



**Appropriate Assessment Report for
Maritime Usage Licence Application**
From
Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd

**Site investigations surveys for proposed subsea fibre
optic cable having landfall in Kilmore Quay, Co. Wex-
ford**

Application Number No. LIC230017

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21 June 2024

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Statement of Authority

This Appropriate Assessment Report has been undertaken by the Assessment Research and Development Unit within MARA, a specialist unit with appropriate expertise in environmental assessment.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd. have applied to MARA for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to carry out site investigation surveys consisting of geophysical, geotechnical, environmental (benthic sampling), an archaeological survey and intertidal landfall surveys (including bar probes and three Trial Pits). These surveys are proposed to investigate the feasibility of constructing a new subsea telecoms cable system, linking Wales to Ireland, from a landfall on the coast of Wales to a landfall at Kilmore Quay on the southeast coast of Ireland.

The survey corridor has total length of approx. 154 km and a total area of 10,185.4 hectares within Irish EEZ limits. A cable route corridor of between 400m to 1500m in width will be surveyed within the licence application area. The applicant submitted a Natura Impact Statement with their licence application in support of this appropriate assessment.

1.2 Legislative Context

This appropriate assessment report relates to a licence application for an activity in the maritime area in accordance with Part 5 of the Maritime Area Planning Act (2021, as amended). Section 117 of the Act sets out the requirements for MARA to undertake appropriate assessment in respect of proposed maritime usage. The EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) are transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) outline requirements for screening for appropriate assessment and for undertaking appropriate assessment. A 30-day public consultation was undertaken under Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, running from 1 May to 31 May 2024, with the public invited to make observations. In addition to the public consultation, observations were invited from five relevant public bodies. Two submissions were received on foot of the public consultation, both from public bodies, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. These submissions have been considered as part of the appropriate assessment.

1.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

MARA completed a screening for appropriate assessment and published an appropriate assessment screening determination on 24 April 2024. The screening determination found that the proposal by Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd. to carry out site investigation surveys from Kilmore Quay (LIC240017) required Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. It could not be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt on the basis of objective scientific information that the proposed activities, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not have a significant effect on a European Site.

2 Description of proposed works

2.1 Project Description

The principal objective of the Marine Survey & Site Investigations is to ascertain a feasible and safe route for cable system design, deployment, survivability, and subsequent maintenance with due regard for environmental and ecological considerations. The geophysical survey consists of inshore and offshore surveys using different vessels. The inshore marine survey will be carried out using a small craft or unmanned survey vessel equipped with multibeam echosounder, side-scan sonar, marine magnetometer and sub-bottom profile equipment. The offshore marine survey will be carried out by the primary survey vessel using multibeam echosounder, side-scan sonar, marine magnetometer and sub-bottom profiler equipment. The geotechnical surveys consist of cone penetration tests (2m to 3m); gravity core/Vibrocores (3m) and grab samples. The applicant has stated that the site investigation works are planned to commence as soon as feasible, following licence award, are anticipated to take less than 6 weeks in total and will be completed over a 6-month period. The Applicant has applied for a 2- year licence to carry out site investigations works.

2.2 Location

The License Application Area is situated off the coast of Wexford (Figure 1). The survey corridor has total length of approx. 154 km and a total area of 10,185.4 hectares within Irish EEZ limits. A cable route corridor of between 400m to 1500m in width will be surveyed within the licence application area. The licence application area covers the landfall at Kilmore Quay; the landfall location is adjacent to the car park at Ballyteige Burrow / Crossfarnoge Beach. The applicant intends to access the beach for survey via existing established tracks and paths from the car park. The general landfall location is shown in Figure 2.

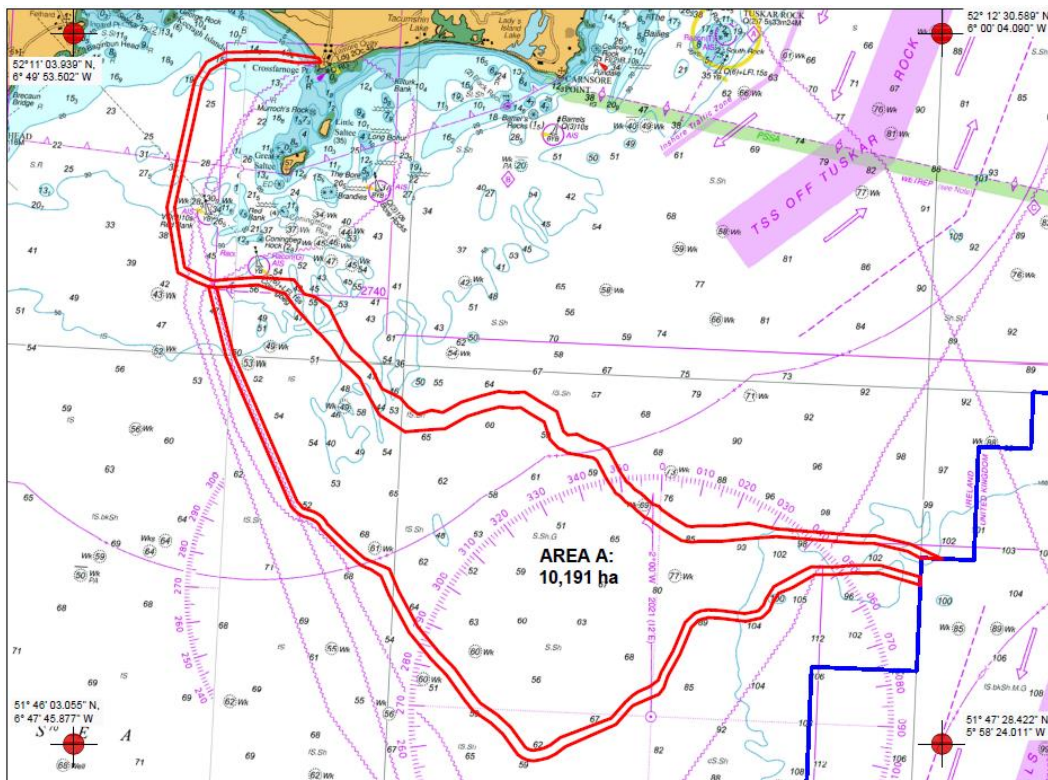


Figure 1: Map showing proposed licence area outlined in red.

