

Maritime Usage Licensing and Planning Advisory Directorate

Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report

To:	John Evans, Director	From:	Maria O Connell Marine Analyst
Date:	23/07/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application Reference No:	MUL240011
MUL Applicant Name:	Bremore Ireland Port Designated Activity Company		
MUL Applicant Registered Address:	Harbourville, Mornington Road, Co. Meath, Meath, A92 Y207.		
Licence application received:	12/08/2024.		
Types of maritime usage activities in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	<i>Schedule 7 (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 usages:	Maritime area adjacent to the townland of Barnageeragh in County Dublin to Callystown in County Louth. Please refer to Maritime Usage Licence Map.		
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening	EIA not required (EIA Screening Form dated 19/11/2025)		
1st request for additional information (RAI) issued:	01/07/2025;	Response to 1st RAI received	05/08/2025
2nd RAI issued:	28/11/2025	Response to 2nd RAI received	23/12/2025
3rd RAI issued:	14/01/2026	Response to 3rd RAI received	23/01/2026;
Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening	05/02/2026		
Notice requesting Natura Impact Statement (NIS) issued:	06/02/2026	NIS received:	06/03/2026
Public body consultation:	02/12/2025 - 01/01/2026	Observations from public bodies received:	Nine
Public consultation:	21/04/2026 - 19/06/2026	Submissions from the public received:	65

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1. Background

Bremore Ireland Port Designated Activity Company (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake marine site investigation surveys under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP Act). Bremore Ireland Port Designated Activity Company is a public-private joint venture company registered with the Irish Companies Registration Office. The proposed maritime usage consists of site investigations (SI) including geophysical, geotechnical, environmental, ecological, metocean, and archaeological surveys in the maritime area adjacent to the townlands of Barnageeragh in County Dublin to Callystown in County Louth, as per Figure 1.

The objective of this MUL application is to obtain site specific technical and environmental data to support the design, consenting and construction requirements for the proposed development of a new multi-modal energy port. The stated aim of the proposed port is to contribute to decarbonisation targets, manage expected increases in maritime freight and port capacity requirements in Ireland up to 2050. The applicant outlines that existing available data is being used to inform the project, however, this information is not available at the spatial or temporal resolution required for project design and environmental assessment purposes.

Application documents submitted.

A number of documents were submitted by the applicant as part of their application for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL). The relevant documents submitted by the applicant include, but are not limited to, the MUL application form, the Assessment of Impacts of the Maritime Usage (AIMU) report, the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) report, and the Annex IV species report. All submitted documents are available on the MARA website and informed the contents of this report.

2. Location and Description of the Proposed Maritime Usage

The total proposed MUL application area is 15950.22ha, however the majority of site investigations will be confined to a smaller area of 2641 ha (26.41 km²) (16.5% of the overall proposed MUL area) which is detailed as the “proposed development sampling area” in Figure 1 below. Indicative locations for the proposed site investigations have been outlined in the applicant’s submissions. The applicant has requested a licence of 7-years to allow “*for site investigation works up to construction of the project*”, however, MARA considers a licence duration of 7 years excessive having considered the type of licence requested. A 5-year licence is considered more appropriate to ensure the relevance for the Appropriate Assessment (Birds and Habitat Directive).

Additionally, it was noted that approximately 9.66ha of the proposed MUL area is in the ownership of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (Now Minister for Agriculture Food and Marine; Folio Ref: DN2408). In December 2025 the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine made a non-statutory public body submission to MARA regarding this application. No reference was made to the ownership of the area concerned or consents required. However, to avoid any future conflicts that may arise MARA recommends part-granting the MUL by removing the maritime space from the proposed licensed area.

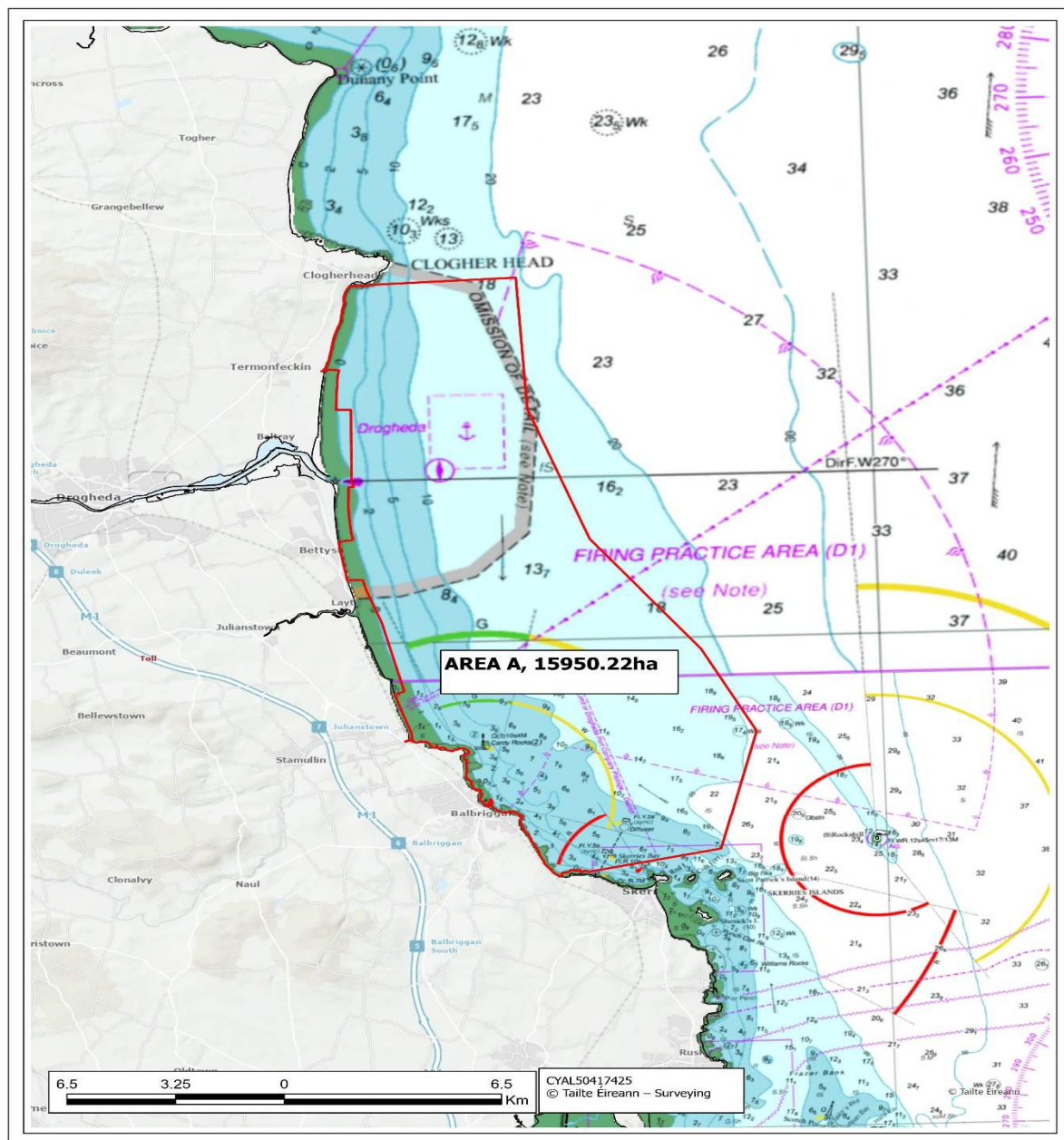


Figure 1: Proposed MUL application area.

Note: Base map (Admiralty Raster Charts- excluding land)

The application outlines that site investigations will be dependent on weather windows, tidal conditions, and vessel availability. Indicative timeframes for site investigation have been provided; however, the exact survey schedule is also dependent on the aforementioned factors. The applicant has highlighted that up to three vessels and/or one jack up barge are likely to be required during site investigation campaigns

The proposed geophysical survey for subtidal areas consists of Multi-beam echosounder (MBES), Side-scan sonar (SSS), Sub-bottom profiler (SBP), Magnetometer. The proposed geotechnical surveys incorporate boreholes, vibro-core sampling, and Cone penetration test (CPT). The remaining survey types include Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP), metocean buoys with a mooring system, sediment traps, grab samples, marine mammal acoustic monitoring devices, Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) system, as well as bird and mammal surveys. The proposed site investigation activities are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of the marine site investigation activities within the MUL Area.

Marine geophysical surveys: approx. 4-8 weeks	
Multi-beam Echosounder (MBES) (MUL Area) Side Scan Sonar (SSS) (PDS Area) Sub-bottom profilers (SBP) Pinger, Sparker, Boomer (PDS Area) Magnetometer (PDS Area)	Drop-down camera (MUL Area) Marine archaeology surveys (including dives) (PDS Area)
Geotechnical Investigations -Proposed Development of Sample (PDS) Area only	
Geotechnical boreholes (x60 samples) approx. 225 days total (24-36 hours per borehole) Vibro-core sampling (x60 samples) approx. 24 days total Cone Penetration Test (CPT) (x60 samples) approx. 40 days total	
Environmental/ecological surveys: (3 hours to 24 months) (Wider MUL Area)	
Benthic sampling/grab sampling (x 200 samples) - subtidal benthic survey. - intertidal habitat walkover survey Water samples (x 200) Mammal Acoustic monitoring devices (CPODs/Sound traps) (x 4)	Fisheries and Shellfish Survey- (Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) system (x 5) Bird and marine mammal survey (Boat or aerial based) 1 day per month for 24 consecutive months
Metocean and geomorphology: (4 weeks to 24 months) (wider MUL Area)	
Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers x 5 (4 weeks to 12months) Wave Buoys x 2 (12-24months) Sediment Traps x10 (approx. 60 days)	

2.1 Brief description of the site characteristics

The coastline adjacent to the MUL application area is principally defined by low lying estuarine coastal plains with long, narrow sandy beaches in the north and low plateau coastlines in the south¹. The application area runs along the high-water mark at three locations as depicted in Figure 1. Water depths in the proposed MUL area range from the intertidal to approximately 26m. Broad scale seabed habitat mapping indicates the presence of a wide range of habitat types within the proposed MUL area. Large areas of circalittoral sand and mud run along the length of the proposed MUL area alongside infralittoral sand and there is also a section of circalittoral mixed sediment to the northwest of the proposed MUL area.

Towards the centre and southwest of the proposed MUL area infralittoral and circalittoral rock and biogenic reef outcrops are noted along with infralittoral sand. To the southeast offshore circalittoral sand, mud, rock and biogenic reef are noted along with a small area of circalittoral coarse sediment².

Spatial overlap exists between the MUL application area and one Special Protection Area (SPA) namely the North-West Irish Sea SPA which is designated for a wide range of marine foraging seabirds (breeding and non -breeding)³. The MUL application area is also sited within three water bodies as defined under the Water Framework Directive (WFD): the Northwestern Irish Sea (HA 08) [IE_EA_020_0000], the Louth Coast waterbody (HA 06) [IE_NB_025_0000], and the Boyne Estuary Plume Zone [IE_EA_010_0000]⁴.

Maritime usages within and adjacent to the proposed MUL application area include but are not limited to fishing (pot, dredge and net fishing), commercial shipping routes, utility operations cables/pipelines, treated wastewater discharge, flood protection, maintenance dredging, disposal at sea, recreational boating, swimming, angling and walking⁵. The landward hinterland of the proposed MUL area contains road and railway corridors, urban residential and commercial areas and agricultural land. The Irish Defence Forces also reserves the right to activate a military danger area which partially overlaps with the proposed MUL area.

3. Assessment

In assessing a MUL application, MARA must have regard to the criteria specified in the MAP Act, as discussed in this section.

¹ Definition and classification of Ireland's seascapes

² Broad Scale Seabed Habitats - Marine Institute Marine Atlas <https://atlas.marine.ie/#?c=53.9043;-15.8862;6>

³ NPWS Designations Viewer NPWS Designations Viewer - Experience Builder

⁴ . EPA Water Mapping based on <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water> and the EPA-Water-Quality-in-Ireland-Report.pdf

⁵ Marine Plan.ie Activities Map | marineplan.ie

3.1 National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)

MARA must have regard to the Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS) which outlines the government's overarching vision, policies, and principles for managing the country's maritime area. MARA must also have regard to the NMPF, which sets the framework for implementing the forward planning component of our marine planning system as set out in the MPPS. The NMPF is divided into overarching marine planning policies and sector/activity specific policies. The overarching marine planning policies are further subdivided into three categories: Environmental, Economic and Social.

The environmental assessment of this application is primarily covered in Sections 3.2–3.8 of this report, including but not limited to the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), the Birds and Habitat Directives, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This application was also assessed against relevant sector specific policies of the NMPF below and under Section 4 of this report under “Consideration of Other Maritime Users” respectively.

The proposed maritime usage licence is for site investigations only and is not regarded a development. The applicant has outlined that the site investigations data obtained will be utilised to inform site specific technical and environmental data to support the design, consenting and construction requirements for the proposed development of a new multi-modal energy port to contribute to decarbonisation targets. An assessment of NMPF policies against the proposed site investigations indicates that there is alignment to policies relating to the Ports, Harbours and Shipping as well as Offshore Renewable Energy and the proposed site investigations are not expected to act significantly against other objectives and policies of the NMPF provided the recommended licence conditions and mitigations where relevant are adhered to and demonstrable.

The NMPF also includes a policy on Heritage Assets, which supports the conservation of the historic environment and heritage assets both along the coast and in the underwater environment. The policy notes that proposals not specifically contributing to enhancing cultural heritage assets must demonstrate that they avoid, minimise or mitigate against harm to heritage assets. It is noted that the MUL area includes and is located in proximity to protected wrecks that are included in the Wreck Inventory of Ireland Database (WIID). The proposed MUL area contains two shipwrecks identified from the INFOMAR database while the National Monuments wreck data indicates four shipwrecks within the proposed MUL area however such records do not have recent survey data associated with them^{6,7}.

⁶ . [Shipwrecks Viewer | Infomar](#)

⁷ . [Wreck Viewer - National Monuments Service](#)

It is recommended that a condition be included in any licence, if granted, requiring the holder to consult with the National Monuments Service (NMS) prior to the commencement of the activities and to comply with all NMS requirements in relation to underwater cultural heritage to ensure alignment with the requirements of this NMPF policy. In addition, it is recommended that a condition to require geophysical surveys should take place in advance of geotechnical surveys to ensure that any archaeological features that may be present on the seabed are identified in advance.

3.2 Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2014/52/EU) (EIA Directive)

MARA carried out a screening for EIA of the proposed site investigations having considered Schedules 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. An EIA Screening Form was issued by MARA on 19/11/2025 and it was concluded that the activities do not fall within the scope of the EIA Directive and therefore an EIA is not required.

3.3 National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan⁸ sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023–2030. The objectives of the NBAP focus on the conservation and restoration of biodiversity. Objective 2 of the NBAP is to meet urgent conservation and restoration needs. Part of its focus is to elevate efforts to tackle invasive alien species. It is recommended that a condition be included in any licence, if granted, to address the potential risks from invasive alien species as a result of the survey activities (from vessels and survey equipment to be deployed). Sections 3.5–3.8 of this report also address the Habitats and Birds Directives, WFD and MSFD and recommend conditions to minimise impacts on biodiversity from the proposed site investigations.

3.4 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended.

Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended (the 'Climate Act') requires relevant bodies, including MARA, to perform their functions in so far as practicable in a manner consistent with the governance framework set out therein. Port space has been identified as a key limiting factor for the development of offshore wind energy in Ireland as there are limited suitable marshallings ports⁹. As set out in Section 3.1 above, the proposed objective of the project is to obtain site specific technical and environmental data to enable the design, consenting and potential construction requirements for the proposed development of a new multi-modal energy port. The Climate Action Plan 2025¹⁰

⁸ Ireland's 4th Biodiversity Action Plan <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/4th-national-biodiversity-action-plan.pdf>

⁹ . NexSys Policy Brief ORE Port Infrastructure.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/>

notes the Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy¹¹ policy document which sets out key actions for the delivery of offshore wind by 2050.

The development of port infrastructure is identified as a key component to support and facilitate ORE deployment in this framework. The regulation of operational/accidental emissions from vessels (from an energy and air quality perspective) is primarily regulated by the Department of Transport (Marine Survey Office) and local port operations where relevant. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, require the Holder to ensure all vessels conform to the appropriate certification standards as required by the Marine Survey Office at the Department of Transport Ireland.

3.5 Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires EU member states to protect and improve water quality in all waters to achieve at least good ecological status in inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater by 2027, at the latest.

The ecological status of coastal waterbodies is based on the assessment of biological quality elements (phytoplankton, benthic invertebrates, macroalgae, angiosperms) as well as supporting chemical (specific pollutants), physico-chemical (e.g. temperature, salinity, nutrients) and hydromorphological quality elements.

The MUL application area is sited across three coastal water bodies as defined under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The waterbody where the majority of site investigations will take place is the Northwestern Irish Sea (HA 08) [IE_EA_020_0000] which waterbody covers the southern section of the MUL application area which is listed as having good quality water status however it is deemed at risk of not meeting its WFD objectives.

Table 2: Water Framework Directive waterbodies in relation to MUL application areas from the reporting period 2019–2024, including status and risk.

Waterbody name & code	Waterbody type	Ecological status & Risk*	Proposed activities within waterbody
Northwestern Irish Sea (HA 08) [IE_EA_020_0000]	Coastal	Good & at risk	Multi-beam Echosounder (MBES) Side Scan Sonar (SSS) (PDS Area) Sub-bottom profilers (SBP) Pinger, Sparker, boomer (PDS Area) Magnetometer Drop-down camera Marine archaeology surveys (including dives) Boreholes

¹¹ <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/future-framework-for-offshore-renewable-energy-e8922154-ac04-4404-9dc9-99dad5332e7c.pdf>

			Vibro-core sampling Cone Penetration Test Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers, Wave buoys Sediment traps Grab sampling Fish, bird and marine mammal surveys
Boyne Estuary Plume Zone [IE_EA_010_0000]	Transitional	Moderate & at risk	Multi-beam Echosounder (MBES) and potential some of the following surveys: Metocean device deployment, Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers, Wave buoy Sediment trap Seabed imagery and grab sampling Fish, bird and marine mammal surveys
Louth Coast (HA 06) [IE_NB_025_0000],	Coastal	High & not at risk	Details as per Boyne Estuary Plume Zone.

*At risk means at risk of not achieving good status by 2027; not at risk means no risk in maintaining current status.

Intertidal investigations will consist of walk over surveys, transect, core and quadrant sampling. Intertidal cores may be collected by borehole (15m depth) and hand cores (10cm depth) which will be undertaken within daylight hours. Subtidal cores will be collected by borehole (40m depth, max. 250mm diameter). The proposed total footprint of the boreholes and grab sampler is relatively small (8m² and 1m² respectively). For subtidal surveys seabed imagery will be used in advance of grab sampling to identify areas of protected habitat.

In terms of the biological element of the specified waterbodies, the seabed in the MUL application area consists of soft substrate habitats and associated species (polychaetes, bivalves, echinoderms). The intrusive geotechnical activities (grab sampling, vibrocore testing, borehole drilling, use of a jack-up barge, moored device retrieval) and vessel operations such as anchoring and dynamic positioning systems have the potential to directly damage benthic invertebrates. Disturbance is expected to be localised and temporary with minimal quantities of suspended sediments expected to be released, resulting in slight increases in water-column turbidity in the vicinity of the sampling location. Near bed smothering and disturbance to benthic invertebrates may result however such species have a high resilience and low sensitivity to penetration/disturbance of the substratum¹². Hard substrates and reefs are noted in the proposed MUL area, however it is recommended that a condition of any licence if granted include a condition outlining that geotechnical activities shall not take place in reef habitat (EU Annex 1 habitat code 1170) and that geophysical surveys should be conducted prior to any geotechnical works which will avoid intrusive negative impact on any associated macroalgae on reef habitats.

¹² The Marine Life Information Network (MARLIN) *Fabulina fabula* and *Magelona mirabilis* with venerid bivalves and amphipods in infralittoral compacted fine muddy sand - MarLIN - The Marine Life Information Network

With regard to the hydromorphological conditions of the waterbodies, the intrusive sampling activities could lead to a temporary, highly localised increase in suspended sediments in the water column, sediment deposition on the surrounding seabed and indentations in the seabed surface levels. The predominant sediment type in the area designated for intrusive sampling is sandy /muddy sediments which are subject to tidal and wave energy regimes. Such homogenous habitat types demonstrate quick recovery times¹³.

In terms of physico-chemical parameters such as dissolved oxygen, temperature, nutrient and salinity levels it is not expected that there will be a negative impact in terms of the water bodies in the MUL area given the scale, intensity and temporary nature of the investigations. Therefore, phytoplankton and angiosperms will not be significantly altered in any of the receiving waters.

Water, inert drill muds and biodegradable drilling fluids will be utilised for borehole drilling. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, require the Holder to take all practicable efforts to ensure that any arisings from boring and drilling activities are collected, stored and disposed of in accordance with the relevant National and European waste legislation and protocols and records retained regarding such activity.

There is low potential for the accidental release of contaminants such as vessel fuel or maintenance fluids which could give rise to a deterioration of water quality during surveys. Three to four vessels are proposed for the site investigations which will be moving at slow speeds of 5 knots or stationery while at survey. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, require the holder to conform to the appropriate certification standards regarding the prevention of pollution from vessels as appropriate and ensure that there is an oil pollution emergency response plan on board vessels and on vehicles used in intertidal areas associated with this Maritime Usage Licence.

The applicant proposes to take a number of measures to avoid and minimize water quality including but not limited to the adherence to the offshore chemical notification scheme and the implementation of an environmental management system. specifically recommended that a licence condition be included in any licence granted requiring the Holder to ensure the activities of the maritime usage licence are undertaken in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted with the application.

Given the characteristics, scale and duration of the proposed site investigations as well as recommended mitigation measures which are to be included as conditions of the proposed

¹³ 13. 2026 Aquafact-APEM Review of the impacts of geophysical and geotechnical surveys on marine fish and shellfish in Irish waters

licence it is not expected that the proposed site investigations will result in deterioration of the biological, physical and chemical status of the relevant WFD waterbodies status.

3.6 Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) sets the framework for European marine environmental policy. It aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) for all marine waters in Europe and protect the resource base for marine related economic and social activities. Ireland's 2024 assessment¹⁴ under Article 8 of the MSFD sets out the status of the 11 qualitative descriptors that describe the state of the marine environment.

Table 3 sets out the status of the relevant descriptors and assesses the potential impacts of the proposed activities.

Table 3: Assessment of impact of proposed activities on MSFD descriptors

MFSD Descriptor	Good Environmental Status achieved	Assessment
Biological diversity	Partially achieved	MARA has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening and assessment (see Section 3.8) in respect to the proposed site investigations Mitigation measures have been identified and included in the proposed licence which address potential impacts on biological diversity including protected habitats and species.
Non-indigenous species	Yes	To ensure that the proposed activities will not result in the unintended introduction of non-indigenous species, a condition is recommended in the Proposed Licence relating to the control of invasive species as discussed in Section 3.3 of this report.
Population of commercial fish/shellfish	Partially achieved	This assessment of GES for this descriptor is based on whether stocks are being fished at or below the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and whether spawning stock biomass is above the level that can produce MSY. The MUL application area lies within known nursery grounds for a number of commercial fisheries, primarily cod, whiting haddock, herring, mackerel and horse mackerel. There are also known spawning grounds for cod, whiting and haddock within the MUL area¹⁵. Given the nature and duration of the proposed site investigations and the scale of the site in relation to the spawning and nursery areas there is not expected to be an impact on this descriptor from the proposed site investigations. Additionally, there is partial spatial overlap with <i>Nephrops</i> grounds (Functional Unit 15) within the northeastern

¹⁴ Ireland's Marine Strategy Part 1: Article 8, 9 and 10 report 2024.

¹⁵ Ireland's Marine Atlas

		section of the MUL area. The proposed site investigations for this area of the proposed MUL include MBES, Metocean, ADCP, fish, bird and marine mammal surveys. Such surveys are not expected to negatively impact on this descriptor given the scale, nature and duration of such investigations. Section 3.8 provides for mitigation measures in relation to underwater noise and marine mammals is recommended as a condition of the proposed licence. This condition requires the holder to implement a soft start (or ramp up) procedures which will minimize the risk of any acoustic disturbance to fish and shellfish in the MUL application. Common fishing methods used within the MUL region include pot, net and dredge fishing for razor clams and scallops. During the proposed geophysical site investigations fishers with static gear such as whelk/lobster/crab pots within the survey area will be requested to temporarily remove them and to maintain a safe distance from the survey vessels due to their restricted manoeuvrability. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted ensure that the Holder records that due regard has been taken for the protection of third-party infrastructure. Furthermore, it is recommended that a condition be included in the proposed licence requiring the appointment of a Fisheries Liaison Officer to avoid or minimise any adverse interactions between the Permitted Maritime Usage and any ongoing fishing activities in the proposed MUL area and that a Marine Notice is arranged for issuance prior to the commencement of investigations. It is not expected that the proposed maritime usage will impact on the requirements for shellfish water quality. Water quality impacts are discussed in Section 3.5. There are no licensed aquaculture sites within or proximal the MUL application area. Therefore, it is not expected that the proposed activities will impact on any licensed aquaculture site. Given the scale, duration and nature of the proposed site investigations and proposed mitigation measures which are to be included as conditions of any licence granted. It is not expected that the proposed maritime usage will result in either incidental bycatch or a significant disturbance to populations of commercially exploited stocks.
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Marine food webs	Unclear	The balance and diversity in marine food webs are not expected be impacted as a result of the proposed maritime usage. Impacts on habitats and associated benthic communities and water quality have been assessed in Section 3.5 and Section 3.8 of this report.
Eutrophication	Yes	The proposed maritime usage does not involve the addition of nutrients to the marine environment and as such will not impact this descriptor achieving GES. It is specifically recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, require the holder to conform to the appropriate certification standards regarding for the prevention of pollution from vessels.
Sea-floor integrity	Partially achieved	Benthic impacts are discussed in Section 3.5 (WFD). It is not expected that the activities will negatively impact on the GES status of this descriptor. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, request the submission of all borehole survey data undertaken in accordance with this Permitted Maritime Usage and submitted to the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) for MSFD reporting requirements.
Alteration of hydrographical conditions	Yes	The proposed activities will not alter the hydrographical conditions (e.g. changes in wave action, currents, salinity, temperature) in the MUL application area. The proposed investigations are not expected to impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Concentrations of contaminants	Yes	See Section 3.5 on the WFD for further discussion on this topic. Given the nature and duration of the activities proposed, and the conditions recommended to mitigate against impacts on water quality, it is not expected that the activities will negatively impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Contaminants in fish/seafood for human consumption	Yes	There are no licensed aquaculture sites within or approximate to the MUL application area. Fish and shellfish fisheries have the potential to be impacted by changes in habitat conditions such as contaminants, litter and non-indigenous species. Recommended licence conditions to avoid impacts on water quality are outlined in Section 3.5. With the implementation of conditions outlined above and on marine litter below is not expected that the site investigations will result in the introduction of contaminants in fish or seafood and therefore, will not impact on the GES status of this descriptor.
Marine Litter	No	It is a standard condition of granted Maritime Usage Licences that the Holder (of a licence) on expiration or termination of the Licence, remove all plant, machinery, equipment or any other thing used in connection with the Permitted Maritime Usage from the Licensed Area. The proposed maritime usage/activities will not result in the introduction of marine litter to the marine environment

		and thus will not impact on the achievement of the GES status of this descriptor.
Introduction of energy including underwater noise	Yes	The impacts of underwater noise arising from the proposed site investigations are assessed in Section 3.8 Appropriate Assessment. It is recommended that, if a licence is granted, a condition be included that the holder should provide details of all acoustic surveys to the Marine Environment Section of the relevant Government department.

3.7 Annex IV species

Articles 12 and 13 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EC) impose obligations on Member States to establish a system of strict protection for animal and plant species listed on Annex IV of the Directive. Articles 12 and 13 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EC) impose obligations on Member States to establish a system of strict protection for animal and plant species listed on Annex IV of the Directive. The Annex IV Risk Assessment Report has been reviewed and considered the scope of the proposed maritime usage, Annex IV species (cetaceans, turtles and otters) and the potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage on those species as well as proposed mitigations.

The report outlines that no impacts on bats from the proposed site investigations. The national biodiversity datacentre highlights there are a number of records for bats at terrestrial locations adjacent to the proposed MUL area¹⁶. Although bats are classified as terrestrial mammals recent studies highlight that some bat species can migrate significant distances over marine waters¹⁷. As bats are nocturnal and begin foraging at or after dusk the effects of artificial light from ships can include attraction and disorientation of bats. Studies conducted by Woodrow -APEM Group on behalf of the North Irish Sea Array also indicate the presence of bats on Rockabill Island. Given the level of activity for *P. pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus* recorded, this study indicated that there is a high likelihood that features on the island are used as both a roost and swarming site¹⁸.

However, the distance between the proposed development sampling area (PDSA) (where geotechnical works are proposed), is a minimum of approximately 10.3km from Rockabill island. One geotechnical vessel (55-90m) and/or one jack up barge is proposed for geotechnical works which can be considered the main source airborne noise/human vessel presence (lighting). The proposed duration of geotechnical works is 24-36 hours per borehole drilling (225 days total), 40 days for CPT and 24 days for vibrocoring. It is considered unlikely that the airborne noise and human vessel presence from the proposed maritime usage will negatively impact on bat populations roosting at and foraging around Rockabill island given

¹⁶ [National Bat Database of Ireland - Detail - Biodiversity Maps](#)

¹⁷ [Offshore and coastline migration of radio-tagged *Nathusius' pipistrelles*](#)

¹⁸ [Appendix 35.2 Rockabill Island and Headland Offshore Bat Monitoring 2023.pdf](#)

the distance between the sites, the existing commercial vessel activity in the area, the low number of vessels proposed as well as the temporary nature of the works.

Geophysical and geotechnical surveys, as well as survey vessels, have the potential to introduce underwater noise to the marine environment and thus the potential to impact upon marine mammal species. Sub Bottom Profiling (SBP systems), drilling and marine geotechnical activities such as drilling and CPTs represent the greatest potential for auditory injury (at close range), temporary threshold shift or temporary behavioural disturbance to marine mammals.

It is recommended that a condition of any proposed licence require the applicant to strictly adhere to the national guidance on managing the risk to marine mammals from man-made sound sources in Irish Waters for both the geotechnical and geophysical surveys and to avoid in combination impacts with other activities that could operate in and adjacent to the MUL area or at the same time. See Section 3.8.3 Mitigation Measures.

It is not expected that the proposed site investigations will result in a deterioration of key resources for marine mammals given the assessment of impacts and associated mitigations proposed in relation to the Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive in this report.

Although airborne noise and visual has the potential to temporarily disturb otter it is expected that any behavioural response by otters will be localised, temporary and confined to the immediate vicinity of active sound sources. Mitigation measures are listed under the Appropriate Assessment section (Section 3.8) below include a requirement for conditions in any licence, if granted, to ensure that access routes to the intertidal are confined to preexisting routes only and for an ecologist to be onsite for all intertidal surveys, which will minimise any risk of disturbance to otters that may be in the vicinity of the site investigations.

In terms of vessel collision, the application outlines that maximum survey speeds of 5 knots will be in operation, there will be a low number of vessels travelling at slow speed levels with some being stationary for periods during surveys. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, require the holder to ensure the Permitted Maritime Usage shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted in support of the application for this Licence.

In summary the proposed site investigations will require mitigation measures to avoid disturbance of Annex IV species from potential underwater noise, airborne noise and human presence impacts. With strict adherence to the mitigation measures proposed, the proposed site investigations will not result in a deterioration of the conservation status for Annex IV species.

The applicant assessed the requirement for a derogation licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) under the (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended,

in accordance with NPWS guidance and stated to MARA that a derogation is not required for the proposed site investigations.

3.8 Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats 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 application was subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) by MARA in accordance with the Regulations. MARA made an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination on 05/02/2026 which concluded that the proposed site investigations will require Stage 2 AA as it could not 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 European 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 in Appendix 1 were considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and zone of influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

Eleven European Sites screened in for appropriate assessment (AA) as part of MARA's appropriate assessment screening determination. Of these sites five were Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and six were Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These European sites, their qualifying interests (also referred to as Special Conservation Interests or SCIs for the SPA sites) and likely or potential source of impact as a result of the proposed site investigation activities are given in Appendix 1. The applicant submitted an updated Natura Impact Statement (NIS) in support of the application, dated 06/03/2026.

3.8.1 Assessment of Likely/Potential Impacts on European Sites

The likely/potential impacts on European sites and their qualifying interests (QIs) in view of the sites' conservation objectives are summarised as (i). underwater noise and vibration with potential for temporal disturbance, displacement or harm to marine mammals, fish and diving birds, (ii). airborne noise and human/vessel presence that could potentially cause temporal disturbance and displacement impacts on marine mammals (otters) and birds and (iii). the increased temporal and spatial risk of disturbance, displacement and harm to marine mammals from vessel collision. This section discusses those impacts individually. Mitigation measures recommended from the analysis of potential impacts are detailed in Section 3.8.3 Mitigation Measures and are to be included in any Proposed Licence which may be granted.

(i) Disturbance, displacement and harm from underwater noise and vibration.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Determination issued by MARA on 05/02/2026 identified the potential for underwater sound and vibration sources from proposed survey activities to create negative impact on marine mammals and seabirds at a number of European sites (see Appendix 1).

(i) (a) Underwater noise/vibration -marine mammals.

The Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) listed in Appendix 1 which have screened in for appropriate assessment in relation to underwater noise and vibration impacts on marine mammals are not located within the proposed MUL application area. However, it is likely that the following qualifying interests (QI) would forage within the proposed MUL application area and thus be indirectly impacted: Harbour porpoise (QI at Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, Lambay Island SAC and Codling Fault Zone, Grey and Harbour seals (QIs at Lambay Island SAC) and Otter (QI at River Boyne and Blackwater SAC). The conservation objectives for the Harbour porpoise, Grey and Harbour seals at the sites specified is to maintain favorable conservation status. The relevant target to achieve such status is that human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect communities at the site(s) and also that species range within the site should not be restricted by artificial barriers to site use. Therefore, anthropogenic underwater noise should not be at a level that would result in a significant negative impact on the Harbour porpoise, Grey and Harbour seal or Otter communities at the SAC site(s) or create artificial barriers.

Marine mammals depend on sound for a wide range of functions including navigation, perception of their environment, communication, prey identification and capture as well as the detection of predators. The production of underwater noise from the proposed site investigation activities could interfere with these functions by inducing permanent auditory injury (or Permanent Threshold Shift) at close range or temporary hearing impairment (or Temporary Threshold Shift – TTS) and disturbance at further distances from the noise source. The level of impact on an individual is a function of the Sound Exposure Level (SEL) that an individual receives as a result of underwater noise.

The proposed site investigations with the potential to impact the aforementioned conservation objectives include marine geophysical activities (MBES, SSS, SBP – see Table 1), the marine geotechnical activities (borehole drilling, CPTs and vibrocoring – see Table 1) and vessel operations. It is not expected that the Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCP) surveys will negatively impact on the conservation objectives of the QIs in question as this equipment operates at a frequency above the hearing ranges of the receptors in question (500-600Khz).

In terms of geophysical surveys MBES and SSS equipment the operating frequencies of this equipment will be above the peak sensitivity range of Harbour porpoise (the most sensitive at 100 to 140kHz)¹⁸ and at or above the documented upper functional hearing range for Harbour Porpoise and Pinnipeds. Sub Bottom Profiling (SBP systems) is proposed to take place only within “the proposed development sampling area” of the MUL area as per Figure 1 and to operate across low to mid-frequency bands. Seismic CPTs and vibrocore operations generate non-impulsive, low-frequency continuous sound that could lead to short-term behavioural disturbance for Harbour Porpoise, Pinnipeds and Otters should they be in close proximity to the works. It is expected that the sand and mud substrate will rapidly attenuate vibration impacts. Section 3.8.3 details the mitigation measures which must be undertaken during geophysical and geotechnical activities to mitigate any potential risk to Harbour Porpoise, Pinnipeds and Otters. Taking into account these mitigation measures it is not expected that there will be significant adverse impacts on the conservation objectives for marine mammal populations from underwater noise and vibration impacts.

(i) (b) Underwater noise/vibration and fish species

The proposed site investigations screened in several fish species for appropriate assessment, including Salmon, Twaite Shad, River and Sea Lamprey (See Appendix 1). The hearing range and sensitivity of fish varies considerably among species depending on the hearing mechanism of the species e.g. whether a swim bladder is involved in the hearing mechanism or not. MARA acknowledges that although individuals of the selected QI fish species (with hearing capacity) may be present within the MUL area it is considered unlikely that the conservation objectives for such species will be impacted by the proposed site investigations, given the predominant freshwater related attributes of such objectives for both sites, the lack of continuous acoustic activity/acoustic barrier across the associated estuaries, the absence of high-energy impulsive sources as well as the temporary and intermittent nature of the works. It should be noted that the mitigation measures recommended for underwater noise and marine mammals will also minimise the potential risk to fish species which may be in the vicinity of the underwater noise generating sources. It is not expected that the proposed site investigations will result in a deterioration of key resources for the qualifying interests in question given the assessment of impacts and associated mitigations proposed in relation to the Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive in this report.

(i) (c) Underwater noise/vibration - diving seabirds.

Auditory thresholds in diving birds shows variability depending on species which can be sensitive to disturbance from underwater noise and fatalities can occur at close range. Consideration of underwater noise disturbance is confined to SCI seabirds that are likely to dive in the marine environment (Arctic Tern, Black-Headed Gull, Common Gull, Common Scooter, Common Tern, Cormorant, Fulmar, Great Black-Backed Gull, Great Northern Diver, Guillemot, Herring Gull, Kittiwake, Lesser Black-Backed Gull, Little Gull, Little Tern, Manx

Shearwater, Puffin, Razorbill, Red-Throated Diver, Roseate Tern and Shag). The relevant conservation objectives are to maintain favourable conservation status apart from six species where the requirement is to restore favourable conservation status., the species concerned are Fulmar, Cormorant, Shag, Kittiwake, Puffin and Herring Gull. The conservation targets are concerned with the protection of population attributes, spatial distribution and supporting habitat.

Disturbance could lead to a significant impact if the underwater noise was at an intensity, frequency and duration which could affect bird populations at SPAs. While there is potential for diving seabirds to interact with the marine surveys when underwater noise is being produced, the likelihood of high numbers of diving seabirds being in the vicinity of noise generating operations is low, due to surface activity disturbing the birds prior to the underwater noise activity commencing. This temporary displacement of seabirds in the vicinity of vessel limits exposure to underwater noise. It is also not expected that the proposed site investigations will result in a deterioration of key resources for the Special conservation Interest (SCIs) in question, given the assessment of impacts and associated mitigations proposed in relation to the Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive in this report.

Given the limited duration of the main noise sources and distance of the main underwater noise sources from sensitive seabird breeding sites such as Rockabill, Skerries Islands and the Boyne Estuary SPA, along with the mobility of diving birds, is not expected that the interaction between underwater noise/ vibration sources and diving seabirds will impact significantly on the conservation objectives for the SCIs and sites in question.

(ii) Potential disturbance and displacement from airborne noise and human/vessel presence – birds and otter.

Airborne sources of noise and visual impacts associated with the intertidal and marine site investigation have the potential to cause disturbance to birds and otters via human and vessel presence, should such activities be at an intensity, frequency and duration which could affect bird and otter populations at adjacent/nearby SPAs and SACs. Intertidal surveys are proposed in the Northwest Irish Sea SPA, but do not overlap directly with any other European site. The proposed intertidal surveys include walk over surveys, transect, core and quadrant sampling and bird surveys undertaken onshore within the MUL Area. The proposed activities will be short in duration, undertaken by small survey teams, and spatially discrete rather than continuous along the shoreline. However, given the ecological sensitivity of the area/SPA, it is recommended that mitigation measures be included as conditions of any licence, if granted, to rule out possible negative impacts on protected bird species due to above-water noise and human presence in the intertidal area. See Section 3.8.3 - Mitigation Measures.

Sources of airborne noise and human/vessel presence such as surface noise from propulsion, dynamic positioning and lighting as well as survey equipment operation may give rise to

temporary flushing, short distance displacement, attraction and disorientation. The project scale consists of one geotechnical vessel (55-90m) and/or one jack-up barge for geotechnical work, with the total proposed duration being 225 days. The geophysical work is proposed for a duration of 4 to 8 weeks in total. In order to minimise significant disturbance of airborne noise and human/vessel presence from marine survey operations on species that use the offshore survey area for feeding it is recommended that buffer zones of 500m are to be applied to avoid significant clusters of feeding seabirds in the proposed MUL area. See Section 3.8.3 Mitigation Measures.

Additionally, it is noted that the main noise/vessel presence impact sources (geotechnical, geophysical, vessel operations) will be concentrated in the “proposed development sampling area (Figure 1) which is directly adjacent (140m) to the River Nanny and Shore SPA (a designated site for over wintering birds). Airborne noise from low-speed survey vessels operating near the SPA boundary may be audible to wintering waterbirds using nearshore waters and may also result in visual disturbance where birds are present in waters close to the SPA boundary. During hours of darkness migratory shorebirds may use less preferable roosting sites to avoid lights from survey vessel and thus may be exposed to increased predation where lighting from the vessel makes them more visible at night¹⁹. To avoid causing disturbance or displacement of wintering SCI species it is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, place a restriction on all geotechnical and geophysical operations within 1km of the River Nanny and Shore SPA boundary, from October to February annually. See Section 3.8.3 Mitigation Measures. The applicant has proposed a number of mitigations within the NIS submitted and it is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, shall require the holder to ensure the Permitted Maritime Usage shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted in support of the application for this Licence. With the adoption of such measures and recommended licence conditions, it is concluded that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of SPAs in question as a result of the proposed maritime usage.

While the otter species may be present in the MUL area it is expected that any behavioural response by otters to airborne noise impact would be localised, temporary and confined to the immediate vicinity of active sound sources and is not expected that any interaction will impact significantly on the conservation objectives for this QI at the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. The mitigation measures in terms of intertidal works above include the presence of an ecologist during intertidal works and access to the intertidal via preexisting routes only. Such measures will also assist as a precautionary measure in minimising any impact to otters.

(iii) Vessel Collision – marine mammals.

¹⁹ <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12900>. The Society for Conservation Biology

In terms of the risk of vessel collisions, increased risk is normally associated with larger ships and faster speeds (Laist et al., 2001). This application proposes to use two small vessels and 1 to 2 larger vessels. Survey speeds will be at 5 knots and at times be stationary. Faster transit times are expected but given the nature, scale and duration of site investigations it is not expected that the risk of vessel collision will significantly impact on the conservation objectives of marine mammals in the SACs concerned.

3.8.2 Assessment of In-combination effects

The potential impacts of the proposed site investigations must be considered individually and also in combination with other plans or projects. All types of plans or projects that could, in combination with this application, have a significant effect have been considered.

This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement and is assessed primarily in terms of potential spatial and temporal impacts. Table 4 below outlines those activities which are considered to have the potential to act in combination with the proposed maritime usage.

The spatial scope of the in-combination assessment is 6km as defined at Appropriate Assessment screening stage and which is based on the maximum distance of underwater noise generated by survey equipment and the effective deterrence range of harbour porpoise, which is most sensitive to underwater noise (JNCC, 2025). The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed are proposed. The applicant has applied for a 7 -year licence duration however a 5 year is considered more appropriate by MARA for the type of works in question thus the temporal scope (CETS) is 5 years.

Table 4 Potential sources of impact that **could act in combination** with the application.

Impact	Potential Cumulative Pathway
Disturbance from underwater noise and vibration	Pathway possible via sound travelling through water with impacts possible within 3 km, and where there is temporal overlap with other underwater noise producing projects.
Disturbance and displacement from above water noise and human/vessel presence.	Pathway possible via airborne sound and lighting spectrum where works are within the CESS and where there is spatial and temporal overlap with other visual and above water noise producing projects.

Prediction:

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

- *Disturbance and displacement from underwater noise and vibration*
There is the potential for increased underwater noise disturbance for marine mammals if other relevant projects, capable of producing similar underwater noise and vibration sources were to take place at the same time.
- *Disturbance and displacement from airborne noise and human/vessel presence*
There is the potential for increased visual and above water noise disturbance on birds if other relevant projects with sound and artificial light aspects were to spatially and temporarily overlap.

Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination.

A search was carried out on 14/07/26 of relevant databases (including EPA, An Coimisiún Pleanála, Foreshore Unit, MARA, Local Planning Authorities) for plans and projects with characteristics that may cause in-combination effects with the proposed investigations on the QIs of the European sites identified on Appendix 1. The projects shown on Table 5 are within the CESS and CETS of the proposed site investigations.

Table 5. Projects identified with the potential to have in-combination effects given the nature and location of the activities.

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area	Project Status
313210	Construction of Residential Units	Directly adjacent	Granted
LIC230001	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	Overlap	Granted
OA29N.319866	Windfarm Development	Overlap	Applied
OA29N.319866	Railway Project	Directly adjacent	Applied
FS003997	Pipeline	Overlap	Granted
FS007028	Drogheda Port Maintenance	Overlap	Granted
S0015-03	Dumping At Sea	Overlap	Granted

MUL260022	Maintenance Dredging Balbriggan Harbour	Overlap	Applied
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The following plans were assessed in terms of having potential to result in in-combination effects: Fingal County Council Development Plan 2022–2028, Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030, Meath County Council Development Plan, Meath Biodiversity Action plan 2025–2030, Louth County Council Development Plan, Louth Biodiversity Plan, Meath, Louth and Fingal County Council Climate Action Plans, National Ports Policy 2013., Drogheda Port Masterplan 2020–2050, , The National Development Plan 2021–2030, the Climate Action Plan 2025, The National Climate Adaptation Framework 2024, Transport Sectoral Adaptation Plan (T-SAP II), and the Water Action Plan 2024–2027.

In-Combination Effects Assessment Conclusion

There is potential for in-combination effects on the conservation objectives of the European sites addressed in this appropriate assessment, where impacts from the proposed site investigation activities could interact synergistically with other projects, to create adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites. Six projects listed above (Table 5) were regarded as having spatial and temporal overlap with the proposed MUL area.

It is not possible to exclude the potential for in-combination effects on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this assessment as a result of underwater noise and airborne noise/human vessel presence impact from vessel operations, in combination with those projects which will produce similar underwater noise and visual impact vessel operations. Therefore, it is recommended that a mitigation measure be included in any Maritime Usage Licence granted to avoid any potential for in-combination effects on the qualifying interests of European sites. See Section 3.8.3 below - Mitigation Measures.

The plans assessed are not expected to have in combination impacts as they, in general, promote the sustainable development of the maritime area and no mechanisms to effect in combination impacts could be identified at this time

3.8.3 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures for those impacts identified in Section 3.8.1 - are detailed below. These mitigation measures are recommended to be included as conditions of a licence, if granted.

- (i) Underwater noise mitigation
- (i) (a) Underwater Noise Mitigation - Marine Mammals/Fish/Birds

- The Holder shall appoint a marine mammal observer(s) for the purposes of overseeing the Permitted Maritime Usage. The Holder shall ensure the marine mammal observer(s) shall satisfy the requirements of the most up to date national guidance.
- The Holder shall implement risk control and mitigation measures for marine mammals in strict accordance with the most up to date national guidance.
- The Holder shall, within 30 days of the completion of the Permitted Maritime Usage, and within 30 days of the completion of each stage of the site investigation, forward a report of the marine mammal observer(s) operations and mitigations undertaken, to offshore@npws.gov.ie and compliance@mara.gov.ie
- The Holder shall publish the report and recording and data forms on their website within 60 days of completion of the Permitted Maritime Usage and each stage of site investigation requiring a Marine Mammal Observer unless otherwise agreed with the Grantor.

(ii) Above water noise and human/vessel presence mitigation

- The Holder shall ensure that an ecologist will be retained prior to and during all intertidal surveys carried out as part of this Permitted Maritime Usage in order to minimise disturbance and ensure site integrity is maintained.
- Access to the intertidal area shall be exclusively through existing access routes.
- The Holder shall not undertake geotechnical and geophysical surveys within 1 km of the River Nanny and Shore SPA from 1st October to 28th February annually.
- Where the Holder observes significant clusters of birds, actively fishing and/or diving, within 500m of the survey vessel, in carrying out the Permitted Maritime Usage, the survey route shall be altered to maintain a 500m buffer from the birds. Appropriate records must be retained by the Holder.

(iii) Vessel Collision

- No specific mitigations required for this aspect.

In-combination mitigation

Prior to the commencement of the Permitted Maritime Usage, the Holder shall coordinate with other authorisation holders carrying out geophysical, seismic and geotechnical activities within a 3 km radius of the Licensed Area.

- Where a vessel-to-vessel distance of greater than 6km cannot be maintained with respect to geophysical, seismic and geotechnical activities, the Holder shall co-ordinate with other authorisation holders to prevent temporal overlap of the

activities. Where the Holder can submit evidence that there is a vessel-to-vessel distance of greater than 6km, no temporal co-ordination of activities is required.

- Where the Holder becomes aware of temporal overlap that cannot be resolved within the prescribed distance, the Holder shall notify the Grantor who shall determine the timing of activities. Records of all engagements held, and agreements reached, if any, shall be maintained by the Holder and made available to the Grantor if requested.

3.8.4 Residual effects

This assessment has identified likely/potential significant impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests in Section 3.8.1 and recommends mitigation measures as conditions in the Proposed Licence.

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.

3.8.5 Assessment of Transboundary effects

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

3.8.6 Appropriate Assessment conclusion

The Appropriate Assessment screening process identified likely/possible significant impacts due to underwater noise and airborne noise and human/vessel presence as well as vessel collision. Likely significant impacts from the proposed site investigations could not be ruled out, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, without mitigation. The potential for in-combination effects from the proposed site investigations 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 3.8.3 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. The Appropriate Assessment Determination is detailed in Section 9.

4. Consideration of other maritime users.

MARA has had regard to the rights of other users as set out in Section 3 (3)(b) of the MAP Act. Conditions are recommended in the Proposed Licence to ensure minimal disruption to other users and alignment with the objectives and policies of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF). It is noted that the proposed maritime usage will be on a non-exclusive basis and together with the nature of the proposed activities, any licence granted should not significantly conflict with any other users or activities.

- **Ports, Harbours and Shipping/Safety at Sea**

The proposed MUL area is utilised primarily by fishing vessels with analysis of EMOdnet data indicating that cargo tanker and fishing vessel traffic is highest at the entrance to the Port of Drogheda. Other ports and harbours proximal to the proposed MUL area include Skerries Harbour (0.65 km), Balbriggan Harbour (2.50 km), Clogherhead Harbour (1.58 km). It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, shall require the Holder to arrange for the issuance of a Marine Notice via the Marine Survey Office, to operate all vessels to national and international certification requirements and consult with the relevant port authorities in the vicinity of the proposed MUL area in order to for any potential disruption to be managed as appropriate. On completion of the site investigations, it is further recommended that a condition of the licence, if, granted, shall require the Holder to provide the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) with the final bathymetric data from this Permitted Maritime Usage so that the appropriate charts can be updated to ensure the safety of navigation at sea. With the adoption of such measures, it is not expected that the site investigations will significantly interfere with existing or planned routes used by shipping, access to ports/ harbours and navigational safety.

- **Fish and Aquaculture:**

Fisheries and aquaculture impacts and mitigations are primarily considered under the Section 3.6 (MSFD section) and Section 3.5 (WFD Section).

- **Defence**

The proposed MUL area also partially overlaps with a military firing, test, exercise area operated by the Irish Defence Forces. The NMPF policy in the context of this scenario is that proposals should only be supported where, having consulted with the Defence Forces, they are satisfied that it will not result in unacceptable interference with the performance by the Defence Forces of their security and non-security related tasks. A public body consultation with the Defence Forces was undertaken. The Irish Defence Forces highlighted that it reserves the right to activate military danger area EI D1 at any time. Warning of activation is carried out by NOTAM (Notice to Air Missions) through AirNav Ireland and Marine Notices via the Marine Survey Office where water access will be restricted.

The proposed MUL area is within a military firing test exercise area. Before carrying out the proposed maritime usage, if granted, the applicant should review the Guidance for Consent Holders on the identification of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in the Maritime Area - MARA - Maritime Area Regulatory Authority. The detection of Unexploded Ordnance is a maritime safety issue and falls under the remit of the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG). MARA has no responsibility for the management of UXO in the maritime area but to ensure the protection of other maritime users and the marine environment MARA is to be notified if a UXO is identified. It is recommended that a condition be included in any licence, if granted, that prior

to the commencement of the permitted maritime usage, the applicant shall review and subsequently adhere to the "Guidance for Consent Holders on the identification of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in the Maritime Area" available on the MARA website.

- **Transmission and Wastewater Treatment and Disposal**

Within the MUL area there is an active gas interconnector pipeline which makes landfall at Gormanston beach. Additionally, there is a wastewater disposal outlet mapped north of Skerries. There is potential for interaction between the geotechnical investigation equipment, metocean devices, anchors and/or moorings and existing subsea infrastructure. It is recommended that a condition of any licence, if granted, shall require the holder to conduct geophysical surveys in advance of any geotechnical site investigations and that drop-down camera surveys will also be used. This action will enable the locations of sub-sea cables/pipelines to be accurately identified and will ensure that geotechnical works, grab samples, anchoring-DPS and metocean devices are sited away from existing subsea utility infrastructure.

- **Sport and Recreation**

In terms of Sport and Recreation activities a Marine Notice is to be published by the applicant via the Marine Survey Office which will bring the site investigations to the attention of recreational vessel users. Additionally, there are six monitored bathing areas in the MUL application area. The mitigation measures applied under the WFD and MSFD sections will contribute to the protection of water quality. It is recommended that during the course of the intertidal coring operations the Holder shall use all reasonable efforts to ensure that existing public access arrangements are maintained, and all necessary precautions are put in place to protect the public. The Holder shall retain photographic evidence of all such arrangements made and precautions taken during the course of the works.

5. Site visit

A visit to the intertidal areas of Balbriggan Harbour/Beach, Barnageerah Strand and the Skerries coast was undertaken on the 25/06/2026 and to the intertidal areas of Gormanston and Laytown area was undertaken on 26/06/2026. At low tide rocky outcrops are visible along the shoreline along with extensive sandy beaches to the north. Activity in the intertidal mainly consisted of people utilising the beach amenity, no recreational boating was evident time of the inspection. Active fishing vessels were noted to the southern end of the MUL area. No commercial shipping was evident from shore however visibility was poor. Coastal protection works are in place at various locations along the shore. Green algae growth was present at a number of locations along the intertidal areas inspected.

6. Public Body Consultation

Observations on the proposed MUL application were invited from relevant public bodies to ensure that MARA takes account of all other relevant maritime usages and interests in the consent area. Nine responses were received. The following tables summarise the observations from public bodies with a response given below each observation summary. The MARA website should be consulted to view the full details of the observations received.

1. Applications Unit (DAU), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Observation summary
The DAU made a submission on behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Underwater Archaeological Unit (UAU). The NPWS considers that the information provided is sufficient to inform the Appropriate Assessment and should be subject to: Full and enforceable implementation of the proposed mitigation measures and compliance with the relevant National Parks and Wildlife Service marine mammal guidance. Additionally, the NPWS submit that ongoing coordination to manage potential cumulative effects particularly with other site investigations in the Irish Sea should be undertaken. The requirements under Regulation 54 of the EU Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations were also highlighted. The UAU outlines its review of the applicants AMIU report and notes that the MUL application area includes and is proximal to protected wrecks that are included in the Wreck Inventory of Ireland Database (WII) and contains submerged palaeolandscapes. Reference is provided to the legislative and policy requirements for the protection of archaeological heritage along with a number of suggested conditions to be applied to the proposed Licence if granted.

MARA response: MARA notes the submission of the Applications Unit (DAU), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Regarding the NPWS submission, where a licence is granted to the applicant for the proposed maritime, it will include a condition requiring adherence to the plans and particulars of their submitted application documents, which includes their NIS. Additional relevant conditions are discussed in Sections 3.1 and 3.8.3 above. In relation to the UAU submission, any licence issued to the applicant for the proposed maritime usage will require adherence to the plans and particulars of the submitted application documents and it is specifically recommended that the licence, if granted, include a condition to consult with, and comply with the requirements of, the National Monuments Service prior to commencing the proposed maritime usage and that geophysical works are undertaken prior to geotechnical operations.

2. Dept of Defence
Observation summary
Observations were submitted by the Dept of Defence which stated they were on a non-prejudicial basis and are not intended to be used to rely on a prospective planning

application, in the event of any commercial transaction pertaining to such lands or any contract exchange pertaining to same. The submission highlights that the Irish Defence Forces reserves the right to activate military danger area EI D1 at any time. Warning of activation is carried out by NOTAM through AirNav Ireland. Access to the area within EI D1 boundary on land and water will be restricted.

MARA's response: MARA notes the submission from the Department of Defence. With regard to access to the restricted area Marine Notices are issued via the Marine Survey Office at the Department of Transport to alert all stakeholders of the restriction at sea.

3. Irish Lights
Observation summary
Irish Lights submitted no objection to the granting of this licence from a safety of navigation perspective and highlighted that prior to the deployment of equipment such as ADCPs or Waverider buoys that such activity will require consent from Irish Lights under the Merchant Shipping Act.

MARA's response: MARA notes the submission from Irish Lights. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that all required statutory consents are in place prior to the commencement-deployment of equipment. Irish Lights have a statutory mandate regarding the issuance of consents for marine aids to navigation therefore prior to the commencement -deployment of survey equipment the applicant must be in receipt of consent from Irish Lights for all relevant actions.

4. Department of Transport – Marine Survey Office
Observation Summary
The Marine Survey Office stated it has no objection to the site investigations proposed in the application from a navigational safety perspective. The submission outlines that the applicant should arrange for the publication of a Marine Notice via the Department of Transport -Marine Survey Office and that all hazards to safe navigation shall be easily identifiable including any moored instruments which be required to be compliant with International Association of Aids to Navigation (IALA) requirements as regulated by the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Additionally, the MSO submit that conformity with Irish certification standards for vessels is required for all vessels engaged in the proposed site investigations and to be operated by appropriately qualified personnel. Where equipment is carried in support of the proposed activity an Irish Load line survey may be required. They also state that the applicant should contact the Marine Survey Office Dublin for clarification certification, licensing and suitability of vessels intended to be deployed. The MSO also state that the provision of data to the UK Hydrographic Office and INFOMAR will be required and, appropriate communications channels established where deemed necessary via consultation with the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG).

MARAs response: MARA notes the submission from the Department of Transport - MSO. Conditions are included as standard in Marine Usage Licences in respect of the requirement to publish marine notices and the need for vessels to conform with the requirements of Irish certification standards. All MULs include a condition as standard, stating that the MUL does not negate the holders' statutory obligations or requirements under any other law. A specific condition will also be included in any licence granted that on completion the Holder shall provide bathymetric data to the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) and the INFOMAR program.

5, 6. & 7. Department Agriculture, Food, Marine (DAFM) – BIM and Marine Institute
Observation Summary:
DAFM recognises that the developer's aim is to promote co-existence and minimise potential disruption to commercial fishing activities in the area. Additionally, DAFM acknowledged that a Fishery Liaison Officer (FLO) will engage with fishers who operate in the MUL application area (as outlined by the applicant). The MI states that although the proposed survey operations may impact fishing activities, the spatial extent is relatively small, and operation times limited. The MI state that independently, proposed operations should not substantially interfere with fish stocks, fishing activities or aquaculture activities but there is potential for cumulative impacts between these and other activities that may be active in the local vicinity and/or operate on similar timeframes. BIM acknowledge the applicants AMIU report and outlines its main concern as being the disturbance to fishing, and accidental entanglement with static fishing gear by the survey vessels, and/or by fishing vessels with the deployed survey equipment. No potential impact on aquaculture activities is identified. BIM recommend that early and continuous communication is made with stakeholders in the survey areas and relevant local fishing organisations should be included on the provision of any Notices to Mariners and other channels of communication.

MARA's Response: MARA notes the content of the submission from DAFM, with additional comments from the Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Marine Institute. The point regarding the use of a Fisheries Liaison Officer is considered, along with other aspects of co-existence, in Sections 3.5 and 4 above.

8. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)
Observation Summary:
The IFI submit in summary that River Lamprey, Sea Lamprey, Salmon and Twaite Shad are Habitat Directive Annex II species and are qualifying interest for a number of Natura 2000 sites along the East Coast. IFI state their opinion that a zone of influence as specified by the applicant was not an adequate distance. Lack of data on the use of coastal waters by diadromous fish species and the routes they take in the Irish Sea are highlighted. The IFI reference the applicants SISAA report which states that likely effects of underwater noise on Annex II fish species cannot be excluded and IFI believe the Twaite Shad should be screened in also. IFI further suggest that following the proposed mitigation measures as

outlined in the NIS report, Annex II fish species will not be negatively impacted by the proposed maritime usage.

MARA's Response: MARA notes the content of the submission from Inland Fisheries Ireland. Impacts on the relevant fish species are assessed in Section 3.8 (i) (b) of this report, including proposed mitigation measures.

9. Geological Survey of Ireland

Observation Summary

Geological Survey Ireland is the national earth science agency and is a division of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications who provide independent geological information, interpretation and collation of various data. Recommendations were provided on various data sets available from GSI when conducting assessments.

MARA's Response:

MARA notes the submission from the GSI, and avails of the valuable data developed and maintained by the GSI in the assessment of MUL applications.

7. Public Consultation

A public consultation was undertaken between 21/04/2026 - 19/06/2026 under Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and under section 117(6)(b) of the MAP Act. Sixty-five submissions were received in total. Table 6 below summarises the submissions, along with the response from MARA. The MARA website should be consulted to view the full details of the submissions received.

Table 6 Public Consultation Submission Summaries and Responses

Submissions	Points raised	MARAs response
49 x individual public consultation submissions	• Impact on an Area of Natural Beauty and Public Amenity. • Risks to Marine Water Quality and Pollution.	• The submissions appear to refer to the impact of a potential port development which is not the proposed maritime usage activity being considered. The licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future port development application. • The proposed site investigations have been assessed in terms of the Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive with mitigation measures recommended as conditions of the proposed licence. It should be noted that the regulation of vessels is a function of the Marine Survey Office at the Dept of Transport. • The Appropriate Assessment report and determination produced by MARA outline the

	• Destruction of Habitats and Biodiversity. • Unsuitable location & requirement for extensive dredging • Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Sensitivity. • Coastal Processes and Erosion Risks • Limited Economic Benefit vs Environmental Cost • Availability of Less Harmful Alternatives	consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including SACs and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites. Mitigation measures identified in the AA report and determination as well as the wider MUL report will be included as conditions in any licence granted. • It is not the intention of this assessment to examine suitability for a port but for site investigations therefore assessment of dredging requirements is not considered in this application. • Section 3.1 of this report outlines that a condition be included in the licence, if granted, requiring the holder to consult with the National Monuments Service (NMS) prior to the commencement of the activities and to comply with all NMS requirements in relation to underwater cultural heritage to ensure alignment with the requirements of this NMPF policy. In addition, it is recommended that a condition to require geophysical surveys should take place in advance of geotechnical surveys to ensure that any archaeological features that may be present on the seabed are identified in advance. • It is not expected that the proposed site investigations will contribute to the alteration of coastal processes given the scale of the geotechnical works, the duration and phased implementation of the site investigations. • This licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future port development application. • It is not the intention of this assessment to examine suitability for a port but for site investigations therefore assessment of dredging requirements is not considered in this application.
1 x public consultation submission	• Raised concern regarding lack of contact or communications from the applicant with concerned community groups and public representatives in Meath, Fingal and other areas. And issues with a free newspaper advert. Makes requests that the MUL application be rejected in its entirety.	• MARA can confirm that public consultation for this maritime usage licence opened on 21st April 2026 with an original closing date for submissions of 28th May 2026. The adverts were published in the Drogheda Leader on 21st April and the Meath Chronicle on 25th April. However, the advert in the Irish Examiner was not published at that time. The public consultation period was then extended to 19th June 2026, with adverts published in the Irish Examiner on 14th May, and again in the Drogheda Leader and the Meath Chronicle on 19th May. The applicant has therefore fulfilled their statutory requirement as regards public consultation under the MAP Act (2021).

Gormanston Community Association and Stamullen Community Alert	• Raised concern re Public Notification and Local Engagement – absence of publication in Dublin paper. • Concerns re the scale of the Licence Area and visibility of the map. • Damage to Seabed, Sea-Life and Marine Mammals as part of the survey • Environmental Sensitivity and Natura 2000 Considerations • Cumulative Effects • Archaeology and Seabed Disturbance	• The issues raised in these submissions are noted. MARA confirms that public consultation for this maritime usage licence opened on 21st April 2026 with an original closing date for submissions of 28th May 2026. The adverts were published in the Drogheda Leader on 21st April and the Meath Chronicle on 25th April. However, the advert in the Irish Examiner was not published at that time. The public consultation period was then extended to 19th June 2026, with adverts published in the Irish Examiner on 14th May, and again in the Drogheda Leader and the Meath Chronicle on 19th May. All documents are also publicly available on the MARA website. • Please refer to the MUL Map associated with the proposed maritime usage licence, this map is the official map of the licensed area and represents a reduced licensed area. It should be noted that the majority of site investigations will take place in a 26km2 area, the larger licence area is required to obtain sufficient data on the sediment processes and ecology in the wider sediment cell. • The Appropriate Assessment report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including SACs and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites from the site investigations and to prevent in combination impacts from other site investigation/MULs. It should be noted that mitigation measures outlined in the wider MUL report (Section 3.1-2.8) will be also included as conditions in any licence granted for the protection of the marine environment. • Section 3.1 of this report outlines that a condition be included in the licence, if granted, requiring the holder to consult with the National Monuments Service (NMS) prior to the commencement of the activities and to comply with all NMS requirements in relation to underwater cultural heritage to ensure alignment with the requirements of this NMPF policy. In addition, it is recommended that a condition to require geophysical surveys should take place in advance of geotechnical surveys to ensure that any archaeological features that may be present on the seabed are identified in advance.
Balbriggan Community Council	• International Best Practice Framework	• The issues raised are noted however the licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future

	• Ecological Impacts & Environmental Vulnerability • Marine Mammals, Aquatic & Benthic Ecology • Coastal Hydrodynamics & Hydrology • Impact on Balbriggan Residents & Socio-Economic Wellbeing • Traffic Infrastructure & Freight Congestion • Cultural Heritage & Archaeology. • Direct Flouting of Local Development Objectives • Infringement of the VVI Gold Standard for Asset Integrity • Demands	port development application, it is not the purpose of this licence to consent the development of a port. • The Appropriate Assessment report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including SACs and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites from the site investigations and to prevent in combination impacts from other site investigation/MULs. It should be noted that mitigation measures outlined in the wider MUL report (Section 3.1-2.8) will be also included as conditions in any licence granted for the protection of the marine environment. • It is not expected that the site investigations proposed will significantly impact the Coastal Hydrodynamics & Hydrology of the MUL area See Section 3.6 and 3.6. • As the majority of the investigations will take place at sea it is not expected that the site investigations will impact on Balbriggan residents' socio-economic wellbeing and traffic Infrastructure & freight congestion will not arising from the site investigations. • Section 3.1 of this report outlines that a condition be included in the licence, if granted, requiring the holder to consult with the National Monuments Service (NMS) prior to the commencement of the activities and to comply with all NMS requirements in relation to underwater cultural heritage to ensure alignment with the requirements of this NMPF policy. In addition, it is recommended that a condition to require geophysical surveys should take place in advance of geotechnical surveys to ensure that any archaeological features that may be present on the seabed are identified in advance. • The proposed licence is for site investigations and not the development of port infrastructure. No construction can take place before planning permission is granted. Prior to applying for planning permission, the applicant would also need Maritime Area Consent. • The demands outlined in the submission primarily relate to issues which can only be addressed at planning stage, please note that geospatial and temporal exclusions have been applied as a condition of the proposed licence with regard to ecological concerns, conditions have been applied with regard
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		to underwater, airborne noise and visual impact have also been incorporated into the proposed licence.
1 x public consultation submission	• Raises concerns regarding the Strategic Need and National Port Capacity • Legal Authority, Governance and Institutional Capacity • Planning Policy and Marine Spatial Consistency. • Environmental and Ecological Considerations • Coastal Community, Landscape and Amenity Impacts	• The issues raised are noted however the licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future port development application, it is not the purpose of this licence to consent the development of a port. • Bremore Ireland Port Designated Activity Company is a public-private joint venture company registered with the Irish Companies Registration Office (reference no: IE431243) and as such as the right to make an application for a MUL licence. Whereby a development is proposed in the maritime area the applicant is required to apply for a maritime Area consent (MAC) and to demonstrate that they are fit and proper as per the MAP act 2021 (as amended) • A MAC will be required prior to seeking planning permission where the elements raised will be assessed. • The Appropriate Assessment report and determination produced by MARA outline the consideration given to local Natura 2000 sites, including SACs and specify that the proposed mitigation measures will prevent any potential significant impact to the protected sites from the site investigations and to prevent in combination impacts from other site investigation/MULs. It should be noted that mitigation measures outlined in the wider MUL report (Section 3.1-3.8) will be also included as conditions in any licence granted for the protection of the marine environment. • The proposed licence for site investigations does not provide consent for the development of a port. No permanent impacts on landscape or amenity are envisaged from the proposed activities and section 4 of this report considers other users in terms of amenity.
1 x public consultation submission.	• Expresses opposition to the principle of developing a port in this region., requests substantially reduction in area, reduced in duration, tightly conditioned • The application has contained uncertainty	• The issues raised in this submission are noted. The proposed licence for site investigations does not provide consent for the development of a port. MARA can confirm that the duration of the licence has been reduced to 5 years with the spatial extent also being reduced with several proposed licence conditions to ensure the activity is strictly controlled. • The proposed site investigations are as per the applicant submission on 23-12-2026 and Table 1 of

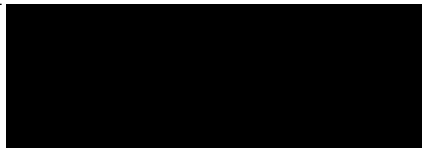
	around the actual survey details Public notification and local engagement have been inadequate	this report. Activities which do not align with any changes to the specifics detailed will constitute a material amendment to the licence. MARA conducts enforcement of licence conditions via our enforcement section. For the purposes of compiling with the MAP Act public consultation MARA can confirm that public consultation for this maritime usage licence opened on 21st April 2026 with an original closing date for submissions of 28th May 2026. The adverts were published in the Drogheda Leader on 21st April and the Meath Chronicle on 25th April. However, the advert in the Irish Examiner was not published at that time. The public consultation period was then extended to 19th June 2026, with adverts published in the Irish Examiner on 14th May, and again in the Drogheda Leader and the Meath Chronicle on 19th May.
6 x public consultation submissions	Raises concerns about the wider impact this development could have on the coast and marine environment around Bremore and Gormanston, lack of cumulative impacts of a future port and the pressures of climate change on coastal environments.	The issues raised in this submission are noted. The proposed licence for site investigations does not provide consent for the development of a port. Environmental assessments and mitigation measures are outlined in this report and are included as conditions of the proposed licence for site investigation works only.
1 x public consultation -	Raises concern regarding a port in the area due to extensive dredging, with concomitant degradation of adjacent beaches and coastal amenities, amongst other matters.	The submission appears to refer to the impact of a potential port development which is not the proposed maritime usage activity being considered. The licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future port development application.
1 x public consultation submission -	Expressed opposition to a proposed port development, raising concerns with regard to the construction and operations of a port in this area having negative impact on the environment, community and quality of life in the area.	The submission appears to refer to the impact of a potential port development which is not the proposed maritime usage activity being considered. The licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future port development application.

1 x public consultation submission	• Raises concern regarding the siting of a port at the location in question due to negative environmental impact and sustainability grounds. Suggests development of preexisting port as an alternative.	• The submissions appear to refer to the impact of a potential port development which is not the proposed maritime usage activity being considered. The licence is for site investigations to inform a potential future port development application.
SWEG Environmental Group	• Raises concerns regarding the proposed subsea surveying causing distress to marine mammals and queries the survey method - fixed wing aircraft rather /subsea systems. • Highlights the proximity of the proposed port and the proposed NISA windfarm project make double trouble for marine mammals and foraging birds • Concerns that increased activity will lead to more disturbance for wildlife and they believe that a derogation licence from the NPWs is required.	• The proposed site investigations for this licence are as per the response to a request for additional information submitted on 23-12 2026 and Table 1 of this report. Fixed wing aircraft activities currently fall outside the remit of MARA. All geophysical site investigations are condition to adhere to the national guidance on underwater noise which is a condition of the proposed licence. • This licence does not consent to the development of a port but does take in combination aspects into consideration. It is a specific condition of the proposed licence that measures to avoid and minimise combination impacts are undertaken. • For regulation 54 derogations the NPWS require applicants to self-assess via the NPWS website. It is not for MARA to make the applicants decision on this issue. The applicant's attention is drawn to Condition 3.4 in draft licence issued which outlines that nothing in this licence shall be construed as negating the Holder's statutory obligations or requirements under any other law

8. Recommendation

Having considered the information submitted in support of the application, and the criteria specified in the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, as amended, I recommend that a Maritime Usage Licence in accordance with Section 119 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021, as amended, be **part granted** to Bremore Ireland Port Designated Activity Company, Harbourville, Mornington Road, Co. Meath, Meath, A92 Y207 for the purposes of *marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000 (Schedule 7 (3) MAP Act)*, subject to the conditions in the Proposed Licence and for a duration of 5 years for the following reasons:

The maritime area contained in Folio DN2408 is in the registered ownership of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development now the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine. Therefore, this area is to be excluded from the proposed maritime usage area.

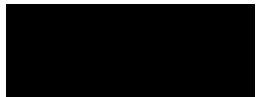
Signed:	
Prepared by:	Maria O Connell Marine Analyst
Date:	23/07/2026

9. Appropriate Assessment Determination

Having considered:

- the application information submitted by the applicant,
- observations received further to public body consultation
- submissions received further to public consultation and
- this Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report,

together with my own assessment, it can be concluded, and I determine, for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(11) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) 2011 that the proposal to *marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000 (Schedule 7 (3) MAP Act)*, (MUL240011) (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 the foregoing Section 3.8 – Appropriate Assessment. These mitigation measures are included in the Proposed Licence and must be incorporated into any consent that may be granted in respect of the respective maritime usage licence application.

Signed:	
Appropriate Assessment Determination by:	John Evans Director of Maritime Usage Licensing
Date:	23 rd July 2026

Appendix 1

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
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC [002299]	~5km	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey)</i> [1099] <i>Salmo salar (Salmon)</i> [1106] <i>Lutra lutra (Otter)</i> [1355]	Potential disturbance, displacement or harm from underwater noise and vibration. Potential disturbance and displacement from airborne noise/human presence for otters.	<u>NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC 002299. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage</u>
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC [003000]	<2.5km	<i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise)</i> [1351]	Potential disturbance, displacement or harm from - underwater noise and vibration, - vessel collision.	<u>NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000. Version 1. NPWS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</u>
Lambay Island SAC [000204]	<12km	<i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise)</i> [1351] <i>Halichoerus grypus (Grey Seal)</i> [1364] <i>Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal)</i> [1365]	Potential disturbance, displacement or harm from - underwater noise and vibration, - vessel collision	<u>NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SAC 000204. Version 2. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</u>

Codling Fault Zone SAC [003015]	<42km	<i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</i>	Potential disturbance, displacement or harm from - underwater noise and vibration, - vessel collision	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Codling Fault Zone SAC 003015. Version 2. NPWS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Slaney River Valley SAC (000781)	<145km	<i>Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103]</i> <i>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]</i> <i>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</i> <i>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]</i>	Potential disturbance, displacement or harm from underwater noise and vibration,	NPWS 2011) Conservation Objectives: Slaney River Valley SAC 000781 . Version 1. NPWS Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht
SPAs				
Northwest Irish Sea SPA [004236]	Overlap	<i>Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]</i> <i>Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]</i> <i>Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009]</i> <i>Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013]</i> <i>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</i> <i>Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018]</i> <i>Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</i> <i>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</i> <i>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]</i> <i>Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]</i> <i>Great Black-backed Gull (Larus marinus) [A187]</i> <i>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]</i> <i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i> <i>Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199]</i> <i>Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200]</i> <i>Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204]</i>	Potential disturbance and displacement from - airborne noise, human/vessel presence, - underwater noise and vibration.	NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

		<i>Little Gull (Hydrocoloeus minutus) [A862]</i> <i>Little Tern (Sternula albifrons) [A885]</i>		
River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA [004158]	0.14km	Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143] Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Possible disturbance and displacement from airborne noise, human/vessel presence.	<u>NPWs (2012) Conservation Objectives: River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA 004158. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</u>
Boyne Estuary SPA [004080]	0.14km	Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048] Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143] Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Little Tern (Sternula albifrons) [A885] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Possible disturbance and displacement from airborne noise, human/vessel presence.	<u>NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Boyne Estuary SPA 004080. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</u>
Rockabill SPA [004014]	0.2km	Purple Sandpiper (Calidris maritima) [A148] Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]	Possible disturbance and displacement from - airborne noise, human/vessel presence, - underwater noise and vibration.	<u>NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rockabil SPA 004014. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</u>

Skerries Islands SPA [004122]	0.5km	Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018] Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Purple Sandpiper (Calidris maritima) [A148] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]	Possible disturbance and displacement from - airborne noise, human/vessel presence, underwater noise and vibration.	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Skerries Islands SPA 004122. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Lambay Islands SPA [004069]	<11km	Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009] Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018] Greylag Goose (Anser anser) [A043] Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184] Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188] Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199] Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200] Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204]	Possible disturbance and displacement from - airborne noise, human/vessel presence, underwater noise and vibration.	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SPA 004069. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.