

# **Seafood / ORE Engagement in Ireland**

## **A Summary Guide**

# 1 Introduction

This **Summary Guide on Seafood / ORE Engagement in Ireland** is intended to provide Offshore Renewable Energy projects and seafood stakeholders with guidance on how to engage and co-exist in a meaningful and constructive manner throughout the lifecycle of an ORE Project.

The content of this Guide is consistent with more detailed information contained in its parent document, *Seafood / ORE Engagement in Ireland - A Guide for Good Practice*, which is still in development. This Guide and its parent document are presented having regard to the National Marine Planning Framework.

The development of an ORE project is a complex process. Projects can be considered to have 5 stages:

- Stage 1 – Inception to Maritime Area Consent (MAC)
- Stage 2 – Maritime Area Consent to Final Consent Decision
- Stage 3 – Construction
- Stage 4 – Operation
- Stage 5 – Decommissioning

For individual projects there may be times when these stages overlap or take place in parallel.

## 2 Principles for Engagement Good Practice

It is important for both the Seafood and ORE sectors to find the right balance between protecting seafood interests, the need to respond to the global climate emergency and the requirement to deliver the State's legal obligations for reductions in carbon emissions as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2023. This balance can only be achieved through meaningful engagement between the sectors on the basis that both the Seafood and ORE industries can co-exist in the long term.

Mutual respect, best endeavours to reach agreement, and recognition of the importance of both sectors, is critical to effective engagement. The seafood industry is a vital part of our economy and an established part of the existing culture of Ireland's coastal communities. The ORE industry will play a vital role in Ireland's actions to address the climate emergency and to achieve energy security and independence.

The development of ORE is subject to multiple statutory consent processes. There will also be significant engagement between potential ORE projects and the seafood representative organisations which will require all of those involved to proactively work together on the basis of the principles below.

### Principles

- Early and ongoing engagement – See Section 3 below.
- Communication: Commit to open sharing of information by both ORE and seafood industries, that is relevant to the intended recipient and, subject to commercial / GDPR or other restrictions, communicate with each other honestly, openly and transparently. All data / information will be evidence-based and provided in a way that is easily understood and accessible.

- Cooperation: Work together, recognising each other's expertise and the importance of each other's industry to Ireland, to our economy, our society, and our coastal communities, to achieve sustainable outcomes that benefit us all.
- Co-existence: Encourage the principle that the seafood and offshore renewable energy industries can work side-by-side and co-exist in a manner that respectfully shares the marine space.
- Cooperate to determine the impact, effect and opportunities that ORE proposals may have on seafood activity and work together to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts.

### 3 Timing and Content of Engagement

Early and ongoing engagement between the sectors is one of the principles set out in Section 2 above. This engagement should include the topic of survey work that could impact on seafood activity. This section considers how this can be achieved in practice.

#### Phase 1

Phase 1 projects were granted Maritime Area Consents (MACs) in December 2022. MACs also include consents for subsidiary areas associated with export cable connections. These MAC areas are already determined but the location of the project within the MAC area will be confirmed through the planning approval process with An Bord Pleanála.

In advance of an application being made to ABP, Phase 1 ORE projects should arrange physical meetings with National and Regional seafood representative organisations as set out in Annex 1 relevant to their - project area to engage on issues related to the project. ORE projects proposers will be only required to hold physical meetings with those seafood representative organisations identified in Annex 1. Seafood organisations should cooperate in the arrangement of these meetings to avoid any delay in the process.

Where the ORE project proposer has formally written twice to a seafood representative organisation (over a period of 4 to 6 weeks) offering multiple dates for a physical meeting with follow up calls without a response or rejecting the multiple dates, from the seafood representative organisation then these formal attempts by the ORE Project developer will be accepted as meeting the requirement for holding a physical meeting and cannot be argued afterwards that no physical meeting has taken place.

Examples of issues that may be discussed include, but are not limited to, project location within the MAC boundary, survey activity, and how to avoid, minimise, and mitigate impacts on seafood activity.

These meetings should be arranged as soon as is reasonably practicable in advance of the submission of a planning application to An Bord Pleanála.

A reasonable effort should be made by the project to contact individuals and other stakeholder representatives who are not represented by the seafood representative organisations listed in Annex 1.

### **Phase 2 and Phase 3**

Unlike Phase 1, prospective Phase 2 and 3 project proposers have not submitted MAC applications as the process has not yet opened. Phase 2 and 3 projects will be required to apply to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for Maritime Area Consents (MAC) under the new consent regime provided for by the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. This new consent regime will commence as soon as MARA is operational. Not all proposed Phase 2 and 3 projects will necessarily be successful in their application for a MAC and this makes ongoing engagement all the more important.

Following publication of the Phase Two Policy Statement it is our understanding that all ORE projects will be developed within individual Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Designated Areas, which will be designated according to legislative provisions for Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) in the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act.

For Phase 2 and Phase 3, ORE project proposers, at the earliest practical moment, should arrange physical meetings with National and Regional seafood representative organisations as set out in Annex 1 relevant to their project area to discuss relevant issues in advance of a MAC application. ORE Project proposers will be only required to hold physical meetings with those seafood representative organisations identified in Annex 1. Seafood organisations should cooperate in the arrangement of these meetings to avoid any delay in the process.

Where the ORE project proposer has formally written twice to a seafood representative organisation (over a period of 4 to 6 weeks) offering multiple dates for a physical meeting with follow up calls without a response or rejecting the multiple dates, from the seafood representative organisation then these formal attempts by the ORE Project proposer will be accepted as meeting the requirement for holding a physical meeting and cannot be argued afterwards that no physical meeting has taken place. Examples of issues that may be discussed include, but are not limited to, the proposed MAC area, location of project, how to avoid, minimise, and mitigate impacts on seafood activity and survey activity.

Discussions that have taken place with seafood representative organisations as set out in Annex 1 or affected individuals before the publication of this document should be taken into account.

A reasonable effort should be made by the project to contact individuals and other stakeholder representatives who are not represented by the seafood representative organisations listed in Annex 1.

### **Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAP)**

The Maritime Area Planning Act (MAP Act) provides for a process where marine areas can be identified for specific uses. These are called Designated Maritime Area Plans, or DMAPs. DMAPs for ORE projects will be prepared by a designated competent authority and will specify clear objectives in relation to the proposed maritime usage; the relevant geographical area; information on the evidence base; and the timeframe envisaged, among other things. Section 23 of the Act provides for a comprehensive and transparent public participation process to underpin the DMAP.

The consultation on DMAPs, by the designated competent authority, should actively and effectively seek the views of seafood and ORE stakeholders and take these into account prior to DMAP finalisation.

Following publication of the Phase Two Policy Statement it is our understanding that all ORE projects will be developed within individual Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Designated Areas, which will be designated according to legislative provisions for Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) in the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act.

### **Enduring Regime**

For Enduring Regime projects, it is anticipated that the State will have indicated in advance areas that can be considered for ORE developments and the planned capacity from each area.

Enduring Regime project proposers, at the earliest practical moment, should arrange a physical meeting with National and Regional seafood representative organisations as set out in Annex 1 relevant to their project area to discuss relevant issues in advance of a MAC application. Project proposers will be only required to hold physical meetings with those seafood representative organisations identified in Annex 1. Seafood organisations should cooperate in the arrangement of these meetings to avoid any delay in the process.

Where the Project proposer has formally written twice to a seafood representative organisation offering (over a period of 4 to 6 weeks) multiple dates for a physical meeting with follow up calls without a response or rejecting the multiple dates, from the seafood representative organisation then these formal attempts by the ORE Project proposer will be classified as meeting the requirement for holding a physical meeting and cannot be argued afterwards that no physical meeting has taken place.

Examples of issues that may be discussed include, but are not limited to, the proposed MAC area, location of project, how to avoid, minimise, and mitigate impacts on seafood activity and survey activity.

At this point in time the process for enduring regime project applications has not been finalised.

Discussions that have taken place with seafood representative organisations as set out in Annex 1 before the publication of this document should be taken into account.

A reasonable effort should be made by the project to contact individuals and other stakeholder representatives who are not represented by seafood the representative organisations listed in Annex 1.

## **4 Identifying Appropriate Contacts**

A comprehensive and up to date list of stakeholders is fundamental to effective engagement and information exchange.

The responsibility for stakeholder identification rests with the ORE project on a best efforts basis. Other relevant stakeholder organisations and State agencies should assist with this process (adhering to and regulated by prevailing data legislation / GDPR).

