Assessment, Research and Data Unit
Appropriate Assessment Report and Determination for a Maritime Usage Licence

To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	**From:**	Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor
Date	08/12/2025	**Maritime Usage Licence Application No:**	MUL230029
Approved for issue by:		John Evans, Director of ARD Unit	
Applicant:		Department of Defence, Defence Forces Headquarters, McKee Barracks, Dublin, D07 A065	
Type of maritime usage in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021:		*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—* *(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* *(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.*	
		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),* *(b) a container floating in the sea, or* *(c) a structure on land constructed or adapted wholly or mainly for the purpose of depositing solids in the sea.*	
Location of proposed maritime usage:		• Dredging at Haulbowline Naval Base, Cork Harbour, and • Deposit of dredged material 8 km southeast of Roches Point outside of Cork Harbour	
Licence application received:		04/06/2024	

Section 117(3) request for additional information (RAI) issued:	02/07/2024, 31/07/2024, 25/09/2024, 15/05/2025, 15/07/2025		
Response to RAI received:	03/07/2024, 17/09/2024, 01/10/2024, 12/06/2025, 22/07/2025		
Section 117(6)(a) notice requesting Natura Impact Statement (NIS) issued:	25/07/2025	**NIS received**	25/09/2025
Public consultation:	13/10/2025 to 12/11/2025		
Submissions from the public received:	None	**Observations from public bodies received:**	Six

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Statement of Authority

This Appropriate Assessment Report has been undertaken by the Assessment, Research and Data (ARD) Unit within the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), a specialist unit with appropriate expertise in environmental assessment.

1 Introduction

2.1 Background

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

The applicant has been granted a Dumping at Sea (DAS) permit by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Dumping at Sea Act 1996 as amended (permit ref. no S0005-03) for loading of dredged material at the naval base and dumping the material at the offshore deposit (or dump) site. An appropriate assessment was undertaken by the EPA as part of that permitting process. The permitted loading areas under the EPA permit include the entrance to the naval base as well as the naval basin.

2.2 Legislative Context

Part 5, Section 117 of the MAP Act sets out the requirements for MARA to undertake appropriate assessment in respect of a MUL application. The EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EC) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) are transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended (the Regulations) and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The requirements for screening for appropriate assessment and for undertaking appropriate assessment are set out in Regulation 42 of the Regulations. Where appropriate assessment is required to be undertaken on a MUL application, a minimum 30-day public consultation period is required on the application and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) under Section 117 of the MAP Act and in line with Regulation 42 of the Regulations.

2.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

MARA issued an appropriate assessment screening determination dated 24/07/2025. The determination concluded that the proposal by the Department of Defence to carry out dredging at Haulbowline Naval Base and deposit of dredged material at a deposit site south of Roches Point will require appropriate assessment, as it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed maritime usages, individually or in

combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European Site(s). Following MARA's screening determination, the applicant submitted an NIS, dated 25/09/2025. The applicant undertook a period of public consultation on the application and the NIS from 13/10/2025 to 12/11/2025. In addition, MARA consulted with a number of public bodies. The observations received are detailed in the accompanying Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report for this application.

2 Location and Proposed Maritime Usage

2.4 Site Location and Characteristics

It is proposed to undertake maintenance dredging in two discrete locations (MUL application Areas A and B) in the maritime area[1] at Haulbowline Naval Base. Area A is 0.46 ha and is at the entrance to the naval base and Area B is a small section (0.05 ha) of the former graving dock within the naval base. The remainder of the graving dock is outside of the maritime area and outside of the scope of the application. It is proposed to deposit uncontaminated dredged material at MUL application Area C, which is an established marine deposit (or dump) site, approximately 8 km south of Roches Point and is 377.8 ha. Contaminated dredged material (i.e. not meeting national assessment criteria for suitability for disposal in Irish waters[2]) will not be deposited in the maritime area but will be taken ashore for treatment in landside geotubes and then for authorised disposal.

