

Assessment, Research and Data Unit

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	From:	Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor
Date of Report:	24/07/2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL230029
Applicant:	Department of Defence, Defence Forces Headquarters, McKee Barracks, Dublin, D07 A065		
Licence application received:	14/05/2024		
Type of maritime usage in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021:	<p><i>1. Dredging (including dredging involving the use of a device to remove any material, whether or not suspended in water, from one part of the seabed to another part of the seabed) other than—</i></p> <p><i>(a) dredging carried out to create a new harbour, berth or waterway, or to deepen existing facilities in order to allow access for larger ships, or</i></p> <p><i>(b) dredging ancillary to development authorised under the Act of 2000, whether or not it involves the removal of any material from the sea or seabed.</i></p> <p><i>6. The deposit of any substance or object, either in the sea or on or under the seabed, from –</i></p> <p><i>(a) a vehicle, vessel (including a craft capable of travelling on, in or under water, whether or not self-propelled), boat, aircraft or marine structure (other than a pipeline),</i></p> <p><i>(b) a container floating in the sea, or</i></p> <p><i>(c) a structure on land constructed or adapted wholly or mainly for the purpose of depositing solids in the sea.</i></p>		
Location of proposed Maritime Usage:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dredging at Haulbowline Naval Base, Cork Harbour, and • Deposit of dredged material 8 km southeast of Roches Point outside of Cork Harbour. 		

1. Background

The Department of Defence (the applicant) has applied to Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake maintenance dredging at the Haulbowline Naval Base in, Cork Harbour and deposit of dredged material at an established deposit site 8 km southeast of Roches Point, outside of Cork Harbour. The application is required to allow safe navigation of naval vessels into and out of the naval base. The proposed maritime usages are maintenance dredging, which falls under Schedule 7(1) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP Act), and deposit of the dredged material falling under Schedule 7(6).

2. Description of Project/Proposal and local site characteristics

The applicant proposes to undertake maintenance dredging in two discrete locations (MUL application Areas A and B) in the maritime area¹ (see Figure 1). It is proposed to deposit some of the dredged material at an established marine deposit (or dump) site (Area C), approximately 8 km southeast of Roches Point and 16 km south of the naval base (see Figure 2). Table 1 shows the two proposed methods of dredging and the method of deposit at sea. Table 2 shows the quantities of material proposed to be dredged and deposited. The applicant has applied for an 8-year MUL duration so that four dredging campaigns can take place, between 2025 and 31st December 2032.

The applicant has also submitted a Dumping at Sea permit application to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Dumping at Sea Act 1996 as amended (permit ref. no S0005-03) for loading dredged material from the naval base, including the naval basin, and dumping the dredged material at the offshore deposit (or dump) site.

Table 1: Proposed methods of dredging and deposit.

Maritime usage activity	Method
Dredging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dredging Outboard Pump (DOP) equipped with a water jet cutter and operated using a crawler crane. Dredged material will be pumped to a hopper barge or taken ashore for appropriate treatment and disposal. 2. Backhoe dredger (i.e. long-reach backhoe excavator). Dredged material will be placed in a hopper barge or taken ashore for appropriate treatment and disposal.
Deposit	Hopper barge (i.e. bottom opening split hopper barge) of 1,000 m ³ capacity. Tug or towboat will transfer the hopper barge to and from deposit site.

¹ The limit of the Maritime Area at its landward extent is defined by the High Water line of ordinary or medium tides which is the High Water Mark (HWM) as defined by the Chief Boundary Surveyor (CBS)

Table 2: Proposed quantities of material to be dredged and deposited.

Uncontaminated material		Contaminated Material	Uncontaminated material
Dredge areas		Dredge area	Deposit area
Area A	Area B	Area B	Area C
4,040 m ³	450 m ³	1,560 m ³	4,590 m ³



Figure 1: Map showing the proposed dredging areas (MUL application Areas A and B) within Haulbowline naval base in Cork Harbour. Area A=0.46 ha to be dredged to -5.5m CD², Area B=0.05 ha to be reestablished to its original depth, or to -5.5 m CD, whichever is the lesser.

² CD = Chart Datum is the plane below which all depths on nautical charts are referenced, it's set at or below the level of the lowest astronomical tide (LAT).

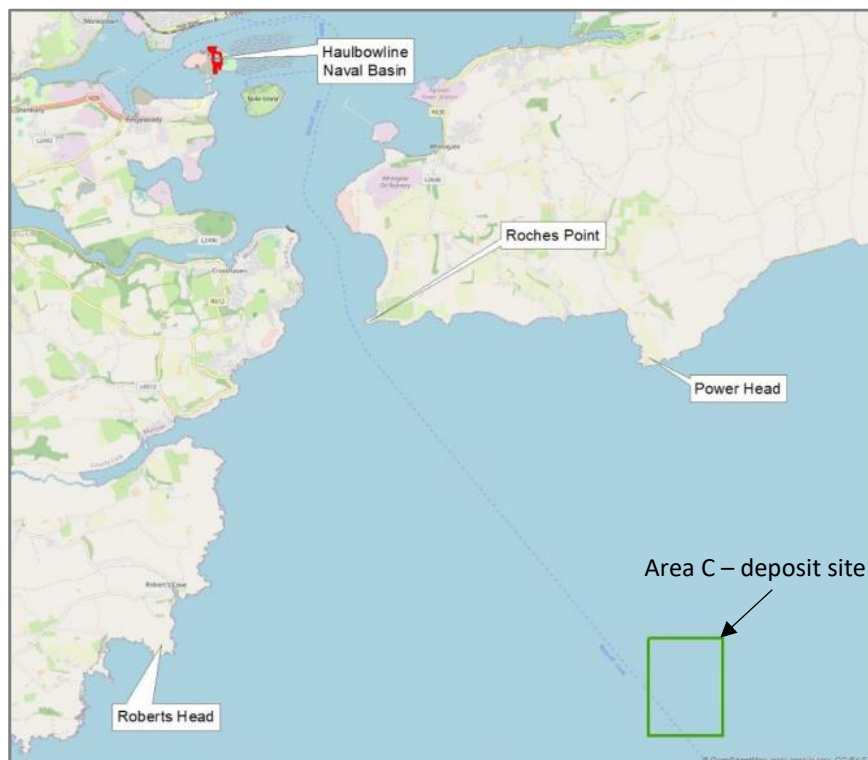


Figure 2: Map showing proposed deposit site outlined in green (MUL application Area C), relative to the Haulbowline Naval Base . Area C=377.8 ha.

2.1 Brief description of the site characteristics

Haulbowline is situated in an industrial and urbanised harbour setting in the lower part of Cork Harbour with many industries, including commercial shipping, fishing and leisure amenities occurring in the harbour. The depth of the areas to be dredged is -4.4 to -4.7 m CD. It has been subject to regular maintenance dredging in the past. The applicant previously held a Foreshore licence (ref. FS006564) in 2017, authorised under the Foreshore Act, 1933 as amended and a Dumping at Sea permit (ref. S0005-02) issued by the EPA in 2017. The material to be dredged is largely silt with a small fraction of sand (<4 %).

Depths at the deposit site (dump site) are between 25–50 m. The site is an established deposit (or dumping) site. Surveys carried out in the area show that the broad benthic habitat at the deposit site is predominantly hard substrate, or circalittoral rock and biogenic reef, with pockets of circalittoral mud, muddy sand, sand and coarse sediment³.

³ Eunis habitat classifications as shown on Ireland's [Marine Atlas data viewer](#).

3. Identification of relevant European Site(s)

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to cause significant effects to a European site(s) in view of the conservation objectives of the site(s).

The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report and an Assessment of Impact of the Maritime Usage (AIMU) report in support of the application, along with other supporting documents which were referred to during this assessment.

The proposed maritime usage activities are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites listed on Table 3 have been screened in for appropriate assessment, given the nature and extent of the proposed activities and the conservation objectives of the European sites. Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) links were assessed as well as the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the proposed activities. The potential for in-combination impacts with relevant plans or projects was also considered (see Section 4 of this report) .

Table 3. European sites screened in for appropriate assessment, their qualifying interests and site specific conservation objectives. (Note: the Qualifying Interests indicated in bold have been screened in for appropriate assessment.)

European site & site code	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests ⁴	Connections (S-P-R)	QIs screened in	European site screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	<2 km	<p>Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004]</p> <p>Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005]</p> <p>Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]</p> <p>Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028]</p> <p>Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]</p> <p>Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]</p> <p>Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]</p> <p>Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]</p> <p>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</p> <p>Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069]</p> <p>Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]</p> <p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</p> <p>Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</p> <p>Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]</p> <p>Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]</p>	Yes - possible visual & above water noise disturbance and disturbance from underwater noise and indirect impacts on water quality.	Yes	Yes	<p>NPWS (2014)</p> <p>Conservation Objectives:</p> <p>Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1.</p> <p>National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p>

⁴ The Qualifying Interests (QI's) highlighted in **bold text** are screened in for Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

		Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]				
Great Island Channel SAC [001058]	<7 km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]	Yes – possible physical disturbance from water quality deterioration (suspended sediments and sediment deposition)	Yes	Yes	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Great Island Channel SAC 001058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Ballycotton Bay SPA [004022]	15–20 km	Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]	No meaningful pathway of impact on the ecological requirements of the SCI species and the proposed activities.	No	No	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Ballycotton Bay SPA 004022. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts,

		Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]				Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Sovereign Islands SPA [004124]	15–25 km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	No meaningful pathway of impact on the ecological requirements of the SCI species and the proposed activities.	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Sovereign Islands SPA 004124. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Ballymacoda Bay SPA [004023]	20–25 km	Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]	No meaningful pathway of impact on the ecological requirements of the SCI species and the proposed activities.	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ballymacoda Bay SPA 004023. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<p>Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>				
<p>Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC [004023]</p>	<p>25–50 km</p>	<p>Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</p>	<p>No possibility of effects due to lack of meaningful pathway of hydrological impact.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ballymacoda Bay SPA 004023. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht</p>

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the project are summarised below.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Disturbance from underwater noise	Possible temporal impacts on marine birds.
Visual and above water noise disturbance.	Possible temporal impacts on birds.
Disturbance from water quality deterioration	Possible habitat deterioration or habitat loss and temporal impacts on birds.

In-combination effects

MARA has developed a stepwise approach for identifying other plans and projects that may impact on European sites in-combination with the proposed activities. Using professional and scientific judgement, the key steps for assessing cumulative effects are as follows:

1. Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)
2. Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)
3. Impact identification
4. Pathway identification
5. Prediction
6. Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination
7. Screening Stage Cumulative Effects Assessment conclusion
8. Managing cumulative impacts - to be carried out as part of Stage 2 AA process.

The CESS has been defined as 5 km and the CETS as eight years. The CETS is the proposed MUL period. The definition of the CESS is based the maximum extent of the sediment plume predicted to be generated as a result of the activities (approximately 1 km at dredging areas and approximately 5 km at deposit site) based on sediment dispersion modelling carried out by the applicant. Using the above 8 step approach and following a search of relevant databases (including but not limited to MARA, Foreshore, planning, EPA authorisation databases) undertaken on the 23/07/2025. Particular attention is given to the projects listed in Table 4 and plans listed below, as having the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usages.

- National Ports Policy 2013,
- Port of Cork Masterplan 2050;
- Cork County Development Plan 2022–2028;
- The National Marine Planning Framework;
- The National Development Plan 2021–2030.

Table 4: List of projects which, in particular, were considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites.

Application Ref.	Project description	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	Project Status
MUL250008	MUL application - deposit of dredged material		Applied
S0013-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork maintenance dredging works	< 1	Permitted
S0005-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Department of Defence maintenance dredging works	overlap	Applied
S0021-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork capital dredging works	< 2	Applied
S0039-01	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork capital dredging works	< 2	Applied
FS007126	Dredging – Port of Cork Company maintenance dredging licence	< 1	Foreshore licence granted
An Coimisiún Pleanála - 321875	Planning permission for redevelopment of port facilities (including capital dredging).	< 2	Applied

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application, the above plans and the projects listed on Table 4, on the conservation objectives of European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

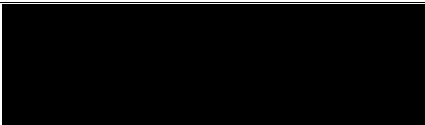
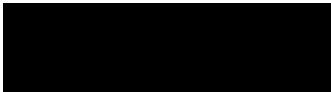
5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

On the basis of the information on file, and having regard to:

- The nature and scale of the proposed activities;
- The distance to the nearest European sites;
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects;
- Possible disturbance from underwater noise;
- Possible visual and above water noise disturbance; and,
- Possible disturbance from water quality deterioration.

Having considered the legal framework applicable to Appropriate Assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usages by **Department of Defence to carry out dredging at Haulbowline Naval Base and deposit of dredged material at a deposit site south of Roches Point (MUL230029) will require Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment**. It cannot be excluded 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.

Signature of Recommending Officer and date:	 Dr. Alison McCarthy, 24/07/2025
Signature of Decision Maker and date:	 John Evans, 24/07/2025