



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
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SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
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MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 1 (Irish Sea)

Wednesday 13 March 2024

09:00 – 10:30

The Printworks, Dublin Castle, Dublin

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair John Lynch welcomed all participants to the meeting. Apologies were received from Dominic Rihan, KFO. The agenda was adopted as drafted. Action points from the the last meeting (13 September 2023) were:

1	Members to send comments on the choke traffic light tool to the Secretariat
	Comments received, choke advice in preparation
2	Chair and Secretariat will follow up on haddock de minimis exemption
	Couldn't find reference to that in previous AC advice ACTION: The Chair will look for further information on a previously discussed proposal on a de minimis for haddock.
3	Secretariat to draft letter to the Commission and Member States regarding the non-consideration of the spurdog exemption
	No letter sent to COM but topic addressed with NWW MS group – MS are working on a survivability exemption, presentation at WG2 as this exemption is for all of area 7
4	Members to provide the Secretariat with written comments on the UK Discard consultation by the 20 September.
	Done – response to UK consultation submitted on 9 October

2. Election of Vicechair

Norah Parke retired from KFO in August 2023 and therefore a new Vicechair is needed. No nominations were received in advance of the meeting.

ACTION: The Chair will propose a candidate Vicechair to be elected at the next WG meeting in July.

3. Dublin Array Offshore Wind Farm



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Dublin Array is a proposed offshore wind farm on the Kish and Bray Banks, approximately 10km from the coastline of Dublin. The Chair welcomed Randal Coughlin and Paul Kelly to present on the project. Slides are available [here](#).

Kelly explained that the Dublin Array is a Phase 1 project. There were two development companies originally progressing on the project since 1999, Kish Offshore Wind Limited and Bray Offshore Wind Limited. These companies are the holders of the Maritime Area Consent for the project and are wholly owned by RWE AG and Saorgus Energy. Kish Offshore Wind Limited and Bray Offshore Wind Limited anticipate to apply for planning permission in due course.

The Maritime Area Consent was awarded by Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications in December 2022. Key features include:

1. A 45-year term
2. Array area, subsidiary area and infrastructure corridor terms
3. Requirement to apply to An Bord Pleanála for development permission (next milestone)
4. Requirement to secure a 'route to market' (successful in ORESS auction in 2023)
5. Requirement to pay an annual levy (ongoing)
6. Rehabilitation and associated Bond
7. Requirement to connect to the Irish electricity transmission system (grid connection secured)

The project includes a subsidiary area to lay the electricity cables to bring the electricity to shore.

Kelly then explained that, from a design perspective, they have been organizing a series of meetings with various different groupings of stakeholders who are interested in the project. *“As we are finalising our planning stage design at the moment, we are reaching out to people and providing them with some updates on what the general configuration of the project design is likely to be”*. One of the factors which needs to be considered in terms of the planning process in Ireland is that the Planning and Development Acts have been modified to accommodate the concept of design flexibility. Going into the planning process, there won't be one fixed layout for one turbine technology because the development time frame of such a project could be about 8-10 years. *“Looking at turbine technology development, you might have turbine technology which would be released and then not available on the market within the time frame that consent has been granted. So you need to protect your investment by making sure that when the project goes to construction you can avail of the best technology which is available at the time when you actually go to construction”*, said Kelly. As a consequence, the project's application includes three turbine options, three array layouts and two export cable corridors. The project is currently in a pre-application consultation stage with An Bord Pleanála, which is not completed and therefore final changes may arise.

The smallest number of turbines envisaged by the project is 39 and the maximum number is 50,



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depending on model specification. Foundation types are likely to be either a monopile or a jacket. The rotor diameter range is between 236 and 278 metres. The bigger the rotor, the bigger the spacing between the turbines.

The electricity be brought from the turbines to the substation offshore. The purpose of that substation is to increase the voltage up to transmission voltage level, which is 220 kilovolts, and then it will be brought to shore by two cables. One of the elements of design flexibility in the planning application is that those cables are likely to sit in either one or two export cable carriers. *“The reason why we wouldn't define a specific route at this stage is that the seabed in the area where we're developing the project is sandy with a number of mobile sand waves. If we pick a very specific route now, there's the risk that we might have to get into extensive sand wave clearance for the purposes of laying the cable and burying it. So what we would be doing is applying for consent for corridors and then pre construction. We will resurvey those corridors to find the optimum route to minimise the extent of sand wave clearance required to achieve cable burial”.*

The range of separation distances to be implemented will be depending on the size of the turbine that will be installed. The smaller separation distance would be 944 metres and the largest could be up to about 1.65 kilometres.

