



Powering Up Offshore - South Coast

Step 3 Consultation FAQs

This document aims to respond to the questions and comments raised over the course of the Powering Up Offshore - South Coast Project Step 3 Consultation, which ran from 12th November 2024 to Friday 24th January 2025. The questions below have been collated and grouped from in person information events, fisheries briefings, webinars, email and online submissions, with responses provided by EirGrid.

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1. Who are EirGrid and what do we do?

EirGrid is a state-owned company that develops, manages, and operates Ireland’s electricity grid. They are responsible for the safe, secure, and reliable supply of Ireland’s electricity, bringing power from where it is generated to the distribution network that supplies the electricity we use every day in homes, businesses, schools, and hospitals. EirGrid is responsible for leading the secure transition of the electricity grid to a sustainable, low-carbon future.

2. What is Powering Up Offshore - South Coast?

The aim of the Powering Up Offshore - South Coast project is to build the new transmission grid infrastructure needed to bring power generated by offshore windfarms into our national grid.

The project is currently in Step 3 - “What is the best option and what area might be affected?”. During Step 3, EirGrid is evaluating options for Landfall Zones and Grid Connection Zones with the aim of identifying a short-list of options to bring forward to Step 4.



3. Consultation Outcome

The aim of this public consultation was to provide opportunities for the public, community groups, businesses, fishers, and other bodies to engage with the EirGrid project team and provide insight and feedback regarding the Powering Up Offshore - South Coast project.

All submissions received were examined by the project team and a detailed report on the consultation process was prepared by an independent body.

A broad variety of feedback was received in the consultation submissions and at engagement events. The consultation provided a lot of useful information about the landfall zones and grid connection zones under consideration. The feedback received

through the submissions ranged significantly from general commentary on the project to a more detailed, localised level of analysis.

We would like to thank all of the communities, organisations, groups and individuals who have taken the time to engage with us to date. The volume and detail of feedback has meant it has taken time to process the content of submissions. We thank you for your patience. While we have now completed our consultation for Step 3, we strongly encourage anyone with comments or concerns to continue to engage with us as the project progresses.

The information gathered will assist us in the ongoing process of project development as we commence Step 4, asking 'Where exactly should we build?'. In this step, we will build on the work carried out to date in order to identify an emerging best performing option.

4. Project Benefits

This project is a critical development on the journey to a renewable energy future in Ireland. The benefits include:

- **Sustainability:** This project will enable homes across Ireland to use electricity generated from offshore renewable energy.
- **Security and reliability of supply:** Building a more independent, resilient, and reliable electricity grid helps ensure that everyone has power when and where they need it.
- **Social and community:** EirGrid's community benefit policy will directly support local communities in the areas that host the programme infrastructure.
- **Meet future needs:** As our society and economy develops, the programme will help EirGrid to meet the growing demand for electricity, without increasing our carbon footprint.
- **Economic:** This critical programme will help strengthen the economy across coastal regions, encouraging and supporting industry investment with accessibility to a strong electricity grid.

5. Your questions answered

5.1 Environmental Impact

5.1.1 What is the current status of environmental data collection for the proposed landfall sites, and when are surveys expected to commence for all locations?

Response: Data collection (primarily desktop, informed by targeted walkover surveys) commenced in 2024. Comprehensive environmental surveys are anticipated to start in summer 2025, subject to Maritime Usage Licence consent.

5.1.2 How will the project mitigate the risk of potential negative impact from development in critical conservation areas?

Response: EirGrid follows a six-step approach to project development, which includes a multi criteria analysis based on five criteria: Economic, Technical, Deliverability, Environmental, and Socio-economic. This process is used to determine all key project decisions, such as landfall location, cable routing and construction methodology. This approach serves to mitigate the risk of potential negative effects or impacts to the sensitive cultural and natural heritage of the south coast.

At this early stage of the project, only the Site Investigation campaign itself has been subject to detailed assessment as this was required as part of the Maritime Usage Licence application to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA). Resulting from this, EirGrid has committed to detailed mitigations during the site investigation campaign to protect habitats of the Hook Head SAC (e.g. including use of drop down video inspections to validate reef distribution and avoid intrusive works in reef habitats), measures to prevent disturbance of sensitive breeding birds onshore (using seasonal setback distances for works from potential SCI nest sites), and measures to mitigate pollution effects to seabirds offshore.

5.1.3 Where is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report required by European directives?

Response: An EIA is not required at this step of the project. The project will be developed in strict accordance with all EU directives regarding the environment.

Environmental assessments were submitted in late 2024 as part of the Maritime Usage Licence application to carry out survey works. These will be available online from the MARA in due course and comprise a Natura Impact Statement, and an 'Assessment of Impacts on Maritime Usage (AIMU)' report.

Following the outcome of further surveys, assessments and consultation in line with EirGrid's six step project development framework, the planning application for EirGrid's best performing option will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála. This will include a further, detailed Natura Impact Statement, and a suite of environmental documents including an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) (or report such as a Planning and Environmental Considerations Report if EIA Screening concludes an EIAR is not required).

5.1.4 Does the documentation for Step 3 address impacts beyond land use, and what potential Maritime Survey impacts could halt the development?

Response: Yes, the documentation for Step 3 addresses impacts beyond land use. As part of EirGrid's approach, a comprehensive multicriteria analysis is applied to decision making during the project development. The multi criteria analysis facilitates a balanced consideration of the following criteria: Economic; Technical; Deliverability; Environmental; and Socio-economic. These same criteria are applied on land and at sea.

All environmental topics considered within the multicriteria assessment include but are not limited to population and human beings, biodiversity, cultural heritage, landscape, climate change, geology, and soils etc. EirGrid will incorporate the results from the maritime survey into the overall route design.

5.1.5 Has assessment been conducted regarding the potential impact of Landfall Zones on the unique Copper Coast landscape?

Response: Consideration of impacts has been undertaken as part of the studies undertaken to date. These are captured in Section 2.2.3 of the Step 3 Report where consideration of temporary structures associated with the construction stage of the project at landfall locations is addressed. There is not anticipated to be any requirement for permanent above ground structures at the landfall locations.

Appendix B.3.3 and Appendix B.3.4 of the Step 3 Report includes assessments of potential seascape, landscape and visual effects at Landfall Zones under both environmental and social criteria. More detailed assessments will be undertaken in Step 4 and in Step 5, including assessments on landscape.

5.1.6 Can access be provided to all marine and environmental studies prior to the commencement of construction or surveys?

Response: Yes, EirGrid is committed to open data sharing of environmental datasets. All finalised environmental reports will also be available on the EirGrid project website.

5.1.7 Should the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be considered in conjunction with the wind farm planning application, even if submitted separately, and has the impact on Special Areas of Conservation for landfall sites been evaluated?

Response: Yes, EirGrid will assess this project in combination with existing activities, the windfarm planning application, all other relevant plans and projects.

5.1.8 What environmental assessments will inform a) the marine licence for the site investigation works, and b) the planning application for the main project?

Response: The environmental assessments to inform the marine licence for the site investigation works and inform the project planning are specified in the AIMU and NIS submitted with the MUL to MARA, available here:

<https://www.maritimeregulator.ie/applications/licence-application-mul240010/>.

For the main project planning application to An Bord Pleanála, this will include a detailed Natura Impact Statement, and a suite of environmental documents including an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) (or report such as a Planning and Environmental Considerations Report if EIA Screening concludes an EIAR is not required).

5.1.9 What measures will EirGrid take to protect seabirds, migratory birds and wildlife?

Response: EirGrid does not develop any windfarm infrastructure, and within the maritime environment, we will be responsible for the development of the offshore transmission cables and the offshore substation platforms. EirGrid will assess and mitigate any impacts to wildlife onshore and offshore, as well as pursuing evidence-based nature restoration activities at the onshore Converter Station site. This will be detailed as part of the project development documentation.

5.1.10 What actions is EirGrid taking to mitigate the environmental impacts of geophysical surveys, particularly concerning the effects of acoustic equipment on marine mammals and herring spawning areas?

Response: EirGrid works to the current industry standard practice on mitigation of underwater noise including employing suitably qualified Marine Mammal Observers to implement the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht underwater guidance for marine mammals.

5.1.11 Where can the public access the data from the marine surveys mentioned in the November 2024 statement?

Response: To access this data the release form and data licence agreement needs to be completed and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d1d44-geophysical-data-for-tonn-nua-offshore-wind-auction/#to-access-data>

5.1.12 Following the Tom Crean vessel's 2024 survey of the DMAP area, what justifies the necessity for additional surveys, particularly considering potential harm to the marine ecosystem?

Response: The 2024 survey by the Marine Institute was a geophysical marine survey (non-intrusive) and within the Tonn Nua area only. A geophysical survey for the offshore transmission cable routes and specific offshore substation (OSS) locations within the Tonn Nua area is still required. The data collected from the geophysical surveys will inform the project of the emerging best performing cable routes and OSS locations. The geotechnical survey will then be performed to understand the sites subsurface soil conditions and is crucial for the design, installation and operation of the project.

5.2 Impact on Fisheries

5.2.1 What measures are being taken to mitigate impact on fish migration, and cod and herring spawning grounds, and Salmon migration?

Response: EirGrid will seek whenever possible to avoid the peak cod and herring spawning seasons and salmon migration when scheduling works in the maritime environment. The EirGrid fisheries Liaison Office (FLO) has developed relationships with local fishers and the FLO engages with the fishing community ahead of any planned works. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) will be used to develop specific mitigation strategies.

5.2.2 What socio-economic impact does the project have on marine users in the designated DMAP areas?

Response: For specific queries in relation to the South Coast DMAP, reference to be made to the department of Environment, DECCs consultation response document which is available at the following link: [Department Report on Public Consultation on the Draft SC-DMAP](#)

As part of EirGrid's approach, a comprehensive and consistent multi criteria analysis is applied to decision making throughout project development. The multi criteria analysis facilitates a balanced consideration of the following constraints relating to project development: 1) Economic; 2) Technical; 3) Deliverability; 4) Environmental; and 5) Socio-economic. These criteria are applied to all stakeholders, including local communities, fisheries and marine users.

5.3 Location

5.3.1 What were the criteria for selecting landfall options?

Response: Comparative assessment criteria for the selection of landfall options considered Technical, Economic, Environmental, Socio-economic and Deliverability factors.

The following reports which are available on the project website detail the multi criteria evaluation approach:

- <https://cms.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Powering-Up-Offshore-South-Coast-Update-Report-November-2024.pdf>
- <https://cms.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Powering-Up-Offshore-South-Coast-Step-3-Emerging-Best-Performing-Options-Report.pdf>

5.3.2 Why has Waterford Harbour not been given more consideration?

Response: Waterford harbour was considered in the overall evaluation. This was not brought forward for further consideration however on cable integrity grounds. Following Engagement with Port of Waterford, we were advised that there are no restrictions on anchoring of vessels within the harbour. Whilst the offshore transmission cable will be buried or protected with rock armour, in line with international best practice, we place a restriction on anchoring of vessels within close vicinity of the cable.

5.3.3 Why has Area A Tonn Nua been prioritized for initial development over Areas B, C, and D without clear justification? What criteria were used to prioritize Area A for development despite its sensitive designation?

Response: The South Coast Designated Maritime Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy (SC-DMAP) was established according to provisions in the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021, as amended, and made by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications in October 2024. The SC-DMAP and the environmental assessments carried out on the Plan can be accessed on the [DECC website](#). It is important to note that the establishment of the SC-DMAP, including the identification of the four Maritime Areas included in the Plan, are beyond the scope of this public consultation by EirGrid. However, consideration of the issues arising

during public consultation on the draft SC-DMAP, including with regard to the identification of the four Maritime Areas such as Tonn Nua, are contained in the [Department Report on Public Consultation on the Draft SC-DMAP](#), which was published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in October 2024.

5.4 Proximity/Visual impact

5.4.1 How far will the Offshore Substation and windfarm developments be from land? What measures will mitigate the visibility of turbines and substations from coastal areas like Tramore and the Geopark?

Response: We are still at the early stages of development and, at this stage, are unable to confirm where within Tonn Nua that the Offshore Substations will be located. We will have further clarity once we have completed our Marine Survey works. With regards to the proposed windfarm development, this is not being developed by EirGrid. It will be progressed by the successful Tonn Nua Auction winner.

5.5 Local Disruption

5.5.1 How will you mitigate impact on local communities during construction, especially road closures?

Response: Onshore cable routing will be designed to minimize where practicable disruption to the local communities during construction. We will have extensive consultation on cable options, and community input will be taken into consideration along with inputs from all stakeholders. EirGrid will work closely with the respective County Councils in relation to the development of this project and will continue to do so throughout the construction phase, including efforts to minimise local disruption and road reinstatement works.

5.6 Engagement and Communications Process

5.6.1 How will community feedback be weighted against technical and economic factors in the consultation process?

Response: All feedback received from this consultation will be assessed in our multi criteria analysis (MCA) and taken into Step 4 of our development framework. The evaluation process does not assign weighting to the criteria but is based on subject matter experts' knowledge and judgement in each of the criteria. Community feedback forms part of the socio-economic feedback and so is incorporated into the overall assessment.

During Step 4, EirGrid will refine locations for the landfall zone and the substation zones. Further stakeholder and public engagement will take place so that all feedback on specific locations can be taken into consideration in our decision making process.

5.6.2 What guarantees exist that this consultation isn't merely a token effort? Can you share examples of project changes made due to public input?

Response: EirGrid's approach to engagement ensures that stakeholder perspectives are taken into consideration in decision-making; engagement is conducted in a consistent, transparent, and accessible way; with many different channels available for stakeholders to provide feedback. The Step 3 Consultation for Powering Up Offshore - South Coast is crucial for informing and capturing feedback and knowledge that will influence the design and decision-making processes of projects. As above, feedback and submissions received in this consultation will be assessed as part of the multi-criteria assessment in Step 4. The multi criteria assessment process is described in the response to the preceding question.

5.6.3 A Publicly elected local representative needs to sit on the proposed community forum - a person who can give the community a voice.

Response: Local representatives will be invited via expressions of interest, as is the case with all Community Forums on EirGrid projects.

5.6.4 What can you say at this stage on Community Benefit Funds for the project?

Response: A dedicated fund will be made available which will commence disbursement when construction starts during Step 6, in line with EirGrid's Community Benefit Policy. These funds will provide support to local community groups, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises that operate in or service communities in the Powering Up Offshore - South Coast project area to ensure the communities adjacent to the development receive real and tangible benefits from its delivery.

An independent fund administrator will be appointed and will work with Community Forum to develop the Community Benefit Fund strategy to ensure that local priorities are central to the fund's design and delivery.

5.7 Project Delivery

5.7.1 Who is the private developer for the project?

Response: The Developer will be confirmed following the completion of the Tonn Nua Auction (currently expected for the successful bidder to be confirmed Q3 2025).

5.7.2 What is the anticipated timeline for submitting the development application for offshore substations?

Response: At this current juncture, our plan is to submit our Planning Application in 2028.

5.7.3 Who is responsible for constructing the offshore transmission infrastructure?

Response: As Offshore Transmission System Operator, EirGrid will develop and construct the offshore transmission infrastructure.

5.7.4 Will the developer face restrictions on turbine selection, noise levels, and air traffic?

Response: This will be an issue for the successful Developer to consider.

5.7.5 How will the offshore cable be deployed on the seabed, and how will the risk of disturbance or damage by other users of the area be mitigated (e.g. fishing nets and pots)?

Response: A cable burial risk assessment (CBRA) will be undertaken to ensure appropriate protection is provided to the submarine cable taking account of all other seabed and maritime users.

The method of cable installation is to be confirmed however at present the approach is assumed to be a simultaneous lay and bury operation, meaning the cable will be buried in the seabed as it is laid. This is subject to ground conditions which will be available after survey campaigns have been performed and studies carried out the optimum methodology to bury and protect the cable.

If there are areas where the cable cannot be simultaneous laid and buried, the cable will be laid on the surface and buried / protected later. This may be via rock armour being placed over the cable.

Fishing activities can continue as normal following cable installation, however there anchoring of vessels will be prohibited within the vicinity of the cable alignment.

5.7.6 Is this infrastructure being future proofed to accommodate future grid development?

EirGrid is working closely with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and other stakeholders on the longer-term plans for development off the South Coast recognising future works as part of the South Coast - Designated Maritime Area Plan (SC-DMAP).

5.7.7 Will auction contracts include a clause guaranteeing refunds to developers if planning permission is denied?

Response: A strong policy framework has been put in place to support Offshore Renewable Energy, including National Marine Planning Framework and Designated Maritime Area Plan. It is within this context that any planning applications will be considered. It is incumbent on any prospective applicant to prepare a complete planning application in order to secure planning consent. Specific queries regarding the auction should be directed to Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU).

5.8 Technology and Energy Infrastructure

5.8.1 Is a 220kV line sufficient for 450MW? Will Tonn Nua alone provide 900MW? What is the offshore generating capacity from all DMAP areas?

Response: Electrical concept design is presently being addressed which includes voltage rating of the cable. This project is to connect 900MW from a wind farm located within Tonn Nua.

Generation from the other areas with the SC-DMAP is outside the scope of this project.

5.8.2 What is the size of developments at Landfall? What is your response to concerns regarding significant development size at Landfall Zone D and its compliance with UNESCO site standards?

Response: There are no plans for any permanent above ground facility at any landfall. Temporary works will be required to bring the offshore cable ashore and connect to the onshore cable. The sites will be fully reinstated after installation has been completed.

5.8.3 Will Offshore Substation Platforms be built to accept 132kV cables? Will one be sufficient, or will more be needed?

Response: Present assumption is that the offshore substations will be built to accept 66kV array cables.

5.8.4 What is the proposed burial depth for the cables, and is it adequate to reduce electromagnetic fields (EMF)?

Response: An assessment of the cable burial along the export routes will be performed, which will determine the targeted burial depths and cable protection required to minimise risk to the cables while considering the potential impact on fishing, dredging, anchors, and other marine activities.

5.8.5 How many turbines are needed to generate 900 MW in Zone A?

Response: This is dependent upon the offshore wind farm developer's design. EirGrid are not developing the offshore wind farm.

5.8.6 Do you have potential location of the Offshore Substation (OSS) already?

Response: The location of the OSSs are presently being evaluated based on the Marine Institute geophysical survey data but will not be confirmed until geotechnical marine surveys have been performed, the results interpreted, and the design engineering has been completed.

5.8.7 There were recommendations for a single landfall and grid connection zone - why is this not feasible?

Response: Present grid availability to connect new power is limited to 450MW in the Waterford/Wexford area and 450MW in the Cork area.