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Attachment 4.4 - Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species Report

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Attachment 4.4 - Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species Report

1.1 Statement of competence

This attachment has been prepared by Luis Gustavo Iemma. Luis is an Associate Director at WSP Ireland Consulting Ltd ('WSP') with over 15 years' experience in ecology and environmental planning. He holds a BSc, MSc, and PhD in Ecology and is a Chartered Ecologist (CEcol) and Full Member of CIEEM. Luis has extensive expertise in Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening, Natura Impact Statements (NIS), Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA), and environmental risk assessments. His experience includes protected species surveys (bats, otters, badgers, birds, amphibians), invasive species assessments, aquatic macroinvertebrate monitoring, and compliance with EU Habitats and Birds Directives and NPWS guidance. He is also skilled in environmental remediation, biodiversity risk management, and ecological input for planning applications and sustainability frameworks such as BREEAM.

This report has been prepared with consideration of MARA guidelines, including the Species Foraging Ranges rules set out in the Applicant Technical Guidance Note.

1.2 Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species

1.2.1 Species identified

The following Annex IV Species have been identified as occurring within the Zone of Influence of the proposed Maritime Usage:

- Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

This species is listed under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and occurs within the broader zone of influence of the proposed works (Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC). Historical records indicate occasional presence in the outer estuary but not within the River Liffey itself.

Harbour porpoise typically forages in coastal and pelagic waters associated with strong tidal currents, headlands, and islands. The River Liffey is not considered functionally important habitat for this species. The nearest record is approximately 5.3 km east of the proposed works (Poolbeg), outside the 500 m disturbance zone recommended by NPWS guidance.

- Otter (*Lutra lutra*)



This species is listed under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and is occasionally recorded in the main channel of the River Liffey in the vicinity of the proposed works according to National Biodiversity Data Centre records.

Otters are principally piscivorous relying predominantly on salmonids (*Salmo trutta* and *Salmo salar*) but also eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) and do prey opportunistically on a range of prey sources where available, e.g., frogs, birds, and small mammals. The likely presence of these prey items both upstream and downstream of the proposed works, in combination with the short duration of the works means that otter foraging is unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed works.

1.2.2 Potential Risks

Underwater Noise Disturbance:

Sonic and rotary drilling produce underwater sound pressure levels (SPLs) typically in the range of 160–180 dB re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m, with peaks rarely exceeding 185 dB. These levels are below injury thresholds for marine mammals but may cause temporary behavioural disturbance if individuals are present within close proximity.

Visual Disturbance:

Harbour porpoise is not visually sensitive to surface operations at the distances involved.

Water Quality:

No risk of contamination due to embedded pollution prevention measures (bundled fuel storage, spill kits, refuelling using jerry cans and plant nappies).

*Otter (*Lutra lutra*):*

Otters are occasionally recorded within the River Liffey corridor and may use the area for commuting and foraging. The Proposed Project does not involve habitat loss, vegetation clearance, riverbank works, disturbance to breeding or resting sites, or activities that could result in direct mortality. Potential risks are therefore limited to temporary disturbance associated with noise, lighting and general construction activity. Given the short duration and limited scale of the works, significant effects on otter are not anticipated.

1.2.3 Operational controls

To ensure negligible risk and compliance with NPWS guidance:

- Establish a marine mammal monitoring zone covering a minimum 200 m radius upstream and downstream of the proposed works prior to and during drilling operations.
- Implement soft-start procedures to gradually increase acoustic output, allowing fauna to vacate the area.



- Marine Mammal Observer (MMO) presence is required during start-up and soft-start phases, with spot checks during operations where feasible.
- Schedule works to avoid peak marine mammal activity periods where known.
- Use real-time observation by qualified marine mammal observers during start-up phases.

Protected Species Awareness (Otter)

- Site personnel shall be briefed on the potential presence of otter within the River Liffey corridor. The MMO remit shall include recording observations of otter where sightlines allow. If an otter is observed in close proximity to active works and considered at risk of disturbance or harm, works in the immediate area shall be temporarily paused and the situation assessed before recommencing. Standard pollution prevention and water quality protection measures will be implemented throughout the works to avoid indirect effects on otter habitat or prey resources.
- No other Annex IV species have been identified as having a credible pathway for interaction with the Proposed Project. The works are confined to a small section of the River Liffey and do not involve vegetation clearance, demolition, modification of buildings, disturbance of known roosting habitat, or loss of terrestrial habitat. Consequently, significant effects on other Annex IV species can be excluded.

1.2.4 Conclusion

In light of the nature, scale and duration of the Proposed Project, and having regard to the operational controls described above, significant effects on harbour porpoise, otter, common dolphin, or any other Annex IV species are not anticipated. The Proposed Project will not result in disturbance, injury, mortality, or deterioration of habitat sufficient to affect the favourable conservation status of Annex IV species and is therefore considered compliant with Article 12 of the Habitats Directive.



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