Kelly then described the two different types of foundation options – monopile, which is a metal tube which gets hammered into the sea bed; or a multi-leg (also called jacket) which might have smaller piles or a suction bucket at the bottom end. The decision about the type of foundation is heavily influenced by the turbine itself and by the ground conditions. Monopile is the most cost-effective and simple solution for installing turbines in shallower waters, while jackets are best for higher turbines in water deeper than 45m. Furthermore, any infrastructure that is put in the seabed requires for foundation scour protection, in this case around the monopile/the legs or around the offshore platform. The extent of scour protection that would be required will depend specifically on the location of the turbine and on the foundation type that's put in.

The Dublin Array project will need 2 subsea cables to bring the electricity to shore. *“Our desire on this project is that all cables will be buried at a depth that they don't pose any hazard, and that ensures protection from anchor drop or drags”*, said Kelly. However, the seabed is not homogeneous and there might be circumstances where it is not possible to achieve burial depth. In that case, cable protection would be needed.

As every offshore wind farm needs operation and maintenance services, technicians will be out in the Dublin Array complex every day that the weather accommodates them to safety. An operations and maintenance facility is to be developed in Dun Laoghaire harbour in a former ferry terminal building which is not currently being used. This would avoid any displacement of current usage within the harbour.

Kelly passed the floor to Counihan to present their Fisheries Mitigation and Management Strategy



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(FMMS). The purpose of the FMMS is to facilitate a positive approach to coexistence and colocation working with the fishing community. The FMMS will detail commitments that the project is making to mitigation and to community opportunities. It outlines how liaison efforts will be delivered between the Dublin Array project and the fishing community. *“For the FMMS to be effective, cooperation between ourselves and the community is absolutely key”*, said Counihan.

Regarding the process, a draft FMMS will be submitted with the Dublin Array application for planning consent and planning permission. It will be prepared in line with the National Marine Planning Framework and will be linked with the Environmental Impact Assessment reports. The FMMS will set out the approaches to avoid, minimise and mitigate potential impacts on the fishing community as far as it is practicable. The report would be finalised post consent and updated periodically. Counihan added that *“this document will be a live document. Our communications and our mitigation and our interaction with fishing community will change at different stages of the project from development through to construction, through to operation and decommissioning. The FMMS will therefore be updated at appropriate times throughout the lifetime of the project”*.

The FMMS will be public and be able to be commented on. Any of those comments and submissions that are made during the planning application, including divergent views, will then be incorporated into that finalised document post-consent. Engagement to date, including minutes from any official meetings, will be included within the draft FMMS.

The operations and maintenance base in Dun Laoghaire will also produce opportunities for members of the marine community to interact with the project and receive hopefully some benefits.

In terms of supplying skills, there are some programmes that will be implemented by the project, such as an Energy Skills Partnership, with events and webinars. Moreover, jobs that will be advertised for the project will be looking at homegrown talent in Ireland. Finally, there is the community benefit fund from Dublin Array will deliver approximately €6.5 million per year into a fund that will be managed by an external and independent fund administrator and that will provide a lot of benefits to local community projects.

“We hope to also provide training opportunities and information in terms of ocean, wind and offshore wind careers programme, talent support platform and apprenticeships, training positions and scholarship positions within the project”, said Counihan.

He concluded by stating that the Dublin Array have taken the stance that they are not looking for any exclusion zones within the project area when it comes to other marine users.

The Chair opened the floor for questions and pointed out that this is a Phase 1 project which only barely touches on the six-mile limit and does not affect other MS than Ireland. However, the presentation by Dublin Array is very useful as the process outlined will be the same for all the Phase 1 projects and there will be many similarities in the plan-led projects.



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Aodh O'Donnell asked whether the draft FMMS will be shared as part of the engagement process with other sectors or just submitted as part of the planning.

Kelly replied that the FMMS is currently being drafted and the Dublin Array project is trying to engage with local communities through various events and the Irish seafood/ORE working group to identify barriers for coexistence and discuss the elements they would like to see included in the FMMS. *"We will consider all suggestions coming forward. I can't guarantee that those suggestions will be implemented, but the most important thing is that those suggestions do come forward so they can be addressed"*.

