

Volume 8: Appendices (Introductory)

Appendix 2.2
**Information provided under
S287 pre-application**

By email & post
13 March 2023

The Secretary
An Bord Pleanála
64, Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

Your ref ABP- 315801-23
Our ref 281240-00
File ref NISA Wind Farm-S288 Pre-App Consultation Response Letter

Dear Sir/Madam

North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Offshore Wind Farm

Response to An Bord Pleanála's letter dated 20th February 2023 requesting that information as set out in Appendix A is submitted in accordance with Section 288(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

North Irish Sea Array Windfarm Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as the Developer), is the holder of a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) Ref: 2022-MAC-005 granted for the occupation of a maritime area for the purposes of the proposed North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the proposed development).

On 5th 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 Acts for the proposed development. Subsequently, the Board issued a letter (case number ABP-315801-23) dated 20th February 2023, requesting that the information as set out in Appendix A of its letter is submitted to the Board in accordance with Section 288(1)(a) of the Planning Acts.

This report has been prepared in response to this request and supplements the information provided on 05th January 2023.

It is noted that the Developer will consult with the Board at a later stage in relation to Section 287B of the Planning Acts to seek an opinion of the Board as to flexibility with regard to the application for permission.

The Developer would be grateful if the Board could confirm the fee provision for pre-application consultation as soon as possible. An electronic fund transfer can be then arranged.

Our ref 281240-00
Date 13 March 2023

Arup is the main agent for the Developer. Please contact the undersigned for any further details.
We look forward to hearing from you to confirm a suitable date for the meeting.
Please note that all commercial information provided in this response is confidential.

Yours sincerely



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1. Prospective Applicant/General Project Details

North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Windfarm Ltd. (hereafter referred to as the Developer) proposes to make an application for permission to carry out the development of the North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the proposed development) under Section 291 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the “Planning Acts”).

On 5th 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 Acts for the proposed development.

This report has been prepared in response to a request from the Board (Case number ABP-315801-23) dated 20th February 2023 that the information as set out in Appendix A of its letter is submitted to the Board in accordance with Section 288(1)(a) of the Planning Acts.

It is noted that the majority of the information contained in this report was previously submitted to the Board in the Developer’s S287 request for pre-application consultation dated 5th January 2023.

1.1 MAC details

The Developer is the holder of a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) which was awarded on the 23 December 2022 (Reference No 2022-MAC-005) granted for occupation of a maritime site for the purposes of the proposed development. ‘*Permitted Maritime Usage: The construction and operation of an offshore windfarm and associated infrastructure*’.

Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/fab8f-maritime-area-consent-mac/>

1.2 Design team proposed

North Irish Sea Array Ltd (the Developer) is comprised of a Joint Venture between Statkraft Ireland Ltd and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners P/S.

The Developer will utilise an in-house design team supplemented by additional specialist technical resources which will be tendered and contracted separately for discrete design work packages as required.

Arup is the Developer’s lead permitting consultant and main agent. It will utilise an in-house design and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) team supplemented by GoBe as offshore EIA specialists and other additional specialists as required.

1.3 Consideration of whether it is anticipated separate Section 287B consultations will be required in relation to the proposed development.

The Developer shall undertake separate Section 287B consultations in relation to the proposed development.

1.4 Anticipated timelines

It is anticipated that the Developer will make an application for permission to carry out the proposed development under Section 291 of the Planning Acts in Q4 2023. Subject to receipt of planning consent, construction will commence in Q1 2026, and commercial operations are expected to commence in Q4 2028.

2. Brief description of location and proposed development:

2.1 Brief description of site and surrounding area

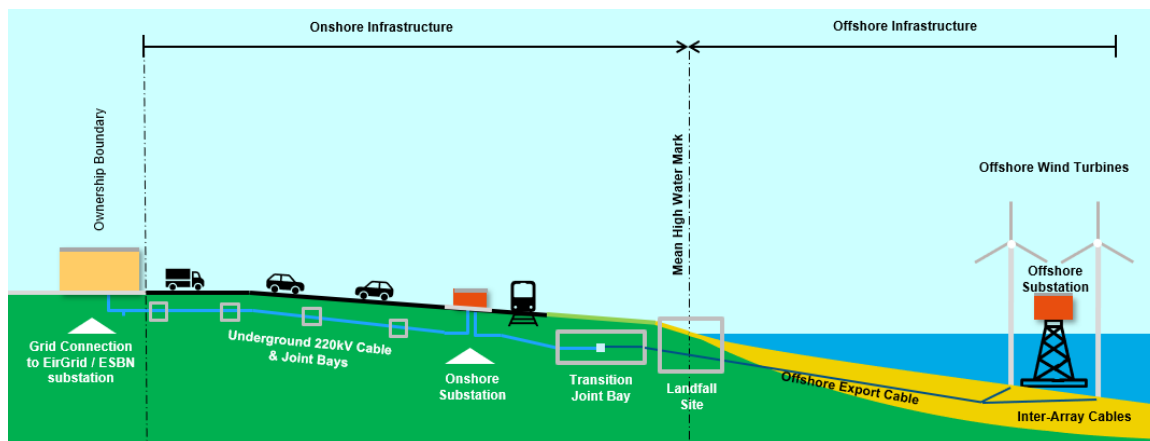
A description of the site and surrounding area, which was provided in Section 6 of the S287 pre-application request on 5th January 2023, is summarised below.

The proposed development consists of an offshore wind farm off the coast of counties Dublin, Meath and Louth and its connection to an existing EirGrid/ ESBN substation at Belcamp, Swords Co. Dublin. The proposed development is comprised of offshore and onshore infrastructure and other supporting infrastructure and ancillary works.

As illustrated in the cross section below, the offshore infrastructure includes the installation of a maximum of 46¹ Wind Turbine Generators (WTG) with associated foundations, one Offshore Substation Platform (OSP), inter-array cables (within the wind farm array area) and two offshore export cables (within an offshore export cable corridor) which come ashore at the landfall site.

The landfall site, located to the north of Balbriggan, acts as the conduit between the offshore and onshore infrastructure.

The onshore infrastructure includes the two offshore export cables at the landfall site, two transition joint bays, one onshore substation at the landfall and approximately 33km of a single 220kV High Voltage Alternative Current (HVAC) underground cable which will connect into the existing EirGrid / ESBN substation at Belcamp.



Picture 1 Infrastructure of the Proposed Development

As previously mentioned, the offshore elements of the proposed development are located off the coast of counties Dublin, Meath and Louth and cover an area of approximately 314.5km² of which 246.6km² corresponds to the wind farm array area and 67.9 km² to the offshore export cable corridor. The wind farm array area ranges from 13km to 23.5km from shore in water depths of 30 to 63m lowest astronomical tide (LAT). The distance of the offshore substation to the shore is approximately 17.5km.

The onshore elements of the proposed development are located within the jurisdiction of two local authorities; Fingal County Council (FCC) and Dublin City Council (DCC) and cover an area of approximately 1.5km².

¹ Information accompanying the S287 pre-application consultation request dated 05th Jan 2023 noted a maximum of 42 wind turbines, however as the design of the proposed development has progressed, the maximum number of wind turbines currently proposed is 46.

The underground cable is approximately 33km in length and connects the landfall area, which is located north of Balbriggan, to the existing EirGrid/ ESNB substation at Belcamp, Swords, Co. Dublin.

The landfall site is located immediately south of Bremore Point in North Co. Dublin adjacent to Bremore Bay Beach. The beach is located c. 700m east of the R132 and c.400m east of the Dublin-Belfast rail line. The landfall site consists of a mixture of sandy and rocky beach with undulating agricultural fields behind sea hills and cliffs. The area in the immediate vicinity of the landfall to the east and west of the rail line consists of agricultural land with a small number of residential and farm dwellings. The town of Balbriggan is located c. 1.4km to the south of the landfall area. O' Dwyer's GAA facility, including clubhouse and sports hall, is being constructed in the adjacent fields west of the rail line. There is pedestrian access to Bremore Bay Beach via Bremore Castle Car Park to the south. The M1 motorway lies approximately 3km to the west of the landfall site.

The onshore cable circuits originate at the landfall site, head west under the Dublin-Belfast line and then proceed west through private lands to cross the R132 to reach the onshore substation.

The onshore substation will be located in the townland of Bremore, Co. Dublin, approximately 2km north of Balbriggan town centre and west of the R132. The substation site is located on greenfield, agricultural lands with a surrounding boundary of hedgerow and mixed vegetation and covers an area of approximately 0.06km². The immediate surrounding fields are in pasture, with one dwelling immediately adjacent to the proposed development. The land use within the wider area consist of Bremore Regional Park (c. 200m to the southeast), O' Dwyer's GAA (c. 600m south), St. Molagas National School (c. 800m southeast) and Balbriggan Harbour (c. 2km southeast). There are several residential communities, within 500m, to the south and east of the landfall area.

From the onshore substation, the onshore cable circuits are routed back towards the R132 as a single 220kV HVAC underground cable and continues in a southerly direction and follows the R132 until it reaches the Estuary Roundabout. Here the underground cable turns north onto the Estuary Road for c. 3km and runs adjacent to the Malahide Estuary SPA (004025) and the Malahide Estuary SAC (000205).

The underground cable joins the R106 and R107 and then turns west along the R139 for approximately 2km before entering the existing EirGrid/ ESNB substation.

Where possible the underground cable has been routed within the public road network, however there may be a requirement for short sections of the cable to traverse private landholdings. The underground cable will cross the East West Interconnector Cable (EWIC), the M1 motorway, a number of watercourses and bridges. The surrounding land uses along the cable route are predominately agricultural, residential and industrial.

2.2 Relevant Coastal (or Planning) Authorities

The relevant coastal or planning authorities, as noted in Section 10 of the S287 pre-application request dated 5th January 2023, are provided below.

The offshore infrastructure of the proposed development is located off the coast of counties Dublin, Meath and Louth and the onshore infrastructure is located within the functional areas of Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council.

2.3 Number of turbines proposed (if specific number not yet known range can be provided)

The design process is ongoing; however it is anticipated that the number of wind turbine generators will range from 34 to 46.

2.4 Output (MW) (range can be provided if not yet known)

The output of the proposed development is anticipated to be approximately 700MW.

