissions and hinders the country's ability to meet climate targets set out in national legislation and policy such as CAP 24 and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

In light of the overarching imperative to secure Ireland's energy needs in response to the war in Ukraine, the National Energy Security Framework (NESF) was published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in April 2022. The framework sets out a wide range of responses aimed at reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and speeding up the transition to renewables. The NESF includes 31 actions to enhance Ireland's energy security, the majority of which have been completed since the framework was introduced. Theme 3 of the NESF aims to reduce the country's dependency on imported fossil fuels. This involves replacing fossil fuels with indigenous renewable energy sources, such as offshore wind energy. Response 25, brought in to aid in achieving the aforementioned goal, seeks to '*Align all elements of the planning system to fully support accelerated renewable energy development*'.

The NESF fully supports the actions called for in the European Commission's REPowerEU plan. Under REPowerEU, the Commission called on EU member states to speed up the permitting process and for renewable energy generation projects and associated infrastructure to be considered as being in the 'overriding public interest'.

Following on from the NESF, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications published the policy document '*Energy Security in Ireland to 2030*', which underscores the significance of safeguarding Ireland's energy supply. The energy security package aims to reduce Ireland's import dependency through energy efficiency measures and investment in a diverse number of renewable energy sources. This will be achieved by a set of short and medium-term actions, set out in the policy document, which prioritises the following

1. Reduced and Responsive Demand.
2. Renewables-Led System.
3. More Resilient Systems.
4. Robust Risk Governance.

A key finding from the technical analysis conducted as part of the energy security package states that '*energy security is systemically linked and dependent upon the twin pillars of harnessing our indigenous renewable energy resources at speed and at scale and the rapid electrification of energy demand*'⁷. As such, the energy security package provides additional measures to supplement the existing measures introduced under previously published government policy documents. Those additional measures most relevant to the Proposed Development are as follows:

'Action 10: To implement Planning and Consenting System Reforms and provide greater certainty to the sector.'

The energy security package aims to ensure that the planning system is fully aligned and resourced to fully support accelerated renewable energy development. It also aims to ensure renewable energy projects are prioritised in line with the recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) and RePowerEU.

The Proposed Development will meaningfully contribute towards the achievement of the aforementioned government policy relating to securing the country's access to energy. The Proposed Development represents an indigenous renewable energy generating asset that can supply a significant quantum of clean electricity to the national electricity grid.

⁷ *Energy Security in Ireland to 2030*, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, pg 29
<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/278473/4919d4e2-44ea-454a-855a-0229eeca4f4f.pdf#page=null>

3.2.4 Economic and Social Benefits

Offshore wind energy developments will provide both economic and social benefits to Irish society. Social benefits include supports for local communities, investment in rural areas, mitigation of climate impacts on future generations and cleaner, less polluted air. Economic benefits include increased economic activity, employment generation, royalties payable to the State for use of the foreshore, taxes and capital investment. Offshore wind energy developments provide social and economic benefits to the coastal communities off which they are situated, often rural areas in need of economic revitalisation, as well as making a significant contribution to the Irish economy as a whole.

Capital investment expenditure associated with offshore wind energy development provides an injection of income into both the industry supply chain and the wider economy. The offshore wind energy economic value chain starts at the project design stage with employment across planning, environmental, engineering, legal, maritime and other professional sectors. The development and construction process of an offshore wind farm is a labour-intensive process which provides high-skilled construction, engineering, and maritime employment. It is estimated that the Proposed Development, during its development and construction phase, will support 610 Annualised Full-Time Equivalent jobs and generate €53 million Gross Value Added (GVA) in Ireland. The operational phase of the Proposed Development is less labour intensive, nonetheless operational and maintenance work provide variety of stable, long-term jobs across different sectors. In an average year, the operational expenditure on the Proposed Development is expected to support 130 jobs and €8 million GVA per annum in Ireland. This value chain includes major international and local wind energy developers, operating alongside a host of local businesses and suppliers. The Proposed Development will also help develop the necessary skills required to develop future offshore wind energy developments. In light of the national ambition to develop the offshore wind energy sector⁸ in Ireland, the Proposed Development will serve as a pathway project for future offshore wind projects off the west coast and beyond. For further analysis on the socio-economic impacts of the Proposed Development, please see Appendix 6-1 of the EIAR – which consists of a Socio Economic Impact Assessment.

The direct, indirect and induced impacts of the offshore wind energy supply chain have the potential to make a significant contribution to the Irish economy. It is estimated that if Ireland are successful in achieving the 2050 offshore wind energy target of 37GW, the sector has potential the add at least €38 billion to the Irish economy over the lifetime of all installed wind farms.⁹

The Proposed Development represents a significant initial investment of c. €1.4 billion euro in a rural coastal area, in the offshore renewable energy industry, which is essential for diversifying the energy sector, contributing to the revitalisation of the rural economy and delivering on climate and energy targets. National Marine Planning Objective 21 of the NPF aims to *‘Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability’*. The Proposed Development will directly support economic growth in Co. Galway, Co. Clare and the wider region, while also contributing to national, regional and local climate and renewable energy targets.

The Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS) is a key driver of offshore renewable energy projects in Ireland. The ORESS supports the development of offshore renewable energy generation, replacing fossil fuels on the electricity grid. A key aspect of the ORESS is that the communities in which renewable energy developments are located should benefit directly from the energy being produced. A community benefit fund must be established to ensure that this takes place. Under the ORESS, electricity generators must contribute €2 to the fund per MWh of electricity produced. If permitted and constructed as planned, it is estimated that **the Proposed Development will contribute over €3.5 million per year to the community benefit fund**. Community benefit funds represent a vital source

⁸ Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/powering-prosperity.pdf>

⁹ <https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/web-bvg-report-jan-2024.pdf>

of economic revitalisation for rural communities across Ireland who have long suffered from outward migration and economic decline.

Climate change will have an economic and social impact globally and in Ireland. The impact of climate change will be seen on both public and personal finances. Climate change will cause more extreme weather events, the severity and frequency of such will increase if climate targets are missed. Historically, Ireland has been relatively unaffected by extreme weather events, however, as global temperatures rise it is likely that Ireland will face extreme weather events more frequently. A study published by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, estimates that as extreme weather events become more frequent, the cost associated with them will double from 0.1% of Gross National Income (GNI) to 0.2% of GNI by 2030¹⁰. Taking flooding as an example, the DCCAE estimate that by 2050 flood damages will cost €1.15 billion per year. Costs will also arise from the development of adaptation measures. Under the National Development Plan 2021–2030, a total of €1.3 billion was allocated to flood defences.

As detailed in the previous section, Ireland is legally bound to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. If Ireland fails to meet climate targets, as predicted by the EPA under current policy measures, there will be a fiscal cost incurred. A publication prepared as part of the Government's spending review 2023 estimated that based on current plans, the cumulative cost of non-compliance with climate targets by 2030 could be up to €3.5 billion¹¹. More recently, the CCAC have estimated that the cost of failing to meet EU targets could exceed €8 billion for the period up to 2030 in certain scenarios¹². While it is acknowledged that the energy transition will be costly, it is predicted that the cost of inaction will be far greater if it results in a more catastrophic climate change impact.

Considering all of the above, it is clear that offshore wind energy developments, such as the Proposed Development, contribute significantly to economic and social development. Investment in offshore wind energy generates employment, stimulates local and regional economies, and fosters community growth through the community benefit fund. Offshore wind energy developments are an integral part of Ireland's plan to decarbonise our economy and society, mitigating against the negative impacts and financial burden of climate change on future generations. In conclusion, the Proposed Development contributes to long-term economic sustainability and the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

¹⁰ <https://www.fiscalcouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/What-climate-change-means-for-Irelands-public-finances-Casey-and-Carroll-2023-Irish-Fiscal-Advisory-Council.pdf>

¹¹ *Estimating the Potential Cost of Compliance with 2030 Climate & Energy Targets*, <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/246850/5982d0ec-1590-4caf-8c40-ce8bf178f5fc.pdf#page=null>

¹² *CCAC Cross-Sectoral Review 2024*, <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/AR2024-Cross-sectoral-Review-FINAL.pdf>

3.3 Application Site Consenting History

Following the designation of the Proposed Development as a ‘Relevant Project’ in 2020, the Proposed Development received its Maritime Area Consent in 2022, allowing for an application to be made for development permission under Section 291 of the Planning Act. The Proposed Development was designated as a ‘Relevant Project’ as it had already advanced under the Foreshore Act 1933 and for context, a brief summary of the Proposed Development’s consenting history under the Foreshore Act 1933 is provided below.

3.3.1 Foreshore Licence

A foreshore licence was granted to Fuinneamh Sceirde Teo for site investigations in 2001 and this was subsequently extended in 2007 (to May 2008). A second foreshore licence application was submitted in 2008. Two further foreshore licence applications for site investigations were submitted in February and April 2022 which covered new areas not surveyed under previous licences. These licences were granted in September 2023.

3.3.2 Foreshore Lease

In May 2008, FST submitted a Foreshore Lease application to occupy an area of the foreshore at Sceirde Rocks, County Galway for the construction and operation of an offshore wind farm (Ref. FS006461). The application included an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The application was not determined.

3.3.3 Relevant Status Confirmation

In September 2020, Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm was confirmed as a “Relevant Project” pursuant to the Transitional Protocol, given that it had an application for a foreshore lease that had been submitted but not yet determined.

3.3.4 Maritime Area Consent

Following the submission by FST of an application and detailed assessment of the technical and financial capability of FST to develop, deliver and operate the Proposed Development, FST was granted a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) for the Proposed Development with a commencement date of the 23rd of December 2022. The permitted maritime usage is for the construction and operation of an Offshore Wind Farm and associated infrastructure (including decommissioning and other works required on foot of any Development Permission for such Offshore Wind Farm). The MAC reference is 2022-MAC-007.

The MAC has two areas identified. The Array Area for the Proposed Development encompasses an area of approximately 37.22 km² located between 5 km and 11.5 km off the coast of Connemara, Co Galway. The Offshore WTGs and the Offshore Substation are located within the Array Area. The second area, the Subsidiary Area, is the area in which the infrastructure reasonably necessary to facilitate the occupation of the Array Area will be located (i.e the offshore export cable).

Three amendments to the MAC have been granted since the original grant in December 2022. The first amendment, relating to the extension of the date by which application for Development Permission must be submitted, was granted by the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), on the 21st of May 2024. The second amendment, relating to the extension of the Array Area, was granted by MARA on the 28th of May 2024. The third amendment, relating to a further extension of the date by which application for Development Permission must be submitted, was granted by MARA on 9th December 2024.

A MAC is required in order to lodge an application for development under Section 291 of the Planning Act.

3.4

Planning History

A planning search was carried out through the Clare County Council planning database and An Bord Pleanála's online planning portal in December 2024 to identify any relevant planning applications within the planning application boundary. The planning search found the following:

- › A total of 9 no. planning applications along the onshore grid connection route.
 - Of the 9 no. planning applications, 7 no. planning applications were granted, 2 no. planning applications were refused;
 - 2 no. planning applications are Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) applications;
- › 7 no. planning applications are for the provision of energy related infrastructure at Moneypoint, Co. Clare, which the Proposed Development connects into. 1 planning application relates to a wind energy development which was refused. 1 no. planning application relates to the retention of development at Kilrush Golf Club, outside Kilrush, Co. Clare.

A search was also carried out for maritime consents within the application boundary (excluding those related to the Proposed Development, detailed above), which found the following:

- › A total of 5 no. foreshore licence applications within the planning application boundary.
- › 4 no. foreshore licence applications are for permission to undertake surveys for early-stage renewable energy projects, none of which have been determined, and none can proceed with seeking a MAC or making a planning application for development consent prior to the publication of a DMAP for the west coast.
- › 1 no. foreshore licence is for the construction of the IRIS sub-sea fibre optic cable system, which is constructed and operational.
- › Of the 5 no. foreshore licence applications within the development application boundary, only 1 no. foreshore licence has been granted.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 EIAR Scoping

A scoping report, providing details of the Proposed Development, was prepared by MKO and circulated in September 2023. MKO requested the comments of the relevant Non-Governmental Organisations and authorities with interest in the specific aspects of the environment with the potential to be affected by the proposal. The responses received aid in identifying potential effects on the environment and provide initial feedback in the early stages of the design iteration process. Full details of the scoping responses received and how any issues raised are addressed in the EIAR is provided in Section 2.7 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR.

4.2 Pre-Planning Consultation

4.2.1.1 An Bord Pleanála

The pre-application consultation process was commenced with An Bord Pleanála (ABP) in June 2023 (Pre-planning ref: OC07.317409). Three pre-application consultation meetings were held under Section 287 of the Planning Act with ABP. Feedback and recommendations from ABP regarding the environmental impact assessment and the preparation of the application were considered and incorporated into the application documents where appropriate. The pre-application consultation was closed by ABP in accordance with Section 287(3) of the Planning Act in a letter dated the 24th September 2024.

The pre-application consultation meetings are summarised in Table 2 below. Further detail is provided in relation to each meeting in Section 2.8.2 in Chapter 2 of the EIAR.

Table 4-1: ABP Consultation Summary Table

| Meeting Details | Matters Discussed |
|---|--|
| 19th September 2023 In-person at An Bord Pleanála and online via MS Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The elements of the Proposed Development to be included in the planning application The visual impact assessment, photomontage viewpoint locations and appropriate study area The consideration of impacts on designated sites and survey methodologies The consideration of policies set out in the NMPF Proposed works at the landfall site Consultation and engagement with relevant bodies Foundation design and construction methodology Community consultation undertaken to date The provision of application documents in Irish and English. |
| 18th December 2023 In-person at An Bord Pleanála and online via MS Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The updated layout and extension of the MAC amendment The application of the design flexibility legislation The policies of the NMPF and the compliance of the Proposed Development Engagement to date with stakeholders. The provision of application documents in Irish and English. The Community Benefit Fund Survey effort along the grid connection corridor Potential impact on other projects in the area |
| 26th July 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedural matters to be followed for the making of an application Confirmation that design flexibility is not being sought by the Applicant |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Online via MS Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea-bed preparation and relevant licences for dumping at sea • Construction methodologies for the gravity-based foundations and the export cable burial and landfall • Modelling of coastal transport and sediment dynamics • Impact of the Proposed Development on Designated Sites • Ports to be used during construction and operation • Engagement with stakeholders • The provision of application documents in Irish |
|---------------------|--|

4.2.1.2 Galway County Council

Pre-application consultation with Galway County Council was undertaken throughout the Proposed Development's design and the preparation of the application for development permission. Four pre-application meetings were held with attendees from various departments of Galway County Council.

The pre-application consultation meetings are summarised in Table 3 below. Further detail is provided in relation to each meeting in Section 2.8.2 in Chapter 2 of the EIAR.

Table 4-2: Galway County Council Consultation Summary Table

| Meeting Details | Matters Discussed |
|--|---|
| <p>3rd May 2023</p> <p>Online via MS Teams</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prospective applicant and project background • Site location, context and constraints • Proposed Development layout and design • Survey work undertaken • Public consultation • The extent of the community benefit fund • Application timelines • Visual impacts along the coast • The consideration of designated sites |
| <p>21st November 2023</p> <p>In-person at GCC</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIAR structure and development being assessed • Grid Connection • Visual impacts on the landscape • Visual impacts on residential amenity • Community Benefit Fund • Site selection and alternative assessment • Heritage sites within the area • Decommissioning • Construction methodologies |
| <p>16th April 2024</p> <p>Online via MS Teams</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General project update • Design update • Landscape and visual update including updated photomontage viewpoints • Community engagement update and community benefit fund details • EIAR and initial survey results • Project timelines and application lodgement |
| <p>23rd October 2024</p> <p>In-person at GCC</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General project progress update • Final Proposed Development design • Findings of the Socio-economic and Tourism assessments undertaken • Visual impact from the Co. Galway coast, including the presentation of the photomontage booklet and other visual aids • Community engagement update • Application lodgement timelines and procedural matters |

4.2.1.3 Clare County Council

Pre-application consultation was also held with Clare County Council as landfall and the onshore elements of the Proposed Development are located in Co. Clare. Three meetings were held with various departments of Clare County Council.

The pre-application consultation meetings are summarised in Table 4 below. Further detail is provided in relation to each meeting in Section 2.8.2 in Chapter 2 of the EIAR.

Table 4-3: Clare County Council Consultation Summary Table

| Meeting Details | Matters Discussed |
|---|--|
| 29th March 2023 In-person at CCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prospective applicant and project background • Site location, context and constraints • Proposed Development layout and grid connection route • Survey work undertaken • Public consultation • Nature of construction works along the grid connection • Potential for locating the grid connection outside the road network • Likely structure and scale of the community fund |
| 20th November 2023 Online via MS Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OGC route and connection into Moneypoint Substation • The impact on the road network and surveys undertaken to inform design • The landfall site and its selection/ suitability • The visual impact from the Clare coastline, including sites such as the Cliffs of Moher • Other offshore projects off the coast of Clare and the potential for cumulative impacts • Potential impacts on archaeology • Planning policy context • The prospect of a west coast DMAP. |
| 22nd February 2024 In person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Alan Kennelly, Senior Executive Engineer, Clare County Council to discuss the proposed grid connection route. |
| 30th May 2024 In-person and Online with TII and CCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on the road network. • The OGC route and joint bay locations. • The OGC design • Reinstatement of the road surface • Capacity of the road network • Construction methodologies • Service crossings |

4.3 Public Consultation

The Applicant has undertaken extensive consultation with the local community. Community engagement began in January 2022, with the appointed of a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) and early consultation with local community groups. In August 2022, a Community Liaison Officer (CLO), Michael Cloherty, was appointed to the project on a full-time basis to manage the consultation process. The CLO has been based full time in the project information office in the gteic building in Carna. The office has been used to meet with individuals and local community groups. All materials, images, maps and VR equipment used during the projects public consultation has been available to view and use on an ongoing basis from

the office. A dedicated project website was launched in April 2023 and continues to be updated on a regular basis with the latest information on the Proposed Development. A virtual consultation room, which went live on the website in April 2024, provided details and a photomontage viewer. A dedicated email address and phone number to facilitate enquiries were made available on all project information documents and on the Proposed Development's website.

From January 2022, the Proposed Development team has been working to ensure that community engagement and public consultation activities have been carried out according to the fundamental principle of proactive consultation and open discussion. Summary details of consultations and interactions with the community since January 2022 is provided in the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report, which can be found as Appendix 2-3 of the EIAR.

A central component of the public consultation strategy was a 4-day public consultation event held from 11th to the 14th June 2024. The events were held in the conference room of the Gteic hub, located in the Enterprise Centre in Carna, Co. Galway. The events were advertised locally and nationally 2-3 weeks prior through the project website, local paper notices, media press release, announcements and radio news features and interviews. Over the 4 events approx. 150 people attended in person. A wide range of detailed information, maps, images and reports around the Proposed Development were on visual display, as well as members of the project team available to answer questions, queries and provide and share information. Also, available at the event was a virtual reality headset showing a selection of viewing points of the Proposed Development from land as a real-life experience in a 360° format.

Please refer to Appendix 2-3 of the EIAR for more details in relation to Community Consultation.

5. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Site Location and Context

The Proposed Development site is located within the Atlantic marine area off the Co. Galway and the Co. Clare coast. The OAA is located between 5 km and 11.5 km off the coast of Connemara, Co. Galway, between Slyne Head and Inishmore (Aran Islands). The closest settlement is Carna, Co. Galway, which is located approximately 8 km to the north-east of the OAA. Land in the area of Carna is primarily pastoral agricultural lands, as well as one-off rural housing. It is proposed to connect the Proposed Development to the national electricity grid via approximately 70km of offshore electrical cabling to be buried within or laid on the seabed. The OEC runs to the west and south of the Aran Islands to a landfall location close to Doonbeg, Co. Clare, before going ashore.

The OEC reaches land approximately 3.5 km northwest of Doonbeg, Co. Clare. It is proposed that the Onshore Export Cable will run underground, mostly in the existing road network but also through some private lands and connect to an Onshore Compensation Compound at Ballymacrinnan near Moneypoint, Co. Clare. The OEC will continue from the OCC to connect to the national grid at the existing 220kV Substation at Moneypoint, Co. Clare.

The proposed onshore infrastructure is located in the townlands of Moanmore Lower, Durha, Carrowmore South, Carrowdotia South, Ballykett, Moanmore North, Killard, Ballymacrinnan, Feagarroge, Clooneylissaun, Moanmore South, Dysert, Moanmore Upper, Parknamoney, Doonmore, Carnaun, Einagh, Kilcarroll, Tullaher, and Carrowdotia North, Co. Clare.

The Proposed Development layout is shown below in figure 5-1. A full and detailed description of all elements of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the EIAR, is provided in Chapter 5 Project Description of the EIAR.

1

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3

PROJECT TITLE:
Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm

DRAWING TITLE:
Offshore Site Layout Key Plan

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| PROJECT No.: 220404 | DRAWING No.: 220404 - 05 | SCALE: 1:100,000 @ A1 |
| DRAWN BY: KD | CHECKED BY: JW | DATE: 17.12.2024 |
| REVISION: P03 | | |

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5.2 The Design Process

The design of the Proposed Development has been an informed and collaborative process from the outset, involving, *inter alia*, the project designers, engineers, environmental, ecological, ornithological, hydrological, geotechnical, and archaeological specialists. The design process has also taken into account recommendations and feedback from the relevant statutory and non-statutory organisations, the local community, An Bord Pleanála and the local authorities where relevant.

The aim of the process being to reduce the potential for environmental effects while designing a commercially viable project capable of being constructed.

Throughout the design process, the layout of the Proposed Development has been revised and refined to take account of the findings of all desk-based assessments, site surveys/ investigations and baseline assessments which have brought the design from its first initial layout to the current proposed layout.

Please refer to chapter of the EIAR – Site Selection and Alternatives, which provides further detail on the site selection and alternatives considered for the Project.

5.3 Summary of Proposed Development

The planning application boundary (red line boundary) for the Proposed Development encompasses an area of approximately 437 sq. km and includes the Offshore Array Area, the Offshore Export Cable Corridor, the Onshore Grid Connection, the Onshore Compensation Compound, and the Grid Connection Cable to Moneypoint 220kV Substation at Carrowdolia South, Co. Clare. The elements of the Proposed Development subject of this planning application are described previously in section 2.3 and 2.4 of this Report. The Operation and Maintenance facility and temporary anchorage, which form part of the Project as assessed by the EIAR, are not included in this development application and will be subject to separate future consenting applications.

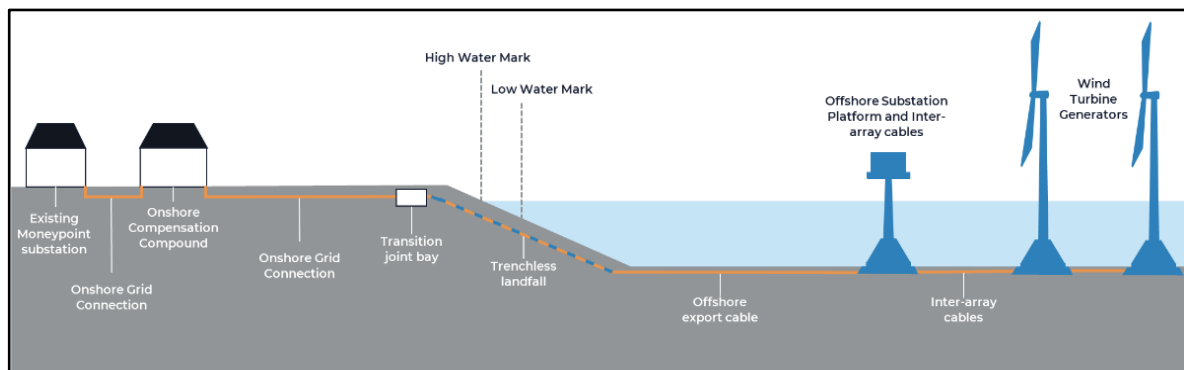


Figure 5-2: Illustrative schematic diagram of the main elements of the Proposed Development

5.4 Proposed Development Phases

5.4.1 Construction Phase

Subject to development permission and other timelines, it is anticipated that construction of the Offshore Development will begin in 2026 and take approximately 40 months including the pre-construction surveys and seabed preparations. Offshore construction will typically be undertaken 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, dependent upon weather conditions and the operations being undertaken.

The key ports for installation and operation and maintenance during the Offshore Development timeline could include Shannon Foynes Port in the Shannon Estuary, Co. Clare/Limerick and Rossaveel, Co. Galway.

The OGC construction works, and the OCC construction will occur in parallel, with the total length of time for the construction of the Onshore Site being an estimated 27 months. A full description of the proposed construction works is provided in Chapter 5 of the EIAR, including construction management and methodologies.

5.4.2 Operational Phase

The operational life of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be 38 years (in line with the lifetime of the MAC) Over the Proposed Development's lifecycle Operation and Maintenance (O&M) activities will take place. O&M activities can be categorised into two main types: planned/preventative and unplanned/corrective maintenance.

Planned maintenance follows scheduled servicing and includes general inspection and servicing, oil sampling/change, cleaning of equipment, investigation of faults, minor fault rectification and replacement of consumables. O&M operations will be managed from an onshore facility, which is being progressed separately and will be subject to a future planning application. The preferred location for the O&M facility is Rossaveel.

Unplanned maintenance covers fault rectification, unexpected minor repairs and major component replacements/repairs. As these cannot be foreseen, they may take place at any time of the year across the Offshore Development's life cycle and may require urgent intervention to rectify any critical issues as quickly as possible. The proposed OCC components will require periodic maintenance throughout the operational phase. It is not foreseen that any works will be required during the operational phase of the underground cabling element.

5.4.3 Decommissioning Phase

Following the operational phase of the Proposed Development, the infrastructure will be removed from the site. During decommissioning a thorough investigation of the Offshore Site infrastructure will be conducted.

A Rehabilitation Schedule has been prepared for the Proposed Development and is provided in Appendix 5-18 of the EIAR. The Rehabilitation Schedule will be updated prior to the end of the operational period in line with decommissioning methodologies that may exist at the time and any proposed changes will be agreed with the competent authority at that time.

The decommissioning base locations could include Shannon Foynes, Cork and/or Belfast depending on what facilities are available at the time of decommissioning.

6. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

6.1 **Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (as amended) & Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**

The Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act) was signed into law on the 23rd of December 2021. The MAP Act established in law the new Irish maritime planning system to regulate development in Ireland's maritime area. The MAP Act introduced 2 key consents that are required for development in the maritime area. The first consent to be obtained in the consenting process for offshore wind development is a Maritime Area Consent (MAC). Once a MAC is obtained, development permission can be applied for. The Proposed Development secured a MAC on the 23rd of December 2022 (2022-MAC-007); thus the project is eligible to apply for development permission.

The MAP Act amended the Planning Act so that it now specifically caters for the consenting of development in the maritime area. Permission for development is applied for through the Coastal Planning Authority or An Bord Pleanála, depending on the scale and location of the development. For offshore wind energy projects, proposed developments of more than 5 turbines or of a total output of more than 5 MW, a development application must be made to An Bord Pleanála. As the Proposed Development has more than 5 turbines and has a capacity greater than 5 MW, the application has been made to An Bord Pleanála.

The development application for the Proposed Development has been prepared and submitted in accordance with the provisions for maritime development applications under Section 291 of the Planning Act. The application for development permission has been prepared in accordance with Article 4 (Application to the Board under S291) of the Planning and Development (Maritime Development) Regulations 2023.

The development application includes both offshore and onshore elements of the Proposed Development. Although elements of the onshore infrastructure fall under the definition of Strategic Infrastructure Development under Section 182A of the Planning Act, due to the amendments under the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 (specifically section 247), the application of Section 182A does not apply to development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission where such development is the subject of an application for permission made to the Board under Section 291. As a result, the transmission infrastructure, normally consented under Section 287A, is included in this application.

6.2 **Climate and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended)**

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 2015 (as amended) ("the Climate Act") legally binds Ireland to achieve net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade.

When exercising its decision-making powers under the Planning Act, the Board is obliged to perform its decision-making function (in so far as practicable) in a manner consistent with:

- › The most recent approved climate action plan,
- › The most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,
- › The most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,

- › The furtherance of the national climate objective, and
- › The objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

The above requirement is a mandatory obligation. The Proposed Development is not only supported by the National Climate Policies and Objectives, it is essential for their achievement.

A recent judgement of the High court delivered on 10th January 2025, provides clarity on the obligations imposed on public bodies under section 15 of the Climate Act (*Coolglass Wind Farm Limited v An Bord Pleanála* [2025] IEHC 1).

Mr Justice Humphreys undertook a detailed consideration of the interpretation of section 15 of the Climate Act and concluded that:

“...all vectors of interpretation point strongly in the same direction – the need for an imperative reading of s. 15(1) in line with what it says, namely that the board and any other relevant body is required to act in conformity with the climate plans and objectives set out in the subsection unless it is impracticable to do so...”

That does not mean allowing an application which is prohibited by law. That wouldn’t be practicable apart from anything else. But it does mean exercising discretionary and evaluative powers in whatever way is most likely to be consistent with the relevant plans and objectives.

As part of Mr Justice Humphrey’s consideration of the interpretation of section 15 of the Climate Act, he states in his judgement that “*an immediate end to business as usual is a precondition for planetary survival*”.

In summary, section 15 of the Climate Act requires the Board to engage in its own independent consideration of the impact of a proposed development on the State achieving its climate targets and to exercise its discretion in a manner which supports the achievement of those targets.¹³

6.3

Other Legal Requirements

Requirement for EIAR

The EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended (the ‘EIA Directive’), has been incorporated into Irish law primarily through the Planning Act and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (‘the Regulations’).

Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations identifies classes and scales of development that require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The relevant class of development in this case relates to “*installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) with more than 5 turbines or having a total output greater than 5 megawatts*”, as per Item 3(i) of the Schedule. The Proposed Development exceeds 5 Megawatts in scale and proposes more than 5 turbines and therefore is subject to EIA.

Requirement for AA / NIS

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) are fundamental components of the European Union’s nature conservation policy, aimed at safeguarding habitats and species of significant European importance. The Habitats Directive facilitates the establishment and conservation of the Natura 2000 network, an EU-wide collection of protected sites. This network comprises Special Areas of

¹³ Beauchamps [2025] <https://beauchamps.ie/publications/1327>

Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive. Under the Planning Act Section 177R, a 'European Site' means a candidate site of Community importance, a site of Community importance, a candidate special area of conservation, a special area of conservation, a candidate special protection area or a special protection area.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive sets out the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of any plan or project that is not directly related to the management of a protected site but is likely to have a significant effect on it. This assessment evaluates the potential implications for the site in light of its conservation objectives. Competent authorities are mandated to grant development consent only if it is ascertained that a proposed project will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned or if it will, if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest why it should proceed, and the relevant criteria is met.

Under Section 318 of the Planning Act, the legal requirements pertaining to AA set out in Part XAB of the Planning Act, apply to this application for development permission under Section 291. This application for development permission is therefore accompanied by an AA Screening Report and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

Requirement for a Dumping at Sea Permit

Dumping at sea of a substance or material requires a permit under the Dumping at Sea Act 1996, as amended. A Dumping at Sea permit is required for the construction of the Proposed Development. An application will be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with the Foreshore and Dumping at Sea (Amendment) Act 2009. All permit application documents will be available to view on the EPA website and will be subject to a public consultation process.

7.

POLICY CONTEXT

This section of the planning report provides an overview of the renewable energy, planning and climate policies relevant to the Proposed Development. The policy context is a key consideration given the ever-changing status of policy at both European and national level. It is evident that offshore renewable energy in particular is strongly supported at a National, European and International level, and has a crucial role to play in meeting the State's climate reduction and renewable energy targets

As is detailed in the following sections, the policy context that applies to the Proposed Development is characterised by a number of crises that have taken centre stage recently and which have been the main drivers behind a large portion of the policy development that has taken place in the last number of years.

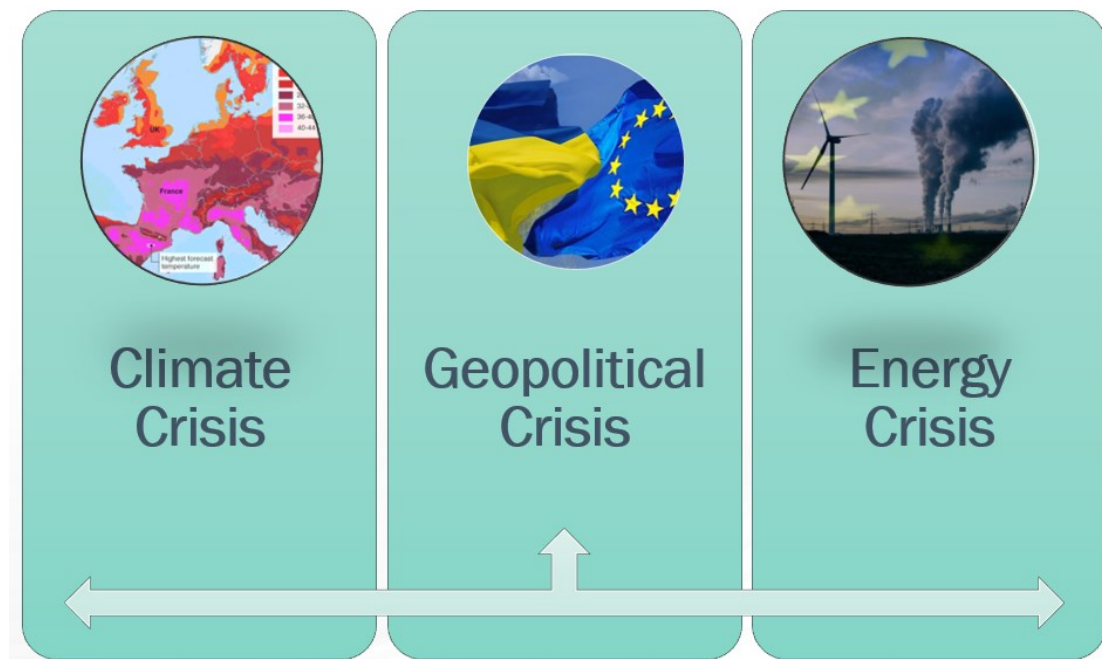


Figure 7-1: A Series of Crises

Climate and renewable energy policy at a European and national level is changing at an unprecedented pace to deal with the challenges arising from the climate and energy crisis. At a national level, the latest Climate Action Plan, CAP 24, has identified that *'the deployment rates of renewable energy and grid infrastructure required to meet the carbon budget programme for electricity is unprecedented and requires urgent action across all actors to align with the national targets'*. At the European level, the latest revision of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) (EU/2023/2413) entered into force on the 20 November 2023. The revised directive sets an overall EU renewable energy target of at least 42.5% by 2030 but aims for the achievement of 45%.

Renewable energy and climate policy have been instrumental in the formation of the planning policy in Ireland over the past decade. Transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient society is one of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) of the National Planning Framework (NPF). Similarly, climate change was a *'central consideration'* throughout the preparation of the of the National Marine Planning Framework. The Updated Draft Revised (NPF), released in November 2024, supports the progressive development of the offshore renewable energy sector under National Policy Objective 55.

A policy compliance summary table, outlining compliance with the most pertinent policy documents at an international, national, regional and local level, is provided below.

Table 7-1: Policy Compliance Summary Table

| Policy / Legislative Document | Targets / Objectives | Compliance |
|--|---|--|
| REPowerEU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerate the roll-out of renewables. Increase the 2030 target for renewables from 40%-45%. Tackle slow and complex permitting for major renewable projects | Considering the urgency required under the REPowerEU, it is imperative that renewable projects, particularly those at a scale similar to the Proposed Development, are developed as soon as possible. |
| Renewable Energy Directive III | 42.5% renewable energy by 2030, aiming for 45%. | The Proposed Development will increase Ireland's renewable energy share, contributing towards Ireland's climate and energy obligations under EU law. |
| EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy | 60 GW of offshore wind by 2030 and reaching 300 GW by 2050. | The Proposed Development will contribute towards the achievement of the offshore wind energy targets of the EU. |
| Revised TENE Regulation | 111 GW of offshore renewable energy by 2030 across EU member states | The Proposed Development will contribute towards the achievement of the Irish governments commitment to contribute 0.5 – 1 GW of offshore renewable energy towards the overall goal for the Atlantic Sea Basin. |
| Climate Action Plan 2024 | 5GW of offshore wind energy by 2030, 80% renewable electricity share | The Proposed Development will contribute directly towards the CAP 24 goal of 5GW of offshore wind energy by 2030. Offshore wind is identified as being critical in the decarbonisation of the electricity system and as such the Proposed Development should be considered in that regard. |
| Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework | National Strategic Outcome 8: Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy. | The Proposed Development is in line with the objectives of the NPF which seeks to transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy. If permitted, the Proposed Development will contribute to the achievement of National Policy Objectives 21, 54, and 55. |
| Project Ireland 2040: The National Marine Planning Framework | ORE Policy 1: Proposals that assist the State in meeting the Government's offshore renewable energy targets, including the target of achieving 5GW of capacity in offshore wind by 2030 and proposals that maximise the long-term shift from the use of fossil | As a 'Phase 1' project (then 'Relevant Project'), the Proposed Development is in compliance with and supported by ORE Policy 2. The Proposed Development will objectively enable the delivery of the Government's 2030 targets, such as developing 5GW of |

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| | <p>fuels to renewable electricity energy, in line with decarbonisation targets, should be supported. All proposals will be rigorously assessed to ensure compliance with environmental standards and seek to minimise impacts on the marine environment, marine ecology and other maritime users.</p> <p>ORE Policy 2: Proposals must be consistent with national policy, including the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA) and its successor. Relevant Projects designated pursuant to the Transition Protocol and those projects that can objectively enable delivery on the Government's 2030 targets will be prioritised for assessment under the new consenting regime. Into the future, areas designated for offshore energy development, under the Designated Marine Area Plan process set out in the Maritime Area Planning Bill, will underpin a plan-led approach to consenting (or development of our marine resources).</p> | <p>offshore wind and reaching an 80% renewable electricity share. The Proposed Development is also supported by and in compliance with the provisions of the OREDPA.</p> |
| National Development Plan 2021 - 2030 | National Strategic Outcomes 8: Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society | <p>The NDP is clear in its priority to reach a low-carbon, climate resilient society over the lifetime of the plan. The Proposed Development, if permitted, will provide clean, renewable electricity to the national grid, furthering development objectives of the NDP.</p> |
| Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (2014) | Core Principle: Ensure offshore renewable energy development is fully in line with EU environmental obligations, best practice, and the suggested mitigation measures developed as part of OREDPA. | <p>The Proposed Development is located in Assessment Area 5 – West Coast, in which wind and wave energy are assessed. Assessment Area 5 is identified as having the capacity to house 500MW of fixed bottom offshore wind energy without likely significant adverse effect on the environment. The project level mitigation measures set out in the OREDPA have been thoroughly considered when determining the necessary mitigation for the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in compliance with the OREDPA.</p> |
| National Energy Security Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring security of energy supply in the near-term; Reducing our dependency on imported fossil fuels in the context of the phasing out of Russian energy imports across the EU. | <p>The Proposed Development will reduce the need for imported fossil fuels for electricity, improving national energy security.</p> |

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| The National Energy & Climate Plan 2021 – 2030 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decarbonisation - Renewable energy Energy security | The Proposed Development will contribute to achieving key decarbonisation and energy security objectives by adding a new renewable electricity generator to the national grid. |
| Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 – Energy Security Package | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced and Responsive Demand. Renewables-Led System. More Resilient Systems. Robust Risk Governance. | The Proposed Development supports the objectives to ensure the State's energy security. The Proposed Development will serve as a domestic renewable energy generator capable of providing clean electricity to the national electricity grid. |
| Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy for the Northern and Western Region | <p>RPO 4.19: Support the appropriate development of offshore wind energy production through the adequate provision of land-based infrastructure and services, in line with national policy and in a manner that is compatible with environmental, ecological and landscape considerations.</p> <p>RPO 4.33: To facilitate where possible Marine Renewable Technology Projects off the West and North West coasts of Ireland, and subject to environmental and amenity considerations (feasibility studies), and where applicable, enable National Grid connection.</p> | Offshore renewable energy development off the west coast and associated infrastructure is supported by the policy objectives of the RSES, therefore the Proposed Development is supported. |
| Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy for the Southern Region | <p>RPO 85 Renewable offshore energy: To promote regional cooperation in terms of offshore renewable energy development, environmental monitoring and awareness of the benefits of realising the Region's offshore energy potential. Initiatives arising from this objective shall be subject to robust feasibility and site selection, which includes explicit consideration of likely significant effects on European Sites and potential for adverse effects on the integrity of European sites in advance of any development.</p> <p>RPO 95 Sustainable Renewable Energy Generation: It is an objective to support implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), and the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan and the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEA and AA and leverage the Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.</p> | The RSES supports the implementation of the NREAP and the OREDP, both of which the Proposed Development is in compliance with and supported by. The RSES supports the grid connection infrastructure necessary for renewable energy generators to connect to the national electricity grid. |

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| | <p>RPO 96 Integrating Renewable Energy Sources: It is an objective to support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure to integrate renewable energy sources and ensure our national and regional energy system remains safe, secure and ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.</p> | |
| Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 | <p>MRE 1 Renewable Energy Support as appropriate, sustainable offshore renewable energy generation off the County Galway coast subject to environmental and amenity considerations.</p> <p>MCE 1 - Maritime Economy: Support development and growth of the maritime economy and balance the competing demands for available space along the coast by different users and encourage co-location and co-existence of activities and infrastructure while having regard to appropriate environmental considerations.</p> | <p>The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 directly supports the principle of developing offshore renewable energy projects off the coast of County Galway. The County Development Plan also encourages co-existence between maritime activities and infrastructure to realise the potential of the maritime economy.</p> |
| Clare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 | <p>CDPI3.5: It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) <i>To support offshore wind, wave and tidal renewable energy developments and the ancillary land-based infrastructure and service requirements to assist in meeting renewable energy targets subject to environmental considerations and the protection of the amenities of the surrounding areas in accordance with the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA), the ORE Planning policies as outlined in the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and SIFP SEA Environmental Reports and the Natura Impact Reports; and</i></p> <p>b) <i>To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub and the development of the Shannon Estuary as a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.</i></p> | <p>The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 recognises its crucial role to enable the ancillary land-based infrastructure required to connect offshore renewable energy generation to the national electricity grid. The County Development Plan also identifies Moneypoint power station and the Shannon Estuary as a green energy hub for offshore wind energy. The Proposed Development is therefore supported by policy at a local level and will help establish Moneypoint and the Shannon Estuary as a hub for offshore wind energy development.</p> |

7.1

European Renewable Energy & Climate Policy Context

European Green Deal

The Green Deal, introduced in 2019, is intended to work through a framework of regulation and legislation setting clear overarching targets, e.g. **a bloc-wide goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and a 55% cut in emissions by 2030 (compared with 1990 levels)**. These targets demonstrate the ambition necessary to keep the global temperature increase to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to keep it to 1.5°C as per the Paris Agreement.

With regard to the energy sector, the Green Deal focuses on 3 no. key principles for the clean energy transition, which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the quality of life for citizens:

- Ensuring a secure and affordable EU energy supply;
- Developing a fully integrated, interconnected and digitalised EU energy market; and
- Prioritising energy efficiency, improving the energy performance of our buildings and developing a power sector based largely on renewable sources (e.g. the Proposed Development the subject of this application)

The European Climate Law¹⁴ writes into law the objectives set out above in the European Green Deal for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. Climate neutrality by 2050 means achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for EU countries as a whole, mainly by cutting emissions, investing in green technologies and protecting the natural environment. The Climate Law includes:

- A legal objective for the Union to reach climate neutrality by 2050;
- An ambitious 2030 climate target of at least 55% reduction of net emissions of greenhouse gases as compared to 1990, with clarity on the contribution of emission reductions and removals;
- A process for setting a 2040 climate target, taking into account an indicative greenhouse gas budget for 2030-2050 to be published by the Commission;
- A commitment to negative emissions after 2050;
- The establishment of a European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, that will provide independent scientific advice;
- Stronger provisions on adaptation to climate change; and
- Strong coherence across Union policies with the climate neutrality objective

The law aims to ensure that all EU policies contribute to this goal and that all sectors of the economy and society play their part. All 27 no. EU Member States have committed to turning the EU into the first climate neutral continent by 2050.

The EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy (2020) was prepared under the European Green Deal.

REPowerEU

Published in May 2022 in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, REPowerEU aims to accelerate the energy transition and increase Europe's energy independence. The European Commission proposed the

¹⁴ REGULATION (EU) 2021/1119 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law')

RePowerEU plan to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels including oil and gas, due to the high and volatile energy prices, and security of supply concerns following Russia's unprecedented military attack on Ukraine.

A key pillar of REPowerEU includes reducing the use of fossil fuels by boosting energy efficiency, **increasing renewables** and addressing infrastructure bottlenecks. The key aims and objectives of REPowerEU can be summarised as follows:

- Accelerate the roll-out of renewables.
- Increase the 2030 target for renewables from 40%-45%.
- Tackle slow and complex permitting for major renewable projects.

Regulation 2022/2577 - Laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy

In December 2022 a text of the proposal for a Council Regulation laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy was agreed by the European Council and published by the European Council¹⁵. The Regulation (Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577) which has been amended and extended by Council Regulation (EU) 2024/223 specifically seeks to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy sources, by means of targeted measures capable of accelerating the pace of deployment of renewables in the European Union in the short term. The regulation focuses therefore on measures which are implementable rapidly at the Member State level, namely the streamlining of the permit-granting processes applicable to renewable energy projects.

Central to the regulation was the introduction of a presumption that renewable energy development must be considered to be ***'in the overriding public interest'*** when addressing competing interests under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), Birds Directive (2009/147/EEC) and the Water Framework Directive (2006/60/EC) and that renewable energy projects should be given priority when balancing legal interests in a given case. The classification of renewable energy projects being ***'in the overriding public interest'*** highlights the strong support at a European Union wide level and urgent need for renewable energy developments such as the Proposed Development at a European wide level.

Article 3:

- 1) *'The planning, construction and operation of plants and installations for the production of energy from renewable sources, and their connection to the grid, the related grid itself and storage assets shall be presumed as being in the overriding public interest and serving public health and safety when balancing legal interests in the individual case, for the purposes of Article 6(4) and Article 16(1)(c) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 4(7) of Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 9(1)(a) of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council....'*
- 2) *'Member States shall ensure, at least for projects which are recognised as being of overriding public interest, that in the planning and permit-granting process, the construction and operation of plants and installations for the production of energy from renewable sources and the related grid infrastructure development are given priority when balancing legal interests in the individual case....' (emphasis added)*

The regulation, which has immediate application in Member States, applies to *"all permit-granting processes that have a starting date within the period of its application"* and includes a number of tangible

¹⁵ General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Outcome of Proceedings: Proposal for a COUNCIL REGULATION laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy (File no. 022/0367(NLE)) (22.12.2022)

measures aimed at streamlining the permit-granting process and facilitating the accelerated deployment of renewable energy.

‘A fast deployment of renewable energy sources can help to mitigate the effects of the current energy crisis, by forming a defence against Russia’s actions. Renewable energy can significantly contribute to counter Russia’s weaponisation of energy by strengthening the Union’s security of supply, reducing volatility in the market and lowering energy prices.’¹⁶

By Regulation 2024/223 of the 22 December 2023 the Council of the European Union, the application of certain provisions of Regulation 2022/2577 were extended to 30 June 2025 (including Article 3(2) set out above) and new provisions were inserted.

Article 16(f) of the third revision of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) places the presumption that renewable energy projects are ‘in the overriding public interest’ (which originated in Article 3(1) of the Regulation as set out above) on a permanent footing until climate neutrality is achieved.

The prioritisation of renewable energy projects in European law is beginning to be implemented and acknowledged by the judicial system in Ireland. In a recent High Court judgment ([2024] IEHC 549) regarding a challenge to a wind farm consent, the Judge stated that recent EU law including in particular Article 16(f) provides “a form of answer for the hitherto problematic clash between arguments regarding the need to address the climate emergency versus the need to give effect to previously established European environmental law regardless of the nature of the project.” Further, the judge stated that “such developments [legal developments] must adjust the public interest calculus somewhat...”

Another recent judgment of the Irish High Court [2024] IEHC 610 relating to a challenge to a foreshore licence required in the context of a wind farm project, also treats of Regulation 2022/2577 and RED III and in particular 1) the presumption that renewables projects are in the “overriding public interest” and 2) the requirement that renewables projects are afforded the most expeditious administrative processes. Renewable Energy Directive.

In November 2023, a revision of the Renewable Energy Directive¹⁷ (RED III), came into force. RED III increases the EU wide renewable energy target from 32% set under the previous revision of the Directive to at least 42.5%, with an ambition to reach 45% by 2030.

RED III requires Member States which fall under the indicative goals for offshore renewable energy generation to be deployed within each sea basin, identified in accordance with Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2022/869, to publish information on the volumes of offshore energy which they plan to achieve through tenders. Such information must consider the technical and economic feasibility of the grid structure and any ongoing activities.

Member States are also required to allocate space for renewable energy projects in their maritime spatial plans. A significant addition is the requirement for Member States to reduce the complexity and to increase the efficiency and transparency of the offshore permit-granting procedure.

The Renewable Energy Directive was revised in 2023 and the amending Directive EU/2023/2413 came into effect on 20 November 2023. There was an 18-month period to transpose most of the directive's provisions into national law, with a shorter deadline of July 2024 for some provisions related to permitting renewables.¹⁸

In September 2024, The European Commission opened infringement procedures against Ireland and 25 other member states by sending a letter of formal notice for failing to fully transpose the provisions of the

¹⁶ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577, at Recital 1

¹⁷ Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (recast)

¹⁸ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-directive-targets-and-rules/renewable-energy-directive_en

revised Renewable Energy Directive relating to the simplification and acceleration of permitting procedures.

EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy (2020)

In November 2020, the EU Commission published its strategic plan for Offshore Renewable Energy, with the objective of increasing Europe's offshore wind capacity of 12 GW to a minimum of 60 GW by 2030 and reaching 300 GW by 2050. This collaborative effort will involve cross-border cooperation and the integration of offshore renewable energy development objectives into the National Maritime Spatial Plans, which coastal states were required to submit to the Commission by March 2021.

In order to realise these targets, the Commission estimates that an investment of nearly €800 billion will be necessary between the present and 2050. To facilitate and attract such significant investments, the Commission has outlined several key measures. One of these key measures, relevant to the Proposed Development, is the aim to establish a clear legal framework including clarifications of electricity market rules, revisions of the State aid guidelines on energy and environmental protection, and amendments to the Renewable Energy Directive. These efforts are intended to streamline and facilitate the cost-effective deployment of renewable offshore energy.

Revised TEN-E Regulation

The revised TEN-E Regulation (EU/2022/869) entered into force in June 2022. The revised regulation aims to enhance the EU's energy infrastructure policy and aligns with the European Green Deal. Under the revised regulation, the member states agreed to non-binding offshore wind energy goals to achieve by 2050, with intermediate goals for 2030 and 2040. The cumulative goal committed to by member states across all five of the EU's five sea basins is 111 GW, nearly twice as much as the initial objective of at least 60 GW set out in the 2020 EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy. To bridge the disparity between the 111 GW committed by Member States and the existing capacity as of 2022, an average annual installation of almost 12 GW is required – a significant increase compared to the 3 GW installed in 2023.

Ireland is a part of the Northern Seas offshore priority corridor and the Atlantic offshore priority corridor. The goals for Ireland, as part of the Northern Seas and Atlantic corridors, agreed to by the Irish government, are provided below.

Table 7-2: Offshore renewable energy goals provided by the Irish Government

| Sea Basin | 2030 Goal (GW) | 2040 Goal (GW) | 2050 Goal (GW) |
|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| North Seas | 4.5 | 13 | 20 |
| Atlantic | 0.5 - 1 | 7 | 15 |
| Total | 5 – 5.5 | 20 | 35 |

The Atlantic basin includes the Atlantic Ocean area to the west, north-west and south-west of Ireland. As the only 'Phase 1' offshore wind project in the Atlantic Sea basin, the Proposed Development is the only offshore wind energy project capable of being constructed by 2030 and enabling Ireland to reach its goal set under the requirements of the revised TEN-E regulation.

National Renewable Energy & Climate Policy Context

Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 ('CAP 24') builds on CAP 23 by refining and updating the status of the actions required to deliver the decarbonisation required under the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The renewable electricity generation targets are unchanged from the CAP 23 (5GW of offshore wind and 80% renewable electricity share).

CAP 24 includes the latest trends in the electricity sector:

- › In 2022, renewable generation accounted for 38.6% of electricity, an increase from 35% in 2021.
- › Electricity accounted for 14.4% of Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2022.
- › To meet the first carbon budget the electricity sector requires a decarbonisation rate of 17.3% per annum in the period 2023-2025. For context, the decarbonisation rate between 2018 and 2022 was 1.4% per annum.

The decarbonisation of the electricity sector is crucial for achieving broader decarbonisation targets across sectors such as transport, heating and industry. Electricity will serve as the primary energy source for these sectors. By decarbonising the electricity sector, it will indirectly reduce the carbon emissions of other sectors by enabling them to transition to electric-powered technologies. This is recognised by CAP 24 which states:

'The electricity sector continues to face an immense challenge in meeting its requirements under the sectoral emissions ceiling, as the decarbonisation of other sectors, including transport, heating, and industry, relies to a significant degree on electrification. The deployment rates of renewable energy and grid infrastructure required to meet the carbon budget programme for electricity is unprecedented and requires urgent action across all actors to align with the national targets.'

Chapter 18 sets out the state of play and actions for the marine environment under the CAP 24. First and foremost, the CAP acknowledges the vast renewable energy potential of Ireland's maritime area. The CAP also identifies the significance of the six MACs granted to six offshore wind energy projects off the Irish coastline, one of which is the Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm. The CAP notes that the progression of the 'Phase 1' projects through the planning process with An Bord Pleanála *'marks an important step towards reaching our 2030 climate targets.'*

CAP 24 acknowledges the crucial role of offshore wind in meeting Ireland's electricity sector's sectoral emissions ceiling, with the emissions reductions of the 'Phase 1' projects identified and included in the emissions projections across the carbon budget periods.

"During the second carbon budget period, as the necessary infrastructure and projects come online, we will start to realise Ireland's enormous potential for offshore wind."

Carbon Budgets

To achieve the 51% emissions reduction target, the Climate Act requires the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) to recommend a proposed programme of economy-wide 5-year Carbon Budgets to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications. The first national carbon budget programme proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council, approved by Government and adopted

by both Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2022 comprises three successive 5-year carbon budgets¹⁹. The total emissions allowed under each budget are shown in Table 2-1 below.

Table 7-3: Carbon Budgets of the Climate Change Advisory Council

| | 2021 – 2025 Carbon Budget 1 | 2026 – 2030 Carbon Budget 2 | 2031 – 2035 Provisional Carbon Budget 3 |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | All Gases | | |
| Carbon Budget (Mt CO ₂ eq) | 295 | 200 | 151 |
| Annual Average Percentage Change in Emissions | -4.8% | -8.3% | -3.5% |
| The figures are consistent with emissions in 2018 of 68.3 Mt CO ₂ eq reducing to 33.5 Mt CO ₂ eq in 2030, thus allowing compliance with the 51% emissions reduction target by 2030. | | | |

Section 6C of the Climate Act provides that the Minister shall prepare, within the limits of the carbon budget, the Sectoral Emissions Ceilings. These ceilings set out the maximum amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are permitted in each sector. The Government approved Sectoral Emissions Ceilings on 28 July 2022. The electricity sector is allocated a sectoral ceiling of 40 Mt CO₂ eq for the first budget (2021-2025) and a sectoral ceiling of 20 Mt CO₂ eq for the second budget period (2026-2030). Reported emissions for 2021 and 2022 for the electricity sector were 19.7 Mt CO₂ eq, 49% of the sectoral emissions ceiling for the first carbon budget period²⁰.

National Energy Security Framework

The National Energy Security Framework (DECC, April 2022) highlights clearly the impacts the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting war has had on Europe's energy system. The resulting decision by the European Union to phase out the import of Russian gas, oil and coal (REPowerEU) has brought to the fore the importance of security of supply and how energy policy is designed for long-term resilience. It takes account of the need to decarbonise society and economy, to reduce Ireland's emissions by 51% over the decade to 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050. According to the SEAI's Energy in Ireland (2021) report, oil accounts for 45% of Ireland's primary energy requirement making it one of the highest rates of oil dependency in the EU. The International Energy Agency, of which Ireland is a member country, includes a 10-point plan to cut oil use which calls for an acceleration in the deployment of wind and solar projects. Ireland's response per the Framework is set out over three themes:

- Theme 1 – managing the impact on consumers and businesses
- Theme 2 – ensuring security of energy supply in the near-term
- Theme 3 – reducing our dependency on imported fossil fuels in the context of the phasing out of Russian energy imports across the EU

In relation to theme 3, the Framework highlights that replacing fossil fuels with renewables, including wind energy, will be a focus area of work. The Framework calls for “*Supportive policies across Government and State agencies*” which “*can reduce barriers and fast track permitting for renewable energy generation projects.*” Offshore wind is identified as a “key focus” area for the implementation of the Theme 3. The framework supports the Delivery Taskforce that was established to accelerate the development of offshore wind. The objective of the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce is to ensure that offshore wind energy targets are met (i.e. 5GW under CAP24), to ensure that the benefits arising from the offshore wind industry are maximised, and to work to protect marine biodiversity.

¹⁹ Climate Change Advisory Council Carbon Budget Technical Report (October 2021) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9af1b-carbon-budgets/>

²⁰ Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2024 Electricity Sectoral Review (May 2024) <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/AR2024-Electricity-final.pdf>

Having regard to the above, it is clear that the provision of additional renewable energy generation, such as the Proposed Development, is vital in helping to secure the State's energy supplies and reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and is a top priority for Government.

Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 – Energy Security Package

Published in November 2023, the energy security package titled 'Energy Security in Ireland to 2030' builds on the policies set out in the NESF. The energy security package is based on the recognition of the following fact:

"Ireland's future energy will be secure by moving from an oil-, peat-, coal- and gas-based energy system to an electricity-led system maximising our renewable energy potential, flexibility and being integrated into Europe's energy systems."

The energy security package includes a range of measures to implement this approach by the prioritisation of the following:

1. Reduced and Responsive Demand.
2. Renewables-Led System.
3. More Resilient Systems.
4. Robust Risk Governance.

Independent research undertaken as part of the package, the McCarthy Report, provides an analysis of developments in the electricity sector in Ireland. The McCarthy Report makes the following observation in relation to the consenting process:

"The problem of delays encountered by major infrastructure projects, including in the electricity system, due to planning and environmental consent issues was evident. They had been commented upon by the International Energy Agency in its 2019 review of Ireland which named planning delays as the principal challenge to delivery of policy for the sector."

The energy security package aims to ensure that the planning system is fully aligned and resourced to fully support accelerated renewable energy development. It also aims to ensure renewable energy projects are prioritised in line with the recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) and RePowerEU.

The Proposed Development is set to significantly support the government's objectives in ensuring the State's energy security.

Policy Statement on the Framework for Ireland's Offshore Electricity System (2021)

The Policy Statement on the Framework for Ireland's Offshore Energy Electricity Transmission System was published by the Department of the Environment Climate and Communications in 2021. The policy statement aims to develop Ireland's offshore wind energy capabilities to meet its greenhouse gas emissions targets. The policy provides for the development, operation and ownership of Ireland's offshore electricity transmission system through the following key policies:

- *A Phased transition from the current decentralised offshore transmission system model to a centralised model, with transmission system assets to be planned, developed, owned and operated by EirGrid";*
- *It envisages that the successful First Phase offshore renewable projects, will develop the associated offshore transmission system requirement;*
- *The development of the offshore transmission system in the Second Phase may be carried out by either renewable energy projects, and/or EirGrid; and*

- *Third Phase offshore transmission system development will be developed exclusively by EirGrid, with maritime areas in which renewables development may take place, to be provided for by the second Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPII)*

As a phase 1 project, the Proposed Development is aligned with the offshore transmission policy approved by government. A Grid Connection Assessment for the Proposed Development was received from Eirgrid in December 2022, which secures a Maximum Export Capacity of 450 MW via connection to Moneypoint 220kV Substation, subject to acceptance of a Final Connection Offer if development permission for the Proposed Development is granted by ABP.

7.3

European Planning Policy Context

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive ('MSF Directive') was put in place to protect the marine ecosystem and biodiversity upon which our health and marine-related economic and social activities depend.

The Directive mandates that Member States develop national marine strategies to attain or preserve 'good environmental status' where it already exists. This status was to be achieved by 2020. These marine strategies include conducting regular assessments of the marine environment, setting objectives and targets, establishing monitoring programs, and implementing measures to enhance the condition of marine waters.

Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU)

In July 2014, the European Parliament adopted Directive 2014/89/EU. The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive ('the MSP Directive') established a framework for maritime spatial planning to promote the sustainable growth of maritime economies, the sustainable development of marine areas, and the sustainable use of marine resources.

The MSP Directive placed a legal requirement on Member States to develop and implement the MSP Directive by 2021 at the latest. In response to the MSP Directive, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, published the National Marine Planning Framework in June of 2021. The NMPF is addressed in further detail in Section 7.4 below and in Appendix 1 of this Planning Report.

7.4

National Planning Policy Context

National Marine Planning Policy Statement

The Government published Ireland's first Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS) alongside the Draft National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) in November 2019. The MPPS draws together and describes the existing components of Ireland's marine planning system, outlines a vision for the future development of the marine planning system, sets out the overarching policies and principles the Government expects marine planning bodies and other public bodies that engage with the marine planning system to observe and sets out high-level priorities for the enhancement of the marine planning system in Ireland. The vision for marine spatial planning in Ireland is set out as follows:

"A marine planning system with clear forward planning, development management and enforcement elements that promotes and sustains ocean health, and supports the sustainable (recreational) enjoyment, management and use of Ireland's marine resource."

The MPPS has underpinned the development of marine planning policy and legislation, such as the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 and the NMPF. The MPPS has 10 strategic principles that continue to guide marine planning in Ireland. These strategic principles, *inter alia*, relate to forward planning, development management, the enforcement of EU and national law, ecosystem protection and restoration, heritage preservation, climate change and sea safety. Of particular relevance to the Proposed Development is strategic principle 3, which is as follows:

"Marine planning will facilitate Ireland's transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy. Marine planning should ensure that developments in the marine environment consider as a matter of course ways to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and also that they have due regard to the impacts of a

changing climate. Marine planning should also support the realisation of relevant measures contained in the Government Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown.”

National Marine Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) forms part of Project Ireland 2040 and plans for the effective and sustainable management of the marine environment and associated activities, as required under the MSP Directive. The NMPF complements the National Planning Framework which guides terrestrial planning and development.

The NMPF outlines a number of ‘Overarching Marine Planning Policies’ (OMPPs) which include the following objectives and policies:

- › Support offshore renewable energy proposals to assist in the achievement of Ireland’s offshore renewable energy targets, including the development of 5 GW of offshore renewable energy capacity by 2030;
- › Support for energy transition proposals to improve the security and diversity of Ireland’s energy supply;
- › Manage the effect of proposals on access to fishing grounds and current and future port activity; and
- › Ensuring that offshore renewable energy and infrastructure proposals support safety at sea imperatives.

The NMPF is stated to be the “*key decision-making tool for Government departments, State agencies, regulatory authorities and policy makers for decisions on marine activities up to 2040. Decisions will include planning applications as well as policies, projects and strategies.*”

The NMPF recognises the importance of offshore renewable energy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reaching national climate and energy targets. ORE Policy 1 aims to achieve the national target of 5GW offshore wind capacity by 2030:

ORE Policy 1: Proposals that assist the State in meeting the Government's offshore renewable energy targets, including the target of achieving 5GW of capacity in offshore wind by 2030 and proposals that maximise the long-term shift from the use of fossil fuels to renewable electricity energy, in line with decarbonisation targets, should be supported. All proposals will be rigorously assessed to ensure compliance with environmental standards and seek to minimise impacts on the marine environment, marine ecology and other maritime users.

The NMPF specifically supports the prioritisation of the assessment of the Phase 1 Projects (then referred to as the ‘*Relevant Projects*’) and emphasises the importance of compliance with the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPP).

ORE Policy 2: Proposals must be consistent with national policy, including the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPP) and its successor. Relevant Projects designated pursuant to the Transition Protocol and those projects that can objectively enable delivery on the Government's 2030 targets will be prioritised for assessment under the new consenting regime. Into the future, areas designated for offshore energy development, under the Designated Marine Area Plan process set out in the Maritime Area Planning Bill, will underpin a plan-led approach to consenting (or development of our marine resources). (Emphasis added)

A full detailed assessment of the Proposed Development against each policy in the NMPF is provided in the Statement of Consistency in Appendix 1 of this Planning Report. As demonstrated by the Statement of Consistency table, the Proposed Development is in compliance with all of the policies and objectives of the NMPF.

Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan

In 2014, the Government published the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA). The OREDPA sets out key policy objectives and actions to enable Ireland to utilise its significant offshore energy resources. In this way, the OREDPA provides a framework for the sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources. The OREDPA sets a vision for the development of renewable energy in Irish waters, it states:

“Our offshore renewable energy resource contributing to our economic development and sustainable growth, generating jobs for our citizens, supported by coherent policy, planning and regulation, and managed in an integrated manner”.

The core principles to underpin the development of Ireland's offshore wind and ocean energy resource as set out in the OREDPA are:

- Ensure offshore renewable energy development is fully in line with EU environmental obligations, best practice, and the suggested mitigation measures developed as part of OREDPA.
- The exploitation of our national offshore wind and ocean resources must provide a substantial economic return to Ireland.
- Coordination of the development of the Irish offshore renewable energy industry must be in line with government initiatives.
- The use of public resources to facilitate the infrastructural development of offshore wind and ocean energy must be cost effective and demonstrate value for money.
- The governance of the OREDPA must be in line with best practice, with robust and transparent reporting mechanisms.

The OREDPA is relevant for the assessment of offshore wind projects as it sets out a framework with a spatial dimension against which offshore renewable energy development proposals can be considered.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) was undertaken as part of the preparation of the OREDPA to inform the appropriate level of marine renewable development that could potentially take place without likely significant adverse effect on the environment. The study area for the purpose of carrying out the SEA was split into six assessment areas. The Proposed Development is located in Assessment Area 5 – West Coast, in which wind and wave energy are assessed. The OREDPA provides guidance to planning authorities when considering the appropriate levels of development to permit from an environmental perspective. The OREDPA states that *‘In the event offshore wind is successful in finding a route to market, the findings and recommendations of the SEA and AA, which underpin this OREDPA, will provide valuable environmental information to assist in the development planning decision making process’.*

The overall conclusion of the SEA and AA found that it would be possible to achieve the high scenario of 4,500 MW from offshore wind without likely significant adverse effect on the environment. The total development potential of fixed bottom offshore wind turbines in Assessment Area 5 without causing likely significant adverse effects on the environment is found to be 500MW²¹. This development potential figure is based on the cumulative assessment findings of the SEA and AA. These figures are presented based on the assumption that the mitigation measures will be implemented in full, to ensure significant adverse effects do not occur on the marine environment. Two forms of mitigation are identified, plan level mitigation and project level mitigation.

²¹ Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources - Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan, Pg. 30. Link: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/27215/2bc3cb73b6474beebbe810e88f49d1d4.pdf#page=null>

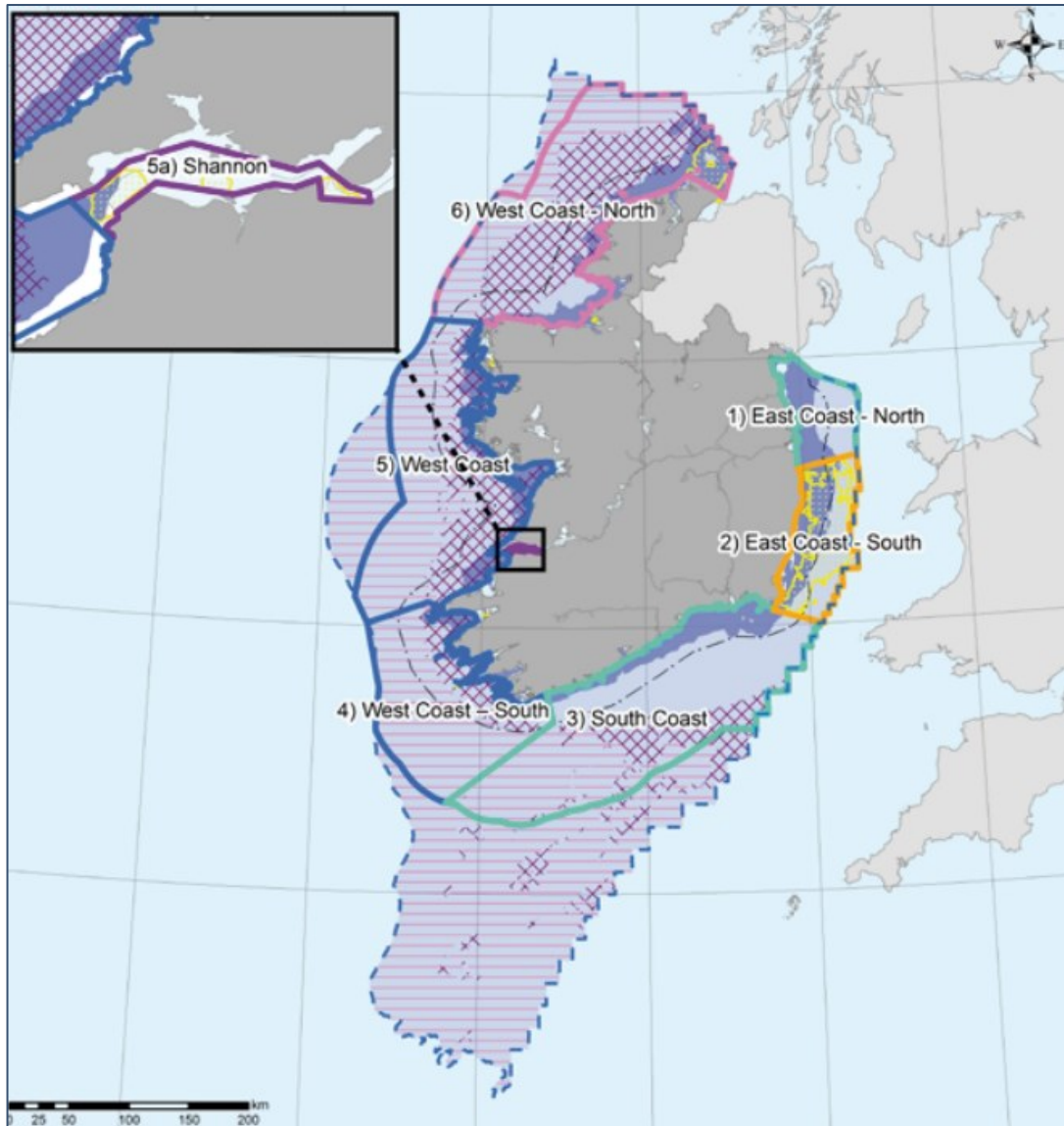


Figure 7-2: OREDP Strategic Environmental Assessment Areas (Source: OREDP)

The Proposed Development is in full compliance with the provisions of the OREDP, Assessment Area 5 is identified as having the capacity to house 500MW of fixed bottom offshore wind energy without likely significant adverse effect on the environment. The project level mitigation measures set out in the OREDP have been strongly considered when determining the necessary mitigation for the Proposed Development. The mitigation measures, outlined in section Chapter 33 Schedule of Mitigation of the EIAR, will ensure that impacts on the environment are mitigated where possible.

National Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040

The National Planning Framework (NPF), published in February of 2018, forms the top tier of terrestrial national planning policy which establishes the policy context for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and local level development plans.

The NPF notes that the population of Ireland is projected to increase by approximately 1 million people by 2040 which will result in a population of roughly 5.7 million. This population growth will place further demand on both the built and natural environment. To strengthen and facilitate more environmentally focused planning at the local level, the NPF states that future planning and development will need to:

“Tackle Ireland’s higher than average carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing our country’s prodigious renewable energy potential.”

A key focus throughout the NPF is the fostering of a transition toward a low carbon, climate-resilient society. In this regard, one of the stated key elements of the NPF is an Ireland which has a secure and sustainable renewable energy supply and facilitates the ability to diversify and adapt to new energy technologies. Key features identified in the NPF to facilitate the transition towards a low carbon energy future relevant to this application, include:

- A shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources.
- Decisions around development and deployment of new technologies relating to areas such as wind.
- Legal and regulatory frameworks to meet demands and challenges in transitioning to a low carbon society.

Relevant to the Proposed Development, the **National Strategic Outcome 8** (*Transition to Sustainable Energy*), notes that in creating Ireland’s future energy landscape, new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary to enable a more distributed energy generation which connects established and emerging energy sources, i.e. renewables, to major sources of demand. The successful transition to a low-carbon power system will depend on the pillars of 1) *Sustainability*, 2) *Security of supply* and 3) *Competitiveness*. A common theme underpinning these pillars is the need for a fit-for-purpose transmission and distribution energy network.

Ireland’s offshore renewable energy policy under **Objective 42** aims ‘*To support, within the context of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED) and its successors, the progressive development of Ireland’s offshore renewable energy potential, including domestic and international grid connectivity enhancements.*’

In regard to the above, it is clear that the provision of offshore renewable energy generation and associated transmission infrastructure is in line with the aims and objectives of the NPF which seeks to transition to a low carbon economy.

National Development Plan 2021 – 2030

The National Development Plan 2021 – 2030 (NDP) was published on 4th October 2021 and sets out the major public investment projects identified by Government which are to play a significant role in addressing the opportunities and challenges faced by Ireland over the coming years such as housing, health, population growth, and most relevant to the Proposed Development, climate change. It is stated that the NDP 2021 – 2030 will be the ‘*largest and greenest ever delivered in Ireland*’, and in this regard, the NDP highlights that extensive consultation was undertaken to ensure that the plan adequately supports the implementation of climate action measures. Reflecting on the recent publication of the IPCC’s 6th Assessment Report, the NDP notes that the Irish Government is fully committed to ‘playing its part’ to ensure that the worst climate change damage can be avoided, e.g. significant reductions in CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions as assisted by the achievement of both European and National renewable energy targets. Specifically, the NDP states that;

“The next 10 years are critical if we are to address the climate crisis and ensure a safe and bright future for the planet, and all of us on it.

The investment priorities included in this chapter [Ch. 13] must be delivered to meet the targets set out in the current and future Climate Action Plans, and to achieve our climate objectives. The investment priorities represent a decisive shift towards the achievement of a decarbonised society, demonstrating the Government’s unequivocal commitment to securing a carbon neutral future.”

Notwithstanding this, the NDP acknowledges that it is not its role to set out a specific blueprint for the achievement of Ireland's climate targets; but as noted above, facilitate capital investment allocations for the climate and environmental strategic priorities.

One of the NDP's strategic climate priorities is the need for low-carbon, resilient electricity systems; specifically, the plan commits to increasing the share of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030. This is characterised by the NDP as an '*unprecedented commitment to the decarbonisation of electricity supplies*,' which is certainly an ambitious and an explicit driver for the deployment of new renewable generators at the scale of the Proposed Development. The focus of investment in renewable energy infrastructure is to contribute to a long-term, sustainable and competitive energy future for Ireland.

7.5

Regional Planning Policy Context

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020 - 2032

The Proposed Development is located off the coast of County Galway, which is a member of The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). The NWRA has a recognised leadership role in setting out regional policies and coordinating initiatives which support the delivery and implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF). The primary vehicle for this is the preparation and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

The RSES acknowledges that the region has a pivotal role in delivering a successful transition to Ireland's proposed low carbon economy with huge potential for growth in renewables. There is '*still significant potential*' for all new renewable energy outputs to the grid. In order to facilitate the growth of renewables within the region, the RSES notes that the NWRA aims to encourage stakeholders, i.e. industry, commercial etc., to be the first to facilitate new opportunities and concentrate on possibilities to further advance renewable energy generation and use.

These strategic aims are captured in Policy Objectives, 4.17 and 4.18:

- **RPO 4.17:** *To position the region to avail of the emerging global market in renewable energy by stimulating the development and deployment of the most advantageous renewable energy systems, including:*
 - *Stimulating the development and deployment of the most advantageous renewable energy systems;*
 - *Raising awareness and public understanding of renewable energy and encourage market opportunities for the renewable energy industry to promote the development and growth of renewable energy businesses; and*
 - *Encourage the development of the transmission and distribution grids to facilitate the development of renewable energy projects and the effective utilisation of the energy generated from renewable sources having regard to the future potential of the region over the lifetime of the Strategy and beyond.*
- **RPO 4.18:** *Support the development of secure, reliable and safe supplies of renewable energy, to maximise their value, maintain the inward investment, support indigenous industry and create jobs.*

As indicated above, there is a clear policy support within the RSES to identify and capitalise on emerging opportunities associated with the transition to a decarbonised economy such as renewable energy generation. The RSES also specifically endorses the development of offshore wind energy production in suitable locations and recognises that '*Off-Shore renewables will be critically important if the Country is to meet the energy targets set out for 2030*'.

Offshore wind energy production is directly supported by Policy Objectives 4.19 and 4.33:

- **RPO 4.19:** Support the appropriate development of offshore wind energy production through the adequate provision of land-based infrastructure and services, in line with national policy and in a manner that is compatible with environmental, ecological and landscape considerations.
- **RPO 4.33:** To facilitate where possible Marine Renewable Technology Projects off the West and North West coasts of Ireland, and subject to environmental and amenity considerations (feasibility studies), and where applicable, enable National Grid connection.

The RSES is ultimately supportive of the future growth of offshore renewable energy technology in the region and sets a clear precedent to identify and capitalise on those opportunities associated with the transition to renewable energy generation.

The delivery of electricity grid infrastructure is also supported in the RSES, for example through the following policy objectives:

- **RPO – 8.1:** The Assembly support the development of a safe, secure and reliable electricity network and the transition towards a low carbon economy centred on energy efficiency and the growth projects outlined and described in this strategy.
- **RPO – 8.3:** The Assembly support the necessary integration of the transmission network requirements to allow linkages with renewable energy proposals at all levels to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.
- **RPO – 8.4** That reinforcements and new electricity transmission infrastructure are put in place and their provision is supported, to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs. Ensure that development minimises impacts on designated areas.

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The Proposed Development includes a grid export cable which comes ashore at Killard, County Clare. The grid export cable runs predominantly in the road network from landfall to the Moneypoint 220kV Substation where it connects to the national grid. County Clare is located in the Southern Region and is a member of the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA). The SRA is primarily focused on the preparation and implementation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), integration of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), management of EU Operational Programmes, EU project participation, implementation of national economic policy and working with the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

The RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework. It will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and state agencies to deliver on this vision and build a cohesive and sustainable region.

“The RSES primarily aims to support the delivery of the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018-27 (NDP). As the regional tier of the national planning process, it will ensure coordination between the City and County Development Plans (CCDP) and Local Enterprise and Community Plans (LECP) of the ten local authorities in the Region.”

The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2019 (superseded by CAP 24) by playing its part in the development of wind, wave, tidal, solar, hydro, and bio energy. The ambition is reflected in the Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's) which sets out the key regional policies for the 12-year lifetime of the plan. With regards to climate change the RSES notes that:

“All global risks of climate change are risks to the Southern Region. The Southern Regional Assembly is committed to play its role to put in place a high-level regional strategy for transition to a low carbon economy and society across all sectors.”

As noted and recognised by the RSES, Ireland and the EU are signatories to the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international agreement to restrict global temperature rises to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to limit any increase to 1.5°C to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. It is further noted that *‘Ireland’s international commitments also extend to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 13, to ‘take action to combat climate change and its impacts.’*

The following Regional Policy Objectives have been listed with regards to climate change:

- **RPO 87 Low Carbon Energy Future:** *The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government’s policy under Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan 2019. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture.*
- **RPO 88 National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework:** *The RSES is committed to the implementation of the National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework: Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland to enable the Region transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. It is an objective to ensure effective co-ordination of climate action with the Climate Action Regional Offices and local authorities to implement the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework in the development and implementation of long-term solutions and extensive adaptation measures.*
- **RPO 90 Regional Decarbonisation:** *It is an objective to develop a Regional Decarbonisation Plan to provide a framework for action on decarbonisation across all sectors. The Regional Decarbonisation Plan shall include existing and future targets for each sector and shall be prepared with key stakeholders, including the Climate Action Regional Offices, and shall identify the scope and role of the Plan, the requirements for SEA, AA and the timescale for its preparation. Implementation mechanisms and monitoring structures for the Plan should also be established.*

Section 4.9 ‘Marine and Coastal Assets’ of the RSES aims to improve economic growth through the sustainable use of its marine resource. This includes the development of marine energy projects to realise Ireland’s offshore renewable energy potential. In support of the offshore renewable energy sector the following policy objectives are included.

- **RPO 95 Sustainable Renewable Energy Generation** *It is an objective to support implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), and the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan and the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEA and AA and leverage the Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.*
- **RPO 96 Integrating Renewable Energy Sources:** *It is an objective to support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure to integrate renewable energy sources and ensure our national and regional energy system remains safe, secure and ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.*
- **RPO 100 Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection:** *It is an objective to support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection.*

The RSES also acknowledges the need to develop a strong grid to support the integration of renewable energy on to the national electricity grid. The RSES sets out a number of infrastructural RPOs, relevant to the Proposed Development which indicate that the Region is open to, and ready to invest in, renewable energy generation:

- **RPO 219 New Energy Infrastructure:** *It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.*

- **RPO 220 Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM):** It is an objective to support the Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM) as a key priority for the Region and seek the sustainable development and reinforcement of the energy grid including grid connections, transboundary networks into and through the Region and between all adjacent Regions subject to appropriate environmental assessment and planning processes.
- **RPO 221 Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Network:**
 - a. Local Authority City and County Development Plans shall support the sustainable development of renewable energy generation and demand centres such as data centres which can be serviced with a renewable energy source (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to spatially suitable locations to ensure efficient use of the existing transmission network;
 - b. The RSES supports strengthened and sustainable local/community renewable energy networks, micro renewable generation, climate smart countryside projects and connections from such initiatives to the grid. The potential for sustainable local/community energy projects and micro generation to both mitigate climate change and to reduce fuel poverty is also supported, The RSES supports the Southern Region as a Carbon Neutral Energy Region.
- **RPO 222 Electricity Infrastructure:** It is an objective to support the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and to support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity networks and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this plan under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity.

The RSES objectives above demonstrate the Region's support for the expansion and strengthening of the electricity transmission infrastructure in order to facilitate the development of the renewable energy sector. The RSES acknowledges the essential role of transmission infrastructure in order to link renewable energy generation with consumer demand. The Proposed Development's onshore grid connection infrastructure is therefore supported in principle by the SRA's RSES.

7.6

Local Planning Policy Context

Under Section 293 of the Planning Act, in making a decision on an application for development permission under Section 291, the Board should have regard to the development plan of any coastal planning authority:

“(i) within whose functional area it is proposed to carry out development to which the application relates, or

(ii) whose functional area adjoins the maritime site to which the application relates,”

The Proposed Development is located within the functional area of the Galway and Clare Coastal Planning Authorities. The Offshore Array Area (OAA) is located approximately 5km from the Galway coastline. The Offshore Export Cable (OEC) runs in a south easterly direction to the landfall point, at Killard, Co. Clare. The OEC runs from landfall to the Moneypoint Substation, Co. Clare. As such, the relevant policies and objectives of the development plans of the two relevant coastal planning authorities are outlined in the following sections.

Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (the GCDP) was adopted by the Elected Members of Galway County Council at the conclusion of the Special Meeting on the 9th of May 2022 and came into effect on the 20th of June 2022.

The policies and objectives set out within the GCDP are supportive of the development of renewable energy off the County's coastline. Climate change is emphasised as one of the greatest global challenges with Galway County Council acknowledging that continual action is needed for Galway to become a low carbon and climate resilient county. The commitment to transition to a low carbon society in line with the relevant European, national and regional policy set out above is detailed in Policy Objective CC1 – Climate Change, which is as follows:

“Support and facilitate the implementation of European, National and Regional objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures.”

The GCDP recognises that a clean and secure energy supply is essential to the future growth and sustainable development of County Galway and Ireland as a whole, which is evident in Policy Objective CC2 - Transition to a low carbon, climate-resilient society which is as follows:

“It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to support the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency.”

The production of renewable energy at appropriate levels is supported by the GCDP in order to meet the national, regional and county renewable energy targets. Policy Objective RE 1 - Renewable Energy Generation and ancillary facilities aims:

“To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation and ancillary facilities in the county to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets, to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy.”

The GCDP recognises that, due to population and economic growth, along with the electrification of various sectors, the demand for energy will increase substantially in the coming years. In order to meet electricity demand in a sustainable manner, the Council supports the sustainable growth of renewable energies. The policy objectives relating to the generation of renewable energy, applicable to the Proposed Development, are as follows:

- **RE1 - Renewable Energy Generation and ancillary facilities:** *To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation and ancillary facilities in the county to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets, to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy.*
- **RE2 - Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy:** *The policy objectives and Development Management Standards set out in the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy for County Galway shall be deemed the policy objectives and development management standards for the purpose of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.*
- **RE 5 – Renewable Energy Strategy:** *Support and facilitate the sustainable development and the use of appropriate renewable energy resources and associated infrastructure within the County having due regard to the Habitats Directive and to the detailed policy objectives and Development Standards set out in the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy.*
 - *Renewable Energy Transmission*
 - *Renewable Energy Generation*
 - *‘Strategic Areas’ for renewable energy development*
 - *Onshore Wind Energy*
 - *Solar Energy*
 - *Bioenergy/Anaerobic*
 - *Digestion*
 - *Micro-renewables*

- *Marine Renewables*
- *Hydro Energy*
- *Geothermal Energy*
- *Alternative Technologies*
- *Energy Efficiency & Conservation*
- *Sustainable Transport*
- *Auto production*
- *Battery Storage*
- *Repowering/Renewing Wind Energy Developments*
- *Community Ownership*
- **RE 7 - Renewable Energy Generation - Transition to a Low Carbon Economy:** *To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation in County Galway, considering the need to transition to a low carbon economy and to reduce dependency on fossil fuels.*

Most relevant to the Proposed Development are the marine policies of the GCDP. The GCDP supports the development of offshore renewable energy off the coast of Galway subject to environmental and amenity considerations. The development of the maritime economy and the necessary infrastructure, i.e. ports and harbours, required to facilitate the maritime economy is also afforded the Council's support. The policy objectives relating to the development of offshore renewable energy development are provided below:

- **MRE 1 Renewable Energy**
Support as appropriate, sustainable offshore renewable energy generation off the County Galway coast subject to environmental and amenity considerations.
- **MCE 1 - Maritime Economy:**
Support development and growth of the maritime economy and balance the competing demands for available space along the coast by different users and encourage co-location and co-existence of activities and infrastructure while having regard to appropriate environmental considerations.
- **SMT 1 - Marine Potential**
Support the marine potential of the county's piers and harbours and related infrastructure and other appropriate marine related development and support the sustainable development of this infrastructure to enable the marine economy to develop.

The GCDP includes other policies and objectives relating to Climate Change, Renewable Energy, marine and Coastal Management, Natural Heritage and Biodiversity, Tourism, Landscape, Archaeology, An Gaeltacht, and other areas relevant to the Proposed Development. A statement of consistency is provided in Appendix 2 of this Planning Report. The statement of consistency demonstrates compliance with all of the GCDP policies/objectives that are relevant to the Proposed Development. In conclusion, it is considered that the Proposed Wind Farm is in compliance with all the relevant policies set out in the GCDP and is therefore in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Galway County Council's Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy

County Galway's Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) is included as Appendix 1 of the GCDP. The LARES for Galway sets out guidance designed to allow County Galway to contribute to meeting national, legally binding renewable energy and climate targets. The vision as outlined in the LARES is as follows:

"To facilitate and encourage renewable energy generation and a low carbon energy transition across County Galway, in the interests of future generations, through the application of energy efficient technology and the harnessing of indigenous renewable energy resources, whilst respecting the need to conserve areas of environmental, cultural and economic value."

The LARES acknowledges the vast potential for the development of renewable energy of the Galway coastline. This includes the development of offshore wind energy, tidal, wave, and ocean thermocline energy. The LARES also recognises the need for the development of onshore infrastructure that will allow the marine renewables sector to develop. The LARES includes consideration for land-based infrastructure such as the transmission network and port infrastructure to facilitate maintenance and repair in Ros an Mhíl and the Port of Galway. The LARES also acknowledges the findings of the OREDP, it states the following:

“It is evidenced by the [OREDPA] 2014 which identifies Area 5 (the area in which County Galway is located) as an area with a marine renewable potential of 18,500- 19,500 Megawatts (MW). Given the technological improvements that have occurred in the marine renewables industry since 2014, it is likely that this is an underestimation of the actual marine renewable potential for this area.”

It is noted within the LARES that Galway County Council cannot actively develop marine renewables in the marine areas because the *“the County’s jurisdiction ends at the High Water Mark”*. This would suggest that the mapping and development management standards within the LARES is only applicable to terrestrial renewable energy projects and not the proposed Offshore Site, which, at the time of drafting of the LARES, was located outside the functional area of Galway County Council. This point is reiterated again in the Council’s estimation of potential renewable energy contributions in County Galway by 2030 (Table 12, pg. 78). Under offshore wind energy, no estimated MW contribution is made, and it is stated that this is due the fact that *‘this (renewable energy type) lies outside the jurisdiction of GCC’*.

However, Appendix E (Informative Maps) of the LARES does include offshore characteristics on the sieve mapping analysis including bathymetry, wind speed, and ecologically designated sites which appear to inform Map 13 of the LARES (Wind Potential). On the wind potential map, the vast majority of the OAA is located within an area classified as *‘Open to Consideration’*. The wind energy classification of the offshore area appears to directly correlate to the Bathymetry and Natura 2000 sites maps set out in Appendix E of the LARES, reproduced in Figure 7-3 and Figure 7-4 below for ease of reference. The wind energy classification at the OAA is based on the bathymetry of the maritime area off the Co. Galway coast. The maritime area where water depth is greater than 60m are considered to be *‘Generally to be Discouraged’* while the maritime area that is between below 60m and are outside of Figure 7-5 below shows the LARES Wind Potential map with the Offshore Site overlaid.

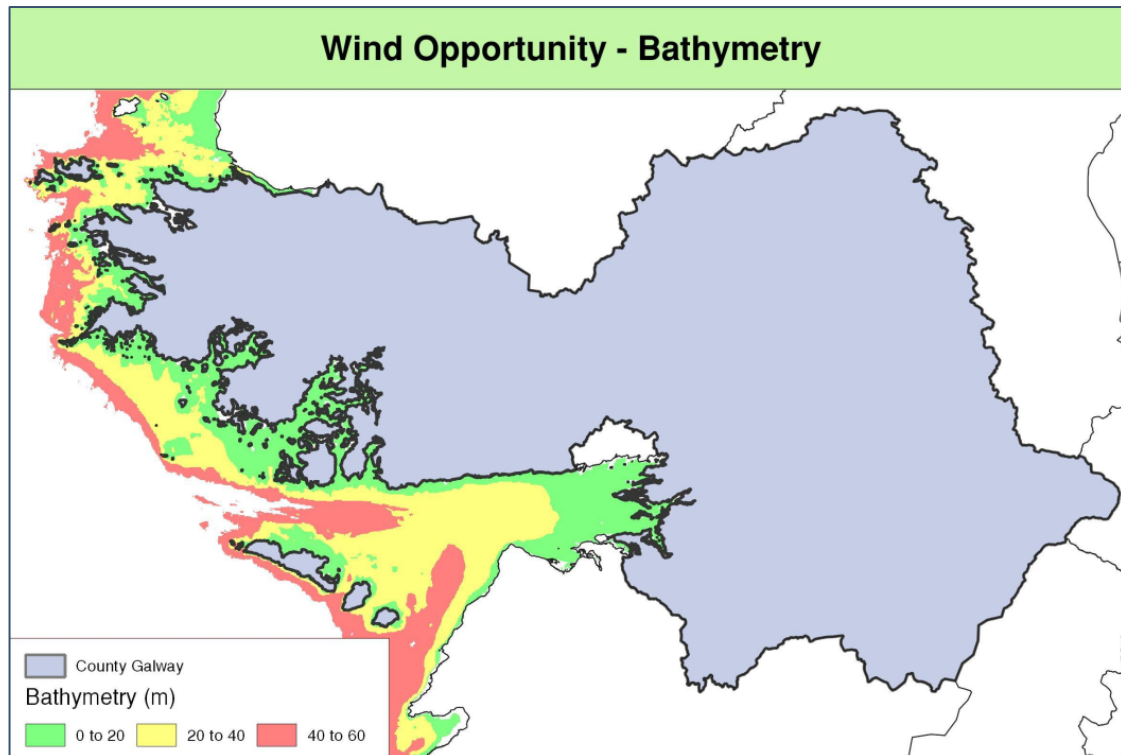


Figure 7-3: Wind Opportunity Bathymetry Map (GCC LARES, Appendix E)

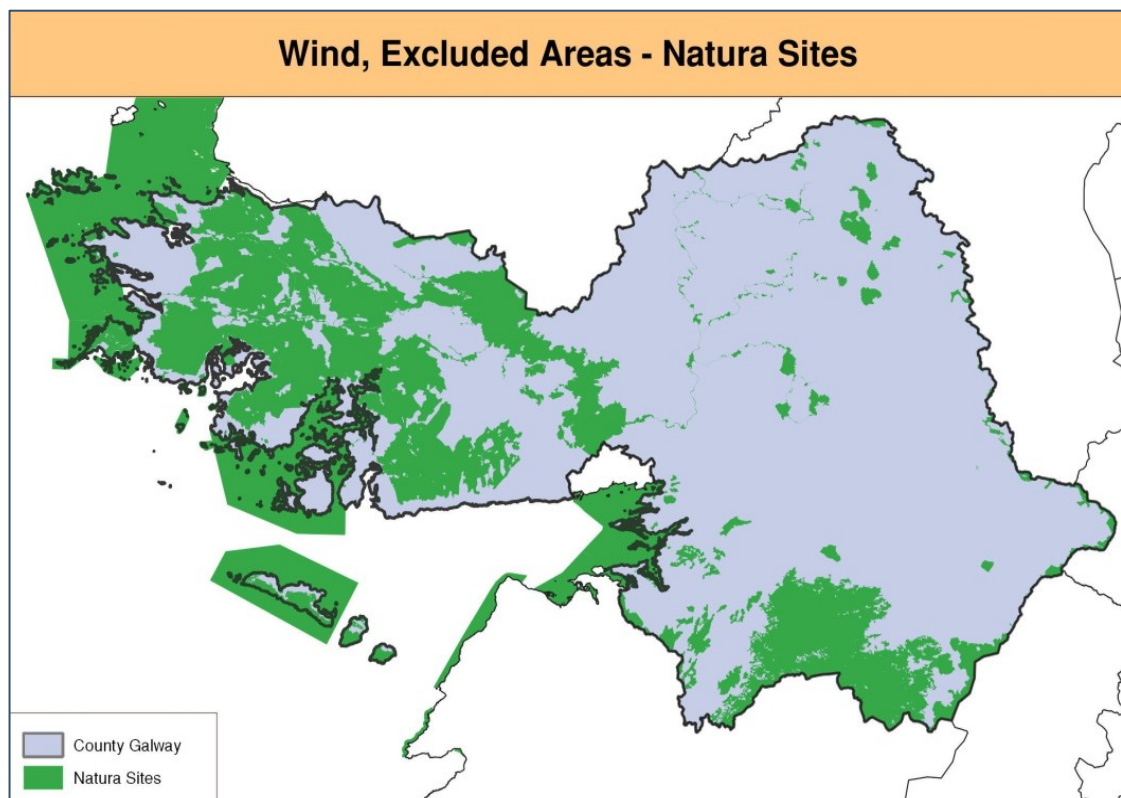


Figure 7-4: Excluded Natura 2000 Sites (GCC LARES, Appendix E)

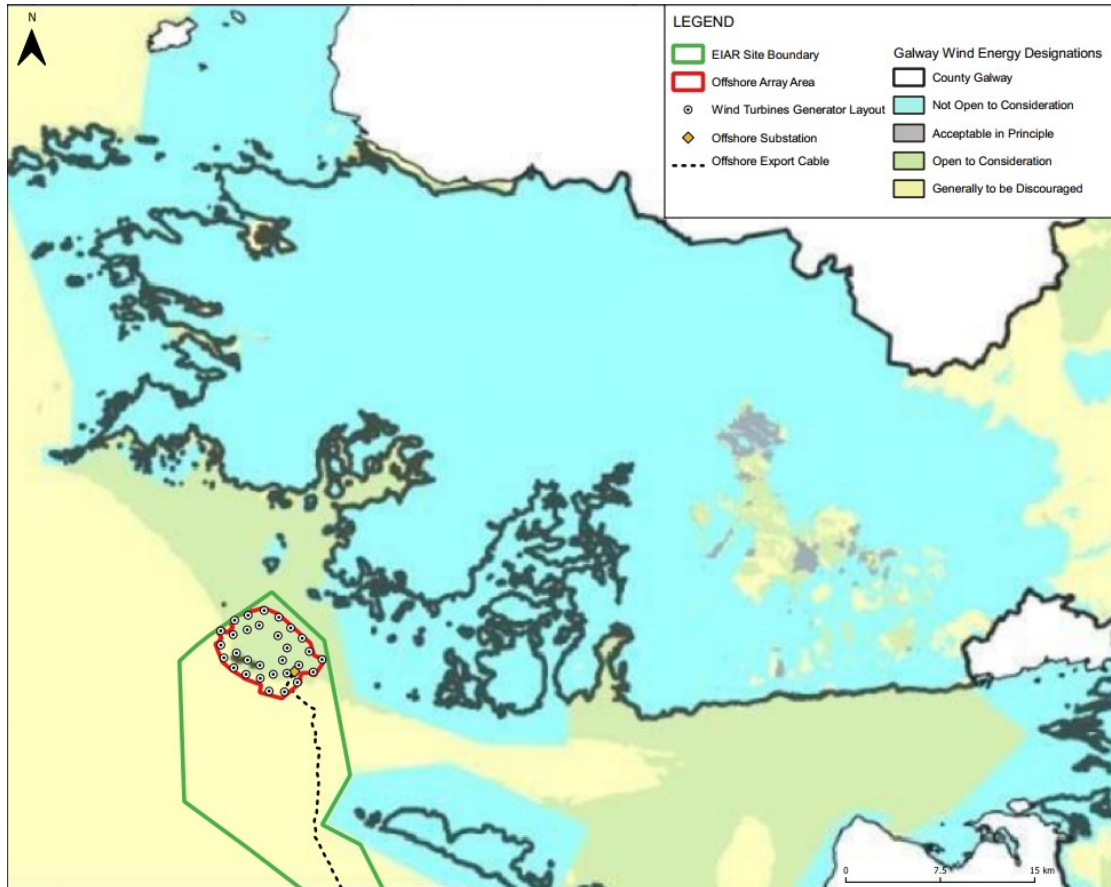


Figure 7-5: Offshore Site overlaid on LARES Wind Potential Map

The LARES supports the development of marine renewable energy and its associated onshore infrastructure in a sustainable manner. The LARES includes three policy objectives in relation to the Marine Renewables, as set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7-4: LARES Marine Policy Objectives

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| LARES Policy Objective 29 | <i>“Marine Renewable Energy: Support the ambition to harness our ocean wealth in a sustainable manner and to engage with all relevant coastal and marine stakeholders.”</i> |
| LARES Policy Objective 30 | <i>“Supporting Infrastructure: Strategically located port facilities and land- based supporting infrastructure will be facilitated where appropriate, and in accordance with the LARES and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.”</i> |
| LARES Policy Objective 31 | <i>“Protection of Marine Environment: Onshore marine renewable infrastructure will generally be discouraged in areas of high ecological and environmental value in recognition of the ecosystem services derived from such natural capital.”</i> |

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the Proposed Development is consistent with the LARES and that the LARES for Galway is supportive of the Proposed Development in principle.

Galway County Council Landscape Policy

Galway County Council have prepared a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) that is contained in *Appendix 4* of the GCDP. This Landscape Character Assessment categorises Galway County into different Landscape Character Types (LCTs). The proposed turbines are located within Coastal Landscape.

Within the LCTs, County Galway is further divided into Landscape Character Units (LCUs). The Proposed Wind Farm is located in Connemara Coastal Islands. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) also identifies protected views and scenic routes “*of great natural beauty located across the county*”.

At a high level, County Galway is divided into 4 landscape regions, the West Galway Region, the Eastern Plains, the South Galway Region and the Coast, under which the Proposed Development falls. The Coast Region covers the islands and coastal waters of Galway. Areas of coastal water derive their character from their proximity and interactions with terrestrial areas. The Coast Region, its features and its interaction with the land is set out under the ‘Seascapes’ section of the LCA.

A ‘seascape’ as defined by the LCA is *‘the coastal landscape and adjoining areas of open water, including views from land to sea, from sea to land and along the coastline’*. Seascapes are made up of 5 main types, depending on the relationship between the land and sea. These seascape types are as follows:

Table 7-5: LCA Seascape Types and Definitions

| Seascape Type | Description |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Fully Enclosed Coast</i> | <i>“This Seascape type includes shorelines that are adjacent to marine or transitional water but have no view of the ocean horizon. Landscape Character of adjoining lands will be dominant. Sea loughs are common throughout Atlantic Galway.”</i> |
| <i>Semi-enclosed Coast</i> | <i>“This Seascape type includes shorelines that are adjacent to marine or transitional water which have no more than a 50% view ocean horizon.”</i> |
| <i>Open Coast</i> | <i>“This Seascape type includes all sea areas for a distance of up to 5km off shore with a view which is at least 50% ocean horizon. Views from these waters will feel that the land is the dominant feature.”</i> |
| <i>Offshore</i> | <i>“This Seascape type includes all water between the edge of the Open Coastal Waters boundary (5km from the shore) and the Open Sea boundary (20km from the shore). Views from these waters will feel that the sea is the dominant feature.”</i> |
| <i>Open Sea</i> | <i>This is the largest Seascape type, it includes all waters that are beyond sight of land, i.e. areas from where no land is visible. Such areas are unoccupied and largely un-used except for intermittent transits by vessels, and aircraft. Visible wildlife mainly consists mainly of seabirds and occasional cetaceans.</i> |

The Proposed Development’s OAA is located between 5 km and 11.5 km off the Galway coast and is therefore located in the ‘Offshore’ seascape type. Each seascape type is assigned a ‘*seascape sensitivity*’. The offshore seascape type is not prescribed any sensitivity in the LCA, suggesting that development in the offshore seascape it is less affected by visual impacts due to its distance from land receptors.

The terrestrial LCT most relevant to the Proposed Development are the ‘Coastal Landscape’ covering the Connemara coastline and northern side of Galway Bay with the ‘Uplands and Bog Landscape’ further inland. The other relevant LCT is ‘Island Landscape’ covering the Aran Islands. The most relevant landscape objectives and policies relating to the terrestrial LCT’s are provided in the table below.

Table 7-6: Terrestrial LCT Policies and Objectives

| Policy Objective | Description |
|---|--|
| LCM 1 - Preservation of Landscape Character | <i>Preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation and enhancement, where possible of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.</i> |
| LCM 2 - Landscape Sensitivity Classification | <i>The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.</i> |
| LCM 3 - Landscape Sensitivity Ratings | <i>Consideration of landscape sensitivity ratings shall be an important factor in determining development uses in areas of the County. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations</i> |
| PVSR 1 – Protected Views and Scenic Routes | <i>Preserve the protected views and scenic routes as detailed in Maps 8.3 and 8.4 from development that in the view of the Planning Authority would negatively impact on said protected views and scenic routes. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.</i> |

It should be noted that under LCM 2 and PVSR 1, the GCDP notes that the implementation of these policies and objectives ‘shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan’. The key strategic aims relevant in this regard are outlined in *Chapter 14 - Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource* of the GCDP are as follows:

- ‘To reduce the County’s CO₂ emissions by achieving international, national, regional and any local targets for achieving a low carbon economy by 2050; and increase energy efficiency in Local Authority activities through its development management functions’
- ‘To reduce County Galway’s dependency on imported fossil fuels and to provide alternative energy sources by harnessing the County’s potential for renewable energy sources while strengthening the grid transmission networks’

The achievement of the strategic aims above are dependent on the development of renewable energy projects. Local and national level renewable energy policy should therefore be considered when balancing the landscape and visual impact and the strategic need for renewable energy development.

It is worth noting that in *Nagle View Turbine Aware Group v. An Bord Pleanála* (and subsequently referenced with approval in *Coolglass Windfarm Limited -v- An Bord Pleanála* High Court [2025] IEHC 1), the judgement approved of the Board Inspector’s report in that case which concluded with the “compelling and obvious point” that:

*“While it is noted that many of the submissions reference their agreement in principle in respect of merits of renewable energy, there is resistance to the location of such a proposal within the locality for the range of reasons outlined in the summary of submissions received above. In order to address Climate Change, I would suggest that other elements of our environment and the context within which the environment is perceived must also change. This includes in particular the visual context of an area which cannot be expected to remain unchanged in perpetuity but particularly within the context of a climate emergency.”*²²

²² [2024] IEHC 603

The LCA also sets out the ‘Protected Views’ and the ‘Scenic Routes’ in County Galway.

Please refer to Chapter 16, which provides Seascape / Landscape Visual Impact Assessment of the offshore elements of the Proposed Development and to Chapter 27 of the EIAR, which provides a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the onshore elements of the Proposed Development, both of which are prepared by Macroworks. Refer also to Volume 2 of the EIAR which consists of a detailed suite of photomontages.

County Galway Tourism Strategy 23-31

The County Galway Tourism Strategy provides a framework for the development of sustainable tourism across County Galway. The strategy is built around 4 strategic focus areas which are outlined below.

1. Destination Management
2. Experience Development
3. Capacity and Skills Development
4. Marketing and Communications

The delivery of the Strategy will be guided by 10 key principles to ensure that actions as a result of the strategy are sustainable. Relevant to the Proposed Development is Principle 3, which states:

‘Prioritising the goal of fully sustainable tourism and aligning with national and local Climate Action Plans’

Six development zones have also been identified, based on the maturity, sustainability, assets and industry and community capacity. The Proposed Development straddles the boundary of Zone 5, the ‘South Conamara Gaeltacht’ and Zone 6, ‘West Connemara’. Zone 5 and 6 are both considered to be a ‘Progressing Destination’, while certain areas of Zones 5 and 6 are acknowledged for their well-developed tourism industry, such as the Aran Islands and Clifden.



Figure 7-6: Zone 5 - South Conamara Gaeltacht (County Galway Tourism Strategy 23-31)

The actions below, set out in the Strategy, are relevant to the area of the coastline off which the Proposed Development is located.

Action 4.4: Support Fáilte Ireland in the delivery of a new Wild Atlantic Way Coastal Path

Action 13.1: Support Údarás in reviewing opportunity for new attractor in Ceantar na nOileán and support additional marketing.

Action 16.6: Review opportunities for a coastal Blueway

Action 16.7: Explore potential to develop ‘welcome scheme’ for walkers and cyclists along Greenways, Blueways and trails (Towns considered includes Carna)

Action 16.8: Explore feasibility of Greenway spurs Derrygimlagh to Kylemore and to Carna / south Connemara coast

A Tourism Impact Assessment was undertaken by Repucon Consulting and is provided in Appendix 6-1 of the EIAR. 85% of visitors surveyed indicated that the presence of an offshore wind farm would not prevent them from considering Connemara as a place to visit. The Tourism Impact Assessment states that, overall, the international research combined with the local consultations and visitor sentiment would suggest the tourism performance of south Connemara will not be affected with no adverse tourism impact in the short to long term. Tourism industry and community feedback, specific to the likely tourism impact, recognise the tourism development opportunity it represents for the area.

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Clare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029, here after referred to as the CCDP, sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Clare over a 6-year period. The CCDP 2023-2029 was adopted on the 9th March 2023, and came into effect 6 weeks later on the 20th April 2023. The CCDP provides overall guidance for the proper planning and development of County Clare through policies and objectives.

The strategic vision of the CDP is underpinned by 20 no. key goals, the most applicable to the Proposed Development being Goal 1, as follows:

Goal I: *A county that is resilient to climate change, plans for and adapts to climate change and flood risk, is the national leader in renewable energy generation, facilitates a low carbon future, supports energy efficiency and conservation and enables the decarbonisation of our lifestyles and economy.*

More specific to the Proposed Development, the CCDP includes policies and objectives which directly support the development of offshore wind energy, and the associated land-based infrastructure required to facilitate offshore projects. The most relevant policies are outlined below.

CDP13.5 :

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- c) *To support offshore wind, wave and tidal renewable energy developments and the ancillary land-based infrastructure and service requirements to assist in meeting renewable energy targets subject to environmental considerations and the protection of the amenities of the surrounding areas in accordance with the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED), the ORE Planning policies as outlined in the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and SIFP SEA Environmental Reports and the Natura Impact Reports; and*
- d) *To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub and the development of the Shannon Estuary as a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.*

CDP13.3:

It is an objective of the Development Plan:

- a) *To ensure consistency and alignment between land based spatial planning and marine planning which supports the protection of the marine environment and the growth of the marine economy;*
- b) *To support appropriate land-based infrastructure which facilitates marine activity (and vice versa).*
- c) *To support proposals for appropriate infrastructure that facilitates the diversification or regeneration of marine industries.*
- d) *To ensure all new activities/developments are consistent with the policies of the National Marine Planning Framework.*
- e) *To promote the development of a research driven marine cluster in the County to support development of Marine ICT and Biotechnology.*

The 220kV onshore grid connection is located in County Clare. As such, Clare County Council's policies and objectives with regard to the provision of grid connections are relevant to the Proposed Development.

CDP11.45 – Grid Connection

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- (a) *To facilitate improvements in energy infrastructure and encourage the expansion of the infrastructure within the County.*
- (b) *To facilitate future alternative renewable energy developments and associated utility infrastructure throughout the County;*
- (c) *To support the Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM) as a key priority for the Southern Region and the sustainable development and reinforcement of the energy grid including grid connections, transboundary networks into and through County Clare subject to appropriate environmental assessment and planning processes;*
- (d) *To collaborate with EirGrid to facilitate the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity, enhanced electricity networks and new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Plan under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process);*
- (e) *To collaborate with EirGrid over the lifetime of the plan to ensure that the County's minimum target of 1,167MW of renewable energy generation is achieved and can be accommodated on the electricity network in County Clare; and*
- (f) *To have regard to environmental and visual considerations in the assessment of developments of this nature and ensure compliance with the environmental requirements of Objective CDP3.3 of this plan.*

The CCDP also includes policies and objectives relating to Climate Change, Renewable Energy, Energy Supply, Energy Security, Environmental Assessment and Strategic Development which are relevant to the Proposed Development. A statement of consistency is provided in Appendix 2 of this Planning Report. The statement of consistency demonstrates compliance with all of the CCDP policies/objectives that are relevant to the Proposed Development. In conclusion, it is considered that the Proposed Development is in compliance with all the relevant policies set out in the CCDP and is therefore in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Clare Renewable Energy Strategy

The Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) is included in Volume 5 of the CCDP. The RES vision is to position County Clare as the “*national leader in renewable energy generation which supports energy efficiency and conservation, and which achieves balanced social and economic development throughout the County and assists in achieving national climate change mitigation targets.*”

The RES primarily focuses on putting a framework in place to guide the development of onshore renewable energy projects, however it does include a chapter that deals with marine renewables. The aim of the Marine Renewables chapter is to profile offshore renewable energy types, clarify Clare County Council's role in relation to the development of the industry, and to set out the policies and objectives to assist the development of the industry.

The role of Clare County Council is primarily related to the onshore elements of offshore renewable energy projects, as the Council's jurisdiction only extends as far as the nearshore area. The RES recognises the crucial nature of this role for the development of the marine renewables sector. With this considered the RES sets out the following objectives and targets:

RES 9.1 Support the National Marine Planning Framework

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To implement and support the streamlined consent system, connection arrangements, and the funding supports for new technologies offshore.*
- b) To promote regional cooperation in terms of offshore renewable energy development, environmental monitoring and awareness of the benefits of realising the Regions' offshore energy potential.*

RES 9.2 Facilitate the development of Marine Renewables

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To support the ocean energy research, development and demonstration pathway for emerging marine technologies (wave, tidal, floating wind) and associated test infrastructure.*
- b) To support the sustainable development of offshore wind energy at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure.*
- c) To maximise the opportunities provided by the Shannon Estuary's strategic location and its' deep water for marine renewable energy development.*

RES 9.3 Strategic Marine Energy Infrastructural Development

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To work in partnership with the marine renewable energy sector (wave, tidal and offshore), DECC, EirGrid and other relevant stakeholders to deliver the key actions recommended by the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA) and DS3 Programme, ensuring that electricity generated off the coast of County Clare can be exported to the demand market subject to the requirements of all environmental DS3 Programme, ensuring that electricity generated off the coast of County Clare can be exported to the demand market subject to the requirements of all environmental legislation, and taking into account the OREDPA SEA Environmental Report and the Natura Impact Report.*
- b) To support the strengthening of the electricity grid to accommodate offshore renewable energy and its connection to the national grid.*
- c) To enable facilities on shore to convert renewable energy generated offshore to be transformed, stored, converted and transported effectively.*

RES 9.4 Marine Energy Service and Port Infrastructure

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) *To actively explore and pursue opportunities to service the marine renewable energy sector at existing ports, to facilitate the growth of new ports, supporting infrastructure and associated development, in compliance with the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary and any future coastal zone management plans.*
- b) *To facilitate the expansion of ports and provision of additional quayside harbour working areas and/or additional quay length to further enhance their attractiveness to marine renewable industry developers.*

RES 9.6 Forward Planning for Offshore Energy

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

To carry out feasibility studies and other forward planning initiatives to enable offshore renewable energy to develop while protecting the environment, maximising local economic and social benefit, and enabling efficient development of supporting infrastructure. This will be done in co-operation with relevant government departments and public agencies.

The onshore infrastructure of the Proposed Development is directly supported by the policies and objectives of the RES. In particular, the Proposed Development is supported by RES 9.2 (b) and RES 9.3 (b) and (c). The Onshore Compensation Compound is appropriately located on lands near to the Moneypoint Substation.

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

8.1 Strategic Need for the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is of national strategic importance. As demonstrated in Section 3.2, the overarching need for the Proposed Development is driven by climate and renewable energy policy at all levels. The main factors driving the need for the Proposed Development are outlined below.

Contribution to Energy and Climate Targets: Under the Climate Act, Ireland has committed to a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050, and a reduction of 51% by 2030. To achieve this, the electricity sector has been assigned the target of achieving an 80% share of renewable electricity by 2030. Central to achieving this target is the development of the offshore wind energy sector, which has a target of 5GW by 2030 under the CAP 24. If these renewable energy targets are not met, Ireland will not reach an 80% share of renewable electricity by 2030 and will exceed carbon budgets.

Balanced Regional Development: As the only ‘Phase 1’ offshore wind energy project off the west coast of Ireland, the Proposed Development represents an opportunity to ensure that the economic and social benefits of offshore wind energy are available to coastal communities on the west coast. The Proposed Development will ensure that the energy transition is regionally balanced.

Energy Security: Ireland’s heavy reliance on imported energy, which accounted for 82% of its needs in 2022, exposes the country to economic, trade, geopolitical, and environmental risks. To address these challenges, the Irish Government published the National Energy Security Framework aiming to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and accelerate the transition to renewable energy. The Proposed Development, if consented, will boost the country’s ability to produce its own electricity, reducing the need to import electricity and fossil fuels for electricity from abroad.

Economic and Social Benefits: The Proposed Development represents a significant initial capital investment of c. €1.4 billion euro in the western region. The Proposed Development will create significant employment opportunities both long-term and short-term through the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. As set out in the Economic Impact Assessment (Appendix 6-2 of the EIAR), during the lifetime of the Proposed Development, it is expected that c. €2.4 billion will be spent on the development, construction, operation and decommissioning. Companies and organisations in Co. Galway are estimated to be awarded contracts worth approx. €430 million, the Atlantic Region €587 million, and nationally €708 million. In an average year, the operational expenditure is expected to be support:

- › 80 jobs and €3 million GVA per annum in County Galway;
- › 110 jobs and €5 million GVA per annum in the Atlantic Region; and
- › 130 jobs and €8 million GVA per annum in Ireland.

The Proposed Development will be subject to community benefit fund requirements of the ORESS, which will see approximately €3.5 million of funding annually over 20 years. The economic and social cost of inaction on climate targets must also be considered, with the cumulative cost of non-compliance with climate targets by 2030 being potentially up to €8 billion²³.

²³ Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2024, pg 4
<https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/AR2024-Cross-sectoral-Review-FINAL.pdf>

8.2 Compliance with Legislation

This application for development permission has been prepared in accordance with the MAP Act and the Planning Act. Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála was undertaken in accordance with Section 287 and the application has been prepared in accordance with the requirements for an application under 291, including the pre-requisite of the obtaining a MAC (2022-MAC-007).

The Proposed Development is also consistent with the Climate Act and the legal requirement for the State to achieve a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030.

The application for development permission is accompanied by an EIAR and an AA Screening Report and an NIS in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act and the Planning Regulations.

8.3 Compliance with Policy

The Proposed Development, as demonstrated by the previous sections and summarised below, is in accordance with and strongly supported by planning, renewable energy, and climate policy at all levels.

Compliance with European Policy

The Proposed Development is considered to be fully in accordance with the above-mentioned EU Policy targets. An EU wide binding target of 42.5% renewable energy by 2030 could be achieved by the implementation of the Proposed Development and other similar projects. Reaching 42.5% target is dependent on the offshore wind energy sector and its contribution to Europe's renewable energy supply. Currently, there is commitment from EU member states to reach an installed capacity of 111GW, the Proposed Development will directly contribute towards meeting this commitment.

The RePowerEU plan aims to increase energy security within the EU and increase the share of renewable energy onto the EU electricity grid. A part of this plan includes *'Speeding up renewables permitting to minimise the time for roll-out of renewable projects and grid infrastructure improvements'*.

Under RED III Article 16f, the presumption of overriding public interest applies to renewable energy projects until climate neutrality is achieved. Article 3(2) of Reg 2022/2577 as amended by Reg 2024/223 states that, *"Member States shall ensure, for projects which are recognised as being of overriding public interest, that in the planning and permit-granting process, the construction and operation of plants and installations for the production of energy from renewable sources and the related grid infrastructure development are given priority when balancing legal interests in the individual case."*

Having regard to the policies and legislation set out above, it is considered that the Proposed Development is strongly supported by and supports the achievement of EU policy.

Compliance with National Policy

With regard to the policies set out in this Planning Report, it is considered that the Proposed Development is in compliance with and supported by the NMPF and the OREDP. The Proposed Development is also in compliance with the NPF and the NDP 2021-2030, as it will contribute to the delivery of renewable energy, economic activity and rural enterprise.

According to ORE Policy 2 of the NMPF, all proposals must adhere to the OREDP. The Proposed Development is in compliance with the policies of the OREDP, which outlines that the west coast is capable of accommodating 500MW of fixed bottom offshore wind energy without causing a likely significant adverse effect on the environment. Furthermore, ORE Policy 2 of the NMPF explicitly supports the timely assessment of 'Relevant Projects' designated under the Transition Protocol.

The addition of 30 no. WTGs, with a Maximum Export Capacity of 450MW, will make a significant contribution to Ireland's national renewable energy targets and support the country in meeting its carbon emission reduction goals. In this regard, the Proposed Development is directly supported by the offshore wind energy target of 5GW by 2030 in CAP 24. The NPF and the NDP are clear in their commitment to support the transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient society. The Proposed Development, if permitted, will provide clean, renewable electricity to the national grid, furthering development objectives of the NPF and the NDP, namely the target to increase the share of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030 and the exploitation of Ireland's offshore wind energy resource.

Compliance with Regional Policy

The RSES for the Northern and Western Region states that the region has a crucial role to play in Ireland's transition to a low carbon future. It is considered that the provision of the Proposed Development would facilitate this just transition and is particularly in line with RPO 4.19 and 4.33 as outlined above. The vast renewable resource of the north and west coast of Ireland and the associated economic and social opportunities are recognised by the RSES. As the only Phase 1 project in the region, the Proposed Development represents the largest investment in renewable energy to date and therefore the Proposed Development is considered to be in line with Regional Policy which, in turn, supports the achievement of the OREDP.

The RSES for the Southern Region includes similar support for offshore wind development and the connection of renewable energy projects to the electricity grid within the Southern Region. The Proposed Development will assist in meeting the climate goals set out in the RSES by facilitating the transition to a low carbon society.

Compliance with Local Policy

The Proposed Development is in compliance with the policy objectives of the GCDP. First and foremost, the GCDP aims to transition to a low-carbon society through the implementation and facilitation of European, national and regional plans and policies. The Proposed Development will generate approximately 450MW of clean, renewable energy contributing towards a clean energy future for County Galway and Ireland as a whole. The principle of renewable energy in the marine area is supported by policy objective MRE 1 and by LARES Policy Objective 29. The GCDP also includes policy support for the associated infrastructure necessary to facilitate the development of marine renewables, namely policy objective SMT 1 - Marine Potential and LARES Policy Objective 30.

The Proposed Development is in compliance with and strongly supported by the policy objectives of the CCDP. County Clare's ambition to become a '*national leader in renewable energy generation*' demonstrates clear ambition and support for the facilitation of renewable energy projects in the County. Offshore renewable energy developments and their associated land-based infrastructure are supported by policy objective 'CDP 13.5 - Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Development'. Moneypoint is identified by the CCDP for development as a green infrastructure hub, with specific support for marine related industry on lands adjacent to Moneypoint. With the above policies considered, it is evident that the Proposed Development is supported by the policy objectives in the CCDP.

ElAR Findings

The purpose of the ElAR is to document the current state of the environment on and in the vicinity of the Site and to quantify the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment. The preparation of the ElAR document served to highlight any areas where mitigation measures may be necessary in order to protect the surrounding environment from the possibility of any significant effects arising from the Proposed Development.

The findings of the EIAR and the mitigation measures set out within the documents demonstrates the Proposed Development will be capable of being constructed, operated and decommissioned without likely significant effects on the environment generally.

8.5 NIS Findings

This NIS (Volumes 1 and 2) has assessed the impacts of the construction, operations and maintenance and decommissioning of the Project on European Sites and their relevant QI to determine whether the Project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and in light of the conservation objectives of the sites. The assessment concluded that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, either as a result of the Project alone or in combination with other plans or projects, provided that the mitigation listed is adhered to.

Therefore, it can be objectively concluded, following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion

8.6 Principle of Development

As seen from the policy provisions outlined in Section 8.3 above, it is clear that there is a positive presumption in favour of offshore renewable energy projects at national, regional and local levels. The Proposed Development is of national strategic importance, this is reflected in national marine planning documents, which support the principle of developing offshore wind energy in Irish waters. In terms of the principle of development at this location, the west coast (assessment area 5) is identified in the OREDP as being capable of accommodating 500MW of fixed bottom offshore wind energy without causing a likely significant adverse effect on the environment. ORE Policy 1 & 2 of the NMPF supports proposals that assist the State in meeting the 5GW offshore wind energy target and proposals that are in consistent with national policy and the OREDP.

As concluded in EIAR outlined in Section 8.4 above, key matters such as residential amenity, landscape and visual impacts, tourism and recreation, marine ecology, and fishing and aquaculture have all been thoroughly assessed, and with the mitigation measures outlined in the EIAR in place the Proposed Development will be capable of being constructed, operated and decommissioned without likely significant effects on the environment generally.

Similarly, as concluded in the NIS as set out in Section 8.5 above, all potential effects have been mitigated to the extent that there is no potential for adverse effects on the integrity of any European Site, as a result of the effects of the Project.

CONCLUSION

The provision of the Proposed Development is strongly supported by International, National, Regional and local policies aimed at achieving the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy, increasing renewable energy generation, and enhancing energy security. Specifically, the Proposed Development will contribute to achieving the State's target of generating 5GW of electricity from offshore wind and reducing GHG emissions by 80% by 2030 as set out in the CAP24. Achieving the 5GW target by 2030 depends on the success of the Proposed Development, along with the other 'Phase 1' offshore wind energy projects, as no other offshore wind developments are sufficiently advanced to be permitted, constructed, and operational by the end of the decade.

Under Section 293 of the Planning Act, the Board must have regard to the following policy documents, when making a decision on an application under Section 291, including *inter alia*:

- **Marine planning policy statement:**
The MPPS supports the establishment of a marine planning system and the development of offshore wind energy subject to proper marine spatial planning.
- **National Marine Planning Framework:**
The Proposed Development is supported by ORE Policy 1 & 2, full compliance is demonstrated in the NMPF Compliance Table (appendix 1 of this Report).
- **The Northern and Western RSES:**
The Proposed Development is supported, in particular, by RPO 4.19 and RPO 4.33.
- **The Southern RSES:**
The Proposed Development is supported, in particular, by RPO 85, RPO 95 and RPO 95.
- **Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028:**
The Proposed Development is supported by policy objectives MRE 1 and MCE 1. Full compliance with GCDP policy is demonstrated in the GCDP Table in appendix 2.
- **Clare County Development Plan 2023- 2029:**
The Proposed Development is supported by policy objective CDP13.5. Full compliance with CCDP policy is demonstrated in the CCDP Table in appendix 2.

Under the Climate and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, public bodies, including An Bord Pleanála, must carry out its functions, in so far as practicable, in a “manner consistent with” the latest Climate Action Plan (CAP 24), the National Adaptation Framework and its associated Electricity and Gas Networks Sectoral Adaptation Plan, and the furtherance of the national climate objective. Therefore, in making their decision on this application, the Board must make their decision in accordance with CAP 24 and all other climate related policy, in so far as practicable.

The Proposed Development is supported and in compliance with the OREDP. The Proposed Development is located in Assessment Area 5 – West Coast. Assessment Area 5 is identified as having the capacity to house 500MW of fixed bottom offshore wind energy without likely significant adverse effect on the environment. The project level mitigation measures set out in the OREDP have been thoroughly considered when determining the necessary mitigation for the Proposed Development.

It is acknowledged that, as a significant infrastructure project, the Proposed Development will have an impact on the receiving environment in which it is proposed. The application for the Proposed Development recognises the parallel interests of tackling climate change while aiming to safeguard residential and coastal amenity and to protect species and habitats. Consideration of this fact has been to forefront of the Proposed Development's design and the preparation of the EIAR, the NIS, and the mitigation measures proposed. The EIAR demonstrates that, if consented, the Proposed Development will be capable of being constructed, operated and decommissioned without causing a significant adverse impact on the environment.

Ultimately, it is considered that this Proposed Development is in accordance with the provisions of proper planning and sustainable development and should be granted planning permission owing to the suitability

of the site and the urgent need for renewable energy development of this scale. National climate and renewable energy objectives, and the decarbonisation of Irish society as a whole is dependent on the rapid expansion of offshore wind energy in Ireland. The scale of the challenge we face to decarbonise the Irish economy is enormous, but the climate change implications of not doing so are even greater. The best and only way to decarbonise a modern society given the scale of the challenge of climate change is through large-scale renewable energy project such as the Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm.

Having regard to the key points set out in this Planning Report, it is respectfully requested that the Board consider the relevant planning context that applies, and grant permission for the Proposed Development which is the subject of this application.

PLANNING REPORT

APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL MARINE PLANNING FRAMEWORK COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT



1.

INTRODUCTION

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) was published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in 2021. The NMPF sets out core principles to inform evolving marine planning and development management processes. The NMPF includes overarching marine planning policies along with sectoral marine planning policies.

Table 1-1 below sets out the marine planning policies contained in the NMPF and provides a description of how the Project complies with each policy, including reference to where the policy is addressed in the application, where relevant.

Table 1-1: Project compliance with the National Marine Planning Framework overarching marine policies.

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
| Environmental – Ocean Health | Environmental – Ocean Health | <p><i>Ocean Health Policy 1:</i> <i>Compliance with NMPF policies relating to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Biodiversity</i> <i>Non-Indigenous Species</i> <i>Water Quality</i> <i>Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity</i> <i>Marine litter</i> <i>Underwater Noise</i> <p><i>should include demonstration of contribution to the relevant Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) targets identified.</i></p> | <p>The Project has been designed to ensure that the overall health of the ocean is not adversely impacted upon during the construction, operational or decommissioning phase of the Project. Compliance with Ocean Health Policy 1 is outlined below, with further detail in relation to each topic provided under the relevant NMPF policies addressed within this document (<i>Biodiversity Policy 1-4, Non-Indigenous Species Policy 1, Water Quality Policy 1 & 2, Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 1-3, Marine litter Policy 1, Underwater Noise Policy 1</i>)</p> <p>The impact of the Project on biodiversity is assessed in Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology, Chapter 12 Marine Mammals, Chapter 20 Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna and Chapter 21 – Terrestrial Ornithology of the EIAR. The assessments within these chapters conclude that, when mitigation measures are considered, there will be no significant adverse impact on biodiversity or non-indigenous species as a result of the construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project.</p> <p>Mitigation measures are in place to reduce the potential for the introduction and/or spread of non-indigenous species. There will be mitigation by reduction in the form of reducing the effect through the implementation of an Offshore Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) (Appendix 5.2 of the EIAR) and Marine Invasive Non-Native Species Management Plan (Appendix 5.8 of the EIAR), including measures to avoid the introduction and spread of non-indigenous species and containment procedures in the unlikely event that non-indigenous species are found.</p> <p>In relation to water quality, Chapter 8 of the EIAR, Water and Sediment Quality, concludes that no significant adverse impacts will arise from the proposed Project. A Water Framework Directive Compliance Assessment was conducted for the Offshore and Onshore Site and are included in Appendix 8-1 (Offshore) and 23-2 (Onshore) of the EIAR. The assessment finds that the Project complies with the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>The development application for the Project includes an Offshore Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) as Appendix 5-2 of the EIAR. The OEMP includes a Resource Waste Management Plan, included as Appendix 5-5. The Resource Waste</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| | | | <p>Management Plan outlines the predicted waste arising from the Project and the waste management measures that will be put in place to ensure that waste is kept to a minimum. Waste management practices will be applied in accordance with the relevant legislation, policy and guidance.</p> <p>The impacts of underwater noise impacts are assessed in the Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 fish and Shellfish, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology, and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals of the EIAR. As the Project will utilise a gravity-based foundation, no underwater drilling or blasting is proposed, reducing underwater noise created as a result of the proposed project and impacts on the sea floor. It is concluded in Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12 that underwater noise created as a result of the Project will not cause a significant adverse impact on marine fauna.</p> <p>Compliance with MSFD's Environmental Targets under Article 10 is demonstrated across all relevant EIAR Chapters. The draft updated Article 10 Environmental Targets, published in July 2024, are also considered where relevant.</p> <p>Having regard to the above, it is submitted therefore, that the Project complies with Ocean Health Policy 1.</p> |
| | Biodiversity | <p><i>Biodiversity Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals incorporating features that enhance or facilitate species adaptation or migration, or natural native habitat connectivity will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals that may have significant adverse impacts on species adaptation or migration, or on natural native habitat connectivity must demonstrate that they will, in order of</i></p> | <p>The Project has been designed to avoid and mitigate against any significant adverse impacts on species adaption or mitigation, or on natural native habitat, where possible. Where impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation measures have been incorporated in order to ensure that no significant adverse impact will occur.</p> <p>In Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, the benthic ecology impact assessment has assessed potential effects likely to be incurred from the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. The impact assessment has concluded that given the mitigation, the residual effect for all impact pathways is Not Significant for all the benthic ecology receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, the potential effects resulting from underwater noise, temporary and long-term habitat loss and disturbance, temporary increases in suspended sediment concentrations, accidental release of pollutants, habitat creation and fish aggregation, EMF effects, thermal emissions, barrier effects and ghost fishing during</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| | | <p><i>preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise, or</i> <i>c) mitigate</i> <p><i>significant adverse impacts on species adaptation or migration, or on natural native habitat connectivity.</i></p> | <p>construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning have been assessed. The assessment concluded that with mitigation considered, the residual effect pathway would be Not Significant for all fish and shellfish receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology, the potential effects resulting from the disturbance and displacement on key bird species as a result of increased vessel activity and other construction/decommissioning activity, indirect effects on foraging seabirds as a result of habitat loss/displacement of prey species, disturbance and displacement on key bird species as a result of increased vessel activity and other maintenance activities, displacement and barrier effects on key bird species within the OAA and appropriate buffer from offshore infrastructure, mortality of key bird species as a result of collision with offshore wind turbines, and disturbance from aviation and navigation lighting over the lifetime of the Project have been assessed. The assessment has concluded that the residual effects would be Not Significant for all offshore ornithology receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 12 Marine Mammals, the potential effects resulting from underwater sound, disturbance and the risk of collision from the presence of vessels, temporary increases in suspended sediment concentrations, accidental releases of pollutants, EMF effects, displacement and barrier effects, and habitat change during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning have been assessed. The assessment concluded that with mitigation measures considered, the residual effect will be Not Significant for all marine mammal and megafauna receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 20 Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna and Chapter 21 biodiversity - Terrestrial Ornithology, it is concluded that provided that the Onshore Site is constructed and operated in accordance with the design, best practice and mitigation that is described within this application, significant individual or cumulative effects on biodiversity are not anticipated at any geographic scale.</p> <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| | | | <p>conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Biodiversity Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Biodiversity Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals that protect, maintain, restore and enhance the distribution and net extent of important habitats and distribution of important species will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals must avoid significant reduction in the distribution and net extent of important habitats and other habitats that important species depend on, including avoidance of activity that may result in disturbance or displacement of habitats.</i></p> | <p>The disturbance or displacement of habitats is assessed in Chapter 7 Marine Physical Processes, Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals.</p> <p>Important habitats are defined by the NMPF as:</p> <p><i>Important habitats are those defined under Annex I of the Habitats Directive and threatened and/or declining habitats as defined by OSPAR and associated Recommendations thereon that have been adopted by Contracting Parties.</i></p> <p>Important species are defined by the NMPF as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Habitats Directive Annex II and Annex IV species that are known to occur (or to have occurred in recent times) as native populations within Irish waters;</i> ➤ <i>Threatened and/or declining species as defined by OSPAR;</i> ➤ <i>Those protected under the Wildlife Acts;</i> ➤ <i>Those assessed as threatened in IUCN Red Lists for Ireland ;</i> ➤ <i>Those listed as special conservation interests for relevant SPAs; and</i> ➤ <i>Those with Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland red status.</i> <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> |

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| | | | <p>The presence of important species and habitats are identified in Chapter 7 Marine Physical Processes, Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals. The EIAR assessments conclude that, with mitigation measures in place, no adverse impacts on important species and habitats, including other habitats that important species depend on, will take place as a result of the Project.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Biodiversity Policy 2.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Biodiversity Policy 3:</i> <i>Where marine or coastal natural capital assets are recognised by Government:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Proposals must seek to enhance marine or coastal natural capital assets where possible.</i> • <i>Proposals must demonstrate that they will in order of preference, and in accordance with legal requirements:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>avoid,</i> b) <i>minimise, or</i> c) <i>mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine or coastal natural capital assets, or</i> d) <i>if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine or coastal natural capital assets proposals must set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | <p>Marine and coastal natural capital assets have been considered from the beginning of the project. A key factor in site selection was the absence of designated sites. The EIAR assess the Project and its impact on the environment.</p> <p>Marine and Coastal natural capital assets define the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources such as flora and fauna, water, soils, mineral and the blue economy found on the coast and that provide benefits to people. Marine and Coastal natural assets have been considered in the following chapters:</p> <p>Chapter 7 Marine Physical and Coastal Processes assessed the potential effects likely to be incurred from the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. With the mitigation measures considered, the residual effects will be Not Significant for all marine physical and coastal processes receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, the potential effects of the Project likely to be incurred from the construction, operational and decommissioning phases have been assessed. Mitigation has been included during project design and additional mitigation measures are proposed and considered within the assessment, for example, the use of trenchless technologies and GBS foundations to minimise seabed disturbance amongst other mitigations strategies. The assessment concluded that due to the low levels of sediment contamination and the highly localised and temporary nature of the impacts, no significant effects to any water and sediment quality receptors are predicted.</p> <p>In Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, the benthic ecology impact assessment has assessed potential effects likely to be incurred from the construction, operational and</p> |

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| | | | <p>decommissioning phases. The impact assessment has concluded that given the mitigation, the residual effect for all impact pathways is Not Significant for all the benthic ecology receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, the potential effects resulting from underwater noise, temporary and long-term habitat loss and disturbance, temporary increases in suspended sediment concentrations, accidental release of pollutants, habitat creation and fish aggregation, EMF effects, thermal emissions, barrier effects and ghost fishing during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning have been assessed. The assessment concluded that with mitigation considered, the residual effect pathway would be Not Significant for all fish and shellfish receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology, the potential effects resulting from the disturbance and displacement of key bird species as a result of increased vessel activity and other construction/decommissioning activity, indirect effects on foraging seabirds as a result of habitat loss/displacement of prey species, disturbance and displacement on key bird species as a result of increased vessel activity and other maintenance activities, displacement and barrier effects on key bird species within the OAA and appropriate buffer from offshore infrastructure, mortality of key bird species as a result of collision with offshore wind turbines, and disturbance from aviation and navigation lighting over the lifetime of the Project have been assessed. The assessment has concluded that the residual effects would be Not Significant for all offshore ornithology receptors.</p> <p>In Chapter 12 Marine mammals, the potential effects resulting from underwater sound, disturbance and the risk of collision from the presence of vessels, temporary increases in suspended sediment concentrations, accidental releases of pollutants, EMF effects, displacement and barrier effects, and habitat change during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning have been assessed. The assessment concluded that with mitigation measures considered, the residual effects will be Not Significant for all marine mammal and megafauna receptors.</p> <p>Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries has assessed potential effects resulting from loss of access to fishing grounds, displacement of fishing activity into other areas, interference with fishing activity as a result of increased vessel traffic, increased steaming times and safety issues for fishing vessels during construction, operation and decommissioning. The likely</p> |

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| | | | <p>significant effects assessment has concluded that, taking into account the mitigation, the residual effect for all will be Not Significant for all commercial fisheries receptors.</p> <p>Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation has assessed the potential effects arising from the displacement of third-party vessels and resulting increased collision risk, collision risk between third-party and Project vessels, reduced access to local ports, creation of third-party allision risk (where one object only is moving), reduction in under-keel clearance, anchor interaction with subsea infrastructure, and emergency response capability. With the proposed mitigation measures outlined in the chapter in place, as well as consideration of a safety justification (Annex to Appendix 14-1 of the EIAR) for the array layout, these impacts result in effects that are entirely either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is Not Significant.</p> <p>Chapter 17 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage identified one shipwreck within the marine archaeology study area. The wreck is deemed to be of low archaeological potential. No other features of archaeological potential were identified and embedded mitigation/ mitigation by design is set out in order to assure that no significant impact occurs to marine archaeological receptors. With respect to the effects of the Offshore Site on the setting of onshore archaeological monuments, the proximity of St MacDara's Monastery means that the Project will have a significant effect. All other monuments would experience lesser, Not Significant effects.</p> <p>While the Project will have a significant effect due to its proximity to St MacDara's Monastery, the impact is limited to a visual impact. While the impact is acknowledged, there remains a strong rationale for the progression of the Project. MacDara's Island is an uninhabited island that is not easily accessible, which is visited once a year on the 16th of July as part of a pilgrimage by residents of the local area. As such the Significant visual impact on MacDara's Monastery will be limited due the infrequency of visits. The Project is a nationally significant infrastructure project, supported through policy from a local to an international level. The Project is crucial for the achievement of the 5GW target for offshore wind energy by 2030 set out in the Climate Action Plan 2024. The Project is also important to Ireland's energy security and Ireland's ability to achieve the legally binding emissions reduction target set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, as amended.</p> |

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| | | | <p>Chapter 18 Other Sea Users considers the likely effects of the Offshore Site on other sea users during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases. With mitigation measures considered, no likely significant residual effects are identified.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Biodiversity Policy 3.</p> |
| | | <p>Biodiversity Policy 4: <i>Proposals must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) avoid, b) minimise, or c) mitigate <p><i>significant disturbance to, or displacement of, highly mobile species.</i></p> | <p>The impact of the Project on highly mobile species is assessed in Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals.</p> <p>The NMPF describes highly mobile species as:</p> <p><i>“Those that range over large distances and include plankton, jellyfish, fish and cephalopods, elasmobranchs, birds, marine mammals and turtles. Individuals are often part of more widespread international populations and may only be present in Ireland on a seasonal basis or for part of their life cycle”</i></p> <p>Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals conclude that with mitigation considered, the residual effect pathway would be Not Significant for all highly mobile species.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Biodiversity Policy 4.</p> |
| | Protected Marine Sites | <p>Protected Marine Sites Policy 1: <i>Proposals must demonstrate that they can be implemented without adverse effects on the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Where adverse effects from proposals remain following mitigation, in line with Habitats Directive Article 6(3), consent for the proposals cannot be granted unless the prerequisites set by Article 6(4) are met.</i></p> | <p>An EIAR accompanies the application for the Project. SACs and SPAs are considered in Chapters 7 Marine Physical Processes, Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals.</p> <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its</p> |

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| | | | <p>conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Protected Marine Sites Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Protected Marine Sites Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals supporting the objectives of protected marine sites should be supported and:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>be informed by appropriate guidance</i> <i>must demonstrate that they are in accordance with legal requirements, including statutory advice provided by authorities relevant to protected marine sites.</i> | <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>Under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, applications for planning permission are obliged to implement the provisions of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, applies to both terrestrial and maritime applications. The NIS has been prepared in accordance with this legal requirement. The NIS also has regard to the appropriate guidance documents and statutory guidelines.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Protected Marine Sites Policy 2.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Protected Marine Sites Policy 3:</i> <i>Proposals that enhance a protected marine site's ability to adapt to climate change, enhancing the resilience of the protected site, should be supported and:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>be informed by appropriate guidance</i> <i>must demonstrate that they are in accordance with legal requirements, including statutory</i> | <p>The Project will provide a significant amount of clean, renewable energy, reducing the carbon emissions from the electricity sector. By providing clean, renewable energy the Project will reduce the amount CO2 emissions, contributing to a reduction in the severity of the impacts associated with climate change. Any reduction to the severity of climate change impacts will have a positive impact on all protected sites.</p> <p>Under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, applications for planning permission are obliged to implement the provisions of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, applies to both terrestrial and maritime applications. The NIS has been prepared in accordance with this legal requirement. The NIS also has regard to the appropriate guidance documents and statutory guidelines.</p> |

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| | | <i>advice provided by authorities relevant to protected marine sites.</i> | Therefore, the Project complies with Protected Marine Sites Policy 3. |
| | | <p><i>Protected Marine Sites Policy 4:</i> <i>Until the ecological coherence of the network of protected marine sites is examined and understood, proposals should identify, by review of best available evidence (including consultation with the competent authority with responsibility for designating such areas as required), the features, under consideration at the time the application is made, that may be required to develop and further establish the network. Based upon identified features that may be required to develop and further establish the network, proposals should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise, or</i> <i>c) mitigate significant impacts on features that may be required to develop and further establish the network, or</i> <i>d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>The NIS considers all Sites of Community Importance, SPAs, SACs and all Candidate Sites.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Protected Marine Sites Policy 4.</p> |

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| | Non-Indigenous Species | <p><i>Non-indigenous Species Policy 1:</i> <i>Reducing the risk of the introduction and/or spread of non-indigenous species is a requirement of all proposals. Proposals must demonstrate a risk management approach to prevent the introduction of and/or spread of non-indigenous species, particularly when:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>moving equipment, boats or livestock (for example fish or shellfish) from one water body to another,</i> b) <i>introducing structures suitable for settlement of non-indigenous species, or the spread of non-indigenous species known to exist in the area of the proposal.</i> | <p>The Project demonstrates a proactive and comprehensive approach to reducing the risk of introducing non-indigenous species. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce the risk of spreading non-indigenous species.</p> <p>The potential for the introduction of invasive or non-native species as a result of the Project is considered in Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology and Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish. The assessments conclude that, with the proposed mitigation measures considered, the residual effect pathway would be Not Significant for all benthic ecology and fish and shellfish receptors.</p> <p>There will be mitigation by reduction in the form of reducing the effect through the implementation of an Offshore Environmental Management Plan (Appendix 5-2 of the EIAR) and a Marine Invasive Non-Native Species Management Plan (Appendix 5-8 of the EIAR) prior to construction, including measures to avoid the introduction and spread of non-indigenous species and containment procedures in the unlikely event that non-indigenous species are found.</p> <p>The Project demonstrates a risk management approach to prevent the introduction and spread of non-indigenous species.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Non-Indigenous Species Policy 1.</p> |
| | Water Quality | <p><i>Water Quality Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that may have significant adverse impacts upon water quality, including upon habitats and species beneficial to water quality, must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>avoid,</i> b) <i>minimise, or</i> c) <i>mitigate</i> | <p>In Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, the potential effects of the Project likely to be incurred from the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. Mitigation measures are proposed and considered within the assessment, for example, the use of trenchless technologies and GBS foundations to minimise seabed disturbance amongst other mitigations strategies. The assessment concluded that due to the low levels of sediment contamination and the highly localised and temporary nature of the impacts, no significant effects to any water and sediment quality receptors are predicted. The Project will adhere to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and Ballast Water Management (BWM) Conventions to minimise the risk of marine pollution.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Water Quality Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <i>significant adverse impacts.</i> | |
| | | <i>Water Quality Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals delivering improvements to water quality, or enhancing habitats and species, which can be of benefit to water quality, should be supported.</i> | The Project will not result in significant adverse effects on water quality as outlined in Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality. |
| | Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity | <i>Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that incorporate measures to support the resilience of marine habitats will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals which may have significant adverse impacts on marine, particularly deep sea, habitats must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise, or</i> <i>c) mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine habitats, or</i> <i>d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine habitats must set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | <p>The impact of the Project on marine habitats is assessed in Chapter 7 Marine Physical Processes, Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals. These assessments have not identified any significant adverse impacts on marine habitats.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals, including those that increase access to the maritime area, must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise, or</i> <i>c) mitigate</i> <p><i>adverse impacts on important habitats and species.</i></p> | <p>Important habitats are defined by the NMPF as:</p> <p><i>Important habitats are those defined under Annex I of the Habitats Directive and threatened and /or declining habitats as defined by OSPAR and associated Recommendations thereon that have been adopted by Contracting Parties.</i></p> <p>Important species are defined by the NMPF as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Habitats Directive Annex II and Annex IV species that are known to occur (or to have occurred in recent times) as native populations within Irish waters;</i> ➤ <i>Threatened and /or declining species as defined by OSPAR;</i> ➤ <i>Those protected under the Wildlife Acts;</i> ➤ <i>Those assessed as threatened in IUCN Red Lists for Ireland ;</i> ➤ <i>Those listed as special conservation interests for relevant SPAs; and</i> ➤ <i>Those with Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland red status.</i> <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites (including Annex II and Annex IV species) in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>The impact of the Project on important species and habitats is assessed in Chapter 7 Marine Physical Processes, Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals. The EIAR assessments conclude that, with mitigation measures in place, no adverse impacts will occur on important species and habitats, including other habitats that important species depend on.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 3:</i> <i>Proposals that protect, maintain, restore and enhance coastal habitats for ecosystem functioning and provision of ecosystem services will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals must take account of the space required for coastal habitats, for ecosystem functioning and provision of ecosystem services, and demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise , or</i> <i>c) mitigate</i> <p><i>for net loss of coastal habitat.</i></p> | <p>The impact of the Project on coastal habitats is assessed in Chapter 7 Marine Physical Processes, Chapter 8 Water and Sediment Quality, Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 12 Marine Mammals, Chapter 20 Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna and Chapter 21 Terrestrial Ornithology. The EIAR assessments conclude that, with mitigation measures in place, no adverse impacts on coastal habitats will arise as a result of the Project. Mitigation measures include mitigation by design such as the selection of a landfall point which avoids coastal SPAs and SACs and the proposed trenchless construction methodology.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 3.</p> |
| | Marine Litter | <p><i>Marine Litter Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that facilitate waste re-use or recycling, or that reduce marine and coastal litter will be supported, where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals that could potentially increase the amount of litter that is discharged into the maritime area, either intentionally or accidentally, must include</i></p> | <p>The development application for the Project includes an Offshore Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) as Appendix 5-2 of the EIAR. The OEMP includes a Resource Waste Management Plan, included as Appendix 5-5. The Resource Waste Management Plan outlines the predicted waste arising from the Project and the waste management measures that will be put in place to ensure that waste is kept to a minimum. Waste management practices will be applied in accordance with the relevant legislation, policy and guidance.</p> <p>Marine pollution prevention under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) convention requirements will be followed during</p> |

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| | | <p><i>measures (such as development of a waste management plan)</i></p> <p><i>to, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise, or</i> <i>c) mitigate</i> <p><i>the litter. Demonstration of these measures must provide satisfactory evidence that the proposal is able to manage all waste without creation of litter.</i></p> | <p>construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning. A Marine Pollution Contingency Plan is provided in Appendix 5-3 of the EIAR.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Marine Litter Policy 1.</p> |
| | Underwater Noise | <p><i>Underwater Noise Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals must take account of spatial distribution, temporal extent, and levels of impulsive and /or continuous sound (underwater noise) that may be generated and the potential for significant adverse impacts on marine fauna. Where the potential for significant impact on marine fauna from underwater noise is identified, a Noise Assessment Statement must be prepared by the proposer of development. The findings of the Noise Assessment Statement should demonstrably inform determination(s) related to the activity proposed and the carrying out of the activity itself.</i></p> | <p>The proposed development will be constructed using a variety of underwater methodologies and therefore is expected to create some level of underwater noise. Underwater noise modelling was undertaken as part of the preparation of the EIAR to assess the likely significant effects on marine fauna.</p> <p>The Project is in compliance with all legal requirements with regard to the assessment of underwater noise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Assessment (AA): An AA Screening Report and NIS have been prepared and are submitted as part of the application. • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): An EIAR has been prepared and is submitted as part of the application. • Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): An SEA was conducted for the west coast, in which the Project is located, as part of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan. • Article 12 of the Habitats Directive: The potential disturbance of species has been specifically assessed in this EIAR. • Wildlife Acts: Particular attention has been paid to species and habitats of ecological importance including species and habitats with national and |

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| | | <p><i>The content of the Noise Assessment Statement should be relevant to the particular circumstances and must include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Demonstration of compliance with applicable legal requirements, such as necessary assessment of proposals likely to have underwater noise implications, including but not limited to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Appropriate Assessment (AA);</i> <i>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);</i> <i>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);</i> <i>Specific response to 'strict protection' requirements of Article 12 of the Habitats Directive in relation to certain species listed in Annex IV of the Directive; and</i> <i>Species protected under the Wildlife Acts.</i> <i>An assessment of the potential impact of the development or use on the affected species in terms of environmental sustainability;</i> <i>Demonstration that significant adverse impacts on marine fauna resulting from underwater noise will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements be:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>avoided,</i> <i>minimised, or</i> <i>mitigated, or</i> | <p>international protection under the Wildlife Acts 1976 (as amended), EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.</p> <p>The impact of underwater noise on marine fauna is assessed in Chapter 10 – Fish and Shellfish Ecology and Chapter 12 – Marine Mammals. The assessments are supported by the Underwater Noise Modelling and Assessment (Appendix 12-1).</p> <p>Chapter 12 – Marine Mammals, assesses the potential effects of underwater sound on marine mammal species and megafauna during the construction, operational and decommissioning phase. With the implementation of underwater sound mitigation, the assessment concludes that the residual effects will be Not Significant for all marine mammal and megafauna receptors. Similarly, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology concludes that, with mitigation measures considered, the residual effect pathway relating to underwater noise will be Not Significant for all fish and shellfish receptors.</p> <p>Underwater noise impacts have also been considered in the NIS where marine fauna species are identified as Qualifying Interests of protected marine sites. The NIS Volume 1 (Offshore) concludes following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>As the WTG's and OSS utilise a gravity-based foundation, there will be no piling or drilling activities required for their installation. This construction method reduces the level of underwater noise associated with the construction of the Project and is an example of where significant impacts (in terms of noise and vibration) have been avoided, minimised and mitigated by design.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Underwater Noise Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <p>d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant</p> <p>adverse impacts on marine fauna, the reasons for proceeding must be set out.</p> <p>This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments require consideration of underwater noise.</p> | |
| | Air Quality | <p>Air Quality Policy 1: Proposals that support a reduction in air pollution should be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals must demonstrate consideration of their contribution to air pollution, both direct and cumulative.</p> | <p>An assessment of the Project's contribution to air pollution, both direct and cumulatively, is provided in Chapter 19 Offshore Air Quality and Noise and Chapter 26 Onshore Air Quality. Chapter 19 Offshore Air Quality and Noise concludes that, with mitigation measures considered, the residual effect will be not significant for all air quality receptors. Chapter 26 Onshore Air Quality concludes that, with mitigation measures considered, the Onshore Site will not result in any significant effects on air quality in the area surrounding the Onshore Site.</p> <p>The Project will have a positive impact on air quality by replacing fossil fuel generation with clean renewable energy. Chapter 30 Climate calculates the emissions displaced by the electricity generated by the project. The projected total generation of electricity over the lifetime of the Project is 76,395,960 MWh (assumed lifetime of 38 years – 2029 to 2067). The CO_{2e} (carbon dioxide equivalent) emissions displaced from the national grid over the proposed 38-year lifetime of the Project is 17.56 million tonnes of CO_{2e}.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Air Quality Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p>Air Quality Policy 2: Where proposals are likely to result in or facilitate an increase in air pollution, proposals should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference in accordance with legal requirements and standards:</p> | <p>An assessment of the Project's contribution to air pollution, both direct and cumulatively, is provided in Chapter 19 Offshore Air Quality and Noise and Chapter 26 Onshore Air Quality. Chapter 19 Offshore Air Quality and Noise concludes that, with mitigation measures considered, the residual effects will be not significant for all air quality receptor. Chapter 26 Onshore Air Quality concludes that, with mitigation measures considered, the Onshore Site will not result in any significant effects on air quality in the area surrounding the Onshore Site.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p>a) avoid, b) minimise, or c) mitigate</p> <p><i>air pollution.</i></p> | <p>Measures to mitigate against any potential impacts on Air Quality during the construction phase are set out in the OEMP (Appendix 5-2) and the Vessel Management Plan (Appendix 5-10).</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Air Quality Policy 2.</p> |
| | Climate Change | <p>Climate Change Policy 1: <i>Proposals should demonstrate how they:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid contribution to adverse changes to physical features of the coast; • enhance, restore or recreate habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services where possible. <p><i>Where potential significant adverse impacts upon habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services are identified, these must be in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <p>a) avoided, b) minimised, c) mitigated, d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, the reasons for proceeding must be set out.</p> | <p>The Project aims to minimise its contribution to adverse changes to physical features of the coast through site selection, project design and mitigation measures. The impact of the Project on the physical features of the coastline are assessed in Chapter 7 Marine Physical Processes. Chapter 7 assess the impact of the Project on offshore and coastal morphology, on features of designated sites, impacts due to the introduction of scour, and on changes to water column structure with impact to stratification. With mitigation measures considered, the Project will not give rise to any significant adverse effects on marine physical processes, features or habitats that provide flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services.</p> <p>Chapter 30 Climate includes a biogenic carbon assessment. The biogenic carbon assessment considers how the Project could affect carbon stored in the marine environment and in the terrestrial environment. Chapter 30 concludes that due to the localised nature of seabed disturbance associated with the Project (including from dredging and disposal activities), and the absence of key blue carbon ecosystems at the Offshore Site, the Project is expected to result in a negligible loss of blue carbon stores or release of carbon due to any direct disturbance of marine ecosystems.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Climate Change policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments are required.</i></p> | |
| | | <p><i>Climate Change Policy 2</i></p> <p><i>For the lifetime of the proposal, the following climate change matters must be demonstrated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>estimation of likely generation of greenhouse gas emissions, both direct and indirect;</i> <i>measures to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions where possible;</i> <i>likely impact of climate change effects upon the proposal from factors including but not limited to: sea level rise, ocean acidification, changing weather patterns;</i> <i>measures incorporated to enable adaptation climate change effects;</i> <i>likely impact upon climate change adaptation measures adopted in the coastal area relevant to the proposal and/or adaptation measures adopted by adjacent activities;</i> <i>where likely impact upon climate change adaptation measures in the coastal area relevant to the proposal and/or adaptation</i> | <p>In Chapter 30 Climate, the carbon intensity of the project is calculated. The carbon intensity of the Project is a measure of the emissions generated per unit of electricity produced. The total carbon intensity associated with the Project was calculated to be 29.9 gCO₂e/kWh. This accounts for the total Project emissions, over the entire lifecycle of the Project, equating to 2,287,973 tCO₂e (2.287973E+12 gCO₂e) and the total MWh generation over the operational phase of 76,395,960 MWh (76,395,960,000 kWh). For comparison, as of 2023, the net marginal carbon intensity of electricity production for Ireland, including existing renewable energy sources, was 229.9g CO₂e/kWh. The payback period for the Project, the period of time before the Project has avoided more carbon dioxide equivalent emissions than has been produced by its construction and operation, is estimated to be 3 years once fully operational.</p> <p>The likely effects of climate change including sea level rise, ocean acidification, changing weather patterns, are described and the associated impacts on receptors are assessed in Chapter 27 – Climate. Overall, for both the Onshore Site and the Offshore Site, there is low potential for in-combination and future climate impacts to adversely impact offshore or onshore receptors.</p> <p>Chapter 2 Background of the EIAR and this planning report provides an assessment of the Project against climate policy at a European and national level. As a ‘Phase 1’ project, the Project is a critical part of the national strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, legally required under the Climate Act.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Climate change Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>measures adopted by adjacent activities is identified, these impacts must be in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoided,</i> <i>b) minimised,</i> <i>c) mitigated,</i> <i>d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, the reasons for proceeding must be set out.</i> | |
| Economic-Thriving Maritime Economy | Co-existence | <p><i>Co-existence Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals should demonstrate that they have considered how to optimise the use of space, including through consideration of opportunities for co-existence and co-operation with other activities, enhancing other activities where appropriate. If proposals cannot avoid significant adverse impacts (including displacement) on other activities they must, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) minimise significant adverse impacts,</i> <i>b) mitigate significant adverse impacts, or</i> <i>c) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | <p>The co-existence of the Project with other marine activities is assessed in Chapter 13 – Commercial Fisheries, Chapter 14 - Shipping and Navigation, Chapter 15 - Civil and Military Aviation, and Chapter 18 –Other Sea Users. Embedded mitigation measures are proposed to minimise adverse impacts on other marine users.</p> <p>With mitigation measures considered, the Project will not give rise to a significant adverse effect on the marine activities and users. In relation to fishing activities, Chapter 13 concludes that there will be no significant long-term impact on fishing activities that currently take place at the site.</p> <p>The project will also have a substantial Community Benefit Fund (CBF), estimated to amount to c. € 3.5 million per annum. The community will determine which projects receive funding from the CBF. The Applicant strongly supports ringfencing a proportion of the fund to support marine related activities. The CBF has the potential to significantly enhance marine related and other activities in the area.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Co-existence Policy 1.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | Infrastructure | <p>Infrastructure Policy 1: <i>Appropriate land-based infrastructure which facilitates marine activity (and vice versa) should be supported. Proposals for appropriate infrastructure that facilitates the diversification or regeneration of marine industries should be supported.</i></p> | <p>There are offshore and onshore elements included in the Project. The main onshore elements are the onshore export cable and the onshore compensation compound. This infrastructure is necessary to bring electricity generated by the Project on to the national electricity grid. The Project will diversify the marine economy by creating new employment at all stages of the project (construction, operation and decommissioning) and will contribute to the emerging offshore wind energy sector.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Infrastructure Policy 1.</p> |
| Social-Engagement with the Sea | Access | <p>Access Policy 1: <i>Proposals, including in relation to tourism and recreation, should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) avoid, b) minimise, or c) mitigate <p><i>significant adverse impacts on public access.</i></p> | <p>As part of the assessment of the Project, an independent tourism study was undertaken to establish the impact of the Project on the area. The tourism assessment, which included 19 in depth interviews with representatives of local communities and members of the tourism industry, and 212 interviews with visitors to south Connemara, concludes that the tourism performance of south Connemara will not be affected with no adverse tourism impact in the short to long term. The Tourism Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Repucon Consulting, is included as Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR.</p> <p>In relation to fishing activities, Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries concludes that there will be no significant long-term impact on fishing activities that currently taking place at the site. Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, which includes an assessment of the Projects obstruction to marine recreational users concludes that the Project will not give rise to any significant adverse effects.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Access Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p>Access Policy 2: <i>Proposals demonstrating appropriate enhanced and inclusive public access to and within the maritime area, and that consider the future provision of services for tourism and recreation activities, should be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the</i></p> | <p>Although tourism and recreation activities are not specifically proposed, it is envisaged that there will be opportunities for marine tourism and recreation activities, which will allow tourists to visit the Offshore Site. The potential opportunities for tourism and recreational activities at the Offshore Site is outlined in the Tourism Impact Assessment Report, included as Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Access Policy 2.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <i>competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF.</i> | |
| | Employment | <p><i>Employment Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals should demonstrate contribution to a net increase in marine related employment in Ireland, particularly where the proposals are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>in line with the skills available in Irish coastal communities adjacent to the maritime area,</i> <i>improve the sustainable use of natural resources,</i> <i>diversify skills to enable employment in emerging industries.</i> | <p>This Project will contribute to marine-related employment by creating jobs in construction, operation, maintenance, survey, monitoring and support services. These jobs span a wide range of disciplines and skill levels, providing opportunities for career growth and development in the marine sector. The Project provides an opportunity to apply valuable existing skills and local knowledge to the offshore wind energy sector, developing capabilities within the region's workforce to provide the services required to construct and operate an offshore wind farm. The benefits to employment extend beyond the Project subject of this application, with a national ambition to install 37GW of offshore renewable energy by 2050 (Future Framework for ORE), the upskilling, training and development arising from the Project will be invaluable for the future of the offshore renewable energy sector in the region.</p> <p>An Economic Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Biggar Economics, is included as Appendix 6-2 of the EIAR. During the lifetime of the Project, it is estimated that approximately €2.4 billion will be spent on the development, construction, operation and decommissioning of the wind farm. It is estimated that the Project will support 174 full time equivalent jobs over the operational phase, with Project lifetime Gross Value Added amounting to approximately €564 million.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Employment Policy 1.</p> |
| | Heritage Assets | <p><i>Heritage Assets Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that demonstrate they will contribute to enhancing the significance of heritage assets will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals unable to contribute to enhancing the significance</i></p> | <p>The impact of the Project on heritage assets is assessed in the EIAR Chapter 17 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage and Chapter 24 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.</p> <p>Chapter 17 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage identified one shipwreck within the marine archaeology study area. The wreck is deemed to be of low archaeological potential. No other features of archaeological potential were identified, and mitigation is set out in order to ensure that no impact occurs to marine archaeological receptors. With respect to the effects of the Offshore Site on the setting of onshore archaeological monuments, the proximity of St MacDara's Monastery means that the Project will have a</p> |

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| | | <p><i>of heritage assets will only be supported if they demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>avoid,</i> b) <i>minimise, or</i> c) <i>mitigate harm to the significance of heritage assets, and</i> d) <i>if it is not possible, to mitigate harm, then the public benefits for proceeding with the proposal must outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage assets. (see definition of 'Public Benefits' in the Glossary)</i> | <p>Significant effect. However it should be noted that St MacDara's island is uninhabited, difficult to access with no pier, and infrequently visited.</p> <p>All other monuments would experience lesser, Not Significant effects.</p> <p>While the Project will have a significant effect due to its proximity to St MacDara's Monastery, the impact is limited to a visual impact. While the impact is acknowledged, there remains a strong rationale for the progression of the Project. The Project is a nationally significant infrastructure project, supported through policy from a local to an international level. The Project is crucial for the achievement of the 5GW target for offshore wind energy by 2030 set out in the Climate Action Plan 2024. The Project is also important to Ireland's energy security and Ireland's ability to achieve the legally binding emissions reduction target set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, as amended.</p> <p>Chapter 24 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage found no significant effects to the cultural heritage resource as a result of the Onshore Site.</p> <p>The project is located off Connemara's Gaeltacht coastline. The cultural significance of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht region is an important part of the Project, and public consultation and communication strategies. Given the Projects connection to the Connemara Gaeltacht, the Irish language and unique culture of the region will continue to be strongly supported by the Project through the Community Benefit Fund.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Heritage Assets Policy 1.</p> |
| | Rural Coastal and Island Communities | <p><i>Rural Coastal and Island Communities Policy 1:</i></p> <p><i>Proposals contributing to access, communications, energy self-sufficiency or sustainability of rural coastal and / or island communities should be supported. Proposals should ideally be inclusive of continual education, skills development and training in marine sectors, thus</i></p> | <p>As the only 'Phase 1' project on the west coast of the country, the Project is important to achieve balanced regional development and to ensure communities off the west coast are not excluded from economic and social benefits of offshore renewable energy development. The development of the offshore renewable energy sector in rural communities through training and education has been a key aspect while preparing the application and over the course of the Project to date. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Údarás na Gaeltachta has been signed to formally continue collaboration on education and training initiatives within the Gaeltacht and the Connemara Region. The Applicant is also a member of the EU supported T-shore CoVE (Centre of Vocational</p> |

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| | | <i>improving the sustainability, social benefits and economic resilience of rural and island communities.</i> | <p>Excellence) project, which aims to develop education and training modules to develop the technical skills required for offshore renewable Energy. Opportunities for education and training were explored throughout the community engagement process. A public information event with a focus on the skills, training, and employment was held.</p> <p>The Project will contribute to marine-related employment by creating jobs in construction, operation, maintenance, survey, monitoring and support services. These jobs span a wide range of disciplines and skill levels, providing opportunities for career growth and development in the marine sector. It is estimated that the Project will support 174 full time equivalent jobs over the operational phase, with Project lifetime Gross Value Added amounting to approximately €564 million. The project will therefore contribute to the sustainability and economic resilience of the rural Atlantic Region in line with Rural Coastal and Island Communities Policy 1.</p> |
| | Seascape and Landscape | <p><i>Seascape and Landscape Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals should demonstrate how the likely significant impacts of a development on the seascape and landscape of an area have been considered. Proposals will only be supported if they demonstrate that they, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimise, or</i> <i>c) mitigate significant adverse impacts on the seascape and landscape of the area.</i> <i>d) If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals must set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> <p><i>This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments.</i></p> | <p>A Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) has been prepared as part of the EIAR (Chapter 16 - SLVIA). The assessment includes 38 no. photomontage viewpoints, which are included in Volume 2 of the EIAR.</p> <p>The SLVIA concludes that the Project is considered to give rise to Major / Negative seascape effects only within approximately 10km of the site, which envelops the coastal waters and nearshore Islands of Macdara, Mason and Mweenish as well as the complex Connemara coastline of the seaward end of the promontory peninsula they extend from. Major / Negative visual effects are also assessed from two of the representative viewpoint locations within this part of the central study area that are afforded open coastal vistas towards the site. This includes from the uninhabited Macdara Island and from Mweenish Island. These are the only SLVIA effects that are considered to be significant in EIA terms. It is important to note that these represent localised significant effects and there are also many visual receptors within 10km of the site that incur little or no visual effect where open sea views are more restricted.</p> <p>While the impacts of the Project on seascape and landscape are acknowledged, there is a need for balance with regards landscape and seascape protection and the need to develop nationally significant renewable energy infrastructure. As noted in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, under policies ‘<i>LCM 2 - Landscape Sensitivity Classification</i>’ and ‘<i>PVSR 1 – Protected Views and Scenic Routes</i>’, the implementation of these</p> |

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| | | | <p>landscape policies and objectives ‘shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan’. The strategic aims of the Galway County Development Plan align with the national climate and energy objective to install 5GW offshore wind energy in Irish waters by the end of the decade.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Seascape and Landscape Policy 1.</p> |
| | Social Benefits | <p><i>Social Benefits Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that enhance or promote social benefits should be supported. Proposals unable to enhance or promote social benefits should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">a) <i>minimise, or</i> b) <i>mitigate</i></p> <p><i>significant adverse impacts which result in the displacement of other existing or authorised (but yet to be implemented) activities that generate social benefits.</i></p> | <p>The Project will drive economic activity through the Gross Value Added (GVA) and jobs that it supports. As with spending, GVA and employment impacts are inclusive, i.e., impacts in Ireland include those occurring in the Atlantic Region. During the development and construction phase, it is expected that the Project will support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 140 Annualized Full-Time Equivalent Jobs (aFTEs) and generate €13 million GVA in County Galway; • 250 aFTEs and generate €22 million GVA in the Atlantic Region; and • 610 aFTEs and generate €53 million GVA in Ireland. <p>The economic impacts during the operational phase of the Project will be long term and this phase represents a significant opportunity to both the regional and Irish economies. In an average year, the operational expenditure on Sceirde Rocks Windfarm the Project is expected to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 jobs and €3 million GVA per annum in County Galway; • 110 jobs and €5 million GVA per annum in the Atlantic Region; and • 130 jobs and €8 million GVA per annum in Ireland. <p>A detailed report outlining the impact of the Project on the local and national economy is included in Appendix 6-2 of Chapter 6 - Population and Human Health</p> <p>The Project will also directly contribute to the communities which are local to the development in line with the Community Benefit Funding proposals. The annual value of the fund will be approximately €3.5 million once the project is fully operational. The communities that will benefit from this funding will be along the western coastline of Connemara, the Aran Islands and the surrounding areas. The fund will be managed by a committee sourced from the local community, which will determine the aims and</p> |

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| | | | objectives of the fund, in line with the guidance published by the Department for Energy, Climate Action and Communications. Therefore, the Project complies with Social Benefits Policy 1. |
| | | <i>Social Benefits Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals that increase the understanding and enjoyment of the marine environment (including its natural, historic and social value), or that promote conservation management and increased education and skills, should be supported.</i> | The project will promote an increased understanding of the marine environment and offshore renewable energy directly through the surveys and assessments carried out to inform the design and assessment of the Project and through the creation of maritime employment opportunities. The Project will also indirectly contribute to increased understanding of the marine environment and increased education and skills as the creation of maritime employment opportunities will likely lead to an increase in marine related fields of study in universities across Ireland, including the west of Ireland. This is already evident, with the Atlantic Technological University - Galway Mayo commencing a Postgraduate Certificate in Marine Spatial Planning in 2023. ¹ Therefore, the Project complies with Social Benefits Policy 2. |
| | Transboundary | <i>Transboundary Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that have transboundary impacts beyond the maritime area, on either the terrestrial environment or neighbouring international jurisdictions, must show evidence of consultation with the relevant public authorities, including terrestrial planning authorities and other country authorities. Proposals should consider transboundary impacts throughout the lifetime of the proposed activity.</i> | Transboundary impacts are limited due to the location of the Project off Ireland's West Coast. The Project has been assessed cumulatively with other projects, including projects in other national jurisdictions. It is concluded in the Cumulative Impact Assessment in the Chapter 4 Environmental Impact Assessment Methodology of the EIAR and in Appendix 4-1 and 4-2, that the Project will not have a transboundary impact on any neighbouring international jurisdictions. No transboundary bodies or states were listed as prescribed bodies by An Bord Pleanála at the close out of the pre-application consultation stage. Therefore, the Project complies with Transboundary Policy 1. |
| Key Sectoral/ Activity Policies | | | |

¹ <https://springboardcourses.ie/index.php/details/13719>

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| Aquaculture | Aquaculture | <p><i>Aquaculture Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals for sustainable development of aquaculture that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate use of innovative approaches, and/or</i> • <i>contribute to diversification of species being grown in a given locality, particularly proposals applying a multi-trophic approach, and/or</i> • <i>enhances resilience to the effects of climate change</i> <p><i>should be supported.</i></p> | <p>The Project does not relate to an Aquaculture development.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project does not conflict with the objectives of Aquaculture Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Aquaculture Policy 2:</i> <i>Non-aquaculture proposals in aquaculture production areas must demonstrate consideration of, and compatibility with, aquaculture production.</i></p> <p><i>Where compatibility is not possible, proposals must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>avoid;</i> <i>minimise;</i> <i>mitigate</i> <i>significant adverse impacts on aquaculture.</i> <p><i>If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts upon aquaculture,</i></p> | <p>The Project is not located within an aquaculture production area.</p> <p>Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries has assessed potential effects resulting from loss of access to fishing grounds, displacement of fishing activity into other areas, interference with fishing activity as a result of increased vessel traffic, increased steaming times and safety issues for fishing vessels during construction, operation and decommissioning. The likely significant effects assessment has concluded that, taking into account the mitigation, the residual effect for all effects will be Not Significant for all commercial fisheries receptors. Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, which includes an assessment of the Projects obstruction to marine recreational users concludes that the Project will not give rise to any significant adverse effects.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Aquaculture Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i></p> <p><i>Aquaculture Policy 3:</i> <i>Land-based coastal infrastructure that is critical to and supports development of aquaculture should be supported, in accordance with any legal requirements and provided environmental safeguards contained within authorisation processes are fully met.</i></p> | <p>The Project does not include any Land-based coastal infrastructure related to aquaculture. Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Aquaculture Policy 3.</p> |
| Defence and Security | Defence and Security | <p><i>Defence and Security Policy 1:</i> <i>Any proposal that has the potential to interfere with the performance by the Defence Forces of their security and non-security related tasks must be subject to consultation with the Defence Organisation.</i></p> <p><i>This includes potential interference with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Safety of navigation and access to naval facilities;</i> <i>Firing, test or exercise areas;</i> <i>Communication, and surveillance systems;</i> <i>Fishery protection functions.</i> <p><i>Proposals should only be supported where, having consulted with the Defence Organisation, they are satisfied that it will not result in unacceptable interference with the performance by the Defence Forces of their security and non-security related tasks.</i></p> | <p>The Department of Defence was consulted and provided with details of the Project during the EIAR scoping process. The Department of Defence stated that they had no observations to make at this time.</p> <p>Chapter 15 of the EIAR, Civil and Military Aviation, assess the impact of the Project on military aviation. It is concluded that the Project will not have a significant adverse effect on military aviation operations.</p> <p>Chapter 14 of the EIAR, Shipping and Navigation concludes that the effects of all potential impacts are assessed as being either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is Not Significant. No interference with military vessels or their operations is foreseen.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Defence and Security Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <i>Any proposal will be subject to the relevant Environmental Assessments, as set out in the introduction to this NMPP.</i> | |
| Energy- Natural Gas Storage | | <p><i>Natural Gas Storage Policy 1</i></p> <p><i>Subject to assessments required for the protection of the environment, and only where in keeping with the outcome of the review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems (which is being carried out by Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications), natural gas storage proposals should be supported.</i></p> | As the Project does not include natural gas storage, there is no conflict with the objectives Natural Gas Storage Policy 1. |
| Energy - Offshore Renewable | Energy & Security | <p><i>ORE Policy 1:</i></p> <p><i>Proposals that assist the State in meeting the Government's offshore renewable energy targets, including the target of achieving 5GW of capacity in offshore wind by 2030 and proposals that maximise the long-term shift from the use of fossil fuels to renewable electricity energy, in line with decarbonisation targets, should be supported. All proposals will be rigorously assessed to ensure compliance with environmental standards and seek to minimise impacts on the marine environment, marine ecology and other maritime users.</i></p> | <p>As a 'Phase 1' project, this Project is critical for the State to achieve the 5GW target for offshore wind by 2030. Proposals, such as the Project, are required to facilitate the shift from the use of fossil fuels to renewable electricity. The Project will have a maximum export capacity of 450 MW. The 'Phase 1' projects represent an opportunity to install approx. 4.2 GW of offshore wind energy in Irish waters and are likely to be the only offshore wind energy projects to be consented and operational by 2030.</p> <p>The Project has been comprehensively assessed in the EIAR and NIS to ensure that the environmental standards are complied with and to minimise the impact on the marine environment.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <p>ORE Policy 2: Proposals must be consistent with national policy, including the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED) and its successor. Relevant Projects designated pursuant to the Transition Protocol and those projects that can objectively enable delivery on the Government's 2030 targets will be prioritised for assessment under the new consenting regime. Into the future, areas designated for offshore energy development, under the Designated Marine Area Plan process set out in the Maritime Area Planning Bill, will underpin a plan-led approach to consenting (or development of our marine resources).</p> | <p>The Project is supported by the OREDP, which has identified the West Coast (assessment area 5) as being capable of accommodating 500MW of fixed wind without likely significant adverse effect on the environment.²</p> <p>The Project is a 'Relevant Project' (now 'Phase 1') designated pursuant to the Transition Protocol. The Project will directly support the State's climate goal of reaching 5GW of offshore wind by 2030. The Project, and the prioritisation of its assessment, is therefore directly supported by ORE Policy 2.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 2.</p> |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 3: Any non- ORE proposals that are in or could affect sites held under a permission or that are subject to an ongoing permitting or consenting process for renewable energy generation (wind, wave or tidal should demonstrate that they will order of preference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) avoid b) minimise c) mitigate d) adverse impacts, or | <p>As the Project is an ORE proposal, there is no conflict with the objectives of ORE Policy 3.</p> |

² Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources: Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (2014), <https://assets.gov.ie/27215/2bc3cb73b6474beebbe810e88f49d1d4.pdf>

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p>e) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</p> <p>Applicants for non-ORE proposals in or affecting ORE sites should engage ORE developers in consultation during pre-application processes as appropriate.</p> | |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 4: Decisions on ORE developments should be informed by consideration of space required for other activities of national importance described in the NMPF.</p> | <p>The cumulative impact of the Project and other nationally important marine activities has been assessed across all chapters of the EIAR. The Project has been designed to allow for other marine activities, such as fishing and aquaculture, to continue.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 4.</p> |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 5: Proposals for activity that may adversely impact ORE test projects by virtue of being within or adjacent to ORE test sites, or between site and landfall of ORE test projects that may adversely impact ORE test site projects, should demonstrate that they will in order of preference:</p> <p>a) avoid b) minimise c) mitigate adverse impacts</p> | <p>The Project will not give rise to any adverse impacts on ORE test sites.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 5.</p> |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 6: Proposals for infrastructure enabling local use of excess energy generated from emerging marine technologies (wave, tidal, floating wind) should be supported.</p> | <p>The Project does not include any infrastructure to utilise excess energy from emerging marine technologies (wave, tidal or floating wind). Therefore, there is no conflict with ORE Policy 6.</p> |

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| | | <p>ORE Policy 7: <i>Where potential for ports to contribute to ORE is identified, plans and policies related to this port must encourage development in such a way as to facilitate ORE and related supply chain activity.</i></p> | <p>The Project will utilise ports on the west coast during the construction period and for operation and maintenance activities. Local policy, at ports such as Ross an Mhíl and Shannon Foynes, is supportive of the offshore renewable energy and related supply chain uses. The Applicant strongly supports the development of ports and port infrastructure to facilitate the construction and operation of offshore renewable energy projects.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 7.</p> |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 8: <i>Proposals for ORE must demonstrate consideration of existing cables passing through or adjacent to areas for development, making sure ability to repair and carry out cable-related remedial work is not significantly compromised. This consideration should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments are required.</i></p> | <p>Existing cables in the vicinity of the offshore site are identified and fully assessed as part of the cumulative impact assessment of the EIAR and are shown on figure 18.1 of Chapter 18 – Other Sea Users.</p> <p>The Offshore Export Cable Corridor (OECC) directly overlaps/crosses with the IRIS submarine cable (privately owned and operated by Farice). The IRIS cable system, which is approximately 1,700 km in length, connects southwest Iceland to Ballyloughane Strand in Galway and was ready for service in March 2023 (Submarine Cable Networks, 2023). As set out in Chapter 18, works associated with the construction of the OECC will take place over a local scale (within the OECC boundaries), short-term duration and at a low intensity. The significance of the of likely interaction between construction activities and any operation and maintenance works associated with the IRIS submarine cable, and the magnitude of the effect is therefore considered to be low.</p> <p>Mitigation measures to reduce impact on the existing IRIS cable are set out in Section 18.6.2.2.4 of Chapter 18 Other Sea Users and include the development of a Cable Plan, which will include a cable crossing methodology, including the need for any cable protection measures. Any crossing and /or proximity agreements will be agreed between the Applicant and Farice to ensure no damage or detrimental interference occurs to this asset or the Project offshore export cable(s). The crossing has been designed to be perpendicular to reduce overlap in so far as possible.</p> <p>There are no other known active or disused submarine cables and pipelines that directly interact with the Other Sea Users Study Area (Figure 18-3).</p> |

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| | | | <p>As set out in Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, due to the short-term nature of the works and with consideration given to the embedded mitigation measures identified in section 18.6.2.2.4 of Chapter 18, significant effects associated with the temporary obstruction to and maintenance of electricity cable installations as a result of safety zones around Project vessels are not expected.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 8.</p> |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 9: <i>A permission for ORE must be informed by inclusion of a visualisation assessment that supports conditions on any development in relation to design and layout. Where a development consent is applied for in an area already subject to permission, proposals must include a visualisation assessment to inform design and layout. Visualisation assessments should demonstrate consultation with communities that may be able to view the proposal, in addition to any other ORE development, which had received consent to proceed at a given site at the time the consent application is made, with the aim of minimising impact. Visualisation assessments will be informed by specific emerging guidelines (detailed in the actions set out in Annexes to this NMPF). Prior to specific guidelines being available, policy and best practice relating to visualisation assessment should be used. This consideration must be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessment is required.</i></p> | <p>A Seascape, Landscape and Visual Assessment (Chapter 16 LVIA) was undertaken as part of the EIAR. The assessment included the production of photomontages from various viewpoints from the surrounding coastline. The SLVIA was undertaken following best practice. The Project photomontages were used during the pre-application and public consultation processes and selected photomontages were also available on the Project website from April 2024.</p> <p>The photomontages are provided in Volume 2 of the EIAR. Further details in relation to the public consultation undertaken can be found in Appendix 2-3 of the EIAR.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 9.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p>ORE Policy 10:</p> <p><i>Opportunities for land-based, coastal infrastructure is critical to and supports development of ORE should be prioritised in plans and policies, where possible.</i></p> | <p>The land-based elements of the Project are required to transport the energy generated at the offshore array to the national electricity grid. The land-based elements of the Project are supported at all policy levels.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 10.</p> |
| | | <p>ORE Policy 11:</p> <p><i>Where appropriate, proposals that enable the provision of emerging renewable energy technologies and associated supply chains will be supported.</i></p> | <p>The Project uses the most advanced offshore wind energy technologies and construction methodologies. For example, the WTG and OSS will avail of gravity-based foundation technology, removing the need for loud pile driving, reducing the noise impact on marine species. The Project has recently been awarded a STEP Seal from the EU. The Seal is the EU's new quality label awarded by the European Commission and recognises this as a high-quality project proposal in a highly competitive evaluation process, following an evaluation by an international panel of independent experts. The STEP Seal is aimed at facilitating access to funding opportunities under EU funding programmes covered by STEP. The Seal will remain with awarded projects over their duration.</p> <p>The technology and processes involved in installing the gravity base foundations has overlaps with aspects of offshore floating wind foundations. The skills and knowledge gained in the development of the Project will assist the Atlantic region take advantage of future opportunities in offshore floating wind off the west coast of Ireland which is considered to be vital to meeting 2050 net zero targets.</p> <p>Overall, the Project will contribute to the emerging offshore wind energy sector, including the associated supply chains.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with ORE Policy 11.</p> |
| Energy-Petroleum | Petroleum Policy | <p>Petroleum Policy 1:</p> <p><i>Proposals in areas where petroleum activities or petroleum production infrastructure have already been approved, or where applications consistent with the Government's prohibition on new</i></p> | <p>The Project does not interfere with any areas where petroleum activities are ongoing. Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Petroleum Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>exploration activity are under consideration, should only be authorised where compatibility with the existing, authorised or proposed activity can be satisfactorily demonstrated or the proposal is clearly of strategic or national importance. Compatibility should be achieved, in order of preference, through:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>avoiding, or</i> b) <i>minimising, or</i> c) <i>mitigating adverse impacts.</i> d) <i>If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | |
| | | <p><i>Petroleum Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals potentially affecting future potential activity in areas (blocks) subject to existing petroleum authorisations should avoid sterilisation of that area for future petroleum-related activity consistent with Government policy, and demonstrate how they, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>avoid, or</i> b) <i>minimise, or</i> c) <i>mitigate potential adverse impacts on those activities.</i> d) <i>If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts,</i> | <p>The Project is not located in an area subject to an existing petroleum authorisation. Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Petroleum Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding. | |
| Energy-Transmission | Energy – Transmission | <p>Transmission Policy 1: <i>Subject to the appropriate environmental assessments, electricity transmission proposals that maintain or improve the security and diversity of Ireland’s energy supply should be supported, including interconnectors, relevant EU Projects of Common Interest (PCIs), and projects in receipt of relevant alternative EU priority energy infrastructure classification provided for by the EU TEN-E regulations. This should include development of the offshore transmission system and connection with the onshore transmission system necessary to meet the Government’s target of 5 GW of offshore renewables by 2030, as well as development of associated transmission system / interconnector infrastructure for hybrid offshore projects, connecting offshore renewable energy installations with Ireland and one or more other electricity transmission systems.</i></p> | <p>The Project is a designated ‘Phase 1’ offshore wind farm with an MEC of 450MW. The Project is crucial to the achievement of Ireland’s 5GW offshore wind energy target, set out in CAP24. The Project is also significant for national energy security, diversification of the national energy supply and in reducing Ireland’s energy import dependency. The Project includes a transmission grid connection to Moneypoint 220 kV substation in Co. Clare.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Transmission Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p>Transmission Policy 2: <i>Proposals for activities that are in or could affect energy transmission proposals in sites held under a permission or that are subject to an ongoing permitting or consenting process for energy transmission proposals should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> | <p>The Project does not impact on any existing or proposed energy transmission, interconnector or other offshore transmission infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Transmission Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | <p>a) avoid, b) minimise, c) mitigate adverse impacts, or d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</p> | |
| | | <p>Transmission Policy 3: <i>Decisions on transmission developments should be informed by consideration of space required for other activities of national importance described in the NMPF.</i></p> | <p>Consideration of the space required for other activities is assessed in Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries, Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation, Chapter 15 Civil and Military Aviation, and Chapter 18 Other Sea Users. Across the assessments included in the above-mentioned chapters, it is concluded that the Project will not give rise to any significant effects.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Transmission Policy 3.</p> |
| | | <p>Transmission Policy 4: <i>Where possible, opportunities for land-based, coastal infrastructure that is critical to and supports energy transmission should be prioritised in plans and policies. Designation of land-based zones for the purposes of the co-ordination and integration with relevant Marine Plans must be considered, where appropriate.</i></p> | <p>The Project includes an offshore substation, an offshore export cable along with landfall using trenchless technology and an onshore grid connection and an onshore compensation compound, which are critical elements of the Project facilitating the transmission of energy generated by the Project to the national electricity grid at Moneypoint. The onshore aspects of the grid connection are supported by the policies and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project is supported by Transmission Policy 4.</p> |
| | | <p>Transmission Policy 5: <i>Proposals for construction or operation activities within one nautical mile of either of the two existing natural gas interconnector pipelines shall be avoided. If construction or operation activities are proposed to take place within one nautical mile of either of the two existing natural gas</i></p> | <p>The Projects construction and operational activities will not take place within one nautical mile of either of the two existing natural gas interconnector pipelines.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Transmission Policy 5.</p> |

