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Status: Approved Submission: An Alternative Approach to Co-Location of ORE and Ocean Farming

Consultation: Future Framework Public Consultation Date Created: 18.02.2024 - 07:03

Which consultee type in the list below best describes you? Industry Representative

Observations:

Theme:	Infrastructural
	Alignment
Title:	An Alternative Perspective on Co-location of ORE and Ocean
	Farming

To whom it may concern:

We are an Irish based company that has been working in the seaweed aquaculture and processing space for the past decade.

We have designed, tested and successfully demonstrated an innovative towable, pre-seeded floating seaweed farm, off the coast in Belmullet. The unit was exposed to four named storms during grow-out and was towed nine nautical miles before harvesting where we attained the predicted level of biomass. We demonstrated that the system can use existing fishing vessels and skills turning the fishing communities into ocean farmers. Seaweed has been evidenced to improve water quality balancing oxygen and Ph levels, it provides a spawning ground for new fish improving marine biodiversity and can act as a natural barrier to minimise the impacts of storms on coastal regions.

This submission is to suggest an alternative approach to shared ocean space with ORE and Ocean Farming.

Having completed a technical review with MEECE funded by Catapult in the UK. There is strong evidence to suggest that on a technical level shared ocean space, even shared mooring is possible. However, stakeholder engagement would suggest that the threats represented by multiple, often unregulated, fishing vessels accessing the site ORE site is not a reasonable proposal.

This suggestion offers a proposal that reflects long established standards in land development projects. It is proposed that the development licenses should include a societal benefit. This would be in the form of a site that is built, managed and maintained for community based ocean farming. Operating similar to a parking space on land where the costs would be covered by charging a reasonable mooring (parking) fee, and thereby covering all cost of investment from the ORE license holder. The advantage to the license holder would promote the community benefits to the fishing and nearshore communities, who might otherwise be objecting to the development, making them part of 'The Solution' as opposed to 'The Problem', to securing and maintaining licenses.

On the part of the fishing and nearshore communities ocean farming of seaweed or shellfish will be more accessible by breaking down the barriers to market entry for small scale aquaculture contributing to food securities, supporting supply chain issues and providing multiple jobs and opportunities for rural coastal communities. Ensuring that units are pre-seeded with native seed-stock reducing the pressures for new ocean farmers to validate environmental compatibility. By leasing units we can make this commercially accessible and generate additional income streams for hard-pressed fishers and nearshore communities who will benefit from the emerging seaweed economy. Utilising assets of both skills and vessels that have been established over generations within the fishing communities we could harness and redirect these before being lost in a single generation.

The cost of infrastructure and licensing approvals would be carried by the license holder for ORE, the site would be located close to the site, likely closer to shore, in an area suitable for aquaculture. Close enough to the ORE site for building and maintenance without representing a threat of stray vessels. Monitoring and appropriate guidance and security measures like those in existing sites would ensure that sites are protected. Sensors would monitor water quality, marine protection and marine biodiversity, offering the three pillars of protecting profit, planet and people.

This proposal represents a positive climate approach, one that supports society and promotes nearshore activity in the growing seaweed economy.

Documents Attached: No Boundaries Captured on No Map: