

To:	Dr Alison McCarthy, Senior Marine Advisor, MULPA	From:	Dr Ciar O'Toole, Senior Marine Advisor, MULPA
		Date:	28/09/2026
Please see below for AA screening and determination report from external consultant Aoife Edgely of Tetra Tech, prepared using MARA procedures and templates with my supervision. I have reviewed the report below.			

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report			
To:	MULPA Directorate, MARA	Prepared by (on behalf of MARA):	Aoife Edgely (Associate Marine Scientist, Tetra Tech)
		Reviewed by:	Dr Ciar O'Toole, MARA
Date:	24/09/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL250020
Applicant:		Kilrush Maritime Ltd, Kilrush Marina, Merchants Quay, Kilrush, V15AD62	
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:		<i>1. Dredging (including dredging involving the use of a device to remove any material, whether or not suspended in water, from one part of the seabed to another part of the seabed) other than— (a) dredging carried out to create a new harbour, berth or waterway, or to deepen existing facilities in order to allow access for larger ships, or (b) dredging ancillary to development authorised under the Act of 2000, whether or not it involves the removal of any material from the sea or seabed.</i>	
Location of proposed maritime usage:		The proposed Maritime Usage is located within the approach channel to Kilrush Marina, situated on the northern shore of the Lower Shannon Estuary in County Clare, approximately 1 km south of Kilrush town centre.	
Licence application received:		07/11/2025	

1. Background

Kilrush Maritime Ltd (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake maintenance dredging of the approach channel to Kilrush Marina County Clare. The proposed works involve plough dredging of the Kilrush Marina approach channel to maintain safe navigable depth for vessels using the marina. The proposed maritime usage is maintenance dredging, which falls under Schedule 7(1) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act).

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed Maritime Usage in this application is part of a long-established programme of maintenance dredging in this area, which has been carried out periodically since the completion of Cappagh Pier in the mid-19th century. The dredging area encompasses the full width (20 m) and length (250 m) of the approach channel in Kilrush Marina and extends from the outermost fairway buoy through the marina approach channel to the lock gates. The equipment proposed to plough the marina approach channel will include a Multicat type tug towing an 8 m wide plough blade suspended from an A-frame on the stern of the vessel. It is proposed that the approach channel is dredged to maintain a channel width of 20 m, a target depth of -2.5 m Chart Datum (CD) and so that the sides of the channel achieve a slope of 1:4. Ploughing commences with a short haul at the outermost end in a seaward direction. Each successive haul begins further inward towards the lock gates until the full length of the approach channel is ploughed. This is repeated daily for the duration of the campaign.

The applicant has applied for an 8-year MUL duration so that one dredging campaign will be completed every two years over the 8-year period, with an additional dredging campaign proposed for the final year of the licence (i.e. 5 dredging campaigns total, one in May 2026, 2028, 2030, 2032 and April 2033). Each dredging campaign will take between 5 and 10 days to complete. Within each dredging campaign, it is proposed that dredging will start 4 hours before highwater and last for up to 8 hours, ending no later than 4 hours after highwater on the ebb tide.