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| | | <i>interconnector pipelines, the views of Gas Networks Ireland in relation to how such activities could impact the pipelines shall be taken into account and either appropriate mitigation measures put in place or the proposed activities altered. If construction or operation activities involve the crossing of either of the two existing natural gas interconnector pipelines by other pipelines or cables, the views of Gas Networks Ireland in relation to how such activities could impact the pipelines shall be taken into account and either appropriate mitigation measures be put in place or the proposed activities altered.</i> | |
| | | Transmission Policy 6: <i>Subject to required assessments for the protection of the environment, and only where in keeping with the outcome of the review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems (which is being carried out by Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications), and not involving the importation of fracked gas, additional proposals for natural gas transmission/ import infrastructure should be supported.</i> | The Project does not include natural gas transmission or import infrastructure. Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Transmission Policy 5. . |
| Fisheries | Fisheries | Fisheries Policy 1: <i>Proposals that may have significant adverse impacts on access for existing fishing activities, must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i> | Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries has assessed potential effects resulting from loss of access to fishing grounds, displacement of fishing activity into other areas, interference with fishing activity as a result of increased vessel traffic, increased steaming times and safety issues for fishing vessels during construction, operation and decommissioning. The likely significant effects assessment has concluded that, taking into account the mitigation by |

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| | | <p>a) <i>avoid</i></p> <p>b) <i>minimise, or</i></p> <p>c) <i>mitigate such impacts.</i></p> <p>d) <i>If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on fishing activity, the public benefits for proceeding with the proposal that outweigh the significant adverse impacts on existing fishing activity must be demonstrated.</i></p> | <p>design, the residual effect for all effects will be Not Significant for all commercial fisheries receptors.</p> <p>The Applicant has engaged with the fishing industry on an ongoing basis throughout the course of the Project. Local fisheries were identified as a key stakeholder at an early stage in the Project and the primary objective of the Applicant was to engage with local fisheries from this early stage in an honest, open and transparent manner. Meetings with key stakeholders within the fishing industry, commenced in early 2022 and have continued since then.</p> <p>These meetings built a two-way collaborative relationship between the Applicant and the fishing industry. The engagement allowed the Applicant to understand the fishing practices that exist within and surrounding the Offshore Site, and to take on board the feedback and concerns of the fishing industry. This feedback was communicated to the Project team, allowing for fisheries to be a central consideration during all stages of the iterative design process of the Project. At the same time, the meetings provided a platform for the fishing industry to learn about the Project and the proposed infrastructure, the design process, planned surveys, and more.</p> <p>The Applicant is also a contributor to the Seafood/Offshore Renewable Energy Working Group through industry representatives. The role of the Seafood/ORE Working Group is to facilitate discussion on matters arising from the interaction of the Irish seafood and offshore renewable energy industries, to promote and share best practice, and to encourage liaison with other sectors in the marine environment. The working group is independently chaired by Captain Robert McCabe and the current membership comprises organisations representing the Seafood Sector, organisations representing the ORE sector, Government Departments, and state agencies. The Applicant supports the discussions and any recommendations arising from this working group.</p> <p>The project will also have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca €3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. The Applicant strongly supports ringfencing a proportion of the fund to support marine related activities. This has the potential to significantly enhance fishing activities in the area.</p> |

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| | | | Therefore, the Project complies with Fisheries Policy 1. |
| | | <p><i>Fisheries Policy 2:</i> <i>Where significant impact upon fishing activity arising from any proposal is identified, a Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy (FMMS) should be prepared by the proposer of development or other maritime area use, in consultation with local fishing interests and other interests as appropriate. All efforts should be made to agree the FMMS with those interests. Those interests should also undertake to engage with the proposer and provide best available, transparent and accurate information and data in a timely manner to help complete the FMMS. The FMMS should be drawn up as part of readying a proposal prior to submission, with measures identified to be considered in finalising conditions of any authorisations granted. Development of the strategy should be coordinated with other relevant assessments such as EIA where possible.</i></p> <p><i>The content of the Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy (FMMS) should be relevant to the particular circumstances and could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>An assessment of the potential impact of all stages of the development or other suggested use on the affected</i> | <p>An FMMS was prepared and is submitted with this application. The FMMS is included as Appendix 5-7 of the EIAR.</p> <p>The final version of the FMMS is subject to the outcome of discussions ongoing at the Seafood/ORE Working Group as there is an intention to prepare an agreed position on co-existence between ORE projects and local fishing communities. Any such agreement and any other agreements arising from the Seafood ORE Working Group will be integrated into the FMMS as appropriate. The FMMS will be circulated with the local fishing community for discussion, adaption and agreement when the appropriate details arising from the Seafood/ORE Working Group are available and integrated with the FMMS and in advance of the commencement of construction at the Offshore Site.</p> <p>Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries has assessed potential effects resulting from loss of access to fishing grounds, displacement of fishing activity into other areas, interference with fishing activity as a result of increased vessel traffic, increased steaming times and safety issues for fishing vessels during construction, operation and decommissioning. The likely significant effects assessment has concluded that, taking into account the mitigation by design and co-operation measures, the residual effect for all effect pathways will be Not Significant for all commercial fisheries receptors.</p> <p>This will ensure compliance with Fisheries Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | <p><i>fishery or fisheries, both in socio-economic terms and in relation to environmental sustainability. This assessment should include consideration of any impact upon cultural identity within fishing communities, as well as identifying indirect / in-combination matters.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A recognition that the disruption to existing fishing opportunities / activity should be minimised as far as possible.</i> <i>Demonstration of the public benefit(s) that outweigh the significant impacts identified.</i> <i>Reasonable measures to mitigate any constraints which the proposed development or use may place on existing or proposed fishing activity.</i> <i>Reasonable measures to mitigate any potential impacts on sustainability of fish stocks (e.g. impacts on spawning grounds or areas of fish or shellfish abundance) and any socio economic impacts.</i> <i>Where it does not prove possible to agree the FMMS with all interests:</i> <i>Divergent views and the reasons for any divergence of views between the parties should be fully explained in the FMMS, and dissenting views should be given a platform within the said FMMS to make their case.</i> | |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where divergent views are identified, relevant public authorities should be engaged to identify informal and formal steps designed to enable proposal(s) to progress. | |
| | | <p>Fisheries Policy 3: Proposals that enhance the sustainability of fisheries or support a sustainable fishing industry, including the industry's diversification and or enhanced resilience to the effects of climate change, should be supported provided they fully meet the environmental safeguards contained within authorisation processes.</p> | <p>The Applicant has supported initiatives that support a sustainable fishing industry and is developing additional schemes to support the diversification of the local fishing industry.</p> <p>The project will have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca € 3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. The Applicant strongly supports ringfencing a proportion of the fund to support marine related activities. This has the potential to support initiatives intended to promote and enhance sustainable fisheries in the area.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Fisheries Policy 3.</p> |
| | | <p>Fisheries Policy 4: Infrastructural proposals that enable access to fishing activities should be supported provided they fully meet the environmental safeguards contained within authorisation processes.</p> | <p>There will be no long-term significant impact on access to fishing activities associated with the Project. Any short-term impacts will be mitigated as set out in Chapter 13 – Commercial Fisheries and in the FMMS (Appendix 5-7).</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Fisheries Policy 4.</p> |
| | | <p>Fisheries Policy 5: Proposals, regardless of the type of activity they relate to, enhancing essential fish habitat, including spawning, nursery and feeding grounds, and migratory routes should be supported. If proposals cannot enhance essential fish habitat, they must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</p> <p>a) avoid,</p> | <p>The impact of the Project on fish habitat, including spawning, nursery and feeding grounds and migratory routes, is assessed in Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology. The assessment concluded that with mitigation considered, the residual effect pathway would be Not Significant for all fish and shellfish receptors.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Fisheries Policy 5.</p> |

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| | | <p>b) minimise, c) mitigate d) significant adverse impact on essential fish habitat, including spawning, nursey and feeding grounds, and migration routes.</p> <p><i>If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impact on essential fish habitat, proposals must set out the reasons for proceeding.</i></p> | |
| | | <p>Fisheries Policy 6: <i>Ports and harbours should seek to engage with fishing and other relevant stakeholders at an early stage to discuss any changes in infrastructure that may affect them. Any port or harbour developments should take account of the needs of the dependent fishing fleets with a view to avoiding commercial harm where possible. Where a port or harbour has reached a minimum level of infrastructure required to support a viable fishing fleet, there should be a presumption in favour of maintaining this infrastructure, provided there is an ongoing requirement for it to remain in place and that it continues to be fit for purpose.</i></p> | <p>The Applicant supports the development of local ports and harbours that can enhance facilities for the fishing community as well as providing infrastructure to support offshore renewable energy development. In particular, the Applicant supports the proposed development of Rosamhil harbour where there are plans for expansion to improve fisheries facilities and which could be used by the Project.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Fisheries Policy 6.</p> |
| Mineral Exploration and Mining | Mineral Exploration and Mining | <p>Mineral Exploration and Mining Policy 1: <i>Only proposals which are in line with national policy on mineral exploration and mining should be considered, provided they fully meet the environmental</i></p> | <p>The Project is not a mineral exploration or mining project.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Mineral Exploration and Mining Policy 1.</p> |

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| | | <i>safeguards contained within the mineral exploration and mining consent processes.</i> | |
| Ports, Harbour and Shipping | Ports, Harbour and Shipping | <p><i>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 1</i></p> <p><i>To provide for shipping activity and freedom of navigation the following factors will be taken into account when reaching decisions regarding development and use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The extent to which the locational decision interferes with existing or planned routes used by shipping, access to ports and harbours and navigational safety. This includes commercial anchorages and approaches to ports as well as key littoral and offshore routes;</i> <i>A mandatory Navigation Risk Assessment;</i> <i>Where interference is likely: whether reasonable alternatives can be identified; and</i> <i>Where there are no reasonable alternatives: whether mitigation through measures adopted in accordance with the principles and procedures established by the International Maritime Organisation can be achieved at no significant cost to the shipping or ports sector.</i> | <p>Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation has assessed the potential effects arising from the displacement of third-party vessels and resulting increased collision risk, collision risk between third-party and Project vessels, reduced access to local ports, creation of third-party allision risk (where one object only is moving), reduction in under-keel clearance, anchor interaction with subsea infrastructure, and emergency response capability. With the proposed mitigation measures outlined in the chapter in place, as well as consideration of a safety justification (Annex to Appendix 14-1 of the EIAR) for the array layout, these impacts result in effects that are entirely either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which are Not Significant.</p> <p>A Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA) was undertaken and is included as Appendix 14.1 of the EIAR. The NRA provides a risk statement which takes into consideration the outputs of consultation, lessons learnt from previous offshore wind farm developments, the baseline characterisation of the existing environment, outputs of collision and allision risk modelling, and expert opinion and the potential Shipping and Navigation hazards due to the presence of the Offshore Site. The significance of risk has been determined as either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation (and As Low As Reasonably Practicable) for all shipping and navigation hazards assessed.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 2:</i></p> <p><i>Proposals that may have a significant impact upon current activity and future</i></p> | <p>The potential for reduced access to ports and harbour activities is assessed in Chapter 14 - Shipping and Navigation of the EIAR. Given the relative distance to ports in the area and the anticipated deviations for the main commercial routes, it is not anticipated that there</p> |

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| | | <p><i>opportunity for expansion of port and harbour activities should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) avoid b) minimise, or c) mitigate significant adverse impacts, and d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on current activity and future opportunity for expansion of port and harbour activities, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding. | <p>will be any substantial effect on vessel approaches to and from the local ports due to the Project. Embedded mitigation measures are proposed to reduce the significance of effect are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting and marking; • Marine coordination for project vessels; • Marking on nautical charts; • Project vessel compliance with international marine regulations; and • Promulgation of information. <p>The Applicant supports the expansion and improvement of port facilities that will enable the construction and operation of the Project although this is a matter for the relevant port authorities and government.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 2.</p> |
| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 3: <i>Proposals that may have a significant impact upon current activity and future opportunity for expansion of port and harbour activities must demonstrate consideration of the National Ports Policy, the National Planning Framework, and relevant provisions related to the TEN-T network.</i></p> | <p>The potential for reduced access to ports and harbour activities is assessed in Chapter 14 - Shipping and Navigation of the EIAR. Given the relative distance to ports in the area and the anticipated deviations for the main commercial routes, it is not anticipated that there will be any substantial effect on vessel approaches to and from the local ports due to the Project.</p> <p>The Applicant supports the National Ports Policy, the National Planning Framework and relevant provisions related to the TEN-T network as improving the capacity of Irish ports will improve facilities for offshore renewable energy development and deployment</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 3.</p> |
| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 4: <i>Proposals within ports limits, beside or in the vicinity of ports, and / or that impact upon the main routes of significance to a port, must demonstrate within applications that they have:</i></p> | <p>Consultation with the relevant port authorities, the Department of Transport, MSO and Commissioners of Irish Lights is described in Section 14.3 – Scoping and Consultation of Chapter 14 – Shipping and Navigation in the EIAR.</p> <p>A Navigational Risk Assessment was undertaken and is included as Appendix 14.1 of the EIAR. Given the low levels of commercial traffic in the region, all commercial operators</p> |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>been informed by consultation at pre-application stage or earlier with the relevant port authority;</i> <i>have carried out a navigational risk assessment including an analysis of maritime traffic in the area; and</i> <i>have consulted Department of Transport, MSO and Commissioners of Irish Lights.</i> <p><i>Applicants must continue to engage parties identified in pre-application processes as appropriate during the decision-making process.</i></p> | <p>identified were contacted. The full list of Regular Operators is provided in Appendix C of the Navigational Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 4.</p> |
| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 5: <i>Proposals for capital dredging will be supported where it is necessary to safeguard national port capacity and Ireland's international connectivity, and where required compliance assessments associated with authorisations have been carried out and incorporated into subsequent competent authority decision(s).</i></p> | <p>The Project does not relate to a capital dredging project.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 5</p> |
| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 6: <i>In areas of authorised dredging activity, including those subject to navigational dredging, proposals for other activities will not be supported unless they are compatible with the dredging activity.</i></p> | <p>The Project is not located in an area of authorised dredging activity.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 6.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 7: <i>Proposals for maintenance dredging activity will be supported where:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>relevant decisions by competent authorities incorporate the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes, as well as necessary compliance assessments associated with authorisations, including in relation to the planning process;</i> <i>there will be no significant adverse impact on marine activities or uses or the maritime area. Any potential adverse impact will be, in order of preference, avoided, minimised or mitigated;</i> <i>dredged waste is managed in accordance with internationally agreed hierarchy of waste management options for sea disposal;</i> <i>if disposing of dredged material at sea, existing registered disposal sites are used, in preference to new disposal sites; and</i> <i>where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF.</i> | <p>While the Project does not relate to a maintenance dredging project, dredging and disposal are required for the construction of the Project. The impact of dredging and disposal areas at the Offshore Site has been assessed as part of the EIAR.</p> <p>The impact of dredging and disposal on marine physical processes and on water and sediment quality are assessed in Chapters 7 and 8 of the EIAR. Both Chapters conclude that dredging and disposal activities will not give rise to any significant effects when mitigation measures are considered.</p> <p>The impact of dredging and disposal on marine species and habitats is assessed in Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals. All three Chapters conclude that with mitigation measures considered, the residual effects will be not significant for all receptors.</p> <p>The impact of dredging and disposal on other marine activities is assessed in Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, with mitigation measures considered, no likely significant residual effects are identified.</p> <p>A Dumping at Sea permit is required for the Project. An application will be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with the Foreshore and Dumping at Sea (Amendment) Act 2009. All permit application documents will be available to view on the EPA website and will be subject to a public consultation process.</p> <p>The Project contributes to the policies and objectives of the NMPF by facilitating an offshore renewable energy project of national importance, which is directly supported by ORE Policies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 7.</p> |
| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 8: <i>Proposals that cause significant adverse impacts on licensed disposal areas should not be supported Proposals that cannot</i></p> | <p>Other licenced disposal areas have been considered where relevant in the EIAR. These are all distant from proposed site activities or will expire prior to any works commencing in the area. No significant impacts on licenced disposal areas have been identified.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p><i>avoid such impact must, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) minimise,</i> <i>b) mitigate, or</i> <i>c) if it is not possible to mitigate the significant adverse impacts, proposals must set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 8.</p> |
| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 9: <i>Proposals for the management of dredged material must demonstrate that they have been assessed against the waste hierarchy (see Glossary).</i></p> | <p>The management of all waste relating to the Offshore site is set out in the OEMP (Appendix 5-2) and the associated Resource and Waste Management Plan (Appendix 5-5). The waste hierarchy was used as the guiding principle in the creation of these plans and provides the general direction to which waste will be treated.</p> <p>The potential impacts of dredging and disposal on marine physical processes and on water and sediment quality are assessed in Chapters 7 and 8 of the EIAR. Both Chapters conclude that dredging and disposal activities will not give rise to any significant effects when mitigation measures are considered.</p> <p>The potential impact of dredging and disposal on marine species and habitats are assessed in Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals. All three Chapters conclude that with mitigation measures considered, the residual effects will be not significant for all receptors.</p> <p>The potential impact of dredging and disposal on other marine activities is assessed in Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, with mitigation measures considered, no likely significant residual effects are identified.</p> <p>A Dumping at Sea permit is required for the Project. An application will be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with the Foreshore and Dumping at Sea (Amendment) Act 2009. All permit application documents will be available to view on the EPA website and will be subject to a public consultation process.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 9.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 10</p> <p><i>Proposals identifying new dredge disposal sites which are subject to best practice and guidance from previous studies should be supported where:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>competent authority decisions incorporate necessary compliance assessments associated with authorisations; and</i> • <i>they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF.</i> <p><i>Proposals must include an adequate characterisation study, be assessed against the waste hierarchy and must be informed by consultation with all relevant stakeholders.</i></p> | <p>The potential impacts of dredging and disposal on marine physical processes and on water and sediment quality are assessed in Chapters 7 and 8 of the EIAR. Both Chapters conclude that dredging and disposal activities will not give rise to any significant effects when mitigation measures are considered.</p> <p>The potential impact of dredging and disposal on marine species and habitats are assessed in Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish and Chapter 12 Marine Mammals. All three Chapters conclude that with mitigation measures considered, the residual effects will be not significant for all receptors.</p> <p>The potential impact of dredging and disposal on other marine activities is assessed in Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, with mitigation measures considered, no likely significant residual effects are identified.</p> <p>A Dumping at Sea permit is required for the Project. An application will be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with the Foreshore and Dumping at Sea (Amendment) Act 2009. All permit application documents will be available to view on the EPA website and will be subject to a public consultation process.</p> <p>The Project contributes to the policies and objectives of the NMPF by facilitating an offshore renewable energy project of national importance, which is directly supported by ORE Policies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 10.</p> |
| Safety at Sea | Safety at Sea | <p>Safety at Sea Policy 1:</p> <p><i>Proposals for installation, operation, and decommissioning of Offshore Wind Farms must demonstrate how they will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minimise navigational risk between commercial vessels arising from an increase in the density of vessels in</i> | <p>The impact on commercial and recreational vessels is assessed in Chapter 14 - Shipping and Navigation and Chapter 18 Other Sea Users of the EIAR. Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation, which includes consideration of the turbine blade height in relation to recommended clearance height for vessels, concludes that the effects of all potential impacts are assessed as being either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is Not Significant. Chapter 18 Other Sea Users, which includes an assessment of the Projects obstruction to marine recreational users concludes that the Project will not give rise to any significant adverse effects.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p><i>maritime space as a result of wind farm layout; and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Allow for recreational vessels within the Offshore Wind Farm (including consideration of turbine height) or redirect recreational vessels, minimising navigational risk arising between recreational and commercial vessels.</i> | <p>Mitigation measures are proposed to ensure the navigational risk between commercial and recreational vessels and the Project is minimised. Mitigation measures include the following, which are described in further detail in the Vessel Management Plan, included as Appendix 5-10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory safe passing distances; • Buoyed construction area; • Guard vessel(s); • Lighting and marking; • Marine coordination for project vessels; • Marking on nautical charts; • Pollution planning; • Project vessel compliance with international marine regulations; and • Promulgation of information. <p>A Navigational Risk Assessment was undertaken and is included as Appendix 14-1 of the EIAR. The NRA provides a risk statement which takes into consideration the outputs of consultation, lessons learnt from previous offshore wind farm developments, the baseline characterisation of the existing environment, outputs of collision and allision risk modelling, and expert opinion and the potential Shipping and Navigation hazards due to the presence of the Offshore Site. The significance of risk has been determined as either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation (and As Low As Reasonably Practicable) for all shipping and navigation hazards assessed. Therefore, the Project complies with Safety at Sea Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Safety at Sea Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals for infrastructure that have the potential to significantly reduce under-keel clearance must demonstrate how they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>avoid,</i> b) <i>minimise,</i> c) <i>mitigate adverse impacts, or</i> | <p>The reduction of under-keel clearance is assessed in Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation of the EIAR. Mitigation measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable protection; • Marking on charts; • Pollution planning; and • Promulgation of information. |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | d) <i>if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | With mitigation measures considered, Chapter 14 concludes that overall, the effects of all potential impacts are assessed as being either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is Not Significant. Therefore, the Project complies with Safety at Sea Policy 2. |
| | | Safety at Sea Policy 3: <i>All proposals for temporary or permanent fixed infrastructure in the maritime area must ensure navigational marking in accordance with appropriate international standards and ensure inclusion in relevant charts where applicable.</i> | As set out in Chapter 14 – Shipping and Navigation, Lighting and marking of the array will be in compliance with IALA Recommendation O-139 and Guideline G1162 (IALA, 2021b/2021a) and agreed with Irish Lights. A Lighting and Marking Plan is provided in Appendix 5-9 - Lighting and Marking Plan. Therefore, the Project complies with Safety at Sea Policy 3. |
| | | Safety at Sea Policy 4: <i>Establishing, changing or disestablishing Aids to Navigation (AtoN) must be sanctioned, in advance of works, by the Commissioners of Irish Lights.</i> | A Lighting and Marking Plan is provided in Appendix 5-9 - Lighting and Marking Plan and will be agreed in advance of work with the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Any proposed temporary or permanent Aids to Navigation will only be installed following a grant of Statutory Sanction from the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Therefore, the Project complies with Safety at Sea Policy 4. |
| | | Safety at Sea Policy 5: <i>Proposals must identify their potential impact, if any, on Maritime Emergency Response (Search and Rescue (SAR), Maritime Casualty and Pollution Response) operations. Where a proposal may have a significant impact on these operations it must demonstrate how it will, in order of preference:</i> a) <i>avoid</i> b) <i>minimise,</i> c) <i>mitigate adverse impacts, or</i> | Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation, identifies and assess the potential impact on Emergency Response and Search and Rescue (SAR). Chapter 14 concludes that the effects of all potential impacts are assessed as being either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is Not Significant. Chapter 14 is supported by a Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA) which includes a safety justification (Annex to Appendix 14-1 of the EIAR) for the array layout. The NRA concludes that the significance of risk has been determined as either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation (and As Low As Reasonably Practicable) for all shipping and navigation hazards assessed. Therefore, the Project complies with Safety at Sea Policy 5. |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | d) <i>if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | |
| Sport and Recreation | Sport and Recreation | <i>Sport and Recreation Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals that promote sustainable development of water-based sports and marine recreation, while enhancing community health, wellbeing and quality of life, should be supported, provided that due consideration is given to environmental carrying capacities and tourism pressures.</i> | <p>The Project will not have significant impact on marine recreation or marine based sports, as demonstrated in Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation and Chapter 18 Other Sea Users. Both Chapters conclude the Project will not give rise to any significant effects when mitigation measures are considered.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sport and Recreation Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <i>Sport and Recreation Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals should demonstrate the following in relation to potential impact on recreation and tourism:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The extent to which the proposal is likely to adversely impact sports clubs and other recreational users, including the extent to which proposals may interfere with facilities or other physical infrastructure.</i> <i>The extent to which any proposal interferes with access to and along the shore, to the water, use of the resource for recreation or tourism purposes and existing navigational routes or navigational safety.</i> <i>The extent to which the proposal is likely to adversely impact on the natural environment.</i> | <p>The Project will not have significant impact on marine recreation or marine based sports, as demonstrated in Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation and Chapter 18 Other Sea Users. Both Chapters conclude the Project will not give rise to any significant effects when mitigation measures are considered.</p> <p>The impact of the Project on Tourism is assessed in Chapter 6 – Population and Human Health and is support by an independent Tourism Impact Assessment Report included as Appendix 6-1 of the EIAR. It is concluded in the EIAR that the Project will not give rise to significant adverse impacts on tourism.</p> <p>The impact of the Project on existing navigational routes and navigational safety is assessed in Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation. Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation concludes that the effects of all potential impacts are assessed as being either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is not significant.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sports and Recreation Policy 2.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <i>Sport and Recreation Policy 3:</i> <i>Opportunities to promote inclusive development of water-based sports and marine recreation should be supported, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with a focus on facilities for people with disabilities.</i> | <p>The Project has supported the development of water-based sports and marine recreation through its sponsorship of the Galway Hookers Association and other water-based sport and marine recreation groups. The Project will have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca € 3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. The Applicant strongly supports ringfencing a proportion of the fund to support marine related activities. This has the potential to support initiatives intended to promote and enhance water-based sports and marine recreation in the area.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sport and Recreation Policy 3.</p> |
| | | <i>Sport and Recreation Policy 4:</i> <i>Proposals that improve access to marine and coastal resources for tourism activities, and sport and recreation should be supported, where appropriate, at the applicable scale and aligned with existing development plans.</i> | <p>The Project will have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca € 3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. The Applicant strongly supports ringfencing a proportion of the fund to support marine related activities. This has the potential to support initiatives intended to promote and enhance water-based sports and marine recreation in the area.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sport and Recreation Policy 4.</p> |
| | | <i>Sport and Recreation Policy 5:</i> <i>Proposals should seek to enhance water safety through provision of appropriate International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and European Committee for Standardization (CEN) compliant safety signage. In general, the safety of persons should be a key consideration for planners and due consideration should be given to best practice guidance for marine and coastal recreation areas endorsed by the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group.</i> | <p>As demonstrated in Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation, mitigation measures have been adopted as part of the Project design process in order to reduce the potential for adverse water safety impacts. Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation concludes that overall, the effects of all potential impacts are assessed as being either Broadly Acceptable or Tolerable with Mitigation, which is Not Significant.</p> <p>During construction/ decommissioning, buoyed construction area around the array area will be implemented during the construction phases in agreement with the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Lighting and marking of the array will be in compliance with IALA Recommendation O-139 and Guideline G1162 (IALA, 2021b/2021a) and agreed with Irish Lights. A Lighting and Marking Plan is provided in Appendix 5-9.</p> <p>Information for vessel routes, timings and locations, advisory safe passing distances will be circulated principally via Notices to Mariners but also via any other appropriate media including the Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO). A Vessel Management Plan, included as</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | | <p>Appendix 5-10, details the navigational safety measures to be implemented during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Sport and Recreation Policy 5.</p> |
| Telecommunications | Telecommunications | <p>Telecommunications Policy 1: <i>Proposals that guarantee existing and future international telecommunications connectivity which is critically important to support the future needs of society, Government, the provision of Public Services and enterprise in Ireland, should be supported.</i></p> | <p>The Project does not include infrastructure for telecommunications connectivity other than that required for the operation of the Project. The impact of the Project on telecommunications cables is assessed in Chapter 18 Other Sea Users and concludes that during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases, with mitigation measures considered, no likely significant residual effects are identified.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Telecommunications Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p>Telecommunications Policy 2: <i>Preference should be given to proposals where evidence is provided of an integrated approach to development and activity, such as the bundling of cables (electricity and communications) where suitable, as well as pipelines for multiple activities, to minimise impacts on the marine environment, infrastructures and other users. Compatibility should be achieved, in order of preference, through:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoiding, or</i> <i>b) minimising, or</i> <i>c) mitigating adverse impacts, or</i> <i>d) If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i> | <p>There is no scope for an integrated approach with existing cabling as there are no suitable cables in the vicinity of the offshore site. All offshore cable infrastructure proposed as part of the Project is bundled, including the electricity export cable, and fibre optic, telecommunication cabling within a single cable.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Transmission Policy 2.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p>Telecommunications Policy 3: Preference should be given to proposals that protect submarine cables whilst achieving successful seabed user coexistence, such as the bundling of cables (electricity and communications) as well as pipelines for multiple activities where suitable. Proposals should specify if separate access to cables for the purposes of repair and maintenance is required. With regard to decommissioning redundant submarine cables, a risk-based approach should be applied with consideration given to cables being left in situ where this would minimise significant impacts on the physical, natural, societal, historic, and economic value of the area.</p> | <p>The Project does not include infrastructure for telecommunications connectivity other than that required for the operation of the Project. The impact of the Project on telecommunications cables is assessed in Chapter 18 Other Sea Users and concludes that during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases, with mitigation measures considered, no likely significant residual effects are identified.</p> <p>In relation to the decommissioning of cables, all cabling associated with the Project will be cut and removed where exposed and accessible. Any cabling that is buried or protected with rock berms, mattresses or rock/grout bags will be retained in-situ to minimise significant impacts on the physical, natural, societal, historic and economic value of the area. Further detail with regard to the decommissioning of Project cables is provided in the rehabilitation plan included as Appendix 5-18.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Transmission Policy 3.</p> |
| | | <p>Telecommunications Policy 4: Proposals that ensure and enhance connectivity of Ireland's rural and island communities to high quality telecommunications networks should be supported.</p> | <p>The Project does not include infrastructure for telecommunications connectivity other than that required for the operation of the Project.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Telecommunications Policy 4.</p> |
| Tourism | Tourism | <p>Tourism Policy 1: Where appropriate, proposals enabling, promoting or facilitating sustainable tourism and recreation activities, particularly where this creates diversification or additional utilisation of related facilities beyond typical usage patterns, should be supported.</p> | <p>Although tourism and recreation activities are not specifically proposed, the Project will have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca € 3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. It is likely that projects that support and promote sustainable tourism and recreation activities will be supported by the fund.</p> <p>Chapter 6 Population and Human Health assesses the impact of the Project on tourism. Chapter 6 concludes that the Project will not result in any significant effects on tourism. Chapter 6 is supported by a Tourism Impact Assessment included as Appendix 6.1 of the</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | | <p>EIAR. The Tourism Impact Assessment Report concludes that the tourism performance of south Connemara will not be affected with no adverse tourism impact in the short to long term.</p> <p>It is envisaged that there will be opportunities for marine tourism and recreation activities, which will allow tourists and recreational users to visit the offshore development area. The potential opportunities for tourism and recreational activities at the Offshore Site is outlined in the Tourism Impact Assessment Report, included as Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Tourism Policy 1.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Tourism Policy 2:</i> <i>Proposals must identify possible impacts on tourism. Where a potential significant impact upon tourism is identified it should be demonstrated how the potential negative consequences to tourism in communities will be minimised. This must include assessment of how the benefits of proposals are not outweighed by potential negative impacts.</i></p> | <p>The impact of the Project on tourism is assessed in Chapter 6 Population and Human Health of the EIAR.</p> <p>As part of the assessment, an independent tourism study was undertaken to establish the impact of the Project on the area. The tourism assessment concludes that the tourism performance of south Connemara will not be affected with no adverse tourism impact in the short to long term. The Tourism Impact Assessment Report is included as Appendix 6-1 of the EIAR.</p> <p>Chapter 6 Population and Human Health of the EIAR concludes will be no significant adverse impact on tourism.</p> <p>The Project will have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca € 3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. It is likely that projects that support and promote sustainable tourism and recreation activities will be supported by the fund.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Tourism Policy 2.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p><i>Tourism Policy 3:</i> <i>Proposals for tourism development should seek to optimise facilities and use of space by taking a cross sectoral development approach that provides for multiple activities, whilst minimising the extent to which the proposal is likely to adversely impact on the natural environment.</i></p> | <p>The Project is not a tourism development.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Tourism Policy 3.</p> |
| Wastewater Treatment and Disposal | Wastewater Treatment and Disposal | <p><i>Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Policy 1:</i> <i>Proposals by Irish Water related to the treatment and disposal of wastewater that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>i) service the social and economic development of the country under the National Planning Framework;</i> <i>ii) resolve environmental issues at priority areas identified by the EPA;</i> <i>iii) contribute to the realisation of the objectives of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Ireland's River Basin Management Plan 2018 – 2021</i> <i>• The Water Services Policy Statement 2018 – 2025</i> <i>• Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2012 – 2020</i> | <p>The Project does not relate to the treatment of wastewater.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no conflict with the objectives of Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Policy 1.</p> |

| High Level Objective | Policy Grouping | Planning Policy | Compliance |
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| | | <p><i>should be supported, provided they fully meet the environmental safeguards contained within relevant authorisation processes.</i></p> | |
| | | <p>Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals that have the potential to significantly adversely affect existing and planned wastewater management and treatment infrastructure where a consent or authorisation or lease has been granted or formally applied for by Irish Water should not be authorised unless:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>compatibility with the existing, authorised, proposed or otherwise identified in consultations with Irish Water activity, can be satisfactorily demonstrated;</i> <i>the proposal is clearly of strategic or national importance.</i> <p><i>Where possible, proposals that may affect Irish Water activities or plans should engage with Irish Water at the earliest available opportunity. Compatibility should be achieved, in order of preference, through:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>avoiding adverse impacts on those activities; and / or</i> <i>minimising impacts where they cannot be avoided; and / or</i> | <p>The Project has been assessed cumulatively with other projects, including wastewater management and treatment infrastructure sites. The Cumulative Impact Assessment methodology is included in Chapter 4 Environmental Impact Assessment Methodology and corresponding Appendices 4-1 and 4-2 in the EIAR. The cumulative impact assessment included wastewater treatment plants and their associated activities. The Project will have no significant adverse impact on Irish Water activities.</p> <p>Therefore, the Project complies with Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Policy 2.</p> |

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| | | <i>c) mitigating impacts where they cannot be minimised.</i> | |

PLANNING REPORT

APPENDIX 2

LOCAL AUTHORITY COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT



1.

INTRODUCTION

The Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 was adopted by the Elected Members of Galway County Council at the conclusion of the Special Meeting on the 9th of May 2022 and came into effect on the 20th of June 2022.

The Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Clare over a 6-year period. The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was adopted on the 9th March 2023, and came into effect 6 weeks later on the 20th April 2023.

Table 1-1 and 1-2 below set out the local planning policies contained in within the Galway and Clare County Development Plans and provides a description of how the Project complies with each policy, including reference to where the policy is addressed in the application, where relevant.

1.1

Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028

Table 1-1: Galway County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 Compliance Assessment Table

| Topic | Policy / Objective | Compliance |
|------------------|--|---|
| Climate Change | CC 1 Climate Change <i>Support and facilitate the implementation of European, National and Regional objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures.</i> | The Project will provide renewable energy to the national electricity grid, contributing to towards renewable energy targets at a European, National and Regional level, thereby facilitating climate mitigation through reducing carbon emissions. |
| | CC 2 Transition to a low carbon, climate-resilient society <i>It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to support the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency.</i> | Decarbonising our economy is reliant on the production of clean, renewable energy and the electrification of other carbon intensive sectors. The Project will increase the level of clean renewable energy on the national electricity grid. |
| | CC 3 County Galway Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 <i>To implement the County Galway Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 as appropriate.</i> | The County Galway Climate Adaptation Strategy identifies the impacts of climate change on County Galway. The Project will aid decarbonisation measures nationally and is therefore in line with the aims of the Adaptation Strategy. |
| Renewable Energy | RE 1 Renewable Energy Generation and ancillary facilities <i>To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation and ancillary facilities in the county to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets, to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy.</i> | The Project will have a maximum export capacity of 450MW which will be transferred on to the National Grid. This will aid in achieving the climate change and renewable energy objectives at a national and international level and the transition to a low carbon economy. |
| | RE 5 Renewable Energy Strategy <i>Support and facilitate the sustainable development and the use of</i> | The Project supports the development marine renewables having regard to the Habitats Directive and to the detailed policy objectives and |

| Topic | Policy / Objective | Compliance |
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| | <i>appropriate renewable energy resources and associated infrastructure within the County having due regard to the Habitats Directive and to the detailed policy objectives and Development Standards set out in the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy as follows: Renewable Energy Transmission, Renewable Energy Generation, 'Strategic Areas' for renewable energy development, Onshore Wind Energy, Solar Energy, Bioenergy/Anaerobic Digestion, Micro-renewables, Marine Renewables, Hydro Energy, Geothermal Energy, Alternative Technologies, Energy Efficiency & Conservation, Sustainable Transport, Auto production, Battery Storage, Repowering/Renewing Wind Energy Developments, Community Ownership</i> | Development Standards set out in the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy. The NIS objectively concluded, following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion. |
| | RE 7 Renewable Energy Generation - Transition to a Low Carbon Economy <i>To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation in County Galway, considering the need to transition to a low carbon economy and to reduce dependency on fossil fuels.</i> <i>Chapter 9 of the GCDP details Galway County Council's policy objectives in relation to the management of marine and coastal areas. Policy objectives are included to support the advancement of new technologies and industries while also protecting and supporting the existing marine sectors and uses. First and foremost, the GCDP aims to support the implementation of the NMPF and the marine spatial planning system.</i> | The Project will significantly increase the level of renewable energy generated in the country, reducing the country's dependence on fossil fuels, enabling a transition to a low carbon economy. |
| | NMPF 1 Marine Planning Framework <i>To seek to implement the policy objectives as set out within the National Marine Planning Framework to support the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of the county's marine resources.</i> | The Project is supported by the NMPF, specifically through the ORE Policies. Compliance with the NMPF is demonstrated in the NMPF compliance assessment included as Appendix 1 of the Planning Report. |
| Marine and Coastal Environment | NMPF 2 Marine Planning and Development Management Bill <i>To support and accommodate any change to the marine spatial planning system which is proposed under the Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019 (or any subsequent Bill) once enacted into law.</i> | The planning application for the Project has been prepared in accordance with the relevant marine spatial planning law. The application has been made to An Bord Pleanála under the Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. |

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| | MCE 1 - Maritime Economy: <i>Support development and growth of the maritime economy and balance the competing demands for available space along the coast by different users and encourage co-location and co-existence of activities and infrastructure while having regard to appropriate environmental considerations.</i> | <p>The Project represents a significant opportunity for economic growth with the establishment of a marine renewables industry in County Galway. As demonstrated in the Socio-economic Report included as Appendix of the EIAR, estimates that the total capital investment over the lifetime of the Project (construction, operation, decommissioning) will be in the region of €2.4 billion. Companies in Galway are estimated to be awarded contracts worth approx. €430 million. In the average year, the operational expenditure is expected to support 80 jobs and €3 million GVA per annum in County Galway.</p> |
| | SMT 1 - Marine Potential <i>Support the marine potential of the county's piers and harbours and related infrastructure and other appropriate marine related development and support the sustainable development of this infrastructure to enable the marine economy to develop.</i> | <p>The Project represents a significant investment in the marine economy. The project will support the development of maritime infrastructure such as ports and harbours in the County. As well as physical infrastructure, the skills and knowledge gained in the development of the Project will leave the County in a strong position to take advantage of future opportunities in offshore floating wind off the west coast of Ireland which is considered to be vital to meeting 2050 net zero targets.</p> |
| | SMT 2 - Expansion of Ros an Mhíl <i>To support within the lifetime of this plan the potential of Ros an Mhíl as a port of significance and to ensure its development potential is fully realised in accordance with environmental considerations.</i> | <p>It is intention to utilise Ros an Mhíl as the location of operation and maintenance (O&M) facilities. The O&M facility will contribute to the overall development of Ros an Mhíl and promote the port as a hub for the offshore renewable energy industry. The O&M facility will be subject to a separate planning application.</p> |
| | AF 1 Marine Aquaculture <i>To support the sustainable development of marine aquaculture and fishing industries, so as to maximise their contribution to jobs and growth in coastal communities where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment.</i> | <p>Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries has assessed potential effects resulting from loss of access to fishing grounds, displacement of fishing activity into other areas, interference with fishing activity as a result of increased vessel traffic, increased steaming times and safety issues for fishing vessels during construction, operation and decommissioning. The likely significant effects assessment has concluded that, taking into account the mitigation, the</p> |

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| | | <p>residual effect for all effects will be Not Significant for all commercial fisheries receptors.</p> <p>The project will also have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca €3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. The Applicant strongly supports ringfencing a proportion of the fund to support marine related activities. This has the potential to significantly enhance fishing activities in the area.</p> |
| | <p>MRE 1 Renewable Energy <i>Support as appropriate, sustainable offshore renewable energy generation off the County Galway coast subject to environmental and amenity considerations.</i></p> | <p>The Project is directly supported by this MRE 1, which supports renewable energy off the County Galway Coast. Environmental and amenity considerations have been thoroughly assessed in the EIAR and NIS which accompany the application.</p> |
| | <p>MCH 1 Cultural and Marine Heritage <i>To prevent where possible marine development from compromising the quality and significance of marine culture and heritage in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</i></p> | <p>The impact of the Project on heritage assets is assessed in the EIAR Chapter 17 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.</p> <p>Chapter 17 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage identified one shipwreck within the marine archaeology study area. The wreck is deemed to be of low archaeological potential. No other features of archaeological potential were identified, and mitigation is set out in order to ensure that no impact occurs to marine archaeological receptors. With respect to the effects of the Offshore Site on the setting of onshore archaeological monuments, the proximity of St MacDara's Monastery means that the Project will have a Significant effect. However, it should be noted that St MacDara's island is uninhabited, difficult to access with no pier, and infrequently visited.</p> <p>All other monuments would experience lesser, Not Significant effects.</p> |

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| | | <p>While the Project will have a significant effect due to its proximity to St MacDara's Monastery, the impact is limited to a visual impact. While the impact is acknowledged, there remains a strong rationale for the progression of the Project. The Project is a nationally significant infrastructure project, supported through policy from a local to an international level. The Project is crucial for the achievement of the 5GW target for offshore wind energy by 2030 set out in the Climate Action Plan 2024. The Project is also important to Ireland's energy security and Ireland's ability to achieve the legally binding emissions reduction target set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, as amended.</p> <p>The project is located off Connemara's Gaeltacht coastline. The cultural significance of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht region is an important part of the Project, and public consultation and communication strategies. Given the Projects connection to the Connemara Gaeltacht, the Irish language and unique culture of the region will continue to be strongly supported by the Project through the Community Benefit Fund.</p> |
| | MCH 2 Marine Based Environment <i>It is policy objective of the Local Authority to protect and enhance where appropriate marine biodiversity in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.</i> | <p>The impact of the Project on biodiversity is assessed in Chapter 9 Benthic Ecology, Chapter 10 Fish and Shellfish Ecology, Chapter 11 Marine Ornithology, Chapter 12 Marine Mammals, Chapter 20 Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna and Chapter 21 – Terrestrial Ornithology of the EIAR. The assessments within these chapters conclude that, when mitigation measures are considered, there will be no significant adverse impact on biodiversity or non-indigenous species as a result of the construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project.</p> |
| | MCC 1 Environmental Values of the Coast <i>Protect the amenity, character, visual, recreational, economic potential and environmental values of the coast. Ensure that natural coastal defences</i> | <p>The environmental value of the coast is comprehensively considered in the EIAR</p> |

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| | <i>including sand dunes, beaches and coastal wetlands are not compromised by inappropriate development.</i> | The Project will have no significant effects on the natural coastal defences, including sand dunes, beaches and coastal wetlands. |
| Tourism | TOU 1 Tourism Sector <i>To co-operate with all relevant stakeholders in initiatives that strengthen the tourism sector in the county.</i> | <p>As part of the assessment of the Project, an independent tourism study was undertaken to establish the impact of the Project on the area. The tourism assessment, which included 19 in depth interviews with representatives of local communities and members of the tourism industry, and 212 interviews with visitors to south Connemara, concludes that the tourism performance of south Connemara will not be affected with no adverse tourism impact in the short to long term. It is envisaged that there will be opportunities for marine tourism and recreation activities, which will allow tourists and recreational users to visit the offshore development area.</p> <p>The Project will have a substantial Community Benefit Fund, estimated to amount to ca € 3.5 million per annum. The community will decide what types of projects will be supported by the fund. It is likely that projects that support and promote sustainable tourism and recreation activities will be supported by the fund.</p> <p>The Tourism Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Repucon Consulting, is included as Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR.</p> |
| Landscape | LCM 1 Preservation of Landscape Character <i>Preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation and enhancement, where possible of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.</i> | <p>A Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) has been prepared as part of the EIAR (Chapter 16 - SLVIA). The assessment includes 38 no. photomontage viewpoints, which are included in Volume 2 of the EIAR.</p> <p>The SLVIA concludes that the Project is considered to give rise to Major / Negative seascape effects only within approximately 10km of the site, which envelops the coastal waters and nearshore Islands of Macdara, Mason and</p> |

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| | | <p>Mweenish as well as the complex Connemara coastline of the seaward end of the promontory peninsula they extend from. Major / Negative visual effects are also assessed from two of the representative viewpoint locations within this part of the central study area that are afforded open coastal vistas towards the site. This includes from the uninhabited Macdara Island and from Mweenish Island. These are the only SLVIA effects that are considered to be significant in EIA terms. It is important to note that these represent localised significant effects and there are also many visual receptors within 10km of the site that incur little or no visual effect where open sea views are more restricted.</p> |
| | <p>LCM 2 Landscape Sensitivity Classification <i>The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.</i></p> | <p>The key strategic aims relevant in this regard are outlined in <i>Chapter 14 - Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource</i> of the GCDP are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘To reduce the County’s CO2 emissions by achieving international, national, regional and any local targets for achieving a low carbon economy by 2050; and increase energy efficiency in Local Authority activities through its development management functions’</i> • <i>‘To reduce County Galway’s dependency on imported fossil fuels and to provide alternative energy sources by harnessing the County’s potential for renewable energy sources while strengthening the grid transmission networks’</i> <p>The achievement of the strategic aims above are dependent on the development of renewable energy projects. Local and national level renewable energy policy should therefore be considered when balancing the landscape and visual impact and the strategic need for renewable energy development.</p> |

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| | <p>LCM 3 Landscape Sensitivity Ratings <i>Consideration of landscape sensitivity ratings shall be an important factor in determining development uses in areas of the County. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.</i></p> | <p>The Offshore Array Area is located between 5 km and 11.5 km off the Galway coast and is therefore located in the ‘Offshore’ seascape type. The offshore seascape type is not prescribed any sensitivity in the LCA, suggesting that development in the offshore seascape it is less affected by visual impacts due to its distance from land receptors.</p> |
| | <p>PVSR 1 – Protected Views and Scenic Routes <i>Preserve the protected views and scenic routes as detailed in Maps 8.3 and 8.4 from development that in the view of the Planning Authority would negatively impact on said protected views and scenic routes. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.</i></p> | <p>The key strategic aims relevant in this regard are outlined in <i>Chapter 14 - Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource</i> of the GCDP are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘To reduce the County’s CO2 emissions by achieving international, national, regional and any local targets for achieving a low carbon economy by 2050; and increase energy efficiency in Local Authority activities through its development management functions’</i> • <i>‘To reduce County Galway’s dependency on imported fossil fuels and to provide alternative energy sources by harnessing the County’s potential for renewable energy sources while strengthening the grid transmission networks’</i> <p>The achievement of the strategic aims above are dependent on the development of renewable energy projects. Local and national level renewable energy policy should therefore be considered when balancing the landscape and visual impact and the strategic need for renewable energy development.</p> <p>The impact on protected views and scenic routes is assessed in further detail in Chapter 16 SLVIA of the EIAR</p> |

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| The Galway Gaeltacht and Islands | GIED 1 Economic Development in An Gaeltacht and the Islands <i>To promote and support developments that contribute to the economic development of the Gaeltacht and Islands in a sustainable manner at suitable locations.</i> | <p>As the only 'Phase 1' project on the west coast of the country and in a Gaeltacht area, the Project is important to achieve balanced regional development and to ensure communities off the west coast are not excluded from economic and social benefits of offshore renewable energy development. The development of the offshore renewable energy sector in the Gaeltacht community through training and education has been a key aspect while preparing the application and over the course of the Project to date. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Údarás na Gaeltachta has been signed to formally continue collaboration on education and training initiatives within the Gaeltacht and the Connemara Region. The Applicant is also a member of the EU supported T-shore CoVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence) project, which aims to develop education and training modules to develop the technical skills required for offshore renewable Energy. Opportunities for education and training were explored throughout the community engagement process.</p> <p>The Project will contribute to marine-related employment by creating jobs in construction, operation, maintenance, survey, monitoring and support services. These jobs span a wide range of disciplines and skill levels, providing opportunities for career growth and development in the marine sector. It is estimated that the Project will support 174 full time equivalent jobs over the operational phase, with Project lifetime Gross Value Added amounting to approximately €564 million.</p> |
| | GIED 3 Development of Infrastructure within An Gaeltacht and Islands <i>Promote the sustainable development of infrastructure projects and the improvement of the infrastructure network in the Galway Gaeltacht and Islands with close co-operation with the relevant stakeholders;</i> | |

Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029

Table 1-2: Clare County Development Plan 2023- 2029 Compliance Assessment Table

| Topic | Policy/ Objective | Compliance |
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| Climate Action | <p>Objective CDP2.1: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>To support the implementation of the National Climate Action Plan 2023 and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (and any subsequent versions thereof), and to work with the Regional Climate Action Offices to enable County Clare to transition to a low carbon and climate resilient county.</i> b) <i>To adopt sustainable planning strategies through integrating land use and transportation and by facilitating mixed use developments as a means of supporting national targets of climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, and reducing our carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions; and</i> c) <i>To raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of climate change on both the local economy and communities in the county, and the ways communities can increase their response and grow their resilience to these impacts.</i> | <p>The CCDP supports the implementation of CAP 23, which sets a target of achieving 5GW of offshore wind energy by 2030. As a Phase 1 project, the Project is critical for the achievement of this target as it is one of 6 offshore wind projects which are capable of being constructed and operational by 2030.</p> <p>The provision of the Onshore Grid Connection and Onshore Compensation Compound in County Clare are essential for the connection of the Project to the national electricity grid, furthering the transition to a local carbon and climate resilient society.</p> |
| Climate Change Mitigation, Adaption and resilience | <p>Objective CDP2.2: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>To support the implementation of the Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 (and any subsequent versions);</i> b) <i>To promote measures that build resilience to climate change to address impact reduction, adaptive capacity, awareness raising, providing for nature-based solutions and emergency planning;</i> | <p>The Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 includes policy support for offshore wind energy. Action 5 under Objective 2 of ‘G2 Infrastructure and Built Environment’ is as follows:</p> <p>‘Support on-land and off-shore renewable energy production by a range of appropriate technologies’</p> |

| Topic | Policy/ Objective | Compliance |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) <i>To raise awareness of issues relating to climate change and climate change adaptation during the lifetime of this plan;</i> d) <i>To liaise, collaborate and work in partnership with the relevant government approved sectors in relation to initiatives and activities across the county;</i> e) <i>To support the Ennis 2040 Spatial and Economic Strategy and its aspiration for Ennis to become Irelands first climate adaptive town; and</i> f) <i>To facilitate and support the relevant stakeholders and enterprises in the progression of advancements in climate adaptation solutions and renewable energy generation and technologies.</i> | |
| Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Development | <p>Objective CDP13.5: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>To support offshore wind, wave and tidal renewable energy developments and the ancillary land-based infrastructure and service requirements to assist in meeting renewable energy targets subject to environmental considerations and the protection of the amenities of the surrounding areas in accordance with the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED), the ORE Planning policies as outlined in the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and SIFP SEA Environmental Reports and the Natura Impact Reports; and</i> b) <i>To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub and the development of the Shannon Estuary as a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.</i> | <p>The main elements of the Project located within the functional area of Clare County Council is the Onshore Grid Connection and Onshore Compensation Compound at Ballymacrinan Co. Clare. The CCDP supports and facilitates the development of the electricity network, particularly projects connecting renewable energy sources to the national electricity grid.</p> <p>The Project also aligns with the Council's ambition to redevelop Moneypoint power station as a green energy hub and the development of the Shannon Estuary as a focal point for the offshore wind industry. The Project will connect to the national electricity grid at Moneypoint Substation and the Onshore Compensation Compound site was selected as it was one of the closest viable parcels of land adjacent to the overall Moneypoint site. The Project intends on utilising the facilities of the Shannon Estuary during the construction of the Project. Utilising the Estuary will offer significant experience and aid in establishing it as a central hub for the offshore wind industry.</p> |

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| Maritime Spatial Planning | <p>Objective CDP13.3: It is an objective of the Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>To ensure consistency and alignment between land based spatial planning and marine planning which supports the protection of the marine environment and the growth of the marine economy;</i> b) <i>To support appropriate land-based infrastructure which facilitates marine activity (and vice versa).</i> c) <i>To support proposals for appropriate infrastructure that facilitates the diversification or regeneration of marine industries.</i> d) <i>To ensure all new activities/developments are consistent with the policies of the National Marine Planning Framework.</i> e) <i>To promote the development of a research driven marine cluster in the County to support development of Marine ICT and Biotechnology.</i> | <p>The Project is further supported by policy <i>CDP 13.3</i> which supports offshore wind energy developments and their associated land-based infrastructure and service requirements, subject to environmental considerations.</p> <p>The Project is in compliance with the policies and objectives NMPF, a table of consistency demonstrating compliance with the NMPF is included in Appendix 1 of the Planning Report.</p> |
| Grid Connection | <p>Objective CDP11.45: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>To facilitate improvements in energy infrastructure and encourage the expansion of the infrastructure within the County.</i> b) <i>To facilitate future alternative renewable energy developments and associated utility infrastructure throughout the County;</i> c) <i>To support the Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM) as a key priority for the Southern Region and the sustainable development and reinforcement of the energy grid including grid connections, transboundary networks into and through County Clare subject to appropriate environmental assessment and planning processes;</i> d) <i>To collaborate with EirGrid to facilitate the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity, enhanced electricity networks and new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Plan under EirGrid's (2017)</i> | <p>Objective CDP 11.45 supports the expansion of the energy infrastructure in County Clare. It also provides specific policy support the associated utility infrastructure associated with renewable energy developments.</p> <p>Compliance with objective 3.3 is demonstrated under the specific objective below.</p> |

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| | <p><i>Grid Development Strategy (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process);</i></p> <p>e) <i>To collaborate with EirGrid over the lifetime of the plan to ensure that the County's minimum target of 1,167MW of renewable energy generation is achieved and can be accommodated on the electricity network in County Clare; and</i></p> <p>f) <i>To have regard to environmental and visual considerations in the assessment of developments of this nature and ensure compliance with the environmental requirements of Objective CDP3.3 of this plan.</i></p> | |
| Energy Supply | <p>Objective CDP6.17: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <p>(a) <i>To contribute to the economic development and enhanced employment opportunities in the County by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Enabling the development of a self-sustaining, secure, reliable and efficient renewable energy supply and storage for the County in line with CDP Objective 3.3;</i> ii. <i>Facilitating the county to become a leader in the production of sustainable and renewable energy for national and international consumption through research, technology development and innovation; and</i> iii. <i>Supporting on-land and off-shore renewable energy production by a range of appropriate technologies in line with CDP Objective 3.3.</i> | <p>Objective CDP6.17 a)iii. supports the development of offshore renewable energy production.</p> <p>Compliance with objective 3.3 is demonstrated under the specific objective below.</p> |
| Energy Security | <p>Objective CDP11.44: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <p><i>To promote and facilitate the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure, to integrate</i></p> | <p>The onshore elements of the Project are essential for the Project as it allows for electricity generated at the offshore array area to be transported on to the national electricity grid. The council supports the proposed</p> |

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| | <i>renewable energy sources, thereby creating a secure and efficient energy supply and storage system for County Clare which is ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.</i> | onshore development as its role is to integrate a renewable energy source with the national grid. |
| Renewable Energy | <p>Objective CDP11.47: <i>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>(a) To encourage and to favourably consider proposals for renewable energy developments, including community owned developments, and ancillary facilities in order to meet National, Regional and County renewable energy targets, and to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy;</i> <i>(b) To assess future renewable energy-related development proposals having regard to the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2030 in Volume 5 of this plan and associated SEA and AA;</i> <i>(c) To support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on-shore and offshore) at appropriate locations and of its related grid infrastructure in County Clare, in accordance with all relevant policies, guidance and guidelines pertaining to the protection of the environment and protected habitats and species, and to assess proposals having regard to the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in Volume 6 of this plan and the associated SEA and AA, or any subsequent updated adopted Strategy and to national Wind Energy Guidelines;</i> <i>(d) To prepare a new and updated Wind Energy Strategy for County Clare during the lifetime of this plan, subject to the publication of the update to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006;</i> <i>(e) To strike an appropriate balance between facilitating renewable and wind energy-related development and protecting the residential amenities of neighbouring properties;</i> | <p>As a renewable energy project that directly contributes to the achievement of a crucial national climate target, the Project contributes directly to this objective and therefore is supported by CDP11.47(a).</p> <p>The Project is also supported by the Clare RES, which includes a number of policies that supports the development of marine renewables and the implementation of the NMPF, of which the Project is supported by and in compliance with.</p> |

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| | <p>(f) To support and facilitate the development of new options and technological advances in relation to renewable energy production and storage, that may emerge over the lifetime of this Plan; The Development Plan clearly states that it is essential to ensure ‘energy demands are met without compromising environmental quality’. For example, the CDP notes that almost the entire County has either an excellent or very good wind energy resource. Notwithstanding, the development and siting of wind energy projects must be ‘balanced with the potential impacts on the landscape, ecology and the amenities of local communities’. In this regard, the CDP identifies areas that are considered suitable for commercial wind energy in their Wind Energy Strategy, as discussed later in this section.</p> | |
| Renewable Energy Strategy | <p>Objective CDP11.48: It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>(a) To support implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), and the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan including mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEA and AA and promote County Clare and the Southern Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation; and,</p> <p>(b) To support the implementation of the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029 in Volume 5 of this plan; and,</p> <p>(c) To support the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy with relevant stakeholders</p> | <p>The Project is in compliance with the objectives of the NREAP to increase the amount of renewable energy generators on the national electricity grid. The Project is also supported by and in compliance with the relevant provisions of the OREDP. The project level mitigation measures included in the OREDP have been considered and included where relevant across the EIAR chapters.</p> <p>The Project is also supported by the Clare RES, which includes a number of policies that supports the development of marine renewables and the implementation of the NMPF, of which the Project is supported by and in compliance with.</p> |
| Power Stations and | <p>Objective CDP11.50: It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> | <p>The Project also aligns with Clare County Council’s ambition to redevelop Moneypoint power station as a green energy hub. The Project will connect to the national electricity grid at Moneypoint Substation and the Onshore</p> |

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| Renewable Energy | <p>(a) To support the sustainable technology upgrading and conversion of power stations in the county including Moneypoint to the use of energy efficient and renewable energy sources; and,</p> <p>(b) To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub subject to the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directive, Water Framework Directive, and all other relevant EU Directives.</p> | Compensation Compound site was selected as it was the closest viable parcel of land adjacent to the overall Moneypoint site. |
| Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment | <p>Objective CDP3.3: It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>(a) To require compliance with the objectives and requirements of the Habitats Directive, specifically Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4), Birds, Water Framework, and all other relevant EU Directives and all relevant transposing national legislation;</p> <p>(b) To require project planning to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project development and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to species, where required together with the preparation of both statutory and non-Statutory Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA);</p> <p>(c) To protect, manage and enhance ecological connectivity and improve the coherence of the Natura 2000 Network;</p> <p>(d) To require all proposals to ensure there is 'no net loss' of biodiversity within developments;</p> <p>(e) To ensure that European sites and Natural Heritage Areas (designated proposed NHAs) are appropriately protected;</p> <p>(f) To require the preparation and assessment of all plans and projects to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA</p> | <p>The Project will comply with the objectives and requirement of the Habitats Directive, specifically Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4), Birds, Water Framework, and all other relevant EU Directives and all relevant transposing national legislation.</p> <p>The potential for effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites in the vicinity of the site is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. Both Volume 1 (Offshore) and Volume 2 (Onshore) conclude that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of predicted impacts from the Project, that the Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in light of its conservation objectives and best scientific information, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.</p> <p>The Project achieves 'no net loss' of onshore biodiversity.</p> |

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| | <p><i>Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report contained in Volume 10 of this development plan; and</i></p> <p><i>(g) to require compliance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and support the implementation of the 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan (and any other iteration during the lifetime of the plan).</i></p> | |
| Strategic Development Location B – Moneypoint | <p>Objective: CDP12.6: It is an objective of Clare County Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) To safeguard the role and function of Strategic Development Location B – Moneypoint as a key strategic driver of economic growth in the country, facilitating its sustainable growth, operational expansion and diversification, in accordance with national and regional energy objectives.</i> <i>b) To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub and the development of the Shannon Estuary as a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.</i> <i>c) To support and facilitate the development of marine related industry on lands adjacent to Moneypoint which is compatible with the primary use of the SDL as a Strategic Energy Location.</i> <i>d) To ensure that all proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EC Directives.</i> <i>e) To ensure that all proposed development at Strategic Development Location B shall incorporate the Mitigation Measures as contained in the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary (Volume 9 of this plan) for ensuring the integrity of the Natura 2000 Network.</i> | <p>The proposed grid connection connects to the 220kV substation at Moneypoint, Co. Clare. This development will safeguard the role and function of Moneypoint as it supports the redevelopment of the power generation station site as a green energy hub.</p> <p>Policy c) is of particular relevance to the Proposed Project, the policy supports energy uses on lands adjacent to the Moneypoint power station, such as the Proposed 220kV substation at lands in the townland of Ballymacrinan to the Moneypoint 220kV Substation.</p> <p>The CCDP includes support for the development of renewable energy projects that contribute to towards the achievement of national climate an energy targets. Under part c) of CDP 11.47, the CCDP specifically supports the development of renewable wind energy, both onshore and offshore at appropriate locations and of its related grid infrastructure in County Clare.</p> |

