

Maritime Usage Licence & Planning Advisory Directorate			
Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report			
To:	Dr Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor	From:	Maria O Connell Marine Analyst
Date:	11/05/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL250003
Applicant:	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, County Hall, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, A96 K6C9, Ireland		
Type 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:	Within Dun Laoghaire Harbour as specified on application maps and Figure 1 in this report.		
Licence application received:	13/06/2025		

1. Background

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (the applicant) 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 objective of the proposed maritime usage (the site investigation activities) is to collate baseline information for the design of a dredging programme that would improve navigational access in the harbour and enable increased capacity for offshore wind farm survey vessels. As per S.I. No. 391/2018 - Harbours Act 2015, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council operate and manage Dun Laoghaire Harbour¹.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed maritime usage activities are detailed in Table 1 below which include the collection of sediment samples for: sediment characterisation, chemical analysis and characterisation of the benthic environment, geophysical techniques including Side Scan Sonar (SSS) and magnetometry which may also be employed to identify potential hazards or archaeological features. The total MUL application area is 0.26 km² (26.02ha,) which is located wholly within the Dun Laoghaire Harbour limits. The applicant has highlighted that a maximum of two slow speed small survey vessels will be operating at any one time within the MUL application area during the site investigations.

Indicative timeframes for site investigations have been provided by the applicant however, the exact survey schedule will be dependent on weather windows, tidal flows and vessel availability. Similarly indicative locations for the site investigations have been provided by the applicant. An estimated total duration of 2-3 weeks is proposed for all site investigation to be completed depending on the aforementioned factors. The application has been assessed as potentially occurring at any time of year.

1. [S.I. No. 391/2018 - Harbours Act 2015 \(Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company Transfer and Dissolution Day\) Order 2018](#)

Table 1: Proposed site investigations

<p>Geophysical surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side Scan Sonar (SSS) (sample frequency: 600/1600kHz), (5 – 10 days -across MUL area). • Magnetometer, (5 – 10 days -across MUL area).
<p>Geotechnical surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrocores (16 samples) up to 100mm diameter, to depths of 3-4m, (30 min to 2 hours per location).
<p>Environmental/ecological & archaeological surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seabed imagery (drop frame camera system) (30 locations) (20 mins per location). • Benthic sampling (grab), (30 locations), (20 mins to 1 hour per location).
<p>Survey vessels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or two low-speed survey small vessels operating within the confines of the harbour.

Brief description of the site characteristics

Dún Laoghaire Harbour extends for approximately 1.6km along the coastline of Dublin Bay with two breakwater arms (the East and West Piers) which creates the harbour’s form. The enclosed water area is approximately 80 hectares (200 acres), and the landside is approximately 20 hectares (50 acres)². The harbour is situated in an area which is defined principally by a broad estuarine bay and shallow offshore waters³. Water depths range from 0 to 14 meters “MHWS” and average tidal range in Dublin Bay ranges between approximately 2 -4.5m with tidal currents operating on average at 2-3 knots in a north-easterly/south-westerly orientation. Broadscale seabed habitat mapping indicates the presence of infralittoral sandy mud Infralittoral and circalittoral mud in the MUL application area⁴. The MUL Application Area for the proposed SI activities are located entirely within the Dún Laoghaire Harbour, depicted in Figure 1, which extends from the harbour entrance southward to include a turning circle and continues to form rectangular areas adjacent to St Michaels Pier and Carlisle Pier.

Dun Laoghaire Harbour supports a range of commercial and recreational marine activities. Maritime usages within and adjacent to the proposed maritime usage application area include but are not limited to shipping catering for cruise and survey vessel primarily, search and rescue facilities, recreational boating, shore angling, and walking. Several organisations operate within the harbour, including four sailing clubs.

2. [dlrcoco.ie/sites/dlrcoco/files/2026-01/Dún Laoghaire Masterplan A3 Compressed 2.pdf](https://dlrcoco.ie/sites/dlrcoco/files/2026-01/Dún%20Laoghaire%20Masterplan%20A3%20Compressed%20.pdf)

3. The Marine Institute. 2020. Definition and Classification of Ireland’s Seascapes. Minogue, R, Foley, K, Collins, T, Hennessy, R, Doherty, P, Vaughan, E and Black, D.

4. [EMODnet Map Viewer](#)

The landward hinterland of the MUL area is urbanised by a mix of residential, commercial and cultural spaces, road and railway corridors. There are two bathing areas located to the north (Seapoint) and south (Sandycove) of the harbour.

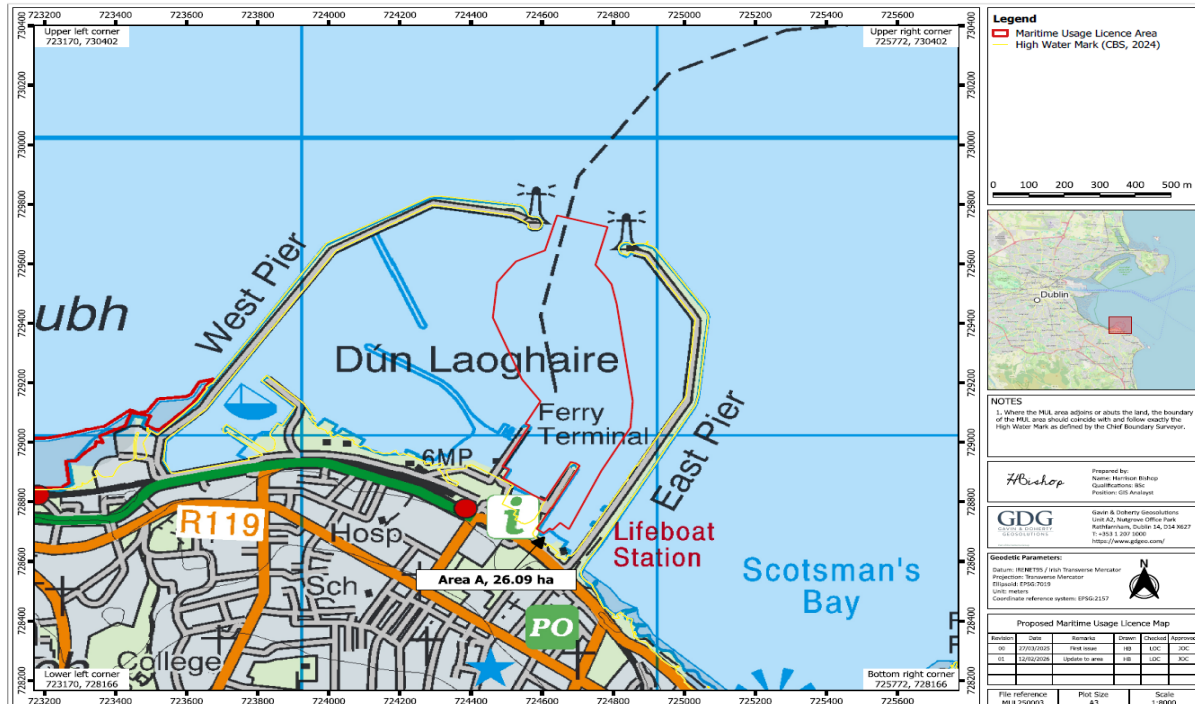


Figure 1 Proposed maritime usage application area (solid red boundary)

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(s), in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites. The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report in support of the application dated 16/02/2026 which was referred to during this assessment.

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (SACs and 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.

European site & site code	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
SACs					
South Dublin Bay SAC (000210)	1.9km	<i>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</i> <i>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]</i> <i>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</i> <i>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2013) . Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (03000)	2.63	<i>Reefs [1170]</i> <i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2013) . Conservation Objectives: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
North Dublin Bay SAC (003000)	5.36	<i>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</i> <i>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]</i> <i>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</i> <i>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]</i> <i>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2013) . Conservation Objectives: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<p><i>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]</i> <i>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120]</i> <i>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]</i> <i>Humid dune slacks [2190]</i> <i><i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]</i></p>			
Baldoyle Bay SAC (000199)	13.5	<p><i>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</i> <i><i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</i> <i>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</i> <i>Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</i></p>	No	No	NPWS (2012) . Conservation Objectives: Baldoyle Bay SAC 000199. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Lambay Island SAC (000204)	21.7	<p><i>Reefs [1170]</i> <i>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]</i> <i><i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</i> <i><i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]</i> <i><i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]</i></p>	No	No	NPWS (2024) . Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SAC 000204. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
SPAs					
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024)	0.07	<p><i>Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046]</i> <i>Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]</i> <i>Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137]</i> <i>Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</i> <i>Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143]</i> <i>Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144]</i> <i>Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]</i> <i>Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]</i></p>	No	No	NPWS 2015 Conservation Objectives: NPWS (2015) South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service,

		<i>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</i> <i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i> <i>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</i>			Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Dalkey Islands SPA (004172)]	3.19	<i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Dalkey Islands SPA 004172. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
North-west Irish Sea SPA (004236)	5.06	<i>Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]</i> <i>Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]</i> <i>Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009]</i> <i>Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013]</i> <i>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</i> <i>Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018]</i> <i>Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus)</i> <i>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</i> <i>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]</i> <i>Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]</i> <i>Great Black-backed Gull (Larus marinus) [A187]</i> <i>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]</i> <i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i> <i>Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199]</i> <i>Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200]</i> <i>Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

		<p><i>Little Gull (Hydrocoloeus minutus) [A862]</i> <i>Little Tern (Sternula albifrons) [A885]</i></p>			
<p>North Bull Island SPA (004006)</p>	<p>5.29</p>	<p><i>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]</i> <i>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]</i> <i>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]</i> <i>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]</i> <i>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]</i> <i>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</i> <i>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]</i> <i>Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143]</i> <i>Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144]</i> <i>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]</i> <i>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]</i> <i>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]</i> <i>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]</i> <i>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]</i> <i>Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</i> <i>Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857]</i> <i>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</i></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>NPWS (2015). Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht</p>
<p>Howth Head Coast SPA (004113)</p>	<p>8.59</p>	<p><i>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]</i></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Howth Head Coast SPA 004113. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

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

Table 3 Potential impacts

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Potential for underwater noise disturbance, displacement or harm from survey activities.	The underwater sound sources from survey activities are not considered likely to be at a level and duration that would cause a significant impact on the site-specific conservation objectives for relevant QIs/SCIs due to the short duration, location, scale and magnitude of the potential impacts on marine mammals, fish and birds identified as relevant QI species.
Potential impacts from airborne noise and visual impacts marine mammals and birds.	The potential for airborne noise and visual impacts to be at a level and duration that would cause a significant impact on site-specific conservation objectives for relevant QI/SCI was not identified in this application. This is due to the short duration, location, scale and low magnitude of the potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage on marine mammals and birds in this busy harbour environment.
Potential physical damage of habitats and species caused by disturbance/turbidity/siltation.	The potential for physical damage from proposed site investigation activity is considered not likely to have a significant effect on site-specific conservation objectives due to the physical barriers and distance between the investigations and protected habitats, along with the short duration and low magnitude of the potential impacts and the resilience of the associated communities.

In-combination effects

The potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage(s)/activities/site investigations must be considered individually and also in combination with other plans or projects. All types of plans or projects that could, in-combination with this application, have a significant effect, have been considered. This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement and is assessed primarily in terms of potential spatial and temporal impacts.

The spatial scope of the in-combination assessment is the proposed MUL area and is based on Dún Laoghaire Harbour environs. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. e.g. The applicant originally applied for a 5-year licence but further to a request from MARA regarding justification of this duration the applicant outlined that a 2-year timeline is considered more appropriate. Therefore, the temporal scope is considered to be 2 years.

A search of relevant databases was undertaken on the 07/05/2026 (MARA, EPA, An Coimisiún Pleanála, Dun Laoghaire Co Co, DECC Foreshore, Marine Institute, Dept of Transport). Table 4 below outlines those activities which were considered to have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

Table 4: List of projects which were considered with regard to potential in-combination impacts on European sites.

Application Ref. & Applicant	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area	Status
MUL250023	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.	Spatial overlap	Applied
MUL230034	Codling Wind Park Ltd. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	Directly adjacent	Granted
MUL240010 A	Eirgrid - Site investigation works	Directly adjacent	Granted
MAC20230012 B	ORE Operations and Maintenance facility	Directly adjacent	Granted
MAC240020 A	Operations and Maintenance Facility for ORE	Directly adjacent	Granted
FS004490	Dún Laoghaire Marina	Directly adjacent	Granted
FS006786	St Michaels Pier	Directly adjacent	Granted
FS007613	Moorings	Spatial overlap	Granted
ACP 306746	Alterations to development permission	Directly adjacent	Granted
ACP321992	Offshore Wind Development	Directly adjacent	Granted

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

- Dún Laoghaire Harbour Master Plan
- Dublin Bay Biosphere Biodiversity Conservation and Research Strategy 2022-2026.
- Dublin City Council Development Plan 2022–2028
- Dublin City Council - Climate Neutral Dublin 2030, 2024
- Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
- Dún Laoghaire County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
- Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR) Biodiversity Action Plan for 2021-2025
- Climate Action Plan 2025 and Water Action Plan 2022–2027
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031
- National Port Policy 2013



Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report can be excluded at this time as there is no significant source-pathway-receptor link identified.

The site investigations are of very short duration and of low impact within Dún Laoghaire Harbour. Two projects have been identified with a potential spatial overlap. However, one of the identified projects is currently part of the MUL assessment process (MUL250023) and a temporal overlap is not expected to occur. The other project (FS007613) was granted in relation to the maintenance of preexisting moorings within Dún Laoghaire Harbour in 2024, this activity is not considered to lead to significant in-combination impacts.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

5. Screening Determination Statement

<p>The assessment of significant effects:</p> <p>Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, the information on file, and having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature, scale and duration of the proposed site investigation activities, • The distance to the nearest European sites; • The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects; • Potential impacts from underwater noise disturbance, displacement or harm from survey activities on marine mammals/fish/birds; • Potential impacts from airborne noise and visual impacts on marine mammals and birds; • Potential physical damage of habitats and species caused by disturbance/turbidity/siltation, <p>it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, County Hall, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, A96 K6C9, Ireland to carry out <i>'marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000'</i> within Dún Laoghaire Harbour, Co Dublin will not require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It can 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.</p>		
Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Maria O Connell Marine Analyst	11/05/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker		14/05/2026