Patrick Murphy felt that the engagement with fishers is very positive. He asked whether the choice of anchorage will also impact the amount of turbines and the spacing between them. He also asked whether there is room to expand the project. Regarding the community fund, he wondered if stakeholders will be consulted on its use to make sure it supports relevant initiatives and targets. Finally, he asked if there will be a follow up to the environmental impact assessment until the project starts.

Kelly replied that turbine technology is evolving, but there is a maximum amount of electricity for Phase 1 projects so it does not make sense to install more turbines. The bigger the turbine the more efficient the turbine, the bigger the space between turbines, the better so there are less of them. However, this depends on several factors. There is no margin for any other area than the one already agreed in the project, as stated in the Maritime Area Consent. *"Regarding the community fund, it is important that that we time our commitment to the local community and set up the fund administration in a proportional and realistic manner"*, said Kelly. Fisheries have been identified as a special interest group and static gear users need to be given priority for the community fund. Once the fund committee is established, there should be proper representation of this interest group. The Environmental Impact Assessment is being finalised at the moment. There's always going to be concern about any sort of construction works. The Dublin Array is located in a part of the sea which is subject to sand waves with a very dynamic environment. As a consequence, there is going to be sand and sediment raised when monopiles will be installed but the resulting environmental effects are not going to be significant. *"We have been exploring an opportunity to develop a pre-construction and post-construction monitoring programme to control sites and sample site, but it will be effective only if there's participation from the local fishing community"*.

4. Technical measures Irish Sea: follow up on STECF EWG 15-23

The STECF Expert Working Group on the Implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation was held on 22-26 January and was attended by John Lynch, Jean-Marie Robert and Matilde Vallerani as NWWAC observers.



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The European Commission had requested STECF to discuss how it could be possible to conduct socio-economic assessments of the implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation, especially regarding improvements in selectivity. NWWAC observers provided input both during the meeting and in writing via email after the meeting.

The Chair provided a summary of the issues raised by stakeholders during the meeting:

- Technical measures are often very detailed, complicated to implement and sometimes even contradict each other. This often leaves no room for manoeuvre for the fishers to optimize their activities within a certain management framework. Fishers have always been keen on their own initiative to collaborate with gear technologists and implement selectivity measures where possible. One of the reasons why the resulting innovations in fishing techniques and gears have actually encountered some difficulty in their implementation is the lack of flexibility in the Technical Measures Regulation.
- There is still the issue with the definition of what are ‘targeted fisheries’. Without a definition, there is still ambiguity regarding the use of specific meshes other than reference meshes. This poses difficulties both in terms of the use of these meshes and their control.
- Stakeholders identify a clash between Article 27 of the Technical Measures regulation ((EU) 2019/1241), which deals with catch composition and mesh sizes as against the obligation to land catches from Article 15 of the CFP. This creates an issue of compliance which greatly affects fishers’ operational activity and thus represents a key challenge in implementing both the TMR and the CFP.
- EU and UK measures need be aligned as the UK implemented different measures than the EU in some areas. This can cause serious operational difficulties for fishers crossing the border.

ACTION: The Secretariat will share the written stakeholder input submitted to STECF following EWG 15-23 on Technical Measures and will share the EWG report once available.

5. Offshore Renewable Energy Future Framework Policy Statement

Michael Keatinge was invited to take the floor and presented on the recently issued Offshore Renewable Energy Future Framework Policy Statement, providing an overview of the rollout of offshore wind in Ireland. Slides are available [here](#).

He started his presentation by pointing out the great number of sites that, both in Europe and in Ireland specifically, have been identified as potential sites for offshore renewable development. Certainly in both the Celtic Sea and the Irish Sea there is a significant degree of overlap between sites selected potentially as OR sites and fishing. In particular, looking at the Northern Irish Sea there were seven given Marine Area Consents. Following competitive tendering, only four of these Phase 1



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projects got through to the point where they've been given a grid connection offer.

The important aspect of Phase 1 projects though is they were developer-led, there was no national plan. There are significant Nephrops fishing grounds in the North Irish Sea which would be impacted by these projects. In particular, there could be a potential loss in access to quota, which would effectively change the balance between capacity and the fleet size, bringing a legal obligation on the State to decommission the fleet.

