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| Agenda Item 11 | EIHA 24/11/01-Annex.03  Original English |
| OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic | |
| Meeting of the Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)  Madrid (Spain) and on-line: 15-19 April 2024 | |

Subsea Cables Task Group 2024-2025 Terms of Reference

Background and purpose

1. Having completed the updated to the OSPAR [Subsea Cables within the OSPAR Maritime Area: Background document on technical considerations and potential environmental impacts](https://www.ospar.org/documents?v=52457), the Task Group will progress work in 2024 and 2025 to refine the [Guidelines on Best Environmental Practice (BEP) in Cable Laying and Operation](https://www.ospar.org/documents?d=32910) (Revised in 2017).

Participants

2. The Task Group will be convened by the UK (Adrian Judd) and ESCA (John Wrottesley) and is open to all OSPAR Contracting Parties and Observers.

Scope of Work

3. The Task Group will identify and progress updates to the 2017 Revised guidance document. The full details are to be identified by the task group, but an initial review indicated the following observations which this update should consider:

* 1. “Section 2 – Submarine Cable Types” has been superseded by the detail presented in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the updated background document. As such, this section could be removed / simplified and replaced with references to the relevant cable typologies sections in the updated background document.
  2. “Section 3 – Potential environmental impacts associated with submarine cables” has been superseded by the detail presented in section 4 of the updated background document. As such, this section could be removed / simplified and replaced with references to the relevant details in the updated background document describing physical pressures (4.2); and substances, litter and energy (4.3).
  3. “Section 4 – Best environmental practice” should be retained but could be restructured to better align with the content of the updated background document and any edits made to the preceding sections of the guidance document.
  4. “Section 5 – Mitigation measures” should be retained but could be restructured to better align with the content of the updated background document and any edits made to the preceding sections of the guidance document and updated in accordance with latest available best practice and research.
  5. “Section 6 – Environmental Impact Assessment” should be retained but could be refined to better align with the content of the updated background document and can provide guidance for best practices regarding environmental assessment of subsea cable activities.
  6. “Section 7 – Knowledge gaps” should be retained but could be refined to better align with the content of the updated background document with the inclusion of more up to date research and evidence.
  7. “Section 8 – Conclusion” should be retained but refined to better align with the content of the updated background document and any edits made to the preceding sections of the guidance document.
  8. Any other matters as advised by the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee.

Working procedures

4. The Task Group reports to the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee.