

Assessment, Research and Data Unit

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	Maritime Authorisations Unit	From:	Dr. Micheál Mac Monagail Marine Analyst
Date:	23/10/2025	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL240012
Applicant:	Uisce Éireann, Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot St, Dublin 1, D01 NP86		
Type(s) of maritime usage activity 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:	12/06/2024		

1. Background

Uisce Éireann has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The activities are required to 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 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.

2. Description of maritime usage(s) and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

Uisce Éireann proposes the use of vessel-based ADCP monitoring, carrying out bathymetric surveys of intertidal areas and deployment of tidal gauges at five locations along the Donegal and Sligo coasts (see Section 2.2 below and Figure 1). The requested licence duration will be three years.

Table 1 - Description of activities, methods and expected duration of proposed maritime usage

Activity	Description / Method	Expected Duration / Frequency
Deployment of vessel-mounted ADCPs	Up to 13 no. ADCPs to be deployed from vessel for current profiling at set locations	30 mins – 1 hour per location and/or 13-hour continuous deployment
Deployment of tidal gauges	Installation of tidal gauges at selected sites to record water level variances	Minimum of 3 months (coinciding with other sampling)
Bathymetric surveys of intertidal areas	Conducted using single beam or multibeam echosounders, LiDAR, or a combination of both	One occasion, to cover all intertidal areas applied for
Collection of conductivity, temperature and depth (CTD) data	Measurements to be taken periodically alongside ADCP profiling	Periodically over 13-hour deployment periods

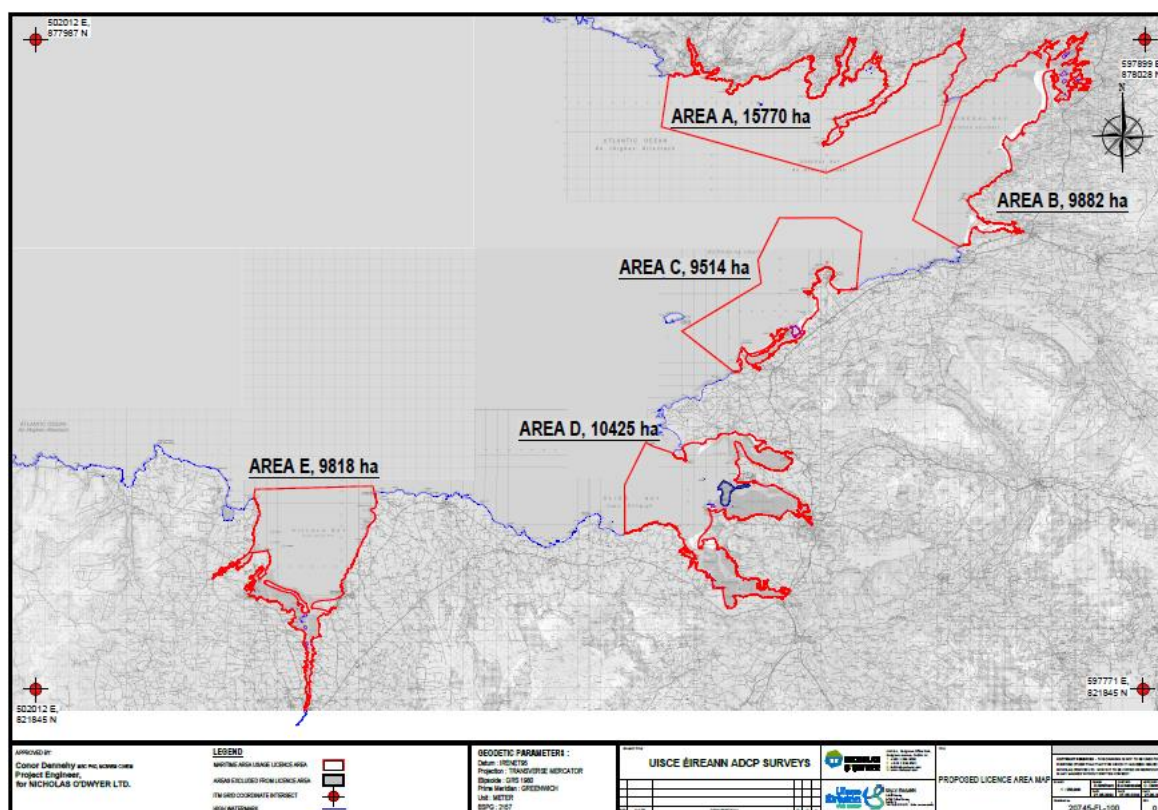


Figure 1 - Proposed Licence Area Map

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

Area A – includes St. John's Point SAC and Slieve League SAC. The underlying geology is limestone. Tournaisian Basal Clastics form the majority of the underlying rocks, while Calp limestone of the Viséan era outcrop at the south-western end of the site. The site has important examples of reef communities. At depths of between 17 and 26 m the substratum is solid bedrock.

Area B – includes Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC and Durnesh Lough SAC. This site occupies the inner part of Donegal Bay, immediately to the south-west of Donegal Town. It contains a number of significant rivers, including River Eske and the Murvagh river. The area is underlain by Carboniferous limestone and shale. Most of the site consists of intertidal habitats, notably mud- and sandflats, sea inlets and bays, tidal rivers, estuarine channels and sandy beaches.

Area C – includes Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC and Streedagh Point Dunes SAC. This site is situated on the south side of Donegal Bay and is very exposed to the prevailing wind and swells from the Atlantic. The underlying geology is of sedimentary rocks including limestone, shale and sandstone.

Area D – includes Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC and Ballysadare Bay SAC. The site bordered by Cullamore in the north-west, Killaspug in the south-west, Sligo town in the south-east and Drumcliff village in the northeast. It encompasses large, shallow bays. The site is largely underlain by Carboniferous limestone. Several important rivers lead into the site, including the Diffreen River, the Garvoge River and the Unshin River.

Area E – includes Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC. the towns of Inishcrone (Co. Sligo) and Killala (Co. Mayo) situated on the eastern and western shores, respectively. The estuary itself forms the County boundary along its northern part. Much of the inner part of the bay is intertidal. The northern part shelves to approximately -10 m. The River Moy flows to the sea via a long, narrow estuarine channel. Extensive sandflats and mudflats are exposed in the estuary and bay at low tide.

The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report in support of the application.

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the 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 on Table 2 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

Table 2 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives. Those Qualifying Interests marked in **bold** have been screened in for Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Slieve League SAC - 000189	MUL area overlapping Slieve League SAC	Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Slieve League SAC - 000189. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

St. John's Point SAC - 000191	MUL area overlapping St. John's Point SAC	Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330] <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: St. John's Point SAC - 000191. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC - 000133	MUL area overlapping Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	No	No	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC - 000133. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
			Yes – surveys within Harbour Seal foraging range (33.65km, Sharples et al. (2012))	Yes – possible visual and above water noise disturbance	

Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC - 000163	MUL area is adjacent to Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]	No	No	NPWS (2019) Conservation Objectives: Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC - 000163. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Lough Melvin SAC - 000428	~3km	Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]	No	No	NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Lough Melvin SAC - 000428. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC - 000625	MUL area overlapping Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Alkaline fens [7230] <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC - 000625. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Ballysadare Bay SAC - 000622	MUL area overlapping Ballysadare Bay SAC	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Ballysadare Bay SAC - 000622. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Yes – surveys within Harbour Seal foraging range (33.65km, Sharples et al. (2012))	Yes – possible visual and above water noise disturbance	
Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC - 000627	MUL area overlapping Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay)	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]	No	No	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.

		<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Yes – surveys within Harbour Seal foraging range (33.65km, Sharples et al. (2012))	Yes – possible visual and above water noise disturbance	
Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC - 000458	MUL area overlapping Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]	No	No	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.

		<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Yes – surveys within Harbour Seal foraging range (33.65km, Sharples et al. (2012))	Yes – possible visual and above water noise disturbance	
West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC - 000197	~45km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Decalcified fixed dunes with <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> [2140] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>) [2150] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110]	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC - 000197. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Alkaline fens [7230] <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395] <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]			
--	--	--	--	--	--

Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC - 000190	~25km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Decalcified fixed dunes with <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> [2140] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>) [2150] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC - 000190. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Yes – surveys within Grey Seal foraging range (51.29km, Cronin et al. 2011))	Yes – possible visual and above water noise disturbance.	

Ben Bulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex SAC - 000623	~4km	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alkaline fens [7230] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110] Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (<i>Thlaspietia rotundifolii</i>) [8120] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No	No	NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Ben Bulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex SAC - 000623. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
--	------	---	----	----	--

Slyne Head Peninsula SAC - 002074	160km	Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130] Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. [3140] European dry heaths [4030] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty, or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Alkaline fens [7230] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]	No	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Slyne Head Peninsula SAC - 002074. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
---	-------	---	----	----	---

		<i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]			
--	--	---	--	--	--

Slyne Head Islands SAC - 000328	158km	Reefs [1170] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Slyne Head Islands SAC - 000328. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Duvillaun Islands SAC - 000495	85km	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Duvillaun Islands SAC - 000495. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
River Finn SAC - 002301	~10km	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No	No	NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: River Finn SAC - 002301. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Inishmore Island SAC - 000213	210km	Coastal lagoons [1150] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Limestone pavements [8240] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330] <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Inishmore Island SAC - 000213. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
-------------------------------	-------	--	----	----	---

Lough Gill SAC - 001976	~1km	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No	No	NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Lough Gill SAC - 001976. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Unshin River SAC - 001898	<1km	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No	No	NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Unshin River SAC - 001898. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

River Moy SAC - 002298	<1km	Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Alkaline fens [7230] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No	No	NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: River Moy SAC - 002298. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
West Connacht Coast SAC - 002998	~55km	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: West Connacht Coast SAC - 002998. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
West Donegal Coast SPA - 004150	MUL area overlapping West Donegal Coast SPA	Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: West Donegal Coast SPA – 004150 Version 1.0 National Parks and

		Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200]			Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184]	Yes – nesting areas potentially disturbed	Yes – possible disturbance from above water noise	
Inishduff SPA - 004115	MUL area overlapping Inishduff SPA	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Brenta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Inishduff SPA - 004115 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018]	Yes – nesting areas potentially disturbed	Yes – possible disturbance from above water noise	
Donegal Bay SPA - 004151	MUL area overlapping Donegal Bay SPA	Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) [A003] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Donegal Bay SPA – 004151 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Drumcliff Bay SPA - 004013	MUL area overlapping Drumcliff Bay SPA	Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Drumcliff Bay SPA - 004013 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Cummeen Strand SPA - 004035	MUL area overlapping Cummeen Strand SPA	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Brenta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Cummeen Strand SPA - 004035 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Ballysadare Bay SPA - 004129	MUL area overlapping Ballysadare Bay SPA	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Brenta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Ballysadare Bay SPA - 004129 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA - 004036	MUL area overlapping Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA	Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA - 004036 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA - 004135	0.65km	Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA - 004135 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	Yes - nesting areas potentially disturbed	Yes - possible disturbance from above water noise	

Inishmurray SPA - 004068	0.77km	Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Inishmurray SPA - 004068 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]	Yes - nesting areas potentially disturbed	Yes - possible disturbance from above water noise	
Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA - 004234	MUL area adjoins Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA	Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045]	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA - 004234 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Aughris Head SPA - 004133	~5km	Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Aughris Head SPA - 004133 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA - 004194	~71km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045] Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA - 004194 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service,

		Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]			Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Tory Island SPA - 004073	~70km	Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Tory Island SPA - 004073 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA - 004057	~13km	Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA - 004057 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA - 004228	~9km	Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA - 004228 Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 3 – Identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

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

Within the proposed survey area, Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) deployments are proposed, as indicated in the mapped information provided by the applicant. The ADCP deployment will be vessel-mounted, thereby avoiding any direct seabed interaction. The underwater noise level resulting from ADCP deployment is outside of the auditory range of cetaceans and pinnipeds and no behavioural responses of these species to the operation of ADCPs have been observed (Coakley, 2011)

The proposed MBES and SSB operate at frequencies between 300-500 kHz, which are above the auditory range of pinnipeds ($\leq 86\text{kHz}$), and therefore no impacts on Grey or Harbour seals are predicted from MBES/SSB equipment use. These frequencies also fall outside the upper hearing range of Bottlenose Dolphin ($\leq 160\text{kHz}$) and Harbour Porpoise ($\leq 180\text{kHz}$; (JNCC, 2020; Southall et al., 2021), therefore no impact on marine mammals is predicted.

Given the proposed use of aerial drones during the survey operations to collect LiDAR data, there is potential for short term behavioural responses through visual, or above water noise disturbance to nesting bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests (SCI) of overlapping and adjoining SPAs. While the overall temporal footprint of the LiDAR survey is limited in each area, aerial drone operations can elicit behavioural responses such as flushing or temporary displacement of bird species. Therefore, potential disturbance to SPA bird populations, specifically to nesting bird species of West Donegal Coast SPA [004150], Inishduff SPA [004115], Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA [004135] and Inishmurray SPA [004068], cannot be ruled out at screening.

Given the proximity of known harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) haul-out sites within the MUL areas, there is potential for short-term behavioural disturbances to this species as a result of vessel presence, aerial drone activity, and associated survey activity. Harbour seals are known to be sensitive to visual and above-water noise disturbance, particularly during

periods of resting, moulting and pupping (Paterson et al. 2019). Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) do not haul out within the immediate MUL areas but occur within their foraging range (51.29km; Cronin et al. 2011). While significant effects on grey seals are unlikely due to the wide availability of foraging habitat and the short duration of the proposed surveys, potential disturbance to both harbour and grey seals from vessel or drone activity cannot be ruled out at screening.

In-combination effects

MARA has developed a stepwise approach for identifying other plans and projects that may impact on European sites in-Combination with the proposed maritime usage. Using professional and scientific judgement, the key steps for assessing cumulative effects are as follows:

1. Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)
2. Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)
3. Impact identification
4. Pathway identification
5. Prediction
6. Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination
7. Screening Stage Cumulative Effects Assessment conclusion
8. Managing cumulative impacts - to be carried out as part of Stage 2 AA process

The CESS has been defined as the red line boundary and the CETS as 3 years. The definition of the CESS is based on acoustic survey equipment effective deterrence ranges as per JNCC Guidance on Assessing the Significance of Noise Disturbance against Harbour Porpoise SACs Conservation Objectives (JNCC, 2025). The CETS is the proposed MUL duration, which is three years.

A search of relevant databases undertaken on the 23/10/25. Relevant projects within the CESS and the CETS were considered. Particular attention was given to the projects shown on Table 4 which have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

Table 4 - List of projects which, in particular, were considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites.

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
MAC20240002	Installation of a landing pontoon and access gangway to facilitate fishing punts, fishing on the Erne Estuary	Overlap	Applied
MAC20230031	Seasonal Pontoon	Overlap	Determined
MAC20230008	Flood Relief Scheme	Overlap	Determined
FS007189	Site investigations for the Aniar Offshore Array Project	Overlap	Applied
FS007553	A strategic modelling study of water currents within Donegal Bay, Sligo Bay and their adjoining waters	Overlap	Determination
FS005725	Foreshore licence application to undertake maintenance and capital dredging	Overlap	Consultation
FS005954	Application for construction of new reinforced quay wall and upgrading of existing quay wall	Overlap	Consultation

The following plans, related to the development of the maritime environment were also considered:

- The Climate Action Plan 2024
- 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

No significant in-combination impacts between the plans listed above and the proposed maritime usage are considered likely and can be ruled out at this stage. However, likely significant in-combination effects with the projects identified in Table 2 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be ruled out at this stage.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

5. Screening Determination Statement

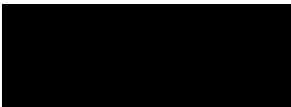
The assessment of significant effects:

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

- The nature and scale of the proposed development
- The distance to the nearest European sites
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects
- Possible visual and above water noise disturbance

Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Uisce Éireann, Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot St, Dublin 1, D01 NP86, to carry out Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000 at bays in Donegal and Sligo (MUL240012) will require Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

It cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Dr. Micheal Mac Monagail Marine Analyst	Date: 23/10/2025
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director of Assessment, Research and Data Unit	Date: 24/10/2025

References

Coakley (2011). Environmental Assessment of a Marine Geophysical Survey by the R/V Marcus G. Langseth in the Arctic Ocean (2011) Prepared for University of Alaska Geophysics Institute 900 Yukon Drive Fairbanks, AK 99775 and National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs 4201 Wilson Blvd., Suite 755 Arlington, VA 22230.

Cronin, M. A., Ó Cadhla, O., Duck, C., Strong, D., & NPWS (2011). Tracking grey seals on Ireland's continental shelf: Final report 2011. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Retrieved from https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Tracking%20grey%20seals_Final%20report%202011.pdf

IAMMWG (Inter-Agency Marine Mammal Working Group). (2023). Review of Management Unit boundaries for cetaceans in UK waters. JNCC Report 734. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough. ISSN 0963-8091.

JNCC (2020). Guidance on assessing the significance of noise disturbance against harbour porpoise conservation objectives. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, UK. JNCC Report No. 654. 28 pp

JNCC. 2025. Updated Effective Deterrent Ranges (EDRs) for assessing the significance of noise disturbance against Conservation Objectives of harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation (England, Wales & Northern Ireland). JNCC Report 803.

Paterson, W D, Russell, D J F, Wu, G-M , McConnell, B , Currie, J I, McCafferty, D J & Thompson, D 2019 , ' Post-disturbance haulout behaviour of harbour seals ' , Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems , vol. 29 , no. S1 , pp. 144-156.

Southall, B. L., Nowacek, D. P., Bowles, A. E., Senigaglia, V., Bejder, L., & Tyack, P. L. (2021). Marine mammal noise exposure criteria: assessing the severity of marine mammal behavioral responses to human noise. *Aquatic Mammals*, 47(5), 421-464. <https://doi.org/10.1578/AM.47.5.2021.421>