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Interested Party Reference number: 20048864
Email: morganoffshorewindproject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

1. Summary

WCSP Ltd have been catching and processing Queen Scallops (also King Scallops) in the eastern Irish Sea since 1971, currently employing over 100 people at our processing site and 30 fishermen who rely on the health of the Queen Scallop fishery. We **object** to the proposal as its area overlaps important Queen Scallop beds of the eastern Irish Sea fishery as well important spawning and nursery ground for this species. Current proposal measures do not go far enough to respect this important fishery. The fishery is one of 4 global Queen Scallop commercial fisheries, therefore Morgan OWF raises significant socioeconomic and market implications and this is especially the case if considered in tandem with the developer's other Mona OWF proposal which will develop on the other most commercially important Queen Scallop beds of the eastern Irish Sea. There are also no mitigation measures proposed to financially compensate Queen Scallop operators for any unforeseen consequences such as short or long-term habitat loss. We consider that the proposal in its current state presents a possible **Moderate or Major** (leaning towards major) effect.

This document initially assesses the proposal in relation to our vessels' 2023 fishing activity for Queen Scallops and we conclude that over 50% of the fishery will be situated within OWF infrastructure in the future between Morgan (and Mona for cumulative considerations). Secondly this document outlines the practical issues of fishing vessels being able to continue fishing in which are poor weather autumn & winter fisheries. Finally with Morgan (and Mona cumulatively) being unique in covering so much of the sandy/gravelly Queen Scallop nursery & fishing grounds, there is a real risk of loss of their habitat and the commercial fishery we rely on, for which the Fish & Shellfish Ecology Chapter unacceptably also dismisses as an impact, rated as minor.

2. Current Queen Scallop fishing activity evidence in relation to OWF infrastructure proposals

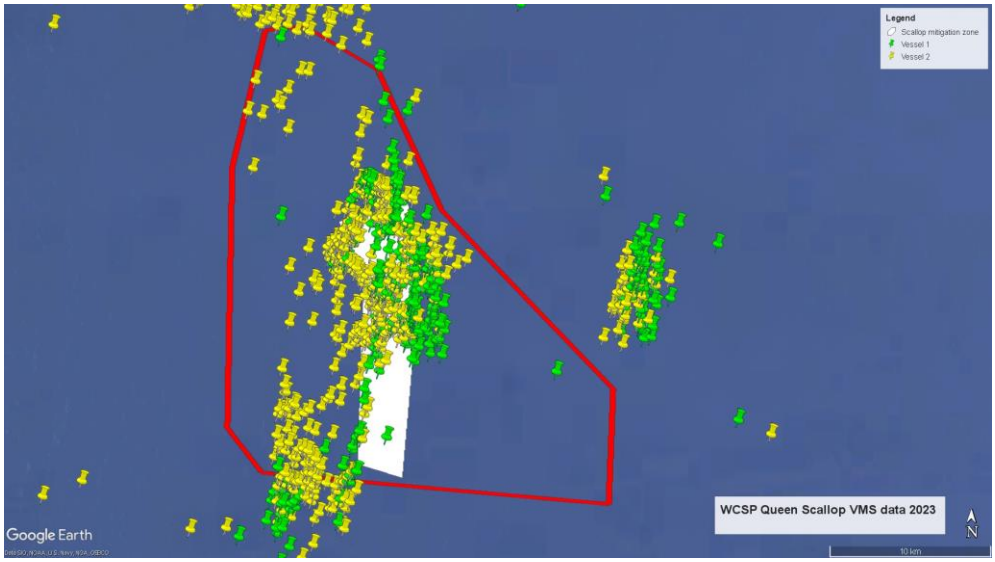
This section provides an initial background of Queen Scallop fishing for 2023 in relation to the Morgan proposal area in the eastern Irish Sea as well as Mona (separate project and application) which requires examination as the two projects collectively by the same developer capture most of the commercial Queen Scallop

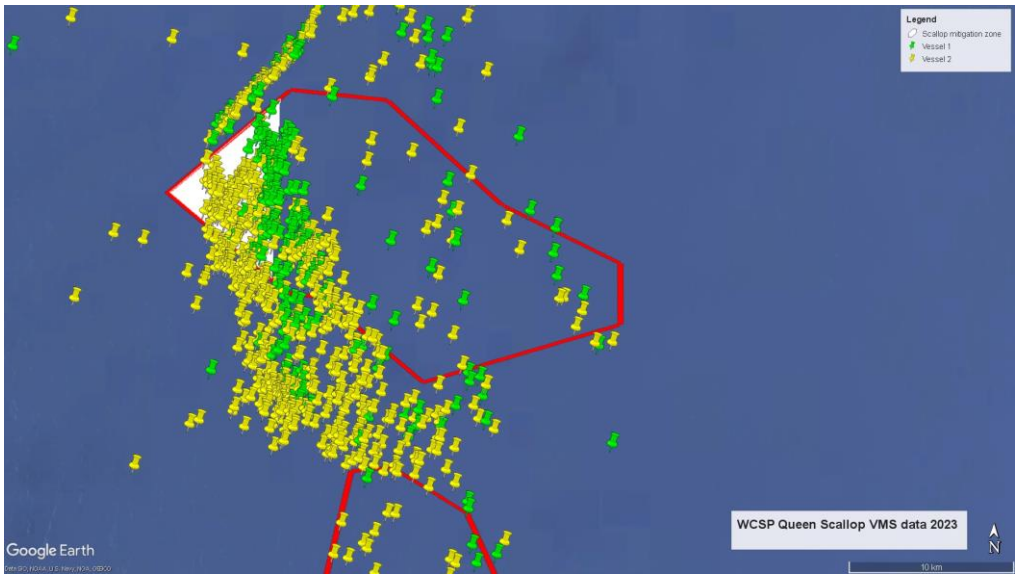
fishing ground in the eastern Irish Sea. It should be noted that the King Scallop fishery will also be negatively affected by the development but for the purpose of this response, our representation concentrates on the Queen Scallop fishery which we regard as more important in this circumstance. Further evidence on the impact to the King Scallop fishery can be provided on request.

The maps below show 2hourly Queen Scallop VMS data for two of our vessels for the year 2023 in relation to Morgan - and Mona importantly for cumulative impact considerations. We do not hold GIS software other than Google Earth to analyse fishing intensity but in terms of spatial data, Morgan shall be situated on approx.. **15%** of 2023's fishing activity for Queen Scallops. This % assessment considers that the Scallop Mitigation Zone presented in the coexistence plan in its current form for Morgan will not serve as a true Scallop Mitigation Zone where a vessel skipper would not be affected by OWF infrastructure, therefore our opinion considers the impact to be as high as 15% (note only based on 2023 data). Our explanation for this is based on our understanding that the western triangle SMZ will be bound west along the Isle of Man territorial sea 12nm line and to the south by a row of turbines. The area will be clear within of turbines and substations but the Fisheries co-existence plan indicates that cables will be routed through. This % affected would be reduced if the Scallop Mitigation Zone was perceived more by ourselves to actually compensate better than its current form (discussed in sections ahead).

The cumulative impact of Morgan is further increased in a future scenario with Mona and Morgan both in construction and eventual operation shows that an additional 38% of 2023's VMS data shall fall within Mona. Again the Scallop Mitigation Zone for Mona which shall comprise of a 3km wide corridor, has been indicated by the developer in the Co-Existence plan for that project will not be absent cable routing through the Scallop Mitigation Zone. Therefore for this reason the Scallop Mitigation Zone for Morgan will not reduce the effect the windfarm shall have on queen Scallop vessel operations as likely anticipated. The overall cumulative effect is that **53% of Queen data for 2023 shall fall within the Morgan and Mona OWF proposal areas**. With just over half the Queen Scallop fishery being subject to spatial squeeze, this will result in increased pressure and displacement in other areas affecting the health balance of this fishery.

Should the applicant consider designating a more effective Scallop mitigation Zone deserving of the Scallop industry's needs to operate then the overall cumulative effect would be reduced from 53% to possibly 20-25%.





3. Impact of infrastructure & significance of effects

Page 142-159 of Chapter 6: Commercial Fisheries outline that there will be only a **negligible-minor** effect on Scottish west coast vessels, i.e. us as a receptor, associated with a variety of impacts Morgan OWF will impose cumulatively. This is arrived at by the ES with a reliance on the coexistence plan that will deliver as a plan to revert fishing access to near-baseline conditions. We do not agree this scoring and we are of the opinion that there will be a **moderate or major** effect on our operations. As outlined in Section 2 above there is a risk of 53% of our ground facing access issues or habitat loss and therefore for "Displacement of fishing activity into other areas" for instance to be rated as negligible is a significant underscore of this impact. Further justification of our disagreement with the commercial fisheries chapter is provided in the table below.

Effect	Commercial fisheries assessment rating	WCSP predicted rating	Justification
Loss or restricted access to fishing grounds (Section 6.8.1, Doc ref F2.6)	Minor	Major	A lot of the commentary can be supported but the concluding rating in the CF chapter is grossly underscored. It is also disappointing how the chapter regards 5-10% loss of annual landings/revenue is a low magnitude of impact (section 6.8.1.60). In some bumper years within the western extents of Morgan, annual reliance and income for some of our vessels have been as high as 25%. **If any business was to incur a 5-10% loss in supplies/revenue then it would be immediately be as a Moderate or Major effect to the business.**
Displacement of fishing activity into other areas (Section 6.8.2, Doc ref F2.6)	Negligible	Moderate or Major	This predicted effect has been grossly underscored with the commentary in section 6.8.2 providing an ill-thought justification that is naïve of the true effects of OWF displacement and spatial squeeze that the fishing industry is currently attempting to adapt to. This section states that a small proportion of annual landings would only be affected which is untrue as the area over the years has been highly productive and adds to the sustainability of rolling zones of Queen Scallop fishing in the east Irish Sea.
Interference with fishing activity (Section 6.8.3, Doc ref F2.6)	Negligible	Moderate	Our experience of fishing in the Moray Firth OWFs and Seagreen over the last 2 years is that there is constant disruption caused by various post construction survey vessels, guard vessels and rolling 500m exclusions.
Temporary increase in steaming distances (Section 6.8.4, Doc ref F2.6)	Negligible	Minor	Not a major concern
Loss or damage to fishing gear due to snagging (Section 6.8.5, Doc ref F2.6)	Minor	Moderate or Major	Target burial depth of 0.5m will inevitably result in cable exposure and heightened risk of snagging.
Potential impacts on commercial fish and	Minor / Negligible	Minor-Major	Development of eastern Queen Scallop nursery ground within Morgan may have

shellfish resources (Section 6.8.6, Doc ref F2.6)	both		profound effects on connectivity with this unfished area with other Queen Scallop grounds in the Irish Sea. There is no science to support the developer's claim in the report on effect upon Queen Scallops
Supply chain opportunities for local fishing vessels (Section 6.8.7, Doc ref F2.6)	Minor / Negligible	Moderate or major	Queen Scallops are cyclical 'boom and bust' species at the best of times. Development of Morgan will result in some effect short term on the species and affect the Queen Scallop market.

3.1 Outline Fisheries Liaison and Co-Existence Plan

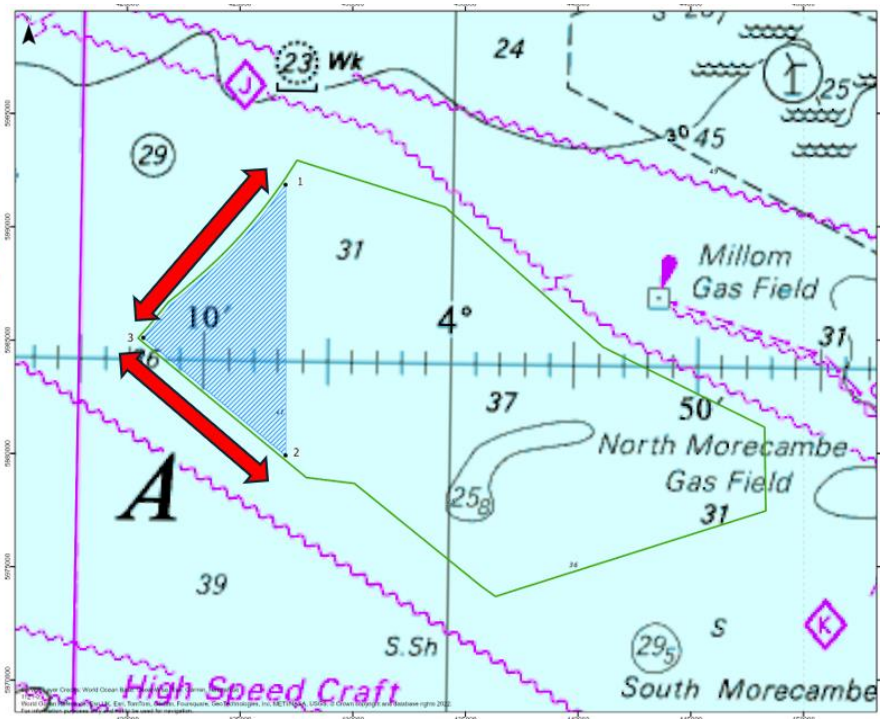
Through consultation with the applicant, a co-existence plan has been presented to support the application. This includes a set of measures which would help to accommodate Queen and King Scallop fishing as much as possible in the situation where offshore windfarm infrastructure is constructed on scallop grounds in this area. For instance, the applicant has included a number of measures which we support such as north-south rows of wind turbine generators and cable routing with 1400m spacing. This supports the general movement of fishing vessels in this area which tow north to south with the tides. Within Morgan the western extents are fished and the eastern extents are considered nursery fishing ground which is left unfished by ourselves. The proposals also include a Scallop Mitigation Zone which has the intention of leaving as much free access as possible for the western fished area within the proposal area.

The Scallop Mitigation Zone is presented as a triangle which is a sufficient area which correlates with the bulk of the fishing data we provided through previous consultation with the developer. The proposals and Coexistence plan however contains details which reveal that it will not be an effective SMZ and fishing vessels will encounter practicalities which will affect safety and fishing access. The flaws identified with the SMZ are as such which fishing businesses such as ourselves find difficult to agree with as being a true SMZ : -

1. Rows of WTGs along the northwest and southwest perimeters of the Scallop Mitigation Zone
2. Associated WTG Interconnecting cables along the perimeter of the SMZ
3. Probable routing of cables through the SMZ

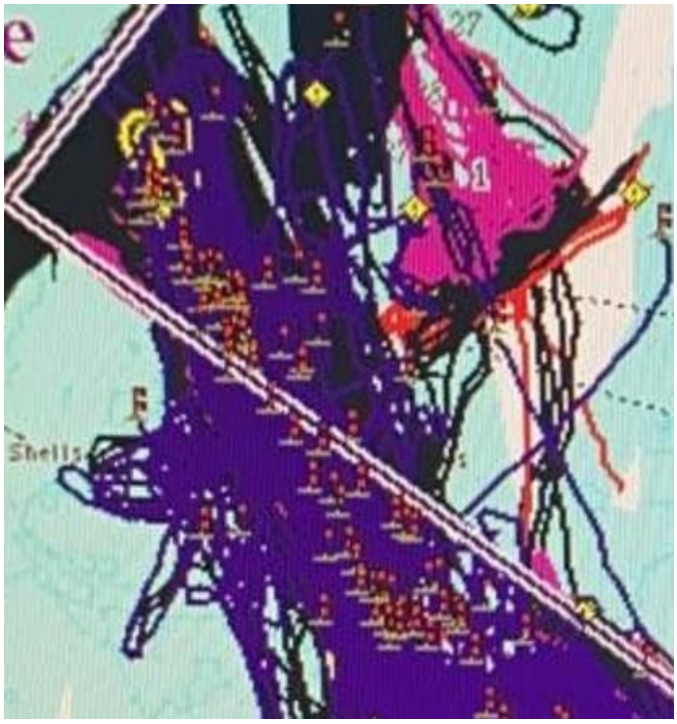
Our concerns over the nature of the SMZ are further shown in the map below which in the view of fishing businesses such ourselves will present a '**fishing on a postage stamp'** scenario in the future.

Red arrows indicate elements of the SMZ of concern in terms of perimeter rows and associative cable route



On paper it could be perceived as a substantial sacrifice of the proposal area by the developer, however the finer details are clear that it is going to present a fishing access issue. We have no issues with WTG infrastructure along the east perimeter of the SMZ as this was to be expected; however the SMZ as presented at the moment will affect fishing and flowing connectivity with the ground and tows to the south.

Analysis of WTG row positioning between points 1 – 3 and points 3 – 2 of the diagram will inflict the following fishing challenges. In terms of points 1 and 3, this is a prolific fishing area for Queen and King Scallops along the Isle of Man territorial sea limit. There is however further concern for continuity of fishing between points 3 and 2 as a row of turbines along this perimeter would cut existing Queen and King Scallops tows in half where vessels at the present would be fishing north to south in and out of the Morgan area. This is emphasized and explained by the plotter screenshot below:



Queen Scallop plotter data within southwestern corner of Morgan proposal area which shows how the fishing tows within Morgan interconnect and flow with the fishing ground immediately outside the proposed OWF

This flaw has been experienced by the Scallop fishing industry this year fishing within Seagreen OWF where good fishing tows along favourable contours have been cut in half by ill thought WTG placing and cable routing. With Seagreen OWF this was a serious missed opportunity and flaw which presents a safety issue for fishing vessels operating for life. A second flaw of this proposal concerns that the presence of WTGs along the perimeter will reduce the prominence of the SMZ by potentially 8%. For example, our fishing vessel in Seagreen OWF this year (2024) operated at a maximum safe distance of 135m when fishing adjacent to inter array cables. Therefore in the case of Morgan we consider that between points 1 – 3 – 2 : a length of 17.5 km x 135 m = 8% of the SMZ area with an access issue, particularly the case if the developer only buries to 0.5m where they will likely become exposed. A third flaw of the SMZ is the co-existence plan's probability that cables will be routed through the SMZ. The fishable area within the SMZ will be some 4km x 4km approximately and if cables are routed through then this defeats the purpose of a coexistence arrangement / allocation of peace of mind access for fishing vessels.
Furthermore Section 1.1.1.36 suggests that the SMZ shall be further 'refined' which we interpret that that this will be further adjusted to the detriment of fishing access opportunities in this crucial western area of the proposal area. Furthermore there is nothing to say that the developer will not introduce two rows of WTGs along the perimeter of the SMZ. This section also (similar to the Mona proposal) states that "cables and cable protection are not excluded from this area". This is wholly unacceptable to us as a measure to present in a coexistence plan and appears to offer the minimum to the Queen Scallop fishing industry.

Another measure of the coexistence plan which is disappointing is with regards to the commitment to 0.5m burial. Our knowledge of this area is that the seabed is gravelly & sandy and sufficient cable burial should not be an issue in our opinion. The ambition and aim for 0.5m presents a real risk to fishing vessels continuing to operate in this area as cables buried to such a depth will just re-surface and become exposed quickly on commencement of fishing and with the area being a naturally dynamic moving sea bed. There is further vast evidence of shallow buried cables nearby (10miles southeast) at Gwynt y Mor OWF (commissioned 2015) of a similar seabed substrate, whereby in 2021 a notice to mariners was issued, including the statement "a *significant number of array cable exposures are still being reported. Due to the mobile nature of the seabed within the wind farm boundary these cable exposures are subject to change and may develop in areas where there were none previously*"[1]. Should Morgan be constructed, it is inevitable that cables only buried 0.5m would become exposed quickly following construction. Exposed lengths would not only be unsafe to fish/tow over but they may encroach on corridors within the area which are left to fish. Should the development go ahead, the developer should be committing to a deeper burial depth of say 1.5-3m.

In general the Coexistence Plan has intentions of a solution for the fishing industry. There are aspects and measures we support such as 1400m turbine spacing, north to south inter array cable routing and avoidance of protection to a minimum. We however cannot support the application on the basis of the Scallop Mitigation Zone. The coexietnce plan contains too many caveats which we perceive puts the developer's interests before respecting the interests of Queen Scallop fishermen who have operated within the Morgan proposal area for over 50 years. As it stands we anticipate the proposal to have a **moderate or major** effect on our operations and the next section justifies this in slightly more detail. The proposal would be slightly more warming to us in terms of predicted impact if the following measures were included / modified within the application : -

- A commitment to bury cables to a greater depth than at present of 0.5m. Also to reflect the relevant method of fishing carried out in this area, we would also request that Scallop dredging over trawl surveys are carried out following burial/completion. This would ascertain successful burial and safety for fishing vessels.
- Commitment to removal of northwest and southwestern WTGs bounding the SMZ Scallop Mitigation Zone
- The document suggests the Scallop Mitigation Zone is indicative and will be refined which makes us further cautious about what the end result shall be. There needs to be a real commitment in this regard.
- A commitment to not take cables through the Scallop Mitigation Zone.

If the recommendations are adopted as above we would envisage the overall negative effect on us as a receptor would be greatly reduced. Essentially Morgan OWF would be directly adjacent to the most important fishing grounds and would not interfere with access the interconnecting grounds to the south.

3.2 Other practicality considerations

Weather

The Commercial fisheries chapter and coexistence plan does not necessarily factor enough in the impact that poor weather will have on decision making fishing vessel skippers. From experience, most skippers will only enter windfarms to fish when the weather conditions are ideal. The Morgan project area is situated on top of autumn and winter Queen and King Scallop fisheries as dictated by the seasonality of the product, i.e. fished when yields are at their peak in the autumn and winter months. As a result fishery management strategies and closed seasonal seasons have been in implemented for years accordingly to account for this seasonality. We expect Morgan to have a **High** level of magnitude on us a receptor as presently skippers will fish in slightly poorish weather, however will be hesitant to enter during the same conditions with the hazards imposed by a windfarm. This would be the case with the Scallop mitigation Zone presented in the Co-Existence plan whereby there would be an opportunity to fish in the parcel presented, however with rows of turbines along the northwest and southwest perimeter of the SMZ and factoring tide and weather into this, would result in safety issues. Essentially our fishermen are of the opinion that although Morgan at present would enable a SMZ and a parcel of sea to fish, there is the crucial hazard of rows of WTGs along the perimeter of the SMZ. Rather than being an OWF they can fish alongside / adjacent to, they would still view it as having to enter the OWF to start fishing and in any given moderate sea state, would be nervous about safety of the vessel. We would like to point out at the present that fishing vessels can fish this area during poor weather in the autumn and winter months both for King and Queen Scallops when the yields are at their highest and subsequently the value of the product.

General navigation

We have concerns about the proposal's impacts on navigation and also cumulatively in mind of other windfarm proposals in the east Irish Sea. From our experience of fishing in Seagreen Windfarm this year for King Scallops the fishing vessel skipper, in addition to concentrating on fishing had to secure the safety of the vessel in terms of : -

1. Other fishing vessels operating within the 'alley ways' between the cable routing between WTGs,
2. Other normal marine traffic
3. Windfarm survey vessels on site at the time – overtrawl
4. Guard vessels
5. Anchored Acoustic monitoring equipment
6. Wind turbine generators
7. Inter-array cables

The current co-existence plan does offer greater scope for coexistence compared to Seagreen on paper; however we expect that the 0.5m burial target will be disastrous. This would result in our vessels and others having little confidence to tow over the cables, and subsequently lead to a heightened navigation risk with more vessels operating in a squeezed area. The plotter screen taken from one of our fishing vessels (below) this year within Seagreen shows the reality of a fishing vessel operating between cable routing and highlights the squeezing and therefore heightened risk of collision between fishing vessels competing for a smaller area. In context of Morgan, the all important SMZ area which covers the bulk of the current fishable area will probably have cables running through it as indicated by the submitted coexistence plan as well as rows of WTGS to the northwest and southwest of the SMZ. As discussed in the previous section, with poorer weather factored in and fishing vessels desperate to catch in peak season in the Irish Sea in the run up to the busy Christmas market, this risk is even more significant. We have reviewed the Navigation section of the EIA the significance of this effect seems to be downplayed.

WCSP company vessel fishing activity within Seagreen windfarm 2024

The Morgan proposal also raises concerns for transiting to and from ports such as Kirkcudbright when not fishing and also during emergency situations, e.g. airlifting of casualties, engine failure scenarios. This is particularly the case in terms of the cumulative impact of up to a total of 4 offshore wind farms proposed for the Irish Sea within current navigation routes between the fishing grounds and Kirkcudbright.

The Morgan proposal area in combination with Mona will also create a squeezing and competing of space between the two windfarms, more so in the vicinity of the Isle of Man to Liverpool ferry route directly south of Morgan. We have concerns that there will be an increased collision risk with other marine traffic whilst trying to fish in area which will be squeezed further.

4. Fish and Shellfish Ecology

As a receptor which will be directly impacted by Morgan, we are of the opinion that access to fish is of course one moderate or major impact, however may not be as concerning to us as the potential for Queen Scallop habitat loss. This is particularly the case since the Morgan proposal area covers unfished juvenile Queen Scallop nursery ground to the east.

Of Doc ref F2.3, page 201 we strongly disagree with Table 3.37 , that the cumulative effect on Queen and King Scallop biomass / habitat loss will be "minor adverse", and such an assessment without any science is simply an assumption. It is furthermore concluded that there will be no ongoing monitoring required with regard to the effect that the project shall have on fish and shellfish. We view this as seriously irresponsible as there is simply no science to what impact a windfarm development is on Queen Scallops, let alone probably the largest Queen Scallop commercial fishery in Europe.

Windfarms have been developed on King Scallop beds around the UK as we have fished in and have shown survivability. King Scallops however are a different species and so far in the short term, their sensory structures appear to have shown to resist the effects of EMPS, construction noise, turbine vibrations etc; however there is no science / no one knows yet what wind farms will have one Queen Scallops. The coexistence plan makes an effort to leave a portion of the Queen Scallop ground within Morgan free of development, however we have serious concerns that the disturbance and alteration to the seabed to the east shall detrimentally affect the unfished areas considered as nursery/spawning fishing ground by the fishermen. The following risks are as such : -

- Cable burial and change of substrate no longer supporting congregations of Queen Scallops and commercially viable levels
- Fixed Turbine disturbance to currents altering plankton distribution and larval dispersal over the Queen Scallop grounds, as indicated as a possible effect by Barbut et al., 2020;
- Local tidal energy losses of turbines and resulting sedimentation effects (Gill A.B et al., 2020)
- Fixed turbines & cable rock dumping creating artificial reefs encouraging invasive species such as starfish to explode in population (Gill A.B et al., 2020)

Due to the risks identified above to the Queen Scallop habitat, which are evidenced by what has been observed in other offshore windfarms and literature we cannot support the minor adverse scoring provided in the Fish and Shellfish Ecology chapter.

Further research should be undertaken before a potential catastrophe could occur in altering the Queen Scallop habitat which we rely on. Across the UK many windfarms have been constructed on shallow banks that support King Scallop dredging; of these the King Scallops are recruited from other areas of unfished seabed. Mona (and

Morgan) proposals would be unique as they would capture the sandy gravelly ground where both spawning of Queen Scallops occurs and where they are recruited and subsequently fished year after year.

References

RWE Renewables UK Ltd: 2021. Gwynt y Môr Offshore Wind Farm Marine Co-ordinator Notice To Mariners

Barbut, L., B. Vastenhoud, L. Vigin, S. Degraer, F.A. Volckaert, and G. Lacroix. 2020. The proportion of flatfish recruitment in the North Sea potentially affected by offshore windfarms. *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 77(3):1,227–1,237,

Gill et al. (2020) Setting the Context for Offshore Wind Development Effects on Fish and Fisheries

KIS-ORCA website: The Risks of Fishing near Cables & Renewable Energy Structures