

**Maritime Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate
Appropriate Assessment Report and Determination for a Maritime
Usage Licence**

To:	John Evans Director	From:	Dr. Micheál Mac Monagail Marine Analyst
Date	18/02/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL240012
Applicant:	Uisce Éireann, Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot St, Dublin 1, D01 NP86		
Type of maritime usage in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, 2021:	3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.		
Location of proposed Maritime Usage:	Uisce Eireann intends to conduct a strategic modelling study of water currents within Donegal Bay and Sligo Bay.		
Licence application received:	16.08.2024		
AA Screening determined	24.10.2025		
Natura Impact Statement received:	21.11.2025		
Further information requests issued:	16.10.2024, 28.11.2024, 23.09.2025 and 24.10.2025		
Responses to further information requests received:	18.10.2024, 04.12.2024, 21.10.2025 and 21.11.2025		
Public consultation:	03.02.2026 to 08.03.2026		
Submissions from the public received:	None		
Submissions from public bodies received:	Eleven		

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Statement of Authority

This Appropriate Assessment Report has been undertaken by the MULPA Directorate within the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), a specialist unit with appropriate expertise in environmental assessment.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Application Documents submitted

A number of documents were submitted by the applicant, Uisce Éireann, as part of their application for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL). The relevant documents submitted by the applicant include the MUL application form dated 12/06/2024, and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) report submitted to MARA on 21/11/2025.

Uisce Éireann are proposing to undertake marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation. The proposed surveys will involve vessel-based ADCP monitoring, intertidal bathymetric surveys, and the deployment of tidal gauges at five locations along the Donegal and Sligo coasts. These activities will collect data on water currents, bathymetry, temperature, conductivity, and salinity within Donegal Bay, Sligo Bay, and adjoining waters. The information will support numerical modelling to inform the design and placement of wastewater infrastructure and to assess potential impacts on water quality and designated shellfish waters.

1.2 Legislative Context

Part 5, Section 117 of the MAP Act sets out the requirements for MARA to undertake Appropriate Assessment in respect of a MUL application. The EU Habitats Directive (Council 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 requirements for screening for Appropriate Assessment and for undertaking Appropriate Assessment are set out in Regulation 42 of the Regulations. Where Appropriate Assessment is required to be undertaken on a MUL application, a minimum 30-day public consultation period is required on the application and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) under Section 117 of the MAP Act and in line with Regulation 42 of the Regulations.

1.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

MARA published an Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening determination on 24/10/2025. The AA screening determination concluded that the proposed maritime usage application will require Appropriate Assessment, as it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed activities, individually or in combination with other plans or

projects, will have a significant effect on a European Site(s). Following MARA's screening determination, the applicant submitted a Natura Impact Statement, submitted to MARA on 21/11/2025. The applicant undertook a period of public consultation on the application and the NIS from 03/02/2026 to 08/03/2026. MARA consulted with several public bodies in tandem with the public consultation period. These are detailed in the accompanying Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report prepared by the MULPA Directorate.

2 Location and Proposed Maritime Usage

2.1 Site Location and Characteristics

Area A The proposed Maritime Usage Licence area covers approximately 138.47 km² and extends along the southern coast of Donegal from the townland of Croaghlin in the west to Raneel at the eastern extent of the proposed MUL area (Figure 1). The area of Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre, in Killybegs, County Donegal, is regulated by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Marine under S.I. No. 235 of 1987 and as such cannot be licenced by MARA at this time.

Area B The proposed Maritime Usage Licence area covers approximately 98.41 km² and extends along the southern coast of Donegal from the townland of Tullyvoose to Finner Road (Figure 1).

Area C The proposed Maritime Usage Licence area covers approximately 94.67 km² and extends along the coast of Sligo from the townland of Bunduff to Agharrow (Figure 1).

Area D The proposed Maritime Usage Licence area covers approximately 103.85 km² and extends along the coast of Sligo from the townland of Raghly to Soodry (Figure 1).

Area E The proposed Maritime Usage Licence area covers approximately 96.50 km² and extends from the townland of Rathlee in County Sligo to Kilcummin in County Mayo (Figure 1).

The proposed maritime usage comprises temporary intertidal and subtidal activities. Intertidal works include the installation of tidal gauges, water column profiling of conductivity, temperature and depth measurements (CTD), and vessel-based bathymetric surveys. Bathymetric surveys will utilise multibeam echosounder (MBES) and/or single-beam sonar (SBS), supplemented by LiDAR in intertidal areas. Subtidal activities will comprise vessel-based ADCP deployment, water sampling, and be confined to navigable marine waters.

The applicant currently holds a foreshore licence (FS007553; determination date: 22 March 2024), for the deployment of twenty-three Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCPs) at various locations within the same areas as the proposed maritime usage.

Table 1 provides details of the proposed maritime usage activities and estimated duration. The activities, as proposed, may occur at any time of the year, and the applicant has applied for a licence duration of three years.

Table 1: Proposed marine environmental surveys and the estimated duration of activities, across all sites, unless otherwise stated.

Proposed activity	Estimated duration
Deployment of vessel-mounted ADCPs	30 mins – 1 hour per location and/or 13-hour continuous deployment
Deployment of tidal gauges	Minimum of 3 months (coinciding with other sampling)
Bathymetric surveys of intertidal areas	One occasion, to cover all intertidal areas applied for
Collection of conductivity, temperature and depth (CTD) data	Periodically over 13-hour deployment periods

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

Overall, the five proposed maritime usage areas represent a diverse assemblage of limestone-dominated coastal and estuarine environments with significant intertidal flats, estuaries, and reef habitats of ecological importance, and are briefly described here.

Area A covers approximately 138.47 km², extending from the townland of Croaghlin at the western extent of the MUL area to Raneel, Mountcharles, in the east. The proposed MUL area overlaps St. John’s Point SAC and Slieve League SAC. Major rivers within or draining to the area include the Owenwee River, Glenaddragh River, Stragar River, Tullaghacullion River, Bruckless River and the Eany River. The underlying geology comprises Tournaisian Basal Clastics and Visean Calp Limestone. The area supports extensive reef communities on solid bedrock substrata, typically occurring between 17–26 m depth. Towards Teelin, at the western extent of the MUL area, the seascape is dominated by high granite and sandstone cliffs with plateau landscapes. In contrast, McSwines Bay is characterised by a large limestone bay with low-lying, undulating hinterland and associated coastal wetlands.

Area B covers approximately 98.41 km², extending from Tullyvoose in the west to Finner Road to the south. The proposed MUL area overlaps Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC and Durnesh Lough SAC. Major rivers associated with the area include the Gortilosky River, Eske River, and the Erne River. The area is underlain by Carboniferous limestone and shale and is dominated by intertidal habitats, including mudflats, sandflats, estuarine channels, tidal

ivers, and sandy beaches. The seascape comprises a large limestone bay with a low lying, undulating hinterland and extensive coastal wetlands.

Area C covers approximately 94.67 km², extending from Bunduff to Agharrow. The proposed MUL area overlaps Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC and Streedagh Point Dunes SAC. Major rivers in the area include the Cartonkillerdoo River and the Grange River. This is an exposed coastal system underlain by sedimentary geology, including limestone, shale and sandstone, and strongly shaped by prevailing Atlantic winds and wave energy. The seascape is characterised by a large limestone bay, a low-lying and undulating hinterland, and associated coastal wetlands.

Area D covers approximately 103.85 km², extending from the townlands of Raghly to Soodry, and comprises Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC and Ballysadare Bay SAC. Major rivers include the Drumcliff River, Drumcliff/Glebe River, Garavogue River, Portavaud River and the Ballysadare River. These are two extensive shallow limestone bays, underlain by Carboniferous limestone and fed by several river systems. The seascape is characterised by a large limestone bay, low-lying and undulating hinterland, and coastal wetlands.

Area E covers approximately 96.50 km², extending from the townland of Rathlee in County Sligo to Kilcummin in County Mayo. The proposed MUL overlaps Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC, located between Inishcrone and Killala. Major rivers include the Moy River, Glenree River, and Cloonaghmore River. The area features a long estuarine channel through which the River Moy discharges to the sea. It supports extensive intertidal mud- and sandflats, with water depths reach approximately –10 m in the outer bay. The seascape is characterised by a large limestone bay, a low-lying undulating hinterland, and coastal wetlands.

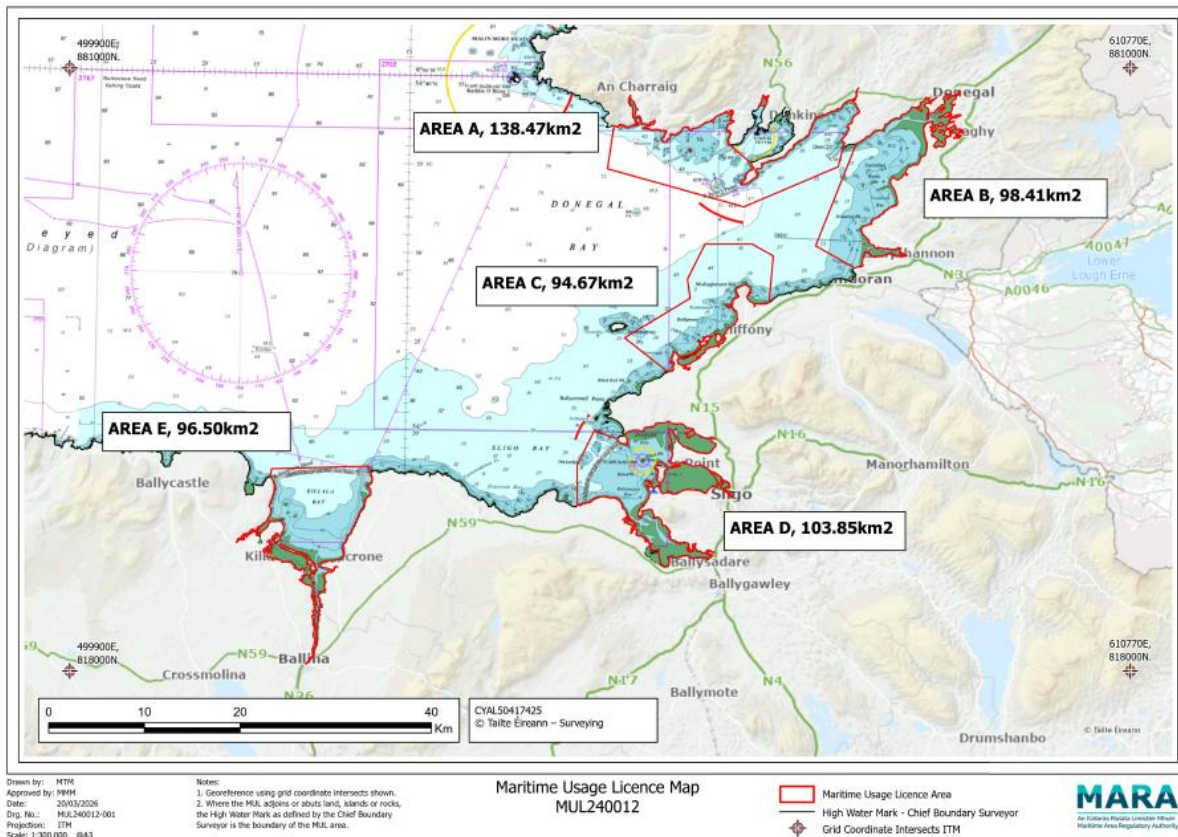


Figure 1: Proposed Maritime usage licence Areas A to E.

3 European Sites and Qualifying Interests

3.1 Identification of European sites likely to be affected

The potential source of impact identified at the screening stage and possible significance of those impacts on the Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) are summarised on Table 2.

Site-specific conservation objectives for sites, habitats and species (listed in Table 3), were used when considering potential impacts of the proposed activity. Details of these sites are available on the NPWS website (<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>). Nine European Sites were screened in for Appropriate Assessment (AA) as part of MARA’s Appropriate Assessment screening determination dated 23/10/2025. This included five Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and four 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 Table 3 below. Pressures and threats for all

Yes

Yes – possible visual and above water noise disturbance

Qualifying Interests and Species of Conservation Interests are considered in the Article 12¹ and Article 17² reports produced by the NPWS and are considered when assessing potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage.

The distances given in Table 3 are from the MUL application area which are the red line boundaries shown on Figure 1.

Since the AA screening determination was issued, a new candidate SPA was published by the Department of Housing and Local Government, namely the Connemara Islands cSPA (Site code IE004159). The SCIs of this new cSPA site were considered for inclusion in this assessment but did not screen in for AA.

Table 2: Potential direct and indirect impacts on the Qualifying Interests of European sites identified at screening stage and possible significance of those impacts.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Visual and above water noise disturbance to bird and seal species	Potential for survey activities to generate noise, vibration and result in increased human presence, or vessel activity to be at an intensity and duration that could cause short term, temporary disturbance and displacement of birds, Grey seals and Harbour seals.

¹ <https://www.npws.ie/status-and-trends-ireland%E2%80%99s-bird-species-%E2%80%93-article-12-reporting>

² <https://www.npws.ie/publications/article-17-reports/article-17-reports-2025>

Table 3: 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 Code	Distance from the MUL area (km) or other unit used	List of Qualifying Interests	Potential source of impact	Site specific conservation objective
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC (Site Code IE000133)	MUL area overlapping Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	i) Disturbance from above water noise ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC – 000133. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Ballysadare Bay SAC (Site Code IE000622)	MUL area overlapping Ballysadare Bay SAC	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	i) Disturbance from above water noise ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Ballysadare Bay SAC – 000622. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code IE000627)	MUL area overlapping Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay)	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	i) Disturbance from above water noise ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC – 000627. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC (Site Code IE000458)	MUL area overlapping Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC	<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	i) Disturbance from above water noise ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC – 000458. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Slieve Tooley/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (Site Code IE000190)	~25km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	i) Disturbance from above water noise ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Tooley/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC – 000190. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
West Donegal Coast SPA (Site Code IE004150)	MUL area overlapping West Donegal Coast SPA	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184]	i) Disturbance from above water noise to nesting areas ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: West Donegal Coast SPA – 004150 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Inishduff SPA (Site Code IE004115)	MUL area overlapping Inishduff SPA	Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018]	i) Disturbance from above water noise to nesting areas ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Inishduff SPA – 004115 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA (Site Code IE004135)	0.65km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	i) Disturbance from above water noise to	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA – 004135 Version 1.0

			nesting areas ii) Visual disturbance	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Inishmurray SPA (Site Code IE004068)	0.77km	Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]	i) Disturbance from above water noise to nesting areas ii) Visual disturbance	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Inishmurray SPA – 004068 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

4 Assessment and Mitigation

4.1 Assessment of Likely/Possible Impacts on European Sites

The following potential impacts on European sites and their designated species or habitats have been identified:

- i) Temporary visual disturbance to seals
- ii) Temporary above-water noise disturbance to seals
- iii) Temporary visual disturbance to birds
- iv) Temporary above-water noise disturbance to birds

Potential impacts have been identified for several Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests at several SAC and SPA sites (Table 3), and this section considers those impacts on an individual basis. The Appropriate Assessment screening report and determination issued by MARA identified that visual disturbance and above-water sound sources associated with survey activities, could occur at a level and duration capable of resulting in significant negative effects on certain Qualifying Interests, particularly seals and bird species, at several European sites. Any mitigation measures recommended on foot of this assessment are set out in Section 4.6 – Mitigation Measures.

4.1.1. Temporary visual and above-water noise disturbance to seals

The applicant proposes to undertake survey activities within the maritime areas of Donegal, Sligo and Mayo under the proposed Maritime Usage Licence. The surveys will involve vessel-based activities which have the potential to cause temporary visual and above-water noise disturbance to marine mammals associated with nearby or overlapping European sites.

Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Ballysadare Bay SAC, Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC, and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC were screened in for Appropriate Assessment due to the potential for vessel-based disturbance affecting Harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*), a Qualifying Interest of these sites (Table 3).

Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*), associated with neighbouring European sites, may also forage within the proposed MUL areas and may exhibit short-term behavioural responses to vessel activity or human presence on shore. The nearest Grey seal haul-out sites occur within Slieve Tooley/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC, approximately 22 km from the proposed MUL area (Area A). Grey seal was initially screened in for Appropriate Assessment due to the potential for vessel-based disturbance. However, considering the distance from the proposed MUL areas to the nearest Grey seal haul-out sites, the use of a single vessel as well as the temporary nature and limited spatial extent of the maritime usage, disturbance associated with Grey seals are considered unlikely.

Known Harbour seal haul-out sites occur within the proposed MUL area in Area B, Area D and Area E, while no haul-out sites are recorded within Area A or Area C. Harbour seals typically also use haul-out sites for breeding purposes, including pupping (June-July) and moulting (July and August), and are particularly sensitive to disturbance during these periods.

Disturbance is particularly relevant during pupping, resting and moulting periods, when seals spend extended periods hauled out and may be more vulnerable to disturbance. However, where flushing occurs outside of these sensitive periods, seals will typically return once the disturbance has ceased.

Seal species are visually alert (Southall et al. 2007) and sensitive to airborne noise (Andersen et al. 2012). Disturbance by way of the presence and movement of vessels or associated above-water noise may cause alert responses, short-term flushing from haul-out sites, or temporary changes in movement and foraging behaviour (Richardson et al., 1995, Henry and Hammill, 2001, Jansen et al. 2010, Jansen et al. 2015, Ruiz-Mar et al. 2022). These responses are generally localised and reversible, with animals expected to resume normal behaviour once disturbance ceases.

Given the presence of known Harbour seal haul-out sites used for breeding and moulting within the proposed MUL area, temporary behavioural disturbance cannot be entirely ruled out where vessel activities occur in close proximity to these sensitive species. This is particularly relevant in areas such as Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Ballysadare Bay SAC, Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC.

Accordingly, it is proposed that specific licence conditions be included to minimise potential visual and above-water noise disturbance to Harbour seal breeding sites within relevant SAC locations, as outlined in Section 4 – Mitigation Measures.

4.1.2 Temporary visual and above-water noise disturbance to birds

Four Special Protection Areas (SPAs) were screened in for Appropriate Assessment (Table 3) due to the presence of nesting seabirds that may be sensitive to visual disturbances and above-water noise arising from vessel movements and intertidal survey activities. Disturbance arising from vessel presence and intertidal survey work may result in behavioural responses in seabirds, including temporary displacement from nests (Chatwin et al. 2013), interruption of foraging activity (Cianchetti-Benedetti et al. 2018), and reduced paternal attendances at nests or even nest abandonment during breeding season (Carey, 2010).

Non-breeding and overwintering birds, which are SCIs of several SPAs throughout the proposed MUL area including Donegal Bay SPA (IE004151), Drumcliff Bay SPA (IE004013), Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA (IE004234), Cummeen Strand SPA (IE004035), Ballysadare

Bay SPA (IE004129) and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA (IE004036), are unlikely to be disturbed to a significant level by the vessel and intertidal activities in the proposed maritime usage.

Vessel movements and intertidal works associated with the proposed maritime usage may result in temporary flushing or short-term displacement of birds if undertaken in proximity to nesting sites. Potential effects are therefore considered in relation to nesting seabirds listed as SCIs within SPAs that overlap or are adjacent to the proposed MUL area.

Area A overlaps West Donegal Coast SPA and Inishduff SPA. West Donegal Coast SPA supports several nesting seabirds, with Cormorant, Shag and Herring Gull screened in due to their sensitivity to near-shore activity and vessel movements during nesting periods. Inishduff SPA is designated for Shag, which may also experience temporary disturbance if nesting during survey operations.

Area B overlaps Donegal Bay SPA. SCI species include Great Northern Diver, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Common Scoter and Sanderling. As these species do not breed in Ireland, the likelihood of nesting-related disturbance can be excluded, and significant effects are not anticipated.

Area D lies approximately 0.65km from Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA, which supports nesting Cormorant. Barnacle Goose is also listed as an SCI for this SPA but does not breed in Ireland. Area C adjoins Inishmurray SPA, which supports nesting Shag, Herring Gull and Arctic Tern. Considering that the proposed maritime usage will involve a single vessel, will be temporary nature, and will have a limited spatial extent, as well as an absence of direct overlap with either SPA, disturbance to nesting SCI species associated with both Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA and Inishmurray SPA are considered unlikely. Therefore, potential impacts on these SPAs can be excluded.

Area D overlaps Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA, Drumcliff Bay SPA, Cummeen Strand SPA and Ballysadare Bay SPA. Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA can be excluded, as Barnacle Goose does not breed in Ireland. Drumcliff Bay, Cummeen Strand and Ballysadare Bay SPAs support non-breeding SCI species only and are therefore not considered sensitive to nesting disturbance.

Area E overlaps Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA, which supports SCI species that do not regularly breed in Ireland. Given the temporary nature of the works and the mobility of these species, significant effects are unlikely.

Although the proposed maritime usage is temporary and localised, short-term disturbance (e.g. temporary flushing or displacement) could occur if works take place close to nesting areas. Mitigation measures are therefore required to minimise visual and above water noise

disturbance and to protect SCI nesting populations of Cormorant, Shag and Herring Gull, all of which are present in SPA sites in Area A only.

It is proposed that a specific mitigation be inserted into any Licence granted to reduce the risk of disturbance during peak nesting season in SPA sites located within Area A. Full mitigation measures are outlined in Section 4.6 – Mitigation Measures.

4.2 Assessment of In-combination effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that an Appropriate Assessment be carried out in respect of any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the likely or possible effects of a plan or project are significant when considered in isolation, the potential for the plan or project to significantly affect European sites in combination with other plans or projects must also be assessed. All types of plans or projects that could, in-combination with the project under consideration, have a significant effect, should be taken into account. This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement.

4.2.1 Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS) and Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)

The CESS was defined at Appropriate Assessment screening stage as the red line boundary. The temporal scope for examination of cumulative effects has been defined considering the period over which the maritime usage is proposed. The applicant has applied for a 3-year licence duration and thus the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS) is 3 years.

4.2.2 Impacts and Pathway Identification

Potential impacts	Potential Cumulative Pathway
Temporary visual and above water noise disturbance to Harbour seals	A potential pathway exists via increased vessel activity, airborne noise and human presence, with cumulative effects possible where such activities overlap spatially and temporally with other above-water noise-generating or vessel-based activities. These effects may lead to repeated disturbance, displacement or altered behaviour of Harbour seals.
Temporary visual and above water noise disturbance to birds	A potential pathway exists via visual disturbance, airborne noise and increased human presence, with cumulative effects possible where survey activities spatially and temporally with other coastal or marine activities. Such overlap may result in repeated disturbance, flushing or temporary displacement of breeding birds.

4.2.3 Prediction:

The magnitude and extent of the identified likely cumulative effects are predicted as follows:

Temporary visual and above-water disturbance to Harbour seals

There is potential for increased visual and above-water noise disturbance to Harbour seal where other relevant projects generating similar disturbance pathways overlap temporally.

Temporary visual and above-water noise disturbance to birds

There is potential for increased visual and above-water noise disturbance to birds where other relevant projects generating similar disturbance pathways overlap temporally.

4.2.4 Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination:

A search was carried out on 23/03/2026 of relevant databases (including EPA, Foreshore, MARA, planning authorities etc.) for other plans and projects with characteristics that may cause in-combination effects with the proposed site investigation activities, on the QIs of the European sites identified on Table 3 and which fall within the defined CETS and CESS. These are listed in Table 4

Table 4: Those projects to which particular attention is given due to the nature and location of the activities in the context of this in-combination assessment.

Application reference no.	Project	Approximate Distance from MUL Area	Project Status	In-combination Effects
MAC20230008	Flood Relief Scheme	Overlap	Determined	No likely significant in-combination effects are predicted. The MAC granted is for localised use and not expected to result in in combination effects.
FS007189	Site investigations for the Aniar Offshore Array Project	Overlap	Applied for but not approved. Applied for on 14/02/2022	No likely significant in-combination effects are predicted. The site investigations are temporary and localised and will not result in disturbances that could act in-combination.
FS007553	A strategic modelling study of water currents within	Overlap	Determination – of date	No likely significant in-combination effects are

	Donegal Bay, Sligo Bay and their adjoining waters		determination 22/03/2024	predicted. The project involves data collection and modelling and will not interact with the proposed maritime usage.
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The following plans, related to the development of the maritime environment were also identified:

- The Climate Action Plan 2025
- Donegal County Council Development Plan 2024-2030
- Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Water Action Plan 2024
- Uisce Eireann Regional Water Resources Plan – North-West – 2023
- Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

These plans promote sustainable development and integrated management planning in the maritime environment. It is unlikely that any of these plans will result in a negative in-combination effect on the conservation objectives of the identified European sites.

4.2.5 In-Combination Effects Assessment conclusion

Following consideration of the proposed maritime usage activity in combination with other relevant plans and projects (Table 4), it is concluded that there is no potential for likely significant in-combination effects on the conservation objectives of any European site. Accordingly, likely significant in-combination effects can be excluded, and no mitigation measures are proposed.

4.3 Residual Effects

This assessment has identified Likely/Possible Significant Impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests in Section 4.1 and recommends mitigation measures for each at Section 4.6 below. 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.

4.4 Assessment of Transboundary effects

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

4.5 Public consultation

A public consultation was undertaken between 03/02/2026 and 08/03/2026 with the public invited to make observations. In addition to the public consultation, observations were invited from relevant public bodies. No submissions were received on foot of the public consultation, while eleven submissions were received from relevant public bodies. These submissions have been considered as part of the Appropriate Assessment and are summarised in Section 6 of the associated Maritime Usage Licence Assessment Report produced as part of the MUL application assessment.

4.6 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures for those impacts identified in Section 4.1 - Assessment of Likely/Possible Significant Impacts on European Sites and their conservation interests are detailed below. These mitigation measures are to be included as conditions in any licence granted.

Temporary visual and above water noise disturbance to Harbour seal

Mitigation is required to minimise potential visual and above water noise disturbance to Harbour seal within European sites. Such measures include that a condition in any licence granted should include the condition:

- (i) The Holder shall not undertake site investigations within 200m of Harbour seal breeding sites (as mapped by NPWS) within Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Ballysadare Bay SAC, Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC, between 1st of June and 31st of August annually to ensure least disturbance to Harbour seals.

Temporary visual and above-water noise disturbance to nesting birds

Mitigation is required to minimise potential visual and above water noise disturbance to nesting birds within European sites. Such measures include that a condition in any licence granted should include the condition:

The Holder shall not undertake the permitted maritime usage surveys as follows:

- i) within 1 km of West Donegal Coast SPA and the Inishduff SPA during the period 30th April to 1st July,

Reason: To ensure protection of the marine environment and protected species.


4.6.1 In-Combination Effects Assessment conclusion

No mitigation required in relation to the in-combination effects assessed in Section 4.2 above.

5 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

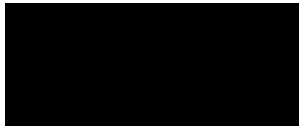
The Appropriate Assessment screening process identified likely/possible significant impacts due to visual and above water noise disturbance. The applicant provided an NIS which detailed the potential impact of the proposed project on relevant European sites and whether these impacts would adversely affect the integrity of the sites in light of their conservation objectives. My assessment found that likely significant impacts from the proposed activities could not be ruled out, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, without mitigation. Additionally, I found that the potential for in-combination effects from the proposed activities with other plans and projects could be ruled out.

Mitigation measures were identified to ensure that impacts on European sites and their qualifying interests and special conservation interests do not occur. Therefore, with adherence to the mitigation measures specified in section 4.6 Mitigation Measures, 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.

<p>Signature and Date of Recommending Marine Advisor</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Dr. Micheál Mac Monagail Marine Analyst Assessment, Research and Data 24/03/2026</p>
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6 Appropriate Assessment Determination

Having considered this report, the documents submitted by Uisce Éireann, Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot St, Dublin 1, the observations received on foot of the public consultation on the application, along with my own assessment, it can be concluded, and I determine, for the purposes of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 42(11) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, that the proposal to undertake *'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), (MUL240012), (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 Section 4.6 Mitigation Measures adopted and outlined above, which must be included as conditions to any consent that may be granted in respect of the respective maritime usage licence application.*

Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 <hr/> John Evans Director of Assessment, Research and Data 30/03/2026
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