

Assessment, Research and Data Unit

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	From:	Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor
Date of Report:	23/10/2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL240010
Applicant:	EirGrid, The Oval, 160 Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.		
Licence application received:	14/05/2024		
Type of maritime usage in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021:	<i>(3) Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.</i>		
Location of proposed Maritime Usage:	Dublin Bay, from Blackrock Park to Shellybanks and to Poolbeg Lighthouse.		

1. Background

EirGrid (the applicant) has applied to Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake marine site investigation surveys in Dublin Bay from Blackrock Park to Shellybanks and Poolbeg Lighthouse. The proposed maritime usage falls under 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP Act) ‘*marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000*’. The proposed MUL is required to enable EirGrid to acquire site specific technical and environmental data to provide a reliable basis for design development, and to support the consenting and construction phases of a proposed 220kV electrical cable circuit, the CP1146 Carrickmines to Poolbeg Project, which is part of EirGrid’s Powering Up Dublin Programme.

2. Description of Project/Proposal and local site characteristics

The applicant proposes to undertake a range of site investigation surveys, as shown on Table 1. The applicant has applied for a MUL duration of 2 years during which the surveys will be carried out on a phased basis.

Table 1: Proposed site investigation surveys

Marine geophysical surveys	
Multi-beam Echosounder (MBES) Side Scan Sonar (SSS) Sub-bottom profiler (SBP) Magnetometer Ultrashort Baseline (USBL) acoustic positioning system Seismic refraction (beach and intertidal)	Ground penetrating radar Drop-down camera and/or Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) Drones/Unmanned Aerial Vehicles /UAV Electrical resistivity Photogrammetry
Marine environmental/ecological surveys	
Benthic sampling/grab sampling Water samples Conductivity, temperature, depth (CTD) water measurements Static underwater noise recorders	Shore-based visual shipping and navigation surveys Marine archaeology surveys (dive, walkover, wade) Marine habitat surveys (intertidal walkover, diving, core sampling, transects) Other ecological surveys (otter, bird and bat surveys)
Geotechnical Investigations	Metocean Surveys
Geotechnical boreholes (6 No.) Vibro-core sampling (30 No.) Cone Penetration Test (CPT) (30 No.)	Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (3 No.)
Other equipment: Survey vessels (10–20 m length), jack up-barge & drill rig, tracked borehole/CPT rig.	

2.1 Brief description of the site characteristics

The MUL application covers 2,101 Ha and extends from the high water mark to approximately 5 km out to sea. Water depths in the MUL application area are relatively shallow, from 0–11 m and the substrate is composed of fine muds, sands and gravels. The MUL application area lies within the South Dublin Bay SAC as well as the southern part of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA. The extensive intertidal areas of sand and mudflats in the SAC provide important habitats for nationally and internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl, protected as part of the SPA. The MUL application area is used for amenity purposes for instance bait digging at low tide and watersports at high tide.

3. Identification of relevant European Site(s)

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to cause significant effects to a European site(s) in view of the conservation objectives of the site(s).

The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report and an Assessment of Impact of the Maritime Usage (AIMU) report in support of the application, along with other supporting documents which were referred to during this assessment.

The proposed site investigation surveys are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites listed on Table 2 have been screened for appropriate assessment, given the nature and extent of the proposed site investigation surveys and the conservation objectives of the European sites. Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) links were assessed as well as the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the proposed surveys. The potential for in-combination impacts with relevant plans or projects was also considered (see Section 4 of this report).

Table 2. European sites screened for appropriate assessment, their qualifying interests and site specific conservation objectives (note: the Qualifying Interests indicated in bold have been screened in for appropriate assessment.)

European site & site code	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (S-P-R)	European site screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
South Dublin Bay SAC [000210]	Within MUL area	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	Yes - possible habitat loss and/or habitat degradation	Yes	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. NPWS (2013) ¹ Conservation Objectives: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
North Dublin Bay SAC [000206]	1	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹ The South Dublin Bay SAC Conservation Objectives document does not include site specific conservation objectives (SSCO) for each of the Annex I habitats, therefore the SSCO document for the North Dublin Bay SAC was also referred to as part of this assessment.

		Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]			
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC [003000]	3	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Possible disturbance, displacement or harm from underwater noise	Yes	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Reefs [1170]	No		
Howth Head SAC [000202]	4	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030]	No	No	NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Howth Head SAC 000202. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
Ireland's Eye SAC [002193]	8	Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	No	No	NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Ireland's Eye SAC 002193. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
Baldoyle Bay SAC [000199]	6	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]	No	No	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Baldoyle Bay SAC 000199. Version 1.0. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]			
Lambay Island SAC [000204]	17	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Possible disturbance, displacement or harm from underwater noise	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SAC 000204. Version 2. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
		Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	No		
Codling Fault Zone SAC [003015]	30	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Possible disturbance, displacement or harm from underwater noise	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Codling Fault Zone SAC 003015. Version 2. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
		Submarine structures made by leaking gases [1180]	No		
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA [004024]	Within MUL area	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]	Possible above and below water noise and/or visual disturbance and displacement Possible habitat loss and habitat degradation	Yes	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
North-west Irish Sea SPA [004236]	0.3	Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) [A003] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>) [A187] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Little Gull (<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>) [A862] Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885]	Possible above and below water noise and/or visual disturbance and displacement	Yes	NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
North Bull Island SPA [004006]	0.3	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]	Possible above water noise and/or visual disturbance and displacement	Yes	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>) [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>			
Dalkey Island SPA [004172]	5	<p>Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]</p>	Possible above water noise and/or visual disturbance and displacement	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Dalkey Islands SPA 004172. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Baldoyle Bay SPA [004016]	6	<p>Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	Possible above water noise and/or visual disturbance and displacement	Yes	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Baldoyle Bay SPA 004016. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Howth Head Coast SPA [004113]	6	<p>Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]</p>	Possible above and below water noise and/or visual	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Howth Head Coast SPA 004113. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

			disturbance and displacement		
Ireland's Eye SPA [004117]	8	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200]	Possible above and below water noise and/or visual disturbance and displacement	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Ireland's Eye SPA 004117. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the site investigation surveys are summarised below.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Habitat loss and/or habitat degradation	Surveys at a level and duration that would lead to Annex I habitat degradation or a permanent reduction in habitat area, reduction in habitat community extent, structure or distribution. Indirect impact of habitat degradation on species relying on the habitat.
Underwater noise	Surveys at a level and duration that would lead to temporal disturbance and displacement, or harm to marine mammals or diving birds.
Above water noise and/or visual	Surveys at a level and duration that could lead to temporal disturbance and displacement to birds.

4.1 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 site investigation surveys, 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 3 km and the CETS as two years. The CETS is the proposed MUL period. The definition of the CESS is based the geophysical survey methods proposed and the Effective Deterrance Range² for Harbour porpoise, given their known sensitivity to anthropogenic noise sources. Using the above 8 step approach and following a search of relevant databases (including but not limited to MARA, Foreshore, planning, EPA authorisation databases) undertaken on the 23/10/2025. Particular attention is given to the projects listed in Table 3 and plans listed below, as having the potential to act in-combination with the proposed site investigation surveys.

- Climate Action Plan 2025
- Water Action Plan 2022–2027
- Dublin Port Masterplan 2040

² [JNCC Report 803](#).

- Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028

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

Application Ref.	Project description	Approx. distance from MUL area (km)	Project Status
MUL Ref. MUL240023	Iarnród Éireann - Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	Granted
An Comisiun Pleanála (ACP) ref. 320768	Codling Wind Park Ltd. Planning application for Codling Wind Park Project, proposed offshore wind farm.	overlap	Applied
MUL ref. MUL230034	Codling Wind Park Ltd. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	Applied
Foreshore licence ref. FS007045	Codling Wind Park Ltd. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	Granted
Foreshore licence ref. FS007188	RWE Renewables Ireland. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	Granted
Foreshore licence ref. FS007029	RWE Renewables Ireland. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	Granted
ACP ref. 320250	Dublin Port Company. 3FM Project, expansion of port facilities.	Directly adjacent	Applied
ACP ref. 304888	Dublin Port Company. Development permission for port expansion.	Directly adjacent	Granted
EPA ref. S0004-03, S0024-02, S0033-01	Dublin Port Company. Dumping at Sea permits issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Directly adjacent	Granted
EPA ref. S0038-01	Dublin Port Company. Dumping at Sea permit application.	Directly adjacent	Applied
MUL Ref. LIC230016	Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd. - Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	0.3	Granted

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application, the above plans and the projects listed on Table 3, on the conservation objectives of European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

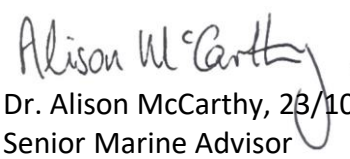
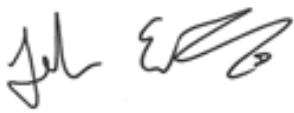
5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

On the basis of the information on file, and having regard to:

- The nature and scale of the proposed site investigation surveys;
- The distance to the nearest European sites;
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects;
- Possible habitat loss and/or habitat degradation;
- Disturbance and displacement or harm from underwater noise, and,
- Possible above water noise and visual and disturbance and displacement.

Having considered the legal framework applicable to Appropriate Assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage ***'Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000'*** by EirGrid, **The Oval, 160 Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, (MUL240010) will require Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.** It cannot 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.

Signature of Recommending Officer and date:	 Dr. Alison McCarthy, 23/10/2025 Senior Marine Advisor
Signature of Decision Maker and date:	 John Evans, 23/10/2025 Director of Assessment, Research and Data