

Supporting Information
Screening for Appropriate
Assessment

NISA
North Irish Sea Array

Appendix 2

Summary of Consultation



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

North Irish Sea Array Offshore Windfarm Ltd (hereafter referred to as “the Developer” is proposing to develop the North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the proposed development).

The proposed development is an offshore wind farm located off the east coast of Ireland, comprising onshore and offshore infrastructure. The offshore infrastructure of the proposed development is situated off the coast of counties Dublin, Meath, and Louth, with the onshore infrastructure situated within Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council jurisdictions.

This report summarises the approach to consultation on Natura Impact Statement (NIS) related matters for the proposed development from project inception to planning application submission stage. The process and the outcomes of the relevant consultation and engagement are detailed in this report.

1.2 Public and Stakeholder Consultation

The Developer has committed, throughout the lifecycle of the project, to provide information throughout all design development phases of the proposed development. As such, the Developer established a systematic, documented process to manage the stakeholder consultation from the outset of the development process to bring forward proposals that would be appropriate in the context of the local area. At a very early stage in the design of the proposed development, the Developer initiated a stakeholder engagement campaign with statutory bodies, the public and other relevant organisations.

Where practicable, the information and advice received during the consultation process was incorporated into the design of the proposed development and addressed in the relevant chapters of the EIAR and NIS.

1.3 Topics Covered in Public Consultations

To re-iterate, a summary of all key EIAR topics discussed during the gathering of feedback from public consultations are presented in Appendix 1.2 (EIAR Consultation), with those relevant to the NIS summarised below.

No impact or damage to beaches or coastline

Several concerns were raised about the potential impact to the area of coastline in which cables would come onshore. Feedback from the engagement process was that people would rather not see the coastline disturbed. This is reflected by the installation of the cable at landfall being undertaken by Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD), directly under the seabed rather than an open cut trench through the seabed. The starting point for the HDD is onshore (above the High Water Mark (HWM)) and the exit point for the HDD is in the subtidal environment, (seaward of the Low Water Mark (LWM)). Therefore, the entire intertidal environment will be avoided.

Environment

Feedback was received regarding potential impacts the proposed development could have on marine life, sea birds and mammals as well as the local environment. The EIAR considers the potential impacts of the construction, operational and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the proposed development, both onshore and offshore. The Developer is committed to minimising negative impacts on the surrounding areas while seeking opportunities to enhance biodiversity and the local environment. The Developer is considering the sustainability of proposed development through the various stages of construction and operation with the view to ensuring that the proposed development is delivered in the most environmentally appropriate manner.

1.4 Informal EIAR Scoping Consultation

An EIAR Scoping Report was prepared in 2021 which described the key elements of the proposed development, the baseline conditions and sensitivities of the receiving environment likely to be affected by the proposed development.

The studies and assessments proposed to be undertaken for the preparation of the EIAR and NIS were summarised, and the report further identified potential for likely significant effects and provided an outline of the proposed EIAR. The report also facilitated stakeholder engagement, with feedback sought from consultees to further inform the content and scope of the EIAR and NIS.

Upon finalisation of the EIAR Scoping Report, informal scoping consultation was carried out from 20 May 2021 to 30 June 2021 and feedback was sought from consultees. The concerns and queries raised during the EIAR scoping stage have been given due consideration in drafting the EIAR and NIS.

1.5 An Bord Pleanála Consultation

Pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála is required under section 287 of the Planning Acts before an application for consent for the proposed development can be made under section 291 of the Planning Acts.

On 5 January 2023 the Developer submitted a request to An Bord Pleanála (the “Board”) to enter pre-application consultation under section 287(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the “Planning Acts”). Reference number ABP-315801-23 was allocated by the Board with respect to the Developer’s intended application under section 291 of the Planning Acts.

Appendix 1.2 (EIAR Consultation) provides further details of this consultation with the Board, and subsequent outcomes. However, key observations by the Board of relevance to the NIS are summarised in Table 2.

1.6 Phase One Collaboration

During S287 pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála, the Developer stated that developers from other Phase One projects have collaborated to share appropriate levels of information. An Bord Pleanála stated that it is important to have ongoing communication in this regard and that there is a consistency in approach and methodology used.

