

Assessment, Research and Data Unit Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report			
To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	From:	Dr Ciar O'Toole, Senior Marine Advisor
Date	18 March 2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL230031
Applicant:	Amazon MCS Ireland Limited		
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021	3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigations or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.		
Purpose and location of proposed Maritime Usage:	For marine survey and site investigations to inform the route of a fibre optic cable with a landfall at Glandore Bay and Castlefreke, Long Strand, Co. Cork and in the Southern Exclusive Economic Zone and Agreed Continental Shelf.		
Environmental Impact Assessment considered:	Not required (considered on 14 September 2024)		
Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment required:	Yes, AA screening and determination dated 24 October 2024, NIS received 14 November 2024		
Public consultation:	Yes, 11 January to 11 February 2025, 138 responses received in total		
Request(s) for further information:	Yes, issued on 31 October 2024, response received 19 November 2024		

		Role	Date
Prepared by:	Dr Ciar O'Toole	Senior Marine Advisor, ARD	18/03/2025
Reviewed by:	Suzanne Wylde	Senior Marine Advisor, ARD	18/03/2025
Approved by:	John Evans	Director, ARD	04/04/2025
Issued by:	Dr Ciar O'Toole	Senior Marine Advisor, ARD	04/04/2025

1 Background

The applicant plans to investigate the feasibility of constructing a new subsea telecoms cable system, linking the United States to Ireland, from a landfall on the northeast coast of the USA to a proposed landfall at Glandore Bay, County Cork on the southwest coast of Ireland. The applicant intends to undertake the survey campaign within the Irish Maritime Area in order to inform the location and design of the cable route and landfall location.

1.1 Project Description

The site investigation works are proposed to be carried out within the proposed maritime usage area predominantly by seabed mapping techniques (geophysical survey) with some selective sampling of the upper layers of the seabed (geotechnical survey). The proposed maritime usage area is situated off the coast of County Cork. The survey corridor has a length of 898.5 km and a total area of 1705646.81 hectares and is approximately 500m wide for most of its length. (Figures 1 and 2). The sediment in the area includes sandy mud, muddy sand and biogenic reef. Water depths in the proposed maritime usage area are from 0m at the high-water mark to over 4,000m depth at the western extent of the Agreed Continental Shelf. A detailed description of the proposed project and its associated scope of works is presented in the Works Methodology document submitted by the applicant (MDM Engineers, 14 May 2024) which has been reviewed as part of this assessment. The proposed Maritime Usage licence application is for three years in total, and the works are estimated to take 31 days in total, broken down into the various activities as outlined in the section below.

The proposed works comprise of:

- Intertidal beach survey and site investigations to 3m water depth, estimated to take 3-4 days, including:
 - Topographical survey using total station, drone or LiDAR,
 - Geophysical survey using ground penetrating radar or magnetometer/metal detector
 - Intertidal walk over survey,
 - Electrical resistivity tomography survey,
 - Up to 3 no. trial pits (target pit depth 2.5m) chosen after walkover survey,
 - Up to 8 no. bar probes on both beaches (16 total), from high to low water (at 10m spacing) and
 - Up to 16 no. bar probes from the low water to the 3m water depth contour (at 10m spacing).
- Inshore Marine Survey (3m to 15m water depth), estimated to take 3-4 days, including:
 - Multibeam echo sounder,
 - Side scan sonar and
 - Sub-bottom profiler.
- Offshore and deep-water survey including geophysical and geotechnical site investigations, estimated to take up to 23 days, including:
 - Multibeam echo sounder and deep-water multibeam echo sounder,
 - Side scan sonar,
 - Sub-bottom profiler,
 - Ultra-short base line positioning system,
 - Magnetometer,

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- Up to 26 no. grab samples,
- Up to 48 no. gravity cores or vibrocores,
- Up to 96 no. cone penetration tests,
- Underwater Video Survey and
- Archaeological Survey.

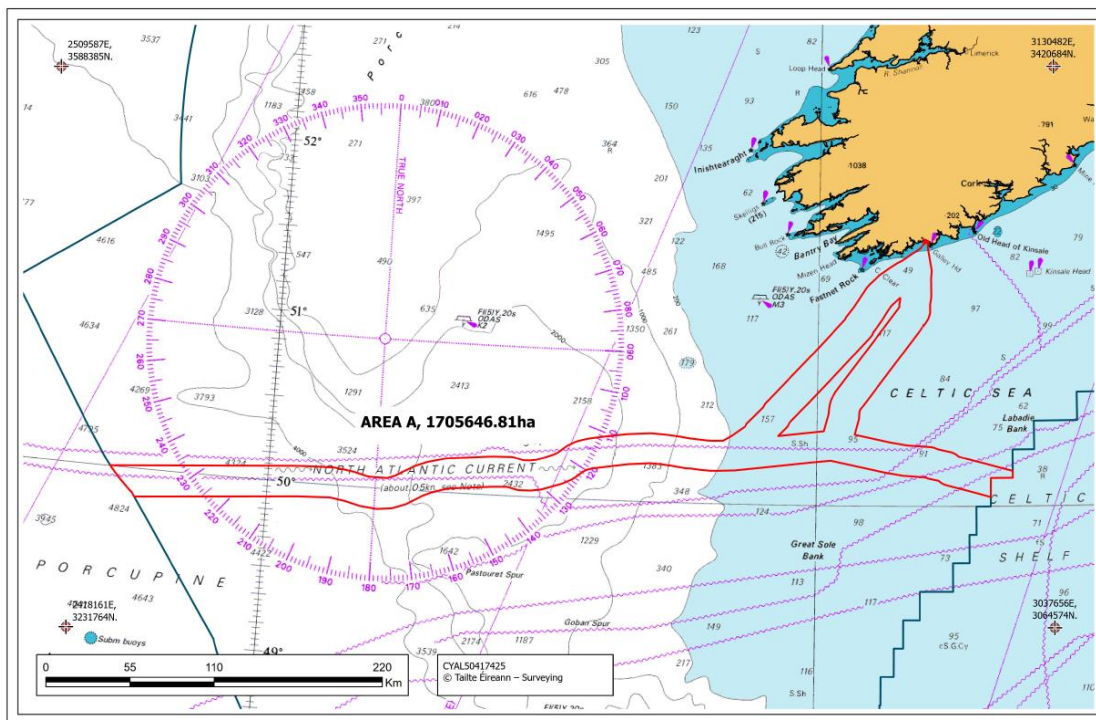


Figure 1: Map showing proposed Maritime Usage area outlined in red.

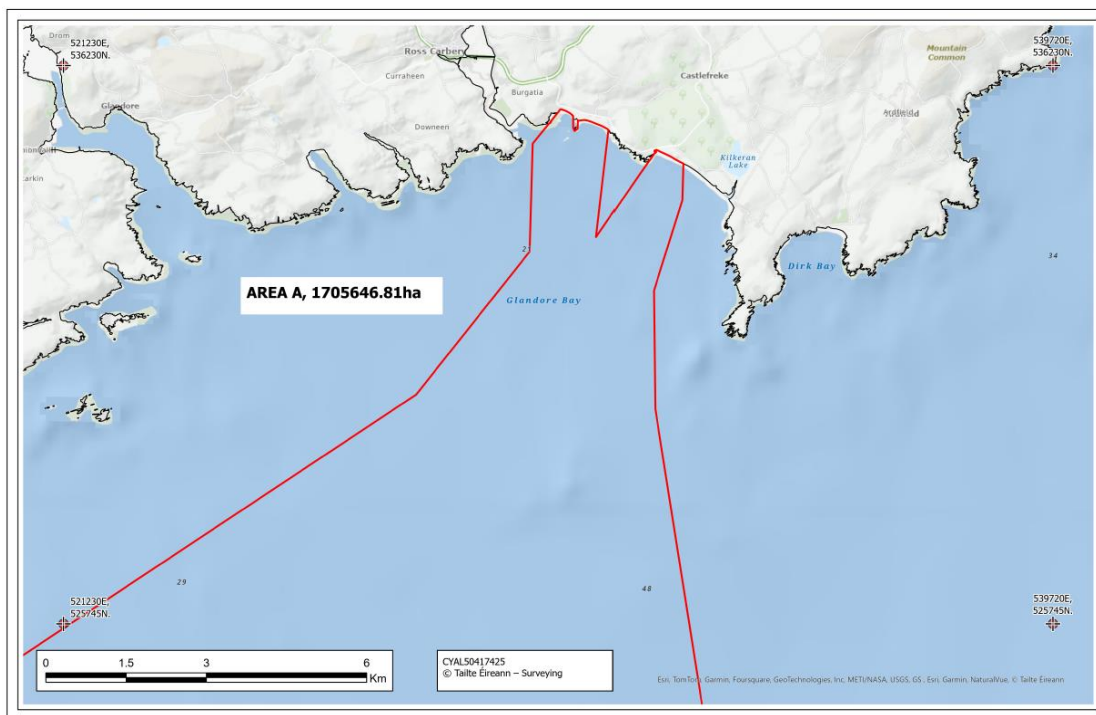


Figure 2 Map showing proposed landfall locations in Glandore Bay, Co. Cork showing proposed Maritime Usage area outlined in red.

2 National Policy and EU Directives

In undertaking the assessment of this proposed Maritime Usage application MARA had regard to the requirements of Section 121(2) of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021, which sets out the marine policy and legislation to which regard must be had in considering a proposed Maritime Usage application. These are each outlined in the following sections 2.1 to 2.10 inclusive.

2.1 National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)

A number of environmental policies detailed in the NMPF are covered in other sections of this report, including, but not limited to, the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), the Birds and Habitat Directives, the Water Framework Directive, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

The proposal to undertake site investigations for a fibre optic cable with a landfall at Glandore Bay and Castlefreke, Long Strand, Co. Cork and in the Southern Exclusive Economic Zone and Agreed Continental Shelf is consistent with two chapters of the NMPF and the policies within them. These are Chapter 6 Economy whose objectives include developing a thriving ocean economy, including those employed in the marine sector, and Chapter 22 Telecommunications whose objectives include facilitating international high-speed connectivity between Ireland and other countries and protecting existing telecommunications cables, ensuring that our connectivity structure is robust and resilient, while facilitating future growth in the sector. Chapters 7 and 23 of the NMDF, Social and Tourism, are also relevant to this assessment, given the landfall location proposed by the applicant and the potential overlap in uses between the proposed maritime usage activity and recreational users and tourists at the landfall site in particular.

2.2 National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)

[Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan](#) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030. The objectives of the NBAP focus on the conservation and restoration of biodiversity. Objective 2 of the NBAP is to meet urgent conservation and restoration needs. Part of its focus is to elevate efforts to tackle invasive alien species. It is recommended that a condition be included in the proposed Maritime Usage licence, if granted, to address the potential risks from invasive alien species.

2.3 Birds and Habitats Directives (79/409/EC and 92/43/EEC)

MARA published an Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination on 24 October 2024 which stated that it could not exclude, on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed project, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site(s).

MARA undertook an Appropriate Assessment in respect to this project. Having considered the documents submitted by the applicant, the observations received on foot of the public consultation on the application, the appropriate assessment concluded, for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 42(11) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, that the proposed maritime usage (either individually or in combination with any other plans or projects) will not adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures. The appropriate assessment specifies

mitigations that must be included as conditions in a licence that may be granted in respect of this Maritime Usage Licence application.

In accordance with the Birds and Habitats Regulations, MARA cannot grant a licence for a maritime usage activity that may contravene the system of strict protection established for Annex IV species, under the Habitats Directive. The applicant undertook an Annex IV risk assessment as part of their proposed Maritime Usage licence application. The risk assessment considered the scope of the proposed Maritime Usage activity, relevant Annex IV species (cetaceans, turtles and otter) and the potential impacts of the proposed Maritime Usage activity on the relevant Annex IV species.

I am satisfied with the conclusion of the risk assessment, that there is no risk to the relevant Annex IV species, subject to implementation of mitigation measures. The mitigation measures included as conditions for the proposed Maritime Usage licence are expected to address any potential impacts on those species. Specifically, I am recommending as a licence condition that the proposed grantee shall adhere to the most up to date national guidance in relation to underwater noise for cetaceans. It is to be noted that submissions from NPWS in relation to this application did not raise concerns regarding impacts on cetaceans. Regarding turtles, no risk was identified. For otters, the assessed risk of the intertidal survey work is considered to be a low one in my opinion, given their crepuscular nature and the fact that the proposed maritime usage activities will occur during daylight hours. Therefore, no specific mitigation for otters and turtles is required for this proposed maritime usage activity.

