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APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

AA SCREENING REPORT FOR THE OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY (ORE) FUTURE FRAMEWORK POILCY STATEMENT

Prepared for:

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
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Appropriate Assessment Screening Report of the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement for the Department Of Environment, Climate and Communications

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company / Mace is pleased to submit this AA Screening Report of the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (the Department) has prepared the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Future Framework Policy Statement.

The Future Framework Policy Statement outlines the Department's ambitions for ORE delivery for Ireland for the post-2030 period, the key processes needed for successful deployment, and a pathway to maximise economic benefits to the State. The key reasons for sustainably developing Ireland's considerable offshore resources are threefold:

- Decarbonising the Irish economy in line with legally binding national and international climate ambitions;
- Ensuring long-term energy security; and
- Developing green industrial opportunities for energy utilisation such as export markets.

Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) were commissioned by the Department to prepare a report to inform the competent authority's Screening for Appropriate Assessment for the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement, as required by Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive). This report presents an examination of whether the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is based on best available scientific knowledge.

1.1 Legislative Requirements

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The Habitats Directive provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species of European Community Interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives (Habitats Directive as above and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable among them. These two designations are collectively known and referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect such sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA. These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Specifically, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (Natura 2000 sites) but likely to have significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public".

Therefore, the AA process is an assessment of the following key concepts:

- Whether a plan or project can be excluded from AA requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site.
- Whether the plan or project will have a potentially significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site's conservation objectives or if residual uncertainty exists regarding potential impacts.

The provisions of Article 6(3) do not apply where the proposed plan or project is 'connected with or necessary to the management of the site'. In this case, the Policy statement is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s).

1.2 Guidance

The assessment was conducted in accordance with the following guidance:

- 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/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (European Commission, 2002).
- This document was updated by Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Commission Notice (2021) Brussels, 28.9.2021 C(2021) 6913 final;
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin (2009, updated 2010);
- Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2018). Brussels, (2019/C 33/01). OJ C 33, 25.1.2019;
- Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission 2013;
- OPR Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, Office of the Planning Regulator (2021).

The process of determining the likelihood of significant effects from a proposed project on European sites is an iterative process centred around a Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) model. In order for an effect to be established, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is not of any relevance or significance.

In the context of screening for Appropriate Assessment of the Policy Statement, a receptor is an ecological feature that is known to be utilised by the Qualifying Interests (QI) or Special Conservation Interests (SCI) of a European site. A source is an action set out under the Policy Statement. A pathway is any connection or link between the source and the receptor¹.

The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects is also assessed.

¹ qualifying interest or special conservation interests of the European site in question and the known sensitivities of these key ecological receptors

The likelihood of significant effects on the European Sites is then interrogated having regard to the sensitivity of each European site with pathways for impacts associated with the Policy Statement on its own and in combination with other plans and projects. Where significant effects are determined to be likely, or where there is uncertainty regarding the likelihood of significant effects, the Policy Statement will be required under law to be subjected to Appropriate Assessment and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) prepared.

2. DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND TO THE ORE FUTURE FRAMEWORK POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Background to the ORE Future Policy Statement

The Phase Two Policy Statement² adopted by Government in March 2023 provides for a plan-led, centralised approach to future ORE delivery in Ireland, previously indicated in the 2021 Policy Statement on the Framework for Ireland's Offshore Electricity System³. The move to a plan-led approach for ORE development in Ireland has taken place within the overarching frameworks of EU and national Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) policy and legislation. The first proposed South Coast DMAP was initiated as a response to energy security requirements, however future DMAPs under the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act⁴ will explore the untapped potential of ORE in Irish Waters, in a method which keeps pace with technological advances.

2.2 Overview of the ORE Future Policy Statement

This Future Framework Policy Statement outlines DECC's ambitions for the post-2030 period, the key processes needed for successful deployment, and a pathway to maximise economic benefits to the State. The key reasons for sustainably developing Ireland's considerable offshore resources are threefold:

- Decarbonising the Irish economy in line with legally binding national and international climate ambitions;
- Ensuring long-term energy security; and
- Developing green industrial opportunities for energy utilisation such as export markets.