2.5 Height of turbines and any other key infrastructure

The design process is ongoing; however the indicative tip heights of the wind turbines are between 276m and 316m (relative to LAT).

The height of the offshore substation is anticipated to be 60m above LAT.

2.6 Location of turbines and any other key infrastructure

Drawing *OFS-ZZ-1001: Offshore Layout Plan* illustrates an indicative layout of the wind turbines and the location of the offshore substation. Given the design process is ongoing, the layout provided is subject to refinement. Currently the offshore red line boundary of the proposed development is located within the MAC boundary as per 2022-MAC-005.

However, within the red line boundary the Developer proposes to commit to an infrastructure boundary within which all infrastructure will be installed and all construction activities including vessel anchoring/jack up will take place.

Consent will be sought to install infrastructure across the infrastructure boundary however, it also commits the proposed development to not developing outside of the infrastructure boundary hence reducing the request for flexibility in the layout design of the proposed development.

Design flexibility regarding the layout of key offshore infrastructure will be sought through the Section 287 consultation process.

3. Drawings at appropriate scales

3.1 Site Location map sufficient to identify the maritime area in which the proposed development would be situated.

As mentioned in Section 5 of the S287 pre-application request sent on 5th January 2023, the proposed development will be located within the red line boundary on the accompanying drawings (see Appendix A). The drawings provided include:

- GEN-ZZ-0001: Site Location Map
- GEN-ZZ-0010: Special Protection Areas
- GEN-ZZ-0011: Special Areas of Conservation
- OFS-ZZ-0001: Offshore Site Location Plan
- OFS-ZZ-1001: Offshore Layout Plan
- ONS-ZZ-0001: Onshore Site Location Plan

The site location map shows the location of the proposed development including the maritime area in which the proposed development will be situated. The draft offshore site location plan shows the location of the offshore wind farm array and export cable corridor. The draft onshore site location plan is included for completeness and shows the location of the landfall site, the onshore substation, the onshore cable route and the grid connection to the existing substation at Belcamp, which are all located within the onshore red line boundary.

3.2 Site Layout to include MAC boundary, turbine locations, offshore substation locations, cable route(s)/landfall point(s) and other key infrastructure as appropriate. (To include distances of key infrastructure from coastline).

An indicative site layout of the offshore infrastructure including the MAC boundary, the red line boundary, infrastructure boundary, location and layout of the wind turbines, offshore substation, offshore export cable route and potential landfall site is presented in drawings *OFS-ZZ-0001: Offshore Site Location Plan* and drawing *OFS-ZZ-1001: Offshore Layout Plan* (Refer to Appendix A).

As previously mentioned, the wind farm array area ranges from 13km to 23.5km from the coastline and the distance of the offshore substation to the coastline is approximately 17.5km.

The site layout of the onshore infrastructure, which is located within the RLB, is shown in drawing *ONS-ZZ-0001 Onshore Site Location Plan* (Refer to Appendix A).

3.3 Photomontages - representative images from key views along the coast (note sample only for PAC purposes).

Photomontages are provided in Appendix B and represent viewpoints from the following locations:

- Balbriggan
- Bettystown
- Howth
- Laytown
- Portmarnock
- Rush
- Skerries

3.4 Maps of coastline and Designated Areas

The designated European sites near the proposed development, which were listed in Section 12.1 of the S287 pre-application request sent on 5th January 2023, are replicated in Table 1 and illustrated in drawings *GEN-ZZ-0010: Special Protection Areas* and *GEN-ZZ-0011: Special Areas of Conservation* (Refer to Appendix A).

Table 1 Designated European sites of relevance to the proposed development.

Designated Site	Location	Feature or Description
Baldoyle Bay SAC/ SPA	Approximately 13.5km south of the proposed development	The site is designated for Annex I habitats including estuaries, tidal mudflats and sandflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadows. This site is of high conservation importance for the following species: brent goose, shelduck, ringed plover, golden plover, grey plover and bar-tailed godwit. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.
Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC/ SPA	Approximately 16km west of the proposed development	The site is of considerable conservation interest as a coastal complex that supports good examples of Annex I habitats, and for the important bird populations that it supports. The designated Annex I habitats include estuaries, tidal mudflats and sandflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic and Mediterranean Salt Meadows. This site is of conservation interest for the following species: shelduck, oystercatcher, golden plover, grey plover, lapwing, knot, sanderling, black-tailed godwit, redshank, turnstone and little tern. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds, with parts of the SPA designated as Wildfowl Sanctuary.

Designated Site	Location	Feature or Description
Clogher Head SAC	Approximately 16.5km north-west of the proposed development	This site supports one of the best-known examples of coastal heath in Co. Louth. It contains two habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, vegetated sea cliffs and dry heath, and supports a good diversity of coastal heath plants.
Dalkey Islands SPA	Approximately 14km south-west of the proposed development	This site is of conservation interest for the following Annex I species: roseate tern, common tern and Arctic tern. The SPA is used by these tern species as a major post-breeding / pre-migration autumn roost area.
Ireland's Eye SPA/ SAC	Approximately 12km south of the proposed development	The site is of high ornithological importance and special conservation interest for the following species: cormorant, herring gull, kittiwake, guillemot and razorbill. Several pairs each of Shelduck, Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover breed. The island is also a traditional site for peregrine falcon, a species that is listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. In winter small numbers of greylag goose and pale-bellied brent goose graze on the island and it is used as a roost site by gulls and some waders. The site is designated for two Annex II habitats, sea cliffs and shingle, which support nationally important seabird colonies.
Lambay Island SAC/ SPA	Approximately 1.9km to the south-west of the proposed development	The site has Annex I vegetated sea cliffs, that hold internationally important populations of seabirds. The site is also of conservation importance for the populations of Annex II listed grey seal and common seal species. The site is of conservation interest for the following species: fulmar, cormorant, shag, greylag goose, lesser black-backed gull, herring gull, kittiwake, guillemot, razorbill and puffin. The site is also of special conservation interest for holding and assemblage of over 20,000 breeding seabirds. Along with the presence of Annex I peregrine falcon at the site.
Malahide Estuary SAC/ SPA (also known as Broadmeadow / Swords Estuary SPA)	Lies adjacent to the proposed development	The site is designated for Annex I habitats including estuaries, tidal mudflats and sandflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadows. The site is important ornithologically, with an internationally significant population of brent goose. The site provides both feeding and roosting areas for a range of wintering waterfowl and is of high conservation importance for the following species: great crested grebe, brent goose, shelduck, pintail, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, oystercatcher, golden plover, grey plover, knot, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit and redshank. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.
North Bull Island SPA/ North Dublin Bay SAC	Approximately 16km south of the proposed development	The site is of conservation interest for the following species: brent goose, shelduck, teal, pintail, shoveler, oystercatcher, golden plover, grey plover, knot, sanderling, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit, curlew, redshank, turnstone and black-headed gull. The site is also of special conservation interest for holding an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering waterbirds. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds, with the site also designated as a Wildfowl Sanctuary. The site is designated for Annex I habitats including estuaries, tidal mudflats and sandflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadows.
River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA	Approximately 17.5km west of the proposed development	The site is of conservation interest for the following species: oystercatcher, ringed plover, golden plover, knot, sanderling and herring gull. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.
Rockabill SPA/ Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC	Lies adjacent to the south-west of the proposed development	This site is of ornithological importance as it supports the most important roseate tern colony in Europe. The site also supports nationally important breeding populations of common tern and Arctic tern and a nationally important wintering population of purple sandpiper. All three species of tern which occur are listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive. The site designation represents a key habitat for the Annex II species harbour porpoise, and Annex I reef habitat within the Irish Sea.

Designated Site	Location	Feature or Description
Rogerstown Estuary SAC/ SPA	Lies adjacent to the proposed development	The site is an internationally important waterfowl site and has been a breeding site for little terns. It is designated for Annex I habitats including estuaries, tidal mudflats and sandflats, Salicornia mud, Atlantic and Mediterranean salt meadows. The site is of conservation interest for the following species: greylag goose, brent goose, shelduck, shoveler, oystercatcher, ringed plover, grey plover, knot, dunlin, black-tailed godwit and redshank. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds. The SPA is also designated as Wildfowl Sanctuary.
Skerries Islands SPA	Approximately 8.2km west of the proposed development	Comprising of three islands this site is of high ornithological importance for both breeding seabirds and wintering waterfowl. The site is of conservation interest for the following species: cormorant, shag, brent goose, purple sandpiper, turnstone and herring gull. Wetlands form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds. There is also the presence of Annex I golden plover and short-eared owl at the site.
Howth Head SAC/ Howth Head Coast SPA	Approximately 6.4km of the proposed development.	The site supports vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts and European dry heaths. The site is of conservation interest for kittiwake

4. Onshore development

4.1 Details and drawings of proposed onshore development including grid connection, cable layout, substation upgrades, Operation and Maintenance Buildings and any other relevant infrastructure.

A description of the onshore infrastructure associated with the proposed development is provided in Section 2.1 of this report and was provided as Sections 6 and ya8 of the S287 pre-application request sent on 5th January 2023.

A summary of the key onshore elements of the proposed development will include the following:

- The landfall site, which will be the interface between offshore and onshore infrastructure, will be located at Bremore Beach, north of Balbriggan.
- At the landfall site, two 220kV offshore export cables will be received at the two cable transition joint bays (TJB). Within each of the cable TJBs, the offshore export cables will transition into two onshore export cables and will be routed underground through private lands, under the Dublin-Belfast rail line and the R132 before connecting into the onshore substation.
- The onshore substation, which will be located west of the R132 and approximately 1km west of the landfall site, will consist of two compounds; one NISA connection compound and one ESBN/EirGrid transmission compound. From the onshore substation, a single 220kV HVAC underground cable will be routed to the existing substation at Belcamp.
- The onshore cable route, which is approximately 33km in length, is a single 220kV HVAC underground cable which will be laid along public roads as far as technically feasible. However, there will be a requirement for the onshore cable go to offline and enter private lands before connecting into the existing substation at Belcamp.
- Grid connection to the National Electricity Transmission Network will take place via an underground connection into the existing 220kV substation at Belcamp.