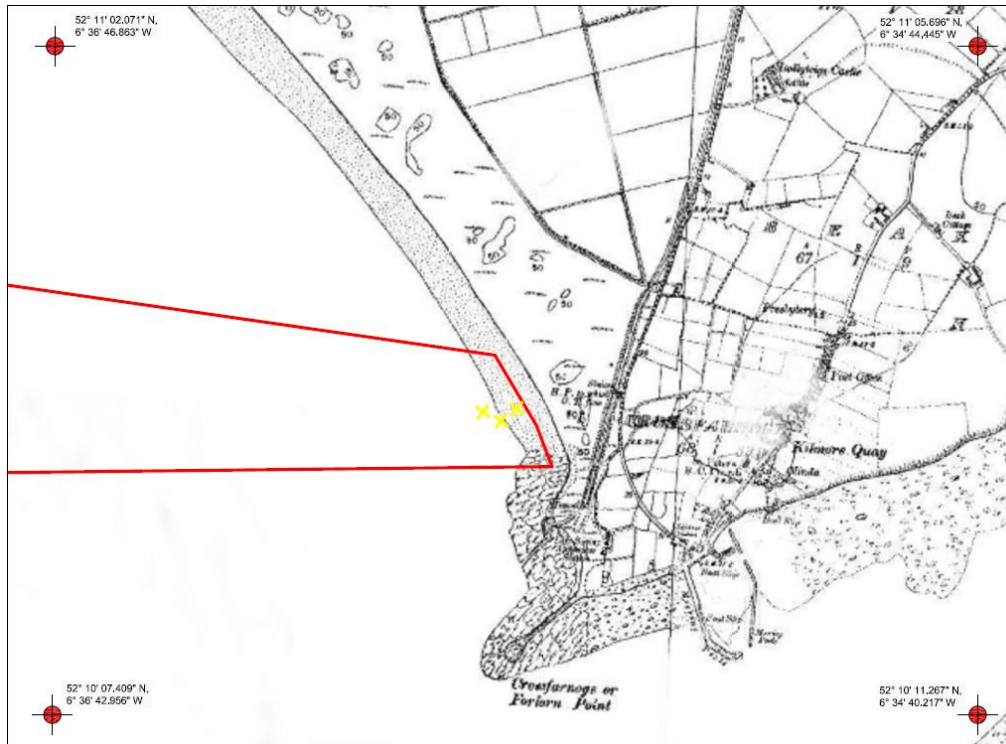


Figure 2: Map showing proposed landfall area outlined in red.

2.3 Description of the Proposed Survey Works

The survey works will consist of a beach and landfall survey (inter-tidal zone), an inshore survey (3m chart datum to 15m chart datum) and an offshore survey (water depths greater than 15m chart datum).

The landfall survey will consist of site investigations and a topographical survey carried out on the beach by the project ecologist. The topographical survey will typically be carried out using equipment to measure angles, calculate locations and distances e.g. GPS Rover, Total Station, LiDar. A terrestrial geophysical survey will be undertaken to establish features and depth to bedrock and any buried ferrous objects, using for example, magnetometer, ground penetrating radar or electrical resistivity tomography. The depth and nature of the sediment will be determined at a number of locations within the landfall area of the proposed licence area. These will consist of approximately 20 bar probes to a depth of 2 metres. There will also be three trial pits on the beach to a depth of 2.5m.

A seabed survey will take place in the inshore and offshore areas within the proposed licence area (Figure 1). The inshore survey will be undertaken using a small craft or unmanned survey vessel. The offshore survey will be undertaken using the primary survey vessel. These surveys will help to determine the nature and density of the upper 3 metres of the seabed. The equipment used will include multibeam echosounder, sidescan sonar, marine magnetometer and sub-bottom profiler equipment. Table 1 details the marine survey equipment that will be used for the purposes of the proposed maritime activity.

Table 1: Survey equipment proposed for the site investigations, with frequencies and noise pressure levels.

Survey equipment	Purpose	Frequency	Noise level (dB re 1µPa @ 1m)	pressure
Multibeam Echosounder	Collect topographical data of the seabed	200-500 kHz	210-245	
Sub-bottom profiling	Boomer	0.5-15 kHz	205-215	
	Parametric	4-15 kHz, 85-115 kHz	238-247, 200-206	
	Pinger	2-15 kHz	214	
	Chirper	2-13 kHz	185-215	
Sidescan sonar	Determine sediment characteristics and seabed features	200-700 kHz	200-240	
Magnetometer	Identifies magnetic anomalies, hazard mapping on the seabed	Passive device, no sound emitted		
Ultrashort Base line	Determine position of other equipment	20-50 kHz	194-207	

The proposed maritime usage activity will also include marine site investigations and seabed sampling to evaluate the physical properties of the superficial seabed sediments along the cable route (Table 2). The total overall scope of the Site Investigations is as follows:

- Bar Probes: 20 No. in the intertidal
- Trial Pits: 3 No. on the beach
- Grab Samples: 17 No. along the route corridor.
- Gravity Cores / Vibrocores: 19 No. along the route corridor.
- Cone Penetration Tests: 26 No. along the route corridor

Table 2: Details of marine site investigations equipment.

Equipment Type	Purpose	Frequency Range	Maximum source pressure level (re 1µPa at 1m)
Cone penetration test	Determine seabed properties	28Hz	118-145
Gravity Core	Retrieve seabed sample using steel core barrel	N/A	N/A
Vibrocorer	Retrieve seabed sample using a vibrating steel core barrel	30Hz	187.4
Grab samples	Collect sediment samples from seabed surface using clamshell mechanism	N/A	N/A

3 European Sites and Qualifying Interests

3.1 Identification of European sites likely to be affected

As the Consenting Authority for Maritime Usage Licensing and in line with Regulation 42.1 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) MARA carried out a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) for these site investigations off the coast of County Wexford. This Screening for AA report is dated 24 April 2024 and is available on the MARA website.

The Screening for AA Report identified eighteen Irish Special Area of Conservation (SAC) sites, eleven British and twenty-six French sites, which were considered to be within the Zone of

Influence of the proposed maritime usage activity. The screening also identified six Special Protected Area (SPA) sites that were considered to be within the Zone of Influence of the proposed maritime usage activity. These European sites, their Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests and possible impact as a result of the proposed project are given in Table 5 below.

3.2 Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests affected

The appropriate assessment screening identified a number of habitat types along with Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) Harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*), Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) and Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) as qualifying interests that may be impacted as a result of the proposed maritime usage. This appropriate assessment has been undertaken in light of the descriptions of the qualifying interests and special conservation interests in the latest Article 17 report from the NPWS in 2019¹.

In addition, 28 bird species were identified as needing further assessment due to the possibility for those species to be significantly negatively affected by disturbance from above water noise or underwater noise in the case of diving species (Screening for AA Report, 24 April 2024, Table 5). Seabird species profiles, population trends and species specific threats used in this assessment were taken from the most recent Article 12 assessment produced by the NPWS in 2019². Information on waterbirds and waders in this assessment came from the most recent Irish Wetland Bird Survey³ and Checklist of Protected and Threatened Species 2019.⁴

It should be noted that species marked with an asterisk in Table 5 are additional to those and assessed in the NIS produced by Altemar consultants in relation to this site in February 2024. For Bottlenose Dolphin and Harbour Porpoise, this is due to the addition of a number of QI's to SACs in March 2024 which were included at the MARA AA Screening stage but postdate the NIS. For bird species, three SPA sites were screened in by MARA that were not included in the NIS. It was not deemed necessary to request an updated NIS to allow a full AA to proceed.

3.3 Conservation Objectives, Overall Status and Trends of Species and Habitats with potential to be affected

Conservation objectives are intended to define as precisely as possible the desired state or degree of conservation to be reached in a particular site. The measures taken under the Habitats Directive are to ensure that the species and habitats listed in the Annexes achieve Favourable Conservation Status. The objective of the Birds Directive is formulated slightly differently but the ambition is the same.

Site-specific conservation objectives for sites, habitats and species listed in Table 5 were used when considering potential impacts of the proposed activity. For most sites screened in for

¹ https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol3_Species_Article17.pdf

² <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/IWM114.pdf>

³ https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/IWM_106_Irelands_Wintering_Waterbirds.pdf

⁴ [IWM 116 Checklists Protected and Threatened Species 2019.pdf \(npws.ie\)](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/IWM_116_Checklists_Protected_and_Threatened_Species_2019.pdf)

this assessment, details are also available in Section 5 of the NIS for this licence application (Altemar, February 2024⁵) which was submitted by the applicant prior to the AA Screening Stage taking place. Details of these are also available on the NPWS website (<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>). Additional to Section 5 in the Altemar NIS are conservation objectives for new QI's for existing SAC sites screened in due to the updated list of QI species for a number of SAC's published by the NPWS in March 2024, for which conservation objectives are not yet available. The Conservation objectives used in the assessment of these species comes from the nearest available SAC. For Bottlenose Dolphin, this is the Lower River Shannon SAC. For Harbour Porpoise, this is Blasket Islands SAC for sites on the South and West Coast, and Rockabill and Dalkey Islands SAC on the East Coast. These SAC sites represent two of the three sites with Harbour Porpoise as a QI before March 2024. A similar approach was taken for assessing French sites without Conservation objectives.

Additionally, three SPA sites were screened in as part of this assessment but not included in the NIS so their information is not available in Section 5 of the NIS. These are Keeragh Islands SPA, Lady's Island SPA and Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA. Site-specific conservation objectives for these SPA sites is available on the NPWS website (<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>) and were used as part of this assessment.

Conservation status of a species relates to the nationwide status, while conservation objectives relate to a specific SAC or SPA. The Favourable Conservation Status of a species is achieved when:

- The population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats.
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

The overall conservation status for the Habitats in Ballyteigue Burrow SAC are outlined in Table 18 of the NIS. These vary between Favourable, Inadequate and Bad/Unfavourable. The overall conservation status for Salmon nationally is Inadequate. Harbour seal, Grey Seal, Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise have Favourable conservation status in the Irish assessments. Grey Seal, Harbour Porpoise and Bottlenose dolphin have a favourable status for the British sites, but Harbour Seal has an Inadequate status in British sites. The Harbour Porpoise and Bottlenose dolphin have a Bad/Unfavourable conservation status for the French assessment.

Tables 27, 28 and 29 of the Altemar NIS outline the overall conservation status of the SCI species for the Seas of Wexford SPA, Ballyteigue Burrow SPA and Saltee Islands SPA, taken classification under the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland assessment⁶. These are mainly classified as Amber (medium concern), with one species, Fulmar classified as Green (low concern) and five species classified as Red (high concern): the Common Scoter, Golden Plover, Mediterranean Gull, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull. Of the three SPA sites

⁵ <https://cdn.maritimeregulator.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/09140522/230017-NIS-redacted.pdf>

⁶ [https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds-of-conservation-concern-in-ireland/#:~:text=The%20conservation%20status%20of%20species,%25\)%20on%20the%20Green%20list.](https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds-of-conservation-concern-in-ireland/#:~:text=The%20conservation%20status%20of%20species,%25)%20on%20the%20Green%20list.)

screened in for AA but not included in the NIS assessment, all species had Amber status, except the Black-Headed Gull, which had Red status.

The most recent Birds Directive Article 12 report identified trends in seabird species relating to Breeding Population numbers and Breeding Distribution. For the species under consideration in this assessment, all except Kittiwake are experiencing increases in their Breeding population numbers in the short term. However, in the longer term, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull and Kittiwake are seeing a declining trend. For breeding distribution, the Common and Arctic terns were the only two species seeing a declining short-term trend. However, declining long-term Breeding distribution trends were seen for the Cormorant, Black-headed Gull, Sandwich tern, Roseate tern, Common tern, Arctic tern and Little tern.

3.4 Pressures and threats to Annex II species and Annex I species

Table 5 outlines the various pressures and threats experienced in Ireland by the Annex II species screened in for this assessment. It should be noted that under the European Environment Agency guidance on Article 17 guidance, noise pollution from marine seismic surveys was to be reported under C09 Geotechnical Surveying.

Table 3 Pressures and Threats on relevant Annex II species as assessed for the NPWS 2019 Article 17 report.

	Pressure	Threat
Salmon [1106]	<p>A26 Agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters (H)</p> <p>G19 Other impacts from marine aquaculture, including infrastructure (H)</p> <p>K05 Physical alteration of water bodies (H)</p> <p>J01 Mixed source pollution to surface and ground waters (limnic and terrestrial) (H)</p> <p>A25 Agricultural activities generating point source pollution to surface or ground waters (M)</p> <p>B23 Forestry activities generating pollution to surface or ground waters (M)</p> <p>D02 Hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure (M)</p> <p>G11 Illegal harvesting, collecting and taking (M)</p> <p>G20 Abstraction of water, flow diversion, dams and other modifications of hydrological conditions for freshwater aquaculture (M)</p> <p>L06 Interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens) (M)</p>	<p>A26 Agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters (H)</p> <p>G19 Other impacts from marine aquaculture, including infrastructure (H)</p> <p>K05 Physical alteration of water bodies (H)</p> <p>N01 Temperature changes (e.g. rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change (H)</p> <p>A25 Agricultural activities generating point source pollution to surface or ground waters (M)</p> <p>B23 Forestry activities generating pollution to surface or ground waters (M)</p> <p>F12 Discharge of urban waste water (excluding storm overflows and/or urban run-offs) generating pollution to surface or ground water (M)</p> <p>F28 Modification of flooding regimes, flood protection for residential or recreational development (M)</p> <p>G11 Illegal harvesting, collecting and taking (M)</p> <p>I02 Other invasive species (other than species of Union concern) (M)</p>
Grey seal[1364], Harbour seal [1365], Harbour porpoise [1351]	<p>C09 Geotechnical surveying (M)</p> <p>G01 Marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species (M)</p>	<p>C09 Geotechnical surveying (M)</p> <p>G01 Marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species (M)</p>

	Pressure	Threat
and Bottlenose dolphin [1349]		

The most recent Birds Directive Article 12 report identified the main pressures and threats to Annex I breeding seabirds. Table 6 shows these main threats and their percentage relevance to seabirds.

Table 4 Pressures and Threats on Annex I bird species as assessed for the NPWS 2019 Article 12 report.

Code	Description	Percentage relevance
D01	Wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure	92
G12	Bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities)	79
N06	Desynchronisation of biological/ecological processes due to climate change	75
N07	Decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change	75
I02	Other invasive alien species (other than species of Union concern)	71
F22	Residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, Styrofoam)	54
F23	Industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, Styrofoam)	54
F07	Sports, tourism and leisure activities	46
G01	Marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species	46
J02	Mixed source marine water pollution (marine and coastal)	29

Table 5: Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and their qualifying interests to be considered further in the screening process.

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Special Areas of Conservation				
Ballyteige Burrow SAC (Site code: IE000696)	Within site boundary	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>) [1420] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Caluno-Ulicetea</i>) [2150] Humid dune slacks [2190]	Physical disturbance	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the listed habitats, as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000696.pdf
Saltee Islands SAC (Site Code: IE000707)	350m	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000707.pdf

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Hook Head SAC (Site code: IE000764)	3.6 km	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]* <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002165.pdf) To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)
Carnsore Point SAC (Site code: IE002269)	10.4 km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)
Slaney River SAC (Site code: IE000781)	Approx. 60 km	<i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salmon in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000781.pdf To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)
Blackwater Bank SAC (Site code: 002953)	27 km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
				IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)
Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000)	124 km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf
Lambay Island SAC (Site Code IE000204)	150 km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]* <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal and Harbour Seal in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000204.pdf To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)
Codling Fault Zone SAC (Site code IE003015)	140 km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Rockabill to Dalkey Islands SAC (Site code: IE003000) were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf)
Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC [Site code IE000101]	Approx. 190 km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000101.pdf
Glengarriff Harbour and Woodland SAC (Site code: IE00090)	Approx. 195 km	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000090.pdf

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Kenmare River SAC [Site code: IE002158]	Approx. 200 km	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002158.pdf To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf)
Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172]	Approx. 250 km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC as per the attributes, measures and targets set out in https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf
Belgica Mound Province SAC [Site code IE002327]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf)
Inishmore Island SAC [Site code IE000213]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf)
Kilkieran Bay and Islands SAC [Site code IE002111]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. [Site code IE002172] were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf)

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
West Connacht Coast SAC [Site code IE002998]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf)
Bunduff Lough and Mach-air/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC [000625]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]*	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used in their absence (https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002172.pdf)
Pembrokeshire Marine SAC (Site code: UK0013116)	Approx. 140 km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Grey Seal in UK waters
West Wales Marine SAC [Site code UK0030397]	Approx. 100 km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Harbour Porpoise in UK waters
Cardigan Bay SAC [Site code UK0012712]	76 km	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Bottlenose Dolphin in UK waters
Bristol Channel Approaches SAC [Site code UK003039]	83 km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Harbour Porpoise in UK waters
Lundy SAC (Site Code UK0013114)	Approx. 115 km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Grey Seal in UK waters

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Llyn Peninsula and the Sarnau SAC [Site code UK0013117]	Approx. 120 km - Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Bottlenose Dolphin and Grey Seal in UK waters
North Anglesey Marine SAC [Site code UK0030398]	Approx. 150 km - Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Harbour Porpoise in UK waters
Isles of Scilly Complex SAC (Site code: UK0013694)	Approx. 195 km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Grey Seal in UK waters
Murlough SAC (Site code: UK0016612)	Approx. 220 km	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Harbour Seal in UK waters
North Channel SAC (Site code: UK0030399)	Approx. 235 km - Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Harbour Porpoise in UK waters
Strangford Lough (Site code:UK0016618)	Approx. 245 km	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained and that it makes the best possible contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for Harbour Seal in UK waters
Mers Celtiques – Talus du golfe de Gascogne (Site code: FR5302015)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Nord Bretagne DH (Site code: FR2502022)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Côte de Granit rose-Sept-Iles (Site code: FR5300009)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Abers – Côtes des légendes (Site code: FR5300017)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Trégor – Goëlo (Site code: FR5300010)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Récifs du talus du golfe de Gascogne (Site code: FR5302016)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Récifs et landes de la Hague SAC [Site code FR2500084]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Baie de Morlaix (Site code: FR5300015)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used
Ouessant-Molene (Site code: FR5300018)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Rivière Leguer, forêts de Beffou, Coat an Noz et Coat an Hay (Site code: FR5300008)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used
Récifs et marais arrière-littoraux du Cap Lévi à la Pointe de Saire (Site code: FR2500085)	Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used
Anse de Vauville SAC [Site code FR2502019]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Banc et récifs de Surtainville SAC [Site code FR2502018]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Chaussée de Sein (Site code: FR5302007)	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Baie de Seine occidentale (Site code: FR2502020)	Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) were used.
Baie de Seine orientale (Site code: FR2502021)	Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) were used.
Littoral Cauchois (Site code: FR2300139)	Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) were used.
Chausey [Site code FR2500079]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used
Baie du Mont Saint-Michel [Site code FR2500077]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncates</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Estuaire de la Rance SAC [Site code FR5300061]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used
Baie de Lancieux, Baie de l'Arguenon, Archipel de Saint Malo et Dinard [Site code FR5300012]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Cap d'Erquy-Cap Fréhel [Site code FR5300011]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Baie de Saint-Brieuc Est [Site code FR5300066]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	There are no specific conservation objectives relating to these species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) and Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used - To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose dolphin and Harbour Porpoise in the SAC.
Côtes de Crozon [Site code FR5302006]	Within MU for species	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Blasket Islands SAC [Site code IE002172] were used
Côte de Cancale à Parme (Site code: FR5300052)	Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) were used.

