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**STATUTORY  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ASSESSMENT  
APPROPRIATE  
ASSESSMENT  
SCREENING  
DETERMINATION FOR  
IOLAR APPLICATION  
(WELL 52/01-A)**

**STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING  
DETERMINATION FOR IOLAR APPLICATION (WELL  
52/01-A)**

Project No. **1700003678**  
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Made by **Rebecca Rae / Kim Moore**  
Checked by **Peter Bruce**  
Approved by **Peter Bruce**



Checked/Approved by: Peter Bruce

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ramboll Environment and Health UK Limited (herein referred to as Ramboll) has been commissioned by the Department for Communication, Climate Action and Environment (herein referred to as DCCAE) to provide assistance with regards to the statutory assessment of applications for consent submitted in respect of offshore geophysical and seismic survey acquisition applications and exploratory drilling.

CNOOC Petroleum Europe Ltd (formally known as Nexen Petroleum UK Ltd) (referred to herein as the applicant) has submitted an application for consent pursuant to the provision of Section 5(2) of the Continental Shelf Act 1968 to carry out proposed exploration drilling on well 52/01-A (Iolar) under Frontier Exploration Licence (FEL) 3/18. This will entail placing a temporary wellhead and associated infrastructure on the seabed. The competent authority (DCCAE) is required to give consideration to the potential for likely significant effects of such activities on European Site(s), with respect to Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC, which is transposed in to Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-15 as amended (the Habitats Regulations).

Paragraph 42(2) of the Habitats Regulations states that “A screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received, or which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt, and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site, shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site”.

Furthermore the regulations provide under Regulation 42 (6) and 42 (7) that:

*“6. The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site and if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.*

*7. The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site and if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.”*

This report provides an assessment of the Iolar Exploration Well Appropriate Assessment Screening Report submitted by the applicant.

Public consultation on the information provided by the applicant has been undertaken by the DCCAE. The consultation responses received by the DCCAE have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this report.

Ramboll confirms that the information provided by the applicant is considered to be adequate, up to date and provides robust scientific information to enable the DCCAE to make a screening determination. This report provides a conclusion that can be used by the DCCAE to issue a screening determination. The conclusion of this report is that the applicant must provide a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to enable the DCCAE to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

Table ES.1 summarises the overall screening determination.

**Table ES.1: Summary of Screening Determination for Appropriate Assessment**

| <b>Outcome of Screening Report Assessment</b>  | <b>Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?</b>                                |
|--|--|
| Likely or Potentially Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, and project is not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site. | <b>Appropriate Assessment is required. DCAE to request NIS from Applicant.</b> |
| <del>No Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, or project is directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site.</del>              | <del><b>Appropriate Assessment is not required</b></del>                       |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ramboll Environment and Health UK Limited (herein referred to as Ramboll) has been commissioned by the Department for Communication, Climate Action and Environment (herein referred to as DCCAE) to provide assistance with regards to the statutory assessment of applications for consent submitted in respect of offshore geophysical and seismic survey acquisition applications and exploratory drilling.

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This report provides an assessment of the Iolar Exploration Well Appropriate Assessment Screening Report submitted by the applicant.

### 1.1 Project Background

The competent authority (DCCAE) is required to give consideration to the potential for likely significant effects of any project on European Site(s), with regard to Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC, which is transposed in to Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-15 as amended (the Habitats Regulations).

Paragraph 42(2) of the Habitats Regulations states that *"A screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received, or which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt, and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site, shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site"*.

Furthermore the regulations provide under Regulation 42 (6) and 42 (7) that:

*"6. The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site and if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.*

*7. The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site and if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site."*

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 2.1 Legislative context

This report has been prepared having regard to EC Directive 2009/147/EC<sup>1</sup> on the conservation of wild birds (commonly referred to as the Birds Directive) and EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (commonly referred to as the Habitats Directives), the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-15 as amended and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts.

### 2.2 Relevant guidance

This report has been prepared having regard to guidance on appropriate assessment for planning authorities, published by the Department for Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in 2009<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the structure and content of this report is based upon the methodology published by the European Communities in 2002<sup>3</sup>.

### 2.3 Public consultation

The application was advertised by DCCAE on their website following receipt of the application on 21 December 2018. Submissions were advertised by the DCCAE to be received by close of business on 21 January 2019 to ensure consideration by the Minister.

The following consultation responses were received:

- Consultation response received from An Taisce to DCCAE dated 13 December 2018.
- Consultation response received from An Taisce – dated (21<sup>st</sup> January)
- Consultation response from Friends of the Irish Environment to DCCAE (undated).
- Consultation response from Gluaiseacht to DCCAE dated 21 January 2019.

Following the provision of additional information in relation to the EIA Screening on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019, a further letter was received from An Taisce to DCCAE dated 7 March 2019.

The points raised in these consultation responses have been considered and responded to as provided in the following sections.

#### 2.3.1 General Consultee Observations

The following general responses have been received.

- **Regulatory process:** concern raised in regard to the lack of regulatory process of assessing exploration and development applications. The involvement of Department officials in the commercial and licensing aspects as well as environmental provides a perceived lack of objectivity and bias in the decision-making process;
- **Regulatory process:** concern raised that the public consultation has not engaged directly with bodies specified under SI No 134/2013 – European Union (EIA) (Petroleum Exploration) Regulations 2013.
- **Regulatory process:** All future applications need to determine how Ireland will meet its commitment under the Paris Agreement and provisions of Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 are to be met.

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<sup>1</sup> Amending Directive 70/409/EEC

<sup>2</sup> DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects - Guidance for Planning Authorities, Revision Notes added 2010, URL: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/guidance-appropriate-assessment-planning-authorities> (accessed 15/03/2019)

<sup>3</sup> European Communities (2002) Assessment of Plans and Projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EE, URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm) (accessed 15/03/2019)

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- **Regulatory process:** The status of the consultation with regard to the Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Directive is unclear, including the process for notification of decisions by the Department to parties making submissions, and procedures for Judicial Review of any decision by the Department.
- **Public consultation process:** The public notification is not widely publicised on other media, such as newspapers or social media platforms and the current process of publicising public consultation is currently not transparent. Separate public notification and scientific peer review of the Habitats Directive process should be undertaken;

These general responses are in regard to the current regulatory process that exists within Ireland and since they are not project specific are not responded to by this report.

## 2.3.2 Project Specific Consultee Observations

The following specific responses have been received:

| Objector  | Project specific objection   | Response   |
|-----------|--|--|
| An Taisce | It is clear from information in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report that a Natura Impact Statement and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required. The Appropriate Assessment screening, Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment should meet in full the requirements of Irish law, CJEU judgments and Advocate General opinions in relation to the Habitats Directive. The current report and recommendations therein does not meet Irish and European law requirements and protections.   | The adequacy of the AA Screening Report has been reviewed and recommendations for the DCCA to adopt have been provided in this report.   |
|           | The Archaeological Assessment Summary Report is inadequate for the purposes of an EIA screening. It is not acceptable that the results of the ROV survey will not be available for assessment at EIA screening stage.  | The adequacy of the Archaeological Assessment is reviewed in the EIA Screening Report produced by Ramboll.   |
|           | An Environmental Impact Assessment Report should be prepared for this development and an Environmental Impact Assessment conducted in accordance with all relevant European directives. The current EIA screening report fails to meet the requirements of several European laws including inter alia Council Directive 2011/92/EU amended by 2014/52/EU, Council Directive 92/43/EEC, Council Directive 2008/56/EC and Commission Decision 2017/848.  | The EIA Screening Report produced by Ramboll confirms whether the application meets the requirements of the relevant European Directives.  |
|           | The international significance of the fishing resource in the area of drilling is clear from the report, as is the fact that the migratory path of tuna, which follow the Gulf Stream, could possibly be active in the area and that there is a likelihood of interaction between the drilling and tuna fishing operations. An Taisce submits that there is insufficient information on the presence of tuna and other fish species in the zone of drilling and that any consideration of the impact on fish is premature and should at least await the outcome of fisheries surveys by the Marine Institute programmed for later this year. The | The applicant notes that 'interaction with, and potential impacts upon, a number of other receptors (e.g. fisheries, marine reptiles including turtles) are possible but these are not relevant to the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives and are not discussed in this Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening report'. This report |



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| Objector                         | Project specific objection  | Response  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
|                                  | pre-drilling fisheries study is lacking in any assessment of risk to fish from a blowout, or other form of leak of petroleum during the drilling operation.   | provides a conclusion on whether we agree with the applicant’s screening assessment in section 3.6.   |
|                                  | There has been no proper assessment of cumulative impacts and effects on habitats, species and the environment of other offshore exploration and drilling, either the cumulative impacts of previous exploration within this NEXEN site or the cumulative impacts of this site with other off shore exploration sites.  | Further details on the cumulative assessment were requested from the applicant. The appropriateness of this response is reviewed in the EIA Screening Report produced by Ramboll.   |
|                                  | There has been no proper assessment of climate change impacts and effects.  | The adequacy of the assessment of effects of climate change is reviewed in the EIA Screening Report produced by Ramboll.  |
|                                  | It has not been possible to consult fully on this application as key documents within the application have been withheld from public scrutiny including the generic well proposal, permits for use and discharge of added chemicals, and the Financial Responsibilities Assessment  | The adequacy of the consultation is a matter for the DCCAE. These documents were not required for the review of the AA Screening Report.  |
| Friends of the Irish Environment | It is submitted that this application requires a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment Report as the screening reports are inadequate.   | This report confirms whether the information provided meets the requirements to allow a decision to be made on whether a NIS is required to enable DCCAE to undertake an AA. The adequacy of the EIA Screening Report has been reviewed and reported separately to this report. |
|                                  | The seabed area of the Porcupine Basin includes cold water coral reefs which are a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive. The current level of marine protection designation in Porcupine Basin area is inadequate to reflect the importance of sea bed habitat. The impact of the activity proposed on marine mammals and on a range a range of fish species including tuna migration paths requires assessment. | The potential effects on the ecology of the baseline environment are considered in the review of information provided by the applicant.   |
| Gluaiseacht                      | Increasing effects of climate change for the benefits of the few.   | The adequacy of the assessment of effects of climate change is reviewed in the EIA Screening Report produced by Ramboll.  |
|                                  | The Porcupine Seabight is a very important ecological area and we are just finding out how important the area is for blue and fin whales. We shouldn’t be threatening these habitats by oil and gas drilling and seismic surveys.   | The potential effects on the ecology of the baseline environment are considered in the review of information provided by the applicant.   |

### 3. REVIEW OF APPLICANT AA SCREENING REPORT

#### 3.1 Project Details

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the key project information.

**Table 3.1: Project Information**

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Project Title:                     | Iolar Exploration Well  |
| Project Type:                      | Offshore Exploration Drilling   |
| Applicant:                         | CNOOC Petroleum Europe Limited (formally known as Nexen Petroleum UK Limited) |
| Exploration Licence Reference:     | FEL 3/18  |
| Date AA Screening Report Received: | 14 November 2018  |

#### 3.2 Determining whether a Project should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment

Under Paragraph 42(6) of the Habitats Regulations, the DCCAE (as the relevant competent authority) shall determine that an AA is required, where it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening, that the project, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will have a significant effect on a European Site.

Where it is determined that AA is required for a proposed development or project, the DCCAE must advise the applicant that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required.

#### 3.3 Description of the Project

The AA screening process involves describing the individual elements of the project that are likely to give rise to impacts on the conservation objectives and/or qualifying features of a Natura site.

Table 3.2 provides a review of the applicant’s description of the project.

