



February 19, 2026

licence@mara.gov.ie

RE: Maritime Usage Licence Application - Reference MUL250003

A Chara

The Marine Divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the application submitted by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence to undertake **marine site investigation(s)** activities to assess the feasibility of potential future dredging within the harbour.

It is essential that the sea-fishing and aquaculture sectors are fully recognised and given a high priority as a long-standing, pre-existing, and traditional activity in the marine environment as the proposed **marine site investigation(s)** are being evaluated. The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) report that 671 tonnes of fish was landed in Dún Laoghaire port in 2024. (source: [2024 Statistics](#))

Fishers and aquaculture site holders are primary food producers dependent upon certain marine areas which are particularly important for food production. This primary production is critical to supplying the downstream indigenous seafood processing and export industries and in sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities. The importance of these primary and secondary food production activities is reflected in the Government's Food Vision 2030 policy.

To inform the DAFM comments, the observations of the Marine Institute (MI) on the application were requested.

The MI advised that some fishing operations are recorded in the near vicinity along with spawning and nursery grounds (2014 – 2018; Ireland's Marine Atlas: <https://atlas.marine.ie>) and also notes nearby fishing activities, which include net fishing, whelk pot fishing and dredging. The MI advised that there are no active aquaculture operations in the local vicinity: <https://dafm-maps.marine.ie/aquaculture-viewer/>

The MI conclude that survey operations should not interfere with fishing activities (assuming any necessary Marine Notices are made) fish ecology/biology or aquaculture, considering the short nature and small area of the proposed operations.

Cumulative impacts should be given consideration regarding similar activities either proposed or planned to take place in close spatial and temporal proximity to the survey area.

DAFM recognises that the developer's aim is to promote co-existence and minimise potential disruption to commercial fishing activities in the area. The evaluation of potential impacts of the **marine site investigations** on commercial sea fishing activities needs to be given consideration

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within the context of the requirements set out under the Maritime Area Planning Act and the National Marine Planning Framework. (NMPF).

The principles in the NMPF of avoiding, minimising, or mitigating impacts on access to existing activities (including specific policies on Fisheries and Aquaculture) should be followed and any proposed activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas.

DAFM notes the content of the Assessment of Impacts on Maritime Usage (AIMU) Report, which states that “The SI activities are minor, temporary, and located away from active fishing or aquaculture areas. No significant effects.” While the proposed works are not anticipated to impact unduly on inshore fisheries, relevant local fishing organisations should nevertheless be included on the provision of any Notices to Mariners in this respect and be made aware of proposed works at the earliest opportunity.

As set out in the application form in relation to these site investigations, it is planned that any necessary stakeholder engagement will be undertaken at a later stage as part of future applications for dredging and dumping at sea. The Department would recommend that engagement with marine users and other relevant stakeholders in the proposed area takes place at the earliest opportunity to avoid any potential disruption.

Please also find attached documents from the MI which provide further comments for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Marine Divisions
An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine