



OREDP II Appropriate Assessment – Screening Report



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications



Date: 30th May 2022



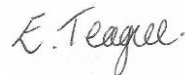


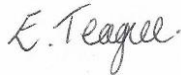

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Quality Management

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Stage 1 Screening with respect to the Strategic Environmental Assessment being undertaken on the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II (ORED II). The Report applies the Screening Principles laid out in the Principles Report, prepared and issued separately.

The requirement for AA is driven by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 –21, (S.I. 477 of 2011, as amended) (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations), with the first step to that process (Stage 1 Screening) being the identification of the designated sites and Qualifying Interests (QIs) to be considered for potential Likely Significant Effect (LSE). The methodology applied is as detailed in the Principles Report, this report provides information on the following:

- Background to the Plan
- The Plan extent
- Legislative background and the AA process
- Screening methods applied
- Results and Conclusions of Screening

Given the conclusions of the Stage 1 Screening, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (and Natura Impact Statement) will be required. It should be noted that subsequent to Stage 1 Screening but before the NIS is drafted, there may be further iterations of the Plan areas which constitute ORED II. Should this be the case, the scope of Stage 2 (set out within this document) will be revisited (applying the same screening and scoping parameters again) to ensure that the conclusions of this report remain valid and if a change in the conclusions is apparent these changes will be documented.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) has commenced preparation of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II (OREDP II) for Ireland (Figure 1). The development of the OREDP II supports a plan-led approach to the strategic development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) within Ireland and builds on the original OREDP published in 2014. OREDP II will support Ireland's increased ORE ambition, including a commitment to develop a plan to take advantage of a potential for at least 30GW of offshore floating wind power in the deeper waters in the Atlantic, and an increase in the proportion of renewable energy up to 80% by 2030 (as set out within the Climate Action Plan 2021).

The purpose of the OREDP II is to develop an understanding of the overall resource potential within Ireland's waters and to provide an evidence base for the identification of areas most suitable for the sustainable development of wind, wave, and tidal technologies (candidate areas for offshore renewable energy development) in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The OREDP II will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Appropriate Assessment (AA). This report details the AA Stage 1: Screening required under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 –21, (S.I. 477 of 2011, as amended) ("Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations"). The methodology applied to screening is detailed in the accompanying Principles Report (NIRAS, 2022). Where potential for likely significant effect (LSE) is identified or cannot be excluded, a subsequent Stage 2 AA will be undertaken and a Natura Impact Assessment (NIS) prepared.

Depending on the conclusions of the Stage 1 Screening, a Stage 2 AA (and subsequent Natura Impact Statement) may be required. It should be noted that subsequent to Stage 1 Screening but before the NIS is drafted, there may be further iterations of the Plan areas within OREDP II. Should this be the case, the scope of Stage 2 (set out within this document) will be re-visited (applying the same screening and scoping parameters again) to ensure that the conclusions of this report remain valid and if a change in the conclusions is apparent these changes will be documented.

