CETUS CIL Co-deployment Project
MUL240028

Supporting Information for the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report

August 2024

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Introduction

Background

This Supporting Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report has been created to assess University College Cork's proposed temporary deployments of passive acoustic receivers on CIL buoys in the western Irish Sea and Celtic Sea. A Maritime Usage License Application for the project is submitted with this report. This report's main goal is to provide information to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process to help inform the decision-making process as to whether the proposed project, both by itself and in conjunction with other plans or projects, has the potential to have a significant impact on any designated European Site considering the site's conservation goals.

Statement of Authority

Dr [redacted], Principal Investigator of the CETUS Project, and a Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at the University College Cork and SFI (Science Foundation Ireland) MaREI Marine Renewable Energy Centre, authored this report. Contents were reviewed by Senior Postdoctoral researcher D [redacted]. The CETUS Project received funding from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in 2022.

Appropriate Assessment Process

Appropriate Assessment is the process through which the possible nature conservation implications of any plan or project on the Natura 2000 site network are considered by a Competent Authority before a decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed.

The European Commission's methodological guidance (European Commission, 2002) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA. Each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is necessary. The four stages are the following:

Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

In this initial stage, the focus is on evaluating and documenting the rationale and outcomes concerning Article 6(3). The primary objective is to ascertain whether a given plan or project has a direct association with or significant relevance to the management of a specific site. Additionally, this stage aims to determine if a project, either on its own or when combined with another project, holds the potential to cause adverse effects on European site(s).

Stage 2- Appropriate Assessment

In this stage, the assessment focuses on determining the project's impact on the integrity of a European site(s) concerning its conservation objectives, structure, and function. Mitigation measures should be applied to ensure that no adverse effects on the site(s) remain.

Stage 3 - Alternative Solutions

If the Appropriate Assessment indicates potential adverse impacts on European site(s), this stage explores alternative approaches to project implementation, aiming to avoid these adverse effects whenever feasible. It is important to note that Stage 3 is not considered as the primary reliance point.

Stage 4 - Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
When no alternative solutions are available and adverse impacts persist, an assessment is conducted to see if compensatory measures can offset the harm to the European site(s), considering imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI). European law stresses the need to explore alternatives outside the project area during this assessment. However, the IROPI test is stringent, and most projects are unlikely to pass it. Furthermore, it's worth mentioning that the developer does not rely heavily on Stage 4.

Aim of report

This report aims to inform the Appropriate Assessment process, as required under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The report assesses whether the proposed project, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will have significant effects on a European site. It will establish if a screening for an Appropriate Assessment, as described above, is required, thus meeting the Department's statutory obligations under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2021 (the "Habitats Regulations"), to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

The assessment in this report is based on the report Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01, published in March 2021. The potential for substantial impacts on a European site is based upon the presence of a clear connection, known as the Source-Pathway-Receptor link, between the planned development and the European site, as outlined in OPR 2021. Therefore, we have assessed potential connectivity in two scenarios: 1) if there is an overlap between the Maritime usage license area and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which would indicate direct effects, and 2) if the SAC fell within the range of the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity, indicating indirect effects. Also, to evaluate the potential for the project to have significant effects on European sites when combined with other existing, ongoing, or foreseeable plans or projects, an assessment for screening for cumulative impacts was made by evaluating the current and foreseeable licensed maritime activities in the area.

Methodology

Appropriate Assessment Guidance

EU and national guidance exist in relation to Member States' fulfilling their requirements under the EU Habitats Directive, with particular reference to Article 6(3) and 6(4) of that Directive. The methodology followed in relation to this AA has had regard to the following guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management OPR Practice Note PN01 March 2021
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010).

