



13th November 2025

licence@mara.gov.ie

RE: Request for Observations – MUL Reference: MUL230037

A Chara,

The Marine Divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the application from Uisce Éireann for a Maritime Usage Licence. The application is for Marine surveys within Newport Bay and Clew Bay to inform the outfall discharge location for a proposed new Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to serve the Newport agglomeration in Co. Mayo.

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 survey works are being evaluated.

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) and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) on the application were requested.

The MI note that the proposed licence area is coincidental with two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The indicated area includes spawning and nursery grounds of a range of commercial fish species, including Cod Nursery Grounds; Herring Spawning Area; Horse Mackerel Nursery Ground and a Mackerel Nursery Ground.

While the proposed survey operations should not substantially interfere with fish stocks, fishing activities or aquaculture activities in the area, the MI request that contractors liaise with local fishermen to avoid impacting on fishing activities. It is assumed that the necessary notices to mariners / fishing vessels will be made regarding the deployment of monitoring devices and bathymetric survey activities.

BIM acknowledge the reference to fisheries and aquaculture within Section 4.5 of the Assessment of Impacts of the Maritime Usage Report (AIMU). *"Clew, Newport, and Westport Bay accounts for the largest number of licenced aquaculture sites in County Mayo. There are numerous aquaculture licences held within the Bay for various aquaculture species, including - Atlantic Salmon, Pacific Oyster, Manila Clam, Great Atlantic Scallop, Blue Mussel, European Lobster and seaweed. The proposed marine surveying will not impact any of the aquaculture sites within the survey area. The proposed types of surveys are common in Ireland and indeed*

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similar surveying was completed prior to the development of Newport wastewater treatment plant. The surveying will be short in duration and will not be placed within a licenced aquaculture area (as listed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine); as such there will be no negative or adverse impact on any aquaculture area or fisheries activities.”

BIM note that Section 4.5 does not refer to the Clew Bay Oyster Fishery Order 1979 which is vested in the Clew Bay Oyster Cooperative Society Ltd. The natural flat oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) beds in Clew Bay are of both national and international importance. They are one of only nine such national native oyster beds in the country.

BIM do not envisage any issues with the survey activity, bathymetric, water sampling locations and Dye and microbial tracing activity with regard to aquaculture and fisheries and a normal notice to mariners would suffice. The applicant and assigned survey contractor would need to be cognisant of the presence of structures such as oyster trestles and navigational poles close to oyster licenced sites which will not be navigable directly above them even on high tides.

DAFM notes that a variety of fishing activities take place within, and adjacent to, the area of interest outlined in licence application MUL 230037 (Source: [Ireland's Marine Atlas](#)). The Assessment of Impacts of the Maritime Usage Report sets out that the proposed marine surveys, and deployment of associated survey equipment, will not inhibit access related to fisheries activities and that the duration that the survey equipment will be in place is limited.

DAFM notes that Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data regarding fishing in, and around, the area of interest may be limited as many of the vessels in the inshore fishing segment (less than 12 metres in length) are not currently required to carry VMS systems on board. 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.

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 proposed survey works on commercial sea fishing activities needs to be given consideration 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 development activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas.

DAFM would seek confirmation that where there are any indirect impacts on traditional fishing grounds identified, consultation with local stakeholders will be undertaken prior to and throughout the works and a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) will be appointed to liaise with all the relevant sea going and foreshore users in advance of any marine survey operations.

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

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



Yours sincerely,

Marine Divisions
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