Haulbowline Naval Base is situated in an industrial and urbanised harbour setting in the lower part of Cork Harbour with many industries, including commercial shipping, commercial fishing activity and leisure amenities occurring in the harbour. The material to be dredged is largely silt with a small fraction of sand (<4 %). The naval basin was subject to maintenance dredging in 2010 and 2017 under previous authorisations from the EPA (ref. no. S0005-02) and the Foreshore Division of the then Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Foreshore licence ref. FS006564).

Area C is an established deposit (or dump) site which has been in use since the late 1970s. Water depth at the site ranges between 25–50 m. Surveys carried out at the site show that the broad benthic habitat is predominantly hard substrate, or circalittoral rock and biogenic reef, with pockets of circalittoral mud, muddy sand, sand and coarse sediment. Surveys at the site have shown that the benthic habitats there have been broadly stable over time.

2.5 Description of the Proposed Maritime Usage

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. Area A will be dredged to -5.5 m CD (meters below Chart Datum) and Area B will be reestablished to its original depth, or to -5.5 m CD, whichever is the lesser. The applicant has applied for an 8-year MUL duration. This will allow for four dredging campaigns to take place, with each

[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)
[2] Guidelines for the assessment of dredge material for disposal in Irish waters Marine Institute 2006 and 2009 addendum.

campaign estimated as 10–12 weeks. During the first campaign, it is proposed to dredge 1,560 m^3 of contaminated material from Area B (see Table 2) which will be taken ashore for landside treatment. Sediment from Area B was tested in 2022 and was found to contain high levels of heavy metals, including Lead and Mercury, which were above national sediment quality criteria for disposal at sea[3]. The applicant proposes that as part of the remaining three dredging campaigns, that 450 m^3 of material from Area B will be dredged and then deposited at the offshore deposit site (Area C). The applicant notes that this will require further sediment quality testing to establish the suitability of the material for disposal (or deposit) at sea and, as part of that, that other authorisations will be required including a Dumping at Sea permit from the EPA.

Table 1: Proposed methods of dredging and deposit.

Maritime usage activity	**Method**
Dredging	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.

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

Uncontaminated material*		Contaminated Material°	Uncontaminated material*
Dredge area		Dredge area	Deposit area
Area A	Area B	Area B	Area C
4,040 m^3	450 m^3	1,560 m^3	4,490 m^3

*suitable/°not suitable for disposal/deposit at sea in accordance with national assessment criteria.

3 European Sites and Qualifying Interests

Two European Sites were screened in for appropriate assessment as part of MARA's appropriate assessment screening determination. This included one Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and one Special Protection Area (SPA). These European sites, their Qualifying Interests (QIs) also referred to as Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) for the SPA site and likely or potential source of impact as a result of the proposed maritime usages are given in Table 3 below.

[3] Marine Institute 2006 and 2009 addendum.

Table 3: European sites and qualifying interests which were screened in for appropriate assessment along with potential source of impact and site-specific conservation objectives.

European Site & site code	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	Qualifying Interests	Potential source of impact	Site-specific conservation objectives
Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	< 2	Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004] Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) [A005] Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017] Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) [A028] Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048] Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050] Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052] Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054] Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056] Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) [A069] Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130] Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140] Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142] Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157] Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160] Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162] Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] Common Gull (*Larus canus*) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183]	Possible visual & above water noise disturbance and disturbance from underwater noise and indirect impacts on water quality.	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]		
Great Island Channel SAC [001058]	<6 (by water)	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330]	Possible physical disturbance from water quality deterioration (suspended sediments and sediment deposition)	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Great Island Channel SAC 001058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

4 Assessment and Mitigation

4.1 Assessment of Likely/Possible Impacts on European Sites

The potential for significant impacts on QI bird species from Cork Harbour SPA was identified (see Table 3). The impacts identified are from above water noise and visual disturbance and underwater noise generated by the dredging activities, vessels, machinery and increased human presence at Areas A and B at Haulbowline. The deposit activity (at Area C) is not expected to impact on the SPA, due to its offshore location. Great Island Channel SAC was screened in for appropriate assessment due to the potential for dredging activities in Areas A and B to cause water quality deterioration and subsequent Annex I habitat degradation. The wetland habitats protected as part of Cork Harbour SPA could also be similarly impacted. This section discusses those impacts individually. Any mitigation measures recommended on foot of the assessment in this section are included in Section 4.6 - Mitigation Measures.

4.1.1 Above water noise and visual disturbance

Cork Harbour SPA supports nationally and internationally important numbers of waders and waterbird species, including wintering waterbirds. The site is also designated for breeding Common tern. The SPA is comprised of a number of intertidal areas in Cork Harbour and their protected wetland habitats cover 2,587 ha. Part of the SPA is the intertidal mudflat area at Monkstown Creek which is <2 km west of the proposed dredging Areas A and B. Other parts of the SPA in the vicinity of the dredging Areas A and B are the intertidal areas at Lough Beg and Whitegate Bay which are <2 km and <3 km respectively to the south and east.

There is no suitable foraging habitat for waders and waterbirds within dredging Areas A and B. Some of the QI bird species listed on Table 2 may forage at low tide in the intertidal areas to the south of Haulbowline and species including Cormorant and Redshank have been recorded roosting on the island[4]. The applicant provided data on the noise produced by the proposed dredging activities, and it is not significantly higher than that produced by regular shipping activities. As such, birds commonly utilising the surrounding area will be accustomed to background noise. The applicant notes that the closest part of Cork Harbour SPA (Monkstown Creek) to Areas A and B is relatively small in the context of the SPA and that if birds were to be disturbed there is availability of suitable alternative habitats in other parts of the SPA. In addition, should birds be foraging in intertidal areas to the south of Haulbowline, buildings and other structures would act as a barrier to the noise generating activities. Thus, increased above water noise and visual disturbance caused to birds that may be present in the vicinity of the dredging activities would not cause a significant decrease in the range, timing and intensity of use of areas by those bird species and specific mitigation is not required.

[4] NPWS, 2014 Cork Harbour Special Protection Area (site code 4030) Conservation Objectives Supporting Document.

4.1.2 Underwater noise disturbance

In terms of underwater noise, it is expected that flushing disturbance would displace any diving bird species (e.g. gulls, cormorant and Common Tern) in the vicinity of the dredging vessels, thereby limiting their exposure to the highest sound pressures generated. In addition, only Area A would provide suitable foraging habitat for diving species. The likelihood of these diving birds being in the vicinity of the noise generating activities (dredging machinery and vessels) is low, due to the surface activity associated with such operations disturbing the birds prior to commencement of the underwater noise.

Cork Harbour SPA is designated for breeding Common Tern and they are commonly recorded in Monkstown Creek and Lough Beg (<2 km from dredge Areas A and B). Outside of the SPA and <1 km to the southeast of Haulbowline, Common Tern also nest on artificial pontoon structures. Studies show that Common Tern appear to be resilient to background noise in harbour and port areas. Data submitted by the applicant indicates that the noise produced by the dredging activities will not be significantly higher than background shipping noise. In addition, it is expected that buildings and artificial structures on Haulbowline would decrease the noise impact to terns nesting to the south. The breeding population of Common tern is increasing nationally in response to conservation initiatives including those in Cork. Thus, it is not expected that the dredging activities would significantly impact on Common Terns from Cork Harbour SPA. Mitigation measures relating to underwater noise are not required.

4.1.3 Disturbance from water quality deterioration

Great Island Channel SAC was screened in for appropriate assessment due to the potential for dredging activities in Areas A and B to cause water quality deterioration and subsequent Annex I habitat degradation. The wetland habitats protected as part of Cork Harbour SPA could also be similarly impacted. In particular, the dredging activities in Areas A and B could lead to increased suspended sediments in the water column. Dredging of contaminated material from Area B could result in the inadvertent release of pollutants into the water column. The deposition of suspended sediments, including contaminated sediments, could lead to habitat degradation.

The applicant undertook suspended sediment plume dispersion modelling which was based on a worst-case scenario, or full dredging campaign at Haulbowline (i.e. 47,630 m^3 of dredged material), including dredging in Areas A and B in the maritime area[5] as well as the dredging of the naval basin as permitted under EPA Dumping at Sea permit ref S0005-03). The furthest extent of the plume is predicted to reach approximately 1 km from Area A, with the plume extending in a south-east direction alongside Haulbowline Island. The peak predicted

[5] 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)

suspended sediment concentration (SSC) is within the basin itself (> 500 mg/l) followed by Area A at the entrance to the basin (> 80 mg/l). Outside of these areas the SSC falls quickly to within background levels in the harbour. The models predict that sediment deposition will be restricted to within the naval basin and the entrance to the naval base. Thus, the dredging activities at Haulbowline alone are not likely to lead to significant suspended sediments and likely impacts on the habitats in the Great Island Channel SAC, given it is just less than 6 km north of Haulbowline.

Modelling of the deposit of dredged material at the deposit site (Area C) indicates that the plume will extend primarily in a western direction from Area C but will dissipate to very low levels (<0.5 mg/l) within a 2 km distance on average and will reach background levels at a maximum distance of 5 km. Suspended sediments of <1 mg/l equates to very low turbidity. Deposition of sediment outside of Area C will be minimal (<6 cm within 1 km of Area C). Given the location of Area C, the deposit of dredged material alone will not lead to any impacts on European sites. See Section 4.2 for discussion on the in-combination impacts of the dredging and deposit activities with other plans and projects.

Dredging from Area B during the first dredging campaign could result in the inadvertent dispersal of contaminants into the water column in Cork Harbour. Mitigation will be required to prevent this from occurring – see Section 4.6.

The applicant proposes to undertake further dredging in Area B of 450 m^3 of material as part of subsequent dredging campaigns (see Table 2). It is proposed that this material will be deposited at the offshore deposit site (Area C) pending further authorisations including a Dumping at Sea permit from the EPA and, as part of that, that the sediment quality is re-tested and found to be suitable for disposal. Mitigation is required to ensure that material which is not suitable for disposal, or deposit, at sea does not take place (see Section 4.6).

4.2 Assessment of In-combination effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that an appropriate assessment be carried out in respect of any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the likely or possible effects of a plan or project are significant when considered in isolation, the potential for the plan or project to significantly affect European sites in combination with other plans or projects must also be assessed. All types of plans or projects that could, in-combination with the project under consideration, have a significant effect, should be taken into account. This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement.

4.2.1 Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)

The CESS is based the maximum extent of the sediment plume predicted to be generated as a result of the activities (i.e. approximately 5 km from the deposit site, Area C) based on sediment dispersion modelling carried out by the applicant.

4.2.2 Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)

The temporal scope for examination of cumulative effects has been defined considering the period over which the proposed activities are proposed. The applicant has applied for a 8-year licence duration and thus the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS) is 8 years.

4.2.3 Impacts and Pathway Identification

Impact	Potential Cumulative Pathway
Above water noise and visual disturbance on birds	Pathway possible via light and sound travelling through air with impacts possible where there is spatial and temporal overlap with other visual and above water noise producing projects.
Underwater noise disturbance on birds	Pathway possible via sound travelling through water with impacts possible where there is spatial and temporal overlap with other underwater noise producing projects.
Deterioration in water quality causing habitat degradation	Pathway possible via increased suspended sediments in the water column where there is spatial and temporal overlap with other relevant projects.

4.2.4 Prediction:

The magnitude and extent of identified likely cumulative effects have been predicted below.

Above water noise and visual disturbance and displacement

There is the potential for increased visual and above water noise disturbance on birds if other sound generating projects were to spatially and temporarily overlap. However, given the high levels of background noise from shipping and other activities in this part of Cork Harbour, birds would be expected to be resilient to temporary increases in noise. There are also other suitable habitat areas for birds to use. The deposit of dredged material via the hopper barge will generate very minimal noise.

Disturbance and displacement from underwater noise

There is the potential for increased underwater noise disturbance effects on birds if other relevant projects, capable of producing similar underwater noise sources, were to take place at the same time. However, this is not expected to be a significant impact given that only Area A provides foraging habitat for diving birds and it a very small area of only 0.46 ha in the context of Cork Harbour.

Deterioration in water quality

There is potential for increased water quality deterioration via suspended sediments if other relevant projects were to overlap temporally and spatially (within the CESS). This could lead to sediment deposition in Great Island Channel SAC or on the wetland habitats in Cork Harbour SPA. There are no SAC sites that could be impacted by increased suspended sediments generated at the deposit site given its location offshore and the manner in which the sediments are predicted to disperse.

4.2.5 Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination

A search was carried out on 24/11/2025 of relevant databases (including EPA, Foreshore, MARA, planning authorities) for other plans and projects with characteristics that may cause in-combination effects with the proposed dredging activities, on the QIs of the European sites identified on Table 3. The projects shown on Table 4 are within the CESS and CETS of the proposed dredging activities. The in-combination assessment also considers the potential cumulative impacts from minor development projects in the CESS and CETS of the proposed activities.

Table 4: Projects identified with the potential to have in-combination effects given the nature and location of the activities

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 at various locations in Cork Harbour including the navigation channel.	< 1	Permitted
S0005-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Department of Defence maintenance dredging works at Haulbowline Naval Base.	overlap	Applied
S0021-03	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork capital dredging works at Ringaskiddy.	< 2	Applied
S0039-01	EPA Dumping at Sea permit – Port of Cork capital dredging works at Ringaskiddy.	< 2	Applied
FS007126	Dredging – Port of Cork maintenance dredging works at various locations in Cork Harbour including the navigation channel.	< 1	Foreshore licence granted

The following plans were identified as having the potential to result in in-combination effects. In general, these plans support port development, including port infrastructure to support Offshore Renewable Energy in Cork Harbour which may involve additional dredging works.

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

4.2.6 In-Combination Effects Assessment conclusion

Plans and projects have been identified which include authorised and proposed dredging activities in close proximity to the MUL application area at Haulbowline. The sediment dispersion models submitted by the applicant did not consider the dredging activities covered under these other authorisations. It is not possible to exclude the possibility of in-combination effects with these projects leading to water quality deterioration via increased suspended sediments in the water column and potential habitat degradation at Great Island Channel SAC or on wetland habitat in Cork Harbour SPA should they occur simultaneously. However, the applicant proposes that the dredging activities will not occur concurrently with other dredging activities in Cork Harbour, thus avoiding increased suspended sediments in-combination with these projects. This mitigation measure will avoid in-combination impacts via increased suspended sediments and is set out in Section 4.6.

4.3 Residual Effects

This assessment has identified Likely/Possible Significant Impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests in Section 4.1 and recommends mitigation measures for each in Section 4.6 below. It is considered that the mitigation measures described and their implementation through licence conditions will remove, or reduce to imperceptible levels, all negative impacts and that residual effects will not arise.

4.4 Assessment of Transboundary effects

The mitigation measures proposed as part of this appropriate assessment will mitigate against any transboundary effects on other European sites.

4.5 Public consultation

A public consultation was undertaken from 13/10/2025 to 12/11/2025with the public invited to make submissions. In addition to the public consultation, observations were invited from relevant public bodies. No submissions were received on foot of the public consultation, while six submissions were received from relevant public bodies. These submissions have been considered as part of the appropriate assessment and are summarised in Section 6 of the associated Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report undertaken as part of the MUL application assessment.

4.6 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures for those impacts identified in *Section 4.1 - Assessment of Likely/Possible Significant Impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests* are detailed below.

4.6.1 Above water noise and visual disturbance

No specific mitigation required.

4.6.2 Underwater noise disturbance

No specific mitigation required.

4.6.3 Water quality mitigation

The applicant states that a silt curtain will be put in place at the entrance to the graving dock to contain any suspended sediments while dredging is underway in Area B. This will be required as a mitigation measure to prevent the inadvertent release of such contaminants into Cork Harbour. Thus, a condition will have to be included in the licence as follows:

- The Holder shall ensure that, prior to the commencement, for the duration and following the completion of dredging within Area B, an appropriate silt curtain is secured at the entrance to the graving dock within Haulbowline Naval Base as shown on drawing No. CM1265-BLA-XX-DR-C-09001 submitted with the application.

A condition must be included in the licence to state that material which is not suitable for disposal cannot be deposited in Area C, as follows:

- Sediment material categorised as not suitable for disposal at sea shall not be deposited in the Licensed Area or any other part of the maritime area.

The definition of material not suitable for disposal at sea must be clearly stated in the licence as meaning sediment that is chemically contaminated such that it does not meet the assessment criteria to be suitable for disposal in accordance with *Guidelines for the Assessment of Dredge Material for Disposal in Irish Water* (Marine Institute, 2006) and *Addendum to 2006 Guidelines for the Assessment of Dredged Material in Irish Waters* (Marine Institute, 2009)

All necessary authorisations, including a Dumping at Sea permit, must be obtained in advance of any subsequent dredging campaigns beyond the first dredging campaign. Thus a condition is required stating that the licence does not negate the Holder's statutory obligations or requirements under any other Law, as follows:

- This licence is for the purposes of licensing under the Act and nothing in this licence shall be construed as negating the Holder's statutory obligations or requirements under any other Law.

4.6.4 In-combination mitigation

- The Holder shall ensure that the Permitted Maritime Usage does not take place concurrently with other authorised dredging or deposit (or dumping) campaigns in Cork Harbour, unless otherwise agreed by the Grantor.

5 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

The applicant provided an NIS which detailed the potential impact of the proposed project on relevant European sites and whether these impacts would adversely affect the integrity of the sites in light of their conservation objectives. The appropriate assessment screening process identified likely/possible significant impacts due to above and below water noise and visual disturbance and water quality deterioration. Likely significant impacts from the proposed activities could not be ruled out, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, without mitigation. The potential for in-combination effects from the proposed dredging activities with other plans and projects could not be ruled out, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, without mitigation.

Mitigation measures were identified to ensure that impacts on European sites and their QIs and SCIs do not occur. Therefore, with adherence to the mitigation measures specified in section 4.6 Mitigation Measures, and in view of best scientific knowledge, and of the sites' conservation objectives, the project, individually, or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not have adverse effects on European sites.

Signature and Date of Recommending Marine Advisor	[redacted] **Dr. Alison McCarthy** Senior Marine Advisor Assessment, Research and Data 08/12/2025

6 Appropriate Assessment Determination

Having considered this report, the documents submitted by the Department of Defence, the observations received on foot of the public consultation and public body consultation on the application, along with my own assessment, it can be concluded, and I determine, for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 42(11) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, that the proposal to **undertake maintenance dredging at Haulbowline Naval Base in Cork Harbour and to deposit the dredged material at an established deposit site 8 km southeast of Roches Point outside of Cork Harbour by the Department of Defence, Defence Forces Headquarters, McKee Barracks, Dublin, D07 A065 (MUL230029)** (either individually or in combination with any other plans or projects), will not adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures specified in Section 4.6 Mitigation Measures adopted and outlined above, which must be included as conditions to any consent that may be granted in respect of the respective maritime usage licence application.

Signature and Date of Decision Maker	[redacted] **John Evans** Director of Assessment, Research and Data 09/12/2025