Consistent with global efforts to combat climate change, Ireland has committed to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, which will require a dramatic increase of utilization of indigenous renewable energy sources, wholesale electrification of domestic demand, increasing electricity interconnection, and an emergent renewable hydrogen industry targeted towards hard-to-abate sectors. Realising Ireland's indigenous renewable energy potential will enhance our energy security by mitigating dependence on volatile international imports, through which Ireland currently receives 70% of current primary energy requirement.

Furthermore, as Ireland continues to develop its ORE sector there will be increased opportunities for supporting the domestic green growth agenda and export market opportunities from co-location of large energy users with renewable generation to electricity interconnection with neighbouring states to the export of renewable hydrogen and its derivatives. Creating a flagship ORE sector will enable Ireland to achieve its binding climate targets while bolstering the security and prosperity of the Irish State.

With the adoption of a plan-led approach to ORE comes a government responsibility to set forth a robust pathway for the achievement of Ireland's ambitious targets out to 2040 and 2050. The purpose of the ORE Future Framework is to set out the future of ORE development in Ireland from 2030 in a manner which will maximise environmental and social welfare. The ORE Future Framework will be delivered through collaboration between State, industry and local communities.

² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f3bb6-policy-statement-on-the-framework-for-phase-two-offshore-wind/>

³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5ec24-policy-statement-on-the-framework-for-irelands-offshore-electricity-transmission-system/>

⁴ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/50/enacted/en/html>

The Future Framework policy sets out the evidence base for Ireland's ORE targets as well as commits to the plan-led approach by outlining key priorities and processes to ORE delivery from 2030 to 2050. This includes identifying realistic potential for ORE generation as well as interconnection and renewable hydrogen production post-2030. Additionally, this document consolidates information provided by existing policy to clarify the regulatory pathway to successful delivery including any opportunities or barriers to implementation. Crucially, the Future Framework policy outlines how a plan-led approach will link all relevant components of the energy system, streamline the ORE consenting process, and integrate key priorities – such as environmental assessments and consultation processes – into the foundation of a sustainable regime for ORE delivery in Ireland.

2.3 Actions within the ORE Future Policy Statement

Most of the actions are process based to provide an evidence base for future works. The actions facilitate, support or explore the feasibility of commitments made in a plan-led approach by outlining key priorities and processes to ORE delivery from 2030 to 2050. A summary of the actions is provided below and these assessments should be read in conjunction with the ORE Framework policy document itself.

Table 2-1: Summary of the actions within the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement

ORE Delivery		
1	Conduct a viability study, or a series of studies, to assess the feasibility of deploying floating offshore wind in Irish waters.	Q2 2024
2	Investigate the feasibility of an Irish coastal FLOW demonstrator site.	Q3 2024
3	Maintain State support for our existing test sites and explore the feasibility of supporting additional test sites.	ongoing
4	Conduct an analysis to determine the economic and practical viability of various innovative technologies with consideration to international market conditions and cost-competitiveness.	Q3 2024-Q4 2025
5	Provide the structures and supports necessary to establish a future DMAP roadmap including timeline for deployment in accordance with all relevant legislative and regulatory processes and in alignment with technology maturity and offtake availability.	Q3 2024
6	Continue to support streamlining of the consenting process for ORE projects including the competitive MAC process and indicative timelines for implementation.	2024
Route to Market		
7	Establish and maintain a single schedule for all upcoming State tenders for ORE, including non-grid connected ORE, in alignment with Action 5.	Q2 2024 - ongoing
8	Design a competitive process to procure 2GW of non-grid connected capacity in 2025, to be in development by 2030.	Q1 2024- Q2 2025

9	Develop and obtain State Aid clearance for a successor support scheme to ORESS, be in operation from 2026-2030, to procure at least 9.5GW for deployment from 2033.	2024-2025
10	Assess the enabling supports and/or frameworks that may be required to maximise capacity from alternative routes to market.	Q1 2024-Q4 2025
11	Collaborate with EirGrid to support the rollout of EirGrid's Grid Implementation Plan and future iterations to aid in the alignment of infrastructure efficiencies in a manner which considers offshore generation, grid, and routes to market.	Q2 2024- Q2 2025
12	Within a regulatory review of CRU and EirGrid, consider provision for expanding capacity for proactive, anticipatory investment in onshore and offshore grid.	Q1 2024- Q4 2024
13	Align resourcing needs across Government Departments and agencies to ensure all Government bodies in relevant marine and ORE disciplines are properly resourced to discharge the expanded responsibilities as set out under the Future Framework.	ongoing
Data Policy		
14	Procure, consolidate and publish all relevant data to support and contribute towards the establishment of data pertaining to the marine environment and to making this information available to the public.	Q3 2023-ongoing
15	Establish a priority process to incorporate cumulative impact studies into the DMAP process as required by the MAP Act.	2024
16	Conduct additional studies and data modelling to inform future ORE DMAP delineation given increasing frequency of weather extremes and future conditions.	Q3 2024-Q1 2025
17	Develop an overarching data policy statement for ORE to be coordinated by DECC in late 2024.	Q4 2024
Alignment		
18	Work with DETE and other key stakeholders to explore potential investment incentives which could be developed to encourage foreign direct investment in domestic supply chain facilities.	Q3 2024- Q1 2025
19	Establish Offshore Bidding Zone Frameworks necessary to maximise utilisation of offshore renewable energy potential for domestic and international markets, in order to meet the objectives of the EU Green Deal.	Q4 2024

20	Conduct an analysis to determine the financial optimisation of the hydrogen industry in Ireland contrasting pipeline and shipping options for hydrogen production and associated derivatives, including the viability of a hydrogen pipeline by 2040.	Q3 2024-Q2 2025
21	In order to safeguard community benefit for coastal and marine communities regardless of technology type and route to market, and to ensure that community benefits persist for the lifetime of ORE projects, the Community Benefit Fund provisions developed in ORESS will be transferred to MAC terms and conditions, from the ORESS 2.1 project onwards.	Q2 2024

2.4 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

ORE policy and ambitions are developed within the broader context of both national, EU and international climate, energy and environmental policy and legislative frameworks. The Future Framework builds on previous commitments, strategies and directions as outlined by both national policy – including the Climate Action Plan, the National Energy and Climate Plan, the National Marine Planning Framework⁵, the National Planning Framework, the National Policy Statement on Interconnection 2023⁶, and the National Hydrogen Strategy⁷ – and EU policy such as RePowerEU⁸ and the EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy⁹.

Ireland's Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce (OWDT) was established in April 2022 to drive delivery of offshore wind targets in the Climate Action Plan, and to mobilise the Irish economy towards realising associated economic and societal opportunities through effective cross-Government collaboration. Membership of the OWDT, chaired by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), comprises senior officials from the Government Departments and Agencies considered vital to the delivery of Ireland's ORE ambitions.

Among others, relevant objectives of the OWDT include:

- Developing a consolidated plan, collating all activities underway across departments and agencies to ensure delivery of offshore wind and related targets as set out in the Programme for Government and Climate Action Plan Ensuring the potential economic and societal benefits from establishing the offshore wind industry are maximised; and
- Ensure alignment in the development of the ORE sector with work being progressed to improve and protect marine biodiversity through designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Marine Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and implementation of the Birds, Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives more broadly.

⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/60e57-national-marine-planning-framework/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3d96f-national-policy-statement-on-electricity-connection-2023/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/624ab-national-hydrogen-strategy/>

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A741%3AFIN&qid=1605792629666>

The 2023 Key Actions of the OWDT were published in March 2023¹⁰ across all workstreams including supply chain, ports policy, skills and workforce, and regulatory consenting. A progress report will be submitted for Government approval in Q1 2024, with publication soon afterwards, including Key Actions for 2024.

A key workstream of the OWDT is the development of this Future Framework policy document for offshore renewable energy policy beyond 2030.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c8749-offshore-wind-delivery-taskforce/>

3. SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction to Screening

An important element of the AA process is the identification of the “conservation objectives”, “Qualifying Interests” (QIs) and/ or “Special Conservation Interests” (SCIs) of European Sites requiring assessment. QIs are the habitat features and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive for which each European Site has been designated and afforded protection. SCIs are wetland habitats and bird species listed within Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive.

Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) have been designed to define favourable conservation status for a particular habitat or species at each European site.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

The objective for each European site is:

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.
- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for the SPA.

The screening stage of AA takes account of European Site conservation objectives relative to the details and characteristics of the Policy Statement actions to determine if potential for significant effects on a European Site are likely.