- An Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) will be required for servicing the offshore wind farm, and as a base for employees working on its operation. The OMF will be the subject of separate applications for approval to Fingal County Council for the onshore infrastructure.

4.2 Submit details of pre-application consultations held or planning applications (if any), and/or proposed consenting approach/timeline

4.2.1 Section 287(1) of the Planning Acts

The Developer proposes to make an application for permission to carry out the proposed development under Section 291 of the Planning Acts.

On 5th January 2023, the Developer submitted a request to the Board to enter pre-application consultation under Section 287(1) of the Planning Acts for the proposed development.

This report dated 13th March 2023, has been prepared in response to a request from the Board (Case number ABP-315801-23) dated 20th February 2023 that the information as set out in Appendix A of its letter is submitted to the Board in accordance with Section 288(1)(a) of the Planning Acts.

Section 8.3 of the S287 pre-application request sent on 5th January 2023, which outlined the suitability of the proposed development for submission under Section 291, is reiterated within this section.

4.2.1.1 Section 285 of the Planning Acts

Chapter III *Other Development in Maritime Area* of Part XXI *Maritime Development* (as inserted by the MAP Act) amends the Planning Acts 2000 in relation to maritime development.

Section 285 sets out the classes of development to which Chapter III applies. The proposed development is a development as defined in Section 285 (1)(a)(iii)(II) as follows:

Section 285 (1)(a)(iii)

(a) development situated –

(iii) ...partly in the outer maritime area, partly in –

(II) ...the nearshore areas of more than one coastal authority and partly on land

4.2.1.2 Eighth Schedule of the Planning Acts

The Eighth Schedule (as inserted by the MAP Act) of the Planning Acts, sets out the classes of development specified for purposes of Chapter III of Part XXI.

The proposed development falls under the development categories of the Eighth Schedule as follows:

4. Development consisting of the construction of an electrical power line that has a voltage of not less than 220 kilovolts and a length of not less than 15 kilometres.

18. An installation for the production of energy by harnessing the power of the wind that has— (a) more than 5 turbines, or (b) a total output of more than 5 megawatts.

4.2.1.3 Section 286 of the Planning Acts

Section 286(2) states that an application for permission to carry out development to which Chapter III applies shall be made to the Board under Section 291.

Section 286(3) sets out the eligibility criteria under which an application for permission to which Chapter III applies. As previously mentioned, the Developer is the holder of a MAC granted for the occupation of a maritime site for the purposes of the proposed development. The planning application will include the consent of the owners of land on which it is proposed to carry out the development concerned. The proposed development is eligible under Section 286(3)(a) and (d).

4.2.2 Details of other Pre-Application Consultations and Planning Applications

The Developer has commenced Section 182A pre-application discussions with An Bord Pleanála for the onshore cable route (Case No: ABP-310329-21). Meetings between the Developer and the Board were held 24th August 2021 and 14th December 2021.

No other pre-application consultations are currently being undertaken. As previously mentioned, the Operation & Maintenance Facility will be the subject of a separate statutory consent application and at the appropriate time, pre-application consultation will be undertaken with the consent authority.

5. Brief Policy Context for proposed development

By 2030 Ireland's electricity demand is forecasted to rise between 19% and 50%. The sections below demonstrate Ireland's commitment to meeting 80% of this demand with electricity from renewable energy sources (RES-E) by 2030. To accommodate this target, the Programme for Government (PfG) set the target for 7GW of offshore wind to be connected to the electrical grid by 2030.

The proposed development was deemed a "Relevant Project" by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government (DHPLG). Importantly, this designation allowed the proposed development to be one of the first projects awarded a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) under the new Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act 2021.

The DHPLG recognised the proposed development as meeting these requirements and has subsequently been included within the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF). As such, the proposed development is directly aligned with the PfG and national plans to achieve the climate targets set for 2030 and beyond.

Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is required under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 which commits Ireland to reach a legally binding target of net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and a cut of 51% by 2030, driven by the EU targets in the Renewable Energy Directive (*Directive (EU) 2018/2001*).

CAP 2023 forecasts electricity demand to grow between 19-50% over the next 10 years. The PfG outlines a high-demand scenario in which demand will almost double by 2030, with electricity emissions reducing between 60-80%. This signals an unprecedented push for renewable resources to meet the growth of demand. The proposed development directly aligns with the PfG to sustainably support the regional growth of urbanisation and development seen on the east coast.

Strategic management of offshore resources around existing onshore infrastructure is necessary to reach the target of 80% of electricity demand from renewable energy by 2030. By allocating offshore renewable development alongside current onshore resources, policy makers, developers, and Transmission System Operators (TSOs) are strategically positioned to deliver grid expansion to areas beyond the east coast.

The proposed development aligns with the actions and targets set out in the CAP regarding the need for investment in renewable energy, specifically marine renewable energy. The proposed development aims to prioritise local supply chains and provide clean, secure, and local electricity to between 500,000 - 700,000 homes in an area of peak demand. The proposed development would be delivered by 2028 and represents 10% of the 7GW offshore wind target set for 2030.

National Marine Planning Framework

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) represents Ireland's first comprehensive Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) since Harnessing Our Ocean's Wealth in 2012. The publication of the NMPF satisfies the requirements outlined in Article 4 of Directive 2014/89/EU (Maritime Spatial Planning Directive) to publish and implement an MSP by 2021.

The NMPF seeks to guide decision makers, users, and stakeholders towards more strategic, plan-led, and efficient use of marine resources.

It forms the second complimentary piece of Ireland's Project 2040 vision with the NPF. Together, the two policies will guide the development of maritime and terrestrial developments with a focus on establishing a connected understanding of the two. The NMPF supports the establishment of Ireland as a world leader in offshore renewable energy deployment, highlighting the importance of offshore renewable energy in Ireland's decarbonisation journey.

Conclusion

The proposed development aligns with the actions and targets established in the NMPF through significant contribution to the 7GW of offshore wind energy by 2030. As a "Relevant Project" the proposed development directly bolsters short-term renewable energy capacity, thus helping to implement the transition protocol by connecting to the grid before 2030. The proposed development also aligns with CAP 2023 in relation to Ireland's 2030 and 2050 carbon emission reduction targets.

Furthermore, the proposed development will generate significant opportunities by contributing to local employment and economic growth, regional delivery of renewable electricity generation, and a secure source of electricity for the national grid. Locally, the project aims to contribute multi-million Euro investments on an annual basis to align with future Renewable Energy Support Schemes, in which developers donate €2/MWh generated to community benefit funds for local renewable energy projects. From a regional perspective, the proposed development will deliver clean energy to between 500,000 and 700,000 homes across the Fingal and Greater Dublin Area. And nationally, the proposed development will deliver a significant portion of the 7GW target for offshore renewable generation set for 2030 whilst improving energy security and reducing reliance on the costly import of energy.

By aligning new generation with existing infrastructure located within an area of high demand, the proposed development directly conforms with existing policies, plans and strategies, whilst alleviating resources to be deployed in areas of greater need.

6. Details of consultations held to date or scheduled with the public, prescribed bodies and any other relevant bodies, or organisations.

At a very early stage in the design of the proposed development, 2021, the Developer initiated a stakeholder engagement campaign with prescribed bodies, the public and other relevant bodies and organisations.

Consultations held to date, including those who were consulted during the EIA scoping stage, and those scheduled to take place are detailed within this section.

6.1 Prescribed Bodies/Stakeholders

Consultations were held with the prescribed bodies, government organisations and other relevant stakeholders as outlined below:

- An Bord Pleanála
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- An Taisce
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ)
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Commissioners of Irish Lights

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Defence
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage including
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service
 - Underwater Archaeology Unit
 - The National Monuments Service
- Dublin City Council
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
- EirGrid
- Environmental Protection Agency
- ESB Networks
- Fingal County Council
- Gas Networks Ireland
- Geological Survey of Ireland
- Health and Safety Authority
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Irish Chamber of Shipping
- Irish Rail
- Irish Water
- Louth County Council
- Marine Institute
- Marine Survey Office
- Meath County Council
- National Biodiversity Data Centre
- Office of Public Works
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland

6.2 Other Relevant Bodies, Organisations and NGOs

Consultations held with other relevant bodies, organisations and NGOs are listed below:

- Birdwatch Ireland
- Bat Conservation Ireland
- Coastwatch

- Drogheda Port Company
- Dublin Port Company
- Earth Mining Division
- East West Interconnector (EWIC)
- Environmental Pillar (Irish Environmental Network (IEN))
- Greater Dublin Drainage Project
- Irish Coast Guard
- Irish Cruising Association
- Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
- Irish Wildlife Trust
- Warrenpoint Port

6.3 Public consultations

Engagement with the Fishing Industry

Building on the Developers' extensive previous experience of working with fisheries in a proactive way on projects such as the Greenlink Interconnector and similar offshore projects in the UK, the Developer engaged with the fishing industry at a very early stage in the development process and, critically, before any foreshore licence application⁸ for site investigations/surveys was submitted.

At the outset a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) with significant experience in the fishing industry was appointed by the Developer to represent the proposed development. The initial round of consultation focused on industry groups such as Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and the relevant Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums. Following this, face to face engagement with fishermen at the relevant ports commenced. Port visits were undertaken, information was provided and feedback gathered. This engagement was incorporated into the design of the proposed development and has influenced the layout and orientation of the current design being considered. Engagement with the fisheries has been ongoing with an update booklet circulated in Q2 2021 and another in Q2 2022.

Engagement with Public Representatives

Once a working design had been established in early 2021, a website for the proposed development was developed and the stakeholder manager working with the dedicated Community Liaison Officer (CLO) reached out to all local public representatives to provide information and gather feedback. In all, 36 local councillors and 20 TDs were contacted regarding the proposed development. Once public representatives were advised of the proposed development, engagement with the wider public commenced. Engagement is ongoing.

Engagement with Local Community Groups

Following commencement of engagement with the public representatives, the CLO for the proposed development began to make contact with local groups, organisations, businesses and interested individuals based in the local area, in order to provide information and to gather feedback. This engagement was carried out over the phone, in person and by email as was appropriate. Feedback was again fed back into the design team for consideration. In all, 350 groups, organisations and interested parties have been personally engaged with, with the majority of these being engaged with on more than one occasion.