**Table 3.2: Description of Project AA Checklist**

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>Brief Project Description:</b></p> <p>The proposed well is located in FEL 3/18, 232.4 km west of the Irish mainland in the Porcupine Basin in water depths of 2.162 km. A spud date of April 2019 has been assumed since this is the earliest window for drilling operations and is likely to be favourable in terms of weather. The total duration of drilling is expected to be between 100 and 150 days. The weather window for drilling activities is between 1 April and 30 September.</p> <p>A safety exclusion zone of 500 m around the drill ship whilst on station is proposed. The proposed drill ship (IceMAX) will maintain its position over the drilling location for the duration of the drilling activities using a dynamic positioning system. Drilling equipment is installed on the deck of the vessel, with the derrick normally placed in the middle of the ship. The well will be drilled through a moon pool that extends to the water’s surface below the derrick.</p> <p>Helicopters will be used to transfer personnel to and from the drill ship for the duration of the drilling period. Helicopters may also be used to occasionally supply the drill ship with equipment required at short notice and would also be used in the event of an emergency situation. Otherwise all transport of drilling equipment, supplies, water, fuel and food will be undertaken by supply vessels, which will also return waste and surplus equipment to shore. These vessels will also perform safety standby operations.</p> <p>A single deviated well is proposed although should the well be deemed a success then there is potential for a short side track for coring purposes. The Iolar well will be drilled to either 6.31 km total vertical depth subsea in the success case or 5.923 km in the dry hole case. The drilling will consist of a number of phases:</p> |
|---|

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| <p>1. Spudding: drilling or jetting of a 36" hole through the surface of the seabed into which a 36" conductor pipe will be cemented (a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) will be used to minimise the amount of cement discharged to the seabed and provide visual monitoring);</p> <p>2. Drilling: well sections of decreasing diameter (from 26" to 8.5") are drilled and casings installed and cemented to provide stability. Drilling fluid will be used and will be circulated back to the drill ship. Both Water Based Muds (WBM) and Oil Based Muds (OBM) are anticipated to be used depending on the down hole conditions.</p> <p>The first two sections of the well will be drilled before the installation of a marine riser and therefore drilling fluids, rock cuttings and residual cement returns will be discharged directly onto the seabed. The sections will be jetted/drilled using seawater and WBM. Thereafter OBM will be used which will be circulated back to the drill ship, where drill cuttings and residual OBM will be placed in waste skips and shipped to shore for treatment, recycling or disposal. None of the OBM from the deeper sections will be discharged at sea.</p> <p>Vertical Seismic Profiling (VSP) may be required and is used to establish the geological structure of the formations through which the well passes. VSP uses a small air gun array with receivers positioned inside the well. Typical VSP operations can take 6 to 12 hours to complete. The VSP source is expected to generate a noise level around 220 dB re 1uPa @ 1 m, with the majority of noise concentrated at low (&lt;100 Hz) frequencies. These operations will be undertaken from the drill ship.</p> <p>Once all operations are complete, the well will be permanently plugged and abandoned. Mechanical and cement plugs will be placed along the well at points where hydrocarbons could enter the well, thus isolating them from the surface. The wellhead will be severed and removed a minimum of 3 m below the seabed.</p> |  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
|---|--|------------------------|--|--|-----|---------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|---|-----|---------------------|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Project Element</b></th> <th><b>Have these features of the project been identified by the applicant? (If not, please provide details)</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Spatial Extent (size, scale, area etc)</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supporting Infrastructure</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transportation Requirements</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Physical changes that will result from the project (e.g. from excavation, dredging)</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emissions and Waste</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resource Requirements (e.g. water abstraction)</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Duration of each phase<br/>e.g.<br/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Construction</li> <li>• Phase 2 Operation</li> <li>• Phase 3 Decommissioning</li> </ul> </td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>  |  | <b>Project Element</b> | <b>Have these features of the project been identified by the applicant? (If not, please provide details)</b> | Spatial Extent (size, scale, area etc) | Yes | Supporting Infrastructure | Yes | Transportation Requirements | Yes | Physical changes that will result from the project (e.g. from excavation, dredging) | Yes | Emissions and Waste | Yes | Resource Requirements (e.g. water abstraction) | Yes | Duration of each phase<br>e.g.<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Construction</li> <li>• Phase 2 Operation</li> <li>• Phase 3 Decommissioning</li> </ul> | Yes |
| <b>Project Element</b>  | <b>Have these features of the project been identified by the applicant? (If not, please provide details)</b> |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Spatial Extent (size, scale, area etc)  | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Supporting Infrastructure   | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Transportation Requirements   | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Physical changes that will result from the project (e.g. from excavation, dredging)   | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Emissions and Waste   | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Resource Requirements (e.g. water abstraction)  | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |
| Duration of each phase<br>e.g.<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Construction</li> <li>• Phase 2 Operation</li> <li>• Phase 3 Decommissioning</li> </ul>  | Yes  |                        |  |  |     |                           |     |                             |     |   |     |                     |     |  |     |  |     |

