

<b>MAC Report</b>	
<b>Application for a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) under Section 79 of Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, as amended (the Act)</b>	
<b>Application Details</b>	
<b>MAC Applicant:</b>	Limerick City & County Council
<b>MAC Reference No:</b>	MAC240037
<b>Location:</b>	South of Shannon Bridge, Co. Limerick
<b>Date Application received:</b>	09 July 2024
<b>Existing Maritime Usage:</b>	Limerick City and County Council has applied for a MAC for the provision of a cantilevered platform, access gangway and floating pontoon with drive on dock (AquaDock) at Shannon Bridge, Limerick.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	To approve Part Granting of the MAC sought with conditions attached.

<b>Document Control</b>			
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Robert Roche	Marine Analyst	10/03/2026
	Paul Brennan	MAC Manager	10/03/2026
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Philip Newell	Senior Marine Advisor	10/03/2026
	Jacinta Ponzi	Head of Maritime Area Consenting	11/03/2026
<b>Approved by:</b>	Jacinta Ponzi	Head of Maritime Area Consenting	11/03/2026
<b>Final Report Version 1:</b>	Paul Brennan	MAC Manager	11/03/2026

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## 1. Overview

On 09 July 2024 MARA received a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) application under Section 79 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, as amended (the Act) from Limerick City and County Council for the provision of a cantilevered platform, access gangway and floating pontoon with drive on dock (AquaDock) at Shannon Bridge, Limerick.

## 2. Background

Limerick City & County Council have installed a cantilevered platform, access gangway and floating pontoon with drive on dock (AquaDock) on the River Shannon at Shannon Bridge, Limerick. This structure is used by Limerick Fire & Rescue Service for launching and receiving rescue vessels in addition to providing a location for the regular inspection of these vessels. The Applicant has stated that the pontoon, access gantry, and aqua dock, which were designed and built to support Limerick Fire & Rescue crews during river rescue operations, were originally built in 2015 and were upgraded in 2022.

The Applicant states that the structure is also available to be used by other agencies and bodies involved in river rescue and lists them as follows:

- National Ambulance Service (NAS)
- Limerick Fire & Rescue Service (LFRS)
- An Garda Síochana (AGS)
- Limerick Marine Search & Rescue (LMSAR)
- Limerick City & County Council (LCCC) [Applicant]
- Munster Regional Communication Centre (MRCC)
- Limerick Civil Defence (LCD)
- Irish Water Safety (IWS)
- Irish Coast Guard (ICG)

The structure comprises floating pontoons which rise and fall on 2 No. piles which are mounted to the quay wall (i.e. not in the riverbed). The pontoons are 18.05m long and 3.045m wide. The pontoons are accessed from a gated cantilevered platform which is attached to the quay wall via a 26.0m long x 1.5m wide gangway. The drive on dock (AquaDock) is anchored to the floating pontoon and is used to store rescue vessels and facilitate casualty transfers.

The structure does not currently have a MAC or foreshore authorisation for the maritime usage. The Applicant states that the structure was not subject to planning consent as it fell below the prescribed financial threshold for developments under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The Applicant proposes to continue the current maritime usage at this location unless an alternative river rescue system or location is required. Therefore, the existing structure is considered an unauthorised usage within the meaning of Section 106 of the Act. The subject application falls under Section 106 of the Act which provides for the regularisation of such unauthorised maritime usages.

### 3. Proposed Maritime Usage

The portion of the existing development which lies within the maritime area includes:

- i. A cantilevered platform (attached to the quay wall)
- ii. Access gangway
- iii. Floating pontoon with attachment to the quay wall
- iv. Drive-on-dock (AquaDock)

The Applicant states that the structure is in daily use and is accessed at least twice a day for inspection of the rescue vessels which are moored/stored there. The structure can be used for providing quick access for emergency services to the river and for transferring casualties from rescue boats to the shore.

The Applicant has not sought a specific duration for the MAC. The Applicant proposes ongoing maintenance of the structure and anticipates that it will remain operational for another 20 years without degradation. The Applicant proposes a *like-for-like substitution* should repair or replacement become necessary. In their response to a Request for Further Information (RAI) dated 20 February 2026, the Applicant stated that they are seeking an “*open-ended MAC*” due to the “*critical, continuous and permanent operational role of the proposed river rescue pontoon*”.

The Applicant does not presently envisage a requirement to decommission the structure; however, it is stated by the Applicant that decommissioning and removal can be achieved within 10 days and that no residual infrastructure will remain in the maritime area upon removal.

The total area proposed to be occupied by the MAC is by the Applicant is illustrated in Figure 1.

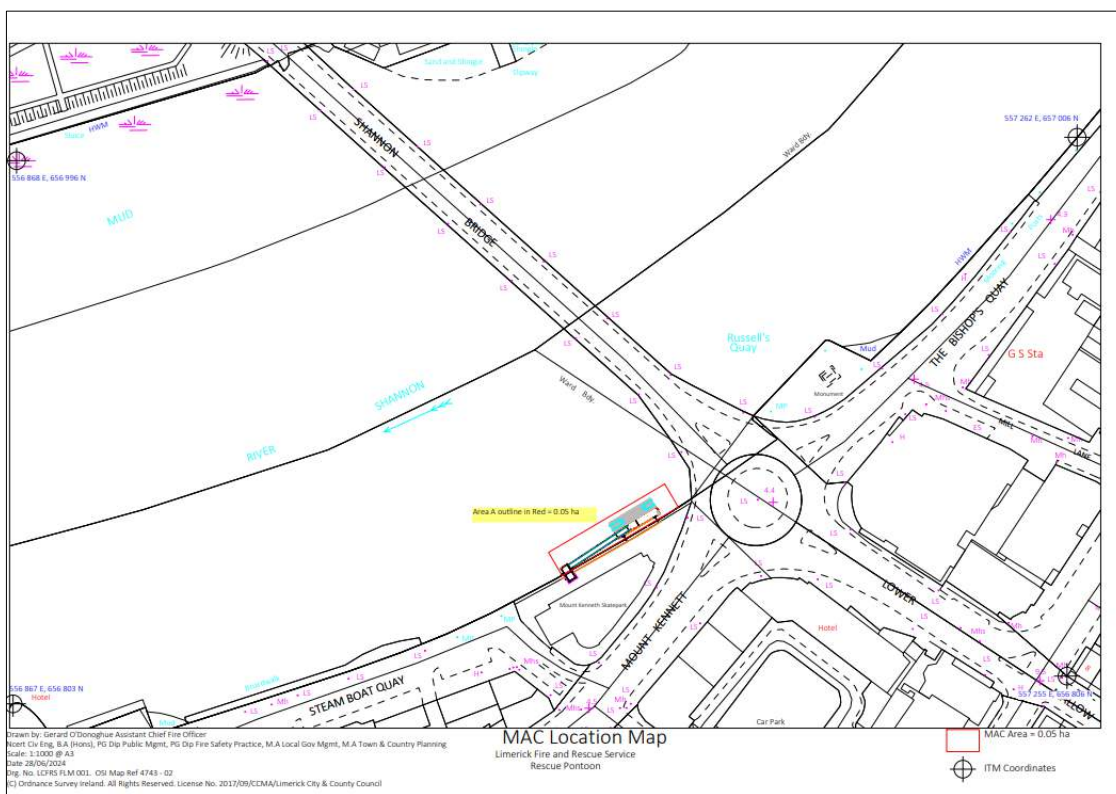


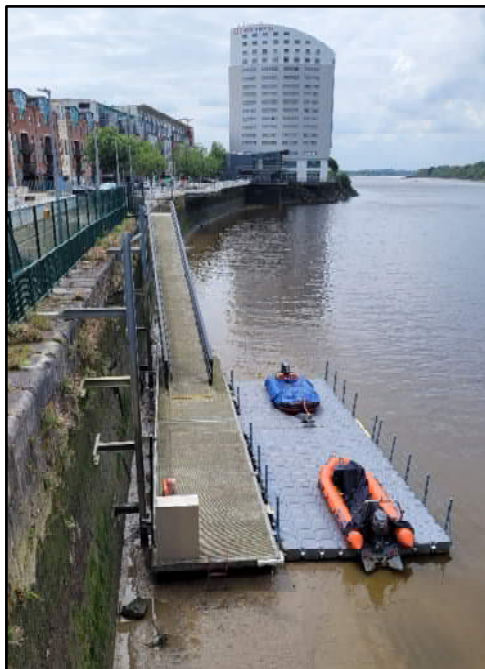
Figure 1: Applicant map of proposed layout of MAC area at Shannon Bridge, Limerick

#### 4. Site Visit

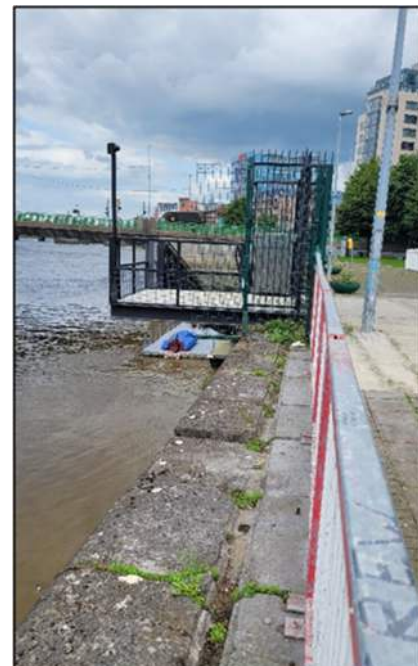
Senior Marine Advisor, Philip Newell inspected the site on 13 June 2025. The pontoon is situated immediately downstream of Shannon Bridge in Limerick City Centre, on the southern bank of the River Shannon adjacent to Steamboat Quay. The inspection was carried out at approximately 14:00hrs, coinciding with spring low tide conditions. At the time of inspection, the pontoon structure was observed to be resting on riverbed silt. The pontoon is secured by means of vertical guide rails, which are face-fixed to the existing masonry quay wall. Access to the gangway and pontoon is controlled by a lockable security gate and associated perimeter fencing. A modular Aquadock floating structure has been installed immediately adjacent to the main pontoon unit. Two vessels were berthed on the Aquadock structure at the time of the inspection.

Photographs 1 to 3 document the existing infrastructure and the character of the receiving maritime environment within the immediate vicinity of the proposed MAC area.

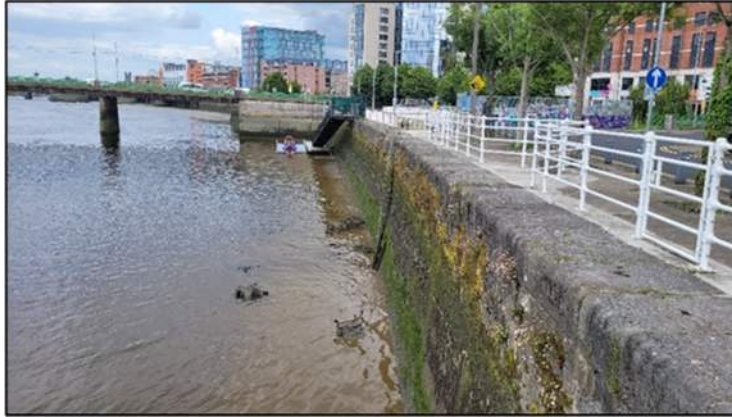
The site inspection did not identify any existing infrastructure or occupation within the proposed MAC area that would conflict with the proposed maritime usage.



*Photograph 1: Existing infrastructure looking southwest towards Steamboat Quay [PN 13/06/2025].*



*Photograph 2: Existing cantilever platform looking northeast towards Shannon Bridge [PN 13/06/2025].*



Photograph 3: View looking northeast from Steamboat Quay towards pontoon [PN 13/06/2025].

## 5. Review of Legislation & Associated Consents

### 5.1 Applicable Provisions of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021 as amended (the Act)

Under the Act, MARA has responsibility for granting MACs.

Schedule 3 and Schedule 4 of the Act specifies maritime usages for which a MAC is not required, including where the proposed maritime usage falls under the remit of another enactment, is navigation or fishing, is a licensable activity under Schedule 7 or where the activity is to be undertaken on private land. The proposed maritime usage is not considered to fall under those listed under Schedule 3 or 4 of the Act.

As outlined in Section 2 above, the subject MAC application is considered to fall under Section 106 of the Act which provides for the regularisation of unauthorised maritime usages. Section 106 of the Act specifies that “unauthorised usage”:

*“means a maritime usage—*

- a) undertaken by a person before 12 August 2021,*
- b) (b) which, in order to be lawfully undertaken before that date, was required to be, but was not, the subject of a foreshore authorisation, and regardless as to whether or not any other authorisations (whether the authorisation takes the form of the grant of a licence, consent, approval or any other type of authorisation) were required, or were in fact granted, under any other enactment in order to enable the person referred to in paragraph (a) to undertake such usage, and*
- c) which, if it were undertaken on or after the coming into operation of Chapter 2, would be required by that Chapter to be the subject of a MAC.”*

The existing maritime usage commenced in 2015 at this location. It is considered that the maritime usage should have been subject to a foreshore authorisation at the time of its installation and for its

operation thereafter. Accordingly, the subject of this application is considered to fall under Section 106 of the Act.

## 5.2 Existing Consents & Authorisations

A search of the MARA's GIS database was undertaken on 03 September 2024 and 16 February 2026 for spatial overlap between the proposed MAC areas and existing foreshore authorisations and MARA licences and consents.

The proposed MAC area does not overlap with any existing MACs or Maritime Usage Licences (MUL) or applications for the same. The application overlaps with one foreshore authorisation as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Overlapping maritime authorisations and foreshore authorisations				
File Reference Number	Applicant/ Holder	Consent Type	Maritime Usage	Status
FS004855	Limerick City Council	Lease	Works in connection with Limerick Main Drainage Scheme & Limerick City Navigation Scheme	Active Expiry 30 December 2035

Foreshore consent FS004855 is a foreshore lease granted to Limerick City Council (now Limerick City & County Council) for works in connection with the Limerick Main Drainage Scheme & Limerick City Navigation Scheme. Since the holder of the lease is the Applicant of the subject MAC application, no conflict is considered to exist.

The Marine Institute's Ireland's Marine Atlas database<sup>1</sup> was searched on 16 February 2026 for spatial overlap between the proposed MAC areas and any Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) foreshore authorisations for aquaculture sites. No overlaps with any DAFM foreshore authorisations for aquaculture sites were found.

In summary, no existing MACs, MULs, foreshore authorisations (including those for aquaculture) or applications for the same were identified as overlapping the proposed MAC application area which would impede MARA in granting a MAC for the proposed maritime usage.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://atlas.marine.ie/>

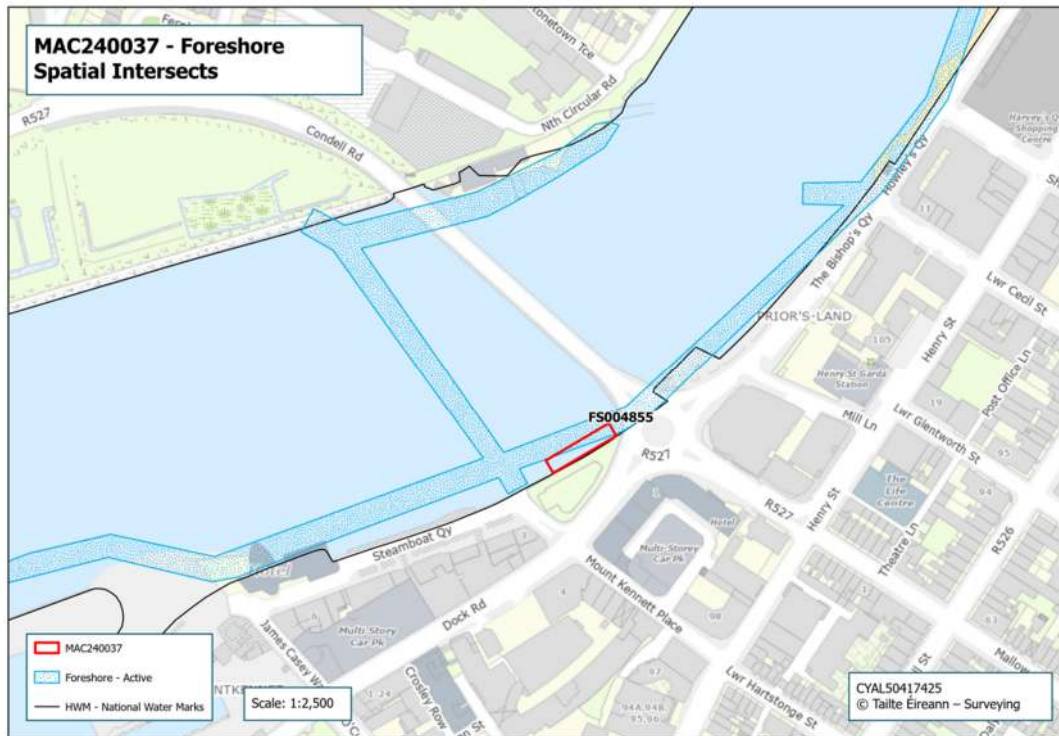


Figure 2: Spatial overlap with Foreshore Lease FS004855

### 5.3 Development Permission

The Applicant has stated that development consent was not required for the existing structure, as the scale and nature of the development fell below the thresholds that require development consent under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The subject MAC application relates to existing infrastructure which has been considered by MARA on the basis of Section 106 of the Act. Considering that the structure is located within the nearshore, any requirement for Development Permission or otherwise, including any retention thereof, is a matter for the planning authority.

### 5.4 Ownership

A search was undertaken of the Land Registry on 16 February 2026 for any document granting or affecting rights to land in order to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest with the MAC area being applied for as outlined in the proposed MAC Map.

No conflicts of interest affecting the proposed MAC area were identified.

## 6. Assessment

### 6.1 Schedule 5

The MAC application was submitted on 08 July 2024 with the appropriate fee paid on 09 July 2024 and reviewed for completeness on 29 July 2024. An incomplete application notification was issued on 29 July 2024; with supplementary documentation/information received on 29 July 2024. The application was deemed complete by MARA on 11 September 2024.

A number of requests for additional information were issued on 11 October 2024, 18 June 2025 and 20 February 2026 under Section 79(3) of the Act and associated responses received relating to matters for technical assessment and financial assessment on 16 October 2024, 20 June 2025 and 02 March 2026.

Schedule 5 of the Act sets out the criteria to which MARA must have regard when assessing a MAC application. This report sets out the assessment undertaken pursuant to Section 5 of the Act. The assessment is summarised in Table 2 below.

<b>Table 2: Synopsis of the assessment of the application with regard to the requirements of Schedule 5</b>			
<b>Schedule 5 Requirements</b>		<b>Synopsis</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1.	The nature, scope and duration of the occupation of the maritime area concerned for the purposes of the proposed maritime usage.	<p>Details of the proposed maritime usage, including the nature scope and duration are described in Section 3 &amp; 4 above.</p> <p>In their response to a Request for Further Information (RAI) dated 20 February 2026, the Applicant stated that they are seeking an “<i>open-ended MAC</i>” due to the “<i>critical, continuous and permanent operational role of the proposed river rescue pontoon</i>”. Notwithstanding the Applicant’s requirements to maintain a pontoon in this location for the provision of river rescue services, it is MARA’s policy to align the MAC term with the design life of the proposed infrastructure. It is considered that a remaining design life for the structure of circa 20 years based on the information provided by the Applicant, with proper maintenance and repair, should be achievable. Accordingly, a MAC term of 25 years, which allows for ongoing maintenance and the rehabilitation / decommissioning phases is recommended.</p> <p>The proposed maritime usage is considered satisfactory, having regard to the nature and scope. The proposed maritime usage is considered partially satisfactory having regard to the duration sought. Accordingly, it is recommended to part grant a MAC for a shorter MAC term than that sought, as outlined above.</p>	Partially Satisfied
2.	Whether the proposed maritime usage is in the public interest.	The Applicant stated that “ <i>The Fire and Rescue Service operate under the Fire Service Act 1981 and The Health Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005. As such, the fire service must provide adequate</i>	Satisfactory

		<p><i>systems of work for their employees when engaged in river rescue activities.”</i></p> <p>The Applicant stated that <i>“the pontoon is strictly limited to those involved in River Rescue related activities. The following organisations may use the pontoon with the consent of Limerick Fire and Rescue Service; An Garda Síochána, HSE/National Ambulance Service, Limerick Civil Defence, Limerick Marine Search and Rescue and the Irish Coast Guard.”</i></p> <p>The Applicant indicated that there will be no impact on existing public access/use and amenity of the Maritime Area and that the project will not impact on any potential future use of the maritime area.</p> <p>A pontoon to assist river rescue staff is in the public interest as it enhances the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of water-based emergency response efforts. By providing a stable and accessible platform for launching and retrieving rescue boats, treating casualties or coordinating search operations, a pontoon significantly reduces response times during critical incidents. Furthermore, the presence of such infrastructure demonstrates a proactive commitment to public safety, potentially saving lives and reducing the severity of water-related accidents in the community.</p> <p>The proposed maritime usage is considered satisfactory, having regard to the public interest.</p>	
3.	The location and spatial extent of the occupation of the maritime area concerned for the purposes of the proposed maritime usage.	<p>Details of the location, relevant consents, ownership and development permissions are provided in Sections 2 to 5 above. Based on the searches and site visit undertaken, nothing was identified that would preclude the granting of a MAC in the proposed area.</p> <p>The total area proposed occupied by the MAC is 500 sqm, comprising MAC Area A, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Proposed MAC Map) in Section 7.</p> <p>Accordingly, the proposed maritime usage is considered satisfactory, having regard to the location(s) and spatial extent of the occupation.</p>	Satisfactory
4.	Guidelines issued under Section 7 which are relevant to the proposed maritime usage.	No such guidelines have been published to date.	Not applicable

5.	Whether the Applicant is a fit and proper person (within the meaning of Schedule 2) to be granted a MAC, both at the time the application is made and at the time that the MAC application concerned is determined by the MARA.	In accordance with <i>S.I. No. 467/2025 - Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (Fit and Proper Person) Order 2025</i> , Limerick City and County Council has been declared as a fit and proper person to be granted and to hold any MAC in accordance with Section 90(1)(b) of the Act.	Satisfactory
6.	Whether the Applicant is tax compliant, both at the time the application is made and at the time that the MAC application concerned is determined by the MARA.	The Applicant submitted Tax Registration Number and Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) which was used to view the Applicant's tax clearance certificate. Based on the review of the tax clearance certificate, the Applicant is considered tax compliant.	Satisfactory
7.	In the case of any maritime usage relating to offshore renewable energy (within the meaning of section 100), the consistency of the MAC application concerned with the development plans of the transmission system operator (within the meaning of section 100).	Not applicable	Not Applicable
8.	The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).	<p>Based on a review of the application, MARA has had regard to the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and it is considered that the proposed project aligns with the overall objectives of the NMPF, including the Safety at Sea, Economic and Social objectives set out therein.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed project aligns with the following economic, social and key sectoral policy objectives of the NMPF: -</p>	Satisfactory

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure Policy 1</b> - <i>Appropriate land-based infrastructure which facilitates marine activity (and vice versa) should be supported. Proposals for appropriate infrastructure that facilitates the diversification or regeneration of marine industries should be supported.</i></li> <li>• <b>Co-existence Policy 1</b> - <i>Proposals should demonstrate that they have considered how to optimise the use of space, including through consideration of opportunities for co-existence and co-operation with other activities, enhancing other activities where appropriate.</i></li> <li>• <b>Social Benefits Policy 1</b> - <i>Proposals that enhance or promote social benefits should be supported.</i></li> <li>• <b>Social Benefits Policy 2</b> - <i>Proposals that increase the understanding and enjoyment of the marine environment (including its natural, historic and social value), or that promote conservation management and increased education and skills, should be supported.</i></li> <li>• <b>Safety at Sea Policy 5</b> - <i>Proposals must identify their potential impact, if any, on Maritime Emergency Response (Search and Rescue (SAR), Maritime Casualty and Pollution Response) operations.</i></li> </ul> <p>In the application, the Applicant states that the proposed project is consistent with the environmental objectives of the NMPF.</p> <p>Based on the above, MARA is satisfied that the proposed works align with the above overall objectives and policy objectives of the NMPF.</p>	
9.	The extent and nature of the preparatory work already undertaken by the Applicant towards ensuring the efficacious undertaking of the proposed maritime usage the subject of the MAC application concerned should the Applicant be granted a MAC in respect of such usage.	Having regard to the fact that the subject maritime usage is an existing maritime usage and not a proposed maritime usage, preparatory works undertaken are not considered to be required in this instance.	Not applicable

10.	The extent and nature of stakeholder engagement undertaken by the Applicant in respect of the proposed maritime usage.	<p>The Applicant stated that they <i>contacted the following groups in connection with the project</i>;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development Management Section Limerick City and County Council</i></li> <li>• <i>Shannon Foynes Port Company</i></li> <li>• <i>Property Management Section Limerick City and County Council</i></li> <li>• <i>An Garda Síochána (AGS)</i></li> <li>• <i>Midwest Regional Control Centre</i></li> <li>• <i>Heritage Officer Limerick City and County Council</i></li> <li>• <i>Health and Safety Officer Limerick City and County Council</i></li> <li>• <i>Inland and Coastal Marina Systems Ltd</i></li> <li>• <i>Limerick Civil Defence (LCD)</i></li> <li>• <i>Limerick Marine Search and Rescue (LMSAR)</i></li> <li>• <i>HSE/National Ambulance Service (NAS)</i></li> </ul> <p>The Applicant stated, “<i>We had no negative feedback from any of the above groups</i>” and that “<i>there was a memorandum of understanding regarding the use of the pontoon as a shared pick up point between AGS, HSE/NAS, LMSAR, LCD and Fire Services.</i>”</p> <p>Having regard to the above and the fact that the subject maritime usage is an existing maritime usage and not a proposed maritime usage, the extent and nature of the stakeholder engagement undertaken is therefore considered acceptable for a project of this scale and nature.</p>	Satisfactory
11.	Where a competitive process referred to in section 93 or 103 is used, the outcome of such process.	Not applicable	Not applicable
12.	Any additional criteria specified, for the purposes of this paragraph, in regulations made under section 80(2).	No such regulations have been made to date.	Not applicable

## 6.2 Rehabilitation Schedule

Under Section 96(1) of the Act, it is required that the holder of a MAC shall, before the expiration of the MAC, rehabilitate that part of the maritime area the subject of the MAC.

As this application falls for submission under Section 106 of the Act, it is required that a rehabilitation schedule be attached to the MAC. Section 96(4) of the Act specifies particulars that should be included in a rehabilitation schedule that set out how the Applicant will discharge their rehabilitation obligations.

The Applicant submitted a Rehabilitation Schedule to MARA on 20 June 2025. Upon review of the requirements of Section 96 of the Act, the Rehabilitation Schedule is considered satisfactory.

### **6.3 Section 83 – Nature of Use**

Section 83(1) of the Act requires MARA in the granting of a MAC to specify whether the specific part of the maritime area the subject of that MAC is for exclusive use or not. Section 83(1) provides MARA discretion and flexibility to specify the nature of the use (i.e. exclusive, non-exclusive or may/may not be exclusive).

Having regard to the nature and lifecycle of the maritime usage the subject of this application, it is reasonably foreseeable that Limerick City & County Council may be required to exclude access to parts of the MAC area on a temporary basis. For example, during maintenance, decommissioning and rehabilitation phases for health and safety reasons. Such temporary/ short-term exclusions may be mandated by the planning authority or other authorities or legislation for specific purposes and durations. In this instance, it is considered that granting of exclusive use for the full term of the MAC is not merited, particularly having regard to co-existence and co-operation objectives of the NMPF. It is considered that exclusive use should only be permitted where use on an exclusive basis is required and provided for under another authorisation or enactment. Accordingly, it is recommended that the MAC is granted on a “may or may not be exclusive” basis contingent on circumstances that may arise after the granting of the MAC” in accordance with Section 83(1)(c) of the Act.

## 7. Proposed MAC Map (for illustration purposes only)

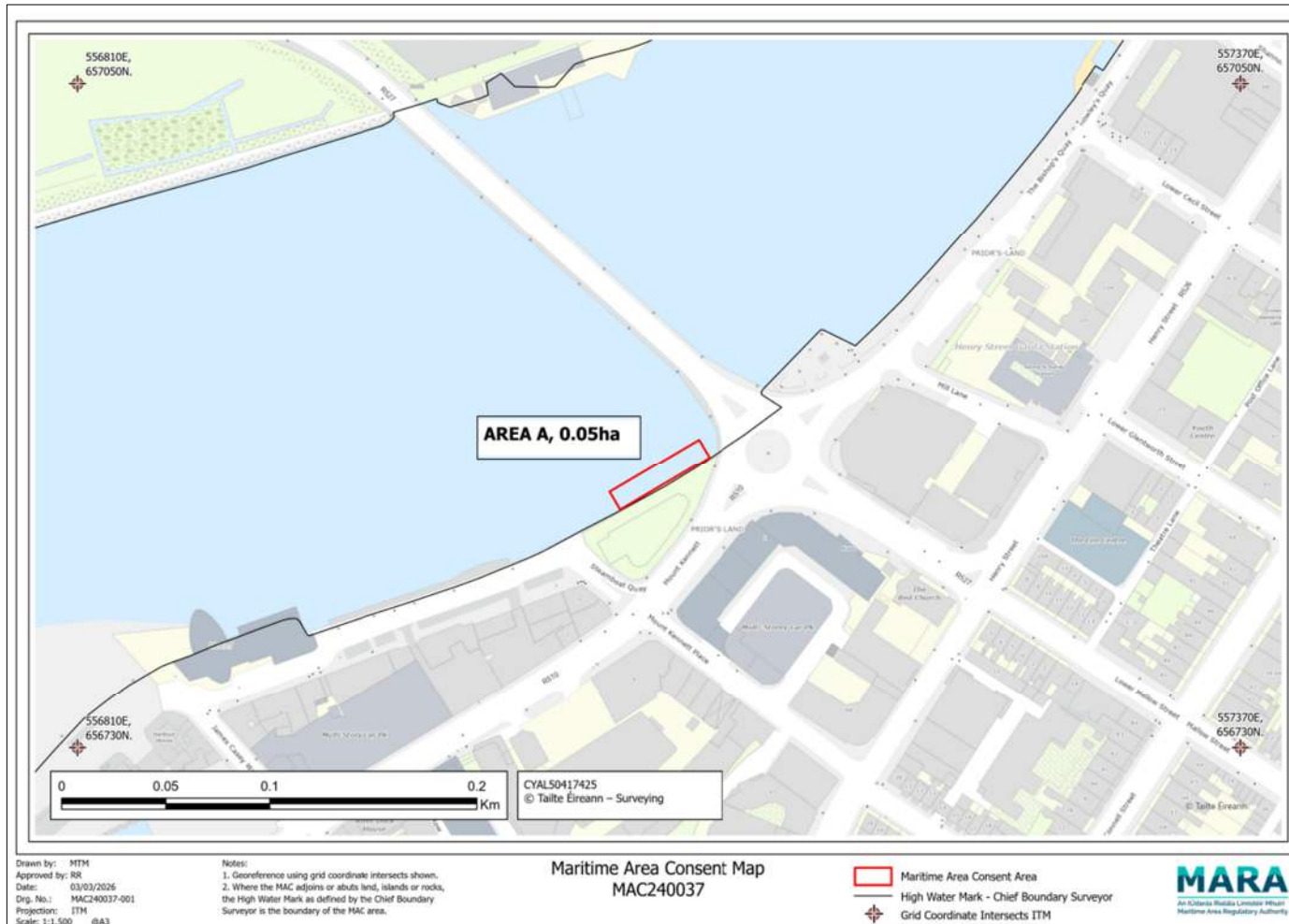


Figure 3: Proposed MAC Map

## 8. Levy

An annual MAC levy has been calculated based on the project type and proposed MAC area in accordance with MARA's MAC levy framework, as set out below.

<b>MAPA Levy Framework Part:</b>	Nearshore
<b>Category/Class:</b>	Development (non-commercial)
<b>Tier:</b>	Tier 2
<b>Applicable Rate:</b>	Base Annual Charge of €214.09 plus an add on of 0.80 per sq.m for areas in excess of 100 sq.m
<b>Area:</b>	500 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Calculation:</b>	€214.09 + (€0.80 * (500.00 - 100.00))
<b>Levy due:</b>	€534.09

The MAC levy has been calculated as €534.09 per annum. All levies are indexed to the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP), applied on an annual basis.

## 9. Discussion

Based on the assessments undertaken contained herein, it is considered that the subject MAC application complies with all the necessary requirements of Schedule 5 of the Act, where relevant and appropriate, with the exception of Schedule 5(1).

-The Applicant did not specify a MAC term and instead requested an open-ended term. It is MARA's policy to align the MAC term with the design life of the infrastructure. Accordingly, it is recommended that the MAC is part granted for a term of 25 years.

The above consideration has been made subject to the following recommended terms and conditions:

### a. Terms

<b>MAC Term:</b>	25 Years
<b>Consent Area:</b>	That part of the maritime area marked red on the MAC Map.
<b>MAC Map Title:</b>	Maritime Area Consent Map Drawing Number: MAC240037-001; Date: 03/03/2026

<b>Permitted Maritime Usage:</b>	The use, operation and maintenance of berthing pontoons, access gangway and associated infrastructure, including all associated decommissioning, demolition and rehabilitation.
<b>Nature of Usage:</b>	May/May Not be Exclusive

**b. Conditions and Reasons for Conditions**

Section 82 of the Act specifies that MARA may attach to a MAC one or more conditions which fall within the types of conditions specified in Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Act. All conditions contained in Schedule 6; Part 2 are deemed to be attached to a MAC.

The standard suite of MARA conditions reflecting the contractual and statutory relationship that will exist with a grant of consent are also recommended. Reasons for these conditions are set out in the enclosed Proposed MAC with the Section 81(7)(b) Minded to Notice.

**10. Conclusion & Recommendation**

Following a detailed assessment of all information on file, it is considered that the proposal complies with all the necessary requirements, subject to the part granting of a MAC term of 25 years. Accordingly, it is recommended to issue a Section 81(7)(b) Minded to Notice, as enclosed, informing the Applicant that MARA is minded to part grant a Maritime Area Consent subject to the proposed conditions attached to the MAC. It is recommended to allow the Applicant 21 days from the date of issue of the Minded to Notice to submit supplementary material in relation to the reasons for the conditions as per Section 81(7)(b)(ii).

Once a final determination is made by MARA, the Applicant will be notified and MARA will publish a notice on its website as soon as practicable thereafter.

Signed: Robert Roche Position: Marine Analyst, MAC Directorate

Signed: Paul Brennan Position: Manager, MAC Directorate