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests(QIs)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Falaises du Cran aux Oeufs et du Cap Gris-Nez, Dunes du Chatelet, Marais de Tardinghen et Dunes de Wissant (Site code: FR3100478)	Within MU for species	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	To maintain favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin in the SAC. There are no specific conservation objectives relating to this species in this SAC, so the conservation objectives from Lower Shannon River SAC (Site code: IE002165) were used.

Special Protected Areas

European Site Code	Distance from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Special Conservation Interests (SCI)	Potential source of impact	Conservation Objective
Seas Off Wexford SPA (Site code: IE004237)	Within the site boundary	Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>) [A176] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) [A191] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200]	Visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys. Diving birds could be disturbed by underwater noise	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of all listed SCI species at Seas off Wexford SPA, as defined by the list of attributes and targets available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004237.pdf

		Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]		
Ballyteigue Burrow SPA (Site code: IE004020)	700m	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys. Diving birds could be disturbed by underwater noise	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of all listed SCI species at Ballyteigue Burrow SPA as defined by the list of attributes and targets available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004020.pdf
Saltee Islands SPA (Site code: IE004002)	3 km	Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]	Visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys. Diving birds could be disturbed by underwater noise	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of all listed SCI species at Saltee Islands SPA as defined by the list of attributes and targets available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004002.pdf
Keeragh Islands SPA (Site code: IE004118)	3.5 km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]*	Visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys. Diving birds could be disturbed by underwater noise	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of all listed SCI species at Keeragh Islands SPA as defined by the list of attributes and targets available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004118.pdf
Lady's Island SPA (Site code: IE004009)	12 km	Black-headed Gull (<i>C ridibundus</i>) [A179]* Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) [A191]* Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192]* Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]* Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]*	Visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys. Diving birds could be disturbed by underwater noise	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of all listed SCI species at Lady's Island SPA as defined by the list of attributes and targets available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004009.pdf
Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA (Site code: IE004076)	15 km	Black-headed Gull (<i>C ridibundus</i>) [A179]* Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]* Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195]*	Visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys. Diving birds could be disturbed by underwater noise	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of all listed SCI species at Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA as defined by the list of attributes and targets available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004076.pdf

4 Assessment and Mitigation

4.1 Assessment of Likely/Possible Significant Impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests

The impacts that have been identified that have the potential to cause significant impacts on European sites and their designated species or habitats are physical disturbance to habitats in Ballyteigue Burrow SAC, potential disturbance to salmon migration for Slaney River SAC and visual disturbance, underwater noise and above water noise for a number of SAC and SPA sites. This disturbance may cause deterioration of habitats, the displacement of individuals, changes in species behaviour, or the risk of morbidity or mortality. Any mitigation measures recommended on foot of the assessment in this section are included in Section 4.4 Mitigation Measures.

4.1.1 Physical Disturbance to Habitats

All habitats in Ballyteigue Burrow SAC (Table 5) were screened in for further assessment as a number of the proposed site activities will occur in this SAC. For a number of these habitats, it has been found that no impact is foreseen as the proposed works will not either overlap directly or be proximate to the habitats. These are Estuaries [1130], Coastal lagoons [1150], Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310], Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*) [1330], Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410], Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetea fruticosi*) [1420], Embryonic shifting dunes [2110], Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150] and Humid dune slacks [2190].

The proposed beach access and survey works are within the Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] habitat. There is potential for localised short-term compaction and disturbance in addition to risk in relation to pollution discharges from machinery. Mitigation measures are required to limit the potential impacts on this feature of interest in this SAC.

Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) [2120] and Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130], habitats are in the area of the proposed beach access and terrestrial survey works. No excavations are required in the dune areas. Potential impacts on dune habitat include compaction and accidental removal /damage to dune habitat from personnel and machinery. The formal and informal existing access path to the beach manhole and existing pedestrian path to the beach both run through the dune habitats. Mitigation measures are required to limit the potential impacts on these features of interest in this SAC.

4.1.2 Disturbance to Atlantic salmon migratory route

Hearing plays an important role for fish in providing information often over great distances. Sound is used for communication, for mating behaviour, detection of prey and predators, for orientation, migration and habitat selection⁷. Most fish are capable of hearing sound within the frequency range of 50Hz to 200-1,500Hz. While exposure to very intense sound may lead to mortality, less intensive sounds may lead to altered behaviour, including deviation from migration routes or feeding or breeding habitats. Increased sedimentation levels during sampling periods could have a localised, temporary negative impact on migratory fish species such as the Atlantic salmon. High, long-term sedimen-

⁷ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jfb.13948>

tation rates in a concentrated area are known to have significant impacts on fish species from immediate impacts such as clogging of gills, to longer-term effects such as increased pathogen and heavy metal loads. However, short term peaks over a wide study area and a relatively short time scale (approximately 30 weeks total, non-continuous sampling) would be of lesser concern. While the proposed activities are in the expected migration route for salmon as mobile species, salmon have the ability to avoid such localised disturbances. Therefore, on further consideration, potentially significant negative impacts on these species, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects are not expected due to the proposed development.

