Annex J Application for Planning Permission for the Proposed Development ACP Case Ref. ABP-319864-24, EIAR Volume III - Appendix 25.10: Environmental Vessel Management Plan



Arklow Bank Wind Park 2

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume III, Appendix 25.10: Environmental Vessel Management Plan

sse Renewables

Sure Partners Ltd

Arklow Bank Wind Park 2

Environmental Vessel Management Plan

Volume III, Appendix 25.10



COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

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Project reference: **P14099 Arklow Bank Wind Park 2**

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Revision and Amendment Register

Version Number	Date	Status	Author	Reviewed by	Approved by
1.0	02/05/2024	Final (External)	APEM Ltd	GoBe Consultants	Sure Partners Limited

Experts	Qualifications	Relevant Experience
APEM: Phoebe Meredith Author	M.Sc. Volcanology, University of Bristol (2019). B.Sc. (Hons) Geography, University of Exeter (2018).	Phoebe is an experienced consultant with a background in consenting of offshore wind developments. She joined APEM in 2021 as a Senior Marine Mammal Consultant where she managed multi-million-pound digital aerial survey programmes, working collaboratively with a range of team members such as aerial technicians, data operators, and image analysts, to collect baseline marine mammal (cetacean and pinniped) data for offshore wind developments off the UK and Irish coasts. Since joining APEM's Marine Mammal Consultancy team, Phoebe has contributed to several projects that demonstrate her understanding of cetacean ecology and potential threats posed to them through several desk-based studies, technical baseline reports, and reports to inform appropriate assessment, as well as providing advice to clients regarding visual and acoustic monitoring options for baseline data collection.
APEM: Ross Culloch Document audit	Ph.D. Behavioural Ecology and Ecological Modelling, Durham University. M.Sc. Marine Mammal Science, Bangor University. B.Sc. (Hons) Aquatic Bioscience,	Ross is an Associate Director and head of the Marine Mammal Consultancy team at APEM. Ross joined APEM in February 2022 from Marine Scotland Science (now Marine Directorate), bringing a wealth of expertise in the field of marine mammal ecology, conservation and management, and a practical understanding of the legislation and policy relating to marine mammals and the consenting of major marine infrastructure projects. Ross has 20 years of experience working on marine mammals, primarily in relation to conservation and management, and

	University of Glasgow.	anthropogenic impacts including fisheries interactions, collision risk and underwater noise.

Statement of Authority

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) (the Project)	Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) (The Project) is the onshore and offshore infrastructure. This EIAR is being prepared for the Offshore Infrastructure. Consents for the Onshore Grid Infrastructure (Planning Reference 310090) and Operations Maintenance Facility (Planning Reference 211316) has been granted on 26th May 2022 and 20th July 2022, respectively. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Offshore Infrastructure: This includes all elements to be consented in accordance with the Maritime Area Consent. This is the subject of this EIAR and will be referred to as 'the Proposed Development' in the EIAR. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Onshore Grid Infrastructure: This relates to the onshore grid infrastructure for which planning permission has been granted. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF): This includes the onshore and nearshore infrastructure at the OMF, for which planning permission has been granted. • Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 EirGrid Upgrade Works: any non-contestable grid upgrade works, consent to be sought and works to be completed by EirGrid.
Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 – Offshore Infrastructure	"The Proposed Development", Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Offshore Infrastructure: This includes all elements under the existing Maritime Area Consent.
Array Area	The Array Area is the area within which the Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs), the Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs), and associated cables (export, inter- array and interconnector cabling) and foundations will be installed.
Cable Corridor and Working Area	The Cable Corridor and Working Area is the area within which export, inter-array and interconnector cabling will be installed This area will also facilitate vessel jacking operations associated with installation of WTG structures and associated foundations within the Array Area.
Eirgrid	State-owned electric power transmission system operator (TSO) in Ireland and Transmission Asset Owner (TAO) for the Project's transmission assets.

Term	Meaning
EIA	An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a statutory process by which certain planned projects must be assessed before a formal decision to proceed can be made. It involves the collection and consideration of environmental information, which fulfils the assessment requirements of the Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (EIA Directive) and the regulations transposing the EIA Directive (EIA Regulations).
Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)	An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is a report of the effects, if any, which the proposed project, if carried out, would have on the environment. It is prepared by the developer to inform the EIA process.
Haul-out	A coastal site where seals choose to rest on land. These sites are important during life-history stages such as moulting or breeding.
Landfall	The area in which the offshore export cables make landfall and is the transitional area between the offshore cabling and the onshore cabling.
Maritime Area Consent (MAC)	A consent to occupy a specific part of the maritime area on a non-exclusive basis for the purpose of carrying out a Permitted Maritime Usage strictly in accordance with the conditions attached to the MAC granted on 22nd December 2022 with reference number 2022-MAC-002.
The Developer	Sure Partners Ltd.
Permitted Maritime Usage	The construction and operation of an offshore windfarm and associated infrastructure (including decommissioning and other works required on foot of any permission for such offshore windfarm).

Acronyms

Term	Meaning
ABWP2	Arklow Bank Wind Park 2
CTV	Crew Transfer Vessel
DCMNR	Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EU	European Union
EVMP	Environmental Vessel Management Plan
IWDG	Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
MAC	Maritime Area Consent
MARA	Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
MMMP	Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan
OMF	Operations and Maintenance Facility
OSP	Offshore Substation Platform
TAO	transmission asset owner
TSO	transmission system operator
UXO	unexploded ordnance
VMP	Vessel Management Plan
WTG	wind turbine generator

Units

Unit	Meaning
km	Kilometre (distance)
m	Metre (distance)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Project

Sure Partners Ltd, hereafter referred to as 'the Developer', is proposing to develop the offshore elements of Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 (ABWP2) Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development will be located on and around Arklow Bank in the Irish Sea, approximately 6 to 15 kilometres (km) off the coast of Arklow in County Wicklow. The Proposed Development will consist of the ABWP2 offshore infrastructure including offshore Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) and associated foundations, inter-array and inter-connector cables, Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs) and associated foundations and the Cable Corridor and Working Area, in which the export cables will be routed to the Landfall (see Volume II, Chapter 4: Description of Development for further details).

1.2 Purpose of this Document

During the construction, operational and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development, activities will take place offshore involving vessels and personnel. Therefore, it is likely that activities will, at times, be undertaken in close proximity to wildlife, including marine wildlife (marine mammals, marine turtles, basking sharks) and marine ornithology receptors.

The objective of this Environmental Vessel Management Plan (EVMP) document is to:

- Minimise the risk of collision and injury to marine wildlife;
- Minimise the risk of disturbance to marine wildlife;
- Prescribe measures to be implemented by contractors conducting activities on behalf of the Developer in proximity to wildlife; and
- Provide contractors with the procedures for reporting vessel collisions with marine wildlife.

This document shall undergo regular reviews in line with commitments in the Volume III, Appendix 25.1: Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to incorporate updated guidance and information.

While this document provides guidance for vessel activities, there may be additional requirements within project consents, planning consent or other planning permissions. It is the responsibility of the individual to be fully aware of these requirements in relation to any planned or undertaken work. Certain wildlife, including most birds (including their nests and eggs), marine mammals, and marine turtles are protected by the European Union (EU) Directives, and other domestic legislation.

This document should be read alongside the following Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) chapters and appendices:

- Volume II, Chapter 4: Description of Development;
- Volume II, Chapter 10: Fish, Shellfish and Sea Turtle Ecology;
- Volume II, Chapter 11: Marine Mammals;
- Volume II, Chapter 12: Offshore Ornithology;
- Volume II, Chapter 15: Shipping and Navigation;
- Volume III, Appendix 25.1: Environmental Management Plan;
- Volume III, Appendix 25.2: Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan (MMMP); and
- Volume III, Appendix 25.7: Vessel Management Plan.

1.3 Scope

This document (EVMP) is applicable to the construction, operational and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development.

2. Marine Wildlife

2.1 Marine Mammals and Other Megafauna

A MMMP has been submitted as part of this application (Volume III, Appendix 25.2). The MMMP identifies proposed mitigation measures, such as soft-start procedures, aimed at minimising the risk of any physical or permanent auditory injury to marine mammals during the geophysical surveys, Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) clearance, and piling operations. Based on the assessment in Volume II, Chapter 10: Fish, Shellfish and Sea Turtle Ecology, mitigation measures for basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) and leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) have also been included in the MMMP.

The purpose of this EVMP is to draw on best practice and guidance for the operation of vessels in proximity to wildlife and is applicable to all phases of the Proposed Development.

2.2 Offshore Ornithology

This EVMP outlines proposed measures aimed at minimising vessel disturbance to seabirds, in particular red-throated divers (*Gavia stellata*), but also other species such as guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and razorbill (*Alca torda*) which may be displaced by vessels (see Section 3).

3. Vessel Operation Guidelines and Safety Awareness

In the marine environment, operators of vessels shall be informed about the potential threat their vessels may pose to marine wildlife. Guidance on collision awareness and avoidance protocols must be communicated to vessel crews during mobilisation briefings.

Compliance with activity-specific Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS) is mandatory, with strict adherence to any specified requirements for vessel movements within planning consents.

The following Vessel Code of Conduct will be implemented, to minimise risks to marine wildlife:

- Incorporate vessel movements to and from ports within existing routes where feasible;
- Avoid active and deliberate approaches or pursuits of animals;
- Refrain from touching animals;
- When animals are alongside vessels, maintain a steady speed and avoid course changes; and
- Conduct briefings for vessel crew on the purpose and implications of these vessel management practices, such as through toolbox talks and posters in frequently used personnel areas.

The measures outlined in the bullet points above are applicable unless they pose a risk to the safety of the vessel, crew, and other sea users. Safety is the foremost priority in all cases.

3.1 Vessel Good Practice and Collision Avoidance

Approaches to minimising the risk of vessel collisions with marine mammals include using existing vessel routes, where possible, as marine mammals are accustomed to vessels in those areas, thereby reducing the risk of collision.

1. The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources released Marine Notice No. 15 of 2005 on the Guidelines for Correct Procedures When Encountering Whales and Dolphins in Irish Coastal Waters (DCMNR, 2005). Additionally, the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) produced a Code of Conduct for all watercraft encountering whales and dolphins (IWDG, 2005). The Developer recognises that these guidelines are for interactions between small vessels and marine mammals, particularly for whale watching vessels. However, the key principles outlined in Section 3 will be followed by all vessels associated with the Proposed Development where it is safe to do so, to minimise the risk of vessel collisions with, and vessel disturbance to, marine mammals and other marine wildlife.

Measures which will be implemented to avoid vessel collisions with marine mammals and other marine wildlife and to minimise disturbance during transit to and from site include:

- When an animal(s) is first sighted, vessels will maintain a steady course (speed and direction) to allow marine mammals and other marine wildlife to predict the vessel's path;
- Where possible, when an animal(s) is in close proximity, vessel speed will be gradually reduced and maintained below 7 knots;
- If animals are moving in a consistent direction, maintain a parallel course;
- Do not cut off individuals by moving across their path;
- Avoid deliberately approaching marine mammals when sighted;
- Avoid abrupt changes to course or speed should marine mammals or other marine wildlife approach the vessel or bow-ride;
- Transiting vessels will maintain a distance of 600 m[1] or more from the coast, where possible, particularly when near to known seal haul-out sites during sensitive periods (i.e. moulting and breeding seasons); and
- Following indicative transit corridor routes that will be defined in advance of the construction phase (see Section 6 of Volume III, Appendix 25.7: Vessel Management Plan).

There is no guidance for vessels operating in close proximity to basking sharks or marine turtles in Irish waters. The recommended measures for marine mammals are considered relevant and applicable to basking sharks and marine turtles. Therefore, should these species/taxa be sighted, the recommended measures above in this section will be followed, where it is safe to do so.

Details of any collision between a vessel and marine mammal, marine turtle and/or basking shark will be reported to the Developer's Environmental Manager by the Contractor in accordance with the Developer's 'MS-SHE-010 Incident Reporting Management Investigation Standard'. The document details the timelines, and to whom within SPL, an incident should be reported, before external enforcing Authorities are contacted. The document states, "*Managers shall ensure that significant or potentially significant incidents are immediately reported and escalated through the Business management chain within 30-minutes of their occurrence and reported to the SHE Director*. Details of any collision with marine mammals or other marine megafauna (e.g. basking sharks) shall be recorded by the MMO or delegated personnel and should be reported to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) at the earliest opportunity or, where relevant, as per any regulatory requirements.

[1] https://wnnmp.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/sites/29/reports/2019/05/SMRU-The-Wash-Breeding-Season-Seal-Survey-Report-2018.pdf

The measures outlined in the bullet points above are applicable unless they pose a risk to the safety of the vessel, crew, and other sea users. Safety is the foremost priority in all cases.

3.2 Best Practice Protocol for Minimising Disturbance to seabirds

Potential impacts on seabirds, with a particular focus on red-throated diver, will be mitigated through the following measures:

- Minimise vessel traffic, where possible, during the most sensitive time period for red-throated diver between November and March 1st inclusive;
- Restriction of vessel movements to existing navigation routes and where possible, selection of routes that avoid known areas where birds aggregate;
- Avoidance of rafting birds encountered anywhere within the Proposed Development (e.g. the Cable Corridor and Working Area and the Array Area itself), where possible, and minimise disturbance in areas with consistently high diver densities;
- Avoid over-revving of engines to minimise noise disturbance;
- Maintaining direct transit routes to minimise distances through areas used by red-throated divers;
- Vessel operators will be made aware of the importance of this species, and the associated mitigation measures, through toolbox talks and vessel inductions.

3.3 Toolbox Talks

Toolbox talks are an effective means of disseminating information related to work activities. Contractors are obligated to deliver environmental toolbox talks to all on-site personnel when required, and records of attendees must be maintained for potential inspection during environmental audits.

4. References

Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. (2005), 'Guidelines for correct procedures when encountering whales and dolphins in Irish coastal waters', Marine Notice No. 15 of 2005.

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group. (2005), 'Code of Conduct for all watercraft encountering whales and dolphins'.