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STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AA SCREENING AND NIS REVIEW FOR VERMILION INSPECTION/MAINTENANCE SURVEY OF PIPELINE AND SUBSEA STRUCTURES 2022

RAMBOLL

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT VERMILION INSPECTION/MAINTENANCE SURVEY OF PIPELINE AND SUBSEA STRUCTURES 2022

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **I**
1. INTRODUCTION **1**
1.1 Documents Reviewed 1
1.2 Project Background 1
2. TERMS OF REFERENCE **2**
2.1 Legislative context 2
2.2 Relevant guidance 2
2.3 Consultation 2
3. REVIEW OF APPLICANT AA SCREENING REPORT **4**
3.1 Determining whether a Project should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment 4
3.2 Description of the Project 4
3.3 Identification of relevant European sites and species 7
3.4 Screening of Likely Significant Effects on Natura sites and adverse effects on Annex IV species. 8
3.5 Screening Determination 9
4. REVIEW OF APPLICANT STAGE 2 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT **11**
4.1 Natura Impact Statements 11
4.2 Article 12 Assessment in relation to Annex IV species 15
4.3 Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment Determination 15
5. MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT COMMITMENTS **17**
APPENDIX 1: IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES/SPECIES AA SCREENING CHECKLIST **20**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ramboll UK Limited (herein referred to as Ramboll) was commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (herein referred to as DECC) to provide assistance with regards to the statutory assessment of an application by Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd (referred to herein as the applicant) for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination and AA Conclusion Statement.

The applicant has submitted an application for consent for an offshore pipeline and subsea structure inspection and a near shore pipeline inspection of the Corrib Offshore Pipeline and Umbilical system (herein referred to as the project) from the landfall valve site in Glengad, Co. Mayo to the Corrib Wells (herein referred to as the site). The scope of the project comprises two main components:

- Offshore pipeline and subsea structure inspection and maintenance survey works from a suitable offshore vessel supported by ROV, similar to the Edda Sun used previously as part of the survey programme. This vessel will be responsible for the survey works covering the area of the Corrib offshore field assets as well as seabed infrastructure as far inshore as Broadhaven Bay.
- Nearshore pipeline inspection using the survey vessel Leah-C or similar. This vessel is responsible for the survey covering the area primarily within Broadhaven Bay as far as the inshore limit of safe navigation.

The application for consent also makes reference to maintenance and repair works that may be required (if any) following the survey works. However, the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) report only covers survey works, and accordingly any potential maintenance / repair works (if any required) are not considered further in this report. It is noted that original consent to operate the Corrib Upstream Gas Pipeline (issued by the Minister on 29 December 2015) is considered to provide consent for any required maintenance / repair works, should these be required.

The competent authority (DECC) is required to consider the potential effects of such activities on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, with respect to Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC which is transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-21 as amended (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations).

An AA Screening Determination was made by the Environment Assessment Unit (EAU) of DECC on 10 March 2022, which concluded that an AA would be required in respect of the activities covered by the application.

This report provides a review of the NIS report (which includes the AA screening) and the assessment of impacts on Annex IV species contained within the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Both reports were prepared by RSK on behalf of the applicant and submitted with their application.

Public consultation on the application has been undertaken by the DECC, including for the purposes of AA. No submissions were received from the public.

Ramboll confirms that the information provided by the applicant is considered to be adequate, up to date and that no other information is required to carry out an AA. The applicant has provided adequate, up-to-date, best scientific information so as to enable the DECC to undertake an AA to determine whether the integrity of any European site is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed project.

This report concludes that the proposed project, either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects, will not have an adverse effect on the environment or on the integrity of any

European site in view of its conservation objectives and will not cause any significant disturbance to the Annex IV species described, subject to the mitigation described in Section 5 of this report being implemented in full.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ramboll UK Limited (herein referred to as Ramboll) was commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (herein referred to as DECC) to provide assistance as competent experts for the statutory assessment of an application by Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd (herein referred to as the applicant), submitted in respect of an offshore pipeline and subsea structure inspection, and a nearshore pipeline inspection. The authors hold undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in environmental science (or related disciplines), professional qualifications including chartered status with the Society for the Environment and full membership of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and have long standing experience as expert practitioners within the fields of offshore development, environmental impact assessment and the appraisal of applications in the context of the Birds and Natural Habitat regulations.

1.1 Documents Reviewed

The following documents have been reviewed to inform this report:

- Notification of Application to Conduct an Offshore Pipeline Survey and Inspection / Maintenance Programme of the Offshore Facilities in 2022. Submitted by Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd on 10 December 2021 (cover letter);
- Application to conduct an offshore survey form. Completed by Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd;
- Corrib subsea infrastructure inspection, and maintenance surveys. EIA screening and environmental risk assessment for Annex IV species. Report prepared by RSK on behalf of Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd. Project Number 660841. Dated 8 December 2021; and
- Corrib subsea infrastructure inspection, and maintenance surveys - 2022. Natura Impact Statement. Report prepared by RSK on behalf of Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd. Project Number 660841. Dated 8 December 2021.

This report provides a review of the Natura Impact Statement (NIS)[1] report (which also contains the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening), and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report submitted by the applicant, prepared and approved by Ramboll as competent experts having relevant qualifications and experience.

1.2 Project Background

The competent authority (DECC) is required to consider the potential effects of such activities on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, with respect to Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC which is transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-21 as amended (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations). Additionally, as required by Article 12 of the Habitats Directive, the potential impact on the favourable conservation status of species listed in Annex IV of the Directive must also be assessed.

[1] Note - Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is an Irish specific term used following transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives into national legislation.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Legislative context

This report has been prepared having regard to EC Directive 2009/147/EC[2] 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 2011-21 (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) as amended and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts.

The NIS report submitted by the applicant confirms that the Project has been screened having regard to the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Birds and Natural Habitats regulations and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts.

2.2 Relevant guidance

This report has been prepared having regard to guidance on AA for planning authorities, published by the Department for Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in 2009[3]. In addition, the structure and content of this report is based upon the methodology published by the European Communities in 2002[4] and Commission notice C (2021)[5].

2.3 Consultation

2.3.1 Notified Bodies

The applicant submitted the application on 10 December 2021. The following bodies were notified of the application by the DECC on 23 December 2021:

- Irish Maritime Administration (IMA), Department of Transport;
- Marine Survey Office, IMA, Department of Transport;
- Maritime Safety Policy Division, IMA, Department of Transport;
- Marine Notices, IMA, Department of Transport Ship Source Pollution Prevention Unit, Irish Maritime Administration, Department of Transport;
- Irish Coast Guard (& National Maritime Operations Centre), Department of Transport;
- Sea Fisheries Protection Authority;
- Sea Fisheries Policy Division, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- Department of Agriculture and Food;
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Development Applications Unit, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;
- Marine Institute;
- Department of Defence;
- Mission Support Facility, Irish Air Corps;
- Naval Headquarters;

[2] Amending Directive 70/409/EEC
[3] DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects - Guidance for Planning Authorities, Revision Notes added 2010, URL: https://www.npws.ie (accessed 15/02/2022)
[4] 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 (accessed 15/02/2022)
[5] C (2021) 6913 final "Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive: https://op.europa.eu (accessed 15/02/2022)

- Commission for Regulation of Utilities; and
- Commissioners of Irish Lights.

One response was received within the consultation period, which closed on the 8 February 2022:

- Response from the Maritime Safety Policy Division of the Department of Transport received by the applicant on 10 December 2021 and received by the DECC on 23 December 2021.

The following observations were made:

- Prospective licensees and their employees and contractors are reminded that they should be aware of ship-source pollution prevention provisions which are in place to protect human health and the marine environment and apply to all shipping activity. These provisions are obligatory independently of particular licence terms and conditions. Under the MARPOL Convention and EU law as applicable in national law, ships may not cause pollution either by discharge to water or emissions to air, when at sea or when at berth in port. Ships include Floating Production and Offloading vessels (FPSOs) also called a "unit" or a "system", and Floating Storage Units (FSUs). Ships berthed at terminals at sea are also obliged to conform to the law.
- Management of ship waste (mainly oil, hazardous and polluting substances, sewage, garbage and polluting emissions to air) and of all cargo residues must be ensured as required under international (IMO), EU and national law. Under existing provisions ships are obliged to discharge waste and cargo residues at port and ports are obliged to provide adequate facilities for their reception from ships.

An AA Screening Determination was made by the Environment Assessment Unit (EAU) of the DECC on 10 March 2022 in line with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011) as amended, that a Stage 2 AA was required in respect of this application, as it could not be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would have a significant effect on a European site. A 30-day public consultation was carried out in respect of the application for the purpose of carrying out a Stage 2 AA. The above referenced notified bodies were also informed and invited to make observations. No additional responses were received from notified bodies.

Appropriate regard has been given to the issues raised in the submissions received from notified bodies, including whether appropriate mitigation measures have been suggested that address the observations made or whether additional mitigation would be required to address those observations. The mitigation proposed is set out in Section 5 of this report.

2.3.2 Public Consultation

The application was advertised by the DECC on their website on 23 December 2021, following receipt of the application on 10 December 2021. Invitations for submissions were advertised by the DECC to be received by close of business on 8 February 2022 to ensure consideration by the Minister. No responses were received from the public in response to this consultation.

As described above, the AA Screening Determination was made by EAU of the DECC on 10 March 2022, and public consultation was carried out for 30 days, for the purposes of carrying out a Stage 2 AA. No responses were received from the public in response to this consultation.

3. REVIEW OF APPLICANT AA SCREENING REPORT

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the key project information.

Table 3.1: Project Information

Project Title:	Corrib subsea infrastructure inspection, and maintenance surveys - 2022
Project Type:	Visual and Geophysical Survey
Applicant:	Vermilion Exploration & Production Ireland Ltd
Exploration Licence Reference:	Corrib Petroleum Lease
Date AA Screening Report Received:	10 December 2021

3.1 Determining whether a Project should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment

Under Paragraph 42(6) of the Habitats Regulations, the DECC (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, would have a significant effect on a European Site.

Where it is determined that AA is required for the project, the applicant must submit a NIS.

3.2 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

Brief Project Description:

The proposed work scope will comprise two main components:

- Offshore pipeline and subsea structure inspection and maintenance survey work from a suitable offshore vessel supported by ROV, similar to the Edda Sun used previously as part of the survey programme. This vessel will be responsible for the survey works covering the area of the Corrib offshore field assets as well as seabed infrastructure as far inshore as Broadhaven Bay.
- Nearshore pipeline inspection using the survey vessel Leah-C or similar. This vessel is responsible for the survey covering the area primarily within Broadhaven Bay as far as the inshore limit of safe navigation.

The offshore and nearshore elements of the work will investigate features such as free-spanning and scouring, pipeline burial depth and integrity as well as cathodic protection measures. The survey will be carried out using a combination of acoustic survey techniques (e.g. multibeam echo sounder (MBES), sub-bottom profiler (SBP), side-scan sonar (SSS)). In addition, a visual survey using underwater video / camera imagery and ROV will be undertaken.

The application for consent also makes reference to maintenance and repair works that may be required (if any) following the survey works. However, the NIS report only covers survey works, and accordingly any potential maintenance / repair works (if any required) are not considered further in this report. It is noted that the original consent to operate the Corrib Upstream Gas Pipeline (issued by the Minister on 29 December 2015) is considered to provide consent for any required maintenance / repair works, should these be required.

Details on the proposed equipment is provided below:

- A Sound Velocity Probe (SVP) will be deployed occasionally throughout the surveys to provide salinity, conductivity, temperature and sound velocity depth information. These probes operate at an extremely high frequency of around 2.5 MHz at a very low level of intensity. This allows periodic calibration of the primary acoustic survey sensors.
- Both vessels are likely to have single beam depth echosounders (operating at around 50 kHz) and ultra-short baseline acoustic profiling systems (USBL) for maintaining position and communications with any deployed equipment. The USBL system operate at a frequency at between 19 kHz to 34 kHz.
- The nearshore vessel will use a SBP with an operating frequency between 3 kHz and 8 kHz. Alternative systems operate between 3 and 10 kHz.
- MBES equipment will be hull mounted on the nearshore survey vessel for the survey in the confined waters of Broadhaven Bay. The preferred option for the MBES system onboard the nearshore vessel will operate between 350 kHz and 400 kHz. Alternative systems operate between 190 kHz to 450 kHz. MBES will also likely be mounted to the ROV of the offshore vessel for the offshore survey. ROV mounting for the deepwater sections of the survey will result in a relatively short distance between the acoustic source and the seabed allowing for the acquisition of high-resolution seabed data. The bathymetric system onboard the ROV will operate at a frequency of 400 kHz. Alternative systems operate between 400 and 600 kHz.
- The nearshore vessel will use a SSS. The preferred option of the SSS's operating frequency is between 300 kHz and 600 kHz. The alternatives operate between 445 kHz and 900 kHz.
- The offshore vessel will use an obstacle avoidance sonar operating on the ROV, with a frequency of 675 kHz. Alternative systems operate between 300 and 700 kHz.
- The offshore vessel will utilise a doppler velocity log (DVL) for accurate positioning and speed determination. This operates at a high frequency between 1.2 and 2 MHz at a very low level of intensity.
- The offshore vessel will use a bathymetric system with altimeter (Tritech SK704 or equivalent), which operates at 500 kHz.
- The offshore vessel will use a pipe tracker (TSS 440) of negligible magnetic field strength.
- The ROV deployed from the offshore vessel will be integrated with a laser and imaging system with stills and video camera for pipeline integrity and seabed inspection work.
- The Tracerco Discovery tool or ARTIMIS Halfwave tool will be used for checking pipeline wall thickness and integrity deployed using the ROV from the offshore vessel.

A soft-start procedure for acoustic surveys will be implemented as per the NPWS "Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-Made Sound Sources in Irish Waters" (2014) for both the inshore and offshore surveys.

The determination of "offshore" and "inshore" areas for the purpose of this report has assumed a boundary at a water depth of approximately 20 m below Chart Datum, however, the location of this boundary may be refined closer to the time of survey. The offshore vessel would therefore be responsible for the survey of the subsea infrastructure between the Corrib Field to Broadhaven Bay, while the nearshore vessel would limit its survey operations to within the Bay itself in depths of 20 m of less and would cover the section of the routes close to the landfall.

It is anticipated that the overall programme will be approximately 20 days in duration (dependent on weather conditions) with operations taking place for both vessels between March and December 2022. It is likely that the offshore and inshore elements will overlap during this time period. During data acquisition, the vessels will follow a pre-determined survey programme that may be subject to change depending on the prevailing current and wind conditions.

Project Element	**Have these features of the project been identified by the applicant? (If not, please provide details)**
Spatial Extent (size, scale, area etc)	**Yes** – the applicant proposes to conduct a visual and geophysical survey (MBES, sub-bottom profiler, SSS) along the pipeline running from Corrib Field (65 km offshore) to the limit of navigational safety in Broadhaven Bay.

Supporting Infrastructure	**Not applicable** – no supporting infrastructure is directly required for this project. The Corrib infrastructure is already in place.
Transportation Requirements	**Yes** – two survey vessels will be used, an *offshore survey vessel* (supported by a ROV) in water depths >20 m and outside Broadhaven Bay, and a *nearshore survey vessel* in water depths up to 20 m in Broadhaven Bay.
Physical changes that will result from the project (e.g. from excavation, dredging)	**No** – The applicant has concluded that there is limited potential for interaction with the identified receptors, and as the minimum survey depth is 2 m, there will be no physical disturbance to sensitive terrestrial or intertidal habitats. Physical changes in terms of underwater noise emissions have been characterised.
Emissions and Waste	**Yes** – the main output from the surveying equipment and vessels is underwater noise emissions, which have been detailed for the preferred and alternative equipment; no waste is expected to be released into the marine environment and will be appropriately disposed of onshore; leakages / spillages are highly unlikely to occur.
Resource Requirements (e.g. water abstraction)	**Yes** – the resource requirements are standard for survey vessel operations and are considered to be minimal.
Duration of each phase *e.g.* • *Phase 1 Construction* • *Phase 2 Operation* • *Phase 3 Decommissioning*	**Yes** – the works will take place over a 20-day period (dependent on weather conditions) between March and December 2022.

The AA screening must consider the effects of the project 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

Brief Description of identified plans / projects that might act in-combination (Operational, Consented and Proposed projects) with the proposed project:		
The applicant's AA screening report considers the following projects that might act in-combination with the proposed project: • a programme of offshore geophysical and geotechnical surveys by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and SAIPEM S.A. at the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site and along a proposed cable route in Belderra Sound (off the west coast of Co. Mayo) programmed to take place in spring 2022; • the proposed subsea telecoms cable installation by America Europe Connect 2 Ltd from New York to a landfall at Fallduff Strand, Old Head, Louisburg, Co. Mayo, anticipated in 2022; and • geophysical survey works associated with the Kinsale area gas field in the Celtic Sea, likely to continue in 2022.		
Project Element	**Is the predicted magnitude / extent of identified likely in-combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Summary**
Spatial Extent (define boundaries for examination of in-combination effects)	Yes	The applicant has stated 200 km as the distance used for screening of other plans and projects, based on typical foraging and migratory ranges for qualifying features of

		European designated sites. This approach is sufficient to screen in/out in-combination effects for the purposes of the review of the applicant's AA Screening Report.
Impact Identification (e.g. noise, chemical emissions etc.)	Yes	The applicant has identified underwater noise as a potential in-combination effect with identified plans and projects. However, the likelihood of such eventuality occurring is rated as low in terms of potential impact on or affecting the integrity of European sites and their qualifying features.
Pathway Identification (e.g. via water, air etc)	Yes	The pathway is via water, i.e. underwater sound.

3.3 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 outside 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.

Appendix 1 identifies the relevant European Sites and species that might be impacted by the project. The relevant sites in the report have been reviewed and the applicant meets the requirements of:

- Identifying the Natura Site / Annex IV species;
- Listing the qualifying interests / Annex IV species;
- Considering direct impacts to the Natura site / Annex IV species;
- Considering indirect impacts to the Natura site / Annex IV species;
- Considering potential zones of influence on the Natura site / Annex IV; and
- The consideration of in combination effects.

3.4 Screening of Likely Significant Effects on Natura sites and adverse effects on Annex IV species.

Table 3.5 provides a summary of the likely significant effects 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