4.1.3 Disturbance due to underwater noise (marine mammal)

Marine mammals depend on sound for a wide range of functions including navigation, perception of their environment, communication, prey identification and capture, and the detection of predators. The hearing system of marine mammals, being highly sensitive and adapted to respond to changes in pressure in an aquatic environment, is particularly susceptible to damage. Auditory injury in marine mammals can be defined as a permanent threshold shift leading to non-reversible auditory injury or as a temporary threshold shift in hearing sensitivity, which can have negative effects on the ability to communicate, navigate, or locate prey for a period of minutes, hours or days. The possibility of impact on marine mammals as a result of equipment proposed as per Tables 1 and 2 of this report cannot be excluded. In-combination impacts resulting in a higher risk of negative impact are possible in relation to underwater noise due to the potential for similar surveys and activities occurring at the same time in the same area, as outlined in Section 4.2. Therefore, it is recommended that suitable mitigation measures be included in any Maritime Usage Licence relating to this proposed maritime usage activity.

4.1.4 Disturbance due to underwater noise (birds)

Diving birds such as Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Manx Shearwater, Cormorant and Shag can be sensitive to disturbance from underwater noise and fatalities can occur at close distance. Flushing disturbance can be expected to displace these diving seabirds from close proximity to the survey vessel and any towed equipment, thereby limiting their exposure to the highest sound pressures generated. The likelihood of these birds being in the vicinity of a noise generating operation is low due to the surface activity associated with such operations disturbing the birds prior to commencement of the underwater noise⁸. There is a low likelihood of interaction between the sound source and diving birds due to the relatively short exposure time, the temporary nature of the survey work, the mobile nature of the birds and the displacement of most diving species due to flushing disturbance. Therefore, it can be determined that underwater noise would be very unlikely to have a significant effect on diving seabirds in the vicinity of the survey area. In-combination impacts resulting in a higher risk of negative impact are possible in relation to underwater noise due to the potential for similar surveys and activities occurring at the same time in the same area, as considered in Section 4.2.

There is also a possible indirect impact from the proposed maritime usage activity on the supporting habitats of the proposed bird features of the SPAs through disturbance to marine benthic communities and habitat loss. This could impact the ability of foraging grounds to provide food for

⁸https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778899/OPRED_EIA_Guidance_2019_Revision_5_-_14Feb19.pdf
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2019.00192/full>

foraging birds. However, this is considered very unlikely as a result of this proposed maritime usage activity due to the relative size of the survey area disturbed in this manner in comparison to the overall foraging habitat available in the region and the SPAs themselves. Intrusive works undertaken by other projects may contribute to a further possible indirect impact on the supporting habitats of the proposed bird features of the SPA through disturbance to marine benthic communities and habitat. There is potential for increased physical disturbance and habitat loss if geotechnical activities from other projects were to take place at the same time in close proximity to this project, and this is considered further in Section 4.2. Therefore, it is recommended that suitable mitigation measures be included in any Maritime Usage Licence relating to this proposed maritime usage activity.

4.1.5 Disturbance due to above water noise

Temporary displacement from boat activity and above water noise can be expected for bird species. In the intertidal, disturbance is also possible to breeding and feeding birds due to noise and activity disturbance during the digging of trial pits and bar probes. This is unlikely to be significant, due to the temporary nature of the disturbance and the public nature of the landfall site. However, it is recommended that suitable mitigation measures be included in any Maritime Usage Licence relating to the proposed maritime usage activity.

While it is acknowledged that the species that use the survey area for feeding and breeding may be disturbed by the activities of the survey vessel, visual or above water noise disturbance from up to two additional vessels in a busy maritime area is unlikely to be significant when considered against background levels. In-combination impacts in relation to disturbance are possible in relation to above water noise and bird activity due to the potential for other surveys and activities to occur at the same time in the same area, as outlined in Section 4.2. However, given the short duration of the proposed site investigations, the significance of effects on birds in the offshore environment from the proposed site investigations, including due to visual or above water noise disturbance, will be temporary and therefore, will not be significant.

4.1.6 Disturbance due to accidental incidents

It is proposed to carry out seabed surveys in both the inshore and offshore areas. The inshore survey will be undertaken using a small craft or unmanned survey vessel. The offshore survey will be undertaken using the primary survey vessel. The use of small craft or survey vessels present the risk of diesel or oil spills which can impact foraging ability, health and mortality of the birds identified as susceptible to potential impacts from the proposed project. While the risks associated with this form of disturbance is low, the impact could be significant and mitigation is required. Therefore, it is recommended that suitable mitigation measures be included in any Maritime Usage Licence relating to the proposed maritime usage activity.

4.2 Assessment of In-combination effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that an Appropriate Assessment be carried out in respect of any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the likely or possible effects of a plan or project are significant when considered in isolation, the potential for the plan or project to significantly affect European sites in combination with other past, present or foreseeable future plans or projects must also be assessed. All types of plans or projects that could, in-combination with the project under consideration, have a significant effect,

should be taken into account. This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement

Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)

Impacts of underwater noise associated with the proposed maritime usage are considered to have the widest spatial reach, with Harbour Porpoise being most sensitive to noise disturbance⁹. The CESS was defined at appropriate assessment screening stage as 5km, based on acoustic survey equipment effective deterrence ranges.

Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)

The temporal scope for examination of cumulative effects has been defined considering the period over which the proposed maritime usage would take place. The Natura Impact Statement states, it is anticipated that the proposed activities will take less than 6 weeks in total and will be completed over a 6-month period. A licence period of 2 years is recommended to allow for bad weather hampering completion of the proposed project in Summer 2024. Therefore, the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS) is 2 years.

Impact identification

The impacts identified are:

- Disturbance from underwater noise
- Disturbance to Atlantic salmon migratory route
- Visual and above water noise disturbance
- Physical disturbance and habitat loss

Pathway Identification

Impact	Potential Cumulative Pathway
Disturbance from underwater noise	Pathway possible via sound travelling through water with impacts possible within CESS where there is temporal overlap with other underwater noise producing projects.
Disturbance to Atlantic salmon migratory route	Pathway possible via increased noise disturbance and increased sedimentation levels with impacts possible within CESS where there is temporal overlap with other underwater noise producing projects.
Visual and above water noise disturbance	Pathway possible via light and sound travelling through air with impacts possible within CESS where there is temporal overlap with other visual and above water noise producing projects.
Physical disturbance and habitat loss	Pathway requires direct spatial overlap. Potential pathway for physical disturbance and habitat loss impact where there is spatial and temporal overlap.