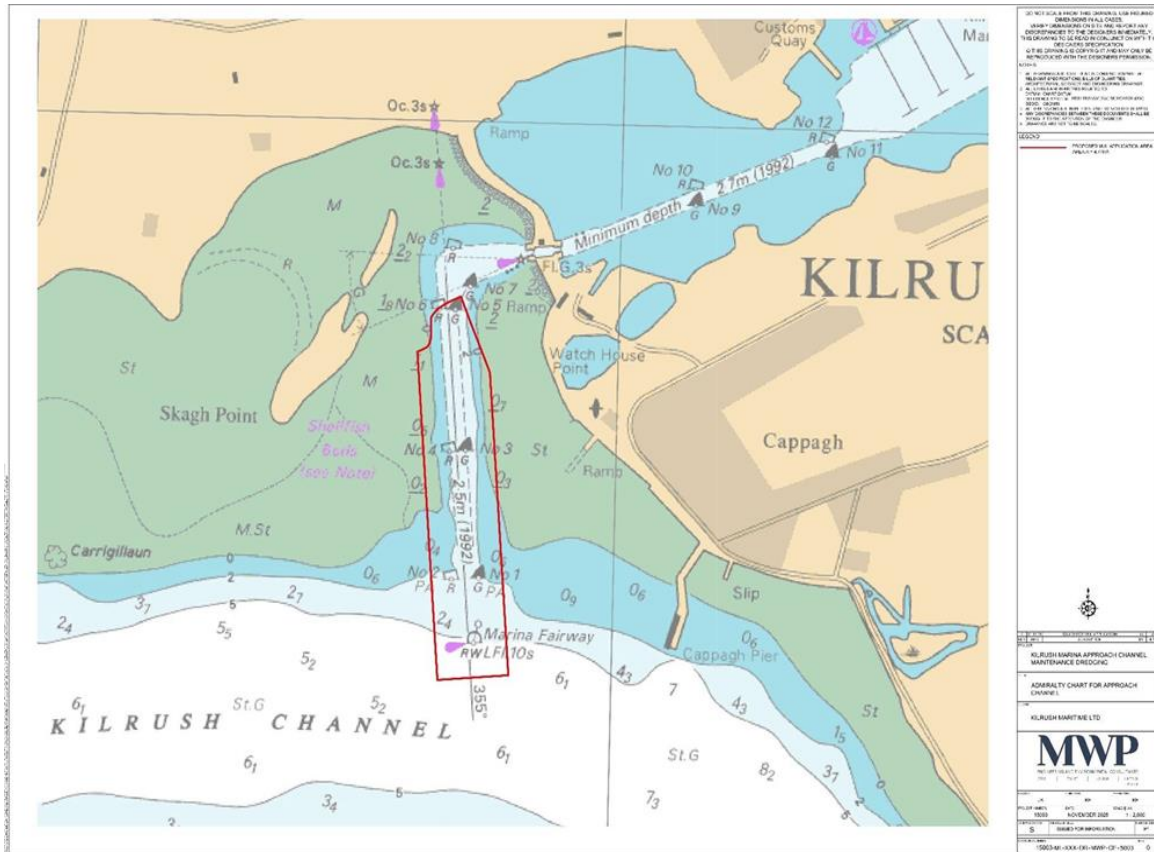


Figure 1: Map showing the proposed dredge area on the approach channel to Kilrush Marina County Clare.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The dredging activities proposed within this MUL application are located on the northern shore of the Lower Shannon Estuary in County Clare, approximately 1 km south of Kilrush town centre. It is proposed that the approach channel to Kilrush Marina is dredged to maintain a channel width of 20 m, a target depth of -2.5 m CD and so that the sides of the channel achieve a slope of 1:4. Kilrush Marina serves a range of recreational and small commercial craft, supporting leisure boating, marine tourism, and associated waterfront businesses. The channel has been subject to regular maintenance dredging in the past. The applicant previously held Dumping at Sea (DaS) permits issued by the EPA (ref. S0020-01 in 2015 and ref. S0020-02 in 2017). The applicant applied for a DaS permit (ref. S0020-03) on the 17/11/2025, and dredging associated with this permit will be undertaken where previous seabed levelling through plough dredging has already been undertaken under S0020-01 and S0020-02 and coincides with the proposed MUL area. The material to be dredged is largely subtidal sand to mixed sediment with *Nucula nucleus* community complex. Habitat of this nature is characterised by subtidal sediments ranging from sand to mixtures of sand, gravel and mud.

The proposed MUL area covers a total of 4.77 ha. Mean depths at the dredging site are between 0 m and 20 m. Broad benthic habitat types, where mapped, are a combination of circalittoral mixed sediment (EUNIS A5.44), and infralittoral mixed sediment (EUNIS A5.43)¹. The mapped Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats large shallow inlets and bays [1160] and reefs [1170] overlap the MUL area and make up part of the Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)².

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European site(s), in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the site(s).

The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report in support of the application which was referred to during this assessment.

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed in Table 1 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

¹ EUNIS habitat classifications as shown on [Ireland's Marine Atlas data viewer](#) accessed August 2026

² https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002165 accessed August 2026

Table 1: Identification and assessment of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests (QIs) and site-specific conservation objectives (SCIs). Those QIs marked in bold have been screened in for Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA [004077]	0	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Whooper swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Light-bellied Brent goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062] Ringed plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]	Yes. MUL Area overlaps with SPA, therefore, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise - Above water noise, vibration and lighting - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation to wetland habitats, including sediment/water quality impacts.	Yes	NPWS 2012 Conservation Objectives: River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA 004077. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
		Bar-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) [A164] Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>) [A857] Wetland and waterbirds [A999]			
Mid-Clare Coast SPA [004182]	12	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise - Above water noise, vibration and lighting - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation, including sediment/water quality impacts.	Yes	NPWS 2014 Conservation Objectives: Mid-Clare Coast SPA 004182. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Barnacle goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045] Ringed plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144]	No SPR connection.	No	

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
		Purple sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) [A148] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Wetland and waterbirds [A999]			
Illaunonearaun SPA [004114]	15	Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045]	No SPR connection identified	No	NPWS 2024 Conservation Objectives: Illaunonearaun SPA 004114. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA [004161]	17	Hen harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) [A082]	MUL Area is outside the foraging range of hen harrier and no SPR connection exists.	No	NPWS 2022 Conservation Objectives: Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
					004161. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Lower River Shannon SAC [002165]	0	Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation including sediment/water quality impacts.	Yes	NPWS 2012 Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise; - Above water noise, vibration and lighting; and/or - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation, including sediment/water quality impacts.		

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
		Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) [1095] River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099] Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise; - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation, including sediment/water quality impacts.		
		Common bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) [1349]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise; - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation, including sediment/water quality impacts. - Collision risk		

		Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] Coastal lagoons [1150] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] Freshwater pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) [1029] Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) [1096]	No SPR due to lack of meaningful hydrological pathway.	No	
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European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Inishmore Island SAC [000213]	49	Coastal lagoons [1150] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	No SPR connection due to lack of meaningful hydrological pathway.	No	NPWS 2024 Conservation Objectives: Inishmore Island SAC 000213. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
		Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Limestone pavements [8240] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330] <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]			
		<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour porpoise) [1351]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise; - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation (including smothering due to increased suspended sediment concentrations (SSC)); - Collision risk	Yes	

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Galway Bay Complex SAC [000268]	59	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Turloughs [3180] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	No SPR connection due to lack of meaningful hydrological pathway.	No	NPWS 2026 Conservation Objectives: Galway Bay Complex SAC 000268. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
		Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]			
		<i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise; - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation (including smothering due to increased suspended sediment concentrations (SSC)); - Collision risk	Yes	
Blasket Islands SAC [002172]	94	Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030]	No SPR connection due to lack of meaningful hydrological pathway.	No	NPWS 2014 Conservation Objectives: Blasket Islands SAC 002172. Version 1.0. National

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
		Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]			Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Yes, potential for impacts due to: - Underwater noise; - Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation (including smothering due to increased suspended sediment concentrations (SSC)); - Collision risk	Yes	

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 2: Identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Visual and above water noise disturbance	Possible temporary impacts on birds and otter leading to displacement from the area. Consideration of mobile species is based on their known foraging or commuting distances. <u>Ex situ effects - Birds</u> Ex situ effects to wintering waders and wildfowl ruled out as these species tend to be fairly sedentary once they arrive in their over-wintering areas; often only moving short distances between roosting and feeding areas. Ringed plover, dunlin and sanderling typically forage within 5 km of their roost sites (Goodship and Furness, 2022,³ Dias et al., 2006⁴, Field et al., 1998)⁵ while purple sandpiper forage within 2 km of their breeding sites⁶. Turnstone exhibit high site fidelity and have been recorded as being reliant on the supporting habitats of the SPA⁷. While barnacle goose have a core range of up to 15km from the roost site (SNH, 2016⁸), they are unlikely to forage at sea within the MUL Area. Hen harrier,

³ [NatureScot Research Report 1283 - Disturbance Distances Review: An updated literature review of disturbance distances of selected bird species | NatureScot](#)

⁴ Maria P. Dias, José P. Granadeiro, Miguel Lecoq, Carlos D. Santos, Jorge M. Palmeirim, Distance to high-tide roosts constrains the use of foraging areas by dunlins: Implications for the management of estuarine wetlands, Biological Conservation, Volume 131, Issue (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320706000826)

⁵ https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/shared_documents/publications/research-reports/1998/rr210.pdf

⁶ [Calidris maritima \(purple sandpiper\) | INFORMATION | Animal Diversity Web](#) accessed August 2026

⁷ [https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Mid-ClareCoastSPA\(004182\)Conservationobjectivessupportingdocument](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Mid-ClareCoastSPA(004182)Conservationobjectivessupportingdocument) accessed August 2026

⁸ Scottish National Heritage (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) – Guidance. <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2022-12/Assessing%20connectivity%20with%20special%20protection%20areas.pdf>

	typically forage within 5 km of their nest sites utilising open bog and moorland, including hill farmland and conifer plantations (NPWS, 2015) ⁹ . Hen harriers are also unlikely to forage at sea within the MUL Area.
Habitat loss, alteration and/or fragmentation (including suspended sediment/water quality impacts)	Potential for direct loss of and/or damage to habitats and potential to indirectly affect species (marine mammals, otter, migratory fish and birds) that rely on those habitats for feeding and/or breeding. Potential for sediments disturbed by dredging activities to smother sensitive habitats and to indirectly affect species (marine mammals, otter, migratory fish and birds) that rely on those habitats for feeding and/or breeding. All habitats further than 2.5 km from the MUL Area, as mapped by the NPWS, have been ruled out as sediment disturbed by dredging activity will settle out within this distance. Beyond this distance there is no meaningful hydrological pathway to effects.
Underwater noise impacts	Potential for direct effects (including injury, disturbance and/or displacement) on mobile species with hearing abilities (marine mammals, otter, migratory fish, birds).
Collision risk	Potential for direct injury to marine mammals from vessels.

In-combination effects

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

⁹ NPWS (2015). Site Synopsis: Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA. Site Code: 004161. [SITE SYNOPSIS](#)

The spatial scope of the in-combination assessment is 2.5 km from the MUL Area and is based on the maximum extent of the sediment plume predicted in Appendix 1 of the Applicant's combined SISAA and NIS report. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. The applicant has applied for an 8-year licence and thus the temporal scope is 8 years.

A search of relevant databases, (including MARA, An Coimisiún Pleanála, EPA, DAFM and local authority planning databases) was undertaken on the 28/09/2026.

No relevant projects or activities were identified within the spatial and/or temporal scope with the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage. As is required under the current legislation, the applicant has also applied for a Dumping at Sea permit (ref. S0020-03) on the 17/11/2025 in relation to dredging within the proposed MUL area. As this permit assesses the same works as the MUL application being assessed here, no in-combination effects will result.

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

- Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region 2020-2032
- National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) 2021
- Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000
- River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022-2027

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage, in particular in relation to the County Development Plan and the RSES for the Southern Region.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, the information on file, and having regard to:

- The nature and scale of the proposed development;
- The distance to the nearest European sites;
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects;
- Possible impacts from underwater noise;
- Possible disturbance from above water noise, vibration and lighting;
- Possible impacts due to habitat loss, alteration and/ or fragmentation (including smothering due to increased suspended sediment concentrations (SSC)); and
- Possible risk of collision;

it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Kilrush Maritime Ltd, Kilrush Marina, Merchants Quay, Kilrush, to carry out dredging within the approach channel to Kilrush Marina, situated on the northern shore of the Lower Shannon Estuary in County Clare, approximately 1 km south of Kilrush town centre (MUL250020) will require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Signature and date of the Tetra Tech staff member who prepared the report on behalf of MARA	 Aoife Edgely	24/09/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor Maritime Usage Licensing and Planning Advisory Directorate	28/09/2026