MUL Application Supporting Attachment 4.11 National or European Strategic or Policy Objectives

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1 CONSISTENCY WITH NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

1.1 ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

The proposed Maritime Usage aligns with Ireland's national policy framework for marine planning, climate action and offshore renewable energy development, including:

- National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) as described in Attachment 4.1

The NMPF establishes offshore renewable energy as a priority marine activity while emphasising an ecosystem-based approach, coexistence with other marine users and evidence-based decision-making. The proposed usage supports these objectives by providing baseline information and site-specific data to inform marine planning and regulatory assessment without introducing significant environmental pressures.

- Climate Action and Offshore Renewable Energy Targets

Ireland is legally committed to achieving a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050, with offshore renewable energy identified as a critical contributor to these targets. National policy sets ambitions of 20 GW of offshore wind by 2040 and at least 37 GW by 2050, with floating offshore wind playing a key role in deeper waters. Research-led maritime activities are recognised as essential to de-risking delivery and supporting timely achievement of these targets.

- Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy

The Government's Future Framework identifies research, demonstration and data-gathering activities as key enablers for the long-term, plan-led development of offshore renewable energy. The proposed Maritime Usage directly supports this framework by contributing to the evidence base required for future Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs), consenting processes and infrastructure planning.

In addition, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications Circular: MP 01/2024 states that proposals that constitute research and innovation and that are of a small-scale and duration are considered compatible with the overall objective of supporting the longer-term offshore renewable energy programme.

1.2 ALIGNMENT WITH EUROPEAN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The proposed Maritime Usage is also consistent with European Union policy objectives, including:

- EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy

The EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy identifies research, innovation and demonstration as essential to scaling offshore wind capacity to ≥60 GW by 2030 and ~300 GW by 2050, particularly for floating wind technologies in Atlantic and deep-water regions. To complement their national objectives and funding targets, to promote the production of renewable energy from innovative renewable energy technology and to safeguard the continued leadership of the Union in research and development of innovative renewable energy technology, each Member State should set an indicative

target for innovative renewable energy technology of at least 5 % of newly installed renewable energy capacity by 2030.

The proposed usage supports these objectives by enabling improved understanding of environmental interactions and site conditions relevant to future offshore renewable deployment.

- Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The activity is compatible with the MSFD's ecosystem-based approach and supports improved knowledge of marine environmental conditions without compromising the achievement or maintenance of Good Environmental Status, consistent with EU marine environmental policy objectives.

1.3 STRATEGIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

From a research perspective, the proposed Maritime Usage supports strategic objectives to:

- Improve understanding of marine environmental conditions and interactions relevant to offshore infrastructure;
- Reduce uncertainty in future consenting and planning processes through robust baseline data;
- Inform best practice in environmental assessment, monitoring and mitigation; and
- Support Ireland's position as a centre for offshore renewable energy research and innovation, particularly in relation to floating offshore wind technologies.

These objectives align with national research priorities and EU research and innovation programmes that emphasise evidence-based, environmentally responsible development of marine renewable energy.

1.4 SUMMARY

In summary, the proposed Maritime Usage serves a strategic enabling role, supporting national and European climate, energy and marine policy objectives through targeted research and data acquisition. The activity is proportionate, environmentally responsible and consistent with Ireland's long-term policy goals for sustainable marine use, offshore renewable energy development and biodiversity protection.



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