Description of the Proposed Project

Background

Ireland's waters are home to 71 elasmobranch species, from small resident shark species to the world's largest skate species (Clarke et al. 2016). Despite this diversity, there is a lack of data on their movements in Irish waters, with data predominantly gleaned from observational sightings, mark-recapture tagging and ad-hoc reports. The CETUS (Cetacean, Elasmobranch, Turtle, and Seabird) project is funded by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland in 2021. It is led by researchers from the University College Cork (UCC), the Science Foundation Ireland MaREI Centre for Climate, Energy and Marine and partnered with Inland Fisheries Ireland. Key aims of the CETUS project include (i) the synthesis and generation of data on the distribution of Threatened species in Irish waters and (ii) identifying the potential interactions between marine species (seabirds, elasmobranchs, and cetaceans) within existing and proposed offshore wind development sites. The project includes a multi-disciplinary team of researchers working on multiple species across the Irish and Celtic Seas.

The CETUS elasmobranch project is focused on two key areas in the western Irish Sea and the southern Celtic Sea. In the western Irish Sea, and in particular the coastline from south Dublin to Wexford, tope are commonly caught by recreational anglers. Tope sharks are a large, fast predatory elasmobranch species listed by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) as vulnerable in Europe but Critically Endangered globally. Angling records suggest the east coast is important for immature male pack tope and large females, though both cohorts tend to be segregated spatially. Furthermore, females may be using areas of the Wicklow coast as nursery areas. Therefore, understanding their use of this region is vital to halt population decline and conserve and restore the species. Population decline is due to unsustainable fishing practices in the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite its conservation status, very little is known about the movements of this species and whether it is amenable to spatial protection in this region. Courtmacsherry in Co. Cork is one of the few remaining global hotspots for the now Critically Endangered flapper skate (*Dipturus intermedius*). By understanding the movement ecology of these two focal species, we hope to inform their conservation management in Irish waters.

Over the last decade, the development of animal tracking technology, including acoustic telemetry, has enabled the tracking of fully aquatic animals in their natural environment (Hussey et al. 2015; Orrell et al. 2022). Acoustic telemetry involves either externally attaching or internally implanting an acoustic transmitter (hereafter "tag") on/into an animal, which can have a battery life of up to 10 years. When an acoustically tagged animal comes within the detection range of an acoustic receiver (around 200-2000 m), the unique tag identifier and the time of detection are logged on the receiver. Acoustic receivers are passive acoustic devices or "microphones" that do not emit sound and only record tags operating over a specific frequency band. By deploying receivers on CIL infrastructure, it is possible to passively monitor an extensive coastal corridor, revealing seasonal site fidelity (how long an animal spends within an area) and its dispersal patterns. Moreover, deploying on existing infrastructure eliminates potential impacts.

The CETUS elasmobranch (shark, skate and ray) team includes Dr [redacted] (CETUS lead Principal Investigator, "PI"), D[redacted]l (Senior Postdoctoral Researcher and Project Manager), Dr [redacted] CETUS PI), and Senior Technician[redacted], who have successfully run several biotelemetry (tracking) studies in Irish waters of species including compass jellyfish (*Chrysaora*

hysoscella), sea bass (*Dicentrachus labrax*) and blue shark (*Prionace glauca*). The project is also supported by PhD Researcher [redacted], who has conducted and analysed acoustic telemetry data for Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrhynchus desotoi*) tagged in Mississippi, USA.

Design of deployment

Acoustic receivers will be used to detect fish as they travel within the listening range (typically a few hundred meters). Note that this type of equipment does not emit any sound but contains an acoustic receiver (or "microphone") that can detect when acoustic tags (operating over 69 kHz) come within listening range. We propose deploying receivers on CIL buoys using a Polysteel rope tether, shackled to a lifting eye on the top surface of the buoy, with a weight on the submerged end to maintain line stability and minimise device tilt (Fig. 1). Receivers will be attached to the rope tether three meters under the water surface using large cable ties and two short safety lines.