The developers of the five east coast Phase One projects, (Oriel Wind Park, NISA Wind Farm, Dublin Array Offshore Wind Farm, Codling Wind Park, and Arklow Bank Phase 2) collaborated on the following activities:

- An ornithology joint method statement (including the assessment methods to be used in preparing the EIARs) was prepared and submitted to NPWS (refer to Appendix 14: Method Statement - Offshore Wind Ornithology Assessment for East Coast Phase 1 Projects, for further details).
- Impact assessment methodology workshops were held between project technical specialists to discuss the assessment approach and receptor sensitivities and establish alignment where possible. This included for seascape, landscape and visual impact, offshore bats, ornithology, fish and shellfish, marine mammals, shipping and navigation, and cumulative effects assessment.
- Data sharing for the purposes of cumulative effects assessments for:
 - Offshore ornithology
 - Marine mammals and
 - Seascape, Landscape and Visual Assessment (SLVIA)
- Collaboration between project teams for the proposed development and Dublin Array Offshore Wind Farm including data sharing, for the purposes of preparing a dynamic energy budget modelling exercise to establish the potential for likely significant effects on the Rockabill to Dalkey Island Special Area of Conservation (refer to Appendix 22: NISA/Dublin Bioenergetic Modelling).

1.7 Summary of NIS-relevant observations raised during statutory stakeholder consultations

Table 1 provides a list of relevant statutory and other key stakeholders consulted during the EIAR and NIS consultation process, relevant to the NIS, as outlined in the sections above, with a summary of key observations of relevance to the NIS provided in Table 3.

Table 1: Statutory and other key Consultees relevant to the NIS

Consultee
An Bord Pleanála
BirdWatch Ireland
Environmental Protection Agency
Irish Wildlife Trust
Louth Environmental Network (sub-group of En Pillar/IEN)
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
Marine Survey Office
National Biodiversity Data Centre
Bat Conservation Ireland
Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
Development Applications Unit: The National Parks and Wildlife Service and The National Monuments Service (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
Marine Institute
Irish Fisheries Producer Organisations
National Parks and Wildlife Service
Coastal Planning Authorities: Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Meath County Council and Louth County Council
Transboundary consultees: The Isle of Man – The Department of Infrastructure; Northern Ireland – The Department for Infrastructure Planning; Wales– Energy Division, Welsh Government; Scotland – Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team; and The United Kingdom - Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Environmental Assessment, Planning Reform and Housing Quality.

Table 2: Summary of NIS-relevant observations raised during the proposed development’s statutory stakeholder consultation

EIAR/ NIS Topic	Summary of Key NIS-Relevant Observations from Statutory Stakeholder Consultations	Where addressed in the NIS	Where addressed in the EIAR
Marine Water and Sediment Quality	<p>Meath County Council</p> <p>Key issues that were raised by Meath County Council on the subject of Marine Water and Sediment Quality were provided in response to the proposed development EIAR Scoping Report in 2021 and include:</p> <p>Inclusion of the designated/ non-designated Bathing Waters (Laytown/ Bettystown; Mornington Beach);</p> <p>Due regard to the 2020 Beach Management Plan for Laytown/ Bettystown; and</p> <p>Inclusion of the designated Shellfish Water Balbriggan/ Skerries Shellfish Area for which a Pollution Reduction Plan was adopted in 2011.</p>	<p>Indirect water quality effects on QIs assessed in:</p> <p>SISAA Sections 3.3 Description of receiving environment, and 3.4 Identification of sites and features with connectivity and potential impacts.</p> <p>NIS Sections 5.1 to 5.4 (alone assessment) and 6.1 to 6.4 (in-combination assessment).</p>	<p>Chapter 11 Marine Water and Sediment Quality presents a comprehensive baseline assessment of the offshore development area which consider receptors identified by Meath County Council. Chapter 11 is also supplemented by Appendix 11.1 of Volume 9: Water Framework Directive Assessment.</p>
Benthic and Intertidal Ecology	<p>No key issues on benthic and intertidal ecology receptors were raised during stakeholder consultation.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
Fish and Shellfish	<p>Marine Institute</p> <p>Key issues that were raised by the Marine Institute in response to the EIAR Scoping Report in 2021 under the topic of fish and shellfish include the effects of Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) on electro-sensitive species. Their expectation is that the EIAR examines, in depth, the likely effects of the proposed development on a number of possible receptors. These include, shellfish species (crustaceans), elasmobranchs, demersal species and mammals.</p> <p>Irish Fisheries Producer Organisations</p> <p>During consultation with fisheries Producer Organisations in 2023, as part of the consultation undertaken on commercial fisheries, concerns were raised about the proposed development’s potential impacts on the habitat and ecology of local fish species. Information on key fish habitats and biotopes was presented in person to the producer organisations in 2023.</p>	<p>Migratory Fish:</p> <p>SISAA Sections 3.3 Description of receiving environment, and 3.4 Identification of sites and features with connectivity and potential impacts.</p> <p>NIS Sections 5.2 (alone assessment) and 6.2 (in-combination assessment).</p> <p>NIS Appendix 21: Fish and Shellfish Ecology Baseline Characterisation.</p>	<p>Volume 9, Appendix 13.1 provides a comprehensive baseline assessment of the fish and shellfish receptors within the offshore development area and study area. Impacts to these receptors is assessed in Volume 3, Chapter 13 Fish and Shellfish and this includes from EMF.</p>