Summary of LSE
The applicant's AA Screening Report identified the following impact sources for further consideration in the determination of LSE: • Physical presence of survey vessels and equipment; • Underwater noise from the operation of geophysical survey equipment and survey vessels; • Routine emissions and discharge during vessel operations; • Accidental events; and • Cumulative effects. The applicant has used a screening distance of 200 km, as this is expected to encompass foraging distances for resident and semi-resident species, and have also taken habitat connectivity into account. Sites within 25 km have been given particular consideration, and seabird foraging ranges (Woodward *et al.*, 2019) have been used for SPAs >200 km from the project area. **Physical Presence of the Survey Vessels and Equipment** The applicant has identified collision and disturbance as potential effects associated with vessel presence and has determined that these may impact the following receptors: marine mammals, and seabirds. Due to the short duration (20 days), small spatial scale (in comparison to the foraging range of receptors), and limited number of vessels (2) proposed for the project, the spatial scale and magnitude of effect are considered small. Disturbance effects on marine mammals will be limited to behavioural, and the population will recover (i.e., individuals can return to the region) immediately following the cessation of works. The likelihood of collision is also considered extremely low as the vessels will operate in accordance with codes of conduct and at low speed. Interaction (entanglement) is also unlikely to occur. The applicant has identified that seabirds (from both near and far-ranging SPAs) utilise the area and has considered them as a potential receptor for disturbance effects. Similarly, to marine mammals, seabirds have an extensive foraging habitat available, with high connectivity; and the survey will take place over a short duration and spatial extent. The applicant has given greater consideration to the sites / qualifying features closest to the survey works (within 25 km). Further assessment determined that these species may be temporarily disturbed and displaced from local foraging habitat. However, a wide extent of habitat remains available, with high levels of connectivity. The applicant concluded that the physical presence of the vessel and survey equipment will be unlikely to displace seabirds permanently. **Underwater Noise from the Operation of Geophysical Survey Equipment and Survey Vessels** The potential impact mechanism from underwater noise is acoustic disturbance/injury resulting from use of the survey equipment (MBES, positioning equipment, SSS, sub-bottom profiler, USBL, and mini-dredge tool). The relevant receptors to this impact are seabirds, marine mammals, fish, and prey species. The survey area overlaps with one SPA designated for seabirds; however, a wide number of SACs and SPAs are within screening (marine mammal/seabird foraging) distance of the works. The auditory range of the marine mammal and fish species in the region has been compared with the sound emissions of the vessel and equipment. The equipment specifications and outputs have been described to a high level of detail and overlaps with the hearing ranges of sensitive species have been identified. The initial assessment could not conclude no likely significant effect, and therefore the applicant has conducted a **Stage 2 AA.**

Several SACs designated for migratory fish species were within screening distance, and thus have been assessed for likely significant effect. The species are migratory and have large ranges, and the fact that the species groups in question (salmonids and lampreys) are insensitive to sound. The project area, particularly the offshore proportion, has a low density of diving seabirds, and therefore the applicant has determined that the proposed activities are unlikely to result in any significant effect on these species. **Routine Emissions and Discharges during Vessel Operations** Atmospheric emissions (primarily exhaust gases) and routine marine discharges (macerated food, grey water, bilge water, and ballast water) will be released from the vessel. This may result in localised decreases in air and water quality, however, due to the rapid dispersion, the effect will be temporary and very short term. The applicant concluded that these effects will not be significant, and thus have been screened out of further assessment. **Accidental Events** The applicant notes the possibility of a fuel oil spillage, however, explains that in the rare event a spillage occurs, contaminants would rapidly disperse, and preventative measures used on board during surveying reduce the risk of occurrence. The applicant concludes the potential for impact on European sites is considered to be low. **Cumulative Impacts** The applicant has identified that there are three known projects that will occur within a similar timescale to the proposed works and have the potential to act cumulatively with the effects from the project: • a programme of offshore geophysical and geotechnical surveys by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and SAIPEM S.A.; • the proposed subsea telecoms cable installation by America Europe Connect 2 Ltd; and • geophysical survey works associated with the Kinsale area gas field in the Celtic Sea. The applicant has determined that there is potential for these other plans and projects to result in a cumulative effect on European sites. However, the likelihood of such an eventuality occurring, is considered to be very low in terms of the potential for impact on or affecting the integrity of any European sites and their qualifying interests.
Do you agree with the applicant's AA screening assessment? Why?
The applicant's AA screening assessment is overall considered robust, and as per the applicant's conclusion, it is concluded that a Stage 2 AA is required, as it is not possible to exclude on the basis of the initial assessment that the project will have a likely significant effects (LSE) either individually or in combination with other plans or projects on European sites. We agree with the pathways that have been identified and agree with the applicant's conclusion of no LSE except for the pathway of underwater noise, based on the information provided in the screening report.

3.5 Screening Determination

If significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain then the DECC must request the applicant to provide a NIS in order for the DECC 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 and triggered the need for an AA.

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

Table 3.6: Summary of Applicant's Screening Report Review

Is the plan or project 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 - the applicant could not determine No Likely Significant Effect on marine mammals, migratory fish and seabirds from underwater noise sources, therefore an AA is required.
What further information is required to inform AA Screening Opinion (if any)?	None.

Table 3.7: Recommendation of Screening Determination

Outcome of Screening Report Assessment	**Overall Screening Opinion / AA Required?**
~~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.~~	~~**No likely significant effects on European Sites have been identified, having had regard to the potential connectivity with sites, relevant conservation objectives and the potential for in combination effects and will not cause significant disturbance to Annex IV species described. Appropriate Assessment is not required.**~~
Likely or Potential 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.	Appropriate Assessment is required because it cannot be excluded, on the basis of the initial assessment (AA screening) provided by the applicant, that the project will have either individually or in combination with other plans or projects a likely significant effect on European sites.

4. REVIEW OF APPLICANT STAGE 2 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

4.1 Natura Impact Statements

A NIS is a scientifically robust examination of a proposed plan or project, which is used to characterise any possible implications of the project on the conservation objectives of any relevant European site(s).

The primary purpose of the NIS is to provide the competent authority (DECC) with the information required to complete an AA and determine whether the proposed project is likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity[6] of any relevant European sites with regards to their conservation objectives, both individually and in combination with other plans or projects. On completion of the AA, the DECC will produce an AA Conclusion Statement.

As described in Section 3, the applicant's AA Screening and the AA Screening Determination made by the EAU of DECC on the 10 March 2022, concluded that potential LSE on key receptor species (qualifying interests) associated with underwater noise could not be ruled out. The potential for LSE on habitats was screened out.

Accordingly, this section provides a review of the Stage 2 AA contained in the NIS (and supporting documentation) submitted by the applicant to assess compliance with NIS requirements and assist the DECC to make an AA.

Table 4.3 reviews the extent to which the applicant's Stage 2 AA (or supporting documents) complies with NIS information requirements in relation to European site(s) and/or species that may be affected by the proposed project.

Table 4.3: Summary of the Stage 2 AA compliance review in relation to NIS (or supporting documentation) information requirements on European site(s) and/or species

NIS Information Requirements (European site(s) and/or species information)	Does the applicant provide the following information? (Y/N)	Briefly Explain Answer:
The Conservation Status of relevant Habitats and Species listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive;	Yes	For each of the sites, designated under the Habitats Directive, considered as part of the AA screening, the applicant has provided a short description of the site characteristics and the qualifying habitats and species listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive. Baseline conditions, including conservation status for qualifying features considered in the Stage 2 AA, are further described in the Stage 2 AA section of the NIS where available. Reference to IUCN status is also provided for relevant species in the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
The Conservation Status of relevant Species listed under	Yes	For each of the sites, designated under the Birds Directive, considered as part of the AA screening, the applicant has provided a short description of the site characteristics and the qualifying habitats

[6] Ecological integrity has been defined in as 'the coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or populations of species for which it is classified' (Managing Natura 2000 sites, EC, 2000)

NIS Information Requirements (European site(s) and/or species information)	Does the applicant provide the following information? (Y/N)	Briefly Explain Answer:
Annex I of the Birds Directive;		and species listed under Annex I of the Birds Directive. Baseline conditions, including conservation status for species considered in the Stage 2 AA, are further described in the Stage 2 AA section of the NIS where available. Reference to IUCN status is also provided for relevant species in the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
The baseline conditions of any relevant European site(s);	Yes	The applicant has given a brief description of the European sites within screening distance, including baseline condition, such as population estimates. Additional information is provided in the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
The conservation objectives and qualifying features of any relevant European site(s);	Yes	The applicant has noted the relevant conservation objectives for each SAC/SPA considered as part of the AA screening and covered in the Stage 2 AA section of the NIS. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
Any management plans associated with relevant European site(s);	Yes	The applicant has stated that there are no management plans available for any of the European sites screened into the Stage 2 AA. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
Details on each species and habitat type for which relevant European site(s) are designated and spatial mapping of the distribution and temporal mapping, including lifestyle stages;	Yes	Adequate information has been provided by the applicant in this regard.
Information on population profile of the species and their conservation status (e.g. size, population structure etc.);	Yes	Population estimates have been included by the applicant where they are a designated feature of an European site. Reference has also been made to relevant conservation objectives and status of qualifying features. Additional information on baseline conditions is provided in the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
Ecosystem structure and functioning of the site and its	Yes	The applicant has included a description of each European site, conservation status of qualifying features considered in the Stage 2 AA and has

NIS Information Requirements (European site(s) and/or species information)	Does the applicant provide the following information? (Y/N)	Briefly Explain Answer:
overall conservation state;		included the management objectives inferring overall conservation state. Additional information on baseline conditions is provided in the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
The role of the site within the ecosystem region and the Natura 2000 network;	Yes	The applicant has included information on European site connectivity, and use of sites by features of other sites. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.
Any other aspects of the site or its wildlife that is likely to have an influence on its conservation status and objectives (e.g. current management activities, other developments etc.)	Yes	The applicant has noted the conservation objectives for each site. There are no management plans available for any screened in sites. The applicant has included information on site connectivity and the use of the site, and referred to other important, non-qualifying species where applicable. Additional information on baseline conditions is provided in the EIA Screening and Environmental Risk Assessment for Annex IV species report. Information provided is considered sufficient to inform a decision.

Table 4.4 reviews to what extent the information provided in the NIS (or supporting documents) is sufficient in order for the DECC to complete an AA.

Table 4.4: Summary of information to be included in a NIS (or supporting documentation) for consideration in AA

NIS Information Requirements (to inform an AA)	Does the applicant provide sufficient detail to inform an AA? (Y/N)	Briefly Explain Answer:
A description of size, scale and objectives of the proposed plan or project;	Yes	The applicant has provided information on the proposed project activities, survey objectives, equipment, and duration which is considered adequate.
A description of the pressures of the proposed plan or project, its likely impacts on the conservation objectives and local site characteristics;	Yes	The applicant has provided a detailed description of the project and has characterised the likely impacts that have resulted in the need of an AA.
Identification of all European sites located within the zone of influence of	Yes	The Stage 2 AA considers the nearest site for each designated feature species group; it does not specifically detail all sites that may be affected. It is assumed therefore that all sites with designated

NIS Information Requirements (to inform an AA)	Does the applicant provide sufficient detail to inform an AA? (Y/N)	Briefly Explain Answer:
the proposed plan or project, together with qualifying interests and conservation objectives;		features carried forward to the Stage 2 AA have the potential to be affected by the project. The applicant's assessment shows no adverse effect on the integrity of the nearest sites. Ramboll agrees with this conclusion and notes that based on the nature of the likely effects (i.e. effects associated with underwater noise or disturbance) this can be taken as a proxy to support the conclusion that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of all of the sites detailed in Appendix 1 of this report.
Methodologies, analysis and data sources utilised to demonstrate use of best scientific knowledge;	Yes	The applicant has used a variety of reputable and recent studies in order to substantiate the assessments made, such as Southall *et al.* (2019) to inform marine mammal hearing thresholds, and Woodward *et al.* (2019) to inform the bird foraging ranges.
A scientific assessment, analysis and statement of the significant effects including direct, indirect, cumulative and in combination effects of the relevant European site(s) and/or species which are expected to occur as a result of the development;	Yes	The applicant has provided a detailed assessment of the effects associated with the pressures brought forward, and has included a concluding statement on the assessment outome: "the proposed survey operations either individually or when taken in combination with other plans or projects, are not likely to have a significant effect on a European site".
Details of any appropriate mitigation measures undertaken, or proposed to be undertaken by the applicant to mitigate any significant effects on the environment or on the European site(s) and/or species, and the period within which any such measures shall be carried out by the developer;	Yes	The applicant has detailed mitigation measures, both embedded (industry standard, best practice, e.g. soft starts, monitoring by MMO, adherence to Vessel Operators Code-of-Conduct guidance) and additional (project-specific, e.g. use of linear routes to minimise exposure, coordination with operators responsible for any potential overlapping works).
An assessment of the scope and scale of residual effects	Yes	The applicant has included assessment of residual effects after taking mitigation into account (described by the applicant as 'industry standard

NIS Information Requirements (to inform an AA)	Does the applicant provide sufficient detail to inform an AA? (Y/N)	Briefly Explain Answer:
after mitigation (including direct, indirect, cumulative and in combination effects);		best environmental practice protocols'), including direct, indirect, cumulative and in combination effects.
A conclusion in relation to whether or not the project would adversely affect the integrity of any European site (either individually or in cumulation with other existing or consented developments)	Yes	The applicant has included a concluding statement on the assessment outome: "proposed survey operations either individually or when taken in combination with other plans or projects, are not likely to have a significant effect on a European site". The applicant goes on to add that, "if it is decided that it is necessary to carry out an appropriate assessment under Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive, it is the view of the authors of the NIS that based on the scientific evidence presented (...) that the proposed survey operations will not adversely affect the integrity of the European sites in the vicinity and in the wider location or on any other designated site, when taken individually or when taken in combination with the other plans or projects and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in this regard".

4.2 Article 12 Assessment in relation to Annex IV species

The Applicant's NIS makes cross reference to the EIA screening and risk assessment for Annex IV species that accompanies the application, which provides further characterisation of the baseline for Annex IV species of marine mammals and sea turtles in the area. The assessment provided supports the conclusion that the proposed project will not cause any significant disturbance to Annex IV marine mammal species, with other qualifying features screened out, i.e. proposed not to be further considered in the NIS.

4.3 Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment Determination

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 provide a summary of Ramboll's recommendation to enable DECC to undertake an AA to determine whether the integrity of a European site is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed project.

Table 4.5: Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment Determination Checklist

Does the NIS (and supporting documentation) contain adequate information to complete an AA and to prepare an AA Conclusion Statement?	Yes
Does the NIS conclude that the proposed project or plan will have an adverse residual effect on the integrity of any European sites or species?	No –The applicant concludes that following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of the predicted impacts from the proposed works and with the implementation of best environmental practice

	protocols (taken for the purposes of this report to be mitigation), that the project will not adversely affect (either directly or indirectly) the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.
Do you agree with the conclusion(s) of the applicant's NIS? **(Briefly explain answer)**	Yes – the applicant has provided sufficient detail on the project and associated works and has identified all possible receptors within the project area. Potential effects on receptors have been identified and assessed appropriately, both for the project alone and in combination with other plans and projects. The NIS has considered the likely significant effects associated with underwater noise and made reference to other potential impacts associated with routine emissions and discharges during vessel operations and accidental fuel oil spillages. The applicant outlines proposed mitigation measures, and concludes that proposed survey operations when taken either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site as a consequence of underwater noise or disturbance resulting from the works. Ramboll agrees with this conclusion.

Table 4.4: Summary of Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

Outcome of Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment	**Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment Determination**
~~AA determines that the proposed plan or project is likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of an European Site(s) or species~~	~~Refuse planning consent or proceed to Stage 3 Appropriate Assessment: Alternative Solutions~~
~~The applicant's NIS does not contain sufficient information to determine whether the proposed plan or project is likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of an European Site(s) or species~~	~~Request further information from the Applicant~~
AA determines that the proposed plan or project alone or in-combination with any other plan or project will not have an adverse effect on the environment or on the integrity of any European site in view of its conservation objectives and will not cause any significant disturbance to the Annex IV species described	This report determines that the proposed project alone or in combination with any other plan or project will not have an adverse effect on the environment or on the integrity of any European site in view of its conservation objectives and will not cause any significant disturbance to the Annex IV species described, subject to the mitigation described in Section 5 of this report.

5. MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT COMMITMENTS

The applicant's NIS (and supporting documentation) makes reference to following 'industry standard best environmental practice protocols at all times' required by the statutory agencies. The conclusions of this report are made on the basis that the following mitigation and management commitments, including measures required to address the issues raised in observations following the consultation with notified bodies and the general public, are implemented in full. Table 5.1 documents the required mitigation and management measures:

Table 5.1: Mitigation and management measures

Discipline	Commitment proposed
General Mitigation	Use of the lowest equipment output possible in order to obtain the required data quality
	At the start of proposed activities, power will increase slowly from a low intensity (a 'soft start') to encourage avoidance reactions by marine mammals, fish and marine reptiles.
	A qualified and experienced Marine Mammal Observer (MMO) will be present onboard both the nearshore and offshore geophysical survey vessels. • The MMO will have undergone marine mammal observation training (JNCC or equivalent) and have spent a minimum of six weeks of marine mammal survey experience at sea over a three-year period; • The MMO will be responsible for monitoring the appropriate mitigation zone during survey operations; • The MMO must submit a report, as outlined in NPWS code of practice, within 30 days of completion of the proposed activities to the relevant Licensing Authority, and copy the report to the NPWS; • The geophysical vessel operator must provide a report (including a daily log) on the operation of survey equipment that will indicate the soft starts and their duration to the MMO. This information will be made available to NPWS; and • The MMO must use a distance measuring stick, reticle telescope or binoculars to ascertain distances to marine mammals.
	Adherence to the Vessel Code of Conduct for Inspection and Maintenance Surveys (Document No. VIE-HS-PR-0032, 2021).
Cetaceans, seals and other marine megafaunal species	Pre soft start scans (pre-start monitoring) • Sound-producing activities will only commence in daylight hours where effective visual monitoring, as performed and determined by the MMO, has been achieved. Where effective visual monitoring, as determined by the MMO, is not possible the sound-producing activities shall be postponed until effective visual monitoring is possible. Effective visual monitoring determines the presence or absence of megafaunal species before sound-producing activities commence, and should be undertaken in good weather conditions, where the sea state is low and visibility is good (no fog, heavy rain). • MMOs should survey the area for the presence of species 30 minutes before the onset of the soft start.

Discipline	Commitment proposed
	• A minimum distance of 500 m is required between the centre of the sound source and the nearest species before soft start can commence. • If species are seen within 500 m of the centre of the sound source the start of the sound source(s) should be delayed until they have moved away, allowing adequate time after the last sighting for the animals to leave the area (30 minutes). • An agreed and clear on-site communication signal must be used between the MMO and the Works Superintendent as to whether the relevant activity may or may not proceed, or resume following a break (see below). It shall only proceed on positive confirmation with the MMO. • Soft start should commence after a 500 m area around the vessel has been confirmed clear of species for 30 minutes.
	Soft start / ramp up procedure • In commencing an acoustic survey operation using the above equipment, the following soft start (or ramp up) must be used, including during any testing of acoustic sources, where the output peak sound pressure level from any source exceeds 170 dB re: 1μPa @1m: a) Where it is possible according to the operational parameters of the equipment concerned, the device's acoustic energy output shall commence from a lower energy start-up (i.e., a peak sound pressure level not exceeding 170 dB re: 1μPa @1m) and thereafter be allowed to gradually build up to the necessary maximum output over a period of 20 minutes. b) This controlled build-up of acoustic energy output shall occur in consistent stages to provide a steady and gradual increase over the ramp-up period (e.g., output peak sound pressure level of 170 dB->180dB->190 dB->200 dB->200+ dB over 20 minutes). c) Where the acoustic output measures outlined in steps (a) and (b) are not possible according to the operational parameters of any such equipment, the device shall be switched "on" and "off" in a consistent sequential manner over a period of 20 minutes prior to commencement of the full necessary output. • In all cases where a ramp up procedure is employed the delay between the end of ramp-up and the necessary full output should be minimised to prevent unnecessary high-level sound introduction into the environment. • Once the ramp up procedure commences, there is no requirement to halt or discontinue the procedure at night-time, nor if weather or visibility conditions deteriorate nor if species occur within a 500 m radial distance of the sound source, i.e., within the Monitored Zone.
	Break in sound input • If there is a break in sound output for a period greater than 30 minutes (e.g., due to equipment failure, shut-down, survey line or station change) then all pre-start monitoring and a subsequent ramp up procedure (where appropriate following pre-start monitoring) must be undertaken. • For higher output survey operations which have the potential to produce injurious levels of underwater sound there is a regulatory requirement to adopt a shorter 5 - 10 minute break limit, after which period all pre-start monitoring and