Prediction:

The magnitude and extent of identified likely cumulative effects have been predicted below.

Disturbance from underwater noise

There is the potential for increased underwater noise disturbance effects if geophysical and geotechnical activities with other projects were to take place at the same time.

Disturbance to Atlantic salmon migratory route

There is the potential for increased r noise disturbance effects and increased sedimentation levels if geophysical and geotechnical activities with other projects were to take place at the same time.

⁹ JNCC Guidance on Assessing the Significance of Noise Disturbance against Harbour Porpoise SACs Conservation Objectives (<https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2e60a9a0-4366-4971-9327-2bc409e09784/JNCC-Report-654-FINAL-WEB.pdf>)

Visual and above water noise disturbance

There is the potential for increased visual and above water noise disturbance if geophysical and geotechnical activities with other projects were to take place at the same time.

Physical disturbance and habitat loss

There is overlap between the proposed Maritime Usage Licence area and Ballyteigue Burrow SAC designated for the protection of the Qualifying Interest Annex I Habitats. There is the potential for increased physical disturbance and habitat loss if geophysical and geotechnical activities with other projects were to take place at the same time.

There is also the potential for increased indirect effects of habitat disturbance potentially affecting the food resources of protected bird species if geophysical and geotechnical activities with other projects were to take place at the same time.

Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination:

A search was carried out of relevant databases (e.g. EPA, Foreshore, MARA, planning authorities, etc) for other plans/projects with characteristics that may cause in-combination or cumulative effects with the project being assessed, on Natura 2000 sites. All plans and projects within the CESS and CETS have been identified. All projects within the CESS and CETS have been considered for their potential to cause cumulative effects in combination with the site investigation activities proposed under this Maritime Usage Licence Application, on the qualifying interests of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

Following a search of relevant databases undertaken on the 19 of April 2024 as part of the appropriate assessment screening, the projects in Table 5 were identified as potential in-combination projects.

Table 6: Projects identified with the potential to cause in-combination effects with the project being assessed.

Application	Project	Approx. distance from MUL area	Project status	Cumulative effects
FS007464	Bore Array Offshore Wind Farm in Wexford	0km	Proposed – foreshore licence application submitted 8 th April 2024	Spatial overlap. Within CESS. Possible temporal overlap.
FS007361	Beaufort Subsea Fibre Optic Cable off Wexford coast	0km	Foreshore licence granted 19 th November 2023	Spatial overlap. Within CESS. Possible temporal overlap.
20191633	Uisce Éireann construction of new wastewater treatment plant. Cross-farnogue, Nemestown, Beak, Ballyteigue and Libgate, Kilmore.	~200m	Proposed project - Permission granted 5 th February 2020.	No spatial overlap. Within CESS Possible temporal overlap.
20170534	Extension to existing factory; Cross-farnogue, Kilmore.	~300m	Proposed project – permission granted 1 st August 2017.	No spatial overlap. Within CESS but fully terrestrial. Possible temporal overlap.

Application	Project	Approx. distance from MUL area	Project status	Cumulative effects
FS007384	Celtic Horizon Offshore Wind Farm Limited Site Investigations for proposed Offshore Wind Farm	~3km	Proposed project foreshore licence application submitted 2nd Jun 2021.	No direct spatial overlap. Within CESS. Possible temporal overlap.
FS007274	UCD Soil and Vegetation Sampling - Ballyteige	~4km	Proposed project foreshore licence application submitted 15th January 2021.	No direct spatial overlap. Within CESS. Possible temporal overlap.
20210079	Ballask (ED Kilmore), Kilmore.	~4.5km	Proposed project – permission granted 10 th March 2021.	No spatial overlap. Within CESS but fully terrestrial. Possible temporal overlap.

Cumulative Effects Assessment conclusion:

Based on insufficient clarity on when projects will be carried out and using the precautionary principle the above projects in Table 4 marked in bold are considered to have potential in-combination effects should there be temporal overlap with the proposed maritime usage activity.

The following plans, which promote sustainable development and integrated management planning in the maritime environment related to the development of the maritime environment, were also identified:

- Climate Action Plan 2023
- National Marine Planning Framework
- Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland (2022-2027)
- Draft South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan

It is not possible to exclude the possibility of likely significant in-combination effects on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites considered in this assessment as a result of this proposed maritime usage activity, four of the projects identified in Table 4 and the relevant plans listed above. Therefore, it is recommended that suitable mitigation measure be included in any Maritime Usage Licence relating to the possibility of likely significant in-combination effects.

4.3 Transboundary effects

This proposed maritime usage relates to activity in Kilmore Quay, Co Wexford and part of the seafloor within the Irish EEZ. The mitigation measures proposed as part of this appropriate assessment will mitigate against any transboundary effects on the qualifying interests from the British and French protected sites highlighted in this assessment.

4.4 Public consultation

A 30-day public consultation was undertaken from 1 May to 31 May 2024 with the public invited to make observations. In addition to the public consultation, observations were invited from relevant public bodies. No submissions were received on foot of the public consultation, while two submissions were received from relevant public bodies. These submissions have been considered as

part of the appropriate assessment and are summarised in the Final Environmental Report associated with the licence application.

4.5 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures for those impacts identified in Section 4.1 Assessment of Likely/Possible Significant Impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests are detailed below.

4.5.1 Physical Disturbance to Habitats

To minimize disturbance and remove the risk of damage to protected habitats, as discussed in section 4.1.1, it is recommended a condition be included in any maritime usage licence that may be granted as follows:

Landfall site/Intertidal

- i. An ecologist shall be onsite during all terrestrial/intertidal and subtidal surveys carried out on Ballyteige Beach in order to minimise disturbance and ensure site integrity is maintained.
- ii. Disturbance of drift lines and vegetation on the shore shall be avoided by machinery and personnel.
- iii. Any temporary access arrangements or structures that are put in place to allow machinery access to the shore area shall be prepared in consultation with the site ecologist and the site should be fully reinstated post works. Silt protection measures shall be put in place if deemed necessary by the project ecologist.

