

**Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project
LIC230039**

Supporting Information for the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report

April 2024

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Introduction

Background

This Supporting Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report has been created to assess University College Cork's proposed temporary deployments of subsurface passive acoustic receivers in Courtmacsherry Bay, Co. Cork. A Maritime Usage License Application for the project is submitted with this report. This report's main goal is to provide information to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process to help inform the decision-making process as to whether the proposed project, both by itself and in conjunction with other plans or projects, has the potential to have a significant impact on any designated European Site considering the site's conservation goals.

Statement of Authority

Dr Danielle Orrell, the manager of the elasmobranch tracking component of the CETUS Project, and a Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at the University College Cork and SFI MaREI Marine Renewable Energy Centre authored this report. Contents were reviewed by Dr Tom Doyle and Dr Damien Haberlin, two Principal Investigators on the CETUS Project. The CETUS Project received funding from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland in 2022, with supplemental funding for the Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project secured in December 2023 from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

Appropriate Assessment Process

Appropriate Assessment is the process through which the possible nature conservation implications of any plan or project on the Natura 2000 site network is considered by a Competent Authority, before a decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed.

The European Commission's methodological guidance (European Commission, 2002) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA. Each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is necessary. The four stages are the following:

Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

In this initial stage, the focus is on evaluating and documenting the rationale and outcomes concerning Article 6(3). The primary objective is to ascertain whether a given plan or project has a direct association with or significant relevance to the management of a specific site. Additionally, this stage aims to determine if a project, either on its own or when combined with another project, holds the potential to cause adverse effects on European site(s).

Stage 2- Appropriate Assessment

In this stage, the assessment focuses on determining the project's impact on the integrity of a European site(s) concerning its conservation objectives, structure, and function. Mitigation measures should be applied to ensure that no adverse effects on the site(s) remain.

Stage 3 - Alternative Solutions

In the event that the Appropriate Assessment indicates potential adverse impacts European site(s), this stage explores alternative approaches to project implementation, aiming to avoid these the adverse effects whenever feasible. It's important to note that Stage 3 is not considered as the primary reliance point.

Stage 4 - Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest

When no alternative solutions are available and adverse impacts persist, an assessment is conducted to see if compensatory measures can offset the harm to the European site(s), considering imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI). European law stresses the need to explore alternatives outside the project area during this assessment. However, the IROPI test is stringent, and most projects are unlikely to pass it. Furthermore, it's worth mentioning that the developer does not rely heavily on Stage 4.

Aim of report

The purpose of this report is to inform the Appropriate Assessment process, as required under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The report assesses whether the proposed project, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site. It will establish if a screening for an Appropriate Assessment, as described above, is required, thus meeting the Department's statutory obligations under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2021 (the "Habitats Regulations"), to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

The assessment in this report is based on the report Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01, published March 2021. The potential for substantial impacts on a European site is based upon the presence of a clear connection, known as the Source-Pathway-Receptor link, between the planned development and the European site, as outlined in OPR 2021. Therefore, we have assessed potential connectivity in two scenarios: 1) if there is an overlap between the Maritime usage license area and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which would indicate direct effects, and 2), if the SAC fell within the range of the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity, indicating indirect effects. Also, to evaluate the potential for the project to have significant effects on European sites when combined with other existing, ongoing, or foreseeable future plans or projects, an assessment for screening for cumulative impacts was made, by evaluating the current and foreseeable licensed maritime activities in the area.

Methodology

Appropriate Assessment Guidance

EU and national guidance exist in relation to Member States' fulfilling their requirements under the EU Habitats Directive, with particular reference to Article 6(3) and 6(4) of that Directive. The methodology followed in relation to this AA has had regard to the following guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management OPR Practice Note PN01 March 2021
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010).

Description of the Proposed Project

Background of research project

Ireland's waters are home to 71 elasmobranch species, from small resident shark species to the world's largest skate species (Clarke et al. 2016). Despite this diversity, there is a lack of data on their movements in Irish waters, with data predominantly gleaned from observational sightings, mark-recapture tagging and ad-hoc reports. The CETUS (Cetacean, Elasmobranch, Turtle, and Seabird) project is funded by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland in 2021. It is led by researchers from the University College Cork (UCC) and MaREI Centre and partnered with Inland Fisheries Ireland. Key aims of the CETUS project include (i) the synthesis and generation of data on the distribution of Threatened species in Irish waters and (ii) identifying the potential interactions between marine species (seabirds, elasmobranchs, and cetaceans) within existing and proposed offshore wind development sites. The project includes a multi-disciplinary team of researchers working on multiple species, across the Irish and Celtic Seas.

One component of the CETUS Project is focused on an area in the southern Republic of Ireland in Co. Cork, near a small fishing community called Courtmacsherry. Courtmacsherry Bay is one of the remaining hotspots for the Critically Endangered and OSPAR-listed flapper skate, *Dipturus intermedius*, a species threatened by near-extinction (Garbett et al. 2021). Courtmacsherry Bay is one of few locations both within Irish waters and in the world, where flapper skates are reported to remain in numbers. Population decline is due to unsustainable fishing practices in the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite its conservation status, very little is known about the movements of this species and whether it is amenable to spatial protection in this region. Understanding the spatial ecology is critical to identifying potential conservation management measures to ensure it does not disappear from Irish waters. This is particularly relevant given the potential for increased regional development,

e.g., as provisionally stated under the South Coast DMAP draft released by DHLGH in July 2023. The Courtmacsherry Bay Tracking Project maritime usage involves the deployment of passive acoustic receivers to study the seasonal movements and site fidelity of flapper skate within the Courtmacsherry Bay area, Co. Cork.

Over the last decade, the development of animal tracking technology, including acoustic telemetry, has enabled the tracking of fully aquatic animals in their natural environment (Hussey et al. 2015; Orrell et al. 2022). Acoustic telemetry involves either externally attaching or internally implanting an acoustic transmitter (hereafter “tag”) on/into an animal, which can have a battery life of up to 10 years. When an acoustically tagged animal comes within the detection range of an acoustic receiver (around 400-500 m) the unique tag identifier and the time of detection are logged on the receiver. Acoustic receivers are passive acoustic devices or “microphones” that do not emit sound and only record tags operating over a specific frequency band. By forming lines or “gates” of acoustic receivers across rivers, estuaries, or coastal areas the animal can be tracked as it moves in, or out, of an area. This technology can be used to study seasonal site fidelity (how long an animal spends within an area) and its dispersal (which direction does the animal travel when leaving the bay).

This application describes the proposed Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project array, developed alongside the local community to minimise conflict with existing in-water activities, promote a co-creation approach, and maximise data output. The Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project aims to investigate the flapper skate’s seasonal residency and site fidelity, to inform potential conservation management of this species. This application includes an area identified through community consultation as a flapper skate hotspot, and we include a potential array layout of 22 acoustic receivers. This proposed work aims to use a passive, low impact monitoring methodology to record the movements of tagged flapper skates as they transit and occupy the Courtmacsherry Bay area.

The Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking project is led by Dr Danielle Orrell, a Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at the University College Cork who has a decade of animal tracking experience, from tracking juvenile salmon smolts in Scottish lochs to tracking Galapagos sharks off the east coast of Africa. The CETUS elasmobranch (shark, skate and ray) team includes Dr Tom Doyle (CETUS lead Principal Investigator, “PI”), Dr Damien Haberlin (CETUS PI), and Senior Technician Luke Harman, who have successfully run several biotelemetry (tracking) studies in Irish waters of species including compass jellyfish (*Chrysaora hysoscella*), sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) and blue shark (*Prionace glauca*). The project is also supported by PhD Researcher Alfonso Cohuo, who has conducted and analysed acoustic telemetry data for Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*) tagged in Alabama, USA.

Design of deployment

Acoustic receivers will be used to detect fish as they travel within the listening range (typically a few hundred meters). Note that this type of equipment does not emit any sound but contains an acoustic receiver (or “microphone”) that can detect when acoustic tags (operating over 69 kHz) come within listening range. We propose deploying two types of mooring recovery systems: a “pop-up” and a “pick-up” mooring system.

The “pop-up” mooring systems ($n=10$) are comprised of three 11” subsurface trawl floats surrounding an ARC Ascent Unit with an inbuilt VEMCO VR2AR acoustic receiver (Figure 1 & 2, pp. 8-9). Inside the ARC Ascent canister, a 4” Dyneema rope will be spooled for recovery. The base of the ARC Ascent will be secured to a 100kg chain anchor using 14” polypropylene rope (3-strand rope with a 2790kg break load). The footprint on the seafloor of this anchor will not exceed 0.2m². The mooring height from the anchor to the three terminal trawl floats will not exceed 5m and up to one meter in diameter. A VR100 deck communications box with an attached transponding receiver will be used to activate the ARC acoustic release system from the surface (onboard a small craft) and enable full recovery of the deployed mooring. This release system includes a release lug with a corrodible pin activated by a specific acoustic signal emitted by the transponding receiver. Once the canister “pops up”, the rope will be fed onto a pot hauler to enable its hoisting onto the craft and complete recovery. At the time of recovery, the battery on the unit will be replaced and the unit re-deployed.

The “pick up” mooring system ($n=12$): Mooring lines comprised of an 11” subsurface trawl float affixed to a 14 mm polypropylene rope, which terminates in a 100 kg chain anchor (Figure 3, pp. 10). An 8” stainless steel shackle will connect to an 8” stainless steel swivel positioned between the receiver and terminal anchor to account for any twisting and tension on the line, allowing it to naturally uncoil. The footprint on the seafloor of this anchor will not exceed 0.2m². The height of the mooring from the anchor to the 11” terminal trawl float will not exceed 30m in height and up to one meter in diameter (defined by sub-surface buoy diameter). The height of the mooring is necessary to enable divers to physically recover the acoustic receiver from the mooring line without entirely removing the mooring during routine maintenance. This acoustic receiver type does not have a corrodible pin mechanism. For recovery, a surface line will be connected to a recovery loop positioned above the buoy. Once connected and personnel are clear, the line will be attached to a pot hauler to fully recover the mooring line.

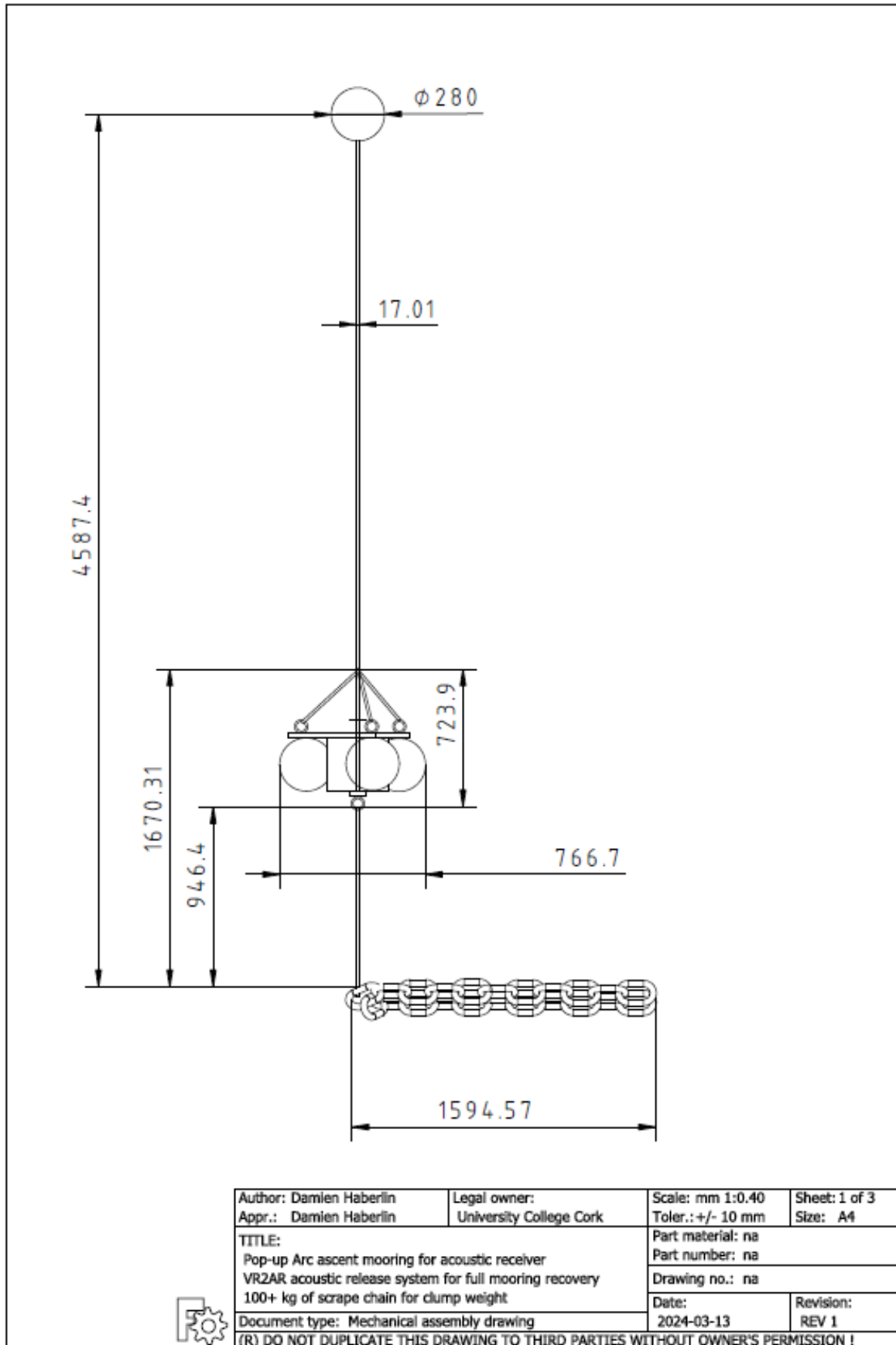


Figure 1. Pop-up Arc ascent mooring for acoustic receiver

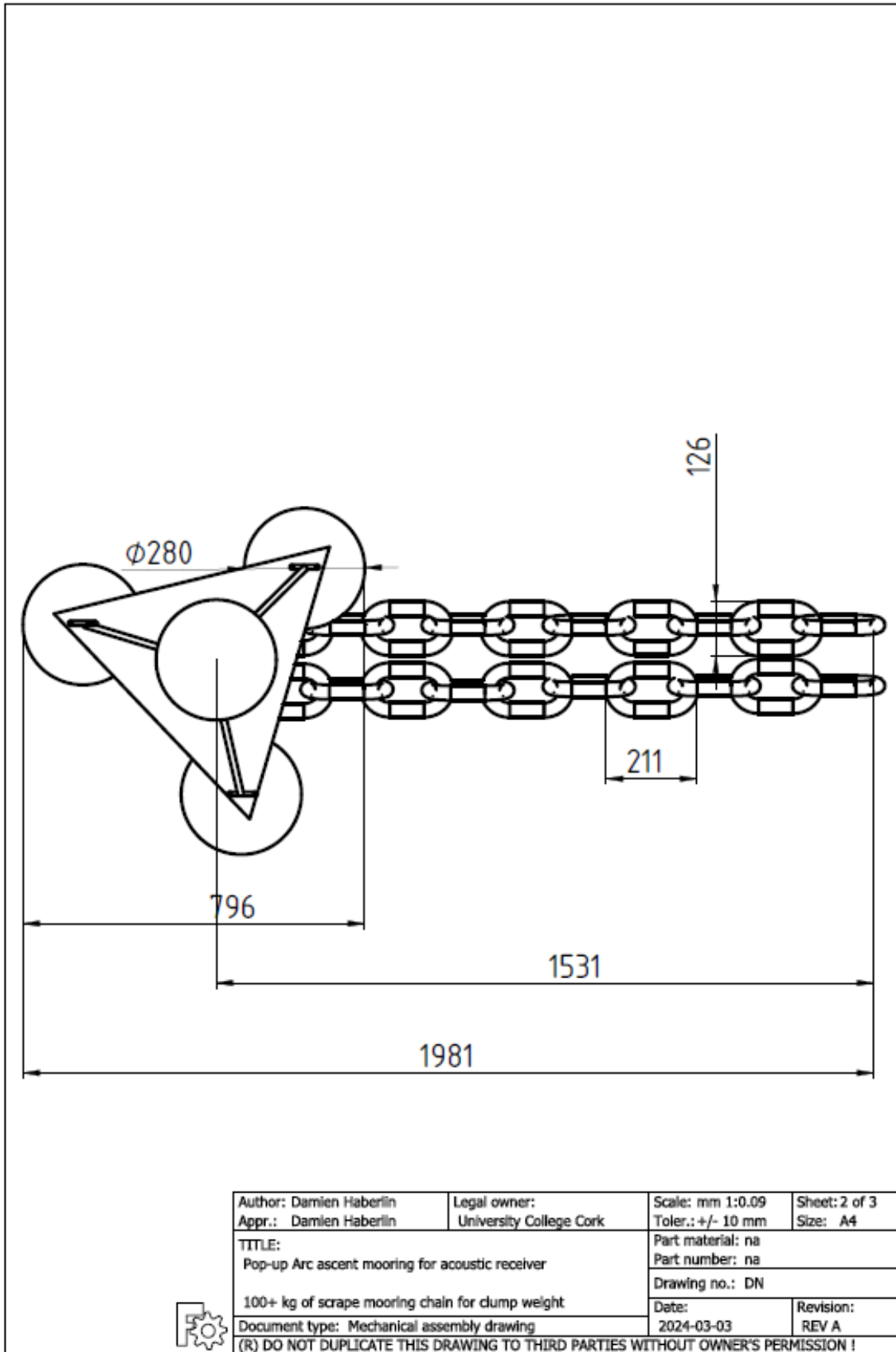


Figure 2. Pop-up Arc ascent mooring for acoustic receiver

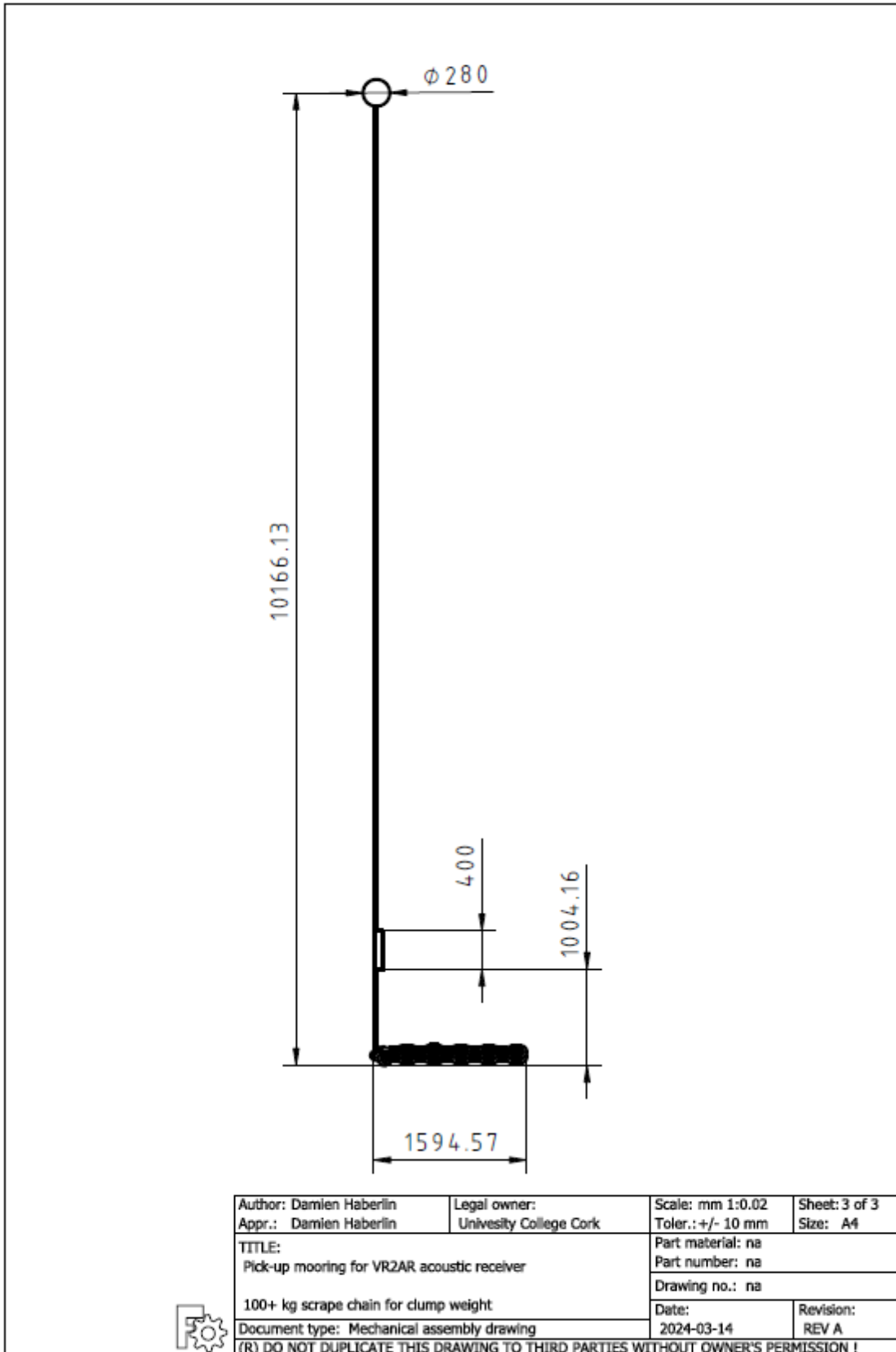


Figure 3. "pick up" VR2W mooring

Deployment Procedure and Maintenance Operations

The current timeline for deployment of acoustic receivers in Courtmacsherry Bay, Co. Cork, is May 2024. According to local anglers, this will allow sufficient time to acoustic tag the animals from June to July during their “peak” presence. Precise dates for deployment are subject to relevant licenses and consents, weather, and vessel availability. The deployments will be undertaken within 1-2 working days.

The moorings will be recovered after 6-12 months for maintenance (battery change) and re-deployed. Exact dates and timing for maintenance and redeployments are subject to relevant licenses and consents, weather, and vessel availability. The procedure will incorporate switching the battery of the hydrophones used or the hydrophones themselves. Each redeployment will be undertaken within 1-2 working days. The aim of this work is to track the movements of the Critically Endangered flapper skate for up to three years.

The vessel for operational activities will depart from Courtmacsherry, Co. Cork. The vessel for operational activities is subject to budget, weather, and vessel availability.

Receiving Environment

The temporary moorings with hydrophones will be deployed in Courtmacsherry Bay, Co. Cork and will include 22 acoustic receiver moorings. All moorings will be positioned at least 500m from shore and will be subsurface to minimise conflict with other water users (Figure 4). The moorings themselves will be sub-surface, with either a loop for recovery (“pick up” receiver moorings), or a pop off acoustic release system (“pop up” receiver mooring) resulting in no surface buoy. “Pop up” receiver moorings will have a low profile (5m height) to minimize risk, while “pick up” moorings (depths of 18-33 m) will have a subsurface float that terminates 6-9 m before the water’s surface (9-17 m total mooring height) to enable recovery. This mooring set up aims to minimize the risk for entanglement in the rising line leading up to a surface buoy through the water column, by any of the Annex II or IV species, or other animals. The benthic substrate in the wider area consists of rock, sand, and mud substrates, with depths in the area ranging from ca. 18 – 60 m. The proposed moorings are not located within any European designated site(s) (i.e SAC or SPA) or ferry routes.

Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project: LIC230039

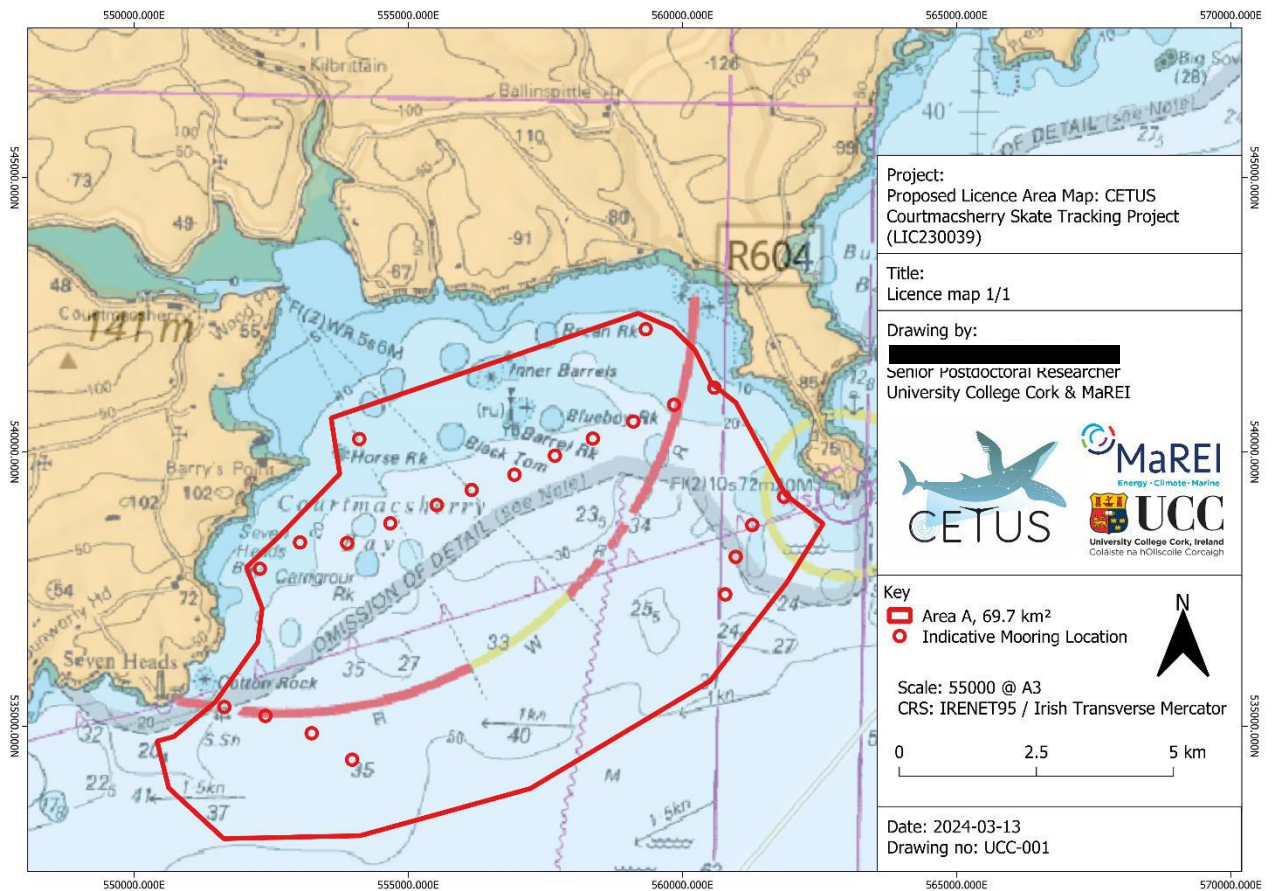


Figure 4. Proposed Licence Area Map for deployments as part of the Courtmacsherry Skate Tracking Project, LIC 230039.

Identification of the relevant European sites

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in proximity to (up to 20 km) our planned project site were collated, for assessing potential linkage between the proposed project and the qualifying interests of the SACs. We examined potential connectivity in two scenarios: 1) in cases where there was an overlap between the Maritime Usage License Application Area and an SAC, which indicates direct effects, and 2) if the SAC fell within the range of the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity, signifying indirect effects. For SACs situated beyond this range, consideration was given based on the presence of a Source-Pathway-Receptor relationship as defined in OPR 2021, between the proposed activity and the qualifying interests of SACs. See Table 1 for a summary of the identified SACs.

Description of European sites (from SAC Site Synopsis)

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC [Site code 001230]

This site is located in west Cork, some 12 km south of Bandon and immediately east of the village of Timoleague. The estuary consists of the drowned valley of the Argideen River, which is now filled with sediments, resulting in an extensive area of mudflats. The site contains a complex of coastal habitats, including ten which are listed in the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[1130] Estuaries

[1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats

[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines

[1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks

[1310] Salicornia Mud

[1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows

[1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows

[2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes

[2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)

[2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)

The greater part of this estuary site is mudflat and tidal channels, but three rivers flow into the site and areas of fresh- and saltmarsh are found. Most of the mudflat at Courtmacsherry is unvegetated, although in places cord-grass (*Spartina* sp.) occurs.

Courtmacsherry Estuary is an important site for the complex of coastal habitats found there, including ten listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and for the large numbers of birds that use the area. The presence of rare and scarce plant species adds further interest and value to the site.

Annex I habitats

Direct effects, as described and defined in the ‘Identification of Possible Effects’ section, are only anticipated in cases where the proposed project intersects with habitats located within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Consequently, for the assessment of screening phase, our consideration is therefore considering if SACs share a geographic overlap with the proposed project.

Given that these deployments exclusively take place in the open marine environment over 500m from shore, we focused our assessment for screening process solely on marine Annex I habitats, guided by the Source-Pathway-Receptor model (as described in OPR 2021). Using this criterion, we determined that none of the Annex I habitat SACs fell within the Zone of Influence of the proposed project.

Table 1. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and their qualifying interests to be considered further in the screening process.

European Site Name and Code	Distance (km) from Project	Qualifying/Special Conservation interest	Considered further in screening	Source Pathway Receptor
Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC [Site code 001230]	>10	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]	No	No Source-Pathway-Receptor link to habitats

Identification of potential environmental impacts

Management of Natura 2000 site/s

Projects or proposals that are intrinsically linked to the administration of a Natura 2000 site are exempt from the need for an Appropriate Assessment (AA). In this case, the proposed project is not connected to or essential for the management of a Natura 2000 site.

Consequently, this project is subject to a preliminary assessment for Appropriate Assessment, aiming to ascertain whether, on its own or in conjunction with other plans or initiatives, it may potentially result in noteworthy impacts on a European site.

Identification of possible effects

The potential for substantial impacts on a European site is contingent upon the presence of a clear connection, known as the Source-Pathway-Receptor link, between the planned development and the European site, as outlined in OPR 2021. We assessed potential connectivity in two scenarios: 1), if there was an overlap between the Maritime Usage Application License Area and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which would indicate direct effects, and 2), if the SAC fell within the range of the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity, signaling indirect effects.

Annex I habitats

The operational influence of our proposed moorings is limited to the direct area covered by the unit's anchor, which will not exceed a footprint of 0.2m². The potential ecological consequences on Annex I Habitats are: 1) Physical disruption to the benthic habitat during the deployment and retrieval processes 2) Physical interference with the benthic habitat within the immediate vicinity of the moorings, and 3) The possibility of a pollution incident.

The seabed at the sites of the moorings consists mainly of sand. For communities inhabiting such sediment, any impact is restricted to the immediate area under the mooring, and the recovery of the community is typically rapid following the removal of the equipment.

The Courtmacsherry Bay SAC has one or more of the Annex I Marine Habitats as Qualifying interests. The protected Annex I habitats in nearest proximity are Sandbanks, Estuaries and Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide (Table 1). The closest point of the proposed area (vertex nearest to Horse Rock) is 600-700m from this SAC, meaning there is no overlap in areas where the bottom substrate is protected.

Annex II species

In Ireland, Annex II marine mammal species are European otter (*Lutra lutra*), grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*), harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*), harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), and bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*). Leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and the Loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) reported in Irish waters, are also listed as

Annex II species. The potential impact on these animals, due to our proposed maritime activity is related to vessel operations during the deployment and retrieval of moorings.

Potential impacts from the vessel includes visual and acoustic disturbance to the environment, and the risk of injury from collisions with the vessel. However, the temporary presence of a single additional vessel in this environment is unlikely to constitute a significant increase in vessel activity for the area given the typical activity levels in the region.

During the operational phase, the moorings will be equipped with non-invasive, silent environmental sensors. Consequently, there is no potential for underwater noise to impact marine mammals, or other listed Annex II species in the area.

The moorings themselves will be sub-surface, with an acoustic release system. For 'pop up' moorings, the height of the mooring set up, from seabed to top of the sub-surface trawl float, will be maximum 5 m. This mooring set up minimises the risk for entanglement in the rising line leading up to a surface buoy through the water column, by any of the Annex II species, or other animals. For 'pick up' moorings, owing to the logistical constraint the riser line will terminate 6-9 m below the waters surface. This will result in some line present within the water column, however, depths for these moorings will be restricted to <35 m to limit the length of rising line.

Birds

During the deployment and maintenance of the moorings, there is a low risk of a temporary disturbance to birds in the immediate vicinity. Our vessel activity may potentially lead to the temporary displacement of individual birds from their preferred feeding or resting areas. However, any displacement is likely to be minimal and temporary, and any disturbed birds will likely relocate to nearby areas. In addition, the presence of one additional vessel in this area will not constitute a significant increase in vessel activity, given the typical levels of activity observed in this region. Moreover, considering the brief duration of the deployment and retrieval process, these activities are unlikely to have a substantial impact on bird species, either directly or indirectly.

Considering the typical levels of vessel activity in this area, the temporary addition of another vessel is not considered a significant increase. Therefore, we rule out any substantial impacts on bird species resulting from the proposed deployment, maintenance, and retrieval of our moorings.

Accidental spillage

Marine vessels are legally obligated to comply with regulations concerning accidental leakages and spillages. We will use vessel operators that comply with all maritime

environmental regulations, and therefore the probability of incidents occurring is considered highly unlikely.

Invasive Alien Species

The hulls of ships can serve as a potential means for the introduction of invasive alien species, which can have consequences on the composition and operation of benthic communities and constituent species. However, the boats identified to be used for deployment/retrieval are relatively small and currently operate in Irish waters, and therefore no risk of introduction of alien species is anticipated. Additionally, equipment used will be cleaned and checked before deployment, and will only be used within the proposed site for the duration of the project. Therefore, we conclude that there is no chance of introduction of alien species because of our study.

In-combination and cumulative effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive mandates the performance of an Appropriate Assessment (AA) for any plan or project that is anticipated to have a noteworthy impact on one or more European sites, either on its own or when considered alongside other plans or projects. Therefore, even if the anticipated effects of a plan or project are not deemed significant when assessed in isolation, it is important to evaluate the potential for the plan or project to have significant effects on European sites when combined with other existing, ongoing, or foreseeable future plans or projects.

During a search conducted on March 12, 2024, on the Department's Foreshore applications website, several projects were identified that might have the potential to collectively impact the proposed project, as their areas of interest overlap with the proposed mooring sites for the maritime usage license application (Table 2). Note withdrawn applications have not been included in this list. Additionally, we are aware of a successful Maritime Usage Licence (LIC230005), which has also been added to this table.

Table 2. Foreshore applications overlapping the proposed mooring sites, their current application status, and possible cumulative effects.

Application	Project	Application Status	Cumulative effects
LIC230005	CETUS Cetacean study within the Irish and Celtic Sea	Granted, January 2024	The single Courtmacsherry mooring will be deployed and recovered alongside the Courtmacsherry Skate Project receivers to minimize disturbance events.
FS007552 RNLi Site Investigation Works Courtmacsherry	Site investigations to inform the design of the new RNLi jetty and berth and to inform disposal options for dredged sediment material.	Applied, 28 February 2023	Underwater noise from jack up barge and associated small vessel.
FS006969 Cork County Council	Removal and replacement of the existing pontoon and gangway, disconnection and reconnection of power and water supplies to the pontoon. Additionally, dredging the channel and area immediately around the pontoon to a depth of - 7.0m OD (proposed dredge footprint is 1,800m ²), and disposal of dredged material on land.	Granted, August 2022	Presence of an additional vessel in the area is not deemed significant

Considering the levels of activity in the vicinity, the temporary introduction of an additional vessel, for one day every 6-12 months as would be the case during our deployments and redeployments, is not regarded as a significant factor. Consequently, our proposed work will not contribute to any cumulative effects in conjunction with and the other projects listed above on the conservation objectives of protected sites, as assessed in this report.

Conclusion

This report has been prepared to inform whether there is a need for the Appropriate Assessment Process to screen if the proposed project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have significant effects on any European site(s). To do this, we used the Source-Pathway-Receptor approach to identify the conservation interests of European sites that might be affected by the proposed project.

After careful evaluation, it has been determined that the likelihood of significant effects on the conservation goals of these European sites, whether from this project alone or when combined with other plans and projects for the area, can be safely excluded. Our project involves deploying temporary moorings that are small, non-invasive, silent and are set in the seabed with an anchor. The proposed project is not directly connected with any European site, excluding direct effects on their seabeds. The proposed project will not give rise to likely significant effects on the qualifying interests of any SAC, neither will the proposed project give rise to likely significant in-combination effects on the special conservation interests of any SAC. Therefore, our report concludes that there is no need to proceed the Appropriate Assessment Process.

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Site Specific Conservation Objectives

Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC [Site code 001230]

https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001230.pdf