A policy document published in March 2023 outlined Phase 2 and reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to 5 GW offshore by 2030. The four Phase 1 projects will supply in excess of 3 GW and Phase 2 projects will then be the additional capacity needed to reach 5. Phase 2 however will be exclusively part of the Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) thus part of the Irish planning legislation. The designated Minister who authorises these DMAPs is our Minister for the Environment. The first of these DMAPs is being developed on the South Coast and it indicates the approach the government will take for all future DMAPs. The State will build the at sea substations necessary to connect the wind farms into the grid.

Phase 3 is part of the Phase 2 approach, but it's making provision for up to a further 2 GW of floating offshore wind.

Keatinge explained that the South Coast DMAP involves a very large area and aiming at 700 to 900 megawatts, so less than a GW. The proposal came out before Christmas, it's gone through an extensive initial consultation and is now being refined and should be approved this summer. The DMAP will go through full parliamentary approval, which means it will be very hard to unwind it once the Parliament has approved it.

Keatinge also raised the point of marine protected areas, as Ireland is currently developing new legislation to deliver on the commitment of 30% coverage. *"How will two things like marine protected areas and offshore renewables sit side by side? Can they coincide, can they be on the same footprint?"* In the Southeast there are already natural sites protecting birds and habitats and the Minister for the Environment has just announced an extended special protected area to give additional protection to bird species in the area. This raises the question if potentially part of the DMAP will get lost.

There are possibly two further DMAPs to be developed by the government in the next year. The two areas identified are on the West and Northwest coast, off Shannon and off Donegal.

Referring to the presentation made by Kelly and Coughlan, Keatinge mentioned the value developers give to the Seafood/ORE Working Group, which is mainly an industry to industry body and has done a lot of work developing engagement protocols and coexistence protocols. He referred to the fact that the NWWAC had asked to participate in this group, but this is still being discussed. Keatinge also mentioned the Seafood Industry Representative Forum, which has the primary function of coordinating at an industry level response to the whole development.



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In Keatinge's opinion, it is really important that the direct, indirect and indeed the induced impacts on the seafood industry are not just minimised, but they're quantified. He felt that this is one of the big issues that this AC could take up, as Europe has given no lead in this area. How should socio-economic impact assessments be done? It's time that Europe takes the lead in developing the techniques to undertake appropriate socio-economic assessment.

Overall, there are three areas for authentic engagement of the seafood sector being identified. One is in the whole area of planning and site selection. To date in Ireland the relationship between the State and the seafood industry in this area has not been good. Even with the new approach which is going to be fully plan-led, the degree of engagement has not been great. Then there is the task to assess and address the socio-economic impact. The industry here has begun a dialogue with BIM, who are responsible for collecting the economic data on the fleet and on the processing sector. Finally, the seafood sector has also expertise on how the community benefit fund could be managed and delivered. A proper cohesive strategy is needed for all these three elements.

The Chair thanked Keatinge for his presentation and opened the floor for questions and comments.

Vallerani added that the AC has already replied to two public consultations, related to the South Coast DMAP and the ecological sensitivity analysis. She also mentioned the work of the joint NWWAC/PelAC Focus Group on spatial squeeze and felt that Keatinge's point on developing methodologies for socio-economic assessment could be a relevant subject for advice to the Commission. On the Seafood/ORE Working Group, she reported that the AC Executive Secretary, Mo Mathies, would attend the next meeting and present on behalf of both the NWWAC and the PelAC on the role and work of ACs and on their request to become observers in the group.

ACTION: It is proposed that a recommendation is made to the Commission for the EU to develop techniques for socio-economic assessments of ORE developments.

6. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	The Chair will look for further information on a previously discussed proposal on a de minimis for haddock.
2	The Chair will propose a candidate Vicechair to be elected at the next WG meeting in July.
3	The Secretariat will share the written stakeholder input submitted to STECF following EWG 15-23 on Technical Measures and will share the EWG report once available.
4	It is proposed that a recommendation is made to the Commission for the EU to develop techniques for socio-economic assessments of ORE developments.



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7. Participants

Members

Name	Organisation
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Patrick Muprhy	ISWPO
Aodh O'Donnell	IFO

Observers & experts

Name	Organisation
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Randal Counihan	RWE
Paul Kelly	RWE
Daragh Browne	BIM
Michael Keatinge	Independent consultant
Ronan Cosgrove	BIM

NWWAC Secretariat

Name	Role
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary