



February 9, 2026

[licence@mara.gov.ie](mailto:licence@mara.gov.ie)

**Re: MUL250021 - National Oceanography Centre**

A Chara,

The Marine Divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the UK National Oceanography Centre's application to conduct systematic scientific surveys in the deep-sea Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel.

It is essential that the sea-fishing and aquaculture sectors are fully recognised and given a high priority as a long-standing, pre-existing, and traditional activity in the marine environment as the proposed development is being evaluated.

Fishers and aquaculture site holders are primary food producers dependent upon certain marine areas which are particularly important for food production. This primary production is critical to supplying the downstream indigenous seafood processing and export industries and in sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities. The importance of these primary and secondary food production activities is reflected in the Government's Food Vision 2030 policy.

To inform the DAFM comments, the observations of the Marine Institute (MI) on the application were requested.

The MI advised that as the duration of the operations is short, they should not interfere with fishing activities, assuming any necessary Marine Notices are made, and exact location of the moorings are published after deployment.

Potential for cumulative impacts should be considered in relation to similar/other activities taking place in close proximity.

The MI propose survey dates from 26th June to 3rd August 2026 onboard the RRS James Cook, with a licence request from June 2026 to December 2027 to accommodate potential vessel schedule changes and recovery of moorings deployed in 2026.

DAFM recognises that the applicant's aim is to promote co-existence and minimise potential disruption to commercial fishing activities in the area. The evaluation of potential impacts of the surveys on commercial sea fishing activities needs to be given consideration within the context of the requirements set out under the Maritime Area Planning Act and the National Marine Planning Framework. (NMPF).

The principles in the NMPF of avoiding, minimising, or mitigating impacts on access to existing activities (including specific policies on Fisheries and Aquaculture) should be followed and any proposed survey activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas.

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**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara**  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



All relevant fishing organisations should receive any applicable Marine Notice/s, and be made aware of any proposed works, at the earliest opportunity to ensure the optimum coordination of activities and to limit potential disturbances to fishing activities to the greatest extent possible.

Please also find an attached document from the MI which provides further comments for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

**Marine Divisions**  
**An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara**  
*Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine*

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