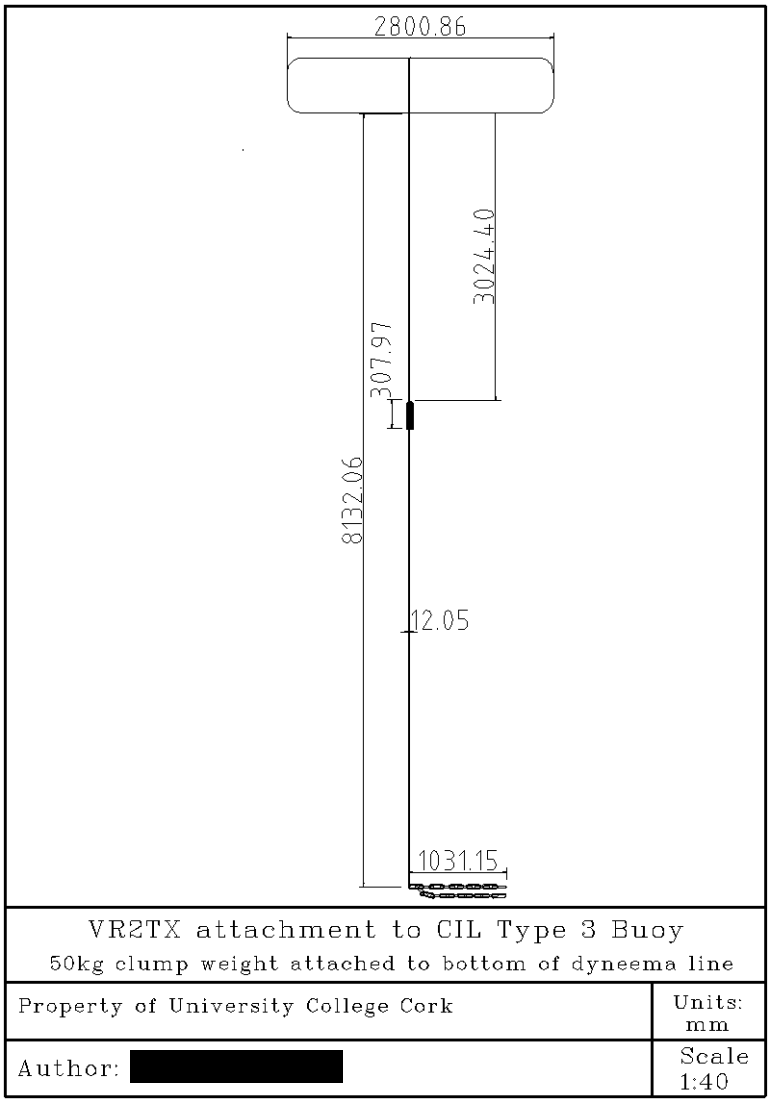


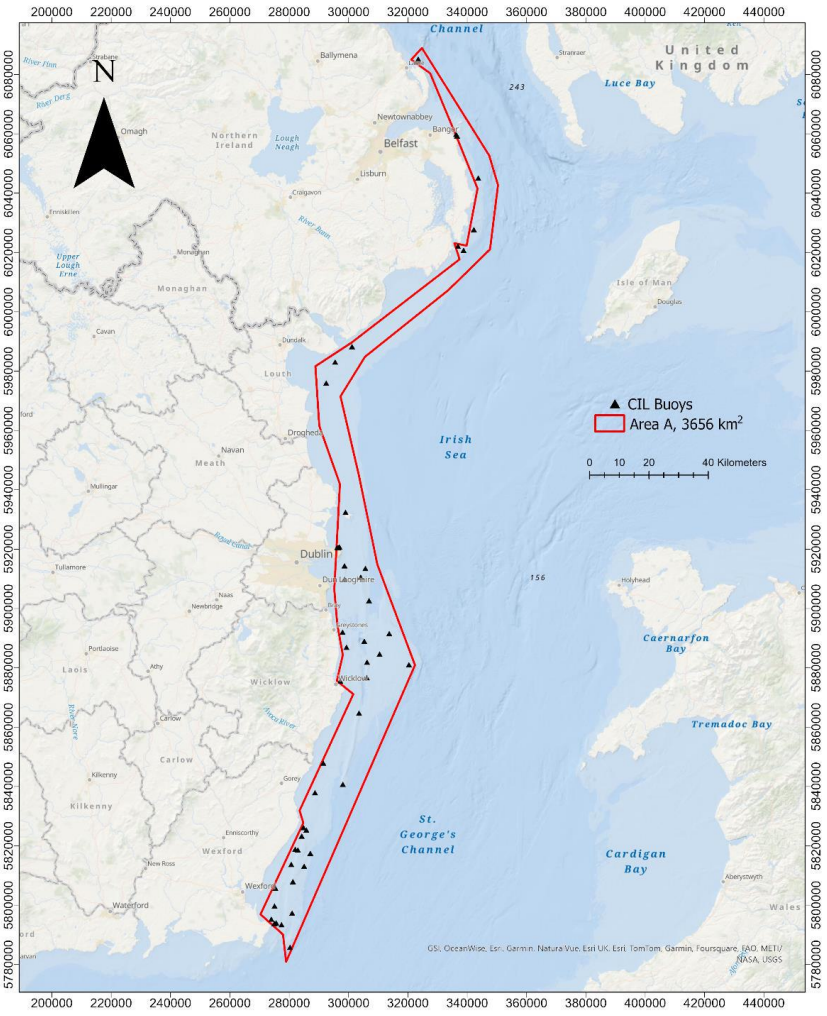
Figure 1. Attachment of acoustic receiver on a Commission of Irish Lights Type 3 Buoy.

Deployment Procedure and Maintenance Operations

The current timeline for deployment of acoustic receivers off the east coast is January 2025. Precise dates for deployment are subject to relevant licenses and consents, weather, etc. However, deployments, as described, are logistically straightforward and can be carried out from the University College Cork RIB boat by CETUS staff and students. Receivers will be prepared and pre-assembled on the poly steel tether for rapid attachment to buoys. The UCC RIB will approach and tie off on the buoy, and the tether will be shackled onto the buoy from inside the RIB. A secondary tether will connect the receiver to the buoy for redundancy. Initial deployments will be recovered after four months during a pilot phase of close monitoring. If successful, tethered deployments will be deployed for 12 months before maintenance (data download, battery change, and redeployment).

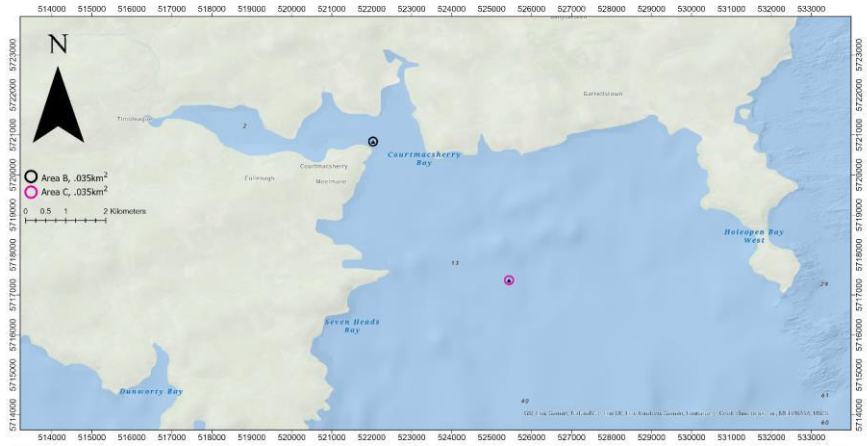
Receiving Environment

The proposed deployments on existing CIL infrastructure represent a trivial addition to a typical navigation or marker buoy. The receiver will sit 3 m below the water's surface, which will equate to a tether total length of 5 to 8 m, depending on the buoy configuration. The tether and weight will not contact the seabed. The receiving environment along the east and south coasts is characterised by shallow sandy, muddy sand or coarse benthic habitat types. On the east coast, powerful tidal currents prevail across the area, particularly along the prominent sandbanks (e.g., Arklow Bank), resulting in high suspended sediments and turbidity levels. CIL buoys are anchored at depths of 7-50 m, with a swing radius ranging from 40 to 170 m. Maps of the two regions are provided below (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).



