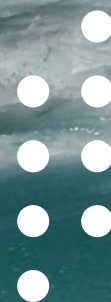


MARA

An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuiri
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority



2023
2024



ANNUAL REPORT

17 July 2023 to 31 December 2024



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Foreword from the Chairperson and CEO

We are pleased to introduce the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority's (MARA) first Annual Report that covers the period 17 July 2023 to 31 December 2024¹.

The establishment of MARA represents one of the most important maritime governance reforms in the history of the Irish State. This marks a significant milestone in Ireland's efforts to establish a robust, transparent and fit-for-purpose system for the governance of Ireland's vast and diverse maritime area. As an independent regulatory agency, MARA is tasked with implementing the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act 2021 – a transformative piece of legislation that places sustainable marine planning and development at the heart of national policy.

Ireland's maritime area is of strategic national importance and encompasses a total claimed jurisdiction of around 900,000 square kilometres when all submissions lodged with the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf are considered. It holds enormous potential as a food source and for offshore renewable energy (ORE) source. It supports, marine biodiversity, sustainable transport, aquaculture, and so much more. MARA's role is to manage the State's maritime jurisdiction in a way that is congruent with Government Policy supporting Ireland's climate action goals, economic development, and environmental protection.

On establishment, MARA's immediate priority was to recruit staff and establish sound regulatory policies and procedures to fulfil its mandate. MARA was also able to accept applications including those for critical marine infrastructure that will support the delivery and deployment of offshore wind projects, such as port development works, as well as other areas of maritime development. In its first months of operation, MARA focused on establishing the core structures, systems and governance frameworks required to deliver its statutory mandate. This report outlines the progress that MARA has made in building a capable, responsive and efficient organisation. It details early operational priorities, including the development of a transparent and efficient consenting regime, the administration of authorisations, and compliance and enforcement functions.

One of the key objectives from the outset was to establish MARA as an independent organisation. This

was achieved by raising its profile as an independent regulator across government departments, industry, the environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGO) sector and with other regulatory agencies in Ireland and internationally. MARA exchanged with comparable organisations on best practice, organisational structures and decision-making processes. More specifically throughout this period, MARA partnered with the Office of the Planning Regulator to engage with local authorities on understanding the respective roles under the MAP Act. MARA engaged with environmental NGOs through the IEN (Irish Environment Network), Coastwatch, Birdwatch Ireland and the Irish Ocean Literacy Network and participated in workshops, networks and conferences with industry. The Maritime Regulators Liaison Group was established by MARA to improve coordination and communication across all regulatory agencies operating in the maritime space.

This first Annual Report captures not only the organisational progress but the wider strategic significance of MARA's role in shaping Ireland's maritime future. As delivery of MARA's first [Strategic Plan \(2024–2027\)](#) is progressed, MARA is determined to grow into a world-class maritime regulator, ensuring Ireland's ocean space is developed and protected for the benefit of current and future generations.

We acknowledge the support of the Board, MARA's dedicated staff, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. We are also grateful to all MARA's stakeholders, whose input and collaboration will remain central to the Authority's work in the years ahead.



Mark Mellett,
Vice Admiral DSM (RTD)
Chairperson

Laura Brien
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Reporting period for the first annual report is in accordance with Section 68(2) of the MAP Act.

Who We Are

Board of MARA

Board Member Role Date Appointed Expiry Date

- Mark Mellett Chair 17/07/2023 16/07/2027
- Karen Banks Board Member 01/08/2023 31/07/2027
- Ruth Brennan Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2027
- Philip Daly Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2027
- Patrick Gibbons Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2027
- Niamh Kenny Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2027
- James Massey Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2027
- Brendan McGrath Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2026
- Patrick Moran Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2026
- Paul O'Neill Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2026
- Alma Walsh Board Member 17/07/2023 16/07/2026

Audit and Risk Committee

- Niamh Kenny ARC Chair 18/07/2023 16/07/2027
- Dónall Curtin ARC Member 11/03/2024 16/07/2027
- James Massey ARC Member 24/08/2023 16/07/2027
- Paul O'Neill ARC Member 18/07/2023 16/07/2026

Chief Executive

Laura Brien

Management Team

- **Maritime Authorisations:**
Karen Creed appointed 15/01/2024
- **Compliance, Enforcement and Revenue Collection:**
Yvonne Doris appointed 15/01/2024
- **Assessment, Research and Data:**
John Evans appointed 04/03/2024
- **Legal Services:**
Alan Harte appointed 09/12/2024
- **Strategy, Governance and Stakeholder Engagement:**
Rory O'Leary returned to parent department 17/07/2024
(Eoin Leahy Director of Policy and External Affairs appointed 27/05/2025)
- **Corporate Affairs:**
Frank Ronan appointed 02/01/2024

Establishing the new Regulator

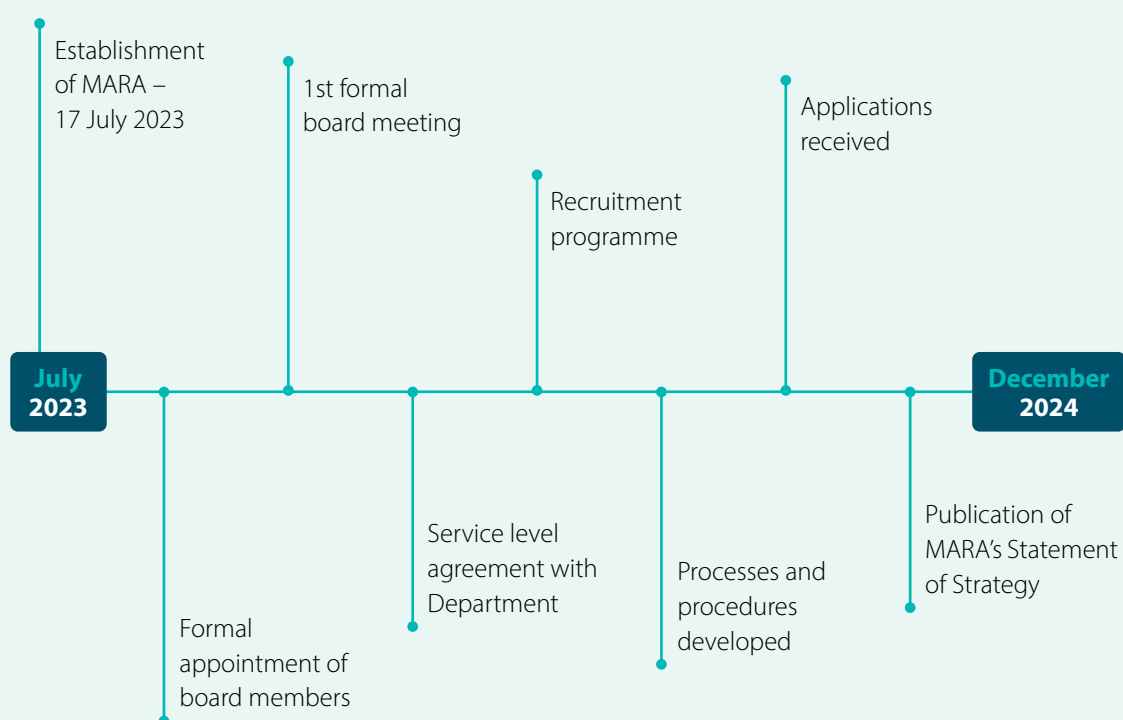
The timeline for establishing MARA began in December 2021 with the enactment of the MAP Act. This formed part of an unprecedented extensive marine management reform programme in Ireland that put in place a planning system for the maritime area of Ireland.

MARA was formally established, as an independent regulator, under the MAP Act on the 17 July 2023. Prior to this date the members of the MARA Board,

who were appointed in February 2023, oversaw preparatory governance work in advance of the formal establishment date. This work was supported by seconded staff who worked as part of the MARA Establishment Unit in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

This report outlines MARA's activities, and the significant progress made by the organisation during the initial 18 months of operation.

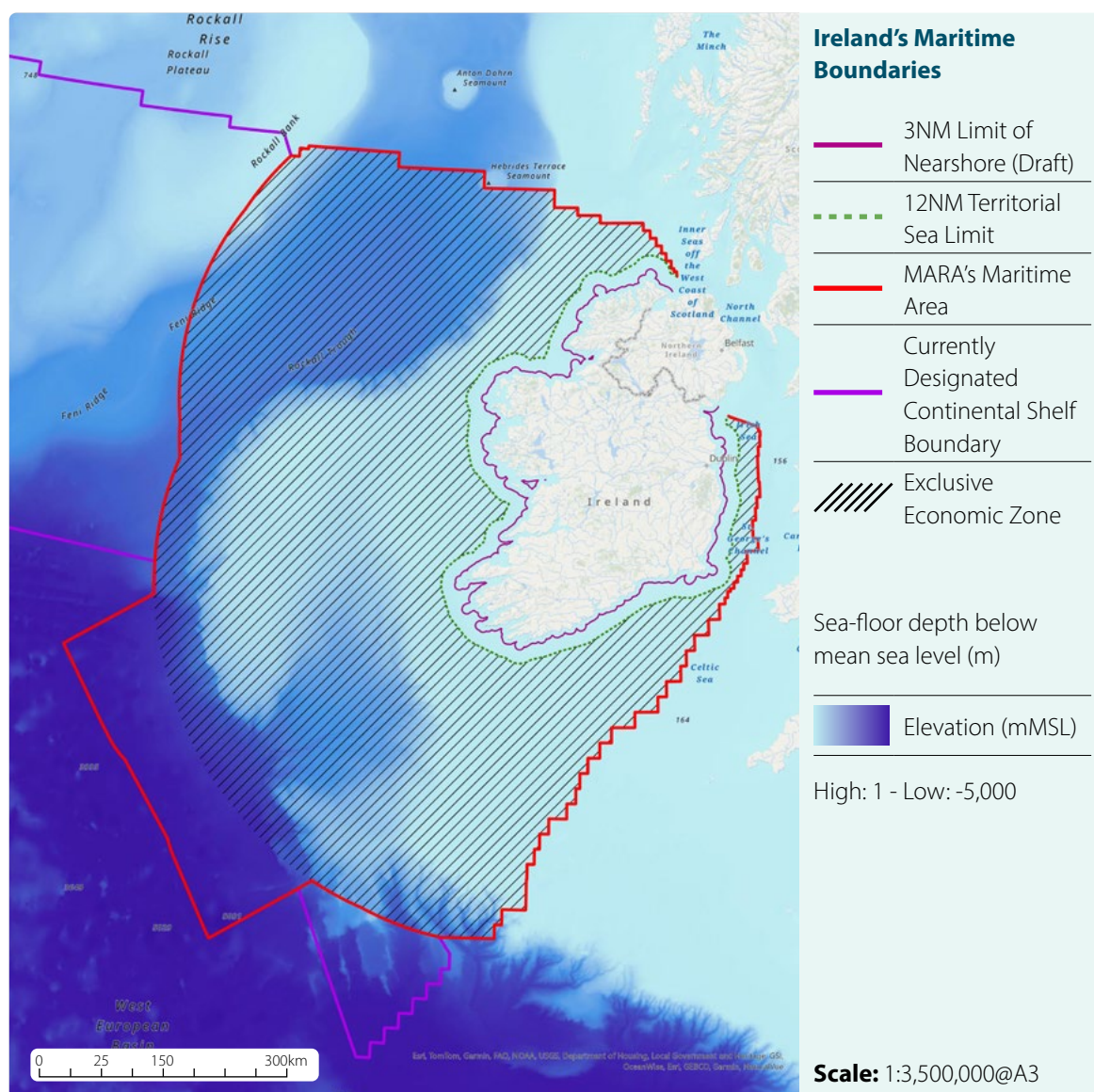
Establishing MARA



What MARA Does

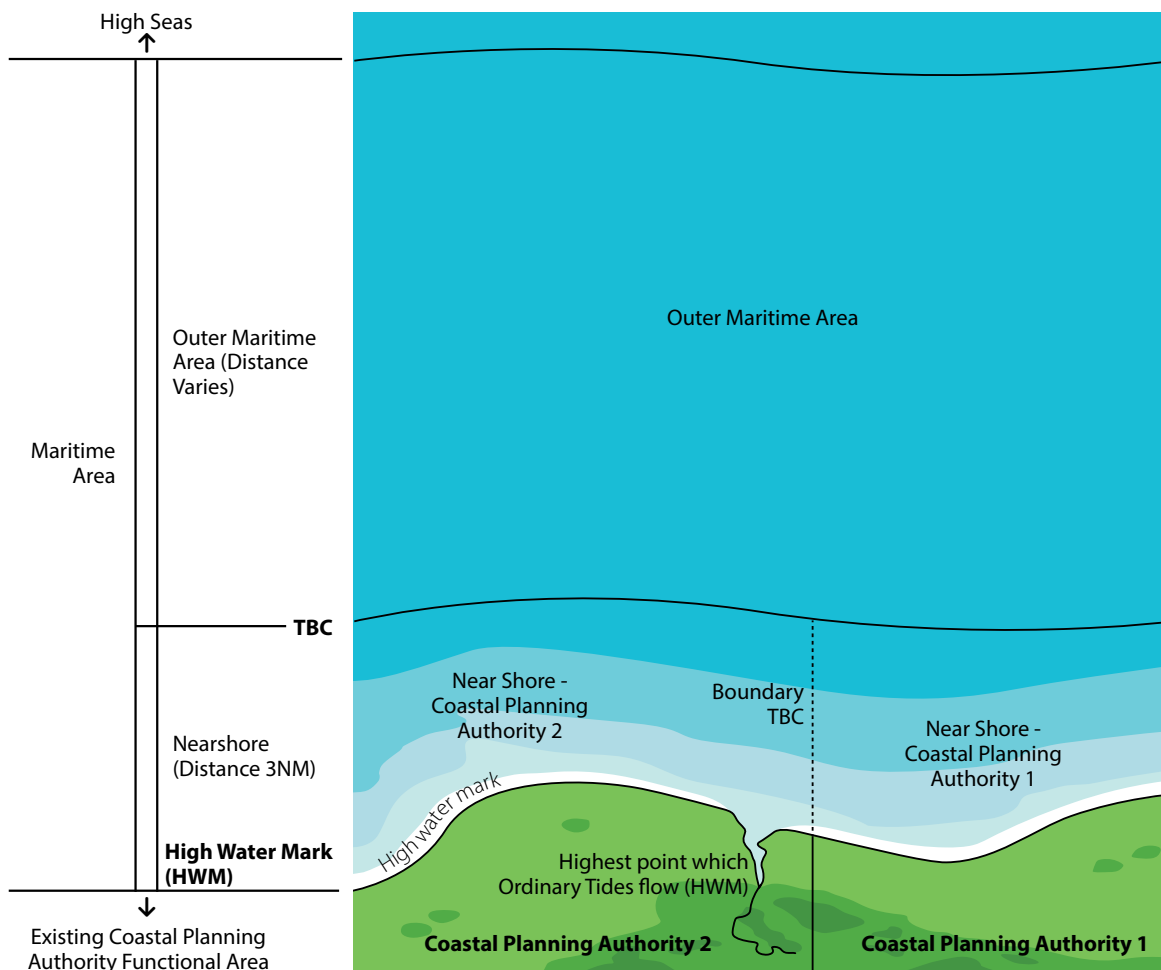
MARA is Ireland's independent maritime regulator. It has a key role in authorising access to Ireland's maritime area, which is seven times the size of Ireland's landmass at almost 500,000 square kilometres². The regulatory regime for development of and specific use of the maritime area from the high-water mark to the outer limit of the State's continental shelf, the EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone), is administered by MARA in conjunction with An Coimisiún Pleanála and the Coastal Planning Authorities. This new regime replaced existing State and development consent regimes and streamlined arrangements.

Ireland's Maritime Area



2 In 2009 Ireland lodged a claim with the UN Commission on Limits of the Continental Shelf for a maritime area of approximately 400,000 square kilometers in the Rockall Hatton area. A final determination for jurisdiction in this area is the subject of ongoing bilateral and multilateral engagement.

Close up of shoreline

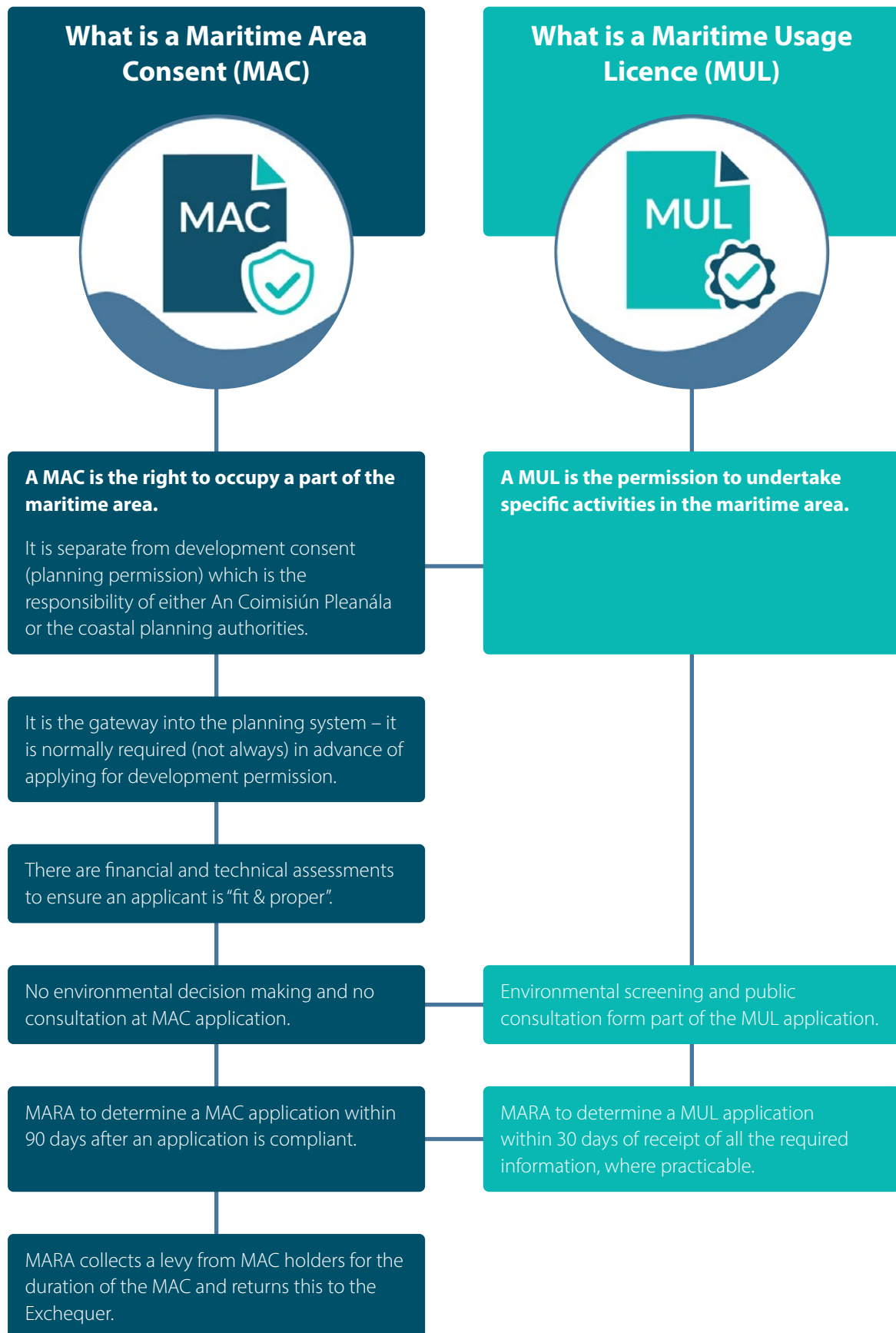


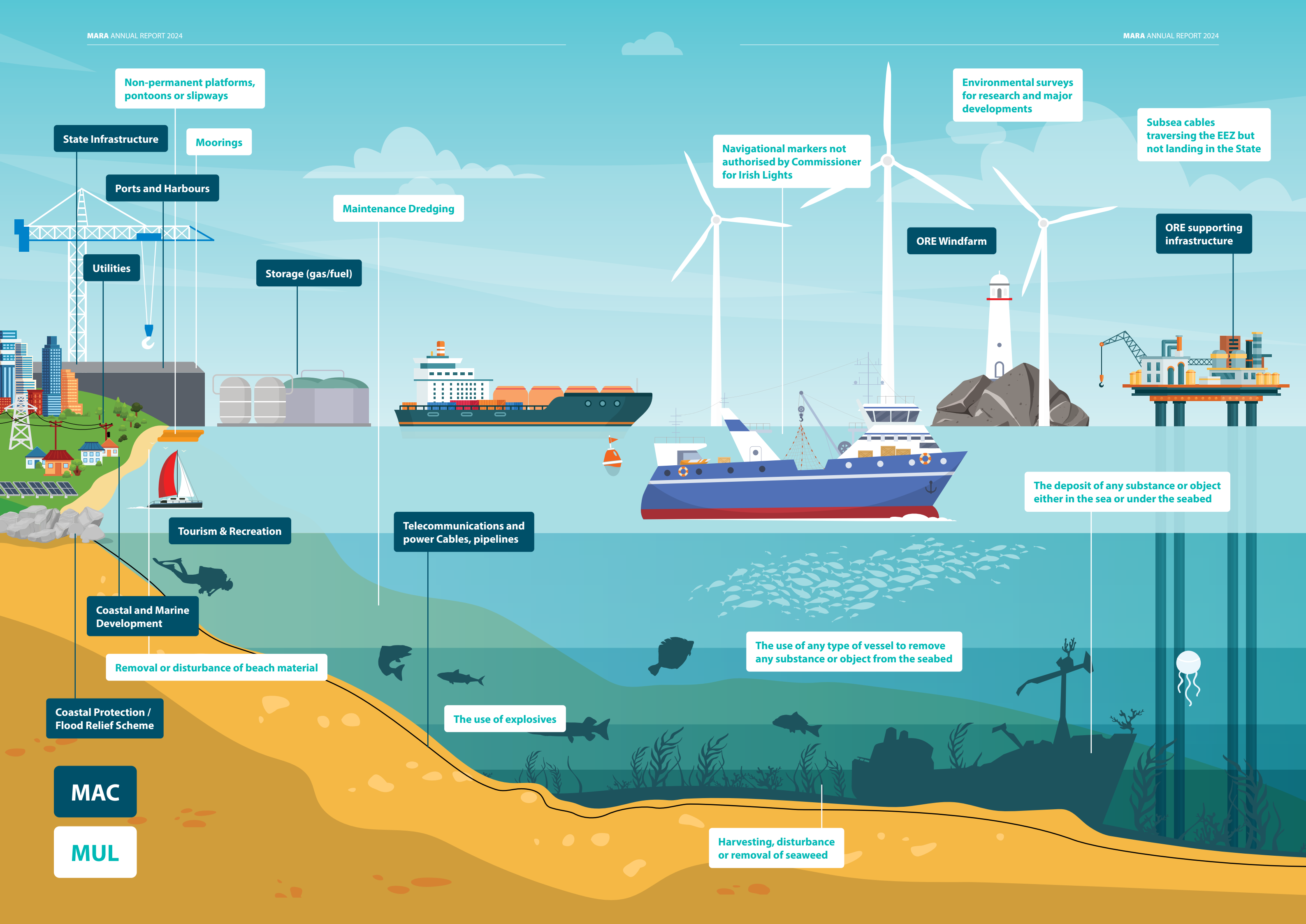
MARA operates within a policy and statutory framework set by Government and as a State body it reports to the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

All of MARA's functions commenced on establishment day, 17 July 2023.

MARA's functions include:

- Authorising access to the State's maritime area through two new authorisations, namely Maritime Area Consent (MAC) and Maritime Usage Licence (MUL).
- Administration of the existing authorisations issued through the Foreshore Act 1933 and transitioning these to the new MAP Act regime, such as through amendments or change of authorisation holders.
- Compliance and enforcement of maritime authorisations. MARA is responsible for compliance assessment and enforcement of existing Foreshore consents, MACs, MULs, and ensuring compliance with offshore development permission issued by An Coimisiún Pleanála.
- Continuity of the State's revenue collection for the existing Foreshore consent portfolio. MARA now manages the State's existing foreshore estate, where there are approximately 1,250 authorisations issued under the Foreshore Act 1930 including leases, licences and other consents. This administration role involves surrenders, assignments and collection of annual rent for its return to the Exchequer.
- Enabling co-operation between regulators of the maritime area. Ireland's maritime area is a shared space with many competing and complimentary priorities and interests. To ensure regulatory certainty and avoid duplication of activities, MARA will encourage co-operation among other maritime regulators.
- Statutory Consultee. In addition to MARA's core functions, MARA is a prescribed body for proposed activities in the maritime area which includes planning applications made to Coastal Planning Authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála.





Non-permanent platforms, pontoons or slipways

State Infrastructure

Moorings

Ports and Harbours

Utilities

Storage (gas/fuel)

Maintenance Dredging

Navigational markers not authorised by Commissioner for Irish Lights

Environmental surveys for research and major developments

Subsea cables traversing the EEZ but not landing in the State

ORE Windfarm

ORE supporting infrastructure

The deposit of any substance or object either in the sea or under the seabed

The use of any type of vessel to remove any substance or object from the seabed

The use of explosives

Harvesting, disturbance or removal of seaweed

Tourism & Recreation

Telecommunications and power Cables, pipelines

Coastal and Marine Development

Removal or disturbance of beach material

Coastal Protection / Flood Relief Scheme

MAC

MUL

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

MARA launched its first Statement of Strategy in 2024. It sets out a clear vision for MARA through to 2027. The subtitle “under the shelter of the ocean people thrive” recognises Ireland’s *dúchas na mara*- sense of belonging to, and responsibility for, the sea.



MARA’s Mission

“Our mission is to act as custodian and regulator of Ireland’s maritime area. We aim to ensure that Ireland’s marine environment is protected for the future through co-operation, compliance, enforcement and transparent decision making.”



MARA’s Vision

“We will be a trusted maritime regulator contributing to the achievement of a thriving ocean ecosystem and the sustainable management of the maritime area of Ireland for the benefit of nature and generations to come.”

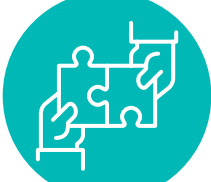
MARA’s Values

1



Integrity

2



Collaboration

3



Innovation

4



Confidence

5

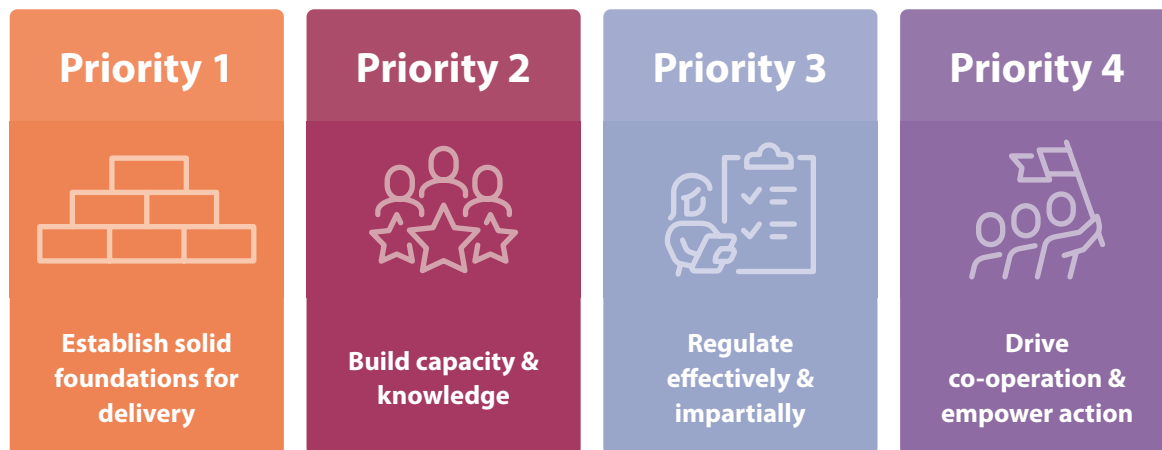


Inclusion

Implementing MARA's Priorities

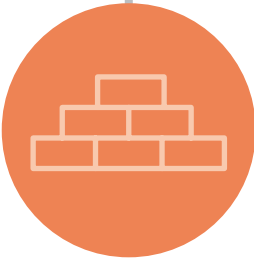
This reporting period is characterised by firsts. Each activity that was progressed was a first for MARA, requiring processes and procedures to be established. As a new organisation MARA's first strategic plan and priorities reflect this start-up phase.

Strategic Priorities



During the first 18 months MARA has made significant achievements across several work streams, advancing a number of the strategy's cross-cutting objectives.

Priority 1



Establish solid foundations for delivery

This includes building an infrastructure to assess applications, issue timely robust decisions and deliver effective governance

Objective 1.1

Deliver a streamlined regulatory process that manages expectations throughout the regulatory lifecycle and effectively utilises technology and ICT solutions.

Objective 1.2

Develop a robust risk-based approach to regulation with proportionate conditions.

Objective 1.3

Foster effective governance and build an environment of trust, transparency and accountability through appropriate structures, oversight and reporting.

Objective 1.4

Ensure robust systems of internal control and financial management are established and operating effectively.

Objective 1.5

Provide a fit for purpose modern HQ that will nurture MARA's independence and cultivate a shared perspective of culture.



Upon establishment, MARA commenced accepting applications. Key developments included streamlined decision-making processes. Enhancement of technical tools and procedures, and published information on applications received and determined on the MARA website.



MARA's Board was established putting essential governance and oversight structures in place. The Board leads the strategic oversight of MARA and delivered MARA's first Statement of Strategy (2024 – 2027) in June 2024.



Under the framework of a Service Level Agreement, early corporate achievements included the establishment of independent procurement and payment procedures, opening of a dedicated bank account, and implementation of new financial control processes. By the end of 2024, MARA had achieved a very high level of administrative independence from its parent Department.



The opening of MARA's new office HQ in Drinagh, Wexford in July 2023, marked the transition to a fully independent organisation. The groundwork was laid over 2024 to deliver the office fit out works required to provide a modern fit for purpose headquarters.



Priority 2



Build capacity and knowledge

This includes growing our team, building capacity within the organisation, enhancing our knowledge, insight and innovation, and embedding our structures

Objective 2.1

Grow our team with suitably qualified and experienced staff to effectively fulfil our responsibilities.

Objective 2.2

Build capacity and deploy resources in line with regulatory and national policy priorities to achieve maximum impact and enhance overall service levels.

Objective 2.3

Ensure our people possess the expertise, skills and knowledge required to deliver on our mandate now, and in the face of new developments in the maritime sector.

Objective 2.4

Foster an open, professional and positive culture that promotes trust, collaboration, people development, and continuous improvement.

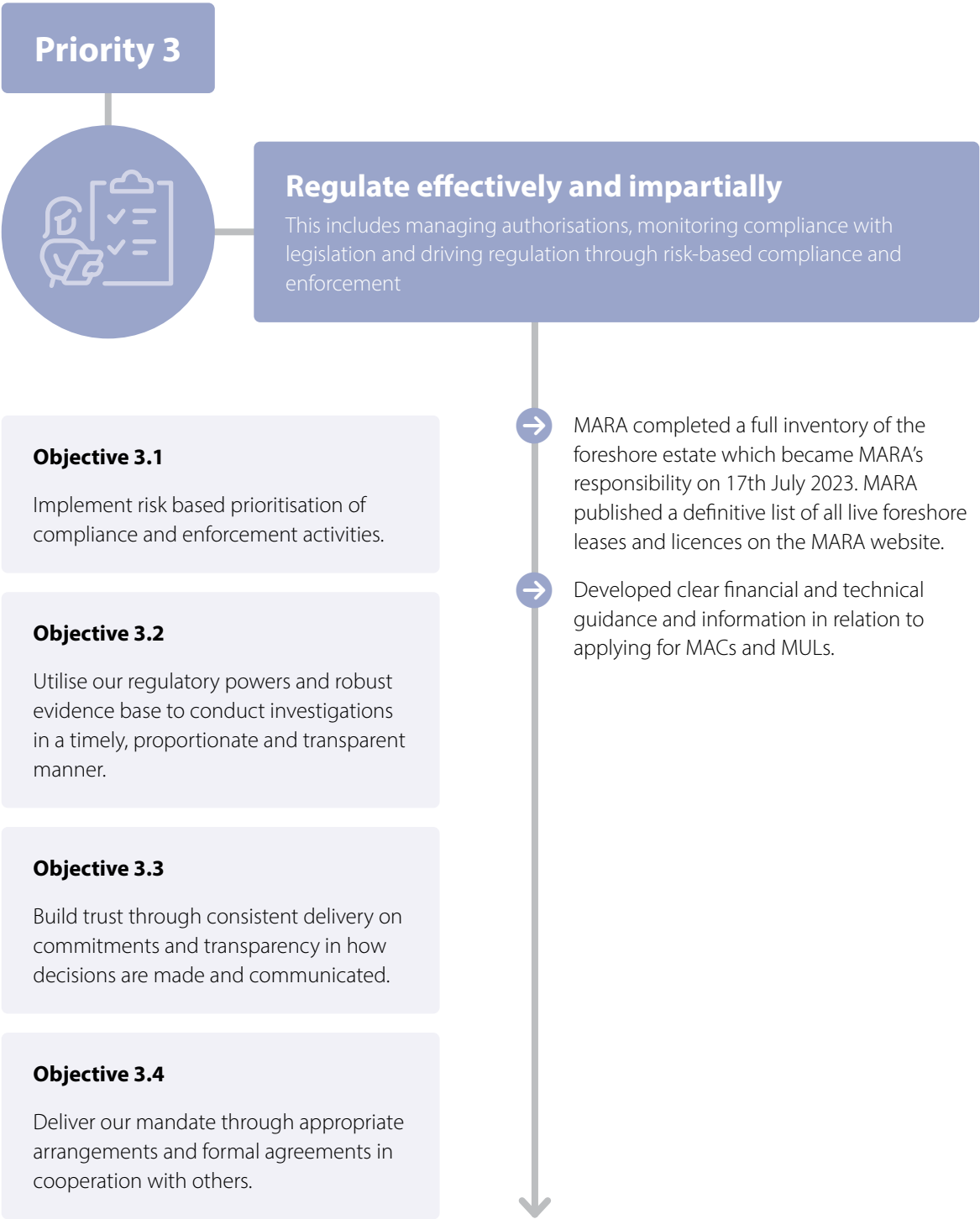


Initially, operating under a Service Level Agreement with MARU's parent Department, MARU consisted of an advance team of 22 seconded staff, led by a newly appointed CEO. By the end of 2024, MARU had staff of 48 in line with the approved Workforce Plan and Skills needs assessment.



Operationally, MARU demonstrated significant progress in building internal capacity and service delivery. In addition to establishing the Corporate and Governance spine, three key regulatory teams – Maritime Authorisations, Assessment, Research and Data (ARD), and Compliance, Enforcement and Revenue Collection (CER), were established and became fully functional, issuing decisions, reflecting a strong administrative and analytical foundation. Legal services were provided by the Chief State Solicitors Office through 2023 and 2024.





Priority 4



Drive co-operation and empower action

This includes being a leading voice for the protection of Ireland's maritime area proactively informing policy, legislation, and better choices for the environment to overcome sea blindness and foster ocean literacy

Objective 4.1

Develop a communications strategy to increase public awareness of MARA's roles and core purpose, and to build our reputation.

Objective 4.2

Work proactively with other regulators to improve cooperation that will address gaps, eliminate duplication and improve the overall maritime regulation system.

Objective 4.3

Collaborate with national and international stakeholders to promote a greater understanding of maritime regulation to encourage compliance.

Objective 4.4

Build on existing sector expertise and commission research that deepens our knowledge of the maritime area, its regulation and ocean literacy.

Objective 4.5

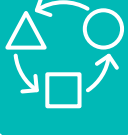
Utilise organisational knowledge and expertise to inform regulation and policy development relevant to the maritime area.

- Coordinated communications activities and MARA messaging that supported delivery of national policies.
- Lead and facilitated the National Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group.
- Engaged with and informed the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce and the MSP Advisory group.
- MARA conducted its first public consultation on the Financial Capability Assessment Guidance. Contributed significantly to national policy by ensuring its role was well-defined in the Future Framework for ORE and related strategies. MARA also collaborated with DCEE on reviewing and preparing amendments to the Maritime Area Planning Act and launched the development of a competitive framework for awarding MACs. Through sustained engagement with other national and international regulatory bodies, MARA strengthened its policy positioning and contributed to shaping Ireland's offshore regulatory landscape.

Deep Dive Into MARA



MARA is organised into six divisions:

-  **1 Maritime Authorisations**
-  **2 Compliance, Enforcement and Revenue Collection**
-  **3 Assessment, Research and Data**
-  **4 Legal Services**
-  **5 Strategy, Governance and Stakeholder Engagement**
-  **6 Corporate Affairs**

01. Maritime Authorisations

Upon establishment, MARA was in a position to accept applications for MACs and MULs. Processes and procedures were developed during 2023, with teams demonstrating significant progress in building internal capacity and service delivery for assessing applications and issuing authorisations.

MARA also had immediate responsibility for managing the 'Relevant Project' MACs which were issued by the then Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications under transitional functions provided for in the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.

In 2024, the number of applications increased, and MARA issued decisions (see tables within Key Statistics section) reflecting a strong administrative and analytical foundation. Key operational improvements were made to MARA's processes to reduce timelines to complete decision making, improve the robustness of decision making and increase transparency.

2023/24 Outcomes	
Process & Procedures	Established procedures for issuing MACs: • Fit and proper test for MACs • Established prioritisation process • Established section 90 process for designating state organisations as fit and proper • Established and implemented procedures for material and non-material amendments of MACs Established procedures for issuing MULs: • Established internal Procedure for managing licence applications • Established Appropriate Assessment Procedure
Application Forms & Guidelines	• Developed and published guidance and application forms for new applications, material and non-material amendments of MACs • Published guidance for new applications on the website • Published guidance for material and non-material amendment applications
Regulations	• Maritime Area Consent (Certain Application Fees) (No. 2) Regulations 2023 • Maritime Area Consent (Non-Material Amendment) Regulations 2024 • Maritime Area Usage (Licence Fees) Regulations 2023 • Maritime Area Usage (Licence Conditions) Regulations 2023
Levy Framework	• Developed and approved for publication by MARA
MACS	• First MAC issued 14/12/2023 • First amended MAC (non-material amendment) issued 16/5/2024 • First amended MAC (material amendment) 26/06/2024

Focus on MAC Assessment – Fit and Proper Person

MARA established a process to assess whether the MAC Applicant (relevant person) can be deemed “Fit and Proper” to hold a MAC for the intended purpose. This includes the following assessments



General Assessment requires completion of a set questionnaire on the application form regarding possible legal or financial issues pertaining to the applicant



Financial Capability Assessment of the applicant to build, maintain and operate the proposed project and decommission infrastructure/ rehabilitate the maritime area



Technical Capability Assessment of the applicant to build, maintain and operate the proposed project and decommission infrastructure/ rehabilitate the maritime area

Key Statistics

An overview of the applications received during the first 18 months of operation is provided at figures 1-3. The variety of organisations that applied to MARA for both MACs and MULs is illustrated at figure 1. The diverse range of activities and developments regulated by MARA's authorisations (both MACs and MULs) is shown at figure 2. As Ireland's maritime area regulator, MARA's remit extends across the breadth of Ireland, figure 3 illustrates the application activity, during the reporting period, for MACs and MULs which included the following counties Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Sligo, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

Finally, figure 4 shows, from MARA establishment date to the end 2024, the number of applications received (across both MAC and MULs), determinations, applications withdrawn, and those on hand in each month. MARA started receiving applications shortly after establishment date. The number of determinations began to increase from April 2024 onwards, after the recruitment of new staff and the development of the necessary regulatory policies and procedures.

Figure 1

Applications & Determinations by Applicant Type

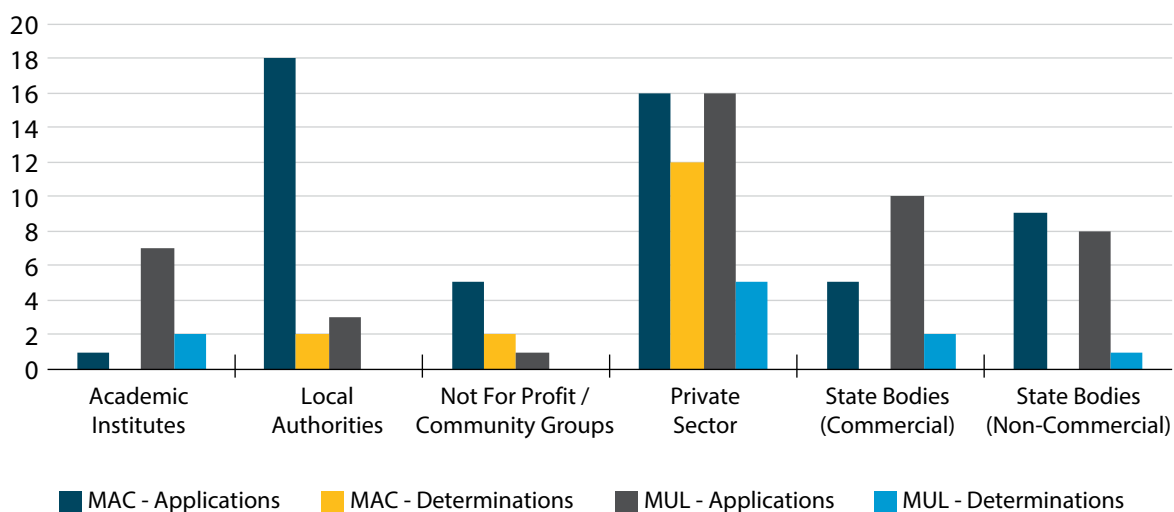


Figure 2

Applications & Determinations by Project Type

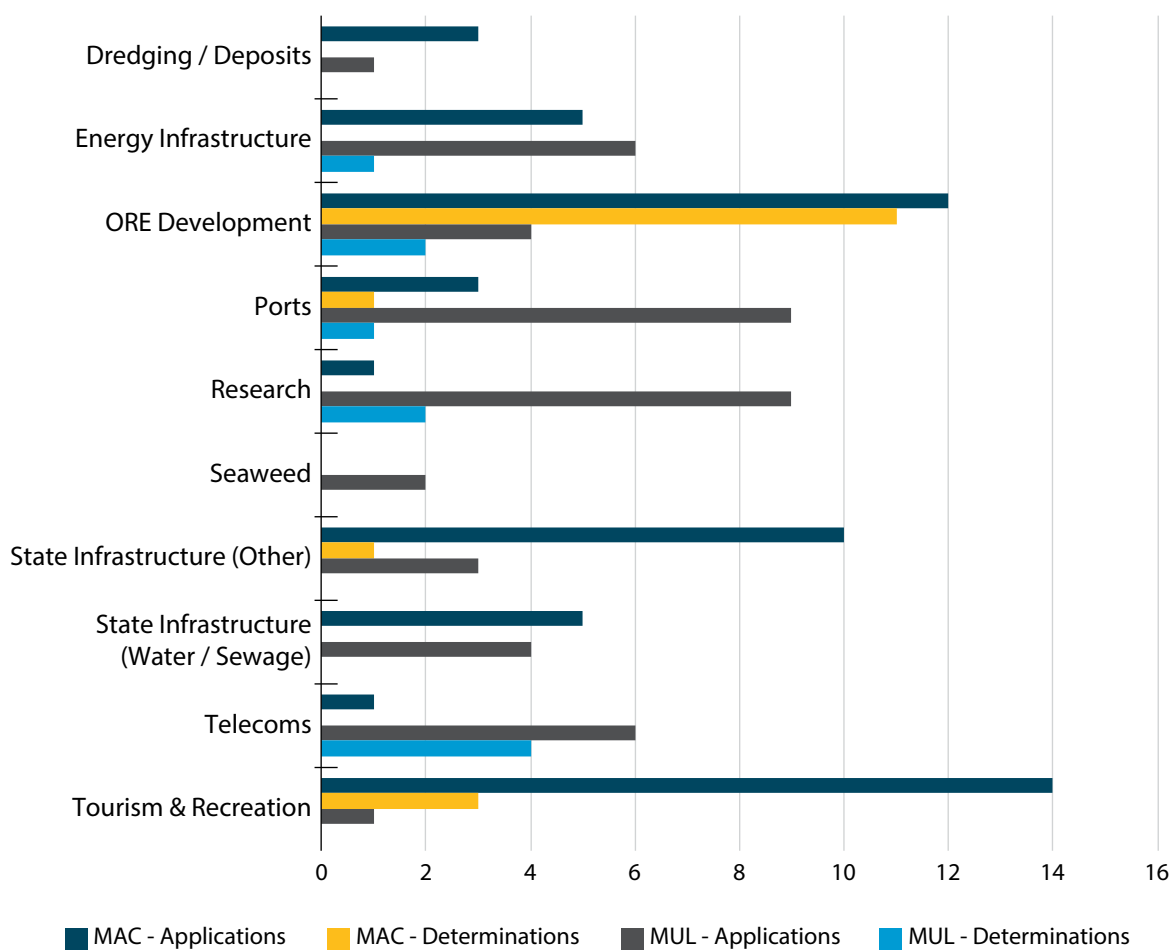


Figure 3
Applications & Determinations by County

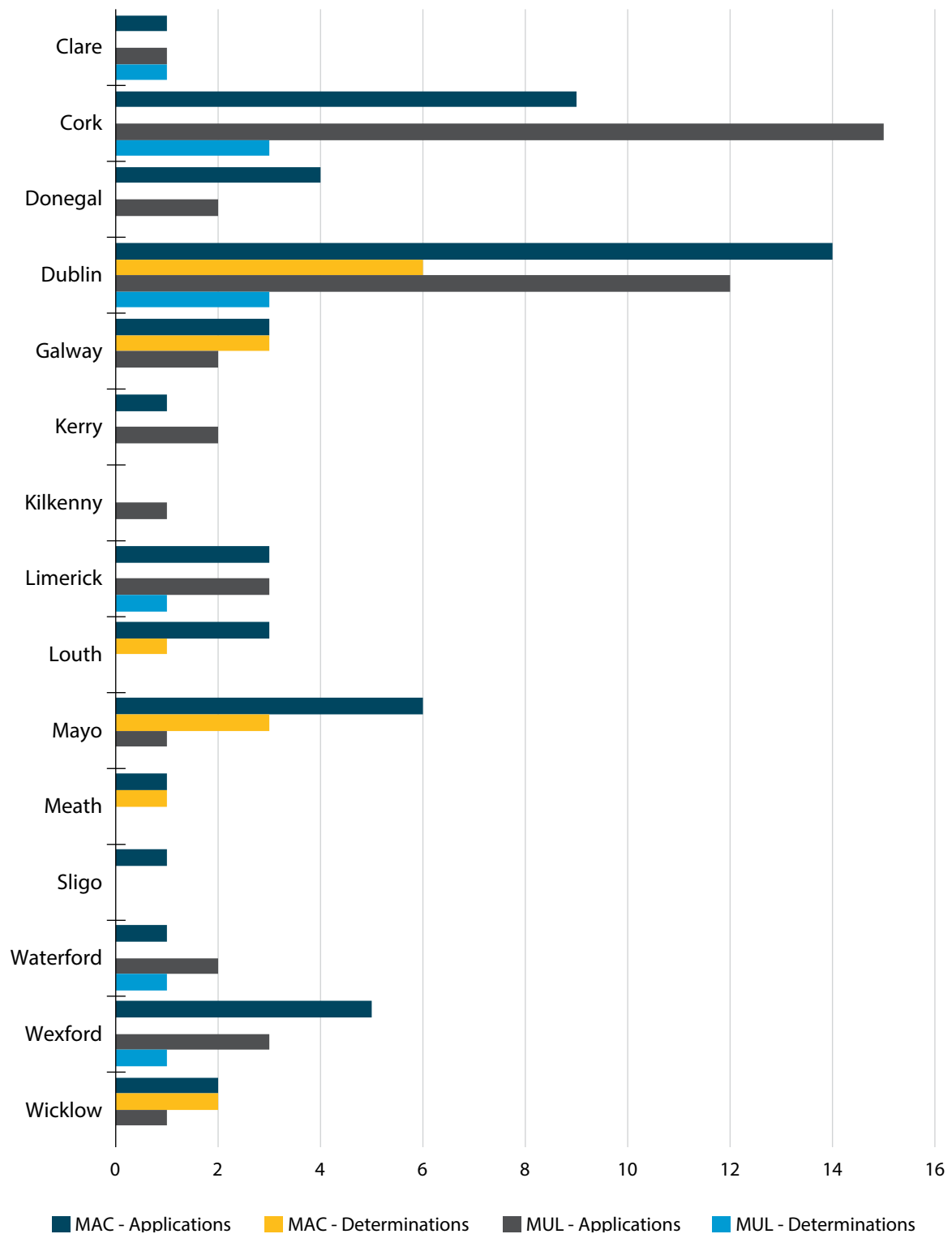
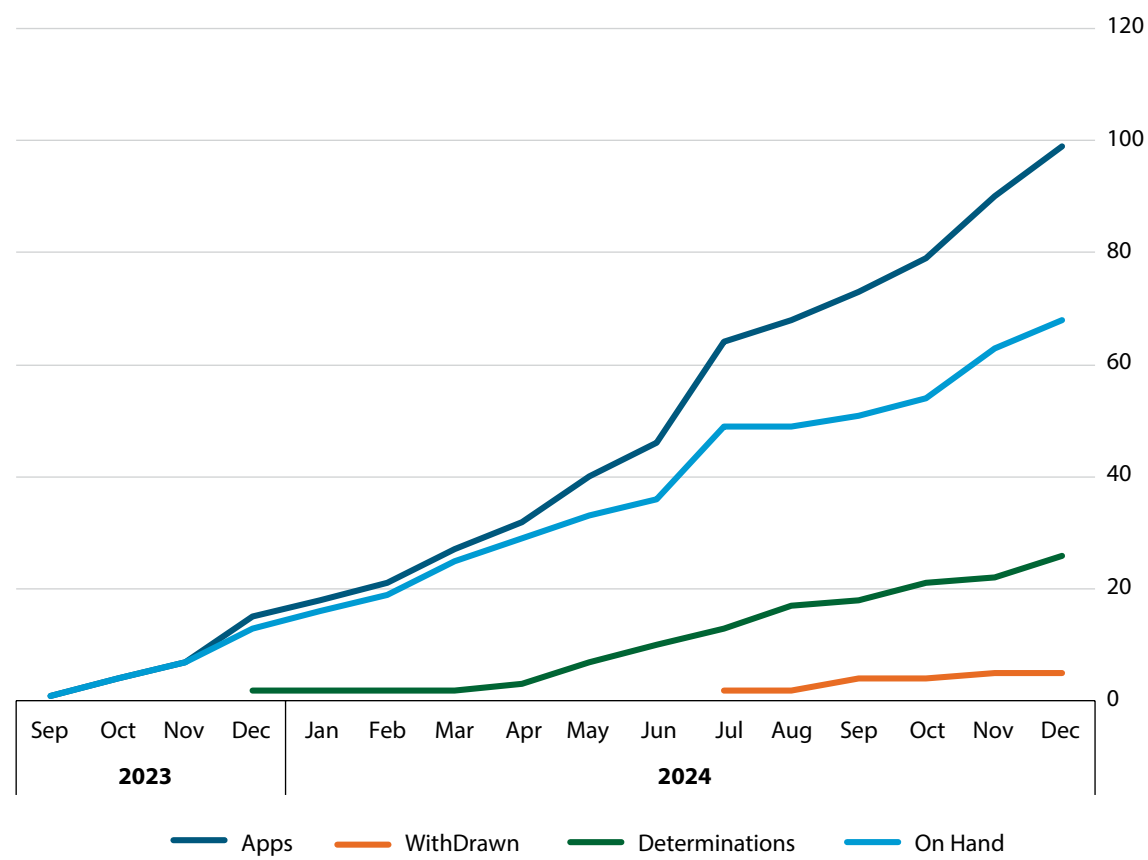


Figure 4
Authorisations: Rolling Totals



02. Assessment, Research and Data

The Assessment, Research & Data (ARD) division supports the other regulatory teams through Appropriate Assessment and various other environmental, engineering, and technical assessments, and GIS/Mapping activities.

2023/4 Outcomes	
Process & Procedures	• Development of Appropriate Assessment and MAC standard reports. • Health and Safety protocols put in place for Marine Advisors carrying site inspections and investigations.
Knowledge sharing	• ARD facilitated information sessions for all MARA staff on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (by DHLGH) and the Water Framework Directive (by EPA). • Marine Advisors attended Irish Planning Institute workshop on the ecosystem-based approach to assessing maritime developments and activities.
Advisory	• A comprehensive review was carried out of the Planning and Development Bill 2024 prior to its enactment, with additional responsibilities for MARA identified. • A survey of local government planning departments was carried out to gain insight into understanding of the requirements of the MAPA by Coastal Planning Authorities and inform future engagement.
Data	• Development of an approach to implementation of the Maritime Authorisations Database (as required by the MAPA) and the Maritime Consent Register (as required by the Planning and Development Act 2024) circulated and agreed with key stakeholders. Initial engagement with the Marine Institute on a collaborative approach to a National Marine Data Service also commenced.
Research	• ARD engaged with SEAI and the Marine Institute on research mechanisms that can be pursued by MARA.

03. Compliance, Enforcement and Revenue Collection

The Compliance, Enforcement and Revenue Collection (CER) division is responsible for MARA's approach to compliance assessment and enforcement of

- Maritime Area Consents
- Marine Usage Licences
- Administration of the existing foreshore estate, including revenue collection for use of the State's maritime area resource. Development permission issued by An Coimisiún Pleanála in the maritime area.

2023/4 Outcomes	
Enforcement	Addressed high profile issues in a timely manner – oil spill, unlicensed salvage obligations. Completed site visit to successfully resolve non-compliance with marine mammal observer guidance.
Compliance	• Established Compliance Tracker and Marine Notice Tracker ensuring compliance with conditions of consents. Communications via compliance@mara.gov.ie. • Commenced Ports project to ensure strategically important Ports are properly regulated under our legislation. • Established Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group (see case study below to foster cooperation between maritime regulators e.g. – Commissioners of Irish Lights and Irish Coast Guard).
Foreshore Estate Management	Transitioned the estate management system from DCEE to MARA; all 2024 invoices issued from MARA by 1 st June 2024.
Reporting requirement as per Section 20 of the Foreshore Act, 1933	• MARA confirms, in accordance with Section 68(4) of the MAP Act that no leases or licences were granted by MARA under the Foreshore Act in the period 17 July 2023 to 31 December 2024. The total of rents and payments received during that period was €4,724,474. • MARA confirms there are no other matters for inclusion in this report relating to foreshore. • The particulars of all extant foreshore consents is publicly available on MARA's website and the amount of rents collected during the financial year for leases and licences is set out in MARA's financial statements appended to the Annual Report.

Case Study

The Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group

Co-operation is a key responsibility under the legislation and highlighted in MARA's strategic plan. In 2024, MARA established the Maritime Regulatory Liaison Group comprising key maritime regulators. The group meets quarterly to share information and work collaboratively to resolve existing and emerging issues and challenges in Ireland's maritime area and is chaired by MARA.

Membership includes

- the Department of Defence,
- the Commissioners of Irish Lights,
- the Marine Survey Office,
- An Coimisiún Pleanála,
- the Irish Coast Guard,
- the Underwater Archaeological Unit of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
- the Health and Safety Authority,
- the Environmental Protection Agency,
- the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority,
- the National Parks and Wildlife Service,
- the Commission for Regulation of Utilities,
- Inland Fisheries Ireland,
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine,
- Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment and
- the Local Government Management Agency, representing the coastal planning authorities.



The group has identified situations that require the collaboration of multiple agencies and government departments to resolve and are working collaboratively to solve them. The purpose, terms of reference and membership of the group and any subgroups are reviewed periodically to ensure the efficiencies and effectiveness. The group or subgroups do not discuss any active application for authorisation or active enforcement matter under review by one of its members.



04. Legal Services

MARA's Legal Affairs Division (Legal Division) provides strategic legal advice and support to the organisation to ensure compliance with its statutory obligations. The Legal Division advises on a broad range of legal issues including regulatory, environmental, planning, maritime, commercial and public law matters.

The Legal Division provides legal support, statutory interpretation and advice on the exercise of MARA's functions under the MAP Act and foreshore legislation including the assessment of maritime area consents and licences, the management of foreshore licences and leases and enforcement specific activities including the management of litigation within the maritime area.

The Legal Division develops and delivers internal training on legal matters for MARA ensuring that the decision-making by the organisation is informed and up-to-date. The Legal Division works closely with other business divisions in the development of operational excellence and the effective management of legal risk.

The Legal Division oversees the procurement of external legal services and manages those engagements to ensure effective and efficient legal advices are provided where required.

During 2023/24 MARA's legal function was provided by a team of solicitors from the Chief State Solicitors Office on a secondment basis. Commencing in Q3 2024 a recruitment programme was initiated to recruit a fully staffed in-house legal team with the intention to fully transition the legal function to an in-house team by Q2 2025.

05. Strategy, Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

2023/4 Outcomes	
Policy	On the policy front, MARA conducted its first public consultation on the Financial Capability Assessment Guidance which contributed significantly to national policy by ensuring its role was well-defined in the Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy and related strategies. MARA also collaborated with DCEE on reviewing and preparing amendments to the Maritime Area Planning Act and launched the development of a competitive framework for awarding MACs. Through sustained engagement with other national and international regulatory bodies, MARA strengthened its policy positioning and contributed to shaping Ireland's offshore regulatory landscape.
Stakeholder Engagement	With MARA as a new agency implementing new legislation, it has been important to actively highlight MARA's functions as well as the obligations that the MAP Act puts on users of the maritime space. 2024 saw MARA move beyond initial engagements with the offshore wind industry which has been one of the more active and vocal stakeholders, to actively engaging with the telecom sector, engagement with ports, seaweed processors, utility infrastructure such as Uisce Eireann and ESB, and Coastal Planning Authorities.
Communications	Promoted MARA's work across all relevant channels.
Website	Managed and updated content on the MARA website www.maritimeregulator.ie The most visited pages during the first 18 months of operation were 1. Careers at MARA 2. Applying for a Maritime Area Consent 3. Applications Determined (MAC) 4. Applications Received (MUL)

06. Corporate Affairs

When MARA was established, it was supported by a service level agreement (SLA) with DHLGH (subsequently DCEE following the transfer of functions). The SLA provided support for MARA across a range of corporate services. During 2023 and 2024, the corporate affairs division built up MARA's capabilities across finance, human resources, information technology and facilities.



2023/4 Outcomes	
Location and Office	The opening of MARA's new office HQ in Drinagh, Wexford in July 2023, marked a major milestone for MARA's transition into a fully independent organisation.
Recruitment Activity	Initially, MARA operated under the aegis of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with a new CEO and a team of 22 staff, seconded from several government departments. By the end of 2024, MARA had staff of 48 in line with the approved Workforce Plan and Skills needs assessment. Following the change of function, MARA transferred to the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.
Finance & Audit	Under the framework of a Service Level Agreement and a combined Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement with MARA's parent Department, early corporate achievements included the establishment of independent procurement and payment procedures, opening of a dedicated bank account. Over the period MARA has built out its Finance team, implementing and building a Financial and Management system and has developed financial control procedures and processes. The first internal audit of financial procedures was completed during the period and the organisation completed its first audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). See Accounts section for detailed financial information.
Procurement	The recruitment of a dedicated procurement officer facilitated the awarding of over 22 contracts for essential services.
Information, Communication and Technology	ICT independence was also largely achieved, including a full transition to the OGCIO network, software upgrades, and website management.

Corporate Governance

The background of the page is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this background is a series of white, wavy, concentric lines that originate from the bottom left and curve upwards and to the right, creating a sense of motion and depth. These lines are of varying thickness and spacing, creating a complex, organic pattern.

The Board, Chief Executive and staff of MARA are committed to acting at all times in accordance with best corporate practices. MARA's business is conducted ethically and transparently in line with statutory responsibilities. Corporate Governance within MARA is guided by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. As a new agency, MARA is in the process of complying with the relevant provisions of the Code.

The role of the Board is to

- ensure that the functions of the MARA are performed efficiently, effectively and to the highest standards,
- set the objectives of the MARA consistent with those functions and the statement of strategy, as per Section 66 of the MAP Act, 2021,
- ensure that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to perform those functions and achieve those objectives,
- design a comprehensive framework for the setting of levies,
- advise and make recommendations to the Minister in relation to policies affecting the functions of MARA.

2023/4 Outcomes	
Establishment of the Board	MARA's Board was formally established on 13th July 2023. MARA has an 11-member Governance board. Board members have a comprehensive mix of experience and skills across legal, regulatory, planning and finance areas. Board appointments resulted in 4 (36.4%) female and 7 (63.6%) male members, with no positions vacant. The Board therefore does not meet the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards. Achieving the required gender and diversity balance remains a priority for the Board and opportunities to address the deficit will be considered when the opportunity for Board re-appointments arises.
Policies and Procedures	Established Board policies in the following areas: MARA Board Terms of Reference, Conflict of Interest, Code of Conduct, Risk Management, Data Protection, Travel, Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference.
Statement of Strategy	The Board governs MARA, sets the strategic direction and oversees the CEO and Executive. Board approval of MARA's first Statement of Strategy (2024 – 2027) in June 2024.
Audit and Risk Committee	Establishment of Audit and Risk Committee and appointment of internal auditors to support the work of the ARC.
DCEE oversight of MARA	An Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement was agreed by MARA and it's parent Department, covering the period to year-end 2024.
Board and Governance Effectiveness	In Q3 2024, the Board undertook its first annual self-assessment exercise.

Further governance information is contained within the Annual Accounts.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Board of MARA established the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) to operate in accordance with a Terms of Reference, which were drawn up within the framework provided by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. The ARC advises the Board on meeting its statutory responsibilities, as well as the effectiveness of its systems of internal control, and its risk management. The ARC consists of Board members: Niamh Kenny - Chair, Paul O'Neill and James Massey and one external member, Dónall Curtin.

The ARC plays a key role in relation to:

- The Comptroller & Auditor General audit,
- Recommendation for approval of the Financial Statements to the Board,
- Review of the drafting of the Letter of Representation and the Chairperson's Comprehensive Report to the Minister,
- Risk Management including risk policy development and review,
- Internal Audit tender evaluation and Internal Audit work programme,
- Approval of ARC written charter to the Board.

Internal Audit

Following a procurement process, in Q4 2024, MARA appointed Forvis Mazars as its outsourced Internal Audit service. An Internal Audit plan for 2025 - 2027 was developed and approved with consideration of MARA's regulatory and operational environment and key risk priorities.

Risk Management

Risk Management is one of the key requirements to ensure good corporate governance and agile organisational responsiveness to risk. The Management Team, including the Chief Risk Officer (the Director of Corporate Affairs), have overall responsibility for overseeing risk management within the organisation, monitoring the organisation's risk appetite and preparation of the Risk Register throughout the year. The Risk Register is reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the Management Team and is a standing agenda item for all Audit & Risk Committee and Board meetings.

In 2023 MARA implemented a comprehensive risk management framework, including the setting of the organisation's risk appetite, preparation of the first risk register and adoption and implementation of a Risk Management Policy. As part of the formation of the risk management framework, the Management Team, supported by the Board, carried out an assessment of MARA's principal risks, including a description of these risks, and associated mitigating measures.

As MARA implements its Strategic Plan, MARA regularly reviews risks that could adversely affect the achievement of MARA's objectives. During 2023/24, the main significant risks under consideration for response were as follows:

Corporate Risks

Covering risks concerned with Occupational Health & Safety, recruitment challenges, provision of appropriate office accommodation, financial compliance and operational systems.

Legal & Policy Risks

Including the risks associated with the practical implementation of new legislation, operating in an area of rapid policy development and managing in the context of changeover from a previous regulatory regime.

Operational Risks

The risks associated with creating appropriate processes and efficient procedures to deliver robust regulatory outputs in the context of statutory deadlines, potential for legal challenge, a developing organisation and a complex compliance environment.

Public Body Compliance

Ethics in Public Office

The statutory disclosure provisions under the Ethics Acts do not currently apply to MARA Board members or employees, as neither have yet been prescribed in regulations as designated directorships or designated positions of employment. When regulations are enacted MARA will then come within the scope of the Ethics Acts. In the interim MARA follows the Code provisions on a non-statutory basis. The provisions have been complied with for 2023 and 2024.

Conflicts of Interest

A Conflict of Interest policy has been in place since establishment and "Declarations of Interest" is an agenda item for every Board meeting. In addition, Board members have completed "Disclosure of Conflict of Interest" forms for 2023 and 2024.

Protected Disclosures

In accordance with Section 21 of the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 MARA has established and maintains procedures for current or former employees to make protected disclosures in relation to MARA and its work and for dealing with such disclosures. Written information about these

procedures has been provided to all employees. The Protected Disclosure Policy and Annual Reports can be found on MARA's [website](#). In 2023 and 2024, no disclosures were made to MARA under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

MARA – Serving the Democratic Process

Joint Oireachtas Committee

Following his appointment as the Chair of MARA, Mr. Mark Mellett, Vice Admiral DSM (rtd) was invited in November 2023 to appear at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government where he updated the Committee on his strategic priorities for his role as Chair of MARA. The Chair was accompanied by CEO Laura Brien.

Communication with Oireachtas Members

MARA operates a dedicated mailbox to provide a direct and efficient communication channel for members of the Oireachtas. In compliance with

[DPER Circular 25/2016 - Protocol for the Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies](#)

MARA must issue responses for substantive replies in 15 working days. MARA has surpassed this target response time for all queries received to date.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

MARA was not subject to Freedom of Information requests in the first six months of operation as outlined in Section 6(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. MARA's statistics for FOI therefore run from January 18th 2024 to 31st December 2024.

FOIs Received	Internal Reviews Received	Appeals Received	Dealt with Outside of Regs
14	2	0	1

Access to Information on the Environment (AIE)

MARA was not exempt from responding to Access to Information requests at any time. MARA's statistics therefore run from 17th July 2023 to 31st of December 2024.

2023:

AIEs Received	Internal Reviews Received	Appeals Received	Dealt with Outside of Regs
1	0	0	0

2024:

AIEs Received	Internal Reviews Received	Appeals Received	Dealt with Outside of Regs
8	4	1	1

In 2024 a total of 1.92 tonnes of CO₂ was reported under this procedure.

Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

MARA has implemented its obligations under this Act. Procedures have been established and the CEO has been designated as MARA's DPO (Designated Public Official).

Energy Consumption

MARA's energy consumption arises from the occupation of its leased offices in Drinagh, Wexford. During the period under review the electrical power consumed amounted to 75,206 kW. MARA is progressing the usage of best practice in air handling / environmental control in its offices and is also looking at steps to improve the overall BER rating of the building.

Climate Reporting

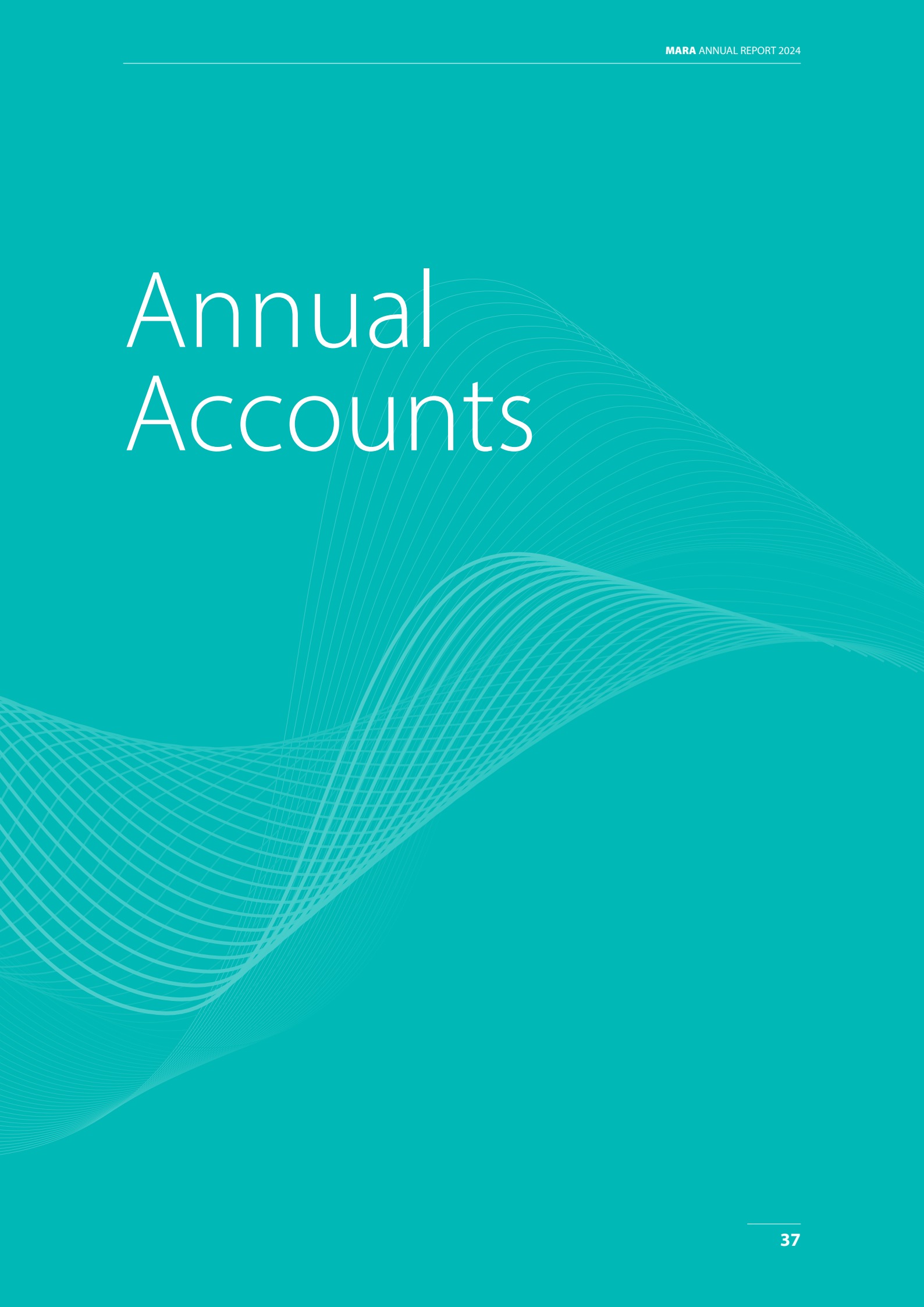
MARA recognises that sustainable development requires participation across all society, and we are aware that MARA's remit aligns with several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. MARA actively supports the call for change.

