

Marine Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	John Evans, Director	From:	Tom Manning, Marine Analyst
Date:	12/02/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL240003
Applicant:	Wexford County Council, Unit 7 Key West, Custom House Quay, Wexford, Y35 D458.		
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.		
Location of proposed maritime usage:	River Barrow, New Ross to Barrow Bridge		
Licence application received:	25/10/2024		

1. Background

Wexford County Council (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) for marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act).

Access to New Ross Port can be restricted by shallow water depths at several locations between New Ross and the Barrow Bridge downstream at the confluence of the Barrow/Nore and Suir. Wexford County Council is the authority for the port of New Ross and proposes to undertake maintenance dredging to improve navigation along this section of the river Barrow. The proposed site investigation activity is required to provide environmental data for use in assessments in relation to the potential dredging of these locations.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed site investigation activity will consist of taking grab samples, sidescan sonar and a riverbed survey using towed video and stills imagery, as follows:

- 10 grab samples of estuary bed sediment and duplicates for contaminant analysis taken by a hand deployed 0.1m² Van Veen grab sampler.
- Benthic grab sampling using a 0.1m² Day Grab at a total of 26 sampling stations within 7 potential dredging locations from an 8.5m vessel platform.
- Subtidal video survey by towed camera to take videos and still images of the benthic habitat (30 videos/still images).
- Tide level measurements will be taken at two locations, tidal current measurements at three locations and turbidity/suspended sediment concentration measurements taken using Niskin bottles.
- Side-scan sonar and magnetometer surveys for archaeological purposes.

It is proposed that the in-water site investigation activity will take a total of 4 days. Tide gauges will be deployed for a period of 30 days and tidal current measurement equipment will be deployed for 14 days. The proposed duration of the maritime usage licence is for 3 years.



Figure 1. Applicant's Site Location Map.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The proposed site location is a 16km section of the estuary of the River Barrow between New Ross and the confluence with the River Suir. The subject site comprises upper tidal sections of the river channel with intertidal flats and substrates ranging from fine, silty mud to coarse sand with pebbles/stones.

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of the sites.

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed on Table 1 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) model.

Table 1 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162	Proposed MUL area within SAC site	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] European dry heaths [4030] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

		<p>Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</p> <p><i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]</p> <p><i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p><i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]</p> <p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p><i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p><i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p><i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaiite Shad) [1103]</p> <p><i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p><i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p> <p><i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985]</p>			
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4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 2 identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Potential impacts from underwater noise disturbance on migratory fish species.	The underwater noise from the proposed site investigation activity would not have a likely significant effect on site-specific Conservation Objectives due to the short duration and low magnitude of the potential impacts.
Potential impacts from visual and above water noise disturbance.	The above water noise and visual disturbance from proposed site investigation activity would not have a likely significant effect on site-specific Conservation Objectives due to the short duration and low magnitude of the potential impacts.
Physical damage of habitats and species caused by penetration and disturbance/increased turbidity/siltation rate/physical removal.	The physical damage from proposed site investigation activity would not have a likely significant effect on site-specific Conservation Objectives due to the short duration and low magnitude of the potential impacts.

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. Using professional and scientific judgement, the key steps for assessing cumulative effects are 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 - to be carried out as part of Stage 2 AA process

The CESS has been defined as the area of possible source-pathway-receptor connections and the CETS as the proposed maritime usage license duration of three years.

A search of relevant databases undertaken on the 26 January, 2026. Relevant projects within the CESS and the CETS were considered. Particular attention was given to the projects shown on Table 3 which have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

Table 3: List of projects considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites.

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
PA20230651	ESB construction, use, Operation and maintenance of an underground electricity cable beneath the River Barrow.	Within MUL area	Granted 30/09/2023
LIC230025	Port of Waterford Company Maintenance dredging of accumulated sediments to maintain the port's navigational trade areas.	< 1	Applied

The following plans, related to the development of the maritime environment were also considered:

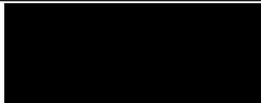
- The Wexford County Development Plan (2022-2028)
- River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022-2027
- Climate Action Plan 2025

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above and projects listed on Table 3 on the conservation objectives of the 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

<p>The assessment of significant effects:</p> <p>On the basis of the information on file, and having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature and scale of the proposed development • The short duration and low magnitude of the potential impacts • The lack of significant in-combination effects with other plans and projects <p>Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Wexford County Council, Unit 7 Key West, Custom House Quay, Wexford, to carry out Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation at the River Barrow between New Ross and the confluence with the River Suir (MUL240003) will not require Stage 2 appropriate assessment.</p> <p>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.</p>		
Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Tom Manning Marine Analyst	Date: 11 February, 2026.
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director of Assessment, Research and Data Unit	Date: 17 February 2026