Title: Maritime Area Usage License- Western Irish Sea Map 1/2, MUL 240028	Description: Map indicating the position of Commission of Irish Lights managed buoys to be used as host infrastructure for passive acoustic receivers. Receivers will monitor the movement of tope within the study area, as part of the CETUS project, managed by University College Cork.
Drawing by: [redacted] PhD Researcher UCC	
Current Date: 27/08/2024	
Drawing No. 1, Rev. 3	
Scale: 1:1,000,000	Projected Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 UTM Zone 30N Projection: Transverse Mercator

Figure 2. Proposed License Area Map for deployments as part of the western Irish Sea co-deployments on CIL buoys, MUL240028. CIL buoy locations are denoted by the black triangles, with the requested licensing area delineated by Area A, the red polygon. Note, all buoy positions are fixed and will not change.



Title: Maritime Area Usage License- Courtmacsherry Point Locations Map 2/2, MUL 240028	Description: Map indicating the locations of two Commission of Irish Lights managed buoys to be used as host infrastructure for passive acoustic receiver. These receivers will support the CETUS project within Courtmacsherry Bay, managed by University College Cork.
Drawing by: [redacted] PhD Researcher UCC	
Current Date: 27/08/2024	
Drawing no. 2, Rev. 2	
Scale: 1:53,960	Projected Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 UTM Zone 29N Projection: Transverse Mercator

Figure 3. Proposed License Area (MUL240028) indicating proposed the co-deployment of two acoustic receivers on existing CIL buoys in the Celtic Sea in Courtmacsherry Bay, Co. Cork.

CIL buoy locations are denoted by the black triangles, with the requested licensing areas delineated by the black (Area B) and pink (Area C) polygons (captures swing radii of both CIL buoys).

Identification of the relevant European sites

21 CIL buoys are located within an SAC or SPA in the western Irish Sea. Four buoys are within the Rockabill to Dalkey SAC (003000), with a further four buoys within < 4 km. Additionally, four buoys are within the North-Western Irish Sea SPA (004236). Four buoys are within the Blackwater Bank SAC (002953), with a further six lying close to the northwest boundary area. One buoy is within the Long Bank SAC (002161), with a further four lying within < 1 km. Sixteen buoys are within the Sea off Wexford SPA (004237). In the southern Celtic Sea, namely in Courtmacsherry Bay, one buoy is within the Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC (001230) and SPA (004219), and the other buoy is 4.6 km and 3 km southeast of the SAC and SPA, respectively.

Given the nature of this proposal and the addition of small passive receivers to existing long-term CIL infrastructure, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in close proximity (1 km) to our planned project site were collated to assess the potential linkage between the proposed project and the qualifying interests of the SACs. The proximity was chosen because the addition of acoustic receivers to buoys via shackle and rope does not significantly alter the size/area of the buoy superstructure. The rope, receiver and weight will not significantly alter the hydrodynamics of the buoys by increasing turbulence, nor will the tether or weight contact the seabed. Therefore, the tidal excursion of the existing buoys will not be significantly altered.

We examined potential connectivity in two scenarios: 1) in cases where there was an overlap between the Maritime Usage License Application Area and a SAC, which indicates direct effects, and 2) if the SAC fell within the range of the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity, signifying indirect effects. For SACs situated beyond this range, consideration was given based on the presence of a Source-Pathway-Receptor relationship as defined in OPR 2021 between the proposed activity and the qualifying interests of SACs. See Table 1 for a summary of the identified SACs.

Table 1. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and their qualifying interests to be considered further in the screening process.

European Site (Code)	Distance (km) from project	Qualifying/Special Conservation interest	Considered further in screening	Source Pathway Receptor
Lambay Island SAC (000204)	0.5 km	Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] *Phocoena phocoena* (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] *Halichoerus grypus* (Grey Seal) [1364] *Phoca vitulina* (Harbour Seal) [1365]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats
Baldoyle Bay SAC (000199)	0.8 km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-*Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (003000)	0 km	Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) [1351] Reefs [1170]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats
Ireland's Eye SAC (002193)	0.3 km	Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats
Howth Head SAC (000202)	0.8 km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats
Blackwater Bank SAC (002953)	0 km	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] *Phocoena phocoena* (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats

Table 1. Continued.