3.2 Assessment Criteria

A determination of no potential for significant effects can only be determined based on one or a combination of the following criteria:

- Where it can be shown that there are no pathways between the Policy Statement Actions (including activities arising from the actions), and the European Site;
- Where known threats or vulnerabilities at a site cannot be linked to potential effects that may arise from the Policy Statement Actions.

The CIEEM (2018) define: an ecologically significant impact as an impact (negative or positive) on the integrity of a defined site or ecosystem and/or the conservation status of habitats or species within a given geographic area; and the integrity of a site as the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.

EC guidance¹¹ outlines the types of effects that may affect European sites. These include effects from the following activities:

- Land take;
- Resource Requirements (Drinking Water Abstraction Etc.);
- Emissions (Disposal to Land, Water or Air);
- Excavation Requirements;
- Transportation Requirements;
- Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning.

In addition, the guidance outlines the following likely changes that may occur at a designated site, which may result in significant effects:

- Reduction of Habitat Area.
- Disturbance to Key Species.
- Habitat or Species Fragmentation.
- Reduction in Species Density.
- Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality Etc.).
- Climate Change.

3.3 Assessment of the Potential for the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement to Give Rise to Effects on European Sites

Each of the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement actions are assessed below with respect to potential for environmental interaction and potential for effects on European Sites.

¹¹ 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/EEC, European Commission Environment DG, 2001

Table 3-1 Evaluation of Potential Environmental Implications of each Action in the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement

Action Number	Action Text	Evaluation of Potential Environmental Implications of each Action
1	Conduct a viability study, or a series of studies, to assess the feasibility of deploying floating offshore wind in Irish waters.	The viability study will explore the potential of this mode of offshore renewables. These feasibility assessments will include considerations for the environment - having due regard to all relevant legislation and regulations. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
2	Investigate the feasibility of an Irish coastal FLOW demonstrator site.	These feasibility assessments will include considerations for the environment - having due regard to all relevant legislation and regulations. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
3	Maintain State support for our existing test sites and explore the feasibility of supporting additional test sites.	The additional test sites will be subject to careful selection processes as per the standard practice and existing processes utilized. These feasibility assessments will include considerations for the environment - having due regard to all relevant legislation and regulations. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
4	Conduct an analysis to determine the economic and practical viability of various innovative technologies with consideration to international market conditions and cost-competitiveness.	This action relates to economic assessments. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
5	Provide the structures and supports necessary to establish a future DMAP roadmap including timeline for deployment in accordance with all relevant legislative and regulatory processes and in alignment with technology maturity and offtake availability.	As it stands the stages for DMAP establishment are as follows: publication of DMAP Proposal; DMAP Proposal area refinement through ongoing public and stakeholder consultation(s), Strategic Environmental Assessment and other expert analysis of maritime areas to assess suitability for ORE development; publication of a draft DMAP; commencement of statutory consultation period; and the approval to be sought of both Houses of the Oireachtas. The proposed roadmap pertains to the creation of processes and structures required to facilitate the administrative potential to develop the DMAPs which will in turn be subject to full SEA and AA processes when the pertinent details are known.

Action Number	Action Text	Evaluation of Potential Environmental Implications of each Action
		Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
6	Continue to support streamlining of the consenting process for ORE projects including the competitive MAC process and indicative timelines for implementation.	This action relates to improvements to existing processes which are already being progressed. The streamlining of processes do not pertain to any increase in environmental interactions. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
7	Establish and maintain a single schedule for all upcoming State tenders for ORE, including non-grid connected ORE, in alignment with Action 5.	This action relates to tendering processes - which will improve overall efficiency of existing works. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
8	Design a competitive process to procure 2GW of non-grid connected capacity in 2025, to be in development by 2030.	This will formalize existing processes into a defined structure. The streamlining of processes do not pertain to any increase in environmental interactions. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
9	Develop and obtain State Aid clearance for a successor support scheme to ORESS, be in operation from 2026-2030, to procure at least 9.5GW for deployment from 2033.	This action relates to economic processes for existing commitments. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
10	Assess the enabling supports and/or frameworks that may be required to maximise capacity from alternative routes to market.	Providing supports or frameworks to maximise capacity from alternate routes to market relate to economic processes. The streamlining of processes do not pertain to any increase in environmental interactions. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
11	Collaborate with EirGrid to support the rollout of EirGrid's Grid Implementation Plan and future iterations to aid in the alignment of infrastructure efficiencies in a manner which considers offshore generation, grid, and routes to market.	EirGrids Grid Implementation Plan has been subject to its own SEA and AA processes, thus the collaborative efforts to support this plan will not introduce sources for impacts. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
12	Within a regulatory review of CRU and EirGrid, consider provision for expanding capacity for proactive, anticipatory investment in onshore and offshore grid.	This action relates to economic investment processes with regard to existing commitments.

