MUL Application Supporting Attachment 4.7 Information for EIA Screening

Client	University College Cork
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1 DETAILS OF MARITIME USAGE

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF MARITIME USAGE

University College Cork (UCC) are establishing a pioneering floating wind testbed, integrated with an energy systems observatory known as FLOWT-EOB within Cork Harbour in Southern Ireland. The main aim of this project is to inform, research and facilitate the extensive future deployment of floating wind technologies in the challenging conditions of the Atlantic Ocean. This infrastructure will advance Ireland's capabilities in offshore renewable energy (ORE).

The proposed Floating Offshore Wind Turbine (FLOWT) location is southeast of Spike Island. An export cable will be installed from the FLOWT passing south or north of Spike Island landing close to the UCC, MAREI building in Ringaskiddy.

This MUL application is for Site Investigation and Survey Activities for the FLOWT-EOB project, as described Part 1 Activity in Schedule 7 "*3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000*."

The MUL Application Area is a total of 308.6 ha including:

- The area including and adjacent to the proposed Floating Offshore Wind Turbine (FLOWT) location
- The area including and adjacent to proposed Electric Cable Corridor (ECC) and landfall location.

This application falls under the application prioritisation criteria "*National and European priorities*" described by MARA "*Applications identified as contributing to National and European priorities such as: ORE DMAP and Related Activities (e.g. Offshore Renewable Energy)"* since it supports research and advancement in Ireland's capabilities in offshore renewable energy.

2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) SCREENING

2.1 APPROACH TO SCREENING FOR EIA

The Office of the Planning Regulator issued a practice note, OPR Practice Note PN02, on EIA Screening for development proposals (Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021). While the aim of the Practice Note is to provide guidance for compliance with the planning legislation, it provides useful guidance for EIA Screening for other consent regimes.

The Practice Note recommends a step-by-step approach to EIA Screening, as follows:

Step 1: Understanding the proposal

The first step comprises the following tests:

a) Is the proposed development a project as per the EIA Directive?

If not, then the proposed development is not subject of EIA Directive, no screening is required, and no EIA is required.

b) Is the project listed in Schedule 5 Part 1 or does it meet or exceed the thresholds in Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations, SI 600 of 2001, as amended?

If it does, no screening is required and EIA is mandatory.

c) Is the project sub threshold?

If it is, then the project must proceed to Step 2, as preliminary examination is required.

Step 2: Preliminary Examination & Conclusion

This step consists of a preliminary examination of, at least, the nature, size, or location of the development, considering:

Nature of the development including production of wastes and pollutants

Size of the development

Location of the development including proximity to ecologically sensitive sites and the potential to affect other environmental sensitivities in the area.

Step 2 will have one of three outcomes:

a) There is no real likelihood of a significant effect on the environment and no further action is required. The reasons for this conclusion will be recorded.

b) There is significant doubt as to the effects on the environment; the project must proceed to Step 3, as a formal screening determination is required.

c) There is a real likelihood of a significant effect on the environment and an EIA is required.

Step 3: Formal Screening Determination

In this step, a Screening exercise must be carried out in order to determine if the proposal is likely to have significant effects on the environment. In making the determination, the planning authority must have regard to Schedule 7 criteria, Schedule 7A information, results of other relevant EU

assessments, the location of sensitive ecological sites, or heritage or conservation designations. Mitigation measures may be considered.

The Screening Determination must record the outcome of the Screening exercise and state the main reasons and considerations, with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Schedule 7 of the Regulations and mitigation if relevant.

2.2 SCREENING FOR EIA

PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 5

All of the project types in Part 1 have been considered in the preparation of this report. The proposed site investigation activities do not constitute a project type or class listed in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations.

PART 2 OF SCHEDULE 5

All of the project types in Part 2 have been considered in the preparation of this report. The following class listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 is the only class that is considered to be relevant to the proposed surveys, and is therefore given more detailed consideration below:

“Class 2 Extractive Industry

2 (e) With the exception of drilling for investigating the stability of the soil, deep drilling, consisting of—

(iv) any other deep drilling, except where, in considering whether or not an environmental impact assessment will be carried out.”

The proposed site investigation activities include geotechnical surveys comprising the drilling of up to 4 no. boreholes. The boreholes that will be undertaken at the landfall locations will be shallow in nature (c. 20m deep) to investigate the stability of the soils and to determine the most suitable construction method for the proposed FLOWT.

The drilling proposed under this application is shallow in nature and its purpose is to investigate composition of the soil to establish the stability of the soil and is excluded from Class 2(e). As deep drilling for investigating the stability of the soil is excluded from Class 2(e), the proposed site investigation activities are not of a class listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations and, therefore, the proposed site investigation activities are exempt as per the EIA Directive

2.3 CONCLUSION OF EIA SCREENING

In answering Step 1, question (a): Is the proposed development a project as per the EIA Directive? as per OPR Practice Note 02, the answer is ‘No’, and the conclusion is that the proposed site investigation activities are not subject of the EIA Directive, no Screening is required, and no EIA is required.



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www.venterra-group.com
info@venterra-group.com