2.4 Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires EU member states to protect and improve water quality in all waters to achieve at least Good Status in inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater by 2027, at the latest. Part of the proposed maritime usage activity will take place in Rosscarbery Bay. Rosscarbery Bay was classified as having Good status in the most recent [Water Quality in Ireland 2016-2021](#) assessment – this included an assessment of ecological status, physicochemical elements and hydro morphological elements of the waterbody. The waterbody is classed as having “Review¹” status in terms of risk of failing to meet the objectives of the WFD by 2027. This indicates a potential increase in pressures cannot be ruled out that may result in a decline in measured water quality under the WFD.

The proposed maritime usage activity is unlikely to cause a decline in water quality under the parameters measured under the WFD due to the types of activities proposed in the waterbody and their short term and temporary nature.

2.5 Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) sets the framework for European marine environmental policy. It aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) for all marine waters in Europe and protect the resource base for marine related economic and social activities. The 2024 draft

¹ Waterbodies that are categorised as “Review” either because additional information is needed to determine their status before resources and more targeted measures are initiated or the measures have been undertaken, e.g. a wastewater treatment plant upgrade, but the outcome hasn’t yet been measured/monitored.

assessment under Article 8 of the MFSD² states that GES has not been achieved for sea-floor integrity, marine litter and biodiversity.

Table 1: Assessment of MFSD descriptors in relation to this proposed Maritime Usage application.

MFSD Descriptor	Good Environmental Status achieved ³	Assessment
Biological diversity	Partially achieved	The applicant submitted an NIS and an Annex IV risk assessment as part of the proposed Maritime Usage licence application. These reports assessed the impacts of the proposed maritime usage activity. Licence conditions will be included in any Maritime Usage Licence granted to mitigate any projected impact on biological diversity.
Non-indigenous species	Yes	To ensure that the proposed maritime usage activity does not result in the unintended introduction of non-indigenous species, it is recommended that a condition be included in the proposed Maritime Usage licence, if granted, to include a condition relating to the control of invasive species in the hulls and ballast water of the relevant vessels and equipment and vehicles used in the intertidal.
Population of commercial fish/shellfish	Partially achieved	Aquaculture/Fisheries Orders: There are two licensed aquaculture sites in the vicinity of the proposed maritime usage activity, both within 5km, T05-011A and T05-011OFO. Both are licensed for native oysters, and neither are expected to be impacted by the proposed maritime usage. Commercial Fisheries: A number of commercial fisheries overlap with the proposed maritime usage area. These include inshore pot and trawl fisheries, Nephrops fisheries, and offshore pelagic trawl and netting fisheries. A condition will be included in any licence granted for a fisheries liaison officer to be appointed for this maritime usage activity and to prevent the removal or damage of any fishing gear in the proposed maritime usage area.
Marine food webs	Unclear	The balance and diversity in marine food webs is not expected to be impacted in any way as a result of the proposed maritime usage activity.
Eutrophication	Yes	The proposed maritime usage activity does not involve the addition of any nutrients from external sources to the marine environment, and as such will not impact this descriptor achieving good environmental status.

² [Ireland's Draft Marine Strategy Part 1: Articles 8, 9 and 10 report 2024.](#)

³ As per [Ireland's Draft Marine Strategy Part 1: Article 8, 9 and 10 report 2024](#)

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Sea floor integrity	No	The benthic environment being sampled as part of this site investigation will experience temporary disturbance due to some of the methods proposed. It is not expected that the Proposed Maritime Usage will impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Alteration of hydrographical conditions	Yes	The proposed maritime usage will not significantly alter the hydrographical conditions in the benthic area to be surveyed. It is not expected that the Proposed Maritime Usage will impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Concentrations of contaminants	Yes	The proposed Maritime Usage licence will require inclusion of a condition relating to preparation of an oil pollution emergency plan in the case of an oil spill to mitigate for any accidental introduction of contaminants to the marine environment. There are no other pathways identified where the proposed maritime usage could negatively impact contaminant concentrations in the survey area.
Contaminants in fish/seafood for human consumption	Yes	The proposed maritime usage activity will not result in the introduction of contaminants in fish or seafood and therefore, will not impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Marine Litter	No	The proposed Maritime Usage activity will not result in additional marine litter being introduced to the marine environment and therefore, will not impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Introduction of energy including underwater noise	Yes	The impacts of underwater noise introduced as a result of the proposed maritime usage activity are assessed in the appropriate assessment and the Annex IV Risk Assessment associated with this proposed Maritime Usage application. It is recommended that a condition relating to marine mammals and the management of underwater noise disturbance be included in the licence, if granted.

2.6 Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2014/52/EU)

MARA had regard to Schedules 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 in considering the necessity to carry out screening for environmental impact assessment on this proposed Maritime Usage on the 14 September 2024. It was concluded that the project does not fall within the scope of the EIA Directive and therefore screening for environmental impact assessment is not required.

2.7 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015

Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act requires relevant bodies, including MARA, to perform their functions in so far as practicable in a manner consistent with the governance framework set out therein. The Act sets legally binding targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. Considering the temporary and short-term nature of the proposed maritime usage, no significant increases in carbon emission are expected to be produced and therefore there are no potential for indirect effects on climate change.

2.8 Consideration of Other Users – the rights of the public over the foreshore in relation to navigation and fishing and the need for co-operation between users of the same maritime area

MARA had regard to the rights of other users as set out in Section 33(b) of the MAP Act 2021. Although the proposed maritime usage activity is short term and temporary in nature, a number of conditions will be included in any Maritime Usage licence granted to cover the requirements regarding navigation, fishing and other users of the licenced area, both commercial and recreational.

I have consulted with the relevant Regional Marine Advisor Engineering within the ARD unit, who has undertaken an assessment in relation to estate management and other maritime users (Appendix 1). Their report identified no existing overlapping Maritime Area Consents, Maritime Usage Licences or Foreshore Licences. It did identify an overlap with two existing foreshore licence applications, with the Foreshore Unit and one existing Maritime Usage Licence application. As these were all at the application stage, they were deemed not to require further consideration in terms of estate management. The report did not identify any other conflicts in terms of estate management in relation to the proposed maritime usage.

The Marine Advisor Engineering noted also that the maritime usage activity, if granted, will be on a non-exclusive basis and a condition to that effect should be included in the licence, if granted. The report also noted that due to the short term nature of the work in the intertidal area, any disturbance to the general public should be limited to a maximum of 1-2 days, and that considering the scale and nature of the works, a beach closure should not be necessary. However, during the course of the intertidal operations the applicant should ensure that existing public access arrangements are maintained, where possible, and all necessary precautions are put in place to protect the public. It is proposed to include this as a licence condition if the maritime usage activity is granted. They also advised a condition to be included in any future Maritime Usage licence relating to the avoidance of damage being caused to third party property.

3 Site visit

A site visit was not undertaken as the majority of the proposed maritime usage activity is in the EEZ and Agreed Continental Shelf.

4 Consultations

A 30-day public consultation period was undertaken under Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations (2011, as amended) and under section 117(6)(b) of the Maritime Area Planning Act (2021, as amended), commencing on 11 January 2025, with the public invited to make observations. In total, 138 submissions were received by MARA during the public consultation period. 129 submissions were received from members of the public on foot of the public consultation, all of which were against the proposed maritime usage activity. These submissions were individually considered as part of my assessment and are summarised by submission type in Table 1 below, which also includes the relevant response from the Marine Advisor. Of the submissions received from members of the public:

- Four submissions stated they were against the proposed maritime usage activity but gave no reason, these are excluded from Table 1.
- 124 submissions raised various and often multiple concerns, relating to potential environmental, ecological or visual impacts, as well as the public consultation process itself. Of these submissions, one was from An Taisce, one from the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and these are dealt with separately in Table 1. One member of the public made six separate submissions on similar issues relating to the environment.
- One submission raised other concerns.

MARA also invited observations on the proposed Maritime Usage licence application from the following public bodies: the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Marine Institute, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency, Cork County Council, the Port of Cork, the Commissioner for Irish Lights, the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Transport, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Monuments Service. Observations were received from nine of these bodies, which are summarised in Table 2 below. Table 2 also includes a response to each submission from the Marine Advisor.

Table 1 Submissions from members of the public grouped by issues raised.

Submissions:	Points raised	Marine Advisor's response
An Taisce	Makes a number of observations regarding the potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage activity, including: the potential for disturbance to an overlapping SAC site, suggesting that consideration be given to potential disturbance of some fish species, marine animal pathways along the Agreed Continental Shelf, and the consideration of potential impacts of underwater noise on marine mammals	<p>MARA welcomes the detailed submission from An Taisce. The issues raised as concerns have been considered as part of the assessment carried out by MARA. The assessment concludes that the short term, temporary nature of the proposed maritime usage will not have any lasting or long-term impact on either the offshore environment or the environment at the proposed landfall sites.</p> <p>The AA report and determination produced by MARA outlines the consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including nearby SACs and their qualifying interest, and this, along with the Annex IV assessment are considered in Section 2.3 of this report. Specific mitigation measures as a result of the Appropriate Assessment have been identified in relation to abutting protected habitats and cetacean species in both shallow and deeper waters. Mitigation measures identified in the AA report and determination relating to protected habitats or species will be included as conditions in any licence granted.</p>
The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) and one other submission	Two submissions raised a number of very similar points regarding omissions in the information submitted by the applicant to inform both the AA screening (SISAA report) and the AA report (Natura Impact Statement), along with an assessment of the Annex IV risk assessment	<p>MARA welcomes the detailed submission of the IWDG and one other party. The issues raised in these submissions regarding the applicant's own AA screening and NIS documents have been considered and taken account of in MARA's AA report and determination. Several mitigation measures are proposed to deal with the concerns raised. In particular, the AA report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local protected Natura 2000 sites and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites. Mitigation measures identified in the AA report and determination will be included as conditions in any licence granted.</p> <p>Two specific points warrant detailed comment here: Regarding the omission of updated qualifying interests in some SACs considered in the AA screening and determination – this arose from the addition of Qualifying Interests (Harbour Porpoise) to certain SACs around the time of the screening. In these instances, while the added Qualifying Interest was not considered at screening, the sites in question screened in for Stage 2 assessment arising from consideration of other Qualifying Interests. No relevant site was omitted from Stage 2 Assessment. The newly</p>

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		<p>added Qualifying Interests were considered as part of the Stage 2 Assessment (after requesting an updated NIS as part of a Request for Further Information from the applicant).</p> <p>MARA found the assessment of the Annex IV report informative. The points raised were considered further in MARA's own assessment.</p>
<p>121 submissions, relating to some or all of the issues listed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns regarding cable installation and impacts of installed cable Concern regarding Protected sites (SAC/SPA/Natura 2000) Concern regarding potential environmental effects including habitat fragmentation, biodiversity, impacts on habitats and species, particularly impacts on dune habitats, the potential for pollution and possible disruption to local marine life Concern regarding potential impact on landscape/visual impact Request for all information to be made available Some submissions state no information has been visibly displayed by Amazon in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These submissions appear to refer to the impact of a potential cable installation, which is not the proposed maritime usage activity being considered, which is for site investigations to inform a potential future cable installation application. The AA report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including SACs and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites. Mitigation measures identified in the AA report and determination will be included as conditions in any licence granted. The issues raised as concerns have been considered as part of the AA report and determination and the MUL report. It has been found that the short term and primarily offshore nature of the proposed maritime usage is not considered to have any lasting or long-term impact on either of the proposed landfall sites in terms of either environmental or visual impacts. In particular, the three proposed trial pits at the landfall site will be refilled after digging and all activity in the area of the landfall site is expected to take a total of three days to complete. Some submissions request more or all available information. All information available to MARA has already been made available on the MARA website as part of the public consultation process. A suggested condition to be included in any licence granted for the proposed maritime usage will include hiring a Community Liaison Officer, whose role would include informing the local population who use the landfall area of activities related to the proposed maritime usage. It is not a requirement of the Maritime Usage Licence application process, as set out in the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (as amended) that a public notice be posted in the area.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some submissions state there was a lack of transparency and public consultation • Concern regarding the impact the proposed maritime usage activity will have on the surf quality at one of the proposed landfall locations, Long Strand, Castlefreke. • States area is one of outstanding natural beauty which is a tourist attraction, has concerns regarding potential impacts • Importance of area to local residents • Comments on unique formation of habitat/beach/dunes • Concerns regarding potential impact on existing blue flag beach • Some submissions stated that the company themselves have admitted that their survey may possibly cause physical disturbance and habitat loss • Some submissions had concerns regarding impacts on local traffic and to the café located beside Long Strand beach, as well as other local businesses • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has followed the requirements of the Maritime Usage Licence application process, including a public consultation period. A suggested condition to be included in any licence granted for the proposed maritime usage would include hiring a Community Liaison Officer, whose role would include informing the local population who use the landfall area of activities related to the proposed maritime usage. • These submissions appear to refer to the impact of a potential cable installation, rather than the site investigations proposed. The short term, temporary nature of the proposed maritime usage activity is not considered to contribute to any decline in surfing waves in the locality, given mitigation measures to be put in place. • The area falls within an area designated as High Value Landscape and a scenic route is located nearby. The short term and primarily offshore nature of the proposed maritime usage is not considered to have any lasting or long-term impact on either of the proposed landfall sites in terms of changing the appearance of the site in any permanent manner or impacting on tourist activity, given mitigation measures to be put in place. It has been found that the short term and primarily offshore nature of the proposed maritime usage is not considered to have any lasting or long-term impact on either of the proposed landfall sites in terms of either environmental or visual impacts. No negative impact to the blue flag beach is predicted given the type of activities being undertaken. In particular, the three proposed trial pits at the landfall site will be refilled after digging and all activity in the area of the landfall site is expected to take a total of three days to complete. • This appears to refer to the SISAA and NIS documents submitted by the applicant as part of the Appropriate Assessment process. The AA report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including SACs and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites. Mitigation measures identified in the AA report and determination will be included as conditions in any licence granted • The proposed Maritime Usage activity in the intertidal area (including the landfall sites) is due to occur over a total of two to three days in total, therefore, no ongoing impact on local businesses and traffic flow is expected as a result, due to the short-term nature of the activities. The localised area over where the activities will occur,
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One submission had a concern, as part of a larger submission, that this application, if granted, will set a precedent for this type of activity in this area • One submission requested reassurance that a full and proper survey of land and sea flora and fauna had been carried out by independent scientists. • One submission, as part of a larger submission, expresses an opinion that there has been chronic historical mismanagement of existing infrastructure in Rosscarbery Bay • One submission, as part of a larger submission, states there are discrepancies in information provided by the applicant • One submission, as part of a larger submission, expresses opinion that by approving this permitted maritime usage makes a military threat of Ireland. 	<p>and the equipment required also indicate an acceptable, small-scale level of disturbance over this time period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each application for a proposed maritime usage activity is assessed independently by MARA • A full physical survey is not required for licensing this type of maritime usage activity, which itself primarily includes survey works to inform the feasibility or otherwise of future applications. • As a relatively new agency, established in 2023, it is beyond the scope of MARA and this report to comment on historical management of maritime infrastructure in the area. • MARA reviews all information submitted to it by the applicant as well as carrying out its own assessments before a decision is made. No discrepancies were found in MARA's assessment, and none were specified in the submission referring to same. • These issues fall outside the scope of this report.
One submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks information on applicant/contractor/consulting engineers etc., as well as contact details for MARA. • Raises a query about building a power station to circumvent this proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The submission appears to refer to the impact of a potential cable installation, which is not the proposed maritime usage activity being considered, which is for site investigations to inform a potential future cable installation application. Contact details for MARA are available on our website. Providing contact details for Amazon MCS Ireland Ltd and any contractors they employ are outside the scope of this report. • MARA wishes to clarify that this application is for site investigation work for a telecommunications cable, not a power cable.

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Table 2: Submissions from Public bodies:

Submission Sent by	Points raised	Marine Advisor's response
Strategy Development and Business Management Division, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	<p>Cable will provide high speed international telecommunications connectivity to Ireland – which they consider a key driver in social, economic and industrial growth and in the development of regions</p> <p>Refers to recent growth in need for this type of subsea cables and projected future demand</p> <p>States it is the Departments strong position to support these types of development and their opinion is that this development supports government policy</p>	MARA notes the points raised and that they have been considered in the context of the National Marine Planning Framework under Section 2.1 of this report.
Water, Energy and Business Support Programme, Environment Protection Agency	<p>Advises that the proposed maritime usage activity should not result in a contravention of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Birds Directive 2009/147/EC, Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC, Bathing Water Directive 73/160/EEC or Environmental Liabilities Directive 2004/35/EC.</p>	MARA notes the submission from the EPA. The Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (as amended) sets out the matters to which MARA must have regard to when considering an application for marine usage in accordance with Schedule 7 of the MAP Act.
Marine Survey Office (Marine Survey Office), Department of Transport	<p>Recommends conditions to be applied to the licence if granted, which relate to: navigation safety, the need for vessels to be suitably certified, the need for the grantee to liaise with the MSO if autonomous or unmanned vehicles are to be used during the proposed maritime usage activity, the requirement for a marine notice to be issued, the requirement for Navtex broadcasts, the need to liaise with the MSO and CIL regarding the marking and lighting of any moored instruments and the particulars of information to be provided to the UK Hydrographic Office.</p>	MARA notes the issues raised by the MSO. Conditions are included as standard in Marine Usage Licences in respect of the requirement to publish marine notices and the need for vessels to conform with the requirements of Irish certification standards. In addition, MARA is required to have regard to the rights of the public or any class of the public over the foreshore in relation to navigation – this requirement has been incorporated into our overall assessment of the licence application and a specific condition added to the licence relating to these issues will form part of any licence granted.
Commissioner of Irish Lights (CIL)	<p>Has no concerns relating to the proposed maritime usage activity. Raises two points relating to the marking and lighting of possible structures in the maritime area, one relating to the</p>	MARA notes the submission, and the points raised by Irish Lights. It should be noted that the requirement for statutory consents in respect of the deployment of buoys lies with the

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	landfall of a potential future cable, and a second related to any potential Aids to Navigation	Commissioner for Irish Lights. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that all the required statutory consents are in place in order for the proposed marine usage activity to go ahead. It is recommended that a condition be included in the licence, if granted, stating that the MUL does not negate the responsibility of Amazon MCS Ireland Ltd to ensure they have all the necessary consents to undertake the proposed activity.
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Considers there will be activities coincidental with fishing operations in the area over the duration of the licence, includes comments and observations from the Marine Institute which relate to possible overlap with fishing grounds, with impacts on fishing activities expected to be minor. It also considers that the survey activity may not be expected to cause fish mortality or have lasting effects on habitats.	MARA notes the content of the submission from DAFM, with additional comments from the Marine Institute. The point regarding overlap with fishing operations is considered in Section 2. 5 above, and in the mitigation measures in Section 6. MARA also notes and agrees with the additional submission from the MI.
Underwater Archaeological Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Provides recommendations and a number of suggested conditions to be applied to the proposed Licence if granted	MARA notes the information submitted and the concerns raised by the National Monuments Service. The submission includes a detailed list of requirements for mitigating impacts on underwater archaeology. It is recommended that the licence include a condition to consult with, and comply with the requirements of, the National Monuments Service prior to commencing the proposed maritime usage.
Marine Institute	The Marine Institute has no specific observations on the type of surveying proposed but points out that the route for surveying is used by various fisheries. The submission notes that it would be important that MARA consider likely interactions with such fisheries in the deliberations. Furthermore, the selection of grab locations along the route seems uniformly distributed. It is the advice of the MI that if MARA are minded licencing this maritime usage activity that these stations be selected following acoustic or other broadscale surveying and, therefore, be used for ground truthing or validation of particularly sensitive or unique habitats.	MARA notes the Marine Institute's submission. The possible interaction with fisheries is considered in Section 2.5 of this report and in the recommended licence conditions in Section 6. Regarding the sampling locations, a specific condition in Section 6 relates to geophysical activity being carried out before geotechnical activities are undertaken.

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<p>Inland Fisheries Ireland</p>	<p>The submission from IFI was submitted to MARA, addressed to the Marine Licence Vetting Committee</p> <p>The submission highlights that twaite shad may use the area for feeding.</p> <p>The submission requests that mitigation measures be included to reduce the sediment plume generated and suggests steps be taken to prevent hydrocarbon spills.</p> <p>Finally, the submission requires that the local IFI office be notified in advance of beginning operations.</p>	<p>MARA notes that the submission was addressed to the Marine Licence Vetting Committee. The Marine Licence Vetting Committee was a consultative committee for the purposes of foreshore licensing and has no bearing on this licence application or the responsibilities of MARA.</p> <p>The AA report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local protected Natura 2000 sites and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites. Sediment plumes or impact on twaite shad in particular were not highlighted as a possible significant effect during the AA process. Hydrocarbon spills are considered in Section 2.4 and the suggested conditions outlined in Section 6 of this report.</p>
<p>Development Applications Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on behalf of National Parks and Wildlife Service</p>	<p>The NPWS, via a submission from DHLGH raises a number of points about the importance of the habitats and species within the Kilkeran Lake and Castlefreke Dunes SAC.</p> <p>It recommends a further assessment of alternative options in terms of landing sites and that the mitigation hierarchy has not been applied here.</p> <p>The submission raises concerns about the consideration of impact on otter, the timing of field surveys and the consideration of invasive species</p>	<p>Part of this submission appears to confuse the proposed maritime usage activity which is investigative in nature and an eventual cable installation that may follow. The AA report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local protected Natura 2000 sites and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites.</p> <p>In regards assessment of alternative landfall sites and application of mitigation hierarchy, it is not clear to MARA how this conclusion can be drawn before the AA report and determination were finalised. MARA has now concluded, as the competent authority, that the proposed development, given the mitigation measures, will not have a significant impact on any of the considered Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>The NPWS submission also appears to interpret the proposed works as overlapping with the protected dune system, which is not the case, although access will be required along this route. Proposed mitigation in this report and the AA report and determination deals with concerns relating to access routes.</p>

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		<p>The concerns regarding otter are considered under Section 2.3 of this report.</p> <p>Invasive species are considered in the AA report and determination, including mitigation measures.</p> <p>The concerns regarding the timings of the field surveys in the NIS are noted. However, the AA report and determination has not assessed any of the species or habitats specified as being at risk of significant impact.</p>
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6 Conclusion and Recommendations

Having considered the information submitted regarding this application, I recommend the granting of a Maritime Usage Licence under Section 119 of the MAP Act for this application subject to inclusion of the following conditions:

1. The Permitted Maritime Usage shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted in support of the application for this Licence.

Reason: *To clarify the scope of this licence and ensure protection of the marine environment.*

2. This licence is for the purposes of licensing under the Act and nothing in this licence shall be construed as negating the Holder's statutory obligations or requirements under any other Law.

Reason: *To clarify the scope of this licence.*

3. Prior to the commencement of the Permitted Maritime Usage the Holder shall consult and comply with the requirements of the Underwater Archaeology Unit of the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage. National Monuments Service, G37, Custom House, Custom House Quay, Dublin 1, D01 W6X0.

Reason: *To ensure protection of maritime heritage*

4. The Holder shall, a minimum 14 days prior to the commencement of the Permitted Maritime Usage, arrange for the publication of a Marine Notice with the Marine Safety Policy Division, Department of Transport.

Reason: *To ensure safe navigation in the maritime area*

5. The Holder shall not damage or interfere with any third party's property, infrastructure or fishing gear while conducting the Permitted Maritime Usage.

Reason: *To minimise impact on other users of the marine environment and ensure the orderly undertaking of the proposed maritime usage*

6. At least two weeks prior to the commencement, and for the duration, of the Permitted Maritime Usage the Holder shall engage a Fisheries Liaison Officer to consult with and fully inform relevant fishers in order that interactions with ongoing fishing activities in the area are minimised during the course of the Permitted Maritime Usage.

Reason: *To minimise impact on other users of the marine environment*

7. At least two weeks prior to the commencement, and for the duration, of the Permitted Maritime Usage the Holder shall engage a Community Liaison Officer to consult with and fully inform relevant users of the marine environment in order that interactions with ongoing recreational and other activities in the area are minimised during the course of the Permitted Maritime Usage.

Reason: *To minimise impact on other users of the marine environment*

8. The Holder shall time the Permitted Maritime Usage to ensure that geophysical surveys are undertaken in advance of all geotechnical works to ensure potential significant effects on underwater cultural heritage are avoided.

Reason: *To ensure the protection of the marine environment.*

9. Landfall site/Intertidal

- i. The Holder shall ensure that an ecologist will be on site during all terrestrial/intertidal surveys carried out as part of this Permitted Maritime Activity in order to minimise disturbance and ensure site integrity is maintained.
- ii. Access to the intertidal area shall be exclusively through existing access routes.
- iii. Disturbance of dune habitat shall be strictly avoided by machinery and personnel.
- iv. Any temporary access arrangements or structures that are put in place to allow machinery access to the shore area, shall be prepared or installed in consultation with the ecologist. The site shall be fully reinstated post works.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the intertidal environment and protected species and habitats*

10. During the course of the intertidal trial pit and bar probe operations the Holder shall ensure that existing public access arrangements are maintained, where possible, and all necessary precautions are put in place to protect the public. The Holder shall retain photographic evidence of all such arrangements made and precautions taken during the course of the works.

Reason: *To minimise impact on other users of the intertidal area and ensure the orderly undertaking of the proposed maritime usage*

11. The Holder shall ensure that all vessels engaged in this Permitted Maritime Usage conform to Irish Certification standards for vessels, as required by the Marine Survey Office.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the marine environment*

12. The Holder shall demonstrate that all reasonable practical measures are taken to ensure that all vessels used in the Permitted Maritime Usage are free of invasive marine species on their hulls and in their ballast water and that all vehicles and equipment used in the intertidal portion of the Permitted Maritime Usage are free of invasive marine species.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the marine environment*

13. Marine Mammals

- i. The Holder shall appoint a marine mammal observer(s) for the purposes of overseeing the Permitted Maritime Usage. The Holder shall ensure the marine mammal observer(s) shall satisfy the requirements of the most up to date national guidance. During the activity, the Holder shall comply with the directions of the marine mammal observer(s).
- ii. The Holder shall implement risk control and mitigation measures for marine mammals in strict accordance with the most up to date national guidance.
- iii. The Holder shall publish the report and recording and data forms on their website within 60 days of completion of the Permitted Maritime Usage unless otherwise agreed with the Grantor.

- iv. The Holder shall, within 30 days of completion of the Permitted Maritime Usage, forward a report of the marine mammal observer(s) operations and mitigation undertaken, to offshore@npws.gov.ie and compliance@mara.gov.ie.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the marine environment and protected species*

14. Accidental events

The Holder shall ensure that there is an oil pollution emergency plan on-board any survey vessels.

This plan should specify:

- i. Information on the location and detail of spill response resources on-board.
- ii. Information on crew training in relation to oil pollution response.
- iii. How crew will interface with other site investigation operators, where applicable.

Reason: *To provide appropriate controls on the Permitted Maritime Usage to ensure protection of the marine environment.*

15. In-combination effects

- i. Prior to the commencement of the Permitted Maritime Usage, the Holder shall coordinate with other authorisation holders carrying out geophysical, seismic and geotechnical activities within a 10 km radius of the site boundary.
- ii. Where a vessel-to-vessel distance of greater than 10 km cannot be maintained with respect to geophysical, seismic and geotechnical activities, the Holder shall co-ordinate with other authorisation holders to prevent temporal overlap of the activities. Where the Holder can submit evidence that there is a vessel-to-vessel distance of greater than 10 km, no temporal co-ordination of activities is required.
- iii. Where the Holder becomes aware of temporal overlap that cannot be resolved within the prescribed distance, the Holder shall notify the Grantor who shall determine the timing of activities.
- iv. Records of all engagements held, and agreements reached, if any, shall be maintained by the Holder and made available to the Grantor if requested.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the marine environment and protected species and habitats*

16. On completion of the activity, the Holder shall provide the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) at bathysurveys@ukho.gov.uk with the final bathymetric data from this Permitted Maritime Usage so that the appropriate charts can be updated.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the marine environment through availability of monitoring data*

17. The Holder, upon completion of the Permitted Maritime Activity, shall submit details of all acoustic surveys undertaken in accordance with this licence to Marine Environment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage at marine.env@housing.gov.ie. This data shall be provided in the reporting format of the OSPAR Impulsive Noise registry.

Reason: *To ensure protection of the marine environment through availability of monitoring data.*

18. The Holder shall keep the following documents (if applicable) together and available for inspection by the Grantor:

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- i. a copy of the licence related to the Permitted Maritime Usage;
- ii. all correspondence with the Grantor;
- iii. up-to-date drawings, plans, and maps relating to the Permitted Maritime Usage;
- iv. documents and photographs as requested by the Grantor from time to time;
- v. the marine positional log; and
- vi. any elements of the licence application and associated documentation referenced in this licence.

In addition, the Grantor may, by notice in writing, require the Holder to provide such additional information as the Grantor considers necessary in relation to any matters arising out of or in connection with this Licence. The Holder shall provide the requested information within the period specified in the notice.

Reason: *To provide appropriate controls on the Permitted Maritime Usage to ensure protection of the marine environment*



Dr Ciar O'Toole
Senior Marine Advisor

APPENDIX I

**Regional Marine Advisor - Engineering Report
for a
Maritime Usage Licence Application**

MUL230031**From: Amazon MCS Ireland Ltd**

FOR: Marine Survey and Site Investigations for a cable route for a proposed transatlantic subsea fibre optic cable having a landfall at Castlefreke, County Cork

AT: From Castlefreke and Glandore Bay, County Cork across the Celtic Sea and Atlantic Ocean within Ireland's EEZ

Document control			
Rev	Date	Prepared by	Reviewed by
	07/03/2025	P. Newell	E. Mooney

MUL230031

Ciar O'Toole,
MA Environment,
ARD Unit.

07/03/2025

Re: Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) application for Marine Environmental Surveys for the Purposes of Site Investigation

Applicant: Amazon MCS Ireland Ltd

Site Location: From Castlerefke and Glandore Bay, County Cork across the Celtic Sea and Atlantic Ocean within Ireland's EEZ.

Application Documentation considered:

- Completed Application Form dated 04/06/2024
- Licence Map, Drawing Number 1355-A-101, dated 18/04/2024
- Site Layout Map 1, Drawing Number 1355-A-102, dated 18/04/2024
- Site Layout Map 2, Drawing Number 1355-A-103, dated 18/04/2024
- Updated Schedule of Works, (file dated 15/11/2024)
- Works Methodology, dated 14/05/2024

Proposed Permitted Maritime Usage and Appropriate Consent Instrument

The Proposed Permitted Maritime Usage is marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation. The applicant intends to undertake the survey campaign across the Licence Application Area within Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Maritime Area in order to inform the location and design of the cable route and landfall. The principal objective of the Marine Survey & Site Investigations is to ascertain a feasible and safe route for cable system design, deployment, survivability and subsequent maintenance with due regard for environmental and ecological considerations. The survey will also enable decisions to be made on cable armouring and burial. The survey will identify the necessary water depths, route features, seabed obstructions, seabed geomorphology and cable hazards and will also provide detailed information on the seabed sediment, subsurface stratigraphy and upper sediment layers to support cable route and installation engineering. The site investigations will provide "ground-truthing" of the geophysical data along the route. The surveys to be carried out within the Licence Area are: -

- Geophysical Surveys
- Geotechnical Surveys and Sediment Sampling

MARA, under the MAP Act, has responsibility for granting MACs and MULs for all maritime usages with the exception of sea fishing and related usages. Under the Foreshore Act the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (MAFM) retains the function for authorisations in relation to a fishery harbour centre, an activity which is wholly or primarily for the use, development or support of aquaculture, or an activity which is wholly or primarily for the use, development or support of sea-fishing including the processing and sale of sea-fish and manufacture of products derived from sea-fish. Accordingly, having reviewed the details of the proposed maritime usage I am satisfied that it is not in relation to a retained function of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the appropriate instrument for authorisation is therefore the MAP Act.

More specifically I am satisfied that the proposed maritime usage meets the description of Item 3 Schedule 7 of the MAP Act “Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000” and so is a maritime usage which may be undertaken pursuant to licence. The maritime usage the subject of this application therefore requires a Maritime Usage Licence (Schedule 7.3) as applied for by the applicant.

Site Inspection, Existing Use and Activities

Due to the offshore nature of the majority of the proposed maritime usage I did not undertake a site visit. The beaches of Long Strand and Ownahinch are high value amenity areas which are regularly used by the general public year-round.



Fig 1 – Long Strand Trial Pit Locations (Extract from Works Methodology Report)



Photograph 2 – Ballyloughane Strand (looking southeast) in the Vicinity of the Proposed Cable Landfall Site Investigations

The proposed trial pits work will require a mechanical excavator to access the beach, however due to the limited number of trial pits proposed (a total of 3 proposed at each location), any disturbance to the general public should be limited to a maximum of 1-2 days. Considering the scale and nature of the trial pit and bar probe SI works, a beach closure should not be necessary.

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During the course of the intertidal trial pit operations the applicant should ensure that existing public access arrangements are maintained, where possible, and all necessary precautions are put in place to protect the public in accordance with relevant Health and Safety Legislation.

Site Consent and Application History

The proposed licence area does not overlap with any existing or proposed Maritime Area Consents and Maritime Usage Licences: -

The proposed licence area overlaps with the following existing or proposed foreshore consents: -

File ref:	Holder/ Applicant:	Consent Type and Details	Expiry Date:	Comment:	Further Consideration Required?
FS007431	Tulca Offshore Array	Application for ORE Site Investigation licence	N/A	Application only – not processed	No
FS007471	Floating Cork Offshore Wind Ltd	Benthic Ecology survey to inform EIA for Export Cable Corridor of proposed Floating Cork Offshore Wind Farm	N/A	Application only – not processed	No

Section 120 Part 7 of the MAPA, which relates to Conditions attached to a MUL, states that “It shall be deemed to be a condition of each licence that the part of the maritime area the subject of the licence is not for the exclusive use of the Schedule 7 usage the subject of the licence except where the licence expressly states that such part is for the exclusive use of such usage.” Accordingly, it is assumed that any MUL issued will not be for exclusive use. This non-exclusive element together with the nature of the proposed usage means that any potential MUL issued can coexist with all existing and proposed Foreshore Consents and Maritime Usage Licences. Considering the details of the proposed maritime usage there is no significant potential for conflicts between existing licenced or proposed maritime usages and foreshore consents.

Licence Map

The recommended map associated with this MUL if issued, is: -

- Maritime Usage Licence Map 1 of 2 MUL230031, Drawing Number: MUL230031-001, dated: 04/12/2024.
- Maritime Usage Licence Map 2 of 2 MUL230031, Drawing Number: MUL230031-002, dated: 04/12/2024.

The total area occupied by the MUL is 1,705,646.81 Ha.

Coastal and Seabed Morphology and Sediment Transport Processes

Given the nature of the proposed works, and the limited range of potential disturbance impacts on seabed sedimentation, even in the absence of mitigation measures, the project will have no significant impact on Coastal and Seabed Morphology or Sediment Transport Processes.

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Recommendation

I have no objection to the granting of a Maritime Usage Licence under Section 119 of the MAP Act for this application subject to the Mara's standard licence conditions and the following.

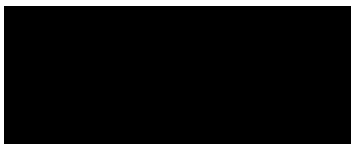
ANNEX 1, THE LICENSED AREA

That part of the maritime area outlined in red on the Maritime usage licence maps titled: -

- Maritime Usage Licence Map 1 of 2 MUL230031, Drawing Number: MUL230031-001, dated: 04/12/2024.
- Maritime Usage Licence Map 2 of 2 MUL230031, Drawing Number: MUL230031-002, dated: 04/12/2024.

Specific Conditions

1. The Permitted Maritime Usage shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted in support of the application for this Licence.
Reason: In the interest of clarity.
2. During the course of the intertidal trial pit and bar probe operations the Holder shall ensure that existing public access arrangements are maintained, where possible, and all necessary precautions are put in place to safeguard the public. The Holder shall retain photographic evidence of all such arrangements made and precautions taken during the course of the works.
Reason: To ensure the orderly undertaking of the proposed maritime usage.
3. The Holder shall not damage or interfere with any third party's property, infrastructure or fishing gear while conducting the Permitted Maritime Usage.
Reason: To ensure the orderly undertaking of the proposed maritime usage.



Philip Newell C. Eng, M.I.E.I
Marine Advisor