

MI Observations on MUL240026 - Uisce Éireann – strategic modelling study of water currents and bathymetry along the Southeast Coast of Ireland

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Summary

The Seafood Climate Unit of DAFM requested MI observations on possible impacts that Marine Usage Licence ref: MUL240026 might have on the seafood sector, i.e. fish stocks, fisheries, aquaculture, or the environments on which they rely. The application submitted by Uisce Éireann in application for a maritime usage license to conduct survey work in support of a modelling study of water currents and bathymetry along the south-east coast of Ireland. The modelling study is intended to establish compliance of existing and future Uisce Éireann assets with relevant legislation and inform future investment decisions.

Necessary monitoring operations include deployment of fixed ADCPs (seafloor in trawl resistant mount) and vessel mounted ADCPs, water sampling, CTD casts, bathymetric mapping using single and multi-beam echosounders, LiDAR and GPS rover; and deployment of inshore tide gauge, pole mounted or to the side of suitable pier.

The application notes that:

“Uisce Éireann have chaired and participated in Stakeholder Consultation with the SFPA and MI with respect to the assessment of impacts of assets on marine waters.

The application covers 11 areas, most of which adjoin or come close to the shore, totalling 577 km², and includes:

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

Having reviewed the MUL application documents, and as detailed in the submitted NIS, FEAS notes the sites overlap or are in close proximity to circa 9 marine/ estuarine SACs and numerous coastal SACs, the Seas off Wexford SPA and 4 shellfish water directive areas (see <https://dafm-maps.marine.ie/aquaculture-viewer/>).

While the proposed survey areas do coincide with fishing areas, fish stocks or aquaculture activities, independently the survey operations should not substantially interfere with fishing activities. It is assumed that necessary notices to mariners / fishing vessels will be made regarding the deployment of seafloor ADCPs and bathymetric mapping activities.

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

Cod Nursery Ground ; Haddock Spawning Ground; Herring Spawning Grounds and Nursery Grounds; Horse Mackerel Nursery Ground; Mackerel Nursery Ground; Whiting Nursery and Spawning Grounds.

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