Action Number	Action Text	Evaluation of Potential Environmental Implications of each Action
		Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
13	Align resourcing needs across Government Departments and agencies to ensure all Government bodies in relevant marine and ORE disciplines are properly resourced to discharge the expanded responsibilities as set out under the Future Framework.	Consolidating and aligning goals, roles and responsibilities will streamline processes and ensure effective use of resources. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
14	Procure, consolidate and publish all relevant data to support and contribute towards the establishment of data pertaining to the marine environment and to making this information available to the public.	Increased knowledge and robust data processes will improve the decision making process and increase understanding overall. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
15	Establish a priority process to incorporate cumulative impact studies into the DMAP process as required by the MAP Act.	This will improve assessment processes related to impact assessments which will in turn improve decision making process and increase understanding overall. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
16	Conduct additional studies and data modelling to inform future ORE DMAP delineation given increasing frequency of weather extremes and future conditions.	Increased knowledge and robust data processes will improve the decision making process and increase understanding overall. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
17	Develop an overarching data policy statement for ORE to be coordinated by DECC in late 2024.	This policy statement will improve the transparency and availability of data. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
18	Work with DETE and other key stakeholders to explore potential investment incentives which could be developed to encourage foreign direct investment in domestic supply chain facilities.	This action relates to stakeholder engagement processes and economic incentives. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
19	Establish Offshore Bidding Zone Frameworks necessary to maximise utilisation of offshore renewable energy potential for domestic and international markets, in order to meet the objectives of the EU Green Deal.	This action relates to provisions and processes for energy bidding zones. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
20	Conduct an analysis to determine the financial optimisation of the hydrogen	This action relates to economic assessments.

Action Number	Action Text	Evaluation of Potential Environmental Implications of each Action
	industry in Ireland contrasting pipeline and shipping options for hydrogen production and associated derivatives, including the viability of a hydrogen pipeline by 2040.	Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.
21	In order to safeguard community benefit for coastal and marine communities regardless of technology type and route to market, and to ensure that community benefits persist for the lifetime of ORE projects, the Community Benefit Fund provisions developed in ORESS will be transferred to MAC terms and conditions, from the ORESS 2.1 project onwards.	This action aims to improve existing processes related to the provision of community benefit funds. Therefore, the action does not introduce a framework for development - nor does it introduce any sources for potential effects.

3.4 Other Plans and Projects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or projects that might, in combination with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon European Sites. There are no sources for effects identified within the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement which are not already identified as being present within the general operations of DECC; therefore, there are no in-combination effects.

4. CONCLUSION

Stage 1 Screening for AA of the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has been carried out. It has been demonstrated that implementation of the actions set out in the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement is not foreseen to have any likely significant effects on any European Site alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Consequently, a (Stage 2) Appropriate Assessment is not required for the ORE Future Framework Policy Statement.

The ORE Future Framework Policy Statement is a high-level expression of broad government policy and statutory commitments for renewable energy. The Policy Statement sets out principles and ambition for the delivery of ORE targets established under National strategies. The actions from the Policy Statement pertain to the creation of processes for data managements, economic investment priorities and other such existing commitments. Additionally, the streamlining of administrative action is a key concept within the Policy Statement. As such, the actions that are prescribed to achieve the Policy's vision do not prescribe specific forms of delivery of ORE targets, or associates and specific geographical areas for ORE delivery. There are no features of the proposed ORE Future Framework Policy Statement which pertain to land use or which provides for development processes.

The Policy Statement establishes a high-level vision for ORE in Ireland. Any plans or projects which arise out of the ambition set out in the Policy Statement will be subject to a full appraisal under AA and SEA as appropriate.

