

MI Observations on MUL240012- Uisce Éireann - Donegal and Sligo Bay.

Jonathan White – Marine Institute – Version 1 – 28/10/2025

Summary

The Seafood Climate Unit of DAFM requested MI observations on possible impacts that Marine Usage Licence ref: MUL240012 might have on the seafood sector, i.e. fish stocks, fisheries, aquaculture, or the environments on which they rely. The application was submitted by Uisce Éireann in application for a maritime usage license to conduct marine survey work within Donegal Bay and Sligo Bay, in support of a modelling study of water currents within the bays.

A Foreshore Licence (FS007553) is already held by the applicant for deployment of up to twenty-three (23) fixed ADCPs. This additional application is for:

- Deployment of a maximum of thirteen (13) vessel mounted ADCPs at locations indicated.
- Collection of additional ancillary data – such as conductivity, temperature and depth (CTD) measurements.
- Bathymetric surveys of the intertidal areas using either/or/ combination of single-beam, multibeam and LiDAR.
- Deployment of tidal gauges.

Survey equipment will be in place for a temporary period only and removed after completion of the survey. Water sampling and CTD measurements will be carried out periodically over the same 13-hour period, while tide gauges will be installed for a minimum of 3 months. A license duration of three years is sought.

“The proposed works will gather information on water currents, bathymetry and ancillary data on temperature, conductivity and salinity within Donegal Bay, Sligo Bay and their adjoining waters. This data is required by Uisce Éireann in order for them to carry out numerical modelling for the purposes of informing future design and installation of wastewater treatment and to examine the impact that wastewater causes on water quality and designated shellfish waters in the surrounding areas.

The proposed operations cover five areas totalling 55,409 ha, some of which adjoin the shore:

Area A = 15,770ha

Area B = 9,882ha

Area C = 9,514ha

Area D = 10,425ha

Area E = 9,818ha

Submission includes:

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

As noted in the application, commercial fishing activities do take place in the proposed areas, which area also coincide with designated shellfish waters and aquaculture licenced areas.

Independently, the proposed survey operations should not substantially interfere with fish stocks, fishing activities or aquaculture activities in the area. It is assumed that the necessary notices to mariners / fishing vessels will be made regarding the deployment of monitoring devices and bathymetric survey activities.

The indicated areas are coincidental with spawning and nursery grounds of a range of commercial fish species, including:

Cod Nursery; Herring Spawning Ground; Horse Mackerel Nursery Ground; Mackerel Nursery Ground; Whiting Spawning Ground.

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