Sustainable Development Goals



MARA complies with the Procedures for Offsetting the Emissions Associated with Official Air Travel.

Annual Accounts

The background of the page is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this are several sets of white, wavy, concentric lines that create a sense of motion and depth. These lines are most prominent in the lower half of the page, where they form a series of overlapping, undulating shapes that resemble a stylized wave or a series of ripples. The lines are thin and closely spaced, creating a fine, grid-like texture in some areas while remaining more sparse in others.

MARA is in receipt of exchequer funding and the appropriate requirements of the Public Spending Code are complied with.

These are MARA's Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The accounts are prepared under the financial reporting standard FRS102 and are prepared on an accruals basis. MARA's expenditure is funded by the Exchequer, under a sub-head of DCEE's Vote in line with central government accounting on a cash basis. The related expenditure does not match the funding provided due to timing differences arising under the differing accounting bases and the inclusion of non-cash expenditure. Please see the ***Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves for the Year Ended 31 December 2024***.

MARA generated a surplus for the year before appropriations. Appropriations includes monies returned to the Exchequer, which comprised monies collected by MARA over the period from establishment in July 2023 to the end of November 2024, thus the funds returned related to both 2023 and 2024.



An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

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MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

General Information

Board Members	Mark Mellett (Chairperson) Karen Banks Ruth Brennan Philip Daly Patrick Gibbons Niamh Kenny James Massey Brendan McGrath Patrick Moran Paul O'Neill Alma Walsh
Senior Management Team	Laura Brien – Chief Executive Karen Creed – Director of Maritime Authorisations (appointed 15/01/2024) Yvonne Doris – Director of Compliance, Enforcement & Revenue Collection (appointed 15/01/2024) John Evans – Director of Assessment, Research & Data (appointed 04/03/2024) Rory O'Leary – Director of Strategy, Governance and Stakeholder Engagement (returned to Parent Department 17/07/2024) Frank Ronan – Director of Corporate Affairs (appointed 02/01/2024) Alan Harte – Director of Legal Affairs (appointed 09/12/2024)
Head Office	Maritime Area Regulatory Authority 2nd Floor, Menapia House, Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh, Wexford, Y35 RF29
Website	www.maritimeregulator.ie
Email	info@mara.gov.ie
Auditors	Comptroller and Auditor General 3A Mayor Street Upper, Dublin 1, D01 PF72
Bankers	Permanent TSB The Bushels, Cornmarket, Wexford

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024

Governance

The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) was established under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the Act), as amended.

MARA is accountable to the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment and is tasked with delivering a streamlined consenting system for the maritime area, the key functions and powers of MARA are in accordance with the legal framework set out.

As provided for in Section 47(1) of the Act and in accordance with the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies, the Board is collectively responsible for leading and directing MARA's activities. While the Board has delegated particular functions to the Executive, the exercise of the power of delegation does not absolve the Board from the duty to supervise the discharge of the delegated functions. The Board have adopted a process enabling the delineation of roles and responsibilities between the Board and the Executive, achieved through

- I. A Schedule of Matters reserved for the Board for matters specifically reserved for its decision to ensure that the direction and control of MARA is firmly in its hands.
- II. A Delegation of Authority which aligns with the provision of Section 47(4) of the Act, and enables the Board to delegate to the Chief Executive Officer the power to carry out the functions of MARA on behalf of the Board.

The Board governs MARA, sets the strategic direction and oversees the CEO and Executive.

The CEO and Executive of MARA are responsible for the management of operations aligned to the delivery of the priorities, objectives and actions set out in the Statement of Strategy.

Transfer of Functions

Following a government decision in December 2023, responsibility for Ireland's marine planning system formally transferred to the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) on the 14th May 2024.

The transfer was based on recommendations made by the former Attorney General Paul Gallagher SC, in which he identified an urgent need to consolidate and rationalise the regulation of marine development and activity to build on the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) and Maritime Area Planning Act (MAP Act) and give practical effect to Ireland's ambition to have a modern, fit for purpose, world-leading marine planning system.

The specific functions that transferred to DCEE were:

- policy and legislative responsibilities in relation to marine forward planning and enforcement (under the MAP Act)
- governance and oversight of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)
- regulation of activity on the foreshore (under the Foreshore Acts 1933) as part of the migration to the new system operated by MARA under the MAP Act

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024 (continued)

MARA's Responsibilities

MARA's functions are set out under Section 43 (1) of the Act and include the following:

- determining Maritime Area Consent (MAC) applications for the maritime area;
- determining Maritime Usage Licence applications for specified activities;
- compliance and enforcement of MACs, licences and offshore development consents;
- investigations and prosecutions;
- administration of Foreshore consents;
- fostering & promoting co-operation between regulators of the maritime area.

Section 67 of the Act requires MARA to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister, all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it.

In preparing these Financial Statements, MARA is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- prepare the Financial Statement on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume it will continue in operation, and
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the Financial Statements.

MARA is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, its financial position and enables it to ensure that the Financial Statements comply with Section 67 of the Act. In addition, MARA is responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the information on its website.

MARA is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Board considers that the Financial Statements of MARA give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of MARA at 31 December 2024.

MARA has adopted a Code of Conduct the provisions of which align with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. A specific policy for dealing with conflicts of interest has been adopted by the Board.

MARA is funded from Vote C11, Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. The funds collected by MARA from its activities are available for return to the Exchequer, subject to provisions under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. See Note 17 for further detail on the return to the Exchequer made in 2024.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024 (continued)

Governance Structure

The Board consists of the Chairperson and 10 ordinary members, all of whom were appointed by the Minister for the following terms:

Board Member	Role	Date Appointed	Expiry Date
Mark Mellett	Chair	17/07/2023	16/07/2027
Karen Banks	Board Member	01/08/2023	31/07/2027
Ruth Brennan	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2027
Philip Daly	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2027
Patrick Gibbons	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2027
Niamh Kenny	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2027
James Massey	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2027
Brendan McGrath	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2026
Patrick Moran	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2026
Paul O'Neill	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2026
Alma Walsh	Board Member	17/07/2023	16/07/2026

The Board established an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) which comprises of four members. Three are Board members: Niamh Kenny (Chairperson of the ARC), James Massey and Paul O'Neill, and one external member, Dónall Curtin, who was appointed on 11 March 2024. The role of the ARC is to support the Board in relation to its responsibilities in matters relating to risk, control and associated assurance. The ARC is independent from the day-to-day financial management of the organisation. The ARC reports to the Board after each meeting.

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

The Board met on 7 occasions in 2024. The ARC met on 5 occasions in 2024. A schedule of attendance for the MARA Board meetings and ARC committee is set out below.

Name	Board Meetings Attended 2024	ARC Committee Meetings Attended 2024	Board Fees 2024 €	ARC Committee Fees 2024 €	Board Travel & Subsistence Expenses 2024 €
Mark Mellett	7/7	-	11,970	-	5,637
Karen Banks	5/7	-	7,695	-	407
Ruth Brennan*	6/7	-	-	-	256
Philip Daly	5/7	-	7,695	-	425
Patrick Gibbons	7/7	-	7,695	-	199
Niamh Kenny	7/7	5/5	7,695	2,405	1,660
James Massey	7/7	5/5	7,695	1,414	2,540
Brendan McGrath*	6/7	-	3,848	-	-
Patrick Moran*	5/7	-	-	-	-
Paul O'Neill*	6/7	5/5	-	-	525
Alma Walsh*	5/7	-	-	-	-
Dónall Curtin**	-	4/4	-	1,131	-
TOTAL			54,293	4,950	11,649

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024 (continued)

*Under the One Person One Salary (OPOS) principle four Board Members did not receive fees for the full year 2024 i.e. Ruth Brennan, Patrick Moran, Paul O'Neill and Alma Walsh. Furthermore, Brendan McGrath waived his entitlement to Board Member fees for Q1 and Q2 2024 but will receive fees for Q3 and Q4 2024 in 2025, accrued at year end.

** Dónall Curtin appointed to the ARC on 11/3/24

ARC Members were paid their 2023 fees during 2024: James Massey €565.58 and Niamh Kenny €962.10. Dónall Curtin will receive his ARC fees in 2025, accrued at year end.

The Board travel and subsistence expenses incurred for 2024 amounted to €11,649, all of which related to domestic travel.

Key Personnel Changes

Rory O'Leary, Director of Strategy, Governance and Stakeholder Engagement returned to the parent Department on 17 July 2024, following a period of secondment with MARA. The rest of the senior management team joined in 2024, see General Information on page 4.

Disclosures Required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Board is responsible for ensuring that MARA has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform in August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code.

Employee Short-Term Benefits

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 are categorised into the following bands:

Range of total employee benefits

Pay band		Number of Employees 2024	Number of Employees 2023 *
From (€)	To (€)	**	
60,000	69,999	4	-
70,000	79,999	3	1
80,000	89,999	2	-
90,000	99,999	5	-
100,000	109,999	1	-
110,000	119,999	-	-
120,000	129,999	-	-
130,000	139,999	-	-
140,000	149,999	-	-
150,000	159,999	-	-
160,000	169,999	1	-
170,000	179,999	-	-

*All staff were contracted on or after Establishment Day and did not receive a full year's remuneration.

** All staff bar the Chief Executive within the salary bands identified above were contracted by MARA during 2024. Hence some of the salaries paid were in relation to periods of less than a full year.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024 (continued)

Note: For the purposes of this disclosure, short-term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting year include salary, overtime allowances (none) and other payments made on behalf of the employee (none) but exclude employer's PRSI.

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business-as-usual' functions.

	12 Months 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Marine Study & Advices – for exempted activities	42	116
Statement of Strategy costs	57	-
Financial Support & Advices – Maritime Area Consent activities	234	40
Recruitment – external support	39	32
Chief State Solicitor's Office Costs	347	-
Architects Fee	111	-
Total	830	188
Consultancy costs capitalised	111	-
Consultancy costs charged to Income & Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves	719	188
Total	830	188

Legal Costs and Settlements

There was no expenditure in the reporting period in relation to settlements and conciliation and arbitration proceedings relating to contracts with third parties. Costs incurred in relation to legal advice and services received by MARA disclosed below.

	12 Months 2024 €000	5 Months 2023 €000
Legal Fees – advice and attendance	156	41

Travel and Subsistence Expenditure

During the period, the following Travel & Subsistence costs were incurred:

	12 Months 2024 €000	5 Months 2023 €000
Board Members	12	10
Others	85	14
Total	97	24

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024 (continued)

Split of Domestic and Foreign travel incurred in 2024:	Domestic	Foreign	Total
Board Members	12	-	12
Others	65	20	85
Total	77	20	97

Hospitality Expenditure

During the period, the following hospitality expenses were incurred by MARA

	12 Months 2024 €000	5 Months 2023 €000
Event Costs	9	5
Catering costs (Staff, Conferences and Board Meetings)	10	4
Total	19	9

Hospitality expenditure incurred during 2024 were MARA staff related apart from €521.03 for costs incurred for Ministerial visits. Event costs of €5,000 incurred in 2023 were for client hospitality for MARA's launch event.

Statement of Compliance

Procedures have been put in place during MARA's establishment phase to comply with the requirements from the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (revised 2016) published by the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform.

MARA has complied with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies with the following exceptions:

Provision in relation to confirmation by the Board to the Minister regarding MARA's system of Internal Controls

The requirement for the Board to confirm annually to the Minister that MARA has an appropriate system of internal and financial controls is currently being progressed. The requirement for a performance measurement system will also be implemented.

Provision in relation to Protected Disclosures

Standard Civil Service guidance and procedures in relation to Protected Disclosures are provided to all MARA staff on their appointment. However, MARA's own procedures for dealing with protected disclosures was not in place for the calendar year 2024 but has been in place since Q1 2025.

Provision in relation to Internal Audit Charter

The Internal Auditors were appointed in November 2024, and an Internal Audit Charter will be drafted for Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) approval in 2025.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Provision in relation to New Board member's statement

The requirement to provide new Board members with a statement regarding the preparation of financial statements and system of internal control and audit will be implemented. Note that no new Board members were appointed in 2024.

Provision in relation to Corporate Procurement Plan

The requirement for a Corporate Procurement Plan is currently being addressed, with the final Plan expected to be in place by Quarter 3 2025.

Provision 1.19 in relation the ARC's annual report to the Board

This requirement which was outstanding in 2024, has been addressed. Following the appointment of Internal Auditors, the ARC's work programme for 2025 will cover all required elements to provide the ARC's report to the Board for 2025.

Provision 1.21 in relation the appraisal of the ARC's Chairperson

This requirement which was outstanding in 2024, will be been addressed in 2025.

Provision in relation to Disposal of Asset Arrangements

The requirement to ensure that arrangements are in place such that disposal of assets are at a fair market related price will be fulfilled by Quarter 4 2025. Although no such situation has arisen to date, a policy will be developed to address it.

Provision in relation to Legal Disputes with Other State Bodies

The requirement concerning legal disputes with other State Bodies has been addressed, with an approved procedure in place as of Quarter 2 2025.

Provision in relation to a Customer Charter and Action Plan

MARA aims to develop a comprehensive Customer Service Charter and Customer Action Plan in 2025.