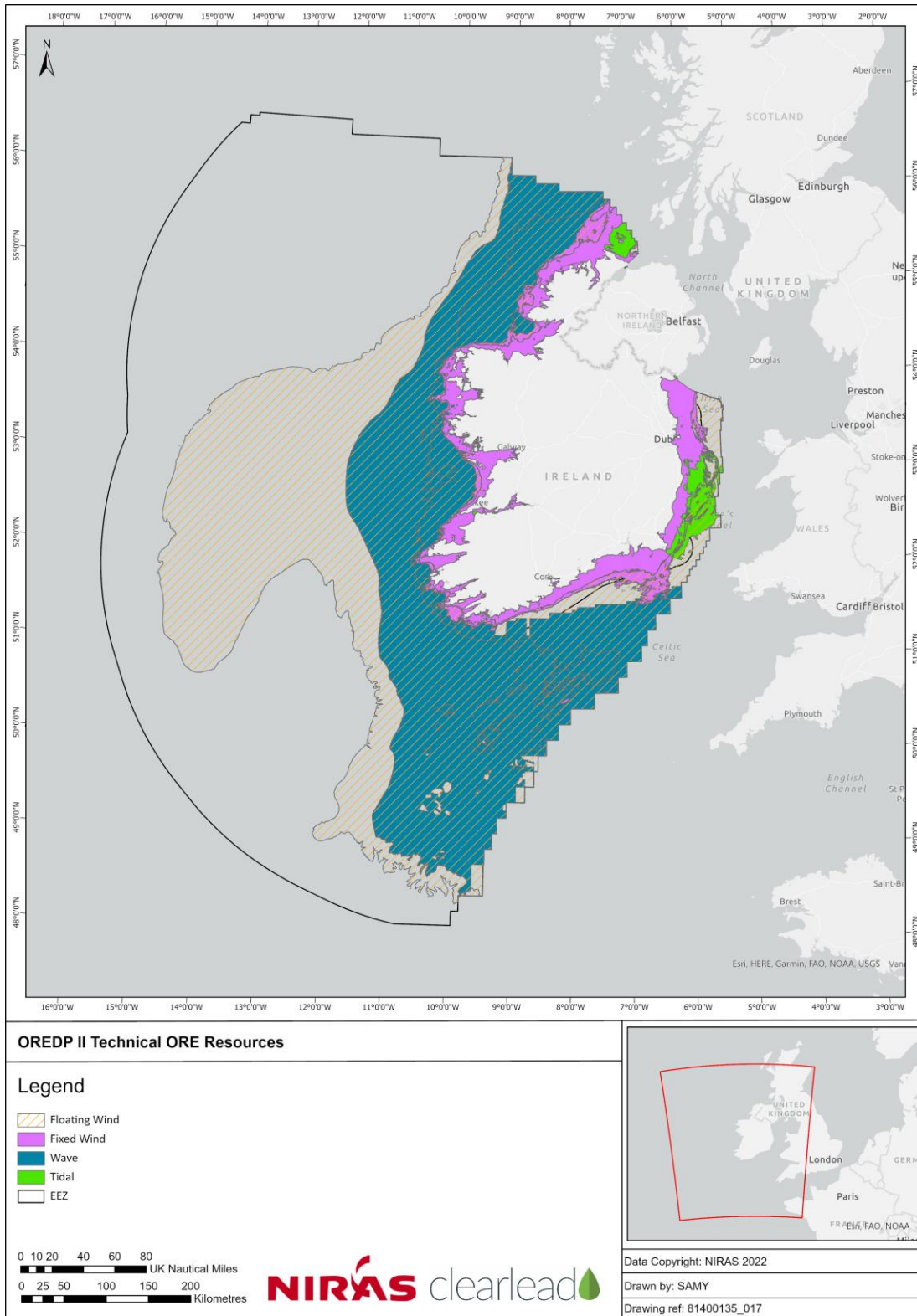


Figure 1: The Offshore Renewable Development Plan II

1.2 Legislative Background

1.2.1 Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations

The requirement to undertake the Appropriate Assessment process is embedded within the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC (the ‘Habitats and Birds Directives’), as transposed into Irish law through the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations.

The ‘Habitats and Birds Directives’ seek to maintain and, where necessary, restore the favourable conservation status of certain natural habitats and species (qualifying interests or “QIs”) throughout the European Union. The most important ecological sites for these QIs are designated as European sites, and comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPA). Collectively these sites are known as European Sites, and together, they form part of the Natura 2000 network of comparable sites throughout Member States.

1.2.2 The Appropriate Assessment Process

Under the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, where it appears to the public authority that the decision to undertake or give consent, permission or other authorisation for, a relevant plan or project: is likely to have a significant effect (“LSE”) on a European site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects; and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site - then the public authority must make an Appropriate Assessment (“AA”) of the implications of the plan or project for the European Site in view of that site’s conservation objectives. In light of any such assessment, the public authority may agree to the plan or project only if it has ascertained that the proposal will not, either on its own or in combination with other plans and projects, adversely affect the integrity of a European Site, unless there is no alternative solution and the plan or project must be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

The above requirements promotes a four stage process, as outlined in Figure 2.

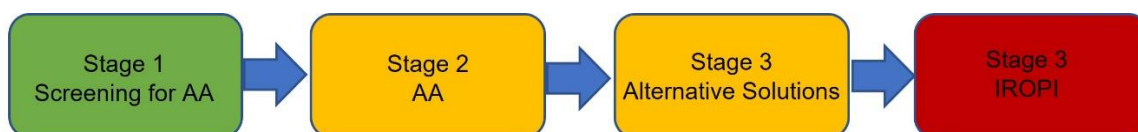


Figure 2: AA four stage process

The relevant Public Authority in this case is DECC. NIRAS Group UK (“NIRAS”) have been contracted to undertake this assessment by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

1.2.3 Approach to Screening

Screening is the first step of the 4 stage AA process. As described above, screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to, first, whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of a European Site. At this stage, it can be concluded that the Plan is not directly connected to or necessary for the management of any European Site.

Second, screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 of the AA process (Department for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010).

The methods underpinning the approach taken Stage 1 screening are described in full in the Principles Report (NIRAS, 2022). This report should, therefore, be read together with that document.

For all European Sites and their QIs it has been assumed, on a precautionary basis, that connectivity alone implies there is a risk of LSE and the relevant European Site/QI will be scoped in based on the screening and scoping criteria outlined in NIRAS 2022. This exercise has been carried out using GIS.

As it is assumed that there will be a potential LSE on these European Sites and QIs alone, by extension it can also be assumed that there will be a risk of LSE from the Plan in-combination with other plans and projects.

Given the marine nature of the works associated with the Plan, consideration has been given to European sites situated seaward of mean high water. Exceptions to this have been applied when terrestrial European sites contain QIs that could range into the Plan area (e.g. migratory bats). To this end, any European Site within Irish territory or beyond, that contains QIs that have the potential to interact with activities associated with the Plan have been considered.

1.3 Data Sources

Screening has been applied relative to the draft Plan areas depicted in Figure 1 **Error! Reference source not found.**, together with use of lists of designated sites and the associated QIs held on the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website¹. Non Irish site information has been sourced from the equivalent organisation in each country. Additional information on the application of the Directives in the UK post Brexit is available on UK websites².

2 Results

The conclusions on screening and scoping are presented in Appendix A (Relevant Pressures for ORE), Appendix B (for European sites with bird QIs) and C (for European sites protecting all other QIs). Within each Appendix, the screening results have been separated by resource (i.e. fixed wind, floating wind, wave and tidal stream).

The location of each European site scoped in relative to the OREDP II resources are presented in Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10.

¹<http://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8f7060450de3485fa1c1085536d477ba>, https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/SPA_Datasheets_March_2022.zip and https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/SAC_Datasheets_March_2022.zip

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017>

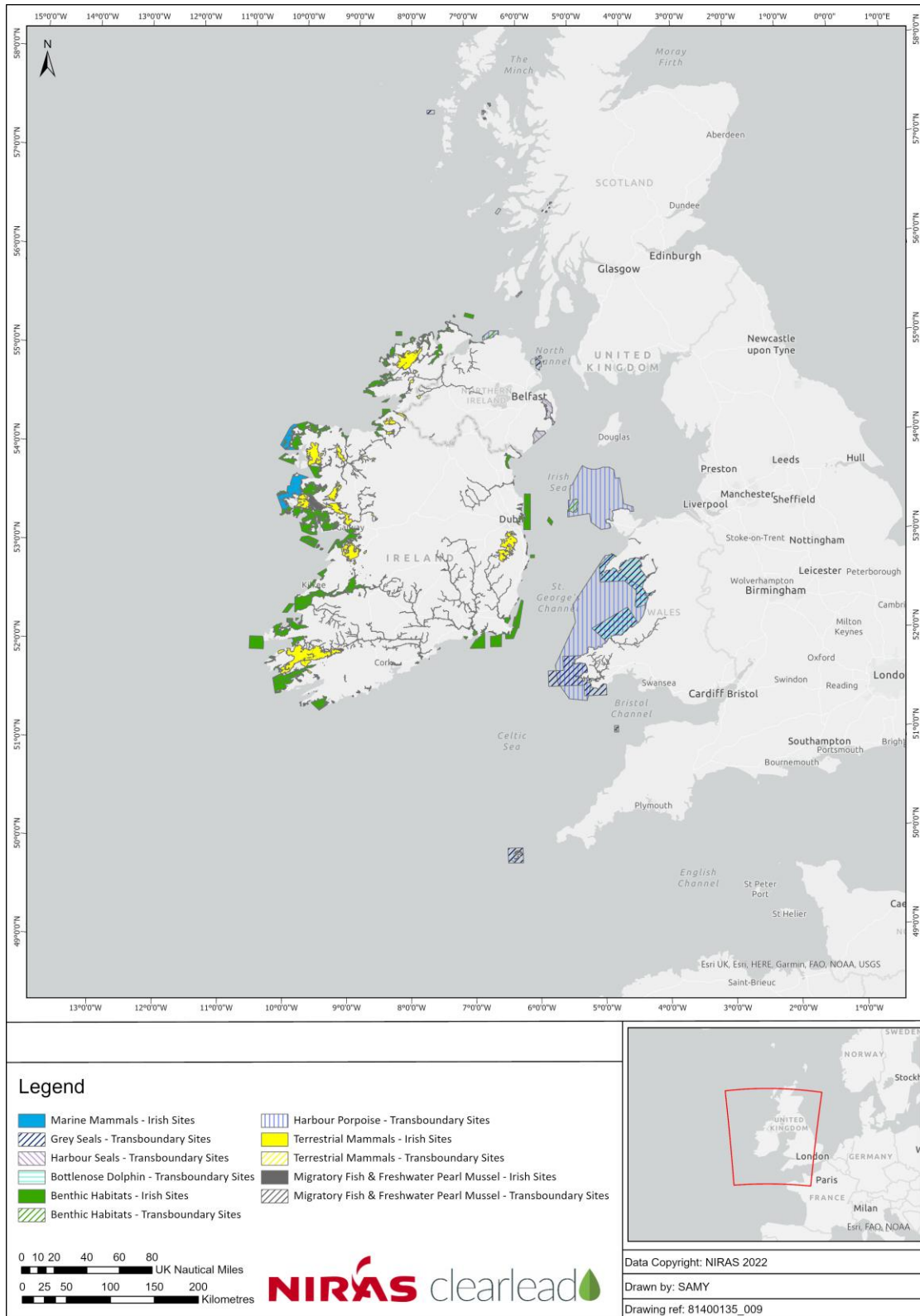


Figure 3: Non Bird Designated sites scoped in for Fixed Wind

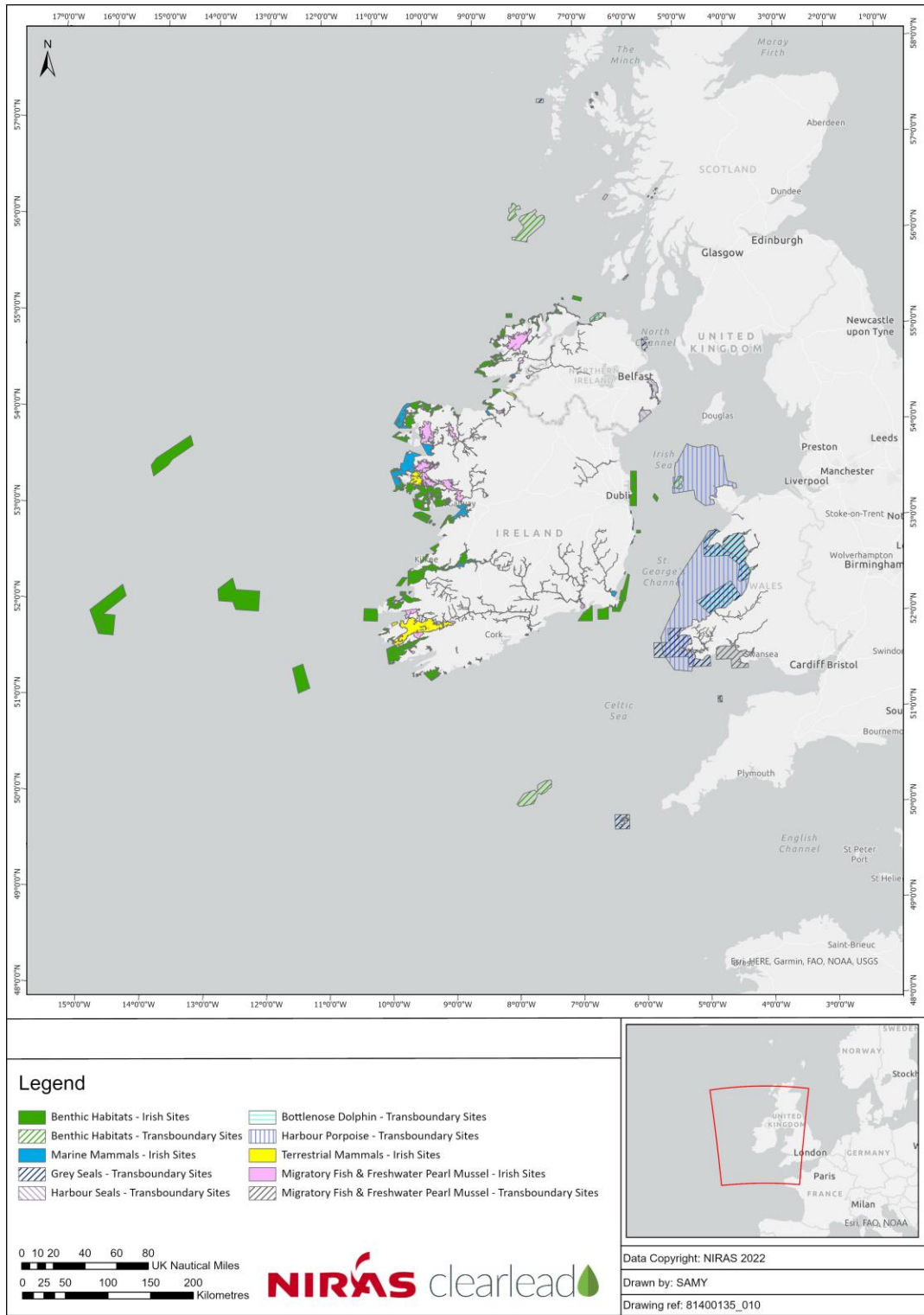


Figure 4: Non bird Designated sites scoped in for Floating Wind

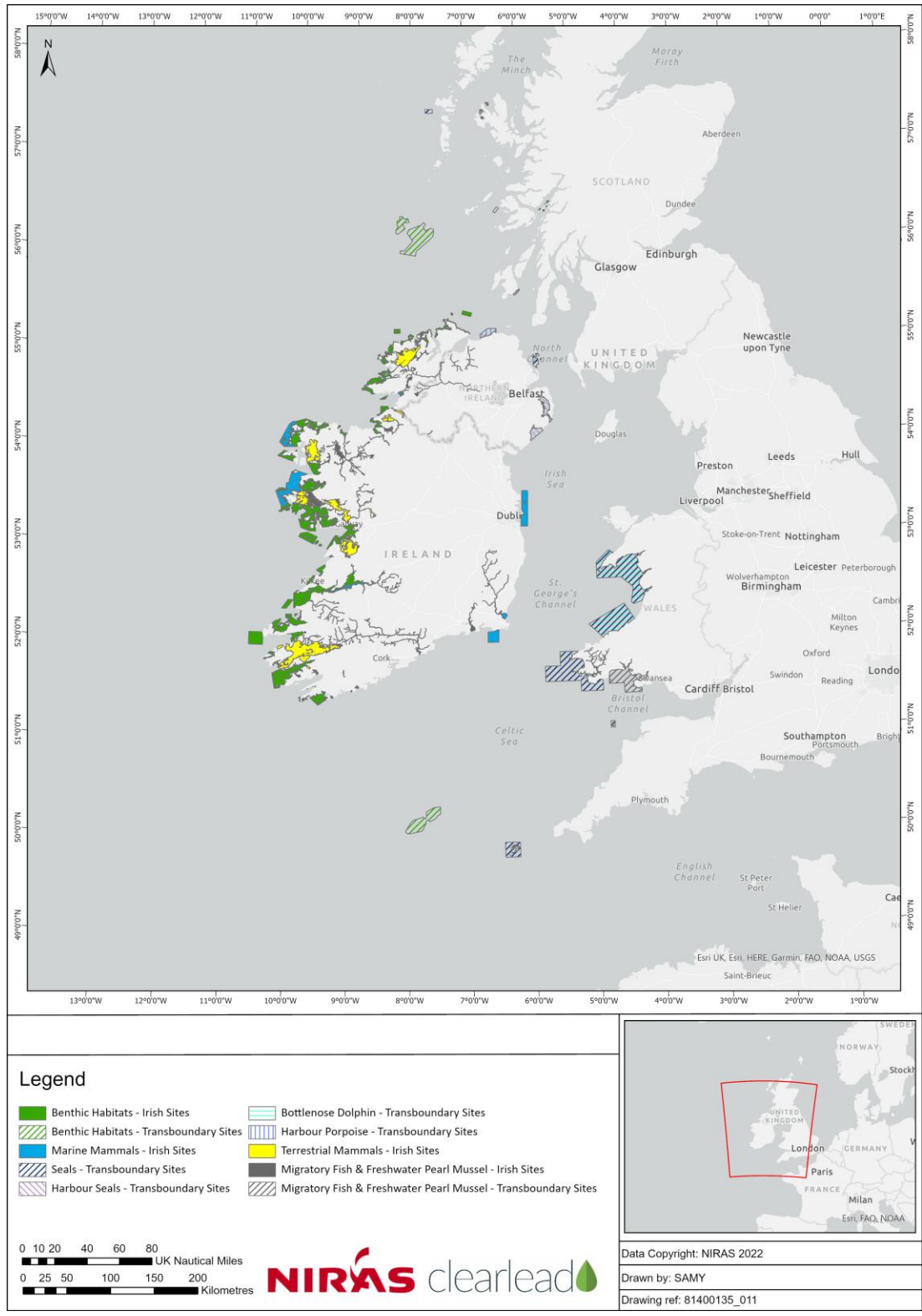


Figure 5: Non bird Designated sites scoped in for Wave

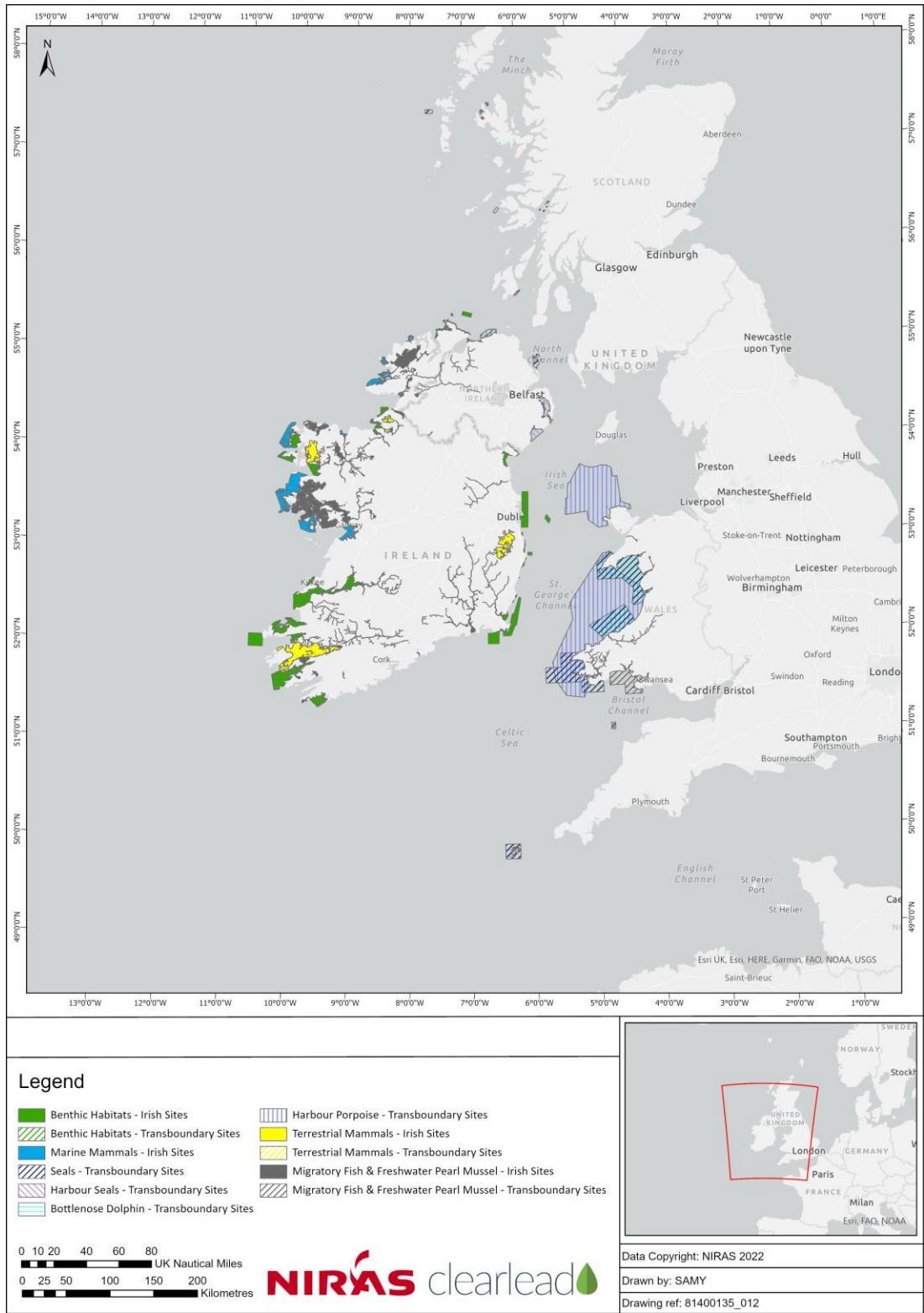


Figure 6: Non bird Designated sites scoped in for Tidal Stream

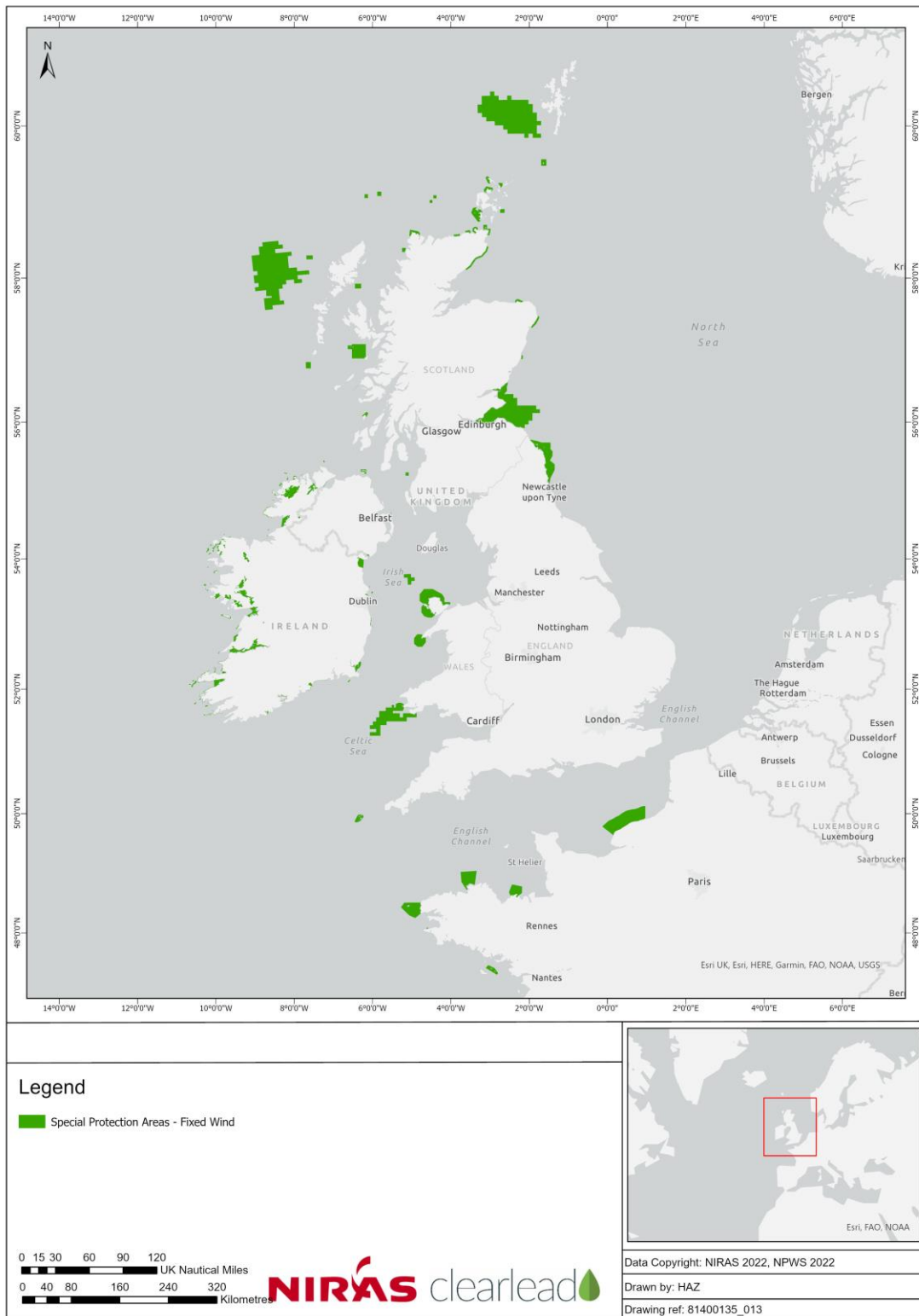


Figure 7: Bird Designated sites scoped in for Fixed Wind

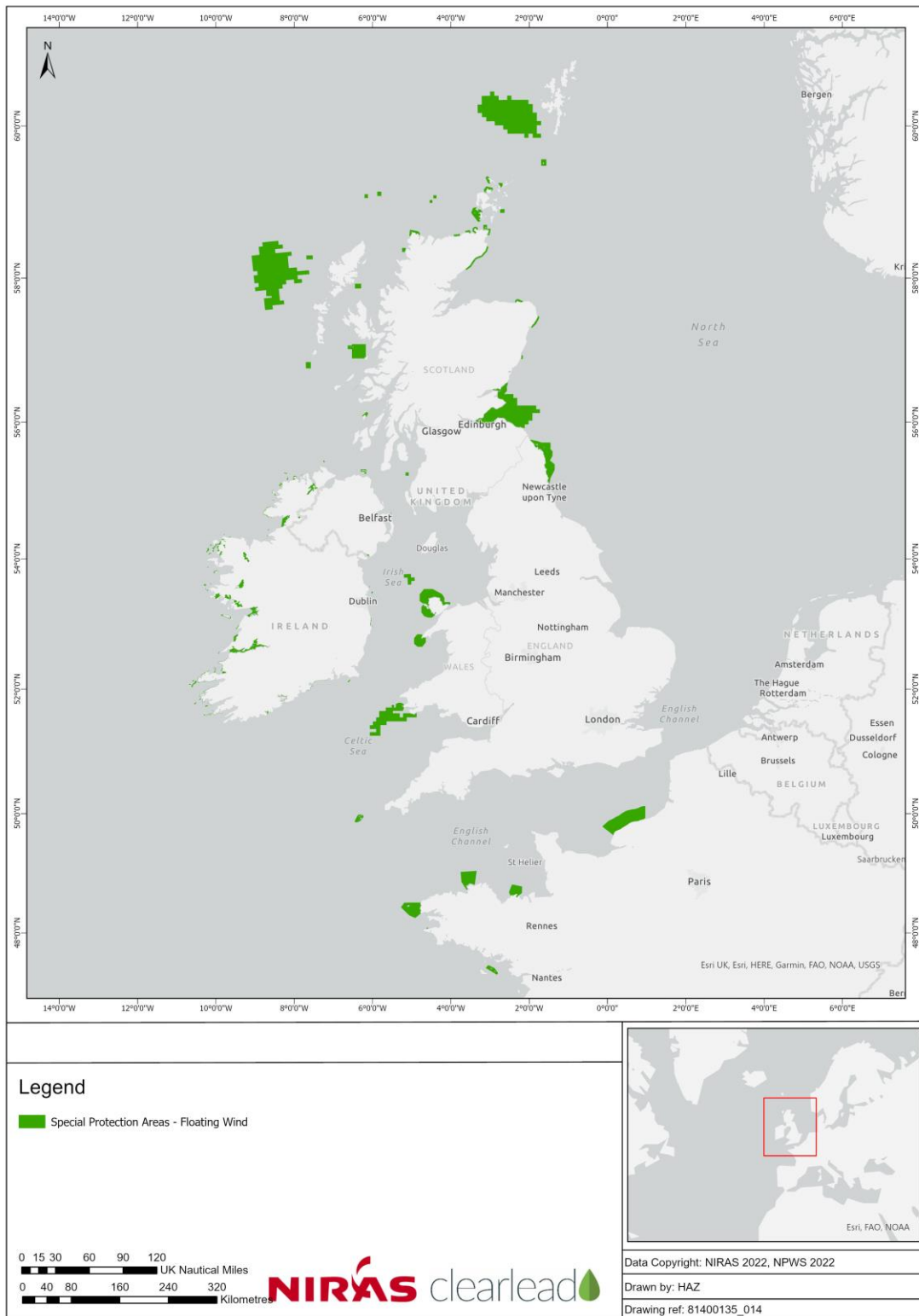


Figure 8: Bird Designated sites scoped in for Floating Wind

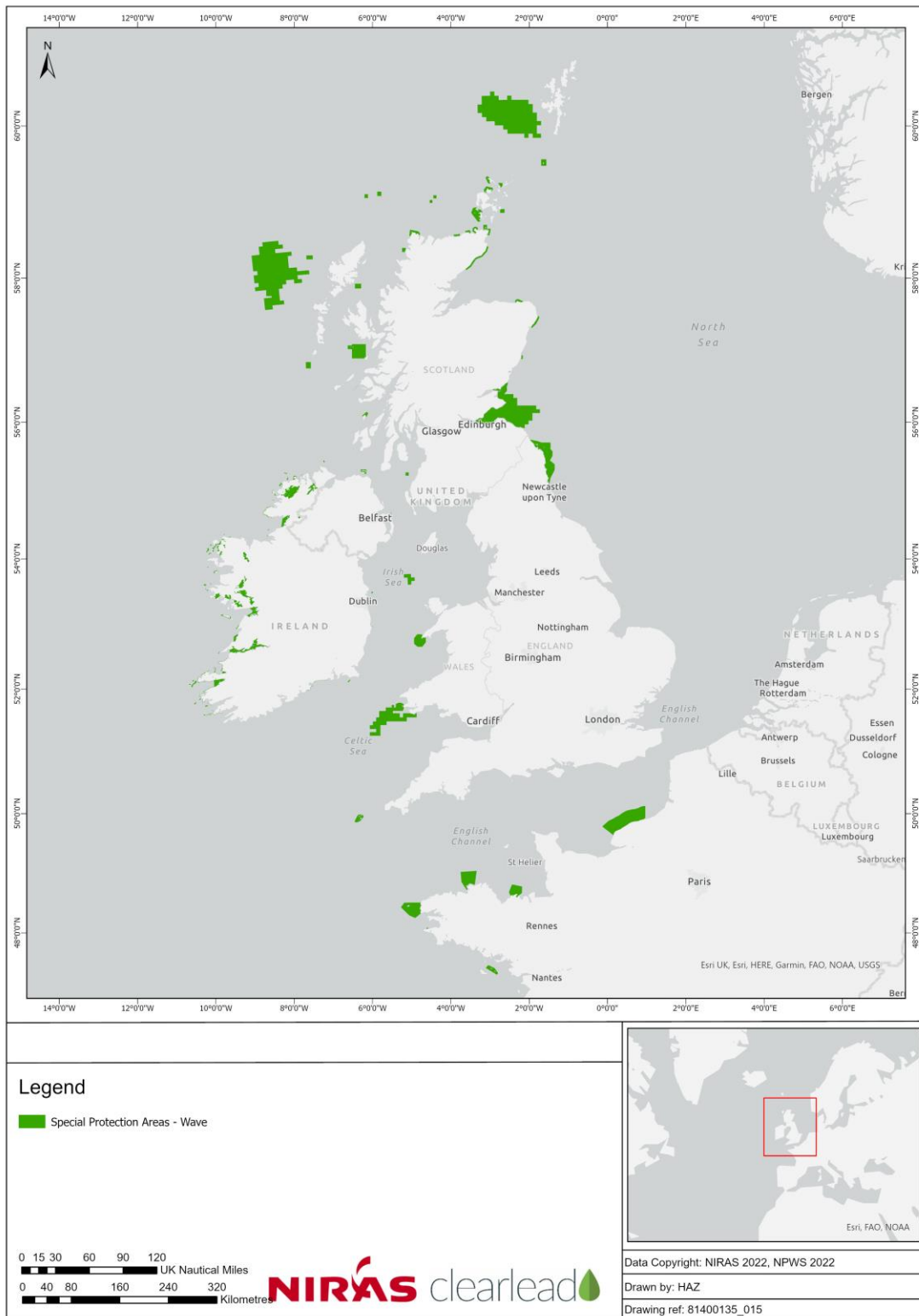


Figure 9: Bird Designated sites scoped in for Wave

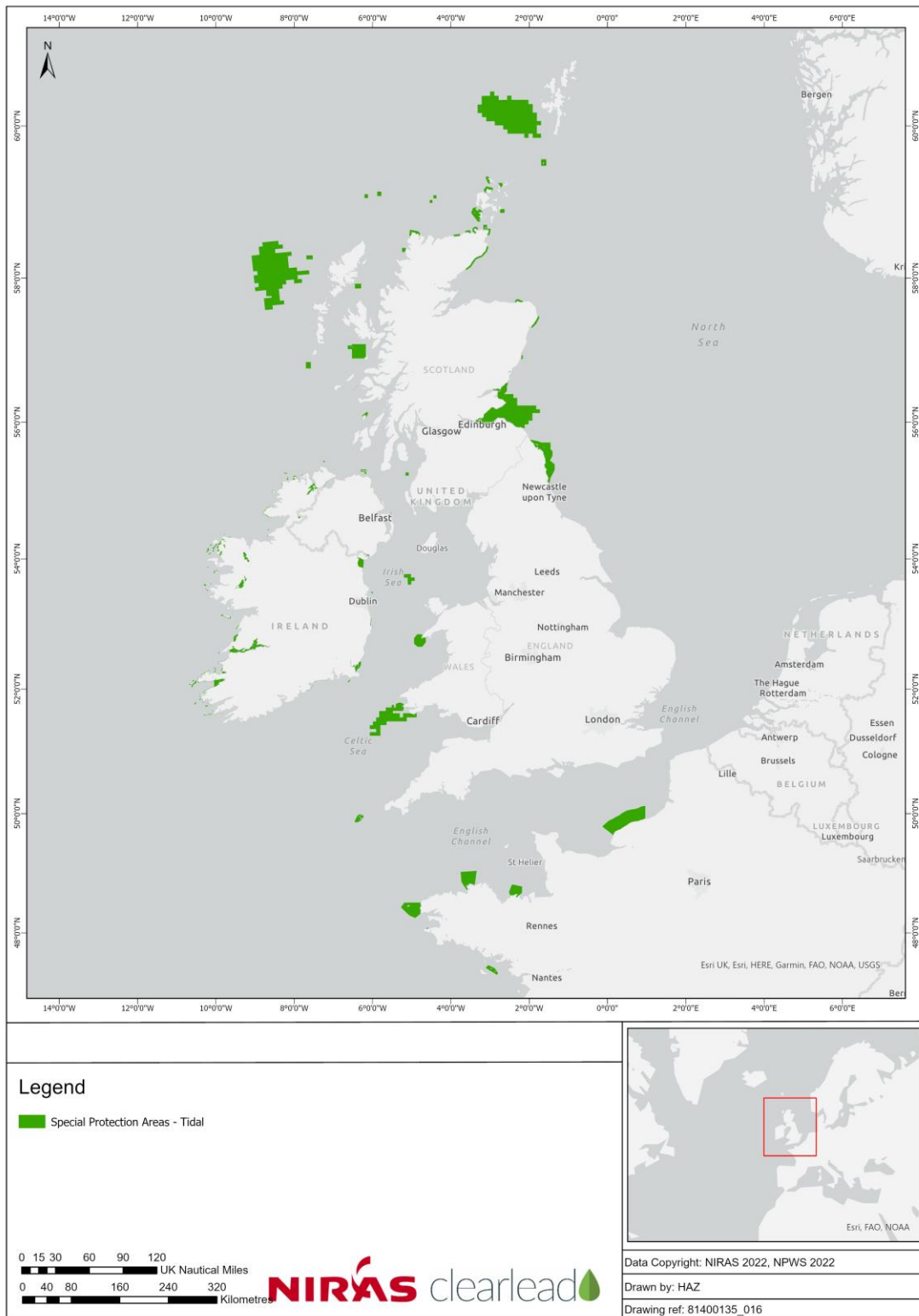


Figure 10: Bird Designated sites scoped in for Tidal Stream

3 Conclusions

The Screening process has found that that the Plan is not directly connected to or necessary for the management of any European Site. Furthermore, the screening process has found that the Plan is likely to have a significant effect on QIs of multiple European sites.

Based on these findings, an Appropriate Assessment of the OREDP II is required to consider each LSE identified in view of the conservation objectives of the European Sites affected.

4 References

NIRAS. 2022. OREDP II Appropriate Assessment - Principles Report. May 2022.

Department for Environment, Heritage and Local Government. 2010. Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities. February 2010.

Appendix A – Relevant Pressures for ORE

Relevant pressures for fixed wind on a receptor basis									
Pressure	Habitats	Marine mammals	Terrestrial mammal – otter	Terrestrial mammal - bat	Migratory fish and FWP/M/PPM	Breeding birds (breeding season)	Breeding birds (non breeding season)	Non-breeding birds (non breeding season)	Migratory seabirds and migratory waterbirds
P1 Habitat loss / gain	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P2 Direct physical damage	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P4 Collision (marine mammals and fish)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P5 Collision (birds)	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
P7 Physical Presence (visual disturbance and barrier effects)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P8 Underwater noise (including, disturbance, injury and death)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P9 Above water noise	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
P10 Toxic contamination	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P11 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P12 Light	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N

P13 Temperature	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P14 Suspended sediments	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P15 Invasive non-native species	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N

Relevant pressures for floating wind on a receptor basis									
Pressure	Habitats	Marine mammals	Terrestrial mammal – otter	Terrestrial mammal - bat	Migratory fish and FWP/M/PM	Breeding birds (breeding season)	Breeding birds (non breeding season)	Non-breeding birds (non breeding season)	Migratory seabirds and migratory waterbirds
P1 Habitat loss / gain	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P2 Direct physical damage	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P4 Collision (marine mammals and fish)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P5 Collision (birds)	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
P7 Physical Presence (visual disturbance and barrier effects)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P8 Underwater noise (including, disturbance, injury and death)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P9 Above water noise	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N

P10 Toxic contamination	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P11 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P12 Light	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
P13 Temperature	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P14 Suspended sediments	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P15 Invasive non-native species	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N

Relevant pressures for wave on a receptor basis									
Pressure	Habitats	Marine mammals	Terrestrial mammal - otter	Terrestrial mammal - bat	Migratory fish and FWP/M/PPM	Breeding birds (breeding season)	Breeding birds (non breeding season)	Non-breeding birds (non breeding season)	Migratory seabirds and migratory waterbirds
P1 Habitat loss / gain	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P2 Direct physical damage	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P4 Collision (marine mammals and fish)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P16 Entanglement	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P7 Physical Presence (visual disturbance and barrier effects)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

P8 Underwater noise (including, disturbance, injury and death)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P9 Above water noise	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
P10 Toxic contamination	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P11 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P12 Light	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
P13 Temperature	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P14 Suspended sediments	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P15 Invasive non-native species	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N

Relevant pressures for tidal stream on a receptor basis									
Pressure	Habitats	Marine mammals	Terrestrial mammal - otter	Terrestrial mammal - bat	Migratory fish and FWP/M/NPM	Breeding birds (breeding season)	Breeding birds (non breeding season)	Non-breeding birds (non breeding season)	Migratory seabirds and migratory waterbirds
P1 Habitat loss / gain	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P2 Direct physical damage	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

P4 Collision (marine mammals and fish)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P16 Entanglement	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P7 Physical Presence (visual disturbance and barrier effects)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P8 Underwater noise (including, disturbance, injury and death)	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P9 Above water noise	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
P10 Toxic contamination	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P11 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P12 Light	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
P13 Temperature	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
P14 Suspended sediments	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
P15 Invasive non-native species	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N



Appendix B – Sites and QIs scoped in for Birds



Appendix C – Sites and QIs scoped in for Non Birds