Discipline	Commitment proposed
	subsequent ramp up procedure (where appropriate following pre-start monitoring) shall recommence as for start-up.
Emissions	Regular maintenance of all onboard engines to minimise emissions, in line with: • Maritime Registry of Shipping (MRS); • MARPOL 73/78 Annex VI (as appropriate); and • Any other similar requirements.
Discharges Measures are in line with ship-source pollution prevention provisions, as required by the Department of Transport	Management of discharges in accordance with the requirements of MARPOL 73/78 as appropriate, with the biochemical oxygen demand of sewage and galley waste discharges reduced to 50 mg/l and macerated to less than 25 mm, using a treatment process before release
Accidental Events	Refuelling of vessels will not be undertaken at sea, but in port where spills, although unlikely to happen, can be responded to more easily, and will reduce the risk of any exposure to marine life. The fuel to be used by vessels is regular marine grade oil (MGO) and not heavy fuel oil (HFO) that could represent a greater environmental hazard if spilled
	The vessels will operate with strict safety, navigational, operating and communications procedures in place in order to avoid collisions. These will include use of Automatic Identification System (AIS) tracking, adherence to the Collision Regulations, communication with other vessels, and 24 hour look ahead plans
	The offshore survey vessel has a deck drainage containment and separation system in the event of a spill of oil on deck. Hydraulic fluids used by the ROV and ROV handling equipment have been selected partly based on their environmental credentials, being inherently rapidly biodegradable and having passed stringent LC 50 and EC 50 tests to determine their toxicity to aquatic life. • Onboard the vessel, the valves between fuel tanks will be kept closed, thereby minimising potential for complete fuel loss. Refuelling will occur according to a specific procedure; and • Maintenance, audits and inspection plans will be in place to mitigate the potential risk of an oil leak at an early stage.
	Shipboard Oil Pollution Emergency Plans (SOPEP), spill mitigation equipment and other facilities are kept onboard all vessels in order to contain or minimise spills; all the vessel crews have been trained in the use of the plans and equipment.
	The Emergency Response Plan will set out how all spill response resources (personnel, command structure, equipment, etc.) will interface, including co-ordination between other seismic survey operators, if applicable.
Interactions with other users (including fisheries)	Communication between operators will ensure that operations are coordinated to limit noise exposure.
	There will be fisheries liaison procedures in place to mitigate interaction with fisheries or other marine users to communicate the survey schedule and enable activities to be planned accordingly.

APPENDIX 1: IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES/SPECIES AA SCREENING CHECKLIST

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
1. Broadhaven Bay SAC (IE0000472)	0.0 (overlap)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
2. Glenamoy Bog Complex SAC (IE0000500)	0.0 (overlap)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
3. West Connacht Coast SAC (IE0002998)	~1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
4. Erris Head SAC (IE0001501)	2.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
5. Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (IE0000470)/ OSPAR MPA (O-IE-0002972)	10.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
6. Owenduff / Nephin Complex SAC (IE0000534)	16.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
7. Inishkea Islands SAC (IE0000507)	19.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements
8. Duvillaun Islands SAC (IE0000495)	26.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements
9. River Moy SAC (IE0002298)	30.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
10. Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SAC (IE0000458)	39.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
11. Newport River SAC (IE0002144)	40.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
12. Clew Bay Complex SAC (IE0001482)	42.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
13. Mweelrea / Sheefry / Erriff Complex SAC (IE0001932)	61.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
14. Cummeen Strand / Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (IE0000627)/ OSPAR MAP (O-IE-0002973)	73.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
15. Inishbofin and Inishshark SAC (IE0000278)	74.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
16. The Twelve Bens / Garraun Complex SAC (IE0002031)	74.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
17. Ballysadare Bay SAC (IE0000622)	76.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
18. Maumturk Mountains SAC (IE0002008)	76.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
19. Slieve Tooey / Tormore Island / Loughros Beg Bay SAC (IE0000190)	82.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
20. Lough Corrib SAC (IE0000297)	86.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
21. Lough Gill SAC (IE0001976)	87.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
22. Connemara Bog Complex SAC (IE0002034)	89.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
23. Slyne Head Islands SAC (IE0000328)	94.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
24. Kilkieran Bay and Islands SAC (IE0002111) / OSPAR MPA (O-IE-0002979)	100.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
25. Lough Melvin SAC (IE0000428)	99.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
26. West of Ardara / Maas Road SAC (IE0000197)	101.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
27. Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC (IE0000133)	111.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
28. Rutland Island and Sound SAC (IE0002283)	112.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
29. Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC (IE0000163)	118.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
30. Galway Bay Complex SAC (IE0000268) / OSPAR MPA (O-IE-0002969)	130.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
31. Horn Head and Rinclevan SAC (IE0000147)	150.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	Distance from Project Site (km)	Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?	Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?	Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?	Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?	Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?	Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?	Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:
32. Lower River Shannon SAC (IE0002165)	166.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
33. Blacksod Bay / Broadhaven SPA (IE0004037)	0.0 (overlap)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has made no reference to the Blacksod and Broadhaven Bay Ramsar site[7], which overlaps with this SPA. However, no further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
34. Carrowmore Lake SPA (IE0004052)	7.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
35. Termoncarragh Lough and Annagh Machair SPA (IE0004093)	9.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

[7] See: https://rsis.ramsar.org

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
36. Mullet Peninsula SPA (IE0004227)	9.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
37. Stags of Broadhaven SPA (IE0004072)	9.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
38. Illanmaster SPA (IE0004074)	11.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
39. Inishglora and Inishkeeragh SPA (IE0004084)	13.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
40. Inishkea Islands SPA (IE0004004)	19.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
41. Duvillaun Islands SPA (IE0004111)	22.0+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
42. Clare Island SPA (IE0004136)	50.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

Natura site/ Annex IV species identified by assessor	**Distance from Project Site (km)**	**Are the Natura site / Annex IV species identified by the applicant?**	**Are all the qualifying interests / Annex IV species listed by the applicant?**	**Are direct impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are indirect impacts to the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are Potential Zones of Influence on the Natura Site / Annex IV species considered by the applicant?**	**Are in combination effects considered by the applicant?**	**Briefly summarise whether the applicant's consideration of relevant Natura sites / Annex IV species which may be affected by the proposed project, meets the requirements for a screening opinion:**
43. Bills Rocks SPA (IE0004177)	50.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
44. Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA (IE0004135)	73.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
45. Inishmurray SPA (IE0004068)	76.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
46. West Donegal Coast SPA (IE0004150)	78.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
47. Cruagh Island SPA (IE0004170)	86.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
48. Inishduff SPA (IE0004115)	89.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
49. Connemara Bog Complex SPA (IE0004181)	89.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

