Observations relating to further information request for the Oriel Wind Farm Project.

Marine Institute – 29-04-2026

Summary

- The applicant continues to state that the impact of the development, and its cumulative impact when considered alongside other Irish Sea developments, will be non-significant and minimal. However, scientific reviews of the impacts of offshore renewable energy (ORE) on fishing activity indicate reductions of 77–94% for mobile gear fisheries and approximately 36% for static gear fisheries, indicating development could be significant. Furthermore, displacement from ORE extends beyond the immediate boundary of the development. Impact assessments should therefore include an appropriate buffer around the development to more accurately represent this potential displacement.
- The impacts are described as potentially low; however, the sensitivity of individual operators to displacement could be high, and this does not appear to be sufficiently acknowledged.
- It is recommended that the applicant submits a further request to the relevant competent authority for access to Irish VMS and logbook data, to enable a more accurate assessment of the impacts of the proposed development and not solely rely on publicly available data.
- While it is acknowledged that the inshore sector is data-poor, species-specific information and biomass maps are available for the razor clam fishery, as outlined in the Marine Institute's *Shellfish Stocks and Fisheries Review 2025*. This fishery overlaps with the development area, and it appears that this information has not been utilised in assessing the impacts of the development.
- It is further highlighted in the commercial fisheries chapter that the reference period is out of date and that more recent landings data is publicly available through EU data portal or specific request could/should be made to the component Irish data holder.
- Based on this information, there is potential that the full impact of the development has not been fully assessed or accurately described.
- To fully calculate the impact of the development a project socio-economic impact assessment could be recommended.

Background

In March 2026, MI were requested to provide observations in relation to ongoing consultation regarding the further information request for the Oriel Wind Farm Project. Observations were requested on the response document, as well as the addendum to chapter 12 – Commercial Fisheries and the Appendix E Addendum – Fish and Shellfish Ecology.

Previous detailed comments had been provided on the extent of the development and potential impacts to the fishing industry and biological impacts to commercial fish stock on 26th July 2024.

Observations:

Response to Submissions Report

The applicant makes attempts to address the points raised by the marine institute. The Marine institute welcomes the inclusion of a cumulative impact assessment The applicant however states that the overall development will have limited impact on the commercial fishing sectors both at a

development and cumulative impact assessment. The applicant does not look at different scenarios within this assessment and looks to only include the outcome that fishing can continue within the development post construction. Examples presented by the developer indicate that displacement will be minimal. Scientific literature however indicates that fishing within developments that do not legal inhibit access still experience declines in fishing operations. With mobile gear activity reducing by 77– 93% (Dunkley and Soldant, 2022; Fitkov-Norris et al. 2025) whilst effort by static gear is reduced by 36% (Fitkov-Norris et al. 2025). Exclusion can also extend up to 4.2km outside of the site boundary increasing the footprint of the development significantly.

Addendum to chapter 12 – Commercial Fisheries

The applicant has used the reference period 2012 to 2016 to calculate value of fishing within the fishery area. It's stated that a more recent value period is not available. More recent data is available at https://data.jrc.ec.europa.eu/dataset/f847528b-1734-4bb8-8361-f4877ba395ed. This would enable a more accurate assessment of value and subsequent impact to be calculated across all aspects of the development and is fundamental for an accurate assessment of impact.

Furthermore, Irish specific data could be requested from the SFPA the competent authority for logbook/sales note data in Ireland (subject to data sharing and GDPR)

Appendix E Addendum Fish and Shellfish Ecology - Supporting Information.

No additional comments are made of Appendix E.

References:

Fitkov-Norris, B., Witt, M.J. and Simmons, B.I., 2025. Offshore wind farms act as de facto marine reserves. Science of the Total Environment, 994, p.179973.

Dunkley, F., Solandt, J.-L., 2022. Windfarms, fishing and benthic recovery: Overlaps, risks and opportunities. Mar. Policy 145, 105262. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.10526