



**NOTICE DIRECTING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THE PURPOSES OF CARRYING OUT STAGE II  
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

On 15 May 2019, Europa Oil & Gas (Inishkea) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Europa Oil & Gas (Holdings) PLC (“**Europa**”) submitted an application to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment seeking approval to undertake a geophysical and environmental site survey over Licensing Blocks 18/19 and 18/20, offshore Ireland in 2019. The survey – called the Inishkea survey – is located approximately 4 km north-west of the western-most end of the Corrib gas pipeline and over 63 km from landfall at Inishkea South Island which is located approximately 4 km west of the Mullet Peninsula, County Mayo, Ireland (“**Europa Inishkea Survey Application**”).

It is proposed that survey operations will be undertaken by a single survey team between June and late November 2019. Excluding weather and technical downtime, survey operations are expected to take a total of 14 survey working days. If the survey has not commenced or concluded in 2019, operations will be undertaken sometime between early-February 2020 and late November 2020.

The following documents were submitted with the Europa application:-

- (i) Inishkea Prospect Site Survey: Letter from Applicant;
- (ii) Inishkea Prospect Site Survey: Screening for EIA and ERA Report prepared by RPS on behalf of Europa;
- (iii) Inishkea Prospect Site Survey: Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement Report prepared by RPS on behalf of Europa;
- (iv) Inishkea Prospect Site Survey: Survey Technical Specifications Report prepared by RPS on behalf of Europa;
- (v) Inishkea Prospect Site Survey: Pre-Survey Fisheries Assessment Report prepared by RPS on behalf of Europa.

**AA Screening**

On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019 a determination was made, following screening under Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), as amended, that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required to be carried out in respect of the Europa Inishkea Survey, as it cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information that the proposed survey, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European Site.

**Additional Information Required**

Regulation 42(3) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), as amended, provides as follows:-

*(3) At any time following an application for consent for a plan or project, a public authority may give a notice in writing to the applicant, directing him or her to—*

*(a) furnish a Natura Impact Statement and the applicant shall furnish the statement within the period specified in the notice, and*

*(b) furnish any additional information that the public authority considers necessary for the purposes of this Regulation.*

Having reviewed the material submitted by Europa with the application, in particular, the Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement Report and the conclusions reached in the Appropriate Assessment Screening and NIS Review for Europa Inishkea Report, prepared by Ramboll UK Limited, I agree with and adopt the recommendation made by Ramboll that the additional information specified below is required for the purposes of carrying out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the Europa Inishkea Survey.

Pursuant to Regulation 42(3) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, Europa is hereby directed to provide the additional information set out below, which is necessary for the purposes of carrying out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment in respect of the application:-

- An anticipated line plan and expected line distance over which the geophysical data could be acquired including noise emissions during line turns for the proposed survey is required;
- Additional details as to the expected noise emissions from the equipment proposed, including peak source levels and references for these details is required;
- Details on the anticipated survey vessel that the appointed Furgo survey teams will use to undertake survey are required;
- Consistency between submitted documentation in regard to the equipment proposed and its output sound levels to ensure that all documentation is accurate and complete;
- Clarification is needed as to what methods will be used when a start is anticipated during the hours of darkness and what would happen should there be a break in sound during the hours of darkness;
- Confirmation is required as to why the Blacksod Bay/ Broadhaven SPA [004037] is no longer included within the screening;
- Clarification that reliance has been made on the implementation of mitigation and monitoring measures, such as application of separation distances with other projects to avoid in-combination effects among others to arrive at the conclusion that there would be no LSE on the Natura Sites;
- The assessment of Annex II and IV species should be included in the NIS for completeness.
- Confirmation as to whether any management plans exist for any of the European sites identified must be provided;
- Confirmation that the Management Plans for each SAC / SPA have been checked;

- How the zone of impact surrounding the AUV will be monitored during operation of the AUV has not been addressed. The report has stated that the maximum radius of impact is in close proximity to the vessel, although it is 6 m from the autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV), but no mitigation is currently proposed for potential effects within this area when the AUV is deployed and operational. Please clarify;
- Up to date information in regard to the survey operations proposed by schemes considered in combination with the Inishkea survey should be provided;
- Additional information on seabed sampling approach must be provided (including number of reference stations, anticipated number of seabed samples and amount of sediment to be removed that is being collected at each sample station (including reference stations) to acquire the analysis listed in the application;
- A commitment to deal with risks associated with climate change in subsequent stages of the project (if any) must be provided, i.e. as part of individual licensing procedures;
- The cumulative impact assessment assumes that other seismic surveys known to be proposed (for the HAVFRUE subsea cable system off the Mayo coast) will be separated by at least 100 km should the surveys occur simultaneously, preventing any cumulative effects. Please clarify how this will apply in practice?;
- Clarification must be provided on whether all qualifying interests and/or Annex IV species have been considered for each of the European sites screened.
- Additional information in the report on the Blackwater River SAC should be provided.
- Additional clarity on the conservation status of relevant habitats and species listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive should be provided;
- Clarity on whether there are any relevant habitat types for which European site(s) are designated and spatial mapping of the distribution and temporal mapping as appropriate must be provided;
- Further information on the ecosystem structure or function of each European sites must be provided;
- Clarity on whether there are any additional aspects of each European site that require consideration that is likely to have an influence on its conservation status or objectives must be provided;
- NOAA have since issued a more recent publication: NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) (2018). Technical Guidance for Assessing the Effects of Anthropogenic Sound on Marine Mammal Hearing, Technical Memorandum NMFS-OPR-55, 2018. This needs to be referenced and included in the documentation accordingly.

Please note that when the additional information has been received from Europa it will be published on the Department website and the public invited to make observations thereon during a 21 day

consultation period, which observations will be taken into account for the purposes of carrying out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the Europa Inishkea Survey application.

6<sup>th</sup> November, 2019

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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Jean Clarke, Senior Advisor