

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:	01/10/2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL250008
Applicant:	Port of Cork Company, Tivoli Terminal Building, Tivoli Dock & Industrial Estate, Tivoli, Cork, T23YNT9		
Licence application received:	14/03/2025		
Type of maritime usage in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021:	<i>6. The deposit of any substance or object, either in the sea or on or under the seabed, from – (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>		
Location of proposed Maritime Usage:	4.5 km south of Power Head, Co. Cork		

1. Background

The Port of Cork Company (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to deposit dredged material from Ringaskiddy Basin in Cork Harbour at an established deposit site 4.5 km south of Power Head, Co. Cork. The proposed maritime usage is the '*deposit of any substance or object either in the sea or on or under the seabed*' from a vessel, which falls under Schedule 7(6) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP Act). The MUL application is required to facilitate berth extensions with capacity to support Offshore Renewable Energy at Ringaskiddy, which is a Strategic Infrastructure Development that has been granted planning by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

2. Description of Project/Proposal and local site characteristics

The applicant proposes to deposit a maximum of 423,217 m³ of uncontaminated dredged material from Ringaskiddy Basin at the established deposit site. The MUL application area covers the extent of the deposit site (see Figure 1). The applicant proposes to deposit the material from a Trailing Suction Hopper Dredger (TSHD) with a capacity of 8,000 m³. A split hopper barge may also be used to deposit the dredged material, either self-propelled or towed by a tug boat. The applicant proposes to undertake two deposit campaigns, each of 2–3 months in duration over the MUL duration. The applicant has applied for an 11-year MUL duration to align with the duration of other authorisations granted for the dredging of Ringaskiddy Basin.

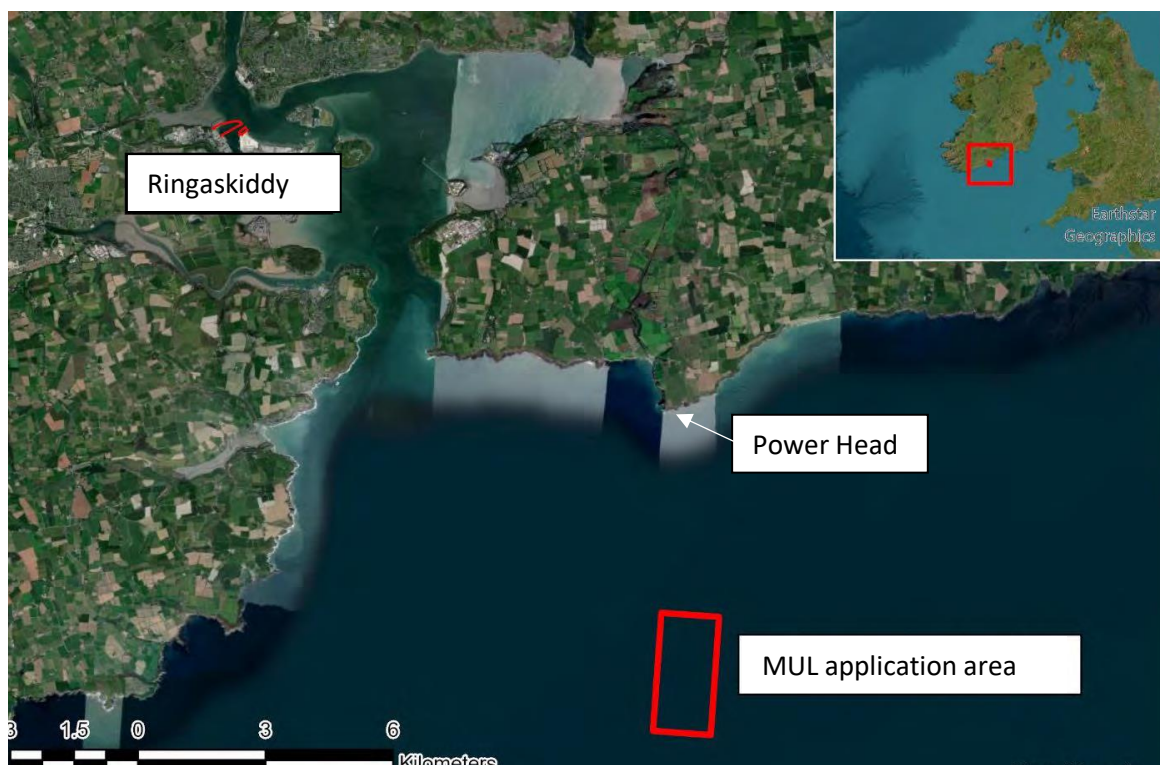


Figure 1: Map showing the MUL application area, or the deposit site, to the south of Power Head, Co. Cork which is proposed to be used for the deposit of dredged material from Ringaskiddy in Cork Harbour.

2.1 Brief description of the site characteristics

The MUL application area is an established deposit (or dumping) site which has been in use since 1978. Depths at the site are between 25–50 m. Benthic habitat surveys carried out in the deposit site in 2004 and 2020 showed that the seabed is predominantly comprised of hard substrates made up of gravel, cobbles, boulders and exposed bedrock. Mixed with the hard substrates are large patches of soft sediments (muds, sands and gravels). The main benthic communities found in the soft substrates and the epifaunal species composition on the exposed bedrock has been broadly stable over time and is typical of the benthos found in the wider area outside of the deposit site.

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 proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites listed on Table 3 have been screened out for appropriate assessment, given the nature and extent of the proposed maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and the lack of any meaningful Source-Pathway-Receptor links. The potential for in-combination impacts with other relevant plans or projects has also been considered (see Section 4.1 of this report) .

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 proposed maritime usage are summarised below.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Habitat disturbance from sediment dispersion and deposition	No likely direct or indirect impacts on SACs given the distance of the modelled sediment plume (submitted by the applicant) arising from the deposition of dredged material.
Visual and above water noise disturbance	No likely direct or indirect impacts on SPAs given the location of the MUL application area (or the deposit site) in relation to the SPAs and given the nature and duration of the proposed maritime usage.

Table 3. European sites screened for appropriate assessment, their qualifying interests and site specific conservation objectives.

European site & site code	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (S-P-R)	European site screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	<10 km	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] 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] 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]	No	No	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Great Island Channel SAC [001058]	<20 km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]	No	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]	<16 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] 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]	<20 km	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.

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 - carried out during AA process if applicable.

The CESS has been defined as 5 km and the CETS as 11 years. The CETS is the applicant's proposed MUL duration. The definition of the CESS is based the maximum extent of the modelled sediment plume predicted to be generated as a result of the proposed maritime usage (approximately 5 km). 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 30/09/2025. 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;
- Water Action Plan 2024, and
- 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
S0013-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork maintenance dredging works	overlap	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	overlap	Applied

S0039-01	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork capital dredging works	overlap	Applied
FS007126	Dredging – Port of Cork Company maintenance dredging licence	overlap	Foreshore licence granted

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 can 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 maritime usage;
- The distance to the nearest European sites;
- The results of the sediment plume modelling submitted by the applicant demonstrating no potential for 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 the Port of Cork Company, Tivoli Terminal Building, Tivoli Dock & Industrial Estate, Tivoli, Cork, T23YNT9 **for 7(6). The deposit of any substance or object, either in the sea or on or under the seabed, from – (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) from Ringaskiddy Basin in Cork Harbour at an established deposit site 4.5 km south of Power Head, Co. Cork (MUL250008) 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 of Recommending Officer and date:


Dr. Alison McCarthy
01/10/2025

Signature of Decision Maker and date:


John Evans,
Director of Assessment, Research and Data
07/10/2025