

Assessment, Research and Data Unit

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	From:	Maria O Connell, Marine Analyst
Date:	08/10/2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL240048
Applicant:	Uisce Éireann, Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot Street, Dublin 1, D01NP86.		
Type(s) of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	Schedule 7(3) Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.		
Location of proposed maritime usage:	Cork Harbour		
Licence application received:	13/03/2025		

1. Background

Uisce Éireann (the applicant – formerly known as Irish Water) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The proposed maritime usage involves the deployment, operation and retrieval of acoustic doppler current profilers (ADCP) at nine locations within three specific areas of Cork Harbour.

Uisce Éireann is Ireland's national regulated water utility responsible for the delivery of secure, safe, and sustainable water services for Ireland. The data obtained from ADCP deployment and operation is required for strategic modelling purposes to inform the future design and installation requirements of wastewater treatment works in the Cork Harbour region. The total area of the proposed maritime usage licence is 14.9km². The ADCPs will be left in-situ for the sampling duration which will be *ca.* 35 days with the possibility of phased deployments of ADCPs.

This application was originally submitted to the Foreshore Division of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on 30/09/2022 as a Foreshore Licence application. The application was transferred to MARA in accordance with (5A) of Section 1E of the Foreshore Act 1933 as amended, to be assessed as an application for a MUL within the meaning of the MAP Act.

2. Description of maritime usage(s) and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed maritime usage activities are shown on Table 1, along with the estimated duration. It is expected that a shallow draft vessel approximately 16m in length will be utilised.

Table 1: The details of the proposed maritime usage activities along with the estimated duration.

Proposed maritime usage activities	Estimated duration
Deployment of ADCPs The units will be deployed from the deck of a vessel onto the seabed at nine locations, where they will remain fully submerged throughout the tidal range. Each ADCP will be contained within a trawl resistant bottom mount frame. The dimension of each frame is <i>ca.</i> 1.8m x 1.3m x 0.6m and the weight of each frame will be approximately 300kg.	1 day per ADCP unit
Operation of ADCPs A lead ballast will secure the frame to the seabed where it will remain fully submerged during the full tidal range at each location (at water depth of no less than 5 m). The frame is approx. 558mm high and	Approx. 35 days in situ per unit

attached to a ground line, a clump weight and to an acoustic release system carrying a rope retrieval system. During operation the units will emit “pings” of sound in the range of 600 KHz or 1 Mhz at a sampling rate of 1-minute average every 10 minutes.	
Recovery of ADCPs Recovery is facilitated by a hydrostatic release which sends a ranging ping to a release mechanism which if successful releases a buoy connected to a recovery line. The vessel moves into position over the buoy and recovers the ADCP into the boat via the crane. Should the hydrostatic releases fail, an acoustic pinger and if required grapple recovery is proposed.	1 day per ADCP unit

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

Three areas have been identified in Cork Harbour for the deployment of ADCPs, shown as areas A, B, C on Figure 1. The maximum distance to land from an ADCP deployment site is recorded as 1.2km and minimum distance is 0.08km.

The proposed MUL area includes:

- Area A extends from Outer Cork Harbour (approx. Carlisle Fort to Roches Point), (563Ha) and is comprised of high energy Atlantic infralittoral rock and sand as well as moderate energy shallow circalittoral muddy sand and coarse sediments.
- Area B extends south and east of Great Island including the Ballinacorra river channel, (811Ha) and contains low energy shallow circalittoral and deep circalittoral muddy sand.
- Area C is located within upper Cork Harbour from Monkstown to Marino Point (West Passage), (116 Ha) and contains primarily coarse sediment and muddy sands.

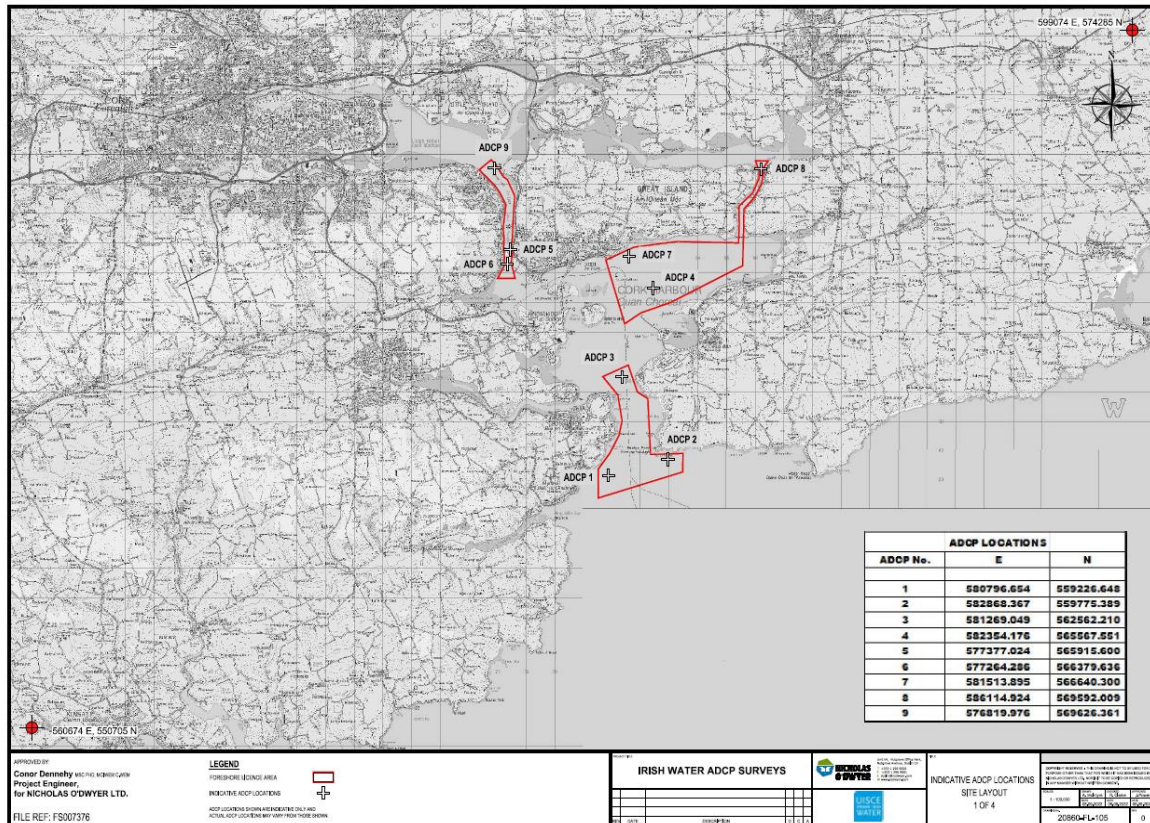


Figure 1 Map detailing the location of areas A, B, C and indicative sites for the deployment of ADCPs.

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European sites, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites.

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed on Table 2 have been screened out for appropriate assessment, given the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and the lack of any meaningful Source-Pathway-Receptor links.

Table 2 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Great Island Channel SAC (001058)	ADCP No 8 is within the SAC.	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]	No	No	NPWS 2014 Conservation Objectives: Great Island SAC 1058 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Cork Harbour SPA (004030)	<0.2km (Area B) <2km to (Area C)	Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> [A056] Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]	No	No	NPWS 2014 Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] 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] Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i> [A164] 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]			
Ballycotton Bay SPA (004022)	<15km	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] 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]	No	No	NPWS 2014 Conservation Objectives: Ballycotton Bay SPA 004022. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Sovereign Islands SPA (004124)	<20km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	No	No	NPWS 2025 Conservation Objectives: Sovereign Islands SPA 004124. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
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4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 3: Identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential impacts	Possible significance of potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Physical disturbance and habitat loss	Not significant. The area of an individual framed unit is approx. 2.4m ² . ADCP unit No. 8 is located within the Great Island Channel SAC however it is not directly sited on an Annex I habitat. All other deployment sites are outside of SAC areas.
Above water noise and visual disturbance and displacement	The impact of one vessel operating at 2 days per location in a busy shipping area is also considered not likely to result in significant impacts on birds.

4.1 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 maritime usage, 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 Cork Harbour and the CETS is 5 years. A search of relevant databases was undertaken on the 21/08/2025. Particular attention is given to the projects listed on Table 4 and the plans listed below, as having the potential to act in-combination.

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

Application Ref	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area	Status
MUL240035	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	Some overlap	MUL granted

MUL240042	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	<2km	MUL applied for
MUL240036	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	Some overlap	MUL granted
S0013-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit	Some overlap	Permitted

The following plans, in particular, were identified: Water Services Strategic Plan 2050, Draft Cork Wastewater Strategy, National Marine Planning Framework 2021, The Climate Action Plan 2025, Cork Climate Action Plans 2024-2029, Water Action Plan 2024, Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028, Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Port of Cork Masterplan 2050. These plans promote sustainable development and integrated management planning in the maritime environment. It is unlikely that any of these plans will result in a negative in-combination effect on the conservation objectives of the European sites.

Likely significant in-combination effects between this project, the projects in Table 4 and plans listed above on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites taken into consideration in this report can be excluded.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

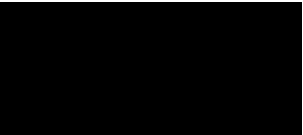
5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

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

- The nature, scale and duration of the proposed maritime usage,
- The distance to the nearest European sites, and
- The lack of significant in-combination effects with other plans and projects.

Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by **Uisce Éireann, Covill House, 24-26 Talbot Street, Dublin 1, to carry out marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000 in Cork Harbour (MUL240048)** will not require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It can 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 and Date of Recommending Officer	 Maria O Connell, Marine Analyst	Date 08/10/2025
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans, Director of Assessment, Research and Data	Date 08/10/2025