Mark Mellett
Chair of the Board

Date: 18 June 2025



Niamh Kenny
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Statement on Internal Control

Scope of Responsibility

The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) was established with effect from 17 July 2023 in accordance with the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. I, as Chairperson of the Board make this statement in accordance with the requirement set out in the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform's Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) and I acknowledge the Board is responsible for the system of Internal Control. The Board has delegated responsibility to the Chief Executive to deal with management and operational issues and to report to the Board regularly.

Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, that transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and that material error or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected on a timely basis.

A system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform's Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) has been established by MARA for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Service Level Agreements

MARA entered into an interim arrangement on Establishment in July 2023 with the original Parent Department, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to manage its financial accounting, payroll, Human Resources (HR) management, Information Technology (ICT) and facilities management during its commencement phase, in the form of a Service Level Agreement (SLA). Following the transfer of functions completed on the 14th May 2024, this SLA was transferred to its new Parent Department, the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, to provide a more limited range of supports focussed on Payroll, HR Services and some ICT access provision, to run to July 2025.

Financial Control Environment

MARA continued to build out its accounting and administrative functions, financial controls, policies and procedures during 2024. The functions include: -

- All invoicing of levies, license fees and lease charges were effected by MARA in 2024
- Collection of monies due for all billings
- MARA operated its own Bank Account in 2024
- The management of all payables for goods and services required by the Agency
- All procurement matters
- All facilities management
- ICT functions to include provision of all IT equipment and of the various licenses and systems needed to run the day to day operations

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

MARA is transitioning from an excel based accounting system to the use of a dedicated financial management system.

MARA's desktop services, shared files, communications, IT Security and server needs are met through the central systems provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). These services are accessed under the auspices of the Parent Department and efforts are in train to secure MARA's direct access to these central services.

MARA employees are Civil Servants and payroll plus HR management systems are delivered using the shared services provided by the National Shared Services Office (NSSO). Access to these services is facilitated by the Parent Department under the SLA referred to in the previous section. MARA is investigating means to ensure continuity of these services past the SLA termination date.

MARA implemented controls and procedures in relation to the approval of all income and expenditure transactions pertaining to MARA, which were reviewed and approved by MARA's Senior Management Team. During 2024 MARA developed a suite of policies and procedures, which are going through the process of review and sign off by the Senior Management team, the Audit Risk Committee and the Board as appropriate.

Administrative Controls and Management Reporting

MARA's system of Internal Control is based on a framework of regular management information, administrative procedures including segregation of duties, and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular, it includes:

- An appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is reviewed regularly by the senior management team.
- Regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports.
- A risk management system that is fit-for-purpose.
- An appropriate capital investment control and formal project management disciplines.
- Appropriate focus on good practice in procurement and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines.
- An Audit and Risk Committee of the Board (ARC) has been established with terms of reference.
- Clearly assigned management responsibilities, with corresponding accountability.
- Suite of approved policies and procedures designed to improve the MARA internal control environment.
- Service Level Agreements are in place for shared services which are administered on behalf of MARA.

Capacity to Handle Risk

MARA has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising three Board members. The ARC was established on 25th October 2023. The ARC met five times in the year ended 31 December 2024. An external member with financial experience was appointed to the committee in 2024.

Following a procurement process an external consulting services firm was appointed as Internal Auditors in November 2024.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Risk and Control Framework

The Board adopted a Risk Management Policy on the 5 December 2023. This policy establishes a framework to identify potential events that may expose MARA to risk, to control and manage this risk within MARA's risk appetite, and to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of MARA's objectives. MARA has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks. A risk register is in place which identifies the key risks facing MARA and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the ARC on a regular basis which then reports to the Board. The risk framework continued to evolve in 2024.

MARA's Senior Management Team meets regularly to review risk and risk is an agenda item for all business unit meetings within MARA.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff.

We confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability,
- there is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management,
- there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems, and
- there are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for the monitoring of internal control processes. Control deficiencies, when detected, are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to the Senior Management Team, where relevant, in a timely way. Where key risks and related controls have been identified, processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

Procurement

MARA has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines.

MARA has complied with these procedures with the exception of the following: During 2024 a total expenditure of €9,240 (Ex VAT) was incurred in respect of one contract for governance management software that was not subject to a competitive tendering process. This contract was in place prior to MARA's establishment in 2023. MARA acknowledges this non-compliance and plans to retender for this software in 2026.

The total spend for this software from 2023 until 2026 will be €29,769.09 (Ex VAT).

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Internal Control Issues

Financial Control Procedures

MARA is transitioning from an excel based accounting system to the use of a dedicated financial management system. At year end 31 December 2024 both systems were running in parallel, but these Annual Financial Statements are based mainly on excel records. The Board has reviewed the mitigating controls in place for this excel based system and is satisfied with these controls. From 1st January 2025, we have moved to the use of a dedicated financial management system.

As a new organisation, MARA made progress in its development of accounting and administrative functions, financial controls, policies and procedures in all areas during 2024. A number of weaknesses in controls were identified during the year and MARA continues to review and finalise its controls, policies and procedures to address these.

In relation to the Service Level Agreements mentioned above, the full range of payroll and HR systems continue to be provided via the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. The agreement for the provision of these services is due to expire in July 2025. To address this matter, a working group has been established and it is a standing item on the governance agenda between MARA and its Parent department. However, at time of signing of these financial statements, no new arrangement has yet been agreed.

Review of Effectiveness

MARA has established procedures for risk management and internal controls.

During the year ended 31 December 2024, the Board's monitoring of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by: -

- a. the work of the external auditors;
- b. the work of the internal auditors;
- c. the work of the Audit and Risk Committee; and
- d. the Senior Management Team with responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.
- e. the development of the Finance Team within MARA's Corporate Affairs Unit



Mark Mellett
Chair of the Board

Date: 18 June 2025



Niamh Kenny
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Certificate of the Comptroller and Auditor General



Ard Reachtaire Cuntas agus Ciste Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority for the year ended 31 December 2024 as required under the provisions of section 67(4) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. The financial statements comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure and retained revenue reserves
- the statement of comprehensive income
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows, and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority at 31 December 2024 and of its income and expenditure for 2024 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters

The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the governance statement and Board Members' report, and the statement on internal control. My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

Weaknesses in financial controls

The governance statement presented with the financial statements recognises the responsibility of the Board for keeping appropriate accounting records and for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information.

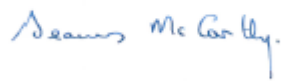
A significant number of amendments were required to the draft financial statements presented for audit.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Report of the C&AG (continued)

The statement on internal control discloses that a number of weaknesses in financial controls were identified during the year, and states that these are being addressed.

The statement on internal control also discloses that, during 2024, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority continued to rely on a spreadsheet-based accounting system which required significant manual intervention. The roll out of automated accounting software took place in 2025.



Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General

23 June 2025

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Appendix to the report

Responsibilities of the Board members

As detailed in the governance statement and Board members' report, the Authority is responsible for

- the preparation of annual financial statements in the form prescribed under section 67 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS 102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as it determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 67(4) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 to audit the financial statements of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.

- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority to cease to continue as a going concern.
- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

Reporting on other matters

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE AND RETAINED REVENUE RESERVES FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

		2024 €'000	5 months 2023 €'000
	Notes		
Income	2		
Oireachtas Grants		4,655	1,448
Foreshore Rents		2,602	2,740
MAC and MULs		11,808	25
Interest Income		<u>13</u>	-
Total Income		<u>19,078</u>	<u>4,213</u>
Expenditure			
Salaries, Wages & Board fees	3	3,145	817
Governance Costs	4	12	10
Information Technology	5	222	3
Professional Fees	6	907	248
Communications	7	25	21
Office and other costs	8	539	176
Depreciation	9	16	14
Bad Debt Provision	10	<u>53</u>	<u>22</u>
Total Expenditure		<u>4,919</u>	<u>1,311</u>
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year/period before appropriations		14,159	2,902
Transferred (to) / from Capital Account		(103)	(46)
Transfer (to) Exchequer	17	(16,026)	-
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year/period after appropriations		<u>(1,970)</u>	<u>2,856</u>
Balance brought forward at 31 December		<u>(1,970)</u>	<u>2,856</u>

All income and expenditure for the period relates to continuing activities at the reporting date. The Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The Statement of Cash Flows and Notes 1 to 18 form part of these Financial Statements.



Mark Mellett
Chair of the Board



Niamh Kenny
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

Date: 18 June 2025

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	2024 €'000	5 months 2023 restated €'000
(Deficit)/Surplus for the financial year/period after appropriation		<u>(1,970)</u>	<u>2,856</u>
Total Comprehensive (Expense)/Income for the year/period		<u>(1,970)</u>	<u>2,856</u>
Opening Revenue Reserves		3,745	-
Receivables as on Establishment Day	10	-	<u>889</u>
REVENUE RESERVES AS AT 31 DECEMBER		<u>1,775</u>	<u>3,745</u>

The Statement of Cash Flows and Notes 1 to 18 form part of these Financial Statements.



Mark Mellett
Chair of the Board

Date: 18 June 2025



Niamh Kenny
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

		31 Dec 2024 €'000	31 Dec 2023 restated €'000
	Notes		
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	9	161	58
Current Assets			
Receivables	10	1,545	2,918
Cash and cash equivalents	11	<u>559</u>	<u>859</u>
Total Current Assets		<u>2,104</u>	<u>3,777</u>
Current Liabilities (Amount falling due within one year)			
Payables	12	<u>(329)</u>	<u>(32)</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>1,775</u>	<u>3,745</u>
Net Assets		<u>1,936</u>	<u>3,803</u>
Representing			
Retained Revenue Reserves		1,775	3,745
Capital Account	13	<u>161</u>	<u>58</u>
		<u>1,936</u>	<u>3,803</u>

The Statement of Cash Flows and Notes 1 to 18 form part of these Financial Statements.



Mark Mellett
Chair of the Board

Date: 18 June 2025



Niamh Kenny
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

		31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 months 2023 €'000
	Notes		
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities			
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year/period		(1,970)	2,856
Transfer to/(from) Capital Account		103	46
Depreciation charge	9	16	14
(Increase) / Decrease in Receivables	10	1,373	(2,029)
(Decrease) / Increase in Payables	12	297	32
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities		(181)	919
Cash Flows from Investing Activities			
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment		(119)	(60)
Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities		(119)	(60)
(Decrease) / Increase in cash and cash equivalents		(300)	859
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of year/period		859	—
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year/period		559	859

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Accounting policies

The basis of accounting and significant accounting policies adopted by MARA are set out below. They have been applied consistently throughout the year.

a) General Information

The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) was established on 17 July 2023. Its functions include the Regulation of the State's maritime area. Its head office is at 2nd Floor, Menapia House, Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh, Wexford, Y35 RF29.

b) Statement of Compliance

The Financial Statements of MARA for the year ended 31 December 2024 have been prepared in compliance with the applicable legislation, and with FRS 102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) in the UK

c) Basis of Preparation

The Financial Statements are prepared on the going concern basis, under the historical cost convention and comply with the financial reporting standards of the Financial Reporting Council, except as indicated in Oireachtas Grants below. The Financial Statements are in the form approved by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform. The Financial Statements are prepared in Euro which is the functional currency of MARA.

The Financial Statements prepared are for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Certain comparative information has been reclassified for consistency with the current year disclosures.

d) Income

Oireachtas Grants

Income recognised in the Financial Statements under Grants represents funding provided to MARA from the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment and previously prior to the transfer of functions from Vote 34 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It is recognised on a cash basis.

Other Income

Foreshore revenue is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure on the invoicing date. Invoices for foreshore consents cover a 12-month period, and income for the full 12 months is recognised on the invoicing date.

Maritime Area Consent (MAC) Levies are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure on the invoicing date. Invoices for MAC Levies cover a 12-month period, and income for the full 12 months is recognised on the invoicing date.

Income for MAC and Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) application fees is recognised on receipt of funds associated with the applications. The application process cannot commence in the absence of receipt of the appropriate fee. Invoices are generated and processed when the fees have been received.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Interest Income

Interest income arose from interest earned on simple deposit accounts and is recognised on a straight-line basis over the term of the deposit.

MARA continued to develop its income recognition policies in 2024 as the activity within the Agency expanded.

e) Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, plant and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation, adjusted for any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided on all property, plant and equipment at rates estimated to write off the cost less the estimated residual value of each asset on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Leasehold improvements (canteen)	20%	(Reflects the original lease term - 5 years to December 2027)
Leasehold improvements – office fit out	10%	Lessor of the period of the extended lease or 10%
Equipment	20%	
Furniture	20%	

For 2024 and in future periods all assets greater than €1,000 are/will be capitalised. For 2023 some assets with a value of less than €1,000 were capitalised and these remain in our asset value.

The original leasehold improvements are depreciated over 5 years which reflected the original lease term. The new lease improvements (office fit out costs) will be depreciated on a 10% straight-line as the lease term has been extended to 2037.

Assets that are not yet in use or operational, or are still undergoing development, construction or installation are capitalised as Work in Progress assets and will be transferred to the respective fixed asset category upon completion and readiness for intended use. Depreciation will not be charged on WIP assets until they are capitalised as completed assets.

A full year's charge is processed in the year of acquisition, none in the year of disposal.

Residual value represents the estimated amount which would currently be obtained from disposal of an asset, after deducting estimated costs of disposal, if the asset were already of an age and in the condition expected at the end of its useful life.

f) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash & Cash Equivalents comprise positive balances on the current accounts.

g) Foreign Currencies

Assets or liabilities denominated in a foreign currency (ie not denominated in Euro) are carried at the Euro equivalent converted at the fx rate applicable at the balance sheet date. Transactions incurred in a foreign currency are translated into Euro and recorded at the rate of exchange ruling at the dates of transactions.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

h) Payroll

Transactional processing of payroll for MARA staff was carried out by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage up to the date of the Transfer of Functions after which it was carried out by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, in both cases utilising the services of the National Shared Services Office.

During 2024 Management decided that Board fees should be disclosed as payroll costs. Previously this was included under Governance costs. For consistency the 2023 figures have been restated to reflect this change.

MARA accrues for employee holiday entitlement that has been earned but not yet taken at the reporting date. This ensures that the financial statements reflect the full liability for unused holidays as at year end. On 31 December 2024 the liability for unused holidays was assessed to be nil.

MARA accrues payroll expenses incurred but not yet paid at year end to match costs with the period in which they were earned by employees. Please see note 12 for the amount accrued.

i) Pension / Retirement Benefit Obligation

All MARA staff and secondees are civil servants, and all pension and retirement obligations are managed centrally and processed through the National Shared Services Office.

j) Operating Leases

Rental expenditure under operating leases is recognised in the Statement of Income & Expenditure over the life of the lease on a straight line basis.

k) Debtors

Amounts that have been invoiced by MARA and remain unpaid at the balance sheet date are carried as Receivables in the Statement of Financial Position less a provision for bad or non-recoverable debts.

l) Foreshore Portfolio

On 17 July 2023, MARA assumed responsibility for the 'determined' foreshore portfolio – being consents issued and fully completed in relation to Foreshore consenting activity. The portfolio's receivables balance was previously held in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. These receivables were brought onto MARA's balance sheet as at 17th July 2023 and treated as an increase in opening reserve less a provision for bad and doubtful debts. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage retained the 'undetermined' foreshore portfolio and will process these to final determination / decision. When finally determined, executed consents will transfer to MARA for administration, including the collection of rent. Responsibility for the undetermined foreshore portfolio transferred to the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment in May 2024.

Following a review of the receivables balances (debtors) taken by MARA and to comply with our income recognition policy, an amendment was required to the opening debtors balance of €537,236 (net) and the corresponding amendment made to the opening reserve balance. This is further detailed under note 10.2.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

m) Critical Accounting Judgements and Estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the statement of financial position date and the amounts reported for revenues and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. The following judgements have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements.

Provision for Bad Debts

MARA provides for bad and doubtful debts where recovery of the amount invoiced/receivable is deemed unlikely. Receivables are deemed unlikely where the account has not performed, made payments and / or engaged with the Agency, or its predecessors, for a period of 24 months or more. MARA will continue to raise invoices against non-performing accounts, and will pursue these to seek to resolve outstanding disputes and will not write-off any amounts in the absence of full investigation and compliance with the appropriate State practice.

Depreciation and Residual Values

The Directors have reviewed the asset lives and associated residual values of all fixed asset classes and have concluded that the asset lives and residual values are appropriate.

Impairment of Property, Plant and Equipment

If there is objective evidence of impairment of the value of an asset, an impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves in the year.

n) Restatement of 2023 Comparative Balances

During 2024 it was noted that adjustments were required to the opening Foreshore Debtors balances which MARA took on from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

A reduction of (€537k) was required to those opening balances and the closing Debtors balance at 31.12.23 has also been restated to reflect this adjustment.

€500k of the adjustment related to balances taken on in July 2023 for 3 files that are charged on a variable basis, i.e. the charge varies depending on activity during the billing year. At 31 December 2023 it was not recognised that these balances were estimates only and had not actually been invoiced. As per income recognition policy; foreshore revenue is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure on the invoicing date and on that basis, the balances should not have been taken on as Debtors balances in July 2023. The opening Foreshore debtor balance and the closing balance at 31.12.23 have been restated to reflect this adjustment and a corresponding adjustment has been reflected in the Retained Revenue Reserves balance.

A further adjustment of (€37k) net related to some other amendments required to the Foreshore debtor balances taken on as at July 2023. The opening Foreshore debtor balance and the closing balance at 31.12.23 have been restated to reflect this adjustment and a corresponding adjustment has been reflected in the Retained Revenue Reserves balance.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

	5 Months 2023 restated €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Debtors as at 17.07.23	889	1,426
Debtors as at 31.12.23	2,881	3,418
Retained Revenue Reserves as at 31.12.23	3,745	4,282

These amendments/adjustments were administrative only and did not involve any actual financial loss or write down of amounts properly due and payable to MARA.

2. Income

a) Oireachtas Grants

	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment	4,763	1,448
Rent Refund	(108)	-
Net Oireachtas Grant received	4,655	1,448

Following a government decision in December 2023, responsibility for Ireland's marine planning system formally transferred to the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the 14th May 2024.

MARA is funded from subhead C11 of Vote 29, Climate, Energy and the Environment. In 2024 this funding covered current (operational) expenditure. In 2023 this funding covered the current (operational) expenditure of MARA. MARA did not receive funding in relation to capital projects.

b) Other Income

	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Foreshore Rents	2,602	2,740
MAC Levies	11,480	2
MAC Application Fees	256	5
MUL Licences	72	18
Interest Income	13	-
Total	14,423	2,765

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

3. Salaries and Wages & Board Fees	31 Dec	5 Months
	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000
Wages and Salaries (including Employer PRSI)	1,665	77
Board Fees	54	53
ARC Fees	6	-
Secondments (including Employer PRSI)	1,415	686
Contractors (including Employer PRSI)	12	2
Social Welfare Contributions	(7)	(1)
Total Salaries and Wages & Board Fees	3,145	817

Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) was deducted in line with statutory requirements. €111,227 of ASC has been deducted in 2024 (2023 €37,144) and retained by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment and in 2023 by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Single Public Service Pension Scheme of €46,554.03 was deducted in 2024 and retained by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Please see note 1(h) regarding the reassignment of Board fees. Board Fees are detailed within the "Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses" contained in the above Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024.

ARC Members were paid their 2023 fees during 2024: James Massey (€565.58) and Niamh Kenny (€962.10)

a) Employee Numbers

The number of staff, including secondments and excluding agency staff, at year end 2024 (full time equivalents) was 48 (2023 period end: 23).

b) Staff Costs and Employee Information

Employee benefits breakdown is disclosed under "Employee Short-Term Benefits" in the Governance Statement and Board Members' Report.

c) Termination Benefits

No termination benefits were paid during the year/period.

d) Remuneration of Chief Executive

The remuneration of the Chief Executive, who was appointed on 10th July 2023, is as follows:

	31 Dec	5 Months
	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000
Chief Executive salary	164	70

The Chief Executive did not receive any performance related payments or any other benefit in kind during the period. The Chief Executives pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements in the public sector defined benefit superannuation scheme.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

4. Governance Costs	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Board Members Expenses		
Board Members Expenses	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>
	12	10

Please see note 1(h) regarding the reassignment of Board fees.

Board Expenses are detailed within the "Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses" contained in the above Governance Statement and Board Members' Report 2024.

5. Information Technology	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Licence and Subscriptions	79	3
ICT Equipment	94	-
Support and Development	49	-
Total	222	3

MARA was established in July 2023. The increase in IT costs year on period reflects the growth in the IT infrastructure to support the new organisation and the growth in employee numbers.

6. Professional Fees	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Financial Fees	234	40
Audit Fees	32	19
Recruitment Fees	39	32
CSSO Consultancy Fees	347	-
Legal Fees	156	41
Other Consultancy	99	116
Total	907	248

Mara was established in July 2023. The increase in Professional fees year on period reflects the requirement of Mara, a new regulatory body for professional support especially in the areas of CSSO legal consultancy support and legal advice costs.

The Chief State Solicitors Office provides legal services to MARA within the terms of an agreed Protocol, which will terminate in July 2025.

All Chief State Solicitors Office services were charged with effect 1st January 2024.

7. Communications	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Conferences and Room Hire	5	6
Catering	10	4
Equipment Hire	1	-
Event Costs	9	11
Total	25	21

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There was no significant increase in Communication costs year over period.

8. Office and Other Costs	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Membership/subscriptions and Training	77	4
Repairs and Cleaning	5	2
Office Rent	145	72
Service Charge	99	48
Insurance	9	3
Electricity	17	-
Post and Stationery	7	2
Phone and Internet	21	12
Employee Travel & Subsistence	85	14
Translation services	5	12
Facilities and General Maintenance	7	4
Protective Clothing	8	-
Waste	1	1
Other Office Costs	2	-
Office Furniture	23	2
Shared Services (see Note 8.1)	28	-
Total	539	176

MARA was established in July 2023. The increase in office and other costs reflects the costs being charged for a 12 versus 5 month period. It also reflects the growth in employee number year over period.

Note 8.1 Shared Services

The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment are completing a number of tasks on behalf of MARA from within their administrative infrastructures. The services provided are outlined in a service level agreement (SLA) which originally included: - Financial Management, Information Technology, Rent and Facilities, Human Resources and General Administration Support. During 2024 the level of support provided under the service level agreement has reduced and is focussed payroll provision, human resource Systems and some Information & Communications Technology supports.

No charges have been raised to date for 2024, but an amount of €28,000 has been accrued to cover expected charges. No charges were raised during 2023 for shared services for the initial establishment period.

9. Property, Plant and Equipment

2024	Leasehold Improvements €'000	WIP assets* €'000	Equipment €'000	Furniture €'000	Total €'000
Cost					
At 1 January 2024	15	-	56	1	72
Additions	-	111	-	8	119

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At 31 December 2024	15	111	56	9	191
Accumulated Depreciation					
At 1 January 2024	3	-	11	-	14
Depreciation charge (full year)	3	-	11	2	16
At 31 December 2024	6	-	22	2	30
Net Book Value					
At 1 January 2024	12	-	45	1	58
At 31 December 2024	9	111	34	7	161

	Leasehold Improvements	WIP assets *	Equipment	Furniture	Total
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
2023					
Cost					
Transferred At 17 July 2023	-	-	12	-	12
Additions for the period	15	-	44	1	60
At 31 December 2023	15	-	56	1	72
Accumulated Depreciation					
Transferred At 17 July 2023	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation charge (full year)	3	-	11	-	14
At 31 December 2023	3	-	11	-	14
Net Book Value					
At 17 July 2023	-	-	12	-	12
At 31 December 2023	12	-	45	1	58

* The costs included in WIP assets relate to the Architects fees for the fit-out project of Menapia House. The project itself commenced in April 2025 and in accordance with our accounting policy these costs are capitalised as WIP assets and will be transferred to Leasehold improvements the respective fixed asset category upon completion and readiness for intended use. Depreciation will not be charged on WIP assets until they are capitalised as completed assets.

10. Receivables		31 Dec 2024	5 Months 2023
		€'000	Restated €'000
Debtors	10.1	1,434	2,881
Prepayments		102	37
PSWT Refund		9	
Total		1,545	2,918

All receivables are due within one year.

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Note 10.1 Debtors

		31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 months 2023 Restated €'000
Balance owing at year end		1,735	3,129
Provision for bad and doubtful debts	10.2	(301)	(248)
Net Debtors		1,434	2,881

Note 10.2

Being the opening provision of €248k (2023: €226k) plus amount provided for in the year of €53k(2023: €22k) net of €3k of bad debts recovered.

Note 10.3

On 17 July 2023, MARA assumed responsibility for the 'determined' foreshore portfolio – being leases and licenses issued and fully completed in relation to Foreshore consenting activity. During the year it was noted that an adjustment was required to these opening balances. Please see note 1(n) for details.

11. Cash and Cash Equivalent

	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Current Account	559	859
Total	559	859

12. Payables

	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
<u>Amounts falling due within one year:</u>		
Professional Services Withholding Tax	26	-
<u>Accruals:</u>		
Payroll	122	-
Professional fees	100	28
Shared services	28	-
IT	24	-
T&S	8	-
Board and ARC 2024 fees	5	-
Other	11	4
Electricity	5	-
Total	329	32

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13. Capital Account

The capital account comprises income allocated for the purchase of fixed assets. It is amortised in line with the depreciation of the related assets.

	31 Dec 2024 €'000	5 Months 2023 €'000
Balance at 1 January 2024/17 July 2023	58	12
Transfer (to)/from Income and Expenditure Account		
Amount allocated to fund fixed asset purchases	119	60
Less: Amortisation in line with depreciation	(16)	(14)
Balance as at 31st December	161	58

14. Lease Commitments

MARA has commitments in respect of a lease on office accommodation at 2nd Floor, Menapia House Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh, Wexford. This is held by way of a lease, which has been extended until 31st of December 2037. The annual rent is €144,777 inclusive of VAT.

At 31st December 2024, MARA had the following future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable leases (to the break clause date of December 2032):

	31 Dec 2024 €'000	31 Dec 2023 €'000
Payable within 1 year	145	145
Payable within 2 – 5 years	580	435
Payable after 5 years	435	-
Total	1,160	580

15. Capital Commitments

There were no capital commitments as at 31 December 2024 or at 31 December 2023.

16. Related Party Transactions/ Disclosure of Interests

MARA complies with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies issued by the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform in relation to the disclosure of interests by the Board and members/staff of MARA. Formal procedures exist to ensure adherence with the requirements of the Code. There were no related party transactions reported in 2024 or in 2023.

Please see General Information on page four which details MARA's key management. As of 31 December 2024, MARA's key Management consisted of the Chief Executive and six Directors, with total remuneration paid in 2024 of €614,489. Key management in 2023 consisted of the Chief Executive and one Senior Manager with total Remuneration paid of €131,451 (5 months 2023).

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17. Return to the Exchequer

At the request of MARA and following consultation with the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications, the Minister for Public Expenditure, issued a direction for MARA to return foreshore, MAC and MUL income received in the period from Establishment to November 2024 in the amount of €16m to the Exchequer in one single payment before the end of the 2024 financial year. On the 20th of December 2024 an amount of €16,026,294.55 was transferred by MARA to the Exchequer.

18. Late Payments in Commercial Transactions

The Board has overall responsibility for MARAs compliance with the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997, which came into effect on 2 January 1998, and the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2012, which came into effect on 16 March 2013. The Board has delegated this responsibility to management.

The system of internal control incorporates such controls and procedures that are considered necessary to ensure compliance with the Act. MARA's system of internal control includes accounting controls are designed to ensure the identification of invoices and contracts for payment within the prescribed payment periods as defined by the Act. The controls are designed to provide reasonable, though not absolute, assurance against non-compliance with the Act. The Board is satisfied that MARA complied with the provisions of that Act in all material aspects. There was €349.61 in interest and €380 in compensation relating to late payments in 2024, which was paid in 2025 (2023: €0).

MARITIME AREA REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Approval of Financial Statements





Mark Mellett
Chair of the Board

Niamh Kenny
Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

Date: 18 June 2025

MARA

An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuiri
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
2nd Floor
Menapia House
Drinagh Business Park
Drinagh
Wexford
Y35 RF29