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50. High Island, Inishshark and Davillaun SPA (IE0004144)	94.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
51. Donegal Bay SPA (IE0004151)	98.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
52. Inner Galway Bay SPA (IE0004031)	123.0	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
53. Inishmore SPA (IE0004152)	125.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
54. Cliffs of Moher SPA (IE0004005)	145.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
55. Aughris Head SPA (IE0004133)	147.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
56. Tory Island SPA (IE0004073)	148.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

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57. Horn Head to Fanad Head (IE0004194)	150.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
58. Mid-Clare Coast SPA (IE0004182)	160.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
59. River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (IE0004077)	188.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
60. Loop Head SPA (IE0004119)	189.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
61. Kerry Head SPA (IE0004189)	201.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
62. Inishtrahull SPA (IE0004100)	208.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
63. Dingle Peninsula SPA (IE0004153)	220.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

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64. Blasket Islands SPA (IE0004008)	243.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
65. Iveragh Peninsula SPA (IE0004154)	248.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
66. Puffin Island SPA (IE0004003)	273.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
67. Skelligs SPA (IE0004007)	281.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
68. Deenish Island and Scariff Island SPA (IE0004175)	283.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
69. Beara Peninsula SPA (IE0004155)	289.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
70. The Bull and the Cow Rocks SPA (IE0004066)	300.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

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71. Irish Sea Front SPA (UK9020328)	308.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
72. Treshnish Isles SPA (UK9003041)	321.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
73. Rum SPA (UK9001341)	358.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
74. Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli / Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA (UK9013121)	364.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
75. Skomer, Skokholm and the Seas off Pembrokeshire / Sgomer, Sgogwm a Moroedd Penfro SPA (UK9014051)	397.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

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76. Mingulay and Berneray SPA (UK9001121)	412.0	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed razorbill *Alca torda*[8], as a qualifying feature, and *Fulmarus glacialis* has been misspelled. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
77. Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA (IE0004156)	413	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
78. Copeland Islands (UK9020291)	418	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
79. Galley Head to Duneen Point (IE0004190)	454	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

[8] See https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu / https://apps.snh.gov.uk

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80. Old Head of Kinsale (IE0004021)	483	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
81. Lambay Island (IE0004069)	509	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
82. Magharee Islands SPA (IE0004125)	512	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
83. St Kilda (UK9001031)	531	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
84. Shiant Isles (UK9001041)	541	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
85. Saltee Islands (IE0004002)	626	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
86. Mers Celtiques - Talus du golfe de Gascogne (FR5212016)	719	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

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87. Nord Bretagne DO (FR2512005)	824	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
88. Ouessant-Molène (FR5310072)	841	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
89. Côte de Granit Rose-Sept Iles (FR5310011)	887	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Arenaria interpres, Calidris alba or Calidris alpina*[9], as a qualifying feature. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
90. Roches de Penmarc'h (FR5312009)	930	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Alca torda, Calonectris Diomedea, Fulmarus glacialis, Gavia*

[9] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu / https://inpn.mnhn.fr

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								stellata, Larus fuscus, Melanitta nigra, Mergus serrator, Oceanodroma leucorhoa, Pernis apivorus, Phalacrocorax aristotelis, Podiceps spp., Puffinus gravis, P. griseus, Rissa tridactyla, Stercorarius parasiticus, S. pomarinus, Sterna hirundo, Sylvia undata, Tachybaptus ruficollis or Uria aalge [10]. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
91. Archipel de Glénan (FR5310057)	951	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Alca torda, Asio flammeus, Calidris spp.,*

[10] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu / https://inpn.mnhn.fr

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								Catharacta skua, Fulica atra, Limosa lapponica, Melanitta nigra, Numenius arquata, Podiceps spp., Somateria mollissima, Stercorarius parasiticus, Sterna albifrons, Tringa tetanus or Uria aale[11]. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
92. Chausey (FR2510037)	1004	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
93. Iles Houat-Hoëdic (FR5312011)	1039	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

[11] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu / https://inpn.mnhn.fr

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94. Cap Gris-Nez (FR3110085)	1041	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Accipiter gentilis*[12], as an important species for the site. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
95. Mor Braz (FR5212013)	1054	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
96. Baie de Vilaine (FR5310074)	1059	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Acrocephalus paludicola, Circus cyaneus, Gavia arctica, Melanitta fusca, Tachybaptus ruficollis or Uria aalge*[13]. Due to the distance from

[12] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu / https://inpn.mnhn.fr

[13] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu

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								the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
97. Littoral seino-marin (FR2310045)	1071	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Gavia immer*[14]. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
98. Estuaire de la Loire - Baie de Bourgneuf (FR5212014)	1086	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.

[14] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu

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99. Estuaire de la Loire (FR5210103)	1098	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
100. Littoral augeron (FR2512001)	1100	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
101. Secteur marin de l'île d'Yeu jusqu'au continent (FR5212015)	1106	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
102. Pertuis charentais – Rochebonne (FR5412026)	1142	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
103. Espacio marino de Punta de Candelaria-Ría de Ortigueira-Estaca de Bares (ES0000495)	1226	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Phalacrocorax aristotelis aristotelis*[15] as a qualifying feature. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required

[15] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu

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								from the applicant to support a screening determination.
104. Espacio marino de la Costa da Morte (ES0000497)	1245	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
105. El Cachucho (ES90ATL01)	1251	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.
106. Espacio marino de la Costa de Ferrolterra-Valdoviño (ES0000496)	1253	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Phalacrocorax aristotelis aristotelis*[16] as a qualifying feature. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.

[16] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu

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107. Espacio marino de Cabo Peñas (ES0000494)	1277	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Phalacrocorax aristotelis aristotelis*[17] as a qualifying feature. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the applicant to support a screening determination.
108. Cabo Busto-Luanco (ES0000318)	1287	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The applicant has not listed *Streptopelia turtur, Uria aalge or Vanellus vanellus*[18] as a qualifying feature. Due to the distance from the project area it is unlikely these species would be affected. No further information is required from the

[17] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu
[18] See: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu

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								applicant to support a screening determination.
109. ZEPA Banco de Galicia (ES0000498)	1294	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Applicant meets requirements.