A sample of those groups engaged with includes the following:

- Rush tourism
- Skerries tidy towns

- Balbriggan resident's association
- Howth yacht club
- Clogherhead lifeboats
- Fingal, Louth, Meath Public Participation Network PPN
- Balbriggan climate club,
- Sustainable Skerries,
- Sonnairte

Project Website

In February 2021, a dedicated website for the proposed development was launched. This website, which provided information on the proposed development, includes:

- High level information - About Statkraft and the proposed development.
- Project Details – Evolution and how the design had evolved to this point. Design and location including maps and photomontages, the further design that was required, and how the proposed development could deliver on sustainability.
- The Development Path – EIAR process, Foreshore Licences, and the route to planning.
- Benefits – on a National and Local level
- A Contact Us facility.

This website has been advertised on local media, social media, through our engagement process and through posters and leaflets. www.northirishsearray.ie

Virtual Consultation Room

As public engagement was progressing, a virtual consultation room (VCR) was developed and launched. During the development of this VCR, stakeholders with whom engagement had been established were contacted to provide feedback on what they would like to see included in the VCR. The VCR also sought feedback from those who visited it. Additional photomontages were added including views from 14 different viewpoint locations.

Information was provided on the onshore and offshore aspects of the proposed development, and the design. Specific sections were afforded to the CLO and the FLO which explained these roles and encouraged engagement.

This VCR was advertised in the local papers (Meath Chronicle, Drogheda Independent, Fingal Independent, Skerries News as well as the website of the Dublin Gazette. Combined circulation of over 80k) and on social media, along with posters being placed at strategic locations in the local areas. The CLO and FLO promoted the VCR within the onshore and fishing communities. This engagement ran from late August 2021 to November 2021.

Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement

The Developer's engagement is aimed at providing ongoing and active engagement with all stakeholders. Initial information was provided at the outset, an update and additional information was provided through the VCR. In Q2 2022, the website was updated, and stakeholders advised. It is planned to hold another VCR in Q2 2023.

This will be followed up with (and may coincide with) engagement with second level schools in the local areas in Q1/Q2 2023. It is planned to hold a further consultation event in Q2 2023, prior to the submission of any planning application.

7. Key environmental considerations

This section provides information on the key environmental considerations including Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, as amended. Information relating to Schedule 7A(1)(a) (description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development) and 7A(1)(b) (the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of the geographical areas likely to be affected) are provided in Sections 2 and 3.4 respectively of this report.

A schedule of studies/assessments that have been undertaken/proposed to be undertaken and associated timeframes is also provided in this section.

It is noted that key environmental considerations were also listed in Section 12 of the S287 pre-application request sent on 5th January 2023.

7.1 **Schedule 7A (2). A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.**

Aspects of the environment which are likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development (offshore and onshore) include the following:

Offshore Environmental Aspects:

- Marine Geology, Oceanography and Physical Processes
- Marine Water and Sediment Quality
- Benthic and Intertidal Ecology
- Fish and Shellfish Ecology
- Marine Mammal and Megafauna Ecology
- Offshore Ornithology & Bats
- Commercial Fisheries
- Shipping and Navigation
- Aviation and Radar

Onshore Environmental Aspects:

- Land and Soils (includes soils, geology and hydrogeology)
- Water (includes hydrology, surface water quality and flooding)
- Biodiversity
- Traffic and Transportation

Aspects which are common to both the offshore and onshore environment include Archaeology, Material Assets, Air Quality & Climate, Seascape, Landscape and Visual, Noise and Vibration, Resource and Waste Management, Population and Human Health, Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation and Major Accidents and Disasters.

7.2 Schedule 7A (3). A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from (a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and (b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.

Taking into consideration the construction activities associated with the installation of the offshore infrastructure, there is the potential for residues and emissions originating from waste generated during excavation activities to have a temporary increase in suspended sediment and sediment deposition, which may have a temporary significant effect on benthic and intertidal habitats, mobile species and/or species that are a feature of a designated site. Within the offshore environment potential long-term significant effects may result on receptors due to changes to physical processes, including seabed composition, from the presences of infrastructure within the marine environment.

In relation to the installation of the onshore cable, which runs adjacent to the Rogerstown and Malahide Estuaries, potential impacts on such areas during the construction phase relate to disturbance to birds and the potential impact on water quality and hydrologically linked habitats resulting from pollution events. Where necessary, potential limitations on timing of works will be considered, employment of good work practices and the implementation of mitigation measures, will be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan with the aim of reducing potential impact.

7.3 Schedule of studies and assessments that have been undertaken or are proposed to be undertaken

As part of the pre-application process, the Developer has undertaken a significant amount of studies and assessments to inform the design of the proposed development. These have been separated into relevant offshore and onshore studies and assessments and are described below.

7.3.1 Offshore Studies and Assessments

Offshore studies and assessments, which have been completed or are ongoing, and the associated timeframes are provided below.

- Metocean survey: December 2021 – ongoing
- Water quality sampling (within the vicinity of the metocean equipment): January 2023
- Geophysical survey of the array area: May 2022 to September 2022
- Geophysical survey of the Export Cable Corridor (ECC): September 2022 to November 2022
- Geotechnical survey of the ECC: Q3 2023
- Geotechnical survey of the array area: October to December 2022
- Archaeological survey of the intertidal area: September 2022
- Benthic ecology survey of the array area: May 2022
- Benthic ecology and water quality sampling survey of the ECC: September 2022
- Offshore ornithology and marine mammal digital aerial survey: May 2020 to November 2022
- Offshore ornithology and marine mammal boat survey: December 2019 – July 2021
- Landfall surveys – including ornithological survey within the intertidal area: October 2020 to August 2022
- Technical offshore studies including May 2021 – ongoing to submission
- Marine Geology, Oceanography and Physical Processes
- Marine Water and Sediment Quality

- Benthic and Intertidal Ecology
- Fish and Shellfish Ecology
- Marine Mammal and Megafauna Ecology
- Offshore Ornithology
- Commercial Fisheries
- Shipping and Navigation
- Offshore Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Aviation and Radar
- Infrastructure and Other Users
- Underwater noise
- Appropriate Assessment within the Natura Impact Statement

7.3.2 Onshore Studies and Assessments

Onshore studies and assessments, which have been completed or are ongoing, and the associated timeframes are provided below.

- Ecology Surveys
 - Extended Phase 1 surveys: August to September 2021, and June, July and September 2022 which included, habitat surveys, invasive species surveys, amphibian and reptile habitat surveys, potential roost features for bats.
 - Breeding bird surveys: June 2021 and April to May 2022
 - Winter bird surveys: October 2021 to December 2021, and January to March 2022
 - Annex I habitat (physical dimensions) survey of coastline: June 2022
 - Water quality surveys: September 2022 to October 2022
 - Annex I habitat (botanical) survey at landfall: June 2022 and September 2022
 - Rare plants survey: September 2022
 - Potential roost feature bat surveys at Belcamp: August 2021, June 2022
 - Bat activity transects at landfall site and onshore substation: August 2022
 - Static bat detector deployment: September 2021, and August 2022
 - Aquatic and fisheries surveys at watercourses: October 2022
 - Otter surveys: October 2022
 - Arborist survey: date to be confirmed.
- Offshore Bat surveys
 - Offshore Bat surveys on Rockabill Island: April to October 2022
 - Offshore Bat surveys on boats: May to July 2022
 - Headland bat monitoring: September to October 2022
- Archaeology Surveys

- Archaeological Geophysics survey at landfall: August 2022
- Archaeological walkover surveys: November 2022
- Pre-planning archaeological test trenching at landfall: March 2023
- Traffic junction surveys: March 2022
- Baseline noise monitoring surveys: May 2022
- Flood Risk Assessment: June 2022 to January 2023
- Topographical survey: August 2022
- Intrusive ground investigations consisting of:
 - Trial pits, boreholes and slit trenches: February 2022 to September 2022
 - Geotechnical and geo-environmental sampling: February 2022 to September 2022
 - Groundwater monitoring and sampling: February 2022 to September 2022
- Non-intrusive ground investigation consisting of electrical resistivity tomography and seismic refraction: March and April 2022
- Utility survey: March and April 2022
- Electromagnetic compatibility/sensitivity assessments: Ongoing
- HDD concept assessment: Ongoing
- Watercourse crossing assessment: August to October 2022
- EMF assessment: Ongoing

8. Anticipated key activities/In-combination effects with other existing and future users of the maritime area

A cumulative and an in-combination assessment (referred to as cumulative effects within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and in-combination effects within the Natura Impact Statement (NIS)) of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment will be prepared.

The assessment specifically considers whether existing and/or future developments in the local or wider area (including the consideration of those within the maritime area) have the potential to exacerbate (i.e. alter the significance of) effects associated with the proposed development. Projects which are already built and operating, are included in the baseline environment or have been assessed as not having the potential to exacerbate effects.

The assessment of in-combination/cumulative effects will consider likely significant effects that may arise during the construction, operation and decommissioning phase of the proposed development (including key activities within the maritime area such as the construction of the export cable corridor, construction of the array area and operation of the wind turbines) and will be assessed to a level of detail commensurate with the information that was available at the time of assessment based on best scientific knowledge.

The cumulative/in-combination assessment methodology consists of a three-part assessment.

- Stage 1 establishes the list of other existing and/or approved projects. Typical existing and future users of the maritime area may include (but are not limited to): other offshore wind farms, subsea cables, ports, aggregates, disposal activities, oil and gas, wave and tidal, shipping, aquaculture; and recreational users.
- Stage 2 involves a screening exercise whereby the EIA Specialists consider whether each of the ‘other existing and/or approved projects’ have the potential to give rise to likely significant cumulative/in-combination impacts with the proposed development. This is undertaken for every topic/assessment listed within Section 7 of this document. Some of the ‘other projects’ will be screened out by the EIA Specialists for a number of reasons including the location, scale and nature of the project.
- Following Stage 2, those projects which were “screened in” by the EIA Specialists are carried forward for assessment in the third stage. This assessment process will continue to be reviewed and updated until the submission of the EIAR and NIS, as existing and future users may continue to change up until that point.

9. Details of proposed port(s) used for transport and/or construction activities (if known)

Details regarding proposed ports have not been confirmed by the Developer at this time.