The ORE Future Framework Policy Statement does not set the framework for development decisions, does not determine or set the management framework for Natura 2000 sites, does not establish the location or proposed location of ORE projects and does not programme the undertaking, timing or phasing of ORE development.

5. REFERENCES

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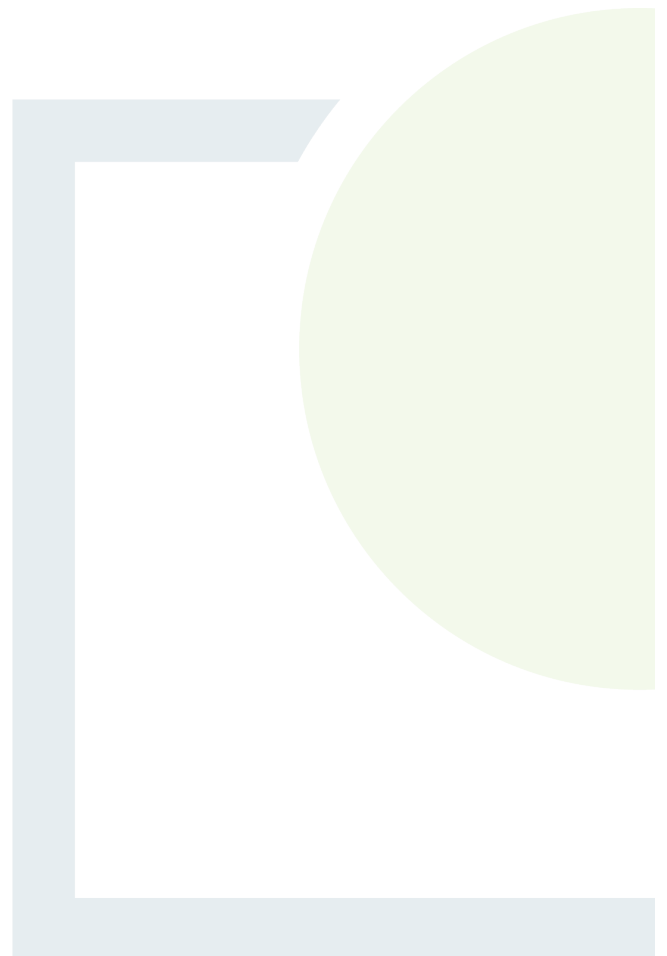
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APPENDIX 1

Author Details



Author Details

Lead Author - Andrew Torsney is a Principal Ecologist with over 10 years' experience working on major national and local scale projects. Andrew graduated from University College Dublin in 2011 with a B.Sc. degree in Zoology and obtained Master's degree in Biodiversity and Conservation from the University of Leeds in 2012. He has a range of ecological skills which include habitat mapping, ecological surveying, data interpretation and report writing. Andrew is a vegetative plant specialist, who has a wealth of experience classifying riparian habitats and identifying rare floral species. Andrew has a vast knowledge of riparian and freshwater ecosystems and undertakes freshwater surveys regularly. Andrew holds 4 national protected species licenses and has a lot of experience optioning surveying licenses for aquatic species such as the white clawed crayfish. He is also a Bat specialist with a wealth of experience, in acoustic surveying and monitoring of bats. Throughout Andrews's career he has worked on a number of large-scale multifaceted projects such as the Killaloe to Dublin water supply project NIS. For this work, Andrew designed and oversaw all ecological field work relating to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and AA.

Andrew has been the principal ecologist for a range of projects including the AA of the National Grid Implementation Strategy, the 4 Brand Strategies for Failte Ireland, National Wind Energy Guidelines, 21 Current County Development Plans, and 25 current County Climate Action Plans for County Councils and a range of large-scale infrastructure projects.

Document Reviewer - Rita Mansfield Rita is a Principal Ecologist and Associate Director with 19 years' previous experience as a technical lead within the environmental and planning services sector. She specialises in statutory consent and environmental assessment for large scale public infrastructure projects in the energy, water (including flood relief schemes) and transport sectors. She is a qualified ecologist with experience in environmental impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment, planning (conventional and strategic infrastructure development), climate adaptation, Appropriate Assessment, foreshore licensing, Water Framework Directive, integrated catchment management, and stakeholder engagement.



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