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1 **Headland rip very-low-frequency fluctuations and surf zone eddies**
2 **during high-energy wave events**

3 Arthur Mouragues,^a Kévin Martins,^a Philippe Bonneton,^a and Bruno Castelle^a

4 ^a *CNRS, UMR 5805 EPOC, University of Bordeaux, 33615 Pessac, France*

5 *Corresponding author:* Arthur Mouragues, arthur.mouragues@u-bordeaux.fr

6 ABSTRACT: A wave group-resolving model is used to investigate the driving mechanisms and the
7 spatio-temporal variability of very-low-frequency (VLF) fluctuations of an headland deflection rip,
8 measured during a 4-m oblique wave event. Surf zone eddies (SZE) occurring in the presence of a
9 strongly-sheared longshore current V at a longshore-uniform beach are first modelled. The spectral
10 signature and the variability of SZE are displayed and compared with the literature. The model
11 is then used to explore the dynamics of vorticity in the surf zone and against a headland under
12 energetic oblique wave conditions. The resulting weakly-sheared V is found to host large-scale
13 SZE propagating towards the headland at a speed decreasing seaward. Vorticity animations and
14 spectral diagrams indicate that VLF fluctuations of the deflection rip are driven by the deflection
15 of the upstream SZE. In line with measurements, periods of 40 min to 1 h dominate the spectrum
16 hundreds of meters from the headland at low tide. At high tide, vorticity spectra in the rip are much
17 narrower than in the surf zone, suggesting that the headland enforces the merging of SZE. This
18 mechanism is further analysed using idealized simulations with varying headland lengths, aiming
19 at extending traditional deflection patterns at the VLF scale. Finally, we discuss the existence of a
20 continuum in SZE driving mechanisms, going from fully wave group-driven to both wave group-
21 and shear instability-driven SZE for weakly- and strongly-sheared V , respectively. This continuum
22 suggests the importance of wave groups to produce SZE under energetic wave conditions.

23 1. Introduction

24 Surf zone eddies (SZE) are two-dimensional horizontal vorticity motions typically associated
25 with frequencies as low as a few millihertz, namely within the very-low-frequency (VLF) band
26 (*e.g.* MacMahan et al. 2004; Reniers et al. 2007). Besides broadly contributing to mixing
27 and dispersion processes in the nearshore (*e.g.* Clark et al. 2010), SZE can also affect the spatio-
28 temporal variability of longshore currents, thus impacting the transport of sediments and pollutants
29 (Deigaard et al. 1995). Several SZE driving mechanisms have been proposed (*e.g.* Bowen and
30 Holman 1989; Long and Özkan-Haller 2009; Feddersen 2014). The first one that was put forward
31 is associated with the presence of shear waves.

32 Shear waves are alongshore progressive vortical structures propagating in the surf zone with
33 periods and alongshore wavelengths of $O(100)$ s and $O(100)$ m, respectively. These motions are
34 commonly observed in the presence of a relatively strong mean (time-averaged) longshore current
35 ($O(1)$ m/s; *e.g.* Oltman-Shay et al. 1989; Dodd et al. 1992) and result from instabilities due to
36 cross-shore shear of the longshore current (Bowen and Holman 1989). They appear in the form of
37 a meandering longshore current depicted by SZE with rather large velocity fluctuations. Observed
38 root-mean-squared velocity amplitudes of such SZE can reach half of the mean longshore current
39 magnitude (Oltman-Shay et al. 1989; Lippmann et al. 1999; Noyes et al. 2004). These highly-
40 energetic motions can therefore span the entire surf zone, altering the nearshore circulation and, in
41 particular, the cross-shore distribution of the longshore current. The presence of shear instability-
42 driven SZE can lead to a substantial cross-shore mixing of momentum in the surf zone, resulting
43 in a smoother longshore current profile (Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999). Surf zone eddies can also
44 be ejected seaward giving rise to spatially- and temporally- transient rip currents (Özkan-Haller
45 and Kirby 1999), representing a dangerous hazard for swimmers (Castelle et al. 2016).

46 Shear wave motions in the nearshore were first theoretically explained by Bowen and Holman
47 (1989), who highlighted the importance of the seaward shear of the longshore current (cross-shore
48 gradient of the longshore current magnitude) to characterize these instabilities. For a strongly-
49 sheared longshore current, the latter becomes unstable, disturbances (or unstable modes) with
50 different wavelengths (wavenumber) are generated and propagate in the same direction of the
51 longshore current at a speed proportional to the longshore current peak. This was confirmed by
52 Oltman-Shay et al. (1989) who analysed measurements collected at a longshore-uniform sandy

53 beach under moderately-energetic and highly-oblique wave conditions (offshore significant wave
54 height H_s of 1.36 m and peak angle of wave incidence θ_p of 30°). Since the works of Bowen
55 and Holman (1989) and Oltman-Shay et al. (1989), shear wave motions have been investigated in
56 many studies which have been extensively reviewed in Dodd et al. (2000). The spectral signature
57 of shear waves is very specific within the longshore wavenumber-frequency (k - f) spectrum. Most
58 shear waves-related energy is spread around a relatively linear dispersion relation located outside of
59 the region of surface gravity motions, indicating that, at a given cross-shore position, all unstable
60 modes of these vorticity motions propagate at the same speed. By analysing the cross-shore
61 variability of shear waves, Noyes et al. (2004) suggested that the celerity of such motions is related
62 to the local value of the mean longshore current. Subsequent two-dimensional horizontal (2DH)
63 modelling studies have highlighted the mechanisms for shear wave energy dissipation through
64 bottom friction and horizontal mixing (*e.g.* Dodd et al. 1992; Falqués and Iranzo 1994; Özkan-
65 Haller and Kirby 1999). In particular, Özkan-Haller and Kirby (1999) used a phase-averaged
66 model to depict complex vortex structures that result from shear instabilities. These structures are
67 essentially made of energetic vorticity fronts and detaching eddies.

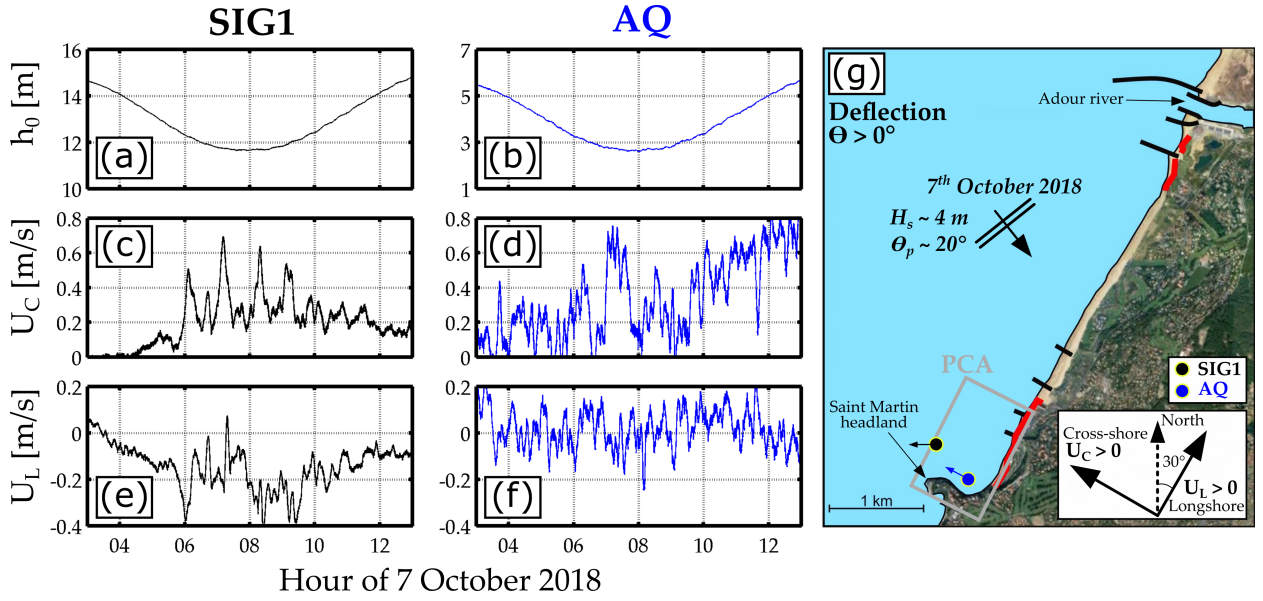
68 Including the effect of wave groups, Long and Özkan-Haller (2009) showed that the production
69 of vorticity due to wave groups and shear instabilities can be of the same order. The inclusion of
70 wave groups was shown to result in broader k - f spectra and a more chaotic vorticity field. These
71 authors also showed that the vorticity due to wave groups was dominant over shear instabilities
72 for weakly-oblique incident waves. Using a phase-resolving model, Feddersen (2014) showed that
73 breaking wave vorticity forcing, which includes both breaking wave group and individual wave
74 vorticity forcing, are the dominant vorticity generation mechanisms, compared to shear instabilities,
75 except for highly-oblique large waves. Overall, these results suggest that SZE are not necessarily
76 always driven by shear instabilities but are driven by mechanisms that may change depending on
77 the longshore current profile which can substantially vary with incident wave conditions.

78 A significant number of measurement and modelling studies have investigated the spatio-temporal
79 variability of surf zone eddies in the presence of a longshore current. However, most of these
80 studies have been conducted for SZE propagating along longshore-uniform (barred or planar)
81 sandy beaches under low- to moderate- energy wave conditions, with H_s rarely exceeding 2 m. The
82 eddy regime under energetic wave conditions is therefore poorly understood. For such conditions,

83 the longshore current is generally wider, potentially resulting in a different seaward longshore
84 current shear than under less energetic wave conditions. The cross-shore structure of the longshore
85 current is yet known to play an important role in the shear wave regime such as their characteristic
86 spatial and temporal scales and the range of unstable modes (*e.g.* Bowen and Holman 1989; Dodd
87 and Thornton 1990; Baquerizo et al. 2001). Although never addressed, the variability of SZE and
88 their driving mechanisms, under high-energy conditions can be potentially different than under
89 low- to moderate-energy conditions. Lastly, there is a lack of knowledge on the behaviour of SZE
90 propagating along longshore non-uniform beaches (Dodd et al. 2000). In particular, the dynamics
91 of SZE propagating over complex morphologies with geological constraints, such as bedrocks or
92 headlands that are commonly present along rugged coastlines, is virtually unknown.

93 Along rugged or artificial coastlines, the presence of physical boundaries, such as natural head-
94 lands or man-made structures, can significantly disrupt the nearshore circulation. Under obliquely-
95 incident wave conditions, wave breaking induces a longshore current that can be deflected against
96 boundaries (*e.g.* Scott et al. 2016), creating a so-called headland deflection rip (Castelle et al. 2016).
97 This type of rip was measured during a three-week field experiment conducted at La Petite Cham-
98 bre d'Amour (PCA; Anglet, SW France) beach in October 2018 (Mouragues et al. 2020b). The
99 field site comprises complex morphological features such as bedrocks and a 500-m rocky headland
100 (Saint Martin headland in Figure 1g). During a 4-m oblique wave event, the longshore current was
101 deflected seaward against the headland, resulting in a strong tidally-modulated deflection rip ex-
102 tending hundreds of meters offshore (Figure 1a-f). At low tide, energetic very-low-frequency (VLF)
103 fluctuations of the deflection rip were measured 800 m offshore, with dominant (most energetic)
104 periods around 30 min and 1 h (see SIG1 in Figure 1; Mouragues et al. 2020a). These fluctuations
105 were successfully reproduced by Mouragues et al. (2021) using a wave group-resolving 2DH model
106 (XBeach SurfBeat mode, hereafter XB-SB, Roelvink et al. 2009) but their driving mechanisms
107 and their spatio-temporal variability were not addressed. Following Mouragues et al. (2021), the
108 present study uses XB-SB to investigate these fluctuations and their driving mechanisms.

115 The paper is organised as follows. The Section 2 briefly presents the field site and the experimental
116 setup. In Section 3, the XB-SB model, its implementation and methods for analysing rotational
117 motions which includes the computation of their k - f spectra and their bulk characteristics are
118 described. In Section 4, the model is used to simulate surf zone eddies in the presence of a



109 FIG. 1. Time series of water depth h_0 (a and b), 5 min-running averaged cross-shore velocity U_C (c and d)
 110 and longshore velocity U_L (e and f) measured at two instrument locations (SIG1 and AQ, respectively) on the
 111 7th of October 2018. The panel g shows the location of the field site (PCA; grey rectangle), the two instrument
 112 locations (black and blue points) and the approximate direction of the measured current (black and blue arrows
 113 based at the points). The offshore significant wave height and peak angle of wave incidence (H_s and θ_p) are also
 114 indicated. Note that the bathymetry map and the entire array of instruments are shown in Figure 2.

119 longshore current measured during the SandyDuck experiment (Duck, North Carolina). This first
 120 modelling experiment ensures that the model is able to reproduce SZE at a longshore-uniform
 121 sandy beach under moderate wave conditions. Model performances are assessed by comparing
 122 bulk characteristics of eddies and their spatio-temporal variability with previous studies. The
 123 ability of the model to reproduce SZE observed during the SandyDuck setup suggests that it can be
 124 used to simulate such motions occurring over more complex morphology and under more energetic
 125 wave conditions and to further explore their variability. Hence, in Section 5, we investigate surf
 126 zone eddies and headland rip VLF fluctuations at PCA under energetic wave conditions and for
 127 different tidal levels. For this investigation, 20 hour-long model simulations with a constant tidal
 128 level are set up in order to simulate a significant number VLF fluctuations (with periods $< O(1)$
 129 h) and to fix the cross-shore location of wave breaking, thus removing the tidal modulation of surf
 130 zone circulation which was strong in the measurement dataset (see Figure 1a-f). These model

131 setups therefore subsequently allow addressing, through statistically-significant spectrum analysis
132 and a stationary state of VLF surf zone currents, the correct exploration of such motions. The
133 mean (time-averaged) circulation patterns and the presence of SZE at low tide and high tide are
134 then emphasized. The last part of Section 5 presents the spatio-temporal (frequency) variability
135 of vorticity in the surf zone and along the headland, showing that VLF fluctuations measured and
136 modelled off the headland tip are related with SZE propagating in the upstream longshore current.
137 In Section 6, the findings of this study are discussed. The discussion includes the control of
138 morphology on VLF fluctuations, with suggestions for future research. The effect of wave group
139 variability on surf zone rotational motions is also discussed, suggesting that wave group forcing
140 may be the primary driver of VLF fluctuations of the rip during the high-energy wave event, rather
141 than shear instabilities of the longshore current. Conclusions and perspectives for future works are
142 finally drawn in Section 7.

143 **2. Field experiment**

144 From the 3rd to the 26th of October 2018, a field experiment was conducted at La Petite Chambre
145 d'Amour (PCA; Figure 2a) beach located in Anglet in the south of the Aquitaine coast (SW France).
146 This rugged coast is a mesotidal high-energy environment that is regularly exposed to energetic
147 Atlantic swells coming from the W-NW direction (Abadie et al. 2005). PCA is a double-barred
148 sandy beach located at the southern end of a 4-km embayment, comprising six groynes, bounded
149 by the Adour river to the North and by the Saint Martin 500-m rocky headland to the South (Figure
150 1g). The reader is referred to Mouragues et al. (2020a,b) for a detailed description of the field site
151 and of the experiment.

152 A large array of instruments were deployed to measure and study the natural variability of
153 wave-induced circulation at a high-energy geologically-constrained beach. In particular, Acoustic
154 Doppler Current Profilers (ADCPs) were installed near the headland to collect high-frequency
155 Eulerian velocity measurements (Figure 2a). On the 7th of October 2018, obliquely-incident
156 energetic waves ($H_s \approx 4.0$ m and $\theta_p \approx 20^\circ$) induced an intense deflection rip flowing against the
157 headland. At low tide, high velocities were measured at the most offshore ADCP located 800-m
158 offshore sitting in 12-m depth (Figure 1 and 2a). Time-averaged current velocities showed energetic
159 VLF fluctuations with dominant periods of around 30 min and 1 h, and associated peak velocities

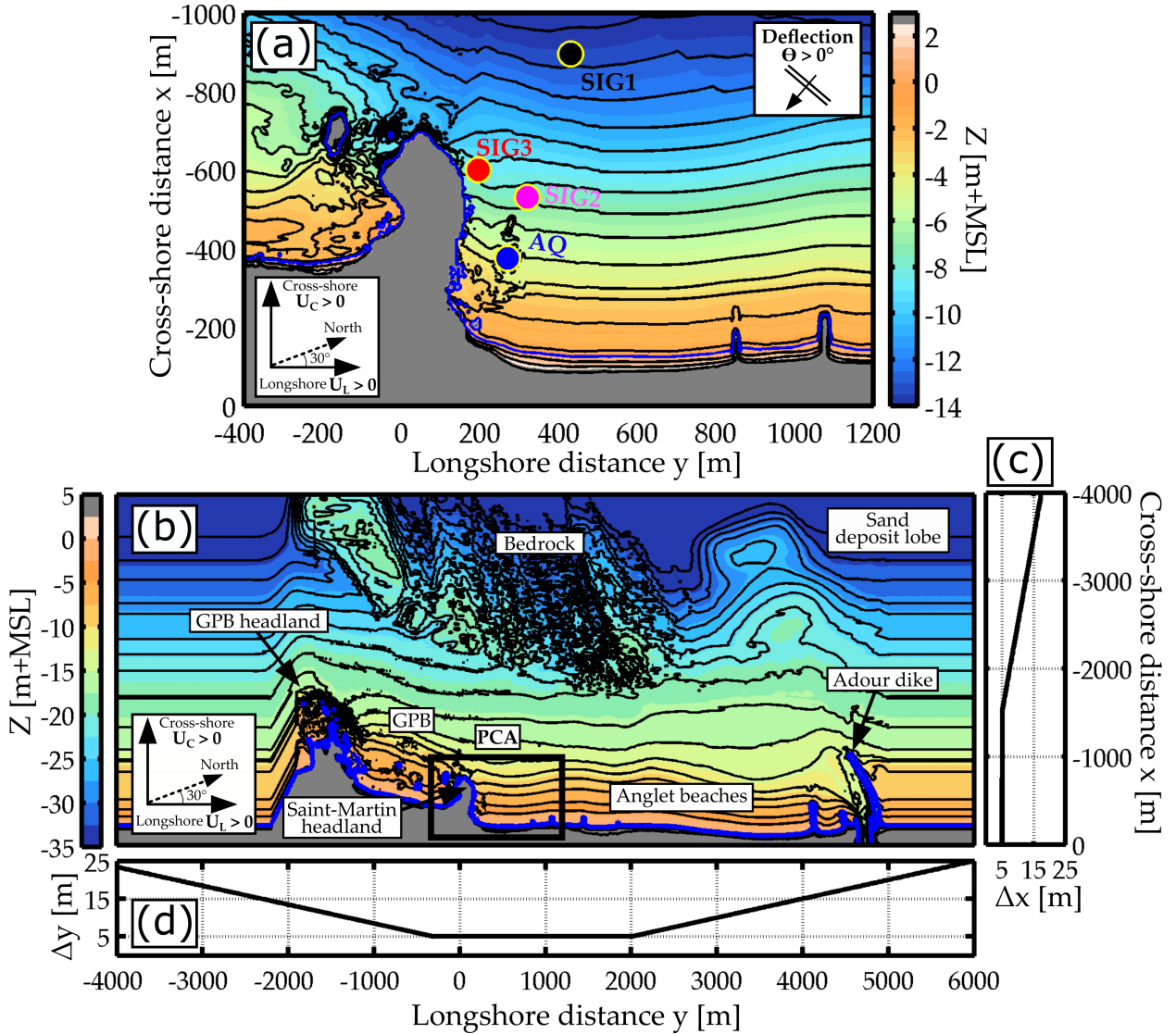
160 up to 0.7 m/s (see *e.g.* Figure 1c,e). These fluctuations were numerically reproduced by Mouragues
161 et al. (2021) using XB-SB which model domain is shown in Figure 2b. The analysis of modelling
162 results further suggested that the rip actually extended up to 1600 m offshore and was strongly
163 modulated by tides (see Figure 1a-f; Mouragues et al. 2020a, 2021). The modelling approach used
164 in the present study is similar to that of Mouragues et al. (2021) and is described in the following
165 section.

171 **3. Modelling surf zone vortical motions**

172 *a. Modelling strategies*

173 Over the past decades, several numerical modeling strategies have been employed in order to
174 simulate surf zone eddies. These approaches mostly differ in terms of the wave scale resolved,
175 ranging from phase-averaged models excluding wave groups (hereafter referred to as fully phase-
176 averaged models; *e.g.* Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999; Noyes et al. 2005) or including wave groups
177 (hereafter referred to as wave group-resolving models; *e.g.* Reniers et al. 2007; Long and Özkan-
178 Haller 2009) to models simulating motions at the individual wave scale (Feddersen 2014). Fully
179 phase-averaged models have been applied to assess, in particular, the effect of bottom friction and
180 horizontal mixing on shear waves and their cross-shore variability. Because these models use a
181 steady forcing to drive the nearshore circulation (*i.e.* averaged over many wave groups), they can
182 only reproduce very-low-frequency (VLF) scales ($f < 0.004$ Hz) associated with shear instabilities
183 of the mean current, and not vorticity motions at the wave group scale. However, accounting for
184 the variability of the wave forcing at scales at least similar to wave groups is essential for better
185 reproducing surf zone rotational motions (Long and Özkan-Haller 2009; Feddersen 2014).

186 Feddersen (2014) used a Boussinesq model to simulate the dynamics of SZE that were measured
187 during the SandyDuck experiment. Such a modelling approach allows the simulation of the
188 vorticity field generated by shear instabilities and through wave breaking at both the individual and
189 wave group scales. However, the sub-metric spatial resolution required to accurately reproduce
190 motions at this scale still makes the use of these models computationally challenging over large
191 spatial domains ($> O(10)$ km²) and for long periods of time (temporal scale of a storm). In
192 this context, wave group-resolving models appear as a good compromise since they are much
193 less costly than fully phase-resolving approaches while keeping the ability of these models to



166 FIG. 2. Bathymetry map of the field site (PCA; (a); black lines show 1-m spaced elevation contours) which
 167 location is shown by a black rectangle in the full model domain ((b); black lines show 2-m spaced elevation
 168 contours). Colour indicates elevation relative to the mean sea level (m+MSL), blue line is the MSL contour and
 169 coloured points indicate ADCP location. (c) and (d) show the cross-shore (Δx) and longshore (Δy) mesh step
 170 size, respectively.

194 reproduce the vorticity generated by wave groups. Wave group-resolving models such as XB-SB
 195 use a wave forcing varying at the wave group scale to drive the nearshore circulation, allowing
 196 to simulate low-frequency surf zone motions which include infragravity and VLF motions. This
 197 approach has been used by several authors to reproduce the low frequency variability of circulation

198 along rip-channelled open beaches (Reniers et al. 2006, 2007) and to simulate vorticity motions
199 that result from obliquely-incident wave groups along a longshore-uniform open beach (Long
200 and Özkan-Haller 2009). The XB-SB wave group-resolving approach has here been chosen to
201 investigate the driving mechanism and the spatio-temporal variability of VLF fluctuations of the
202 deflection rip at PCA. XBeach is a morphodynamic model initially developed to reproduce storm
203 response of sandy beaches where infragravity swash is dominant (Roelvink et al. 2009). It solves
204 the coupled two-dimensional horizontal (2DH) equations for wave propagation, flow, sediment
205 transport and bottom changes (see Roelvink et al. 2009 for a model description). The short-wave
206 effects on currents are modelled through the radiation stress gradients approach (Longuet-Higgins
207 and Stewart 1964). In this paper, sediment transport and bottom change modules are disabled as
208 only hydrodynamics (longshore current and deflection rip) is investigated.

209 *b. Implementation of the XBeach model*

210 Based on the input wave spectrum, the Surfbeat approach uses a random phase selection procedure
211 to reconstruct time series of free surface elevation, from which the short-wave energy varying at
212 the wave-group scale can be extracted and used to force the spectral wave model (see Roelvink
213 et al. 2009, 2018). The circulation model is forced with elevations and currents corresponding to
214 the incident bound infragravity waves computed from the generated time series of surface elevation
215 following Herbers et al. (1994). The free surface elevation time series are generated using a random
216 set of phases, but the model allows them to be saved so that the exact same boundary conditions
217 can be used between numerical tests. This method will often be used in this paper to analyse the
218 spatial-temporal variability of hydrodynamics (*e.g.* vorticity) between different model setup (*e.g.*
219 morphological setup, free parameter calibration).

220 The XBeach model includes several free parameters requiring calibration with measurements.
221 For the modelling experiments carried out in this paper, three free parameters were found to
222 significantly impact the modelled hydrodynamics : the breaking parameter γ , a bed friction Chezy
223 coefficient C and a mixing free parameter c_s . The first two parameters are important, in particular,
224 to the surf zone width and to the intensity of the longshore current, respectively. The third
225 parameter alters the value of the eddy viscosity ν_h that controls the horizontal mixing. Increasing
226 the eddy viscosity is known to have a damping effect on shear instabilities along with increasing

227 their longshore length scales (*e.g.* Falqués and Iranzo 1994; Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999). In
 228 XBeach, ν_h can be parametrised, using a Smagorinsky model, as a function of c_s , velocity spatial
 229 gradients and mesh step sizes :

$$\nu_h = c_s^2 2^{1/2} \sqrt{\left(\frac{\partial u}{\partial x}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{\partial v}{\partial y}\right)^2 + \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial u}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial v}{\partial y}\right)^2} \Delta x \Delta y, \quad (1)$$

230 where Δx and Δy are the mesh step sizes.

231 Calibration of these three parameters was made by finding their values that minimize dis-
 232 crepancies between model outputs and measurements (running-averaged velocities or rotational
 233 velocities). Model calibration results are described in Sections 4 and 5 and are also indicated in
 234 Table A1 (see Appendices). Finally, it should be noted that the effect of currents on waves was
 235 neglected.

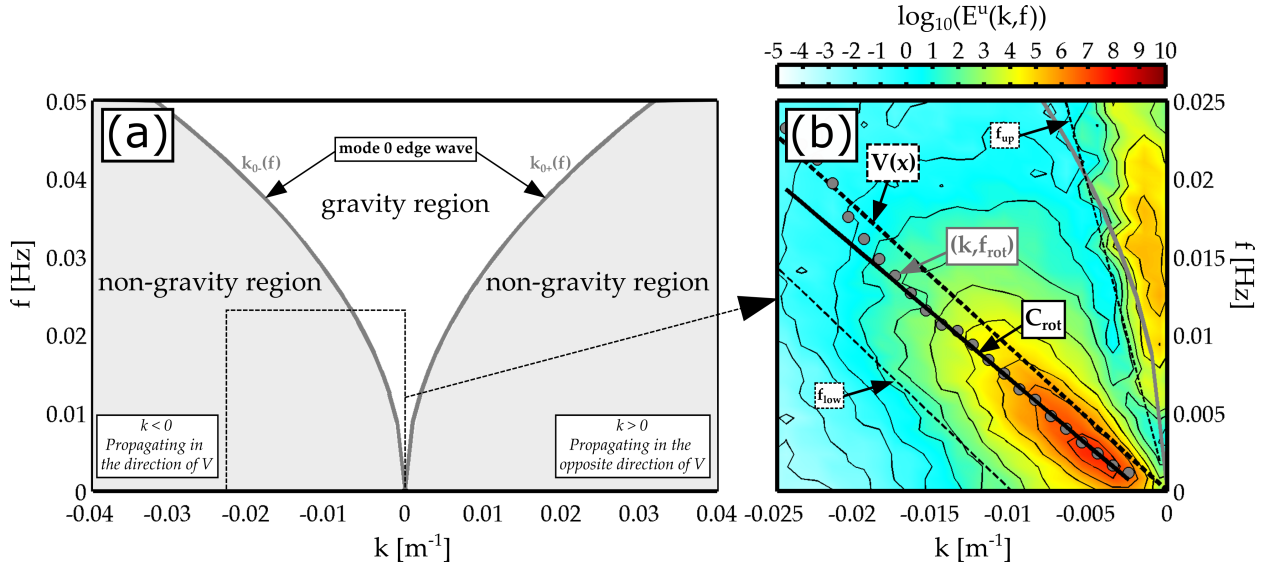
236 *c. Vortical motion analysis*

237 1) WAVENUMBER-FREQUENCY SPECTRUM

238 To investigate surf zone eddy motions, wavenumber-frequency spectra ($k - f$ where k is the
 239 longshore wavenumber in m^{-1}) of the cross-shore velocity u , the longshore velocity v and of the
 240 associated vorticity $q = dv/dx - du/dy$ are computed. Along a longshore transect located at a
 241 given cross-shore position, modelled u , v and q are outputted every 10 s (sampling frequency f_s
 242 = 0.1 Hz) and every Δy m (longshore mesh size; sampling longshore wave number $k_s = 1/\Delta y$)
 243 and stored into 2D-matrices. A 2D-FFT is then applied to these matrices to estimate the energy
 244 density at each wavenumber and frequency $E(k, f)$. Wavenumber-frequency spectra of u , v and q
 245 are hereafter referred to as $E^u(k, f)$, $E^v(k, f)$ and $E^q(k, f)$, respectively.

246 Wavenumber-frequency spectra are typically partitioned into a gravity region and a non-gravity
 247 region (see Figure 3a) which are separated by the mode 0 edge wave dispersion line which is
 248 computed following Eckart (1951). The gravity region typically hosts gravity wave motions such
 249 as edge waves which can remain trapped within the surf zone and propagate down the coast or leaky
 250 waves which may exit the surf zone and propagate seaward. On the other hand, the non-gravity
 251 region may host energetic rotational motions such as shear waves. Figure 3b shows a typical
 252 $E(k, f)$ that is computed in this study and highlights the presence of vorticity motions propagating

253 in the direction of the mean longshore current V ($k < 0$). The spectral signature of these motions
 254 resembles the spectral signature of shear waves consisting of a near-linear dispersion line and for
 255 which a representative eddy celerity can be estimated (*e.g.* Oltman-Shay et al. 1989; Özkan-Haller
 256 and Kirby 1999; Noyes et al. 2004).



257 FIG. 3. (a) Schematic of a k - f spectrum ($E(k, f)$) illustrating gravity and non-gravity regions (after MacMahan
 258 et al. 2004). These regions are separated by the mode 0 edge wave (gray lines; computed with slope $\tan(\beta) =$
 259 0.03). (b) Zoom of a modelled k - f spectrum of cross-shore velocities $E^u(k, f)$ showing eddies propagating in
 260 the direction of the longshore current. The solid gray line shows the mode 0 edge wave dispersion line. Thin
 261 dashed black lines indicate the upper and lower dispersion lines (f_{up} and f_{low} , respectively) used to compute the
 262 rotational motion frequency $f_{rot}(k)$ (gray points). The black line shows the dispersion line resulting from the
 263 fitting of $k - f_{rot}$ and whose slope is the estimated eddy celerity C_{rot} . The thick dashed black line shows the
 264 dispersion line of the local longshore current magnitude $V(x)$.

265 2) EDDY CELERITY

266 A representative eddy celerity C_{rot} can be estimated as the $E(k, f)$ ridge slope. To estimate
 267 C_{rot} , a method similar to Özkan-Haller and Kirby (1999) is employed. For each wavenumber, a
 268 rotational motion frequency $f_{rot}(k)$ is computed by integrating $E(k, f)$ over a rotational motion

269 frequency region :

$$f_{\text{rot}}(k) = \frac{\int_{f_{\text{low}}}^{f_{\text{up}}} f E(k, f) df}{\int_{f_{\text{low}}}^{f_{\text{up}}} E(k, f) df}, \quad (2)$$

270 where f_{up} and f_{low} are the upper and lower cutoff frequency lines delimiting the k - f region
 271 attributed to surf zone eddies (dashed thin black lines in Figure 3b). These cutoff lines were set
 272 to $f_{\text{up}} = 4V(x)k$ and $f_{\text{low}} = V(x)(k+0.01)$, with $V(x)$ being the value of the mean longshore current
 273 (dashed thick black line in Figure 3b) at the cross-shore position x , where the longshore transect
 274 is located. This method leads to the points k - f_{rot} (grey points in Figure 3b) that are used to fit
 275 a straight dispersion line whose slope corresponds to the estimated C_{rot} (plain thick black line
 276 in Figure 3b). For the fitting procedure, each data point k - f_{rot} is weighted by the total energy
 277 $\int_{f_{\text{low}}}^{f_{\text{up}}} E(k, f) df$. It should be noted that, as its name suggests, C_{rot} is a celerity representative of the
 278 most energetic rotational motions. As shown by the following results, interactions between eddies
 279 may occur which tends to increase discrepancies between the individual eddy celerity and C_{rot} .
 280 Note that the spectral signature of such eddy interactions is emphasized by the relative broadness
 281 of the k - f spectrum (see *e.g.* Figure 3b)

282 3) ROTATIONAL VELOCITIES

283 The total frequency spectrum $E(f)$ is computed by integrating $E(k, f)$ over all wavenumber as :

$$E(f) = \int_{-k_N}^{+k_N} E(k, f) dk, \quad (3)$$

284 where $k_N = k_s/2$ is the Nyquist wave number. The spectrum of rotational motions $E_{\text{rot}}(f)$ is
 285 calculated by integrating $E(k, f)$ over regions outside the mode 0 edge wave dispersion line
 286 ($k_{0-}(f)$ and $k_{0+}(f)$; see Figure 3a) :

$$E_{\text{rot}}(f) = E(f) - E_{\text{gw}}(f), \quad (4)$$

287 where the spectrum of irrotational motions $E_{\text{gw}}(f)$ is given by :

$$E_{\text{gw}}(f) = \int_{k_{0-}(f)}^{k_{0+}(f)} E(k, f) dk. \quad (5)$$

288 The total, cross- and longshore root-mean-square rotational velocities ($U_{\text{rms,rot}}$, $u_{\text{rms,rot}}$ and $v_{\text{rms,rot}}$,
 289 respectively) are then computed as :

$$(U_{\text{rms,rot}})^2 = \int_{f_1}^{f_2} (E_{\text{rot}}^u(f) + E_{\text{rot}}^v(f)) df, \quad (6a)$$

$$(u_{\text{rms,rot}})^2 = \int_{f_1}^{f_2} E_{\text{rot}}^u(f) df, \quad (6b)$$

$$(v_{\text{rms,rot}})^2 = \int_{f_1}^{f_2} E_{\text{rot}}^v(f) df, \quad (6c)$$

290 where f_1 and f_2 are the lower and upper cutoff frequencies. It should be noted that these rotational
 291 velocities are velocities associated with rotational motions which include motions resulting from
 292 shear instabilities of the mean longshore current and from wave group forcing (when included).

293 **4. Assessment of the model at a longshore-uniform sandy beach**

294 In this section, the model ability to accurately simulate the dynamics of surf zone eddies propa-
 295 gating at a longshore-uniform sandy beach is investigated. This section serves as a model validation
 296 step for simulating SZE arising over a 2D barred beach under moderate energy wave conditions.
 297 In addition, a brief sensitivity analysis to different parameters is conducted, whose results are
 298 compared with previous studies.

299 The model is setup at the longshore-uniform barred sandy beach of Duck (North Carolina), for
 300 which many shear wave studies build on (see Dodd et al. 2000 for a shear wave study review). The
 301 model is calibrated against measurements collected on the 1st of November 1997 as part of the
 302 SandyDuck experiment described in Noyes et al. (2004). This event was characterised by highly-
 303 oblique and moderate-energy wave conditions, with offshore $H_s = 1.49$ m and mean wave angle
 304 $\theta = 21^\circ$. The latter conditions produced a strong and narrow longshore current V , peaking around
 305 0.9 m/s (time-averaged) with a seaward width Δ (cross-shore distance between the peak position
 306 and the offshore near-zero current intensity) of around 150 m (Noyes et al. 2005; Feddersen 2014).
 307 This strongly-sheared current (mean seaward shear $V_{\text{max}}/\Delta \approx 0.006 \text{ s}^{-1}$) was unstable and hosted
 308 longshore-propagating surf zone eddies driven, at least partially, by shear instabilities (Noyes et al.
 309 2005; Feddersen 2014).

310 In the following sections, XB-SB is first calibrated against measurements presented in Noyes
311 et al. (2005). The calibrated model is then used to investigate the spatio-temporal variability of
312 vorticity which is compared with previous studies. The computational domain extends 1000 m and
313 1000 m in the cross-shore x and longshore y direction, respectively, with mesh resolution set to 2
314 m. The bathymetry is made of a longshore-uniform cross-shore depth profile that is representative
315 of the instrumented transect, with the shoreline and a submerged inner sandbar located around $x =$
316 110 m and $x = 160$ m.

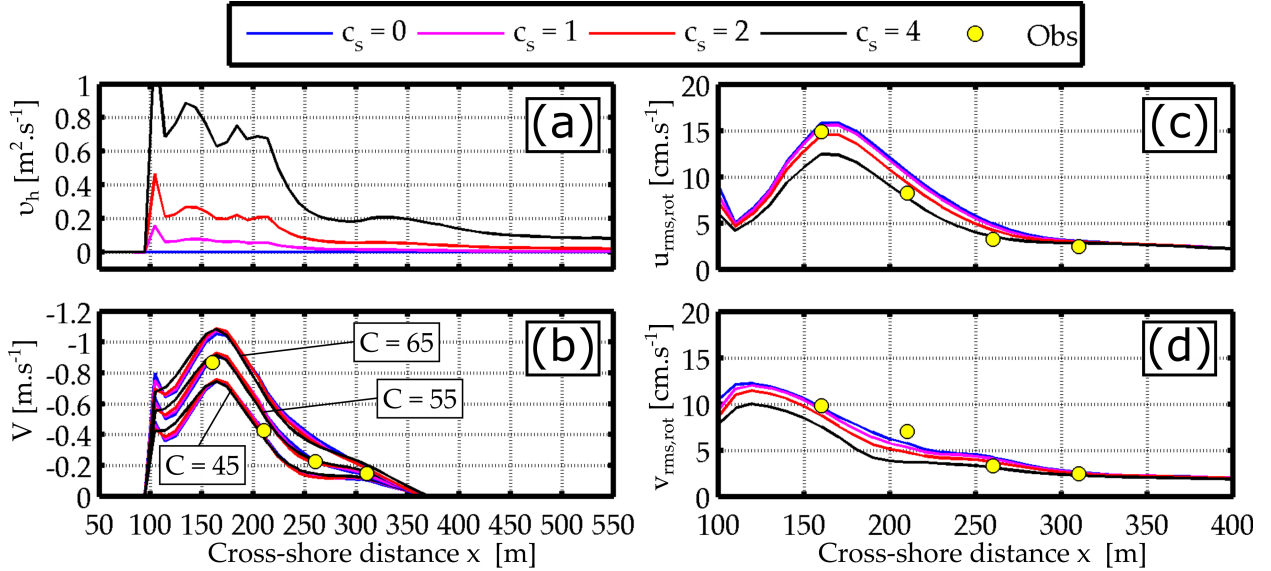
317 The model is forced by a Jonswap spectrum with the same bulk parameters as measurements
318 (H_s , peak period T_p , θ and directional spreading σ_θ) estimated at the 8-m depth pressure gauges
319 array (Long 1996). Similar to Noyes et al. (2005), the period of simulation is set to 8 h with the
320 last 4 h used for analysis. It should be noted that a sensitivity analysis to the longshore domain
321 length and mesh resolution was conducted and indicated that these parameters have a little impact
322 on eddy bulk characteristics (not shown). Note that a mesh resolution of 1 m and 2 m gave similar
323 results while a mesh resolution of 5 m resulted in lower rotational velocities.

324 *a. Model calibration*

325 Figure 4 displays the sensitivity of the time-averaged longshore current $V(x)$ (Figure 4b) and
326 rotational velocities (Figure 4c, d) to bottom friction and horizontal mixing. Bottom friction Chezy
327 coefficient $C = 55 \text{ m}^{1/2}/\text{s}$ best replicates the measured $V(x)$ while the eddy viscosity coefficient
328 $c_s = 1$ correctly reproduces the spatial distribution of both cross-shore and longshore rotational
329 velocities. Both these parameter values are taken for the following analysis (see Table A1). Of
330 note, this eddy viscosity coefficient leads to a cross-shore profile of eddy viscosity (Figure 4a) that
331 is relatively similar to the ones shown in Özkan-Haller and Kirby (1999).

332 In line with previous studies (*e.g.* Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999), increasing the horizontal
333 mixing (increasing c_s) leads to less energetic rotational motion amplitudes. In addition, it should
334 be noted that XB-SB is slightly better able at computing these amplitudes compared to the fully
335 phase-averaged model used in Noyes et al. (2005). This is because including wave groups leads to
336 a broader spectrum than when excluding wave groups (Long and Özkan-Haller 2009). The control
337 of wave groups on the dynamics of rotational motions will be discussed in Section 6. Lastly,
338 it should be noted that a local bottom slope-dependent wave dissipation coefficient (following

339 Pezerat et al. 2021) was implemented and used for the SandyDuck modeling experiment. The
 340 latter implementation allows to prevent a substantial over-dissipation of incident wave energy
 341 occurring seaward of the bar. Such a slope-dependent coefficient was not used for the Anglet
 342 modeling experiment as the cross-shore distribution of the longshore current was not measured
 343 during the field experiment.



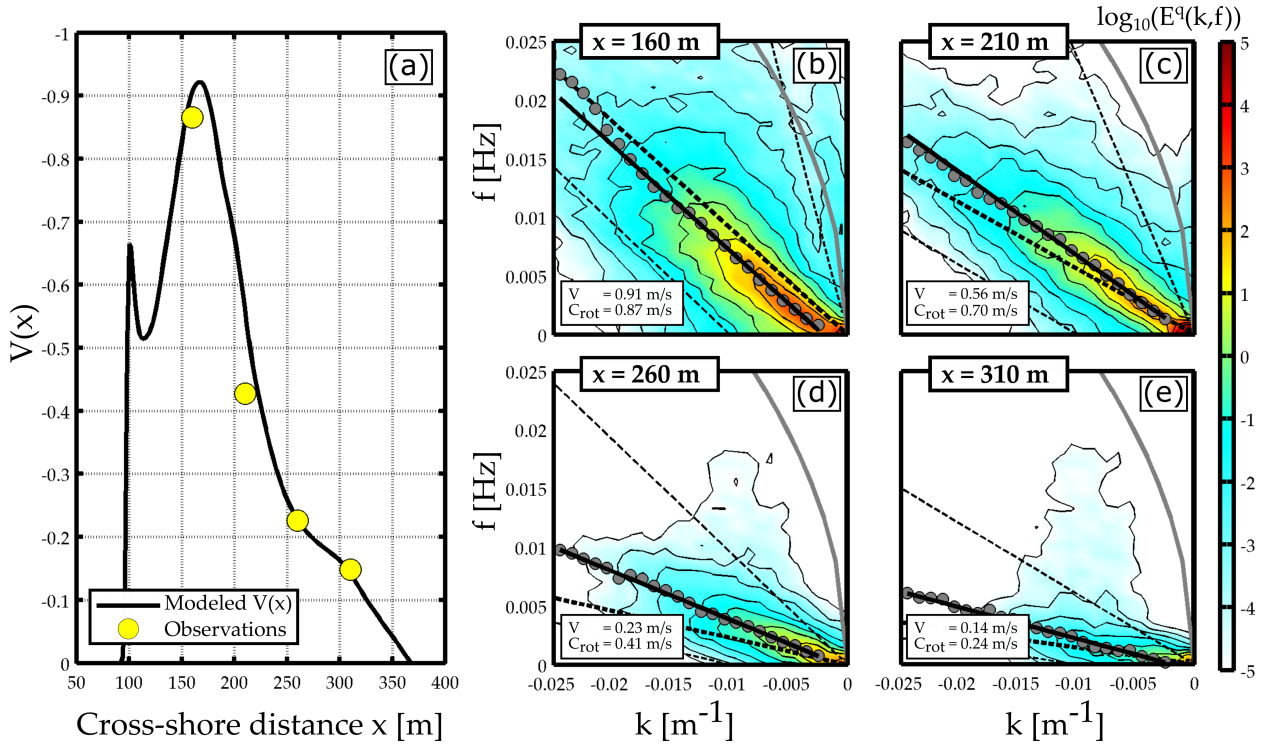
344 FIG. 4. Bottom friction (C) and horizontal mixing (c_s) coefficient sensitivity to the mean longshore current and
 345 to rotational motions (including shear waves). Cross-shore profile of the horizontal viscosity ν_h (a; for $C = 55$
 346 $\text{m}^{1/2}/\text{s}$), of the mean longshore current V (b) and of root-mean-square cross- and longshore rotational velocities
 347 $u_{\text{rms,rot}}$ and $v_{\text{rms,rot}}$ (c and d, respectively; for $C = 55 \text{ m}^{1/2}/\text{s}$). Yellow points indicate observations from Noyes
 348 et al. (2005).

349 *b. Surf zone eddy variability*

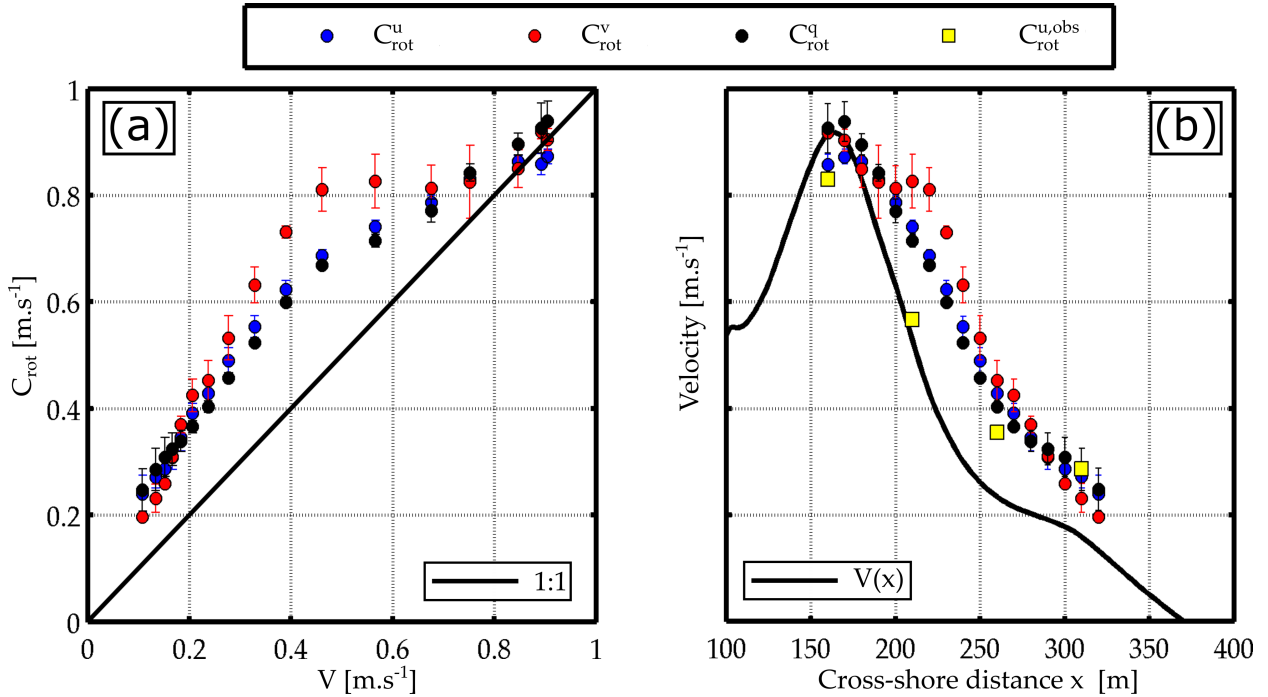
350 The calibrated model is now used to explore the spatio-temporal variability of vorticity. Figure 5
 351 shows wavenumber-frequency spectra of vorticity ($E^q(k, f)$) at four cross-shore positions seaward
 352 of the longshore current peak position. The spectra of modelled vorticity are in qualitative
 353 agreement with the spectra of observed velocities shown in Noyes et al. (2005), exhibiting, in
 354 particular, the presence of shear waves propagating in the direction of V . In line with previous
 355 studies, shear wave-related energy and the range of energetic frequencies decrease seaward. The
 356 most energetic longshore length and period are order of 200 m and 200 s, respectively. Because

357 both irrotational and rotational motions populate velocity spectra, shear wave motions are best
 358 detected using vorticity spectrum and will hereafter used to investigate rotational motions. An
 359 example of u , v and q spectra is provided in Figure B1 to illustrate this point.

360 Although the eddy celerity estimated from velocities can be up to 20 % higher than celerity
 361 estimated from vorticity, the entire set of estimated celerities are of the same order of magnitude
 362 and is proportional to the local value of the mean longshore current (see Figure 6), which is in
 363 agreement with past studies (Noyes et al. 2004, 2005). Eddy celerities reach the longshore current
 364 peak at its peak position and decrease seaward. For each estimated celerity, its standard deviation
 365 computed for different eddy viscosity coefficients is indicated, showing that horizontal mixing does
 366 not strongly impact eddy celerities (with a maximum deviation of 6 %), which is in line with the
 367 literature (Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999).



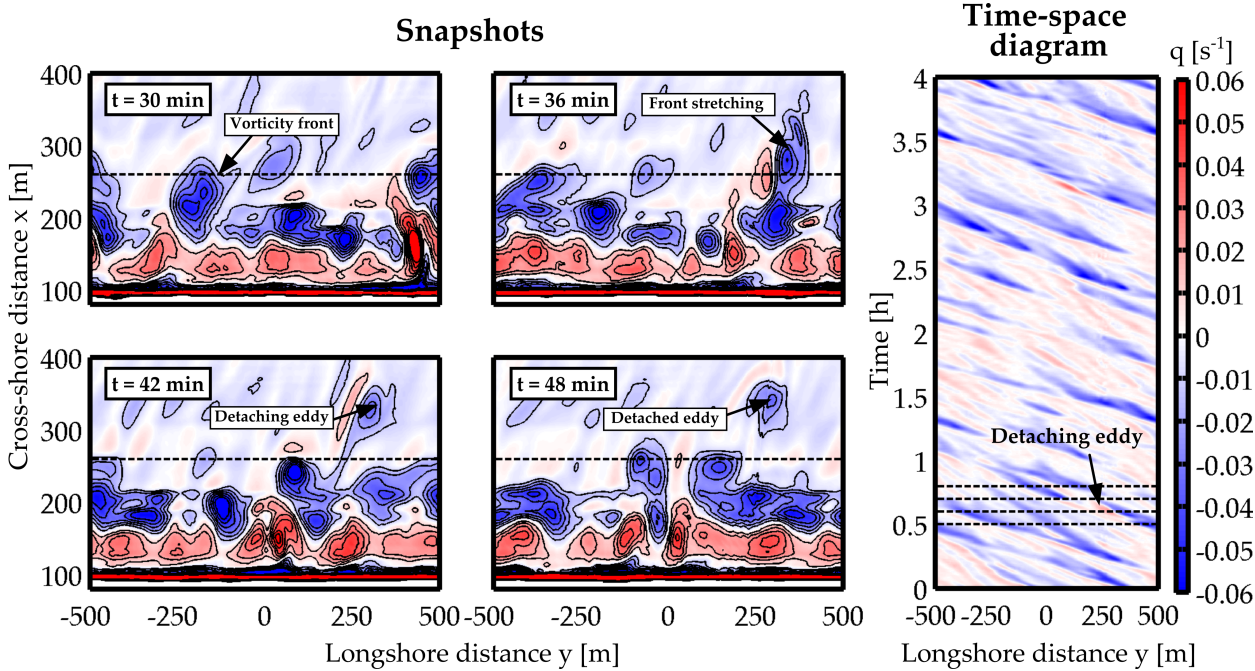
368 FIG. 5. (a) Cross-shore profile of the modelled mean longshore current $V(x)$. Yellow points indicate
 369 observations. (b)-(e) Modeled wavenumber-frequency spectra of vorticity q ($E^q(k, f)$) at the same cross-shore
 370 positions of observations ($x = 160, 210, 260$ and 310 m). For each panel, the local value of the mean longshore
 371 current V and the estimated eddy celerity C_{rot} are indicated. The definition of multiple dispersion lines is the
 372 same as in figure 3b.



373 FIG. 6. **(a)** Eddy celerity C_{rot} extracted from cross-shore velocities (blue; C_{rot}^u), longshore velocities (red; C_{rot}^v)
 374 and vorticity (black; C_{rot}^q). **(b)** Cross-shore profile of rotational velocities (points) and mean longshore current
 375 (black line). For both panels, points show the averaged celerities (for different c_s shown in Figure 4) while
 376 vertical bars show the associated standard deviation. In panel (b), yellow squares show observed eddy celerities
 377 extracted from cross-shore velocities ($C_{rot}^{u,obs}$).

378 The spatio-temporal variability of vorticity modelled at Duck is shown in Figure 7. This figure
 379 displays snapshots and time-space diagram of the 100-s running averaged vorticity along a seaward
 380 transect, emphasising the presence of longshore-propagating vorticity fronts and detaching eddies.
 381 Snapshots indicate the presence of a vorticity front pair (positive and negative fronts) located near
 382 the longshore current peak position, propagating with the longshore current (right to left) and with
 383 longshore lengths of around 200 m. Some vorticity fronts may sometimes stretch until breaking
 384 down into two fronts with the main front continuing its course with the longshore current and the
 385 other secondary front being expelled offshore (detached eddy). Two successive fronts may also
 386 merge together which results in a larger front. It is suggested that such eddy interactions result
 387 in some discrepancies between the mean current and the estimated celerity seaward of the mean
 388 current peak position (see Figure 6; Long and Özkan-Haller 2009). To better visualize vorticity
 389 fronts and their interactions, the reader is referred to the vorticity animation (see Supplementary

390 materials). All these results are in good agreement with vorticity patterns previously modelled for
 391 similar setup (Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999; Long and Özkan-Haller 2009).



392 FIG. 7. Left-hand panels : snapshots of vorticity at four different times ($t = 30, 36, 42$ and 48 min) depicting
 393 the stretching and the splitting of a vorticity front. The dashed black line correspond to the cross-shore position
 394 $x = 260$ m. Right-hand panel : time-space diagram of vorticity along the cross-shore position $x = 260$ m.
 395 Dashed black lines correspond to times at which vorticity field is plotted on the left-hand panels. For a better
 396 visualisation, the reader is referred to vorticity animations (see Supplementary Materials).

397 The previous results indicate that XB-SB is able to simulate the dynamics of surf zone eddies at a
 398 longshore-uniform sandy beach under moderate energy wave conditions. The main characteristics
 399 (length and time scales, amplitudes) of SZE are well reproduced by the model. In the next sections,
 400 the model is used to investigate SZE and VLF fluctuations of an headland deflection rip occurring
 401 at a geologically-constrained beach and under high-energy wave conditions.

402 **5. Surf zone eddies and headland rip VLF fluctuations at a geologically-constrained beach**

403 XB-SB was implemented on a regular grid extending 4000 m and 10000 m in the cross-shore
 404 x and the longshore y direction, respectively (Figure 2b). The computational domain comprises
 405 morphological features such as offshore bedrock and sand deposit lobe off the river mouth, the

406 Adour dike and the six groynes along Anglet beaches, PCA and the Saint Martin headland and the
407 adjacent embayment GPB. The mesh step size was set to 5 m at PCA, gradually increasing to 25
408 m close to the offshore boundaries (Figure 2c, d).

409 Mouragues et al. (2021) describe how the present model was calibrated at the Anglet site using
410 realistic forcing for waves (wave buoy Candhis 06402 moored in 50 m water depth) and water levels
411 collected at a nearby tidal gauge during the energetic event considered here (event D2 on the 7th
412 of October 2018). In the present study, the VLF fluctuations of the deflection rip are investigated
413 with JONSWAP spectra generated using the mean offshore wave conditions averaged over the
414 considered event ($H_s = 4$ m, $T_p = 10$ s and $\theta_p = -20^\circ$). The peak enhancement factor and the
415 directional wave spreading are set to 3.3 and 24° (XBeach default values). This spectrum is used
416 to force the model for 20 hours in order to ensure that a significant number of VLF fluctuations
417 are modelled. In order to disregard model spin-up, the last 12 hours of the simulation are used
418 for the investigation. The tide elevation is set constant during the entire simulation: $\zeta_{\text{tide}} = -2$ m
419 and $\zeta_{\text{tide}} = 2$ m for the low tide and high tide simulation, respectively. As previously explained,
420 using a constant tidal elevation throughout the simulations ensures that surf zone VLF motions are
421 stationary.

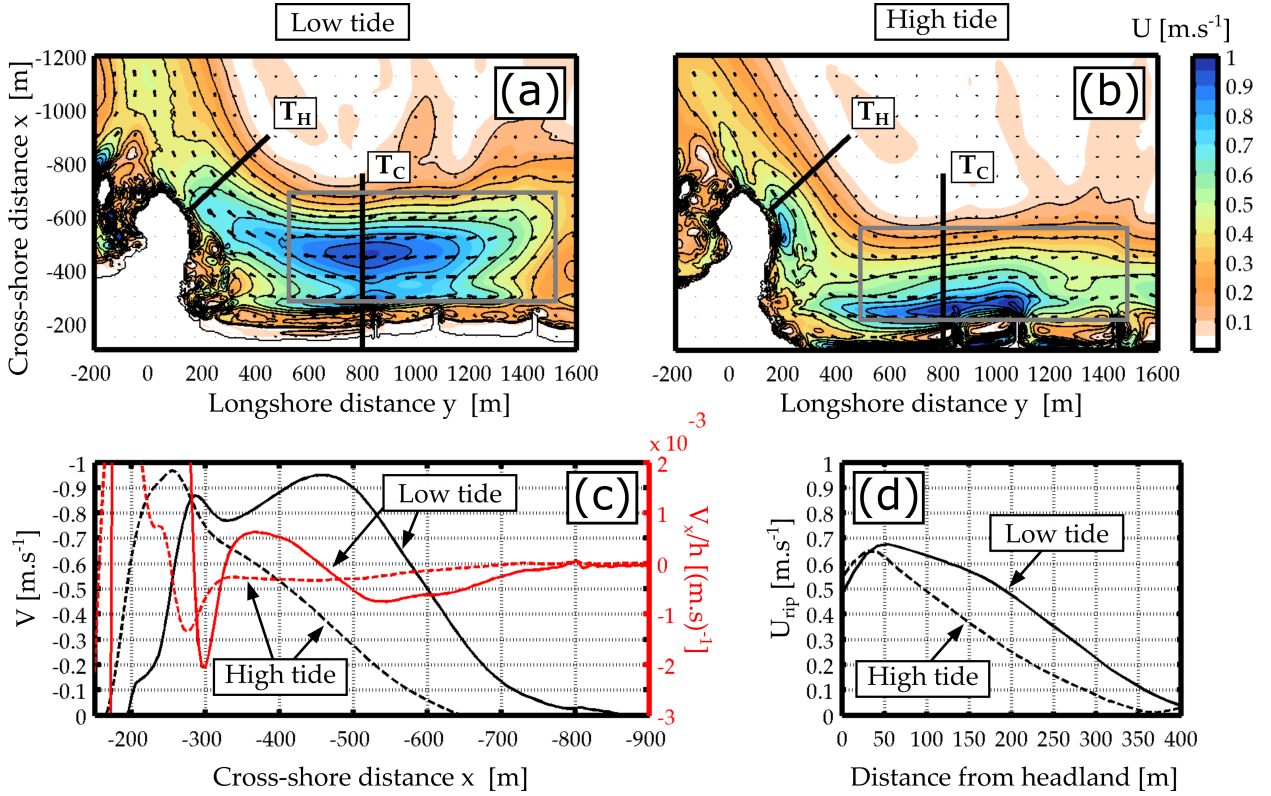
422 Following the model calibration carried out by Mouragues et al. (2021), $\gamma = 0.50$ and $C = 45$
423 $\text{m}^{1/2}/\text{s}$ will be used for the Anglet modelling experiment. Finally, it should be noted that modelled
424 deflection rip velocities in Anglet were found insensitive to the value of c_s (not shown; results are
425 similar to Mouragues et al. 2021). For consistency with the SandyDuck modelling experiment, c_s
426 was set to 1 for all Anglet modelling experiments.

427 *a. Mean circulation and surf zone eddies*

428 Figure 8 shows the mean velocity field along PCA at low tide (panel a) and high tide (panel b).
429 The breaking of highly-oblique and highly-energetic incident waves ($H_s \approx 4.0$ m and $\theta_p \approx 20^\circ$)
430 induces a strong and wide longshore current V oriented to the south. The latter is deflected seaward
431 against the headland, creating a deflection rip extending hundreds of meters off the headland tip.
432 At low tide, the surf zone width is similar to the headland length and the longshore current is
433 deflected by the headland and by the adjacent embayment flow (Mouragues et al. 2021).

434 The surf zone morphology of PCA is relatively longshore-uniform with a relatively steep upper
435 beach face and a low tide terrace that can be exposed at low tide. For a given incident wave
436 condition, changes in tidal elevation alter the pattern and intensity of depth-induced breaking wave
437 energy dissipation which, in turn, results in a strong tidal modulation of the cross-shore distribution
438 of the longshore current along PCA (Figure 8c). At low tide, the longshore current is wide and
439 has two local maxima. The highest maxima is located seaward at $x = -450$ m and reaches 0.95
440 m/s. At high tide, the main peak moves shoreward at $x = -250$ m and reaches 0.98 m/s. The mean
441 seaward shear is around 0.0027 s^{-1} for both tide levels, which is less than half of the longshore
442 current shear during the SandyDuck experiment. For each longshore current profile V , its potential
443 vorticity V_x/h is shown and displays at least one local extremum which is a necessary condition
444 for a shear instability to exist (Bowen and Holman 1989; Dodd et al. 1992). Because the longshore
445 current peak is closer to the shoreline at high tide than at low tide, the location along the headland
446 at which the longshore current is deflected offshore is also closer to the shoreline. This leads to a
447 more concentrated, slightly more intense and narrower seaward flowing jet against the headland at
448 high tide. Along T_H , the headland rip flow is around 50-100 m wider at low tide than at high tide
449 (Figure 8d).

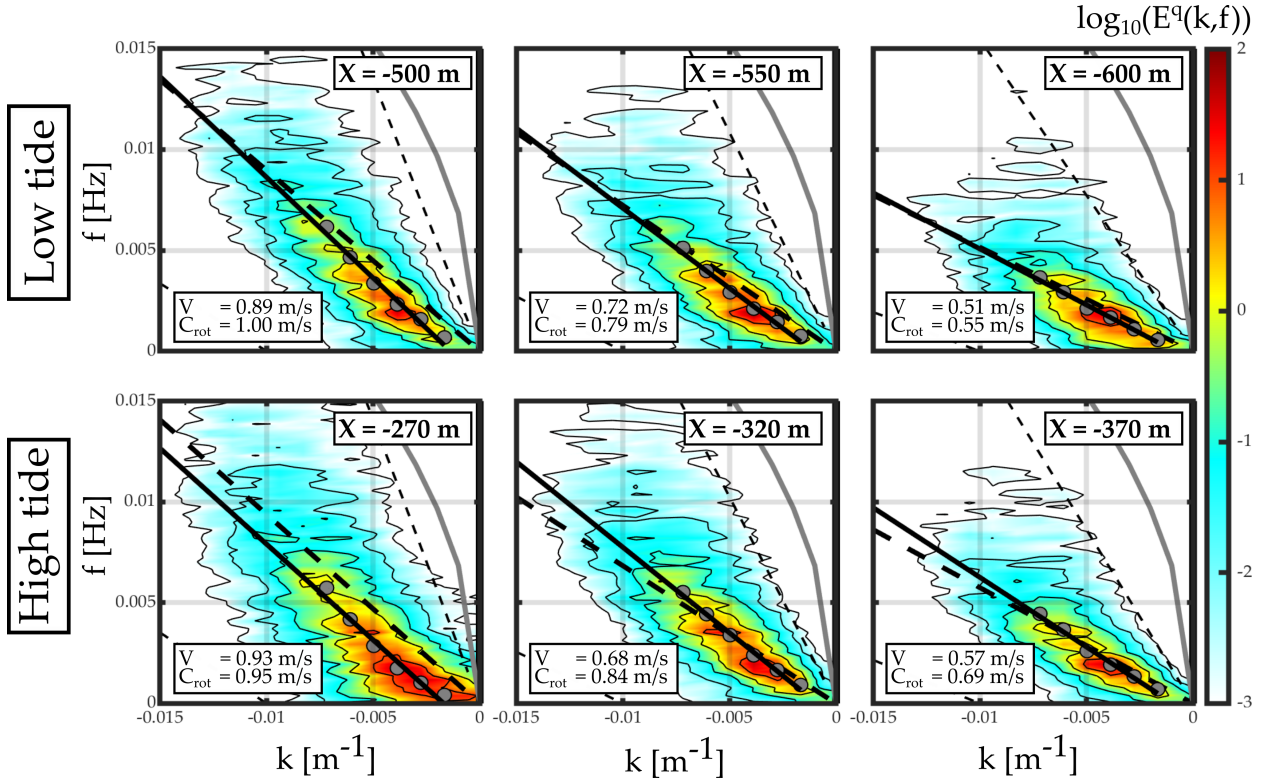
450 Wavenumber-frequency spectra of vorticity at different cross-shore positions in the surf zone
451 and for both tide levels are shown in Figure 9. Similar to the SandyDuck experiment, the presence
452 of SZE propagating in the same direction as the longshore current along PCA is ubiquitous. The
453 approximative range of energetic frequencies is centred around 2 mHz (8 min) and decreases
454 seaward with, for instance, much lower energy for $f > 5$ mHz at $x = -600$ m ($x = -370$ m) than at
455 $x = -500$ m ($x = -270$ m) for low tide (high tide). By contrast, k-f spectra suggest that the range
456 of energetic wavenumber remains relatively constant with cross-shore positions and is centred
457 around 0.004 m^{-1} (250 m). The estimated celerity decreases seaward, going from $O(1)$ m/s near
458 the longshore current peak to $O(0.1)$ m/s 500 m and 700 m offshore at high tide and low tide,
459 respectively (see Figure 10). It should be noted that the estimation of the eddy celerity is relatively
460 sensitive to the method to fit the straight dispersion line (Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999). Such
461 sensitivity is enhanced in Anglet which setup (morphology, high-energy wave conditions) is more
462 complex than along the longshore-uniform sandy beach of Duck. This complexity, in addition to
463 eddy interactions, may strongly increase discrepancies between the estimated eddy celerity and
464



450 FIG. 8. (a)-(b) Mean velocity field at low tide and at high tide. For both top panels, black line show two
 451 transects along which vorticity is plotted in other figures (T_C is the cross-shore transect of the longshore current
 452 and T_H is the cross-section transect of the deflection rip). Grey rectangle indicates area where k - f spectrum are
 453 computed. (c) Cross-shore profile of mean longshore current V (black line) and potential vorticity associated
 454 with V (red line). (d) Cross-section profile of the mean deflection magnitude U_{rip} . For both bottom panels, plain
 455 (dashed) lines are for low tide (high tide).

470 the local mean longshore current. To increase the accuracy of the estimated eddy celerity, points
 471 (k, f_{rot}) with energy less than three orders of magnitude of the energy peak were removed from the
 472 fitting procedure. The resulting eddy celerity and the mean current have equivalent trends which
 473 is similar to SandyDuck.

481 Concluding this section, model results indicate the presence of SZE along PCA at both low tide
 482 and high tide. These eddies propagate in the direction of the longshore current and their celerity
 483 decreases seaward which is similar to SandyDuck (see Section 4). In the next section, the model
 484 is used to explore the relationship between such eddies and the VLF fluctuations of the deflection
 485 rip.

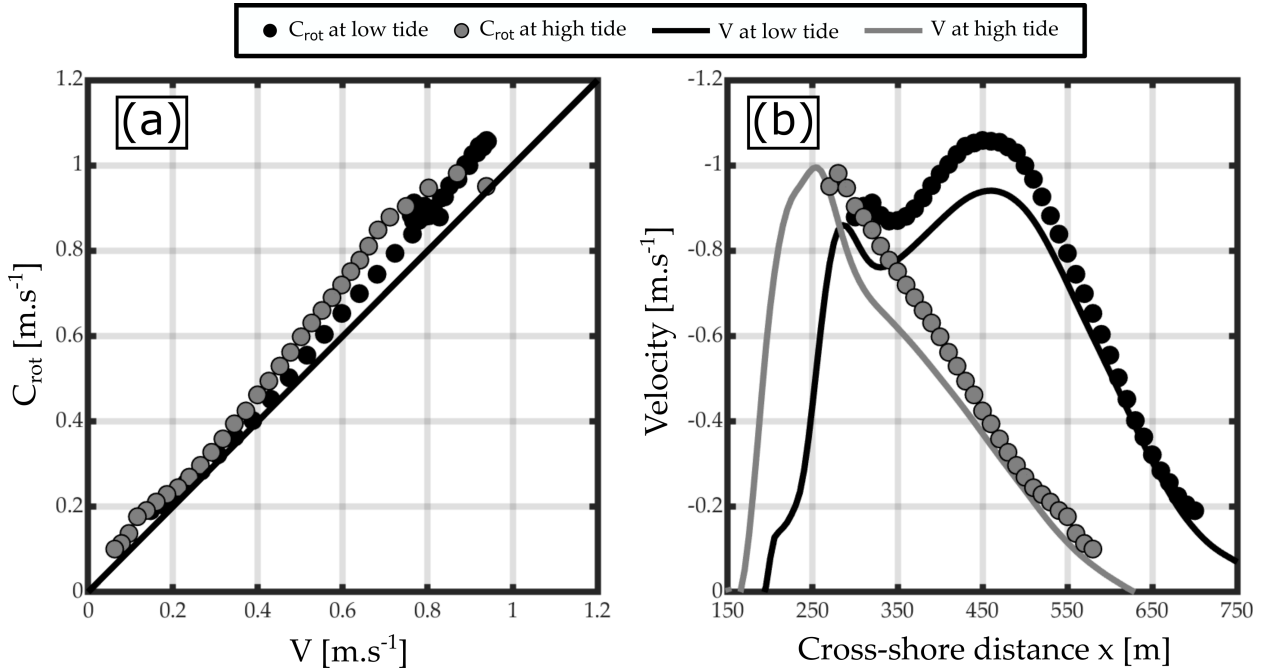


474 FIG. 9. Modeled wavenumber-frequency spectra of vorticity q ($E^q(k, f)$) at low tide (top) and high tide
 475 (bottom) extracted at different cross-shore positions x . For each panel, the local value of the mean longshore
 476 current V and the estimated eddy celerity C_{rot} are written. The definition of multiple dispersion lines is the same
 477 as in figure 3b.

486 *b. Surf zone eddies and headland rip fluctuations*

487 To investigate the hydrodynamic connections between the surf zone and the deflection rip, time-
 488 space and frequency-space diagrams of vorticity are computed along a transect in the surf zone T_C
 489 and against the headland T_H (see Figure 8a, b for transect location). These diagrams are shown in
 490 Figure 11 at low tide. Associated with those, Figure 12 shows several snapshots of vorticity which
 491 emphasise the length scales of vorticity fronts, their longshore advection, their merging and their
 492 offshore shedding through the deflection rip.

493 In the surf zone, two vorticity front pairs are present (Figure 12) and are associated with the two
 494 local maxima of longshore current at low tide (see Figure 8c). The seaward vorticity front pair
 495 is characterised by intense negative vorticity fronts that span the entire seaward longshore current
 496 region, going from around $x = -550$ m to $x = -870$ m. In this region, the frequency-space diagram



478 FIG. 10. **(a)** Eddy celerity C_{rot} extracted from vorticity versus local value of mean longshore current V . **(b)**
 479 Cross-shore profile of eddy celerities (points) and mean longshore current (line). Black and grey are for low tide
 480 and high tide, respectively.

497 along the cross-shore transect in the surf zone T_C (upper right-hand panel in Figure 11) highlights
 498 energetic frequencies that are similar to frequencies of SZE detected previously. Each cross-shore
 499 position is characterised by a relatively narrow range of energetic periods. Energetic periods of 5
 500 to 8 min dominate the spectrum just seaward of the peak while periods of 30 min and 1 h dominate
 501 the spectrum further offshore.

502 In this locally alongshore-uniform surf zone situation, the most energetic period increases with
 503 the distance to the location of the longshore current peak (see upper right-hand panel in Figure
 504 11). As suggested above, the most energetic longshore wavelength may remain relatively constant
 505 across the surf zone, indicating that the spatial structure of the corresponding eddies are conserved
 506 while their propagation speed decreases seaward. The latter mechanism can force the splitting of
 507 some vorticity fronts, leading to the generation of detached eddies that can propagate off the surf
 508 zone. This is better emphasized in the vorticity animation (see Supplementary Materials) and
 509 vorticity snapshots shown in Figure 12. Vorticity fronts span the entire surf zone and are advected
 510 by the longshore current. The most shoreward part of a front propagates faster than the seaward

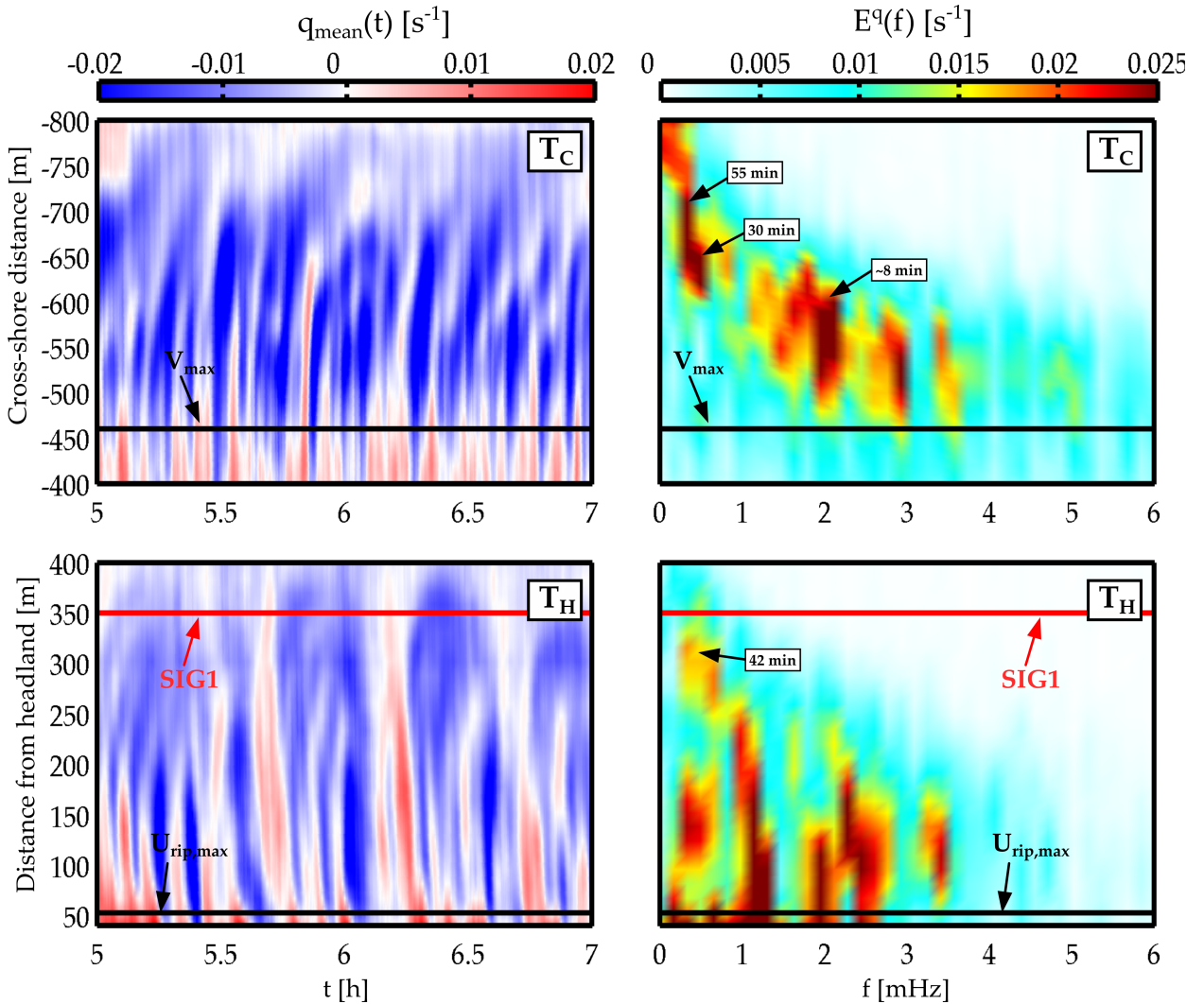
511 part, which forces front stretching and detaching eddies. These eddies can flow off the surf zone
512 or merge with the following front. Such mechanisms can also explained the differences between
513 the representative eddy celerity and the mean longshore current (Figure 6).

514 Close to the headland, these fronts are expelled offshore through the deflection rip against
515 the headland. Frequency-space diagrams along T_C and T_H are relatively similar, suggesting that
516 fluctuations in the deflection rip are associated with the deflection of the upstream SZE. Along the
517 cross-section of the rip neck T_H , energetic periods ranging from 5 min to 1 h dominate the spectrum.
518 Far from the headland, only fluctuations with energetic periods of around 42 min dominate the
519 spectrum at SIG1 location, which is similar with measurements (see Figure 2 and Mouragues et al.
520 2021).

531 Similar to low tide, the spatio-temporal (frequency) variability of vorticity at high tide is shown
532 in Figure 13 and Figure 14. The frequency-space diagram of vorticity along T_C is relatively similar
533 to the one at low tide, with energetic periods that essentially increase seaward. At high tide, the
534 mean longshore current has also two local maxima which are associated with two vorticity front
535 pairs in the surf zone (see around $x = -280$ m and $x = -500$ m). Just seaward of the main peak
536 located at $x = -270$ m, intense negative vorticity fronts are advected along the stream with energetic
537 periods of around 5 min. Further offshore, the longshore current profile displays a secondary
538 bump (see around $x = -420$ m) and is associated with vorticity fronts propagating slower than the
539 shoreward fronts, with energetic periods around 30 min.

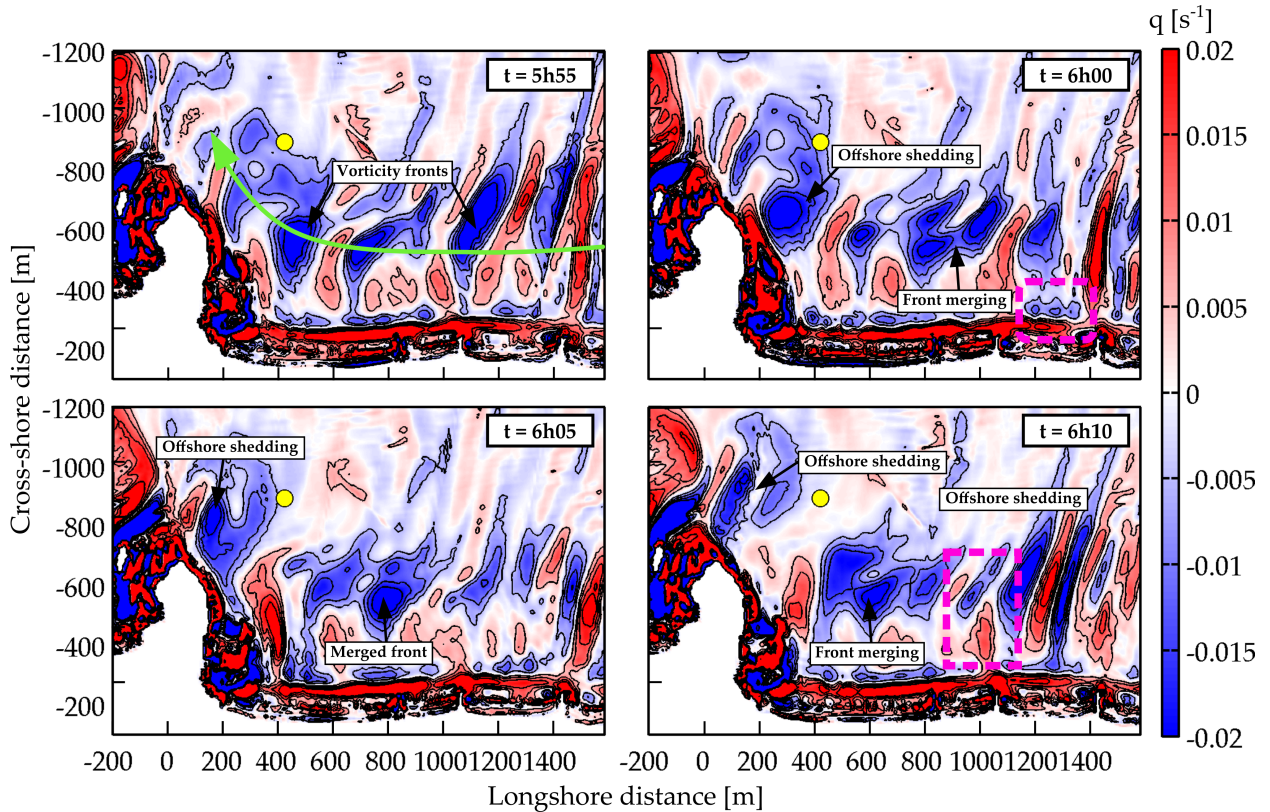
540 The examination of vorticity animation at high tide (see Supplementary Materials) suggests that
541 vorticity fronts merge at the location where the longshore current starts to be deflected offshore
542 (region around $x = -400$ m and $y = 400$ m). The merged fronts are then expelled offshore through
543 the deflection rip which leads to a much narrower range of energetic periods along T_H than along
544 T_C , with distinct energetic periods of 23 min and 50 min along T_H (see bottom right-hand panel
545 in Figure 13). The latter model result differs with the low tide simulation which highlighted the
546 relatively same range of energetic periods along T_C and T_H .

547 This is believed to be controlled by the relative difference of mean flow patterns between low tide
548 and high tide. At high tide, the mean flow against the headland is concentrated within a narrower
549 region than at low tide (Figure 8). This allows all surf zone vorticity fronts to pass through the
550 deflection rip at low tide while, at high tide, some surf zone fronts may merge together before



521 FIG. 11. Time-space diagram of 100-s running averaged vorticity ($q_{\text{mean}}(t)$; left-hand panels) and frequency-
 522 space diagram of instantaneous vorticity spectrum ($E^q(f)$; right-hand panels) along two transects at low tide
 523 (see Figure 8a for transect location). Top panels are for transect T_C with the black line indicating the mean
 524 longshore current peak position. Bottom panels are for transect T_H with the black (red) line indicating the mean
 525 deflection rip peak (SIG1) position.

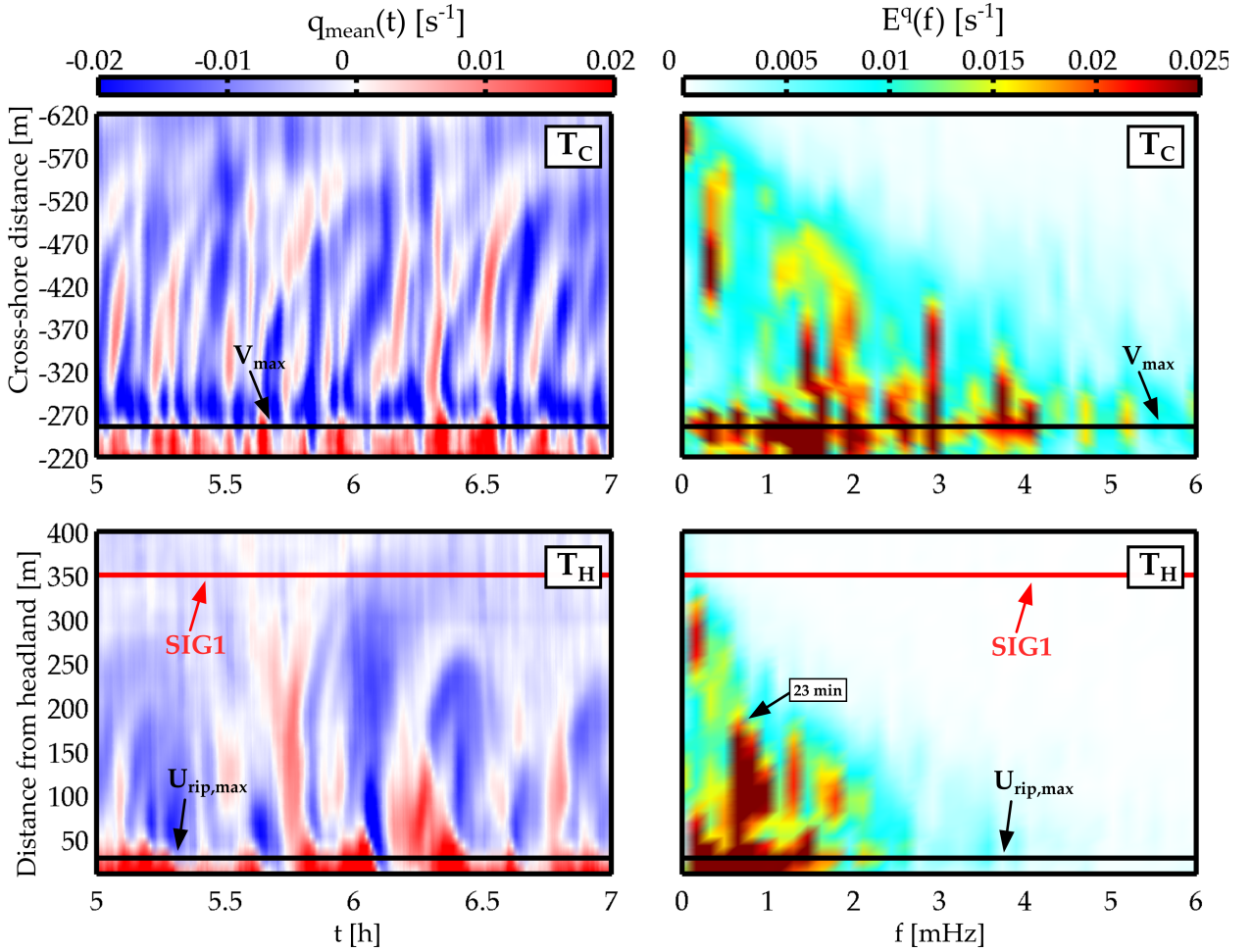
551 being expelled offshore by the rip. This leads to energetic higher periods against the headland that
 552 were not necessarily present updrift in the surf zone (Figure 13). This mechanism will be further
 553 discussed in Section 6.



526 FIG. 12. Snapshots of vorticity at low tide at four different times showing stretched vorticity fronts, front
 527 interactions and offshore shedding through the deflection rip. Yellow point indicates SIG1 location and the green
 528 arrow in the first panel shows the main propagation direction of vorticity fronts. Dashed magenta rectangles show
 529 an example of two vorticity front pairs. For a better visualisation, the reader is referred to vorticity animations
 530 (see Supplementary Materials).

563 6. Discussion

564 In the following section, some components of the above model results are discussed and sugges-
 565 tions for future works are proposed. The morphological control on headland rip VLF fluctuations,
 566 through idealised morphology, is first explored. The latter will be critical to support the fact that
 567 the headland may enforce the merging of surf zone eddies as previously highlighted at PCA at high
 568 tide. Then, the role of wave group forcing and shear instability processes on surf zone rotational
 569 motions is discussed. In particular, we will point out the essential role of incident wave groups to
 570 produce surf zone eddies under high-energy oblique wave conditions. The latter will raise forward

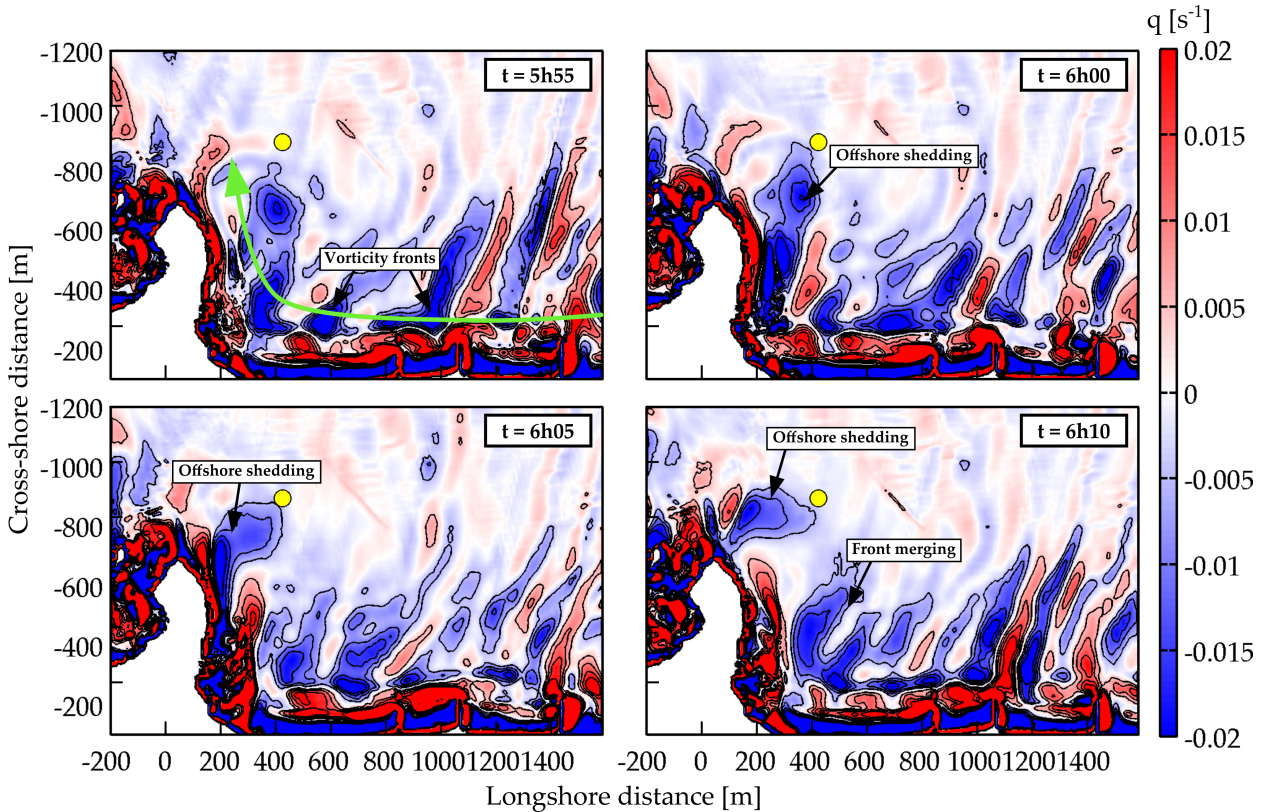


554 FIG. 13. Time-space diagram of 100-s running averaged vorticity ($q_{\text{mean}}(t)$; left-hand panels) and frequency-
 555 space diagram of instantaneous vorticity spectrum ($E^q(f)$; right-hand panels) along two transects at high tide
 556 (see Figure 8b for transect location). Top panels are for transect T_C with the black line indicating the mean
 557 longshore current peak position. Bottom panels are for transect T_H with the black (red) line indicating the mean
 558 deflection rip peak (SIG1) position.

571 the discussion on a continuum of the driving mechanism of surf zone rotational motions under
 572 obliquely-incident waves.

573 *a. Morphological control on headland rip VLF fluctuations*

574 In section 5, the spatio-temporal variability of vorticity suggests that fluctuations of the rip are
 575 associated with the propagation of eddies along the deflection stream. For a given headland length,
 576 the reduction of the surf zone width can strongly modify the mean headland rip flow, with a more



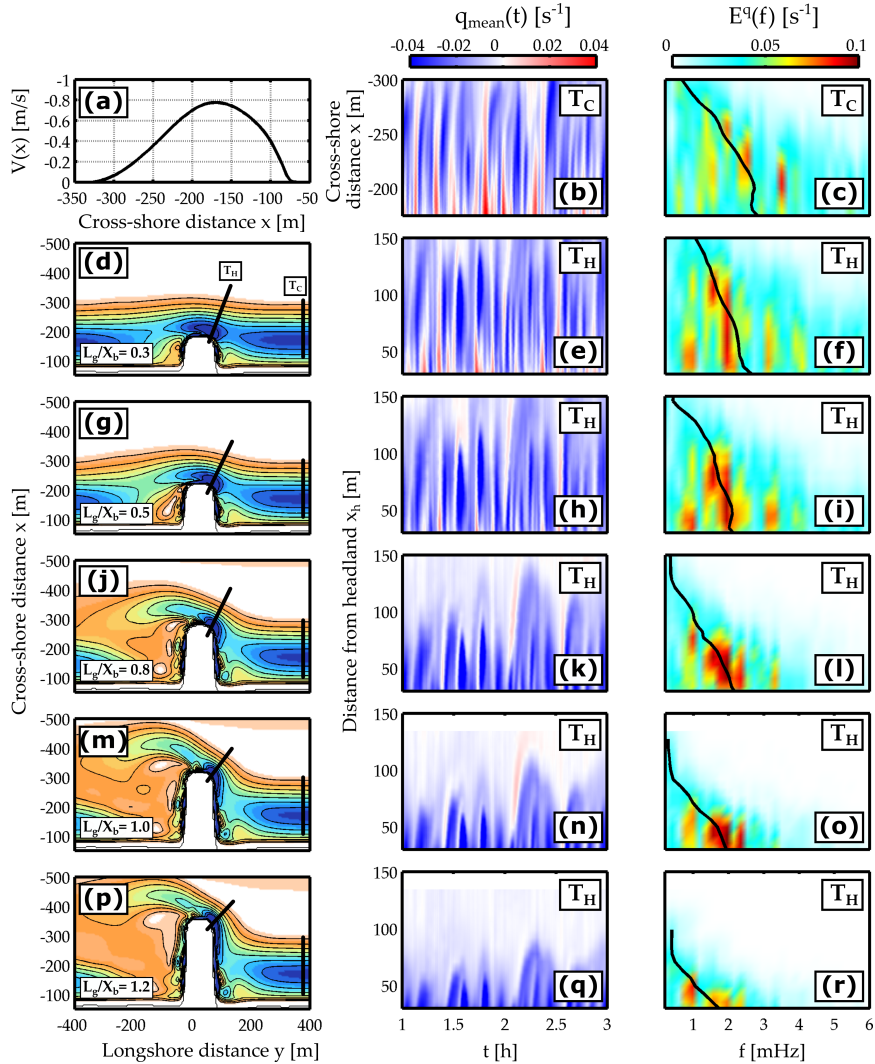
559 FIG. 14. Snapshots of vorticity at high tide at four different times and showing stretched vorticity fronts, front
 560 interactions and offshore shedding through the deflection rip. Yellow point indicates SIG1 location and the green
 561 arrow in the first panel shows the main propagation direction of vorticity fronts. For a better visualisation, the
 562 reader is referred to vorticity animations (see Supplementary Materials).

577 concentrated seaward jet flow as surf zone width decreases. This forces the merging of vorticity
 578 fronts near the headland which results in energetic higher periods against the headland that were
 579 not necessarily present in the surf zone. To further analyse this mechanism, the model is run on
 580 an idealised morphology which is made of a planar surf zone morphology (constant slope of 0.03)
 581 and a physical boundary (headland) with a given length L_g . The incident wave conditions are the
 582 same for all modelling experiments ($H_s = 2$ m and $\theta = -20^\circ$). These conditions result in a 200-m
 583 wide longshore current (surf zone width $X_b \approx 200$ m) peaking around 0.8 m/s (Figure 15a). In
 584 order to obtain different mean flow patterns and further emphasize their effects on the energetic
 585 periods, L_g is varied so that the boundary length to surf zone width ratio L_g/X_b varies from 0.3
 586 to 1.2. This allows to model the full spectrum of mean deflection patterns, going from weakly- to

587 strongly-deflected longshore current (Scott et al. 2016). With a constant X_b , the mean flow patterns
 588 feature different deflection rip widths (see left-hand panels in Figure 15). It should be noted that
 589 obtaining flow patterns with different surf zone and deflection rip widths could have also been done
 590 with *e.g.* varying tidal level (as previously done in Anglet; see Section 5) or varying offshore wave
 591 conditions (varying X_b). Here, we choose to vary L_g/X_b for consistency with Scott et al. (2016).
 592 These authors have varied this ratio to highlight the different deflection mean (time-averaged) flow
 593 patterns. The present model experiments aim at extending their work at the VLF scales.

601 For each experiment, the time-space (frequency) diagrams of vorticity along two transects (T_C
 602 and T_H) are presented (see middle and right-hand panels in Figure 15). Note that the same incident
 603 infragravity wave phases were used to run the model so that the variability of vorticity in the surf
 604 zone (transect T_C) is similar for all experiments. The latter vorticity variability is shown in panels b
 605 and c. The other middle and right-hand panels show vorticity along transect T_H for all experiments
 606 and highlight the effect of varying L_g (or L_g/X_b) and, in turn, the deflection rip width on the range
 607 of energetic periods in the deflection rip. As L_g/X_b increases, the deflection rip is compressed
 608 within a narrow region and its width is much shorter than the surf zone width (see left-hand panels).
 609 The range of energetic periods in the deflection rip strongly decreases compared to the range of
 610 energetic periods in the longshore current. For the longest boundary ($L_g/X_b = 1.2$), only periods
 611 higher than 7 min dominate the deflection rip spectrum (Figure 15r) while the longshore current
 612 features a wide range of energetic periods, going from 4 min to 50 min (Figure 15c).

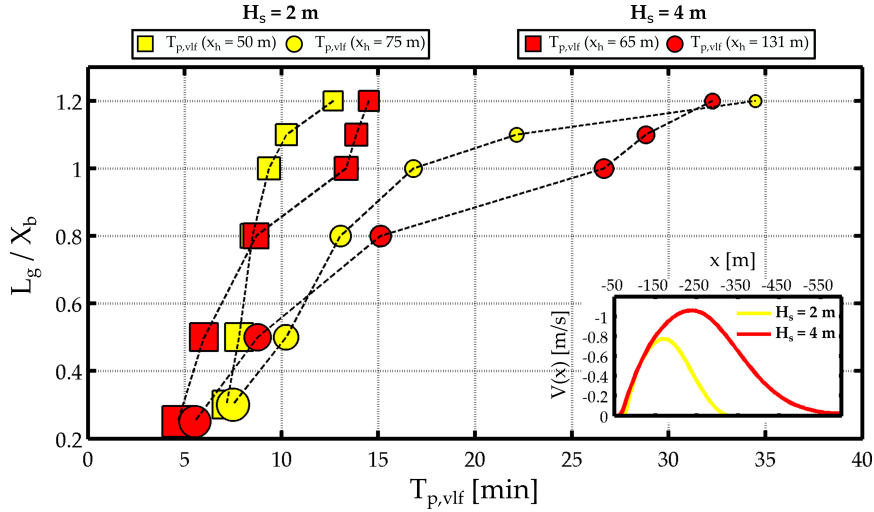
613 Overall, these results underlines the previously-observed effect that an headland may have on the
 614 vorticity motions generated upstream in the surf zone. This is better emphasised by the continuous
 615 peak frequency $f_{p,vlf}$ computed as $\int f(E^q(f))^4 df / \int (E^q(f))^4 df$ (see right-hand panels). As
 616 L_g/X_b increases, the cut-off frequency ($f_{p,vlf}$ closest to the headland) decreases from 2.5 to 1.75
 617 mHz for $L_g/X_b = 0.3$ and 1.2, respectively (Figure 15f and r, respectively). The peak frequency
 618 also strongly decreases with the distance from headland x_h . To further synthesise this mechanism,
 619 Figure 16 shows $T_{p,vlf} = 1/f_{p,vlf}$ at two different x_h as a function of L_g/X_b and for different H_s in
 620 order to highlight the effect of varying X_b . Both X_b feature similar period patterns. As L_g/X_b
 621 increases, periods at both positions and the period gap between both positions increase, which
 622 illustrates the effect of the headland on energetic periods.



594 FIG. 15. Left-hand panels : mean circulation patterns for different idealised boundary length. The boundary
 595 length to surf zone width ratio L_g/X_b is indicated for each panel ($X_b \approx 200$ m). Transects T_H and T_C are indicated
 596 in each panel. Middle panels : time-space diagram of running-averaged vorticity along T_H for different L_g/X_b .
 597 Right-hand panels : frequency-space diagram of instantaneous vorticity along T_H for different L_g/X_b . The upper
 598 middle (upper right-hand) panel shows the time (frequency)-space diagram of running-averaged (instantaneous)
 599 vorticity along T_C which is the same for each modelled case (same incident wave phase time series). Black lines
 600 on right-hand panels show the continuous peak frequency $f_{p,vlf}$ computed as $\int f(E^q(f))^4 df / \int (E^q(f))^4 df$.

630 *b. Effects of wave-group forcing on vorticity dynamics*

631 The effect of wave forcing, through breaking wave vorticity forcing, on the characteristics of surf
 632 zone rotational motions under obliquely incident wave conditions has been addressed by very few



623 FIG. 16. Very-low-frequency peak periods $T_{p,vlf}$ as a function of the boundary length to surf zone width ratio
 624 L_g/X_b . Yellow and red are for $H_s = 2$ m ($X_b = 200$ m) and for $H_s = 4$ m ($X_b = 400$ m). $T_{p,vlf}$ is shown at
 625 two different distances from the boundary x_h , corresponding to the distance of maximum vorticity variance (50
 626 m and 65 m; coloured squares) and further away from the boundary (75 % of the deflection rip width of the
 627 narrowest deflection rip which is for $L_g/X_b = 1.2$; coloured circles). The size of squares and sizes is proportional
 628 to the vorticity variance, with large and small points associated with strongly- and weakly-fluctuating vorticity.
 629 For each H_s , the longshore current profile $V(x)$ is also shown.

633 studies (*e.g.* Long and Özkan-Haller 2009; Feddersen 2014). In the above modelling analysis, the
 634 term 'shear waves' was sometimes used, for simplicity, to refer to surf zone rotational motions in
 635 the presence of a longshore current V . This could mask the fact that shear instabilities of V are not
 636 the only driving mechanism of such motions. Under obliquely incident wave conditions, surf zone
 637 eddy generation mechanisms include shear instabilities of V (hereafter referred to as SI; *e.g.* Bowen
 638 and Holman 1989) and breaking wave vorticity forcing at the wave group scale (hereafter referred
 639 to as WG; *e.g.* Long and Özkan-Haller 2009) and at the individual wave scale through along-crest
 640 variation in wave dissipation (hereafter referred to as IW; *e.g.* Peregrine 1998; Feddersen 2014).
 641 Understanding the relative importance of each mechanism is essential to effectively predict surf
 642 zone rotational motions which strongly control mixing processes in the nearshore (*e.g.* Spydell
 643 et al. 2007; Clark et al. 2012).

644 A WG-resolving model allows simulating surf zone rotational motions driven by both WG and
 645 SI. Long and Özkan-Haller (2009) showed that the vorticity production due to WG was dominant

646 compared to SI under weakly-oblique incident wave conditions ($\theta = 8^\circ$), while production due to
647 WG and SI was similar under strongly-oblique incident wave conditions ($\theta = 20^\circ$). In line with
648 Long and Özkan-Haller (2009), excluding WG for the SandyDuck experiment (strong shear; Figure
649 5a) resulted in weaker rotational motions while excluding WG for the Anglet experiment (weak
650 shear; Figure 8c) resulted in the absence surf zone eddies (not shown).

651 This suggests the existence of a continuum in the driving mechanisms of surf zone rotational
652 motions under obliquely incident waves, from fully WG-driven motions for weakly-sheared V to
653 both WG- and SI-driven motions for V with stronger shear. Note that Feddersen (2014) used
654 a wave-resolving model to investigate eddy generation due to all three mechanisms described
655 above (SI, WG and IW). The existence of a continuum was suggested but was not fully illustrated.
656 Importantly, this continuum would further point out the critical role of WG to produce surf zone
657 eddies under high-energy and oblique wave conditions.

658 To illustrate such continuum, the model is run onto the barred beach of the SandyDuck experiment
659 with varying wave angle of incidence θ . It should be noted that a barred beach was necessary,
660 as opposed to a planar beach, to obtain a sheared-enough V so that eddies are generated when
661 excluding WG. Simulations excluding and including WG are made for θ ranging 0-40° leading to
662 longshore currents with a wide range of peak magnitude V_{\max} (Figure 17a). The associated k - f
663 vorticity spectra emphasise how wave group forcing broadens the spectrum (Figure 17b). Energetic
664 frequencies and wavenumbers are concentrated within a very narrow ridge when excluding WG
665 while the energy is much scattered when including WG. For normally-incident waves, surf zone
666 eddies are absent when WG are excluded, emphasising the essential role of WG to produce eddies
667 for weakly-oblique waves.

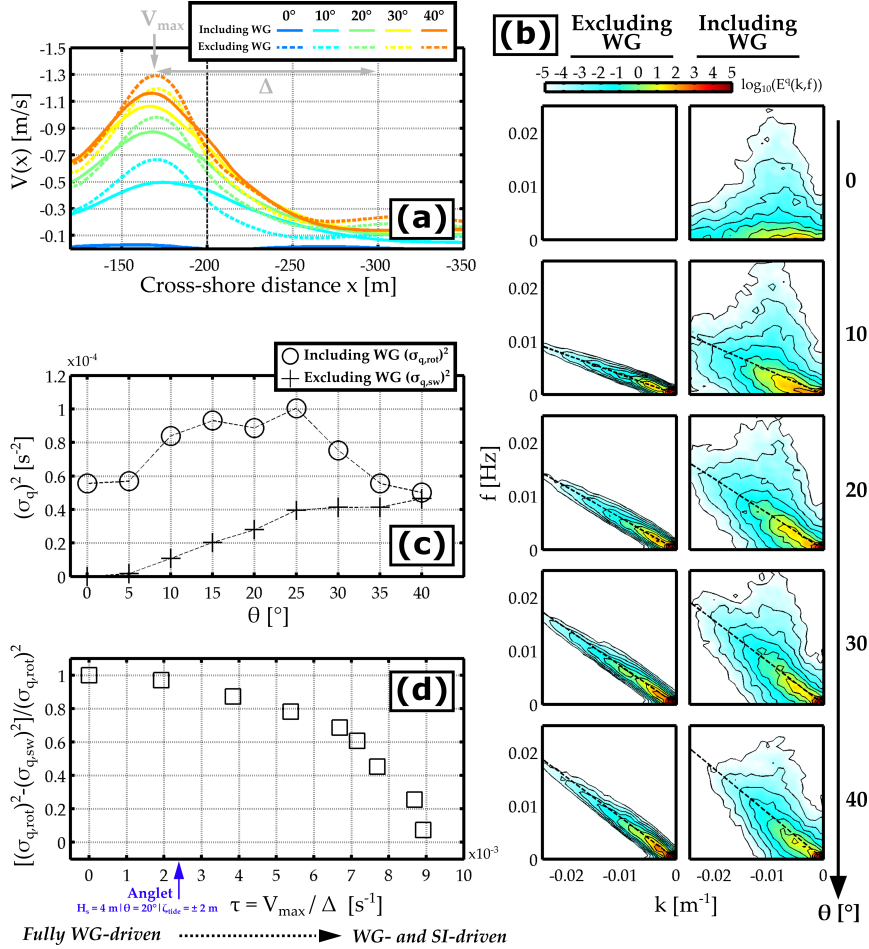
668 This is better illustrated by plotting the total vorticity variance as a function of θ ($(\sigma_{q,\text{rot}})^2$ and
669 $(\sigma_{q,\text{sw}})^2$ including and excluding WG, respectively; Figure 17c). For $\theta < 30^\circ$, $(\sigma_{q,\text{rot}})^2$ is at least
670 two times higher than $(\sigma_{q,\text{sw}})^2$, indicating that WG forcing is responsible for at least 50 % of
671 vorticity variance. For θ between 0° and 25° , $(\sigma_{q,\text{rot}})^2$ increases until reaching a maximum at
672 around $\theta = 25^\circ$. For $\theta > 25^\circ$, $(\sigma_{q,\text{rot}})^2$ decreases which highlights the decreasing contribution of
673 WG to surf zone eddies. This decreasing trend may be due to the modification of the longshore
674 structure of wave groups as a result of strong wave refraction, therefore modifying the longshore

675 variability of wave forcing and momentum injected in the surf zone. Further modeling works will
676 be required to confirm the latter suggestion.

677 For θ between 0° and 25° , $(\sigma_{q,sw})^2$ linearly increases until reaching a plateau for $\theta > 25^\circ$,
678 suggesting that the SI contribution reaches a saturation. Note that Figure 17b-d was plotted at
679 a given cross-shore location $x = -200$ m but similar trends were obtained with other cross-shore
680 locations. The SI contribution saturation may be explained by the fact that the local longshore
681 current shear V_x and the local curvature V_{xx} , which controls the SI contribution to surf zone
682 eddy field (see *e.g.* Long and Özkan-Haller 2009; Feddersen 2014), becomes relatively steady
683 for strongly-oblique incident waves. Note that the presence of more energetic surf zone eddies
684 when WG are included leads to more cross-shore mixing, compared to when WG are excluded,
685 which smooths the longshore current profile (Figure 17a). Discrepancies between both variances
686 decreases as θ increases, suggesting the decreasing contribution of WG, compared to SI, as waves
687 becomes more oblique, which is in line with Long and Özkan-Haller (2009).

688 The relative balance between SI and WG contribution to surf zone eddies is well emphasised
689 by plotting the vorticity variance ratio $((\sigma_{q,rot})^2 - (\sigma_{q,sw})^2) / (\sigma_{q,rot})^2$ as a function of the mean
690 seaward shear τ (Figure 17d). The latter is defined as V_{max}/Δ , where Δ is the seaward width,
691 computed from $V(x)$ including WG (see plain lines in Figure 17a). For the lowest τ ($\tau < 0.004$
692 s^{-1}), this ratio is always higher than 0.8, indicating that WG forcing is the main eddy generation
693 mechanism. The mean seaward shear for the Anglet experiment (see blue text in Figure 17d)
694 falls within the lowest range of τ , suggesting that surf zone vorticity motions and, in turn, VLF
695 fluctuations of the deflection rip may be primarily driven by WG rather than SI. For higher τ , the
696 SI contribution to surf zone eddies increases, with the variance ratio dropping below 0.6. This
697 indicates that both SI and WG force surf zone eddies. Finally, for $\tau > 0.008 s^{-1}$ ($\theta \geq 35^\circ$), the ratio
698 is close to 0, suggesting that WG do not substantially contribute to the total vorticity variance.

708 Overall, Figure 17d suggests the existence of a continuum in the surf zone eddy generation
709 mechanisms, from fully WG-driven eddies for low τ to both WG- and SI-driven eddies for high
710 τ . This is in general agreement with Feddersen (2014) who pointed out the fact that surf zone
711 eddies are primarily controlled by breaking wave vorticity forcing, with possible exceptions for
712 very narrow-banded highly-oblique wave conditions. Here, the total vorticity variance was used,
713 as a first approximation, to quantify the relative importance of SI and WG contribution to surf zone



699 FIG. 17. Surf zone rotational motions modelled including and excluding wave group (WG) forcing for different
700 angle of wave incidence θ ranging 0-40°. (a) Cross-shore profiles of mean longshore current $V(x)$. Vertical
701 dashed line shows the cross-shore position at which quantities are plotted in other panels. (b) k - f vorticity
702 spectra computed excluding and including WG for different θ . (c) Vorticity variance as a function of θ , excluding
703 ($(\sigma_{q,sw})^2$) and including ($(\sigma_{q,rot})^2$) WG (circle and cross, respectively). (d) Vorticity variance ratio as a
704 function of the mean seaward shear τ computed as V_{max}/Δ where V_{max} and Δ are the peak of $V(x)$ and the
705 seaward width, respectively (see panel a). τ for the Anglet model experiments is shown. The dashed horizontal
706 arrow emphasises the continuum of the surf zone rotational motions driving mechanisms which is discussed in
707 the text (SI is for shear instability).

714 eddy generation. However, such bulk quantity does not account for the frequency and wavenumber
715 spreading of the vorticity energy. As observations generally report strongly scattered k - f spectra
716 (*e.g.* Özkan-Haller and Kirby 1999; Noyes et al. 2004), the inclusion of breaking wave vorticity

717 forcing is essential to accurately model the full range of surf zone eddies, even for strongly-sheared
718 current.

719 **7. Summary and future works**

720 A wave group-resolving model was implemented to investigate the driving mechanisms and the
721 spatio-temporal variability of VLF fluctuations of a deflection rip flowing against a 500-m rocky
722 headland located along Anglet beaches (SW, France). These energetic fluctuations were measured
723 800 m offshore during a 4-m oblique wave event and had dominant periods of around 1 h and 30
724 min. The model was first used to simulate surf zone eddies (SZE) in the presence of a longshore
725 current V at a longshore-uniform sandy beach under moderate wave conditions (SandyDuck). This
726 first modeling experiment ensured that the model was able to reproduce characteristics of measured
727 SZE propagating along a strongly-sheared current. The spectral signature and the spatio-temporal
728 variability of surf zone rotational motions, which included shear instability-driven SZE, were
729 displayed and qualitatively compared with past studies.

730 The model was then implemented in Anglet showing the presence of SZE propagating in the same
731 direction as the longshore current at both low tide and high tide. Due to energetic wave conditions,
732 the longshore current was relatively wide and weakly-sheared compared to the SandyDuck model-
733 ing experiment. SZE spanned the entire seaward width and propagated towards the headland at a
734 speed proportional to the local longshore current value. k - f spectra indicated that the celerity and
735 the range of energetic periods of these eddies were decreasing seaward. Space-frequency diagrams
736 of vorticity showed that spectral patterns in the surf zone and along the headland were relatively
737 similar, suggesting that VLF fluctuations of the rip are driven by the deflection of upstream SZE.

738 At low tide, most energetic periods increased with the distance from the headland, going from
739 $O(1)$ - $O(10)$ min very close to the headland to around 40 min to 1 h hundreds of meters away from
740 the headland which is line with measurements. At high tide, the range of most energetic periods in
741 the rip was much narrower than in the surf zone, suggesting that the headland enforces the merging
742 of surf zone eddies resulting in energetic higher periods against the headland. This mechanism
743 was further explored using idealised simulations with varying boundary length to surf zone width
744 ratio L_g/X_b . Increasing such ratio was shown to reduce the deflection rip width and to strongly
745 increase most energetic periods of vorticity fluctuations against the headland. These findings

746 have possible implications for sediment transport occurring along headlands. Most morphological
747 studies along idealised-isolated headlands or natural embayed beaches have shown the ability of
748 deflection rips, based on their time-averaged characteristics, to transport sediments offshore and
749 laterally (*e.g.* McCarroll et al. 2018; Valiente et al. 2020; McCarroll et al. 2021). Here, we show
750 that time-averaged deflection patterns may not be representative of its dynamics as a result of
751 potentially strong VLF fluctuations. These fluctuations may translate into fluctuations of sediment
752 flows which could impact the amount and the spatial dispersion of sediments transported by the
753 rip. Future modelling accounting for sediment transport and morphological changes will unravel
754 the deflection rip-induced sediment transport variability at the VLF scales. In addition to the
755 L_g/X_b -dependent deflection patterns, similar idealised simulations with varying headland spacing
756 L_s could be conducted to explore the distance required for longshore currents to develop SZE.

757 Lastly, the model was used to assess the effect of wave group forcing on surf zone eddies.
758 Excluding wave group forcing resulted in less energetic eddies for SandyDuck and in the absence
759 of eddies for Anglet, suggesting the existence of a continuum in the driving mechanisms of SZE
760 under obliquely incident waves. To illustrate this continuum, the SandyDuck setup simulation was
761 run with varying wave angle of incidence θ resulting in longshore currents with different mean
762 seaward shear. Ratio of the total vorticity variance indicates that wave group forcing accounts
763 for more than 50 % of the variance for θ lower than 30° . This suggests that SZE are primarily
764 controlled by breaking wave vorticity forcing rather than shear instabilities, except for strongly-
765 oblique wave conditions (strongly-sheared current). Interestingly, the contribution of wave groups
766 to the total variance reached a maximum and decreased for θ higher than 30° . Further works are
767 required to understand how wave groups generate eddies fluctuating at the VLF scale and how their
768 spatial structure impact the eddy variability. Finally, recent studies suggest that low-frequency
769 large-scale surf zone motions may be the result of a 2D turbulence inverse energy cascade, fed by
770 high-frequency short-scale vorticity motions due to along-crest energy dissipation (*e.g.* Feddersen
771 2014; Elgar and Raubenheimer 2020). Future works could address whether vorticity injected at
772 the wave group scale or at the individual wave scale due to the inverse cascade mechanism is more
773 dominant in generating surf zone eddies.

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780 APPENDIX A

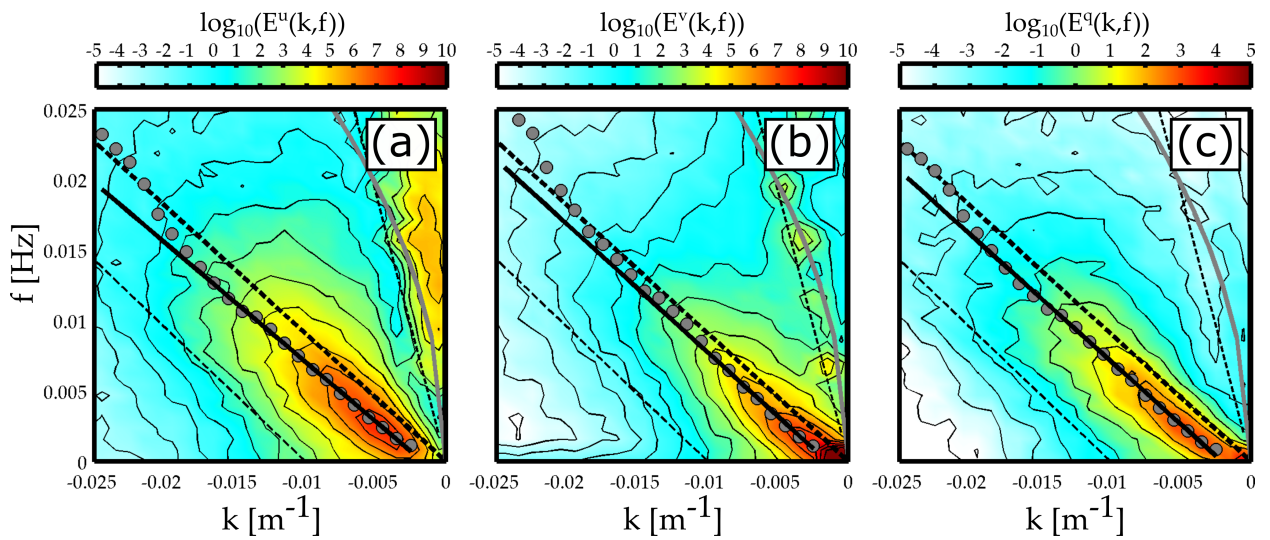
781 **Calibrated free parameters for SandyDuck and Anglet experiment**

Free parameter	Description	Duck	Anglet
$\gamma[-]$	Breaking parameter	0.3	0.5
$C[m^{1/2}.s^{-1}]$	Bottom friction Chezy parameter	55	45
$c_s[-]$	Horizontal mixing parameter	1	1

TABLE A1. Value of each calibrated free parameter for SandyDuck and Anglet experiment.

782 APPENDIX B

783 **Wavenumber-frequency spectra of velocities and vorticity during the SandyDuck** 784 **experiment**



785 FIG. B1. Modeled wavenumber-frequency spectra of cross-shore velocity u (a), longshore velocity v (b) and
 786 vorticity q (c) during the SandyDuck experiment, at the cross-shore position $x = 160$ m. The definition of
 787 multiple dispersion lines is the same as in figure 3b.

788 *Data availability statement.* Datasets for this research are included in Mouragues et al. (2020a).

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