

MI Observations on MUL250013 Uisce Eireann – Greater Dublin Drainage Project

Jonathan White – Marine Institute – Version 1 – 30/10/2025

Summary

The Seafood Climate Unit of DAFM requested MI observations on possible impacts that Marine Usage Licence ref: MUL250013 might have on the seafood sector, i.e. fish stocks, fisheries, aquaculture, or the environments on which they rely. The application submitted on behalf of Uisce Eireann in application for a maritime usage license to conduct marine survey work in two areas, in Baldoyle Bay (Area A; 35 ha.) and extending east from Portmarnock Beach into the Irish Sea (Area B; 713.6ha). Both areas adjoin the coast.

Operations are intended to acquire data to provide for design development and to support construction of a new regional wastewater treatment facility and associated infrastructure to serve Dublin and parts of Kildare and Meath.

Baldoyle Bay (Area A):

- Bathymetric survey (multibeam, sidescan sonar), geomagnetic (magnetometer).
- Four (?) boreholes within the intertidal zone.
- No intrusive environmental sampling is required within Baldoyle Bay.

Irish Sea (Area B):

- Bathymetric survey (multibeam, sidescan sonar) and geophysical survey (sub-bottom profiler and seismic, boomer or spark), geomagnetic (magnetometer).
- Ten (?) boreholes.
- Drop-down video and benthic grab sampling.
- Water sampling including Conductivity, Temperature and Depth (CTD).

Submission includes:

- Supporting information for screening for Appropriate Assessment (SISAA).
- Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species.
- Assessment of Impact on the Maritime Usage Report (AIMU).
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The application notes Area A as being within fishing, fish spawning and nursery grounds, within and adjacent to designated shellfish waters and the Malahide classified area for live bivalve mollusc production, though not coincidental with any aquaculture sites. Associated disruptions to fishing activities – primarily relating to bathymetric and geophysical surveys – are summarised in the submitted Assessment of Impact on the Maritime Usage Report.

Having reviewed the MUL application documents, FEAS notes the site overlaps two marine/coastal SACs, three SPAs and is in close proximity to a Shellfish Water Directive Area (<https://dafm-maps.marine.ie/aquaculture-viewer/>).

As noted in the application, the indicated areas are coincidental with spawning and nursery grounds of a range of commercial fish species, including:

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

Independently, the proposed survey operations should not substantially interfere with fish stocks, fishing activities or aquaculture activities in the area. It is assumed that the necessary notices to mariners / fishing vessels will be made regarding the deployment of seafloor monitoring devices.

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