Finding of no significant effects report:

Name of project or plan: EirGrid– Foreshore Licence application for geophysical site investigations (FS006722).

The project is not located within a Natura 2000 site. There are 5 Natura 2000 sites located within 10Km of the proposed survey area. These sites include:

- **Ballycotton Bay SPA (Site Code 004022)** – The Ballinwilling landfall survey corridor is circa 1.25Km from this site.
- **Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (Site Code 000077)** – The Redbarn / Claycastle landfall corridor is circa 1.5Km from this site and the Ballinwilling landfall survey corridor is circa 7.9Km (by sea) from this site.
- **Ballymacoda Bay SPA (Site Code 004023)** - The Redbarn landfall survey corridor is immediately adjacent to this site, the Claycastle landfall corridor is circa. 1 Km from this site while the Ballinwilling landfall survey corridor is circa 5Km by land from this site.
- **Blackwater River (Cork / Waterford) SAC (Site Code 002170)** – The Claycastle landfall corridor is circa 1Km from this site, the Redbarn landfall survey corridor is circa 1.5Km from this site.
- **Blackwater estuary SPA (Site Code 004028)** - The Claycastle landfall corridor is circa 2.5Km from this site while the Redbarn landfall survey corridor is circa 3Km from this site.

The Conservation Objectives for the Ballycotton Bay SPA are¹:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Teal in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Ringed Plover in Ballycotton

Bay SPA

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Golden Plover in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Plover in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lapwing in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Black-tailed Godwit in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bar-tailed Godwit in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Curlew in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turnstone in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Gull in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lesser Black-backed Gull in Ballycotton Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in Ballycotton Bay SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory birds that utilise it.

The Conservation Objectives for the Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC are:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries in Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC,
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand in Ballymacoda.

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To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) in Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC

The Conservation Objectives for the Ballymacoda Bay SPA are:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Wigeon in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Teal in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Ringed Plover in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Golden Plover in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Plover in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lapwing in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Sanderling in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Dunlin in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Black-tailed Godwit in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bar-tailed Godwit in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Curlew in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Redshank in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turnstone in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Black-headed Gull in

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Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Gull in Ballymacoda Bay SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lesser Black-backed Gull in Ballymacoda Bay SPA
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in Ballymacoda Bay SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory birds that utilise it.

The Conservation Objectives for the Blackwater River (Cork / Waterford) SAC are⁴

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of White clawed Crayfish in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Sea Lamprey in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Brook Lamprey in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of River Lamprey in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Twaite Shad in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of

condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae) in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae) in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Killarney Fern in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho Batrachion vegetation in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) in the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC,

The Conservation Objectives of the Blackwater Estuary SPA are:  

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Wigeon in Blackwater Estuary SPA
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Golden Plover in Blackwater Estuary SPA
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Killarney Fern in the Blackwater Estuary SPA

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- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Dunlin in Blackwater Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Black tailed Godwit in Blackwater Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bar tailed Godwit in Blackwater Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Curlew in Blackwater Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Redshank in Blackwater Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in Blackwater Estuary SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory water birds that utilise it.

**Description of the project or plan**

Geophysical site investigation surveys on the foreshore along 2 No. routes off the south coast of Ireland with landfall at Ballinawilling Strand, Redbarn Beach and Claycastle Beach, Co. Cork.

The surveys will be carried out seaward of the three landfalls within two survey corridors which converge with the previous survey corridors close to the 12nm limit. The survey routes are shown on the Drawing submitted by the applicant entitled:

- “Celtic Interconnector Foreshore Licence Map Marine Survey Area”, dated May 16, 2017

The works would be carried out in the following areas:

- Intertidal survey - from 50m landward of the high water mark (HWM) to the charted low water mark (LWM) at each landfall site
- Shallow water survey - from the LWM seawards to first 10m Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT) water depth
- Offshore survey - seawards to first 10m (LAT) water depth to the 12nm limit.
The survey corridors will be nominally 250m wide for the land/intertidal and shallow water survey works (approximately 100m – 200m from landfall within a 1000m wide area to allow for flexibility in the location of the final land/intertidal survey corridor) and 500m wide for the offshore survey works. The total length of the survey area (two survey corridor to the 12nm limit) is approximately 65.84km.

Details of the proposed Geophysical works are set out in the document entitled “Schedule of Survey Works”, submitted by the applicant as Appendix A of the application form. The works will include

- Topographic Survey and Seismic Refraction / Sediment Profiling in the Intertidal area

- Collection of Bathymetric, Side Scan Sonar, Sub Bottom Profiler, Magnetometer data along the entire survey route.

The interpretation of the geophysical data collected during the surveys will be used to inform the scope of work for additional geotechnical and benthic surveys, which would be the subject of future foreshore licence applications.

The surveys, which are planned to commence in August 2017 at the earliest, are anticipated to last not more than 30 days. As a contingency e.g. due to adverse weather the works may not commence until later in 2017 or early in 2018.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?

No.

Are there other projects or plans?

No.
that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site. The works could potentially:

- Cause disturbance to species listed as qualifying interests of the adjacent Natura 2000 sites as a result of the physical presence of personnel/equipment/vessel during the survey
- Cause disturbance to species listed as qualifying interests of the adjacent Natura 2000 sites and species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive as a result of the introduction of noise to the marine environment from the survey techniques
- Introduce pollutants into the water column during the course of the survey

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

None of the survey activity will take place within a Natura 2000 site. The survey activity will take place outside the adjacent SPAs and SAC and thus will not have a direct impact on any habitats within these sites. There will not be significant disturbance to key habitats or species. Additionally there will be no habitat or species fragmentation and the overall integrity of the sites will not be affected.

There may be disturbance to birds visiting from the SPAs along the survey route. Such disturbance would be localised and of very short duration.

There will be no direct discharge of pollutants into the environment during the works and water quality will not be affected.

The full implementation of the mitigation measures set out in Section 3.1 of Attachment F: “Marine Mammal Risk Assessment” submitted in support of the application and full compliance with the requirements set out in Section 4.3.4 of the NPWS (2014) “Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine
Mammals from Man-made Sound sources in Irish Waters” will minimise any interactions with marine mammals in the survey area.

Considering the location and short duration of the survey activity significant adverse impacts on migratory fish species including salmon and lamprey species using the Blackwater Estuary are not considered likely.

On the basis of the above it is considered that there will be no significant adverse effects as a result of the geophysical site investigations as proposed, on the ‘qualifying interests’ or the ‘conservation objectives’ of the adjacent Ballycotton Bay SPA, Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC, Ballymacoda Bay SPA, the Blackwater River (Cork / Waterford) SAC or the Blackwater estuary SPA.

Who carried out the assessment?  
Marine Institute, August 22, 2017