European Site (Code)	Distance (km) from project	Qualifying/Special Conservation interest	Considered further in screening	Source Pathway Receptor
Long Bank SAC (002161)	0 km	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time [1110]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats
Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC [Site code 001230]	0 km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats

Annex I habitats

Direct effects, as described and defined in the 'Identification of Possible Effects' section, are only anticipated in cases where the proposed project intersects with habitats located within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Consequently, for the assessment of screening phase, our consideration focuses on whether existing SACs share a geographic overlap with the proposed project.

Identification of potential environmental impacts

Management of Natura 2000 site/s

Projects or proposals that are intrinsically linked to the administration of a Natura 2000 site are exempt from the need for an Appropriate Assessment (AA). In this case, the proposed project is not connected to or essential for the management of a Natura 2000 site. Consequently, this project is subject to a preliminary assessment for Appropriate Assessment, aiming to ascertain whether, on its own or in conjunction with other plans or initiatives, it may potentially result in noteworthy impacts on a European site.

Identification of possible effects

The potential for substantial impacts on a European site is contingent upon the presence of a clear connection, known as the Source-Pathway-Receptor link, between the planned development and the European site, as outlined in OPR 2021. We assessed potential connectivity in two scenarios: 1) if there was an overlap between the Maritime Usage Application License Area and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which would indicate direct effects, and 2) if either type of site fell within the range of the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity, signaling indirect effects.

Annex I habitats

Several CIL buoys identified for deployment are within a SAC with a qualifying interest, Sandbanks, which are always covered by seawater [1110]. The proposed attachment system, including a tether, receiver, and weight, will not descend to the seabed and will be designed not to contact the seabed at any tidal stage. The deployment will not alter the behaviour or swept area of the existing CIL buoy; therefore, we assess the deployment as having no impact on benthic habitats.

Annex II species

Annex II marine mammal species in Ireland include the European otter (*Lutra lutra*), grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*), harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*), harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), and bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*). Leatherback sea turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and Loggerhead Sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*), reported in Irish waters, are also listed as Annex II species. The potential impact on these animals due to our proposed maritime activity is related to vessel operations during the deployment and maintenance of co-deployed moorings.

Potential impacts from the vessel include visual and acoustic disturbance to the environment and the risk of injury from collisions with the vessel. However, the temporary presence of a single additional vessel in this environment is unlikely to significantly increase vessel activity for the area, given the typical activity levels in the two regions.

The moorings will be equipped with non-invasive, silent environmental sensors during the operational phase. Consequently, there is no potential for underwater noise to impact marine mammals or other listed Annex II species in the area.

The weight will maintain a taut tether, which will minimise movement and tilt of the receiver while also minimizing any risk of entanglement with marine mammals. The short tether (5-8 m) also mitigates the possibility of entanglement, which is generally a consequence of excess loose rope between benthic infrastructure and small surface markers.

Birds

During the deployment and maintenance of the moorings, there is a minimal risk of a temporary disturbance to birds in the immediate vicinity. Our vessel activity may potentially lead to the temporary displacement of individual birds from their preferred feeding or resting areas. However, any displacement is likely minimal and temporary, and any disturbed birds will likely relocate to nearby areas. In addition, the presence of one additional vessel in this area will not significantly increase vessel activity, given the typical levels of activity observed in this region. Moreover,

considering the brief duration of the deployment and retrieval process, these activities are unlikely to substantially impact bird species, either directly or indirectly.

Considering the typical levels of vessel activity in this area, the temporary addition of another vessel is not considered a significant increase. Therefore, we rule out any substantial impacts on bird species resulting from the proposed deployment, maintenance, and retrieval of our moorings.

Accidental spillage

Marine vessels are legally obligated to comply with regulations concerning accidental leakages and spillages. We will use vessel operators that comply with all maritime environmental regulations; therefore, the probability of incidents occurring is improbable.