The AA screening must consider the effects of the proposed development in combination with other plans and other projects in making the screening assessment.

Table 3.3 provides a review of the in-combination assessment undertaken by the applicant.

**Table 3.3: In-combination Assessment**

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>Brief Description of identified plans / projects that might act in-combination (Operational, Consented and Proposed projects) with the proposed project:</b></p> <p>The applicant's AA screening report states that there are no other projects in the Porcupine Basin nor any other known plans for future exploration or seismic activities during 2019 with the region.</p> |
|--|

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| <b>Project Element</b>   | <b>Is the predicted magnitude / extent of identified likely in-combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Summary</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Spatial Extent (define boundaries for examination of in-combination effects) | Yes   | The applicant has described the potential extent of the effects of the project in order to correctly determine the envelope of impacts from the project and the receptors that may be affected in combination with other projects.   |
| Impact Identification (e.g. noise, chemical emissions etc.)                  | Yes   | The applicant has described the potential impacts arising from the project and considered which of the impacts identified are relevant to the determination of LSE (specifically, underwater sound and pressure emissions and well blowout) and has linked these clearly to pathways that might transmit impacts to receptors. |
| Pathway Identification (e.g. via water, air etc)                             | Yes   | The applicant has described the potential impact / pressure pathways and have linked these clearly to determinations of LSE.   |

### 3.4 Identification of relevant European sites and species

The applicant's AA screening report considers the designated European sites that may be impacted by the project, including consideration of direct, indirect and in combination effects. As projects that lie out with European sites may still have an impact upon their integrity, particularly in a marine environment where the environment is extremely dynamic and species may be highly mobile, identifying potential zones of influence surrounding the European sites is a key component.

Table 3.4 identifies the relevant European Sites and species that might be impacted by the project.

**Table 3.4: Identification of Relevant European Sites/Species AA Screening Checklist**

NB Sites presented in Appendix A of the Applicants AA Screening Report have been cross referenced against current lists of Natura sites – no omissions of relevant sites have been determined. On this basis the list of sites presented by the Application in Appendix A have been considered below.

| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant’s consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 1. Achill Head [002268]                            | 400                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 2. Akeragh, Banna and Barrow Harbour [00332]       | 286                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 3. Anton Dohrn Seamount [UK0030387]                | 713                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 4. Ballinskelligs Bay and Inny Estuary [00335]     | 238                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 5. Barley Cove to Ballyrisode Point [001040]       | 258                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 6. Belgica Mound Province [002327]                 | 119                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b>        | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 7. Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex [00020]                 | 359                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 8. Blasket Islands [002172]                               | 224                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 9. Broadhaven Bay [000472]                                | 435                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 10. Carrowmore Dunes [002250]                             | 334                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 11. Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Island [001021] | 336                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 12. Connemara Bog Complex [002034]                        | 360                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 13. East Rockall Bank [UK0030389]                         | 647                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 14. Erris Head [001501]                            | 434                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 15. Glenamoy Bog Complex [00500]                   | 445                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 16. Haig Fras [UK0030353]                          | 385                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 17. Hovland Mound Province [002328]                | 135                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 18. Inishbofin and Inishshark [00278]              | 366                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 19. Inisheer Island [01275]                        | 355                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 20. Inishkea Islands [00507]                       | 415                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 21. Inishmaan Island [0000212]                     | 353                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 22. Inishmore Island [000213]                      | 345                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 23. Kenmare River [IE02158]                        | 230                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 24. Kerry Head Shoal [02263]                       | 278                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 25. Kilkee Reefs [02264]                           | 317                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 26. Kilkeran Lake and Castlefreke Dunes [01061]    | 315                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 27. Kilkeran Bay and Islands [02111]               | 354                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |



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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b>                                    | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 28. Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment [00365] | 243                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 29. Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs [00097]                                    | 291                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 30. Lower River Shannon [02165]   | 290                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 31. Magharee Islands [002261]   | 277                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 32. Mount Brandon [00375]   | 255                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 33. Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex [000470]  | 419                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 34. North-West Porcupine Bank [02330]   | 289                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 35. Omev Island Machair [001309]                   | 365                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 36. Porcupine Bank Canyon [003001]                 | 155                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 37. Roaringwater Bay and Islands [000101]          | 268                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 38. Slyne Head Islands [00328]                     | 350                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 39. Slyne Head Peninsula [002074]                  | 354                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 40. South East Rockall Bank [03002]                | 533                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 41. South-West Porcupine Bank [02329]              | 141                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b>  | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 42. Three Castle Head to Mizen Head [00109]   | 254                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 43. Tralee Bay and Magharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane [IE0002070 - No site code presented in report] | 266                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 44. Valencia Harbour/Portmagee Channel [002262]   | 231                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 45. West Connacht Coast [IE02998]   | 357                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 46. Beara Peninsula [004155]  | 230                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 47. Bills Rocks [004177]  | 394                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 48. Blasket Islands [004008]  | 227                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 49. Cliffs of Moher [004005]                       | 350                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 50. Cruagh Island [004170]                         | 362                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 51. Deenish Island and Scariff Island [004175]     | 234                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 52. Dingle Peninsula [004153]                      | 241                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 53. Galley Head to Duneen Point [004190]           | 316                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 54. High Island, Inishshark and Davillaun [004144] | 362                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 55. Illanmaster [04074]                            | 457                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 56. Inishglora and Inishkeeragh [04084]            | 427                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 57. Inishkea Islands [04004]                       | 415                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 58. Inishmore [004152]                             | 347                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 59. Iveragh Peninsula [004154]                     | 231                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 60. Kerry Head [004189]                            | 290                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 61. Loop Head [004119]                             | 300                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 62. Magharee Islands [004125]                      | 278                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b>                          | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 63. Mid-Clare Coast [04182]   | 334                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 64. Old Head of Kinsale [04021]   | 345                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 65. Puffin Island [04003]   | 229                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 66. Seven Heads [04191]   | 328                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 67. Sheep's Head to Toe Head [IE0004156 - No site code presented in report] | 254                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 68. Skelligs [04007]  | 218                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 69. Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands [04159]                             | 351                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

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| <b>Natura site/ species identified by assessor</b> | <b>Distance from Project Site (km)</b> | <b>Are the Natura site / species identified by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are all the qualifying interests listed by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are direct impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?</b> | <b>Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 70. Termoncarragh Lake and Annagh Machair [004093] | 433                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 71. The Bull and The Cow Rocks [04066]             | 226                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |
| 72. Tralee Bay Complex [004188]                    | 274                                    | Yes   | Unknown  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes  | Consideration meets requirements   |

### 3.5 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Table 3.5 provides a summary of the LSE identified for the project alone and in combination with other projects considering, *inter alia*, the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the sites concerned by the relevant project and the project location.

**Table 3.5: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects AA Screening**

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>Summary of LSE</b></p> <p>The applicant’s AA screening report identifies the following impact sources for further consideration in the determination of LSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underwater sound and pressure emissions; and</li> <li>• Well blowout.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Do you agree with the applicant’s AA screening assessment? Why?</b></p> <p>No. Ramboll does not agree with the applicant’s AA screening assessment for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has relied on what are described as ‘current best practice’ mitigation and monitoring measures in relation to marine mammals, and ‘industry best practice’ measures in relation to well blowout or other spill scenarios to arrive at their conclusion that there would be no LSE on the Natura Sites.</li> <li>• Ramboll agrees that the measures specified are appropriate and represent current good practice. It is noted that the applicant references DEHLG (2010)<sup>4</sup> and states that the measures proposed are “inherent to how the Project will (and must) be executed to comply with applicable legislation, guidance and good industry practice and are thus given due consideration in this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report”.</li> <li>• It is noted that in accordance with relevant jurisprudence, mitigation must be disregarded at the AA screening stage. While this report acknowledges that some of the measures proposed may be considered to be ‘embedded’ or inherent to the project design, other aspects are considered to be mitigation and are specified or required due to the sensitive receptors identified and the potential LSE (for example, the use of marine mammal observers and soft start procedures).</li> <li>• This report concludes that it is not possible, as a matter of scientific certainty, to rule out the risk of a LSE (without mitigation). As such an AA is required and the applicant must provide a NIS to allow the AA to be prepared to consider the potential adverse effects on the integrity of European sites, taking account of their relevant conservation objectives.</li> </ul> |

### 3.6 Screening Determination

Paragraph 42(2) of the Habitats Regulations states that “A screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received, or which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt, and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site, shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site”.

Furthermore the regulations provide under Regulation 42 (6) and 42 (7) that:

“6. The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site and if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project,

<sup>4</sup> DEHLG (2010) Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government) (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities. Revised 11th February 2010. Available at [https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS\\_2009\\_AA\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2009_AA_Guidance.pdf) (accessed 15/03/2019)



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*individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.*

*7. The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site and if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site."*

If significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain then the DCCAE must request the applicant provides a NIS in order for the DCCAE to undertake an AA as the competent authority. The applicant may also choose to recommence the screening process with a modified project that removes or avoids elements that posed risks of LSE.

Table 3.6 and 3.7 provide a summary of Ramboll’s recommendation to enable DCCAE to make a screening determination.

**Table 3.6: Summary of Applicant’s Screening Report Review**

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Is the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site? | No   |
| Is the project or plan likely to have significant effects on the environment?  | Yes. |
| Is an AA required? (Yes / No / More Information Required?)   | Yes  |

**Table 3.7: Recommendation of Screening Determination**

| <b>Outcome of Screening Report Assessment</b>  | <b>Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?</b>  |
|--|--|
| Likely or Potentially Likely Significant Effects on Natura Sites identified, and project is not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Natura site. | <b>Appropriate Assessment is required.</b>   |
| Next Steps   | <b>DCCAE to request NIS from Applicant.</b>  |
| Notes  | <p>The following additional information should be requested from Applicant in the NIS:</p> <p>The information provided states that Vertical Seismic Profiling (VSP) is expected to generate a noise level around 220 dB re 1uPa @ 1 m. In preparing the NIS, the Applicant should be asked for confirmation of maximum sound levels.</p> <p>Given the spatial effects of some of the impacts the applicant should be asked to confirm if there are any other projects further inshore or elsewhere off the other coasts of Ireland that may interact to give rise to LSE in combination with the proposed project.</p> <p>The applicant NIS must confirm that:</p> |

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| <b>Outcome of Screening Report Assessment</b> | <b>Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?</b>   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected have been considered; AND</li> <li>• the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site and for which that site has not been listed are identified and examined – as well as the implications for habitat types and species outside the boundaries of that site, insofar as those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.</li> </ul> |