

MI Observations on MUL240011 – North Balbriggan-proposed port infrastructure

Jonathan White – Marine Institute – Version 1 – 16/December/2025

Summary

The Seafood Environment Unit of DAFM requested MI observations in relation to an application made to MARA by Bremore Port / Bremore Ireland Port Designated Activity Company (BIPDAC) to undertake Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation to inform the design of the Bremore Port and to provide data to feed into the development of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report to support the planning application.

The request, made for observations of possible impacts on sea fisheries and the seafood sector (including aquaculture) for COB Tuesday 16th December.

The application is to undertake survey operations, primarily around Bremore Head, north Dublin (proposed development area), in the form of Hydrographical and Geophysical surveys (Multibeam Echosounder, Side scan sonar, magnetometer, sub-bottom profiling); Geotechnical (Boreholes, Cone Penetration Tests, Vibrocore / Gravity Corer); Metocean & geomorphology (Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler, wave buoy, sediment traps), Ecology (Bird and Marine Mammal Survey, Fisheries Survey, Benthic Ecology (subtidal benthic survey, intertidal habitat walkover survey) and Marine Mammal Acoustic Monitoring) and Underwater Archaeology.

A licence duration of up to 7 years is being sought - to ensure the licence can enable site investigation works up to construction of the project. Works were proposed to start from as soon as possible in 2024. Survey durations are stated as being dependent on the type and extent of campaigns and weather. Durations for each survey type are indicated in the Assessment of Impact on the Maritime Usage Report.

Environmental reports submitted with the application included:

- Supporting information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment
- Natura Impact Statement
- Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species
- Assessment of Impact on the Maritime Usage Report

Total Licence Application Area covers 159.59 km² and adjoins the high-water mark at its closest point to shore.

The application notes no overlap with licensed aquaculture sites, and partial overlap with the Licence Application Area and the Shellfish Waters Directive and Inshore Shellfish Production Areas (ISPAs). The application area overlaps with spawning and/or nursery grounds of several commercially important fish species including cod, haddock, erring whiting mackerel and horse mackerel and also to its north easter limits, with the recognised fishing ground of Western Irish Sea *Nephrops norvegicus* Functional Unit (FU15).

Proposed survey operations may impact fishing activities. The application states *“BIPDAC and an appointed FLO will work closely with fishers in the area to minimise disruption and potential impacts...”*

The indicated area of operations are coincidental with commercial fishing activities, however the spatial extent is relatively small and operation times limited. Independently, the proposed operations should not substantially interfere with fish stocks, fishing activities or aquaculture activities in the locality. It is assumed that the necessary notices to mariners / fishing vessels will be made regarding the operations and that geophysical surveys and sampling will operate under soft-start up procedures.

There is potential for cumulative impacts between these and other survey/dredging activities that may be active in the local vicinity and/or near timeframes.