Sources that an ORE project could use in compiling a stakeholder list include but are not limited to:

- The Irish Fleet Register maintained by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM);
- Aquaculture licence holders available on the DAFM Aquaculture Information Management System (AQUAMIS);
- Data on vessels from Northern Ireland which may be accessed using the United Kingdom fishing vessel list;
- Data on EU vessels active in Irish waters;
- Sea Angling vessels
- Contacts provided by the ORE project's appointed Fishery Liaison Officer
- Seafood representative organisations.
- Public notices in newspapers / journals and in local media outlets.

## **5 Method of Engagement for Seafood Sector**

Having developed the stakeholder list, the next step is to consider the preferred methods of engagement for different groups of stakeholders and individuals. All participants at meetings should be treated with respect and in a courteous and professional manner.

For meetings with seafood representative organisations, occurring after the publication of this document, unless prior agreed, an agenda should be provided in advance of the meeting. Consideration should be given to appointing a rapporteur to provide independent notes of the meeting. Regardless of the appointment of a rapporteur, arrangements should be made to agree actions before the conclusion of the meeting.

For organised group meetings, other than with seafood representative organisations (covered above), including pier meetings, occurring after the publication of this document, there should be an agenda set out in advance. Notes of the meeting and actions agreed, if any, should be circulated.

The following Methods of Engagement are among those which should be considered when developing the communications strategy. All methods may not be suitable for every project.

- Contact through organisations representing the seafood sector;
- Sectoral Meetings – for example specific subsets of the seafood sector;

- Organised group meetings;
- Pier Head / Site Visits;
- Print Media / Broadcast / Digital media;
- Mail Shots;
- Coordination with the Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO).

There will be times when more than one ORE project has an interest in the same area of coast. Where possible ORE projects should endeavour to cooperate to optimise stakeholder interaction and to reduce the impact of multiple contacts.

The seafood representative organisations will facilitate, as far as possible, providing fisheries information. All data / information will be evidence-based and provided in a way that is easily understood and accessible. This will be further elaborated in the main document.

## **6 Fishery Liaison Officers (FLO)**

ORE projects should appoint a Fishery Liaison Officer (FLO) as part of their seafood sector engagement team.

### **Role of the FLO**

The FLO is one of the representatives of the ORE project who will engage with seafood interests. They may not be the only project representative involved.

It is important that the duties and responsibilities of the FLO as set out below are shared with the seafood representatives, and the relevant local seafood community where required, so that there is a clear understanding of the role.

The FLO interaction with the seafood sector must be aligned to the overall project engagement. Where deemed necessary by the relevant ORE project the FLO should participate in meetings with seafood representative organisations and other meetings and assist in the implementation of actions from those meetings.

The role of the FLO is to assist with the establishment and maintenance of effective communications between the ORE project and the seafood representatives and to support the implementation of agreed actions.

## **FLO Best Practice.**

An FLO should follow these best practices.

- Have an understanding and awareness of the fishing industry.
- Support the implementation of actions agreed between ORE / Seafood representatives and respond to queries in a timely manner.
- Be clear to stakeholders on their role, authority and responsibilities and their relationship with the ORE projects.
- Be reasonably accessible to stakeholders outside of typical work hours recognising that the seafood industry is not 9 to 5.
- Show respect for those involved in the seafood sector and recognise that it is culture and heritage as well as a business and occupation.
- Follow GDPR procedures and protect the data and privacy of contacts.
- Demonstrate good faith during all the interactions with stakeholders and ensure that no unwarranted expectations are generated.
- Provide relevant information in a timely fashion and in a format that is that is clear and concise and readily understood by stakeholders.
- Where charts are used or provided, they should be in a format familiar to seafood stakeholders and use latitude and longitude for positions rather than grid references.
- Follow the advice earlier in this document on meetings and in particular the requirement for an agenda in advance and notes circulated to record what was discussed and agreed where appropriate.
- Respect the knowledge and experience of the seafood representatives and be open to their input on avoidance and mitigating measures.
- The FLO or their nominated deputy should be readily available for contact through a variety of means. During specific activities (such as 24 hours survey, construction or significant maintenance activities), where appropriate, 24 hour points of contact are made available.



## **7 Use of This Guide**

This Summary Guide on Seafood / ORE Engagement in Ireland has been published by the Seafood / ORE Working Group to provide Offshore Renewable Energy projects and seafood stakeholders with guidance on how to engage and co-exist in a meaningful and constructive manner throughout the lifecycle of an ORE Project.