4.5.2 Disturbance to Atlantic salmon migratory route

No mitigation is required here as any potential significant effects were ruled out in section 4.1.2.

4.5.3 Disturbance due to underwater noise (marine mammals)

Appropriate mitigation for the effects of underwater noise on marine mammals as discussed in section 4.1.3, is the implementation of the NPWS [Guidance to manage the Risk to marine mammals from man-made sound sources in Irish Waters](#). When carrying out geotechnical and geophysical surveys particular attention should be paid to the sections of the guidance relating to geophysical acoustic surveys and drilling (in relation to seabed cores). It is recommended that a condition be included in any maritime usage licence as follows:

Marine Mammals

- i. The Holder shall appoint a marine mammal observer for the purposes of overseeing the activity. The Holder shall ensure the marine mammal observer shall satisfy the requirements of National Parks and Wildlife Service guidance.
- ii. The Holder shall implement risk control and mitigation measures for marine mammals in accordance with National Parks and Wildlife guidance.
- iii. All reporting shall be forwarded to offshore@npws.gov.ie.

4.5.4 Disturbance due to above and underwater noise and disturbance (birds)

To minimise the potential for underwater noise related disturbance or displacement on the diving seabirds as discussed in section 4.1.4 and above water noise as discussed in section 4.1.5, it is recommended a condition be included in any maritime usage licence that may be granted as follows:

Birds

- i. The movement of tracked vehicles in the intertidal area shall be restricted to minimum access tracks necessary to achieve completion of the Permitted Maritime Usage.
- ii. Any trial pits excavated for the purposes of the Permitted Maritime Usage shall be refilled.
- iii. Where the Holder observes significant clusters of birds, actively fishing and/or diving, within 500m of the survey vessel, in carrying out the Permitted Maritime Usage, the survey route shall be altered to maintain a 500m buffer from the birds. Appropriate records must be retained by the Holder.

4.5.5 Disturbance due to above water noise

The mitigation proposed in 4.5.4 above relating to under water disturbance to birds will also mitigate for any above water noise and survey related disturbance or displacement on seabirds in the intertidal.

No mitigation is required for birds relating to above water noise or survey disturbance in the offshore marine environment.

4.5.6 Disturbance due to accidental incidents

Mitigation is required to minimise the risk of impacts as a result of accidental spills from small craft or survey vessels as discussed in section 4.1.6. It is recommended a condition be included in any maritime usage licence that may be granted as follows:

The Holder shall ensure that there is an oil pollution emergency plan on-board any survey vessels. This plan should specify:

- i. Information on the location and detail of spill response resources on-board;
- ii. Information on crew training in relation to oil pollution response;
- iii. How crew will interface with other site investigation operators, where applicable.

4.5.7 In-combination effects

To minimise any in-combination effects as a results of other projects or plans as discussed in section 4.2, it is recommended a condition be included in any maritime usage licence that may be granted as follows:

In-combination effects

- i. The Holder shall coordinate with other authorisation holders within a 10km radius of the site boundary to ensure that no temporal overlap occurs between projects in respect of geophysical, seismic and geotechnical activities.
- ii. Where the Holder becomes aware of temporal overlap that cannot be resolved, the Holder shall notify the Grantor who shall determine the timing of activities.

To ensure appropriate records of all the above mitigation measure are maintained, it is also recommended a condition be included in any maritime usage licence that may be granted as follows:

The Holder shall keep the following documents together and available for inspection by the Grantor:

- i. a copy of the licence related to this Permitted Maritime Usage;
- ii. all correspondence with the Grantor;
- iii. up to date drawings, plans and maps relating to the Permitted Maritime Usage;

- iv. documents and photographs and other relevant records relating to the Permitted Maritime Usage to provide evidence of compliance with licence conditions;
- v. marine positional log; and,
- vi. any elements of the licence application and associated documentation referenced in this licence.

5 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion


The applicant provided a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), which detailed the potential impact of the proposed project on most relevant European sites and whether these impacts would adversely affect the integrity of the sites in light of their conservation objectives. Sites not considered in the NIS but screened in for further assessment were assessed separately and included in this report

The screening process identified likely/possible significant impacts due to physical disturbance to habitats, disturbance to migratory routes for Atlantic salmon, disturbance from underwater noise from geophysical and geotechnical surveys on Annex II marine mammal species and Annex I bird species, disturbance from above water noise and survey activity for foraging bird species offshore and in the intertidal and disturbance due to accidental incidents. These likely significant impacts could not be ruled out beyond reasonable scientific doubt without mitigation.

The potential direct and indirect effects as a result of physical disturbance, increased sedimentation, visual and above water noise disturbance from surveys and underwater noise from geophysical and geotechnical surveys were identified as having the potential to cause in-combination impacts which could not be ruled out beyond reasonable scientific doubt without mitigation.

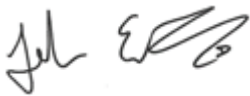
Mitigation measures were identified to ensure that impacts on European sites and their qualifying interests and special conservation interests do not occur. Therefore, with adherence to the mitigation measures specified in section 4.5 Mitigation Measures, and in view of best scientific knowledge, and of the sites' conservation objectives, the project, individually, or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not have adverse effects on European sites.

Therefore, having considered the documents submitted by Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd, the observations received on foot of the public consultation on the application, along with my own assessment, it can be concluded, and I conclude, for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 42(11) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, that the proposal (LIC230017) for site investigation surveys for a proposed subsea fibre optic cable having landfall in Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford (either individually or in combination with any other plans or projects), will not adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures adopted and outlined above.

Signature and Date of Recommending Marine Advisor	 <hr/> Dr Ciar O'Toole Senior Marine Advisor Assessment, Research and Data 21 June 2024
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6 Appropriate Assessment Determination

Having considered this report, the documents submitted by Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd, the observations received on foot of the public consultation on the application, along with my own assessment, it can be determined , and I determine, for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 42(11) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, that the proposal (LIC230017) for site investigation surveys for a proposed subsea fibre optic cable having landfall in Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford (either individually or in combination with any other plans or projects), will not adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures specified in section 4.5 Mitigation Measures adopted and outlined above, which must be included as conditions to any consent that may be granted in respect of the respective maritime usage licence application.

Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 <hr/> John Evans Director of Assessment, Research and Data 21 June 2024
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