

MI Observations on MUL240033 - Uisce Eireann – Galway Bay: Roundstone County Galway to Loop Head Lighthouse, County Clare.

Jonathan White – Marine Institute – Version 1 – 22/10/2025

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 Eireann in application for a maritime usage license to conduct survey work in support of a modelling study of water currents and bathymetry within Galway Bay and the exposed coast extending northwest to Roundstone, County Galway and southwest to Loop Head Lighthouse, County Clare.

The proposed surveys are to inform design and consenting of wastewater infrastructure to facilitate growth of communities, including provision of housing.

Proposed monitoring operations include deployment of 23 fixed ADCPs (seafloor in trawl resistant mount) and 3 vessel mounted ADCPs, water sampling, CTD casts, bathymetric mapping using single and multi-beam echosounders; and deployment of 18 tide gauges. Water quality sampling will also be undertaken from the shore and from a vessel at multiple locations within each of the proposed licence areas. A license duration of five years is sought.

The application covers 11 areas, many of which adjoin to 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, FEAS notes the sites overlap or are in close proximity to circa 4 marine/ estuarine SACs and at least 2 coastal SACs, two SPAs and one 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 proposed survey operations should not substantially interfere with fishing activities. It is assumed that the 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:

Herring Spawning Ground; Angler Monk Nursery Ground; *Nephrops* Ground; Cod Nursery Ground. Haddock Nursery and Spawning 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 local vicinity and/or near timeframes.