EIAR/ NIS Topic	Summary of Key NIS-Relevant Observations from Statutory Stakeholder Consultations	Where addressed in the NIS	Where addressed in the EIAR
<p>Marine Mammal and Megafauna Ecology</p>	<p>National Parks and Wildlife Service A response to the EIAR Scoping Report was provided by the NPWS in 2021, and a follow up virtual meeting was also held in 2021. The survey and assessment methodologies were presented. The NPWS had a number of queries and key issues on these, including for marine mammals.</p> <p>Marine Institute Key issues that were raised by the Marine Institute in response to the EIAR Scoping Report in 2021 under the topic of marine mammals include confirmation that aerial surveys can also be used to survey marine mammals.</p> <p>Irish Whale and Dolphin Group The EIAR Scoping Report was provided to the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) in 2021 and no response was received, and no issues were raised. Consultation was undertaken by the Developer and the EIAR team with IWDG in 2023 by virtual meeting. The impact assessment methodology to be used in the EIAR was presented. The importance of mitigation measures for the reduction of impacts to marine mammals was raised as a key issue, in particular in relation to the approach to piling. IWDG commented that stakeholders are moving away from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) approach and that IWDG considers the current NPWS guidelines are insufficient with regards to mitigation. For IWDG there is an expectation that projects will use whatever measures are necessary (maximum mitigation) to reduce impacts. However, if projects are able to demonstrate acceptable impact levels with science, IWDG will be open to reviewing this.</p> <p>IWDG is keen to obtain as much monitoring data as possible to help understand the current status of the marine environment in particular SACs.</p> <p>IWDG was encouraged that Phase One projects were in discussion on approaches for cumulative assessments.</p>	<p>Marine Mammals: SISAA Sections 3.3 Description of receiving environment, and 3.4 Identification of sites and features with connectivity and potential impacts. NIS Sections 5.3 (alone assessment) and 6.3 (in-combination assessment). NIS Appendices: Appendix 10: Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol; and Appendix 11: Environmental Vessel Management Plan</p>	<p>Volume 3; Chapter 14: Marine Mammals presents a comprehensive baseline assessment of the offshore development and is supported by Appendix 16.1: Marine Mammals Technical Report and Appendix 16.2 Marine Mammals Mitigation Protocol. These documents provide the detail on surveys undertaken; assessment methodologies used; and the mitigation measures relevant to Marine Mammals.</p>

EIAR/ NIS Topic	Summary of Key NIS-Relevant Observations from Statutory Stakeholder Consultations	Where addressed in the NIS	Where addressed in the EIAR
<p>Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology</p>	<p>Marine Institute</p> <p>Key issues that were raised by the Marine Institute in response to the EIAR Scoping Report in 2021 under the topic of offshore and intertidal ornithology include the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) screening of species and relevant SPA colonies and concern over ornithology survey methodologies. The Marine Institute confirmed that aerial digital surveys are the method of choice. The Marine Institute also states that there is a need for some low tide intertidal bird surveys to predict any potential disturbance effect.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Marine Institute commented that methodologies proposed to measure and evaluate cumulative effects of offshore renewable developments, in what is becoming a very active area, i.e. western Irish Sea, was not clearly communicated.</p> <p>National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <p>A response to the EIAR Scoping Report was provided by the NPWS in 2021, and a follow up virtual meeting was also held in 2021. The survey and assessment methodologies were presented and NPWS had a number of queries and key issues on these, including for offshore ornithology such as displacement of fish feeding (prey for birds), bird collision and displacement. NPWS noted in-combination/cumulative effects to be given substantial consideration in the EIAR and NIS.</p> <p>In 2023 a meeting was held between Wind Energy Ireland, the Phase 1 project teams and NPWS to discuss the impacts of the Northwest Irish Sea cSPA on the preparation of the appropriate assessment screening and NISs for Phase One projects. Immediately following this meeting, the EIAR team met the NPWS. At the time of consultation, conservation objectives and qualifying interests had not been established. The project team presented significant survey data to demonstrate the baseline characterisation from an offshore ornithology perspective.</p> <p>Birdwatch Ireland</p> <p>Birdwatch Ireland (BWI) were provided the EIAR Scoping Report in 2021 and no response was received.</p>	<p>Ornithology:</p> <p>SISAA Sections 3.3 Description of receiving environment, and 3.4 Identification of sites and features with connectivity and potential impacts.</p> <p>NIS Sections 5.4 (alone assessment) and 6.4 (in-combination assessment).</p> <p>NIS Appendices:</p> <p>Appendix 12: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Technical Baseline;</p> <p>Appendix 13: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Population Viability Analysis;</p> <p>Appendix 14: Method Statement - Offshore Wind Ornithology Assessment for East Coast Phase 1 Projects;</p> <p>Appendix 15: NPWS Review of Method Statement;</p> <p>Appendix 16: Method Statement Review Consultation and Justification Log;</p> <p>Appendix 17: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Displacement Analysis;</p> <p>Appendix 18: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Collision Risk Modelling Assessment;</p> <p>Appendix 19: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Migratory Collision Risk Modelling;</p> <p>Appendix 20: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Apportioning Appendix;</p> <p>Appendix 22: NISA/Dublin Bioenergetic Modelling; and</p> <p>Appendix 23: MRSea Modelling for Offshore Ornithology.</p>	<p>Volume 3, Chapter 15: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology presents a summary of the surveys, methodologies and impacts assessed of the offshore development area and is supported by Volume 9, Appendices 15.1 to 15.5 which include baseline data and impact assessment and modelling results.</p>