Invasive Alien Species

The hulls of ships can serve as a potential means for introducing invasive alien species, which can affect the composition and operation of benthic communities and constituent species. However, the boats identified for deployment/maintenance are small and currently operate in Irish waters; therefore, no risk of introducing alien species is anticipated. Additionally, the equipment used will be cleaned and checked before deployment and will only be used within the proposed site for the project's duration. Therefore, we conclude that there is minimal likelihood of the introduction of alien species due to our study.

In-combination and cumulative effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive mandates the performance of an Appropriate Assessment (AA) for any plan or project that is anticipated to have a noteworthy impact on one or more European sites, either on its own or when considered alongside other plans or projects. Therefore, even if the anticipated effects of a plan or project are not deemed significant when assessed in isolation, it is important to evaluate the potential for the plan or project to have significant effects on European sites when combined with other existing, ongoing, or foreseeable plans or projects.

During a search conducted on August 23, 2024, on the Department's Foreshore applications website, several projects were identified that might have the potential to collectively impact the proposed project, as their areas of interest overlap with the proposed mooring sites for the maritime usage license application (Table 2). Note withdrawn applications have not been included in this list. Additionally, we are aware of a successful Maritime Usage License (LIC230006) and a pending Maritime Usage License (LIC230039), which have also been added to this table.

Table 2. Foreshore applications and maritime usage licenses that overlap with the proposed mooring sites, with their respective application status, and possible cumulative effects.

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Application	Project	Application Status	Cumulative effects
FS007555- Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase II of the coast of County Wicklow	Site investigation as part of the ongoing survey schedule for the Arklow Wind Park.	Granted, June 2024	The presence of a small water vessel in the area is not deemed significant.
FS007546- Site Investigations relating to a potential offshore wind power development off Counties Wicklow and Dublin	Site investigation to gather baseline environmental and ecological data related to areas of interest for Codling Wind Park.	Granted, April 2023	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007232 - DP Energy - Latitude 52 Offshore Windfarm Ltd. Site Investigations off coast of counties Wicklow and Wexford	Site investigations for potential windfarm construction off the coast of Wicklow and Wexford counties.	Applied, December 2021	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007135 - ESB Wind Development Ltd. Site Investigations at Loch Garman Offshore Wind off coast of county Wexford	Site investigations to gather baseline information related to the Loch Garman wind park.	Consultation, December 2021	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007188-RWE Renewables Ireland, Site Investigations for the proposed Dublin Array Offshore Wind Farm	Site investigations to gather baseline environmental, geotechnical, and ecological data for wind farm planning.	Granted, November 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007134-ESB Wind Development Limited Site Investigations at Sea Stacks Offshore Wind off Dublin and Wicklow	Site investigations to gather baseline information on a potential wind farm site and cable routes.	Consultation, December 2021	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007588-Site Investigations by Wicklow Sea Wind Ltd for Cable Route off County Wicklow	Site investigation surveys to assess cable routes corridors.	Consulation, May 2023	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant

FS007472 Mac Lir Offshore Wind Limited Site Investigations for proposed Offshore Wind Farm, off Counties Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin	Site investigation surveys conducting benthic ecology surveys along potential export cable corridor.	Applied, September 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007367-Greystones (OWL) Windfarm Ltd proposing to develop offshore windfarm off Dublin/Wicklow	Site investigations including multiple marine surveys to inform on potential design for offshore wind farm.	Applied, June 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007283-Banba Wind Ltd., Site Investigations for proposed Offshore Wind Farm, off Counties Wicklow and Dublin	Site investigation surveys to assess design of proposed wind farm and associated structures	Consultation, April 2023	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007151-Sunrise Wind Ltd., Site Investigations for the proposed Sunrise Offshore Wind Farm, off Counties Dublin and Wicklow	Site investigation for proposed Sunrise Offshore Wind Farm	Consultation, April 2023	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007339-Sure Partners Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2 Site Investigations	Site investigations for gathering geotechnical data.	Granted, May 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007045-Codling Wind Park Ltd.	Site investigations related to Codling Bank windfarm.	Determination, February 2021	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007635-MaresConnect Electricity Interconnector Site Investigation	Survey investigation related to interconnector cable.	Determination, August 2024	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007605 - Uisce Éireann (Irish Water) Benthic Survey	Benthic surveys for proposed outfall pipe.	Determination, November 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant

FS007162-Leinster Offshore Wind Limited Site Investigations off County Dublin	Site investigation for offshore wind development.	Applied, October 2020	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007029-Innogy - Site Investigation - Dublin Array at Kish and Bray Banks	Site investigation for offshore windfarms at Kish and Bray Banks	Determination, January 2021	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007383-Oriel Windfarm Limited, Site Investigations for the proposed offshore Oriel Wind Farm	Site investigations including geotechnical surveys for potential windfarm construction.	Determination, May 2021	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
FS007552 RNLI Site Investigation Works Courtmacsherry	Site investigations to inform the design of the new RNLI jetty and berth and to inform disposal options for dredged sediment material.	Applied, February 2023	Underwater noise from jack up barge and associated small vessel.
FS006969 Cork County Council	Removal and replacement of the existing pontoon and gangway, disconnection and reconnection of power and water supplies to the pontoon. Additionally, dredging the channel and area immediately around the pontoon to a depth of -7.0m OD (proposed dredge footprint is 1,800m^2), and disposal of dredged material on land.	Granted, August 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant
LIC230006-CETUS Cetacean study within the Irish and Celtic Sea	Mooring deployments of acoustic listening devices for cetacean research.	Granted, January 2024	The four moorings deployed along the western Irish Sea, and single mooring in the Celtic Sea could be collected during maintenance of buoy attached receivers.
LIC230039-CETUS Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project	Mooring deployments of acoustic receivers for elasmobranch research.	Under review, submitted April 2024	The two moorings deployed in the Celtic Sea could be collected during the maintenance of buoy attached receivers.

Considering the levels of activity in the vicinity, the temporary introduction of an additional vessel, for one day every 12 months as would be the case during our deployments and redeployments, is not regarded as a significant factor. Consequently, our proposed work will not contribute to any cumulative effects in conjunction with and the other projects listed above on the conservation objectives of protected sites, as assessed in this report.

Conclusion

This report has been prepared to inform whether there is a need for the Appropriate Assessment Process to screen if the proposed project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have significant effects on any European site(s). To do this, we used the Source-Pathway-Receptor approach to identify the conservation interests of European sites that might be affected by the proposed project.

After careful evaluation, it has been determined that the likelihood of significant effects on the conservation goals of these European sites, whether from this project alone or when combined with other plans and projects for the area, can be safely excluded. Our project involves deploying trivial attachment tethers to established CIL buoys. The proposed project is not directly connected with any European site. The proposed project is very unlikely to have significant effects on the qualifying interests of any SAC, and neither will the proposed project give rise to significant in-combination effects on the special conservation interests of any SAC. Therefore, our report concludes there is no need to proceed with the Appropriate Assessment Process.

References

Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities. DEHLG, 2009. Revision 2010.

Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management OPR Practice Note PN01 March 2021.

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Orrell DL, Hussey NE (2022) Using the VEMCO Positioning System (VPS) to explore fine-scale movements of aquatic species: applications, analytical approaches and future directions. Mar Ecol Prog Ser 687: 195–216.

Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.

Site Specific Conservation Objectives

Lambay Island SAC [Site code: 000204)
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000204.pdf

Baldoyle Bay SAC [Site code: 000199]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000199.pdf

Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC [Site code: 003000]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf

Ireland's Eye SAC [Site code: 002193]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002193.pdf

Howth Head SAC [Site code: 000202]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000202.pdf

North-west Irish Sea SPA [Site code: 004236]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004236.pdf

Blackwater Bank SAC [Site code: 002953]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002953.pdf

Long Bank SAC [Site code: 002161]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002161.pdf

Seas off Wexford SPA [Site code: 004237]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004237.pdf

Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC [Site code 001230]
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001230.pdf