EIAR/ NIS Topic	Summary of Key NIS-Relevant Observations from Statutory Stakeholder Consultations	Where addressed in the NIS	Where addressed in the EIAR
	<p>Consultation with BWI was undertaken in 2023 by virtual meetings where the proposed development was presented, assessment approaches discussed, and questions asked around available survey information. BWI raised their concerns regarding bird flu and the potential impact on populations at Rockabill. Tern populations on Rockabill are a concern for BWI. BWI have concerns about cumulative effects, as this has been an issue for onshore wind farm projects. BWI asked about the impact to Malahide Estuary SPA and whether fish species (prey) were being assessed as part of the EIAR. During further discussion queries were asked about barrier effects to those birds commuting to and from local sites such as Lambay Island.</p>		
Offshore bats	<p>National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <p>NPWS were consulted during 2023 on the survey methodology and impact assessment methodology for offshore bats. NPWS agreed with the survey and assessment approach and recognised the great value in having survey data, as there is very little available on offshore bats in the Irish sea. NPWS recommended a collaborative approach with other Phase One projects (then called Relevant Projects). NPWS recommended a full year of survey data, to obtain a better understanding of bat activity.</p> <p>Bat Conservation Ireland</p> <p>Bat Conservation Ireland (BCI) were provided the proposed development EIAR Scoping Report in 2021. BCI confirmed that they do not have the resources to comment on planning issues, and no key issues on offshore receptors were raised.</p>	No terrestrial sites or QIs were scoped into the SISAA for consideration.	<p>Volume 4, Chapter 35: Offshore Bats summarises the surveys undertaken by the proposed development and the results of those efforts.</p> <p>The proposed development did undertake further survey following request from NPWS and the survey data is presented in Appendix 35.1 and 35.2.</p> <p>The Phase One projects have agreed to a collaborative approach to monitoring post consent, that includes offshore bats.</p>
Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology	<p>An Bord Pleanála</p> <p>During S287 pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála, the Developer stated that developers from other Phase One projects have collaborated to share appropriate levels of information. An Bord Pleanála stated that it is important to have ongoing communication in this regard and that there is a consistency in approach and methodology used.</p>	<p>Ornithology:</p> <p>SISAA Sections 3.3 Description of receiving environment, and 3.4 Identification of sites and features with connectivity and potential impacts.</p> <p>NIS Sections 5.4 (alone assessment) and 6.4 (in-combination assessment).</p> <p>NIS Appendices:</p> <p>Appendix 12: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Technical Baseline;</p>	For further details on the ornithology joint method statement, refer to Volume 3, Chapter 15 Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology.

EIAR/ NIS Topic	Summary of Key NIS-Relevant Observations from Statutory Stakeholder Consultations	Where addressed in the NIS	Where addressed in the EIAR
	<p><i>Subsequent to the above advice:</i></p> <p><i>The developers of the five east coast Phase One projects, (Oriel Wind Park, North Irish Sea Array Wind Farm, Dublin Array Offshore Wind Farm, Codling Wind Park and Arklow Bank Phase 2) have collaborated on the following activities:</i></p> <p><i>An ornithology joint method statement (including the assessment methods to be used in preparing the EIARs) was prepared and submitted to NPWS;</i></p> <p><i>Impact assessment methodology workshops were held between project technical specialists to discuss the assessment approach and receptor sensitivities and establish alignment where possible. This included offshore bats, ornithology, fish and shellfish, marine mammals, and cumulative effects assessment;</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration between project teams for the proposed development and Dublin Array Offshore Wind Farm including data sharing, for the purposes of preparing a dynamic energy budget modelling exercise to establish the potential for likely significant effects on the Rockabill to Dalkey Island Special Area of Conservation, and</i></p> <p><i>Agreement on establishing the East Coast Phase One Monitoring Group ' (ECPOMG). The ECPOMG are committed to continued collaboration within the group, and with those relevant statutory and technical stakeholders, in order to agree and implement strategic monitoring initiatives where appropriate and relevant. Monitoring initiatives implemented by the East Coast Phase One projects will be determined by the conclusions of the EIAR process, with a focus on validation and evidence gathering. It is anticipated that the ECPOMG, alongside those relevant statutory and technical stakeholders, would seek to explore and agree monitoring objectives, methodologies and outcomes via ongoing collaborative engagement.</i></p>	<p>Appendix 13: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Population Viability Analysis;</p> <p>Appendix 14: Method Statement - Offshore Wind Ornithology Assessment for East Coast Phase 1 Projects;</p> <p>Appendix 15: NPWS Review of Method Statement;</p> <p>Appendix 16: Method Statement Review Consultation and Justification Log;</p> <p>Appendix 17: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Displacement Analysis;</p> <p>Appendix 18: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Collision Risk Modelling Assessment;</p> <p>Appendix 19: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Migratory Collision Risk Modelling;</p> <p>Appendix 20: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology Apportioning Appendix;</p> <p>Appendix 22: NISA/Dublin Bioenergetic Modelling; and</p> <p>Appendix 23: MRSea Modelling for Offshore Ornithology.</p>	
<p>Biodiversity landward of the Highwater Mark (HWM)</p>	<p>National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <p>A response to the EIAR Scoping Report was provided by the NPWS in 2021, and a follow up virtual meeting was also held in 2021. The survey and assessment methodologies were presented. Additional input was obtained from the NPWS on the various ecological surveys to be carried out on receptors landward of the HWM.</p>	<p>SISAA Sections 3.3 Description of receiving environment, and 3.4 Identification of sites and features with connectivity and potential impacts.</p> <p>No terrestrial sites or QIs were scoped into the SISAA for consideration.</p>	<p>Please see Volume 4, Chapter 23: Biodiversity for a detailed assessment of the likely significant effects arising from the proposed development on biodiversity. Appendices 23.1 to 23.9 present the results of desk studies and ecological surveys which informed the</p>

EIAR/ NIS Topic	Summary of Key NIS-Relevant Observations from Statutory Stakeholder Consultations	Where addressed in the NIS	Where addressed in the EIAR
	<p>Several subsequent consultations with the NPWS were undertaken in conjunction with the development of the Northwest Irish Sea Special Protection Area (SPA). Following these consultations, the NPWS provided the datasets to the project team for use in the assessments which enabled a robust assessment of likely significant effects of the proposed development on relevant qualifying species.</p>		<p>baseline upon which the impact assessment was conducted.</p>
Cumulative Effects	<p>An Bord Pleanála</p> <p>During S287 pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála, the Developer stated that developers from other Phase One projects have collaborated to share appropriate levels of information. An Bord Pleanála stated that it is important to have ongoing communication in this regard and that there is a consistency in approach and methodology used.</p> <p>Coastal Planning Authorities</p> <p>During consultation with Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Meath County Council and Louth County Council, the need for a comprehensive cumulative assessment was raised in various meetings with regards to the proposed development. Specific discussions around Fingal County Council focused on the MetroLink and DART Coastal North+ projects for consideration.</p> <p>Consequently, numerous projects including MetroLink (TII and ESB), the Aviation Fuel Pipeline, various active travel plans, DART Coastal North (Irish Rail), and the Greater Dublin Drainage project teams have been consulted from a cumulative perspective and have informed the design and all relevant cumulative assessments.</p>	NIS Section 6: In-combination assessment.	<p>Volume 6, Chapter 38: Cumulative and Inter-Related Effects presents a detailed assessment on cumulative effects carried out as part of this EIAR for onshore and sitewide chapters. Offshore cumulative assessments are presented in the relevant EIAR Chapters in Volume 3, Chapters 10-20 and Volume 5, Chapter 35: Offshore Bats.</p>