

# MARA

An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuiri  
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

## Maritime Usage Licence (MUL)

### General Application (Form MUL1)



**Important information:**

Applicants are strongly advised to read the "[Guidance Note for Applicants applying for a Maritime Usage Licence](#)" before completing this application.

The application form and supporting documentation, including confirmation of payment of fee, must be submitted to [licence@mara.gov.ie](mailto:licence@mara.gov.ie).

Complete this form electronically using the free text and tick boxes provided, free text boxes will expand as required. Responses should, in so far as is possible, clearly and concisely address the information requested. Where appropriate, supporting documentation may be submitted for assessment, providing that any information relevant to the application is clearly referenced in the application form.

Before completing this form, the declaration and consent at the end of the application form should be read.

**Application Fee:**

An application fee of EUR €2,000 applies for each Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) application.

This requirement is detailed in legislation:

Section 117(1) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 and Maritime Area Usage (Licence Fees) Regulations 2023, SI No 402/2003.

The application fee must be paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA). MARA Bank Details are provided upon request by email to [licence@mara.gov.ie](mailto:licence@mara.gov.ie)

Proof of application fee payment /confirmation of funds transfer must be provided with the application documentation.

Should the Maritime Usage Licensing application screen out for Appropriate Assessment, a refund of EUR €1,000 applies.

**Privacy Policy**

MARA may require applicants to provide certain personal data in order to carry out its legislative and administrative functions. MARA will treat all personal data that an applicant provides in accordance with MARA's obligations under data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A Privacy Statement explaining how MARA, as the Data Controller, will process the personal data the applicant provides, how that information will be used and what rights the applicant may exercise in relation to its personal data, is available in this link: [Privacy Policy - MARA - The Maritime Regulator](#).

**Freedom of Information/Access to Information on the Environment**

MARA is a public body for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, as amended (the "FOI Act") and is also subject to the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007-2018 (the "AIE Regulations") and MARA may be required to disclose information and records provided by the applicant in response to a request made under the FOI Act and/or the AIE Regulations, subject to applicable exemptions. Where the applicant considers that any information supplied to MARA is commercially sensitive, confidential or otherwise exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act or the AIE Regulations, the applicant must clearly identify such information at the time. Notwithstanding this, the final decision on disclosure rests with MARA, in accordance with the applicable legislation. The applicant must, upon reasonable request and within a reasonable timeframe, provide all necessary assistance and cooperation to MARA in connection with any request for information made under the FOI Act and/or AIE Regulations.

**Confidential/Commercially Sensitive Information**

Applicants are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by them in their application to MARA is commercially sensitive and/or confidential. The applicant should clearly identify and separate the specific sections of their application containing such information. The applicant should specify the reasons for its confidentiality/sensitivity with regard to the FOI Act and/or AIE Regulations.



## Form MUL1 – Application for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) for an activity listed in Schedule 7 of the MAP Act

### Part 1 Activity in Schedule 7 and relevant section of the MAP Act

1.1 Part 1 Activity in Schedule 7, for which this MUL application is made.

Tick Maritime Usage applicable to the purpose of the MUL. The Applicant should refer to the MUL Guidance Note for Applicants before completing this section.	
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of scientific discovery or research.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The installation or placement of navigational markers or aids to navigation, or both, not undertaken or authorised by the Commissioners of Irish Lights.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The installation of non-permanent platforms, pontoons or slipways.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The deposit of any substance or object, either in the sea or on or under the seabed, from— (a) a vehicle, vessel (including a craft capable of travelling on, in or under water, whether or not self-propelled), boat, aircraft or marine structure (other than a pipeline), (b) a container floating in the sea, or (c) a structure on land constructed or adapted wholly or mainly for the purpose of depositing solids in the sea.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. The use of a vehicle, vessel (including a craft capable of travelling on, in or under water, whether or not self-propelled), boat, aircraft, marine structure (other than a pipeline) or floating container to remove any substance or object from the seabed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. The use of explosives not related to development authorised under the Act of 2000 and not requiring authorisation under any other enactment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The maintenance of any cable, pipeline, oil, gas or carbon storage facility structure that does not require an authorisation (whether the authorisation takes the form of the grant of a licence, consent, approval or any other type of authorisation) under any other enactment in order to be undertaken.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The harvesting, disturbance or removal of seaweed, whether growing or rooted on the seabed, or deposited in or washed up thereon by the action of any one or more than one of the following: (a) tides; (b) winds; (c) waves.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The deposit, construction or removal of any mooring not requiring authorisation under any other enactment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12. (a) The removal of beach material from, or the disturbance of beach material in, the maritime area otherwise than in the course of the ordinary or reasonable recreational enjoyment of the maritime area. 12 (b) In this paragraph, "beach material" means sand, clay, gravel, shingle, stones, rocks, mineral substances, seashells, coral and maerl and any flora, in or on the surface of the seabed or suspended in the water of the maritime area, and includes outcrops of rock or any other mineral substance above the surface of the seabed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The laying or installation of telecommunications cables or ducting by or between coastal States where such cables or ducting pass through the exclusive economic zone (as construed in accordance with the Act of 2021) or the continental shelf but do not land in the State.	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. A maritime usage specified, for the purposes of this paragraph, in regulations made under section 113(2)."	<input type="checkbox"/>



Select activity type from the list below:

Dredging/Deposits	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>
ORE Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Seaweed	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Infrastructure (Water/Sewage)	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Infrastructure (Other)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telecoms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourism & Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 1.2 Select the relevant section(s) of the MAP Act under which this MUL application is made. If more than one section applies, then select all applicable sections.

Section 117 application for a new Schedule 7 usage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section 129 application to amend an existing foreshore authorisation or continue to occupy that part of the maritime area after the expiration of the authorisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section 130 application for an existing unauthorised maritime usage	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 1.3 Provide below details when MUL application is made under Section 129 of the MAP Act.

- A. Confirm that you are transitioning from an existing foreshore authorisation to a MUL to continue the previously consented maritime usage, or to amend an existing authorisation.

Yes  No

- B. If yes, provide the following details.

- i. Foreshore authorisation reference number.

- ii. Date of Issue.

- iii. Expiration date.



iv. Description of Authorised Usage.

v. Reason for transition from foreshore authorisation to MUL.

vi. Confirm that you have attached a copy of the existing foreshore authorisation including foreshore consent map in this MUL application as Attachment 1.3.

Yes  No

1.4 Provide below details when MUL application is made under Section 130 of the MAP Act.

A. Confirm that you are applying for a MUL for an existing unauthorised maritime usage.

Yes  No

B. If yes, provide the following details.

i. Description of existing unauthorised maritime usage.

ii. Location of unauthorised maritime usage.



iii. Date of commencement of unauthorised maritime usage.

### **Part 2 Applicant Details**

#### 2.1 Applicant Details

The name and address should be of the legal or natural person that is to be the MUL Holder. This information would be recorded on the MUL.	
Name of Applicant	National Oceanography Centre
Company/Organisation (if Applicable)	National Oceanography Centre
Applicant Address: Where a legal person would be the Holder of the MUL, these details must be as currently listed in the Companies Registration Office. Where a non-profit entity, which is a registered charity, would be the Holder of the MUL, these details must be as currently listed in the Register of Charitable Organisations.	
Address line 1	Waterfront Campus
Address line 2	European Way
Address line 3	
City/Town	Southampton, Hampshire
Eircode	SO14 3ZH (UK)
Applicant Email Address	<a href="mailto:m.clare@noc.ac.uk">m.clare@noc.ac.uk</a>
If the Applicant is a legal person, Company Registration Office Number. A copy of the Certificate of Incorporation (certified copy provided by CRO) and a list of Directors must be provided as Attachment 2.1.	
If the Applicant is a non-profit entity, which is a registered charity, the Registered Charity Number	Charity number: 1185265

Attachment 2.1 included (if required).

Yes     No     Not Applicable



## 2.2 Authorised Contact Person for MUL Application.

The Authorised Contact Person for the MUL Application will be the person that MARA will contact in relation to any aspect of the MUL application. The Authorised Contact Person can be a person within the Applicant Organisation or a person (agent) nominated by the Applicant

Authorised Contact Name	Dr Michael Clare
Authorised Contact Position	Principal Investigator
Email	<a href="mailto:m.clare@noc.ac.uk">m.clare@noc.ac.uk</a>
Telephone	[REDACTED]

## 2.3 If MARA provided a statutory declaration under Section 115 of the MAP Act as to whether or not a MUL was required for the proposed usage, provide the reference number associated with that declaration.

N/A

## 2.4 Existing Foreshore Authorisation

- A. Provide the reference number and title of any existing Foreshore Authorisations you may hold, or have a current application for, within, or otherwise in the vicinity of the proposed Maritime Usage, which you do not wish to transition (refer to 1.3 for Foreshore Authorisations you wish to transition).

N/A

- B. Do you intend to surrender any existing foreshore consent(s) (Lease/Licence) for any maritime usage other than that granted by the foreshore authorisation?

Yes  No

- C. If yes, provide description of the existing foreshore consent(s) authorised usage. If necessary, provide additional information as Attachment 2.4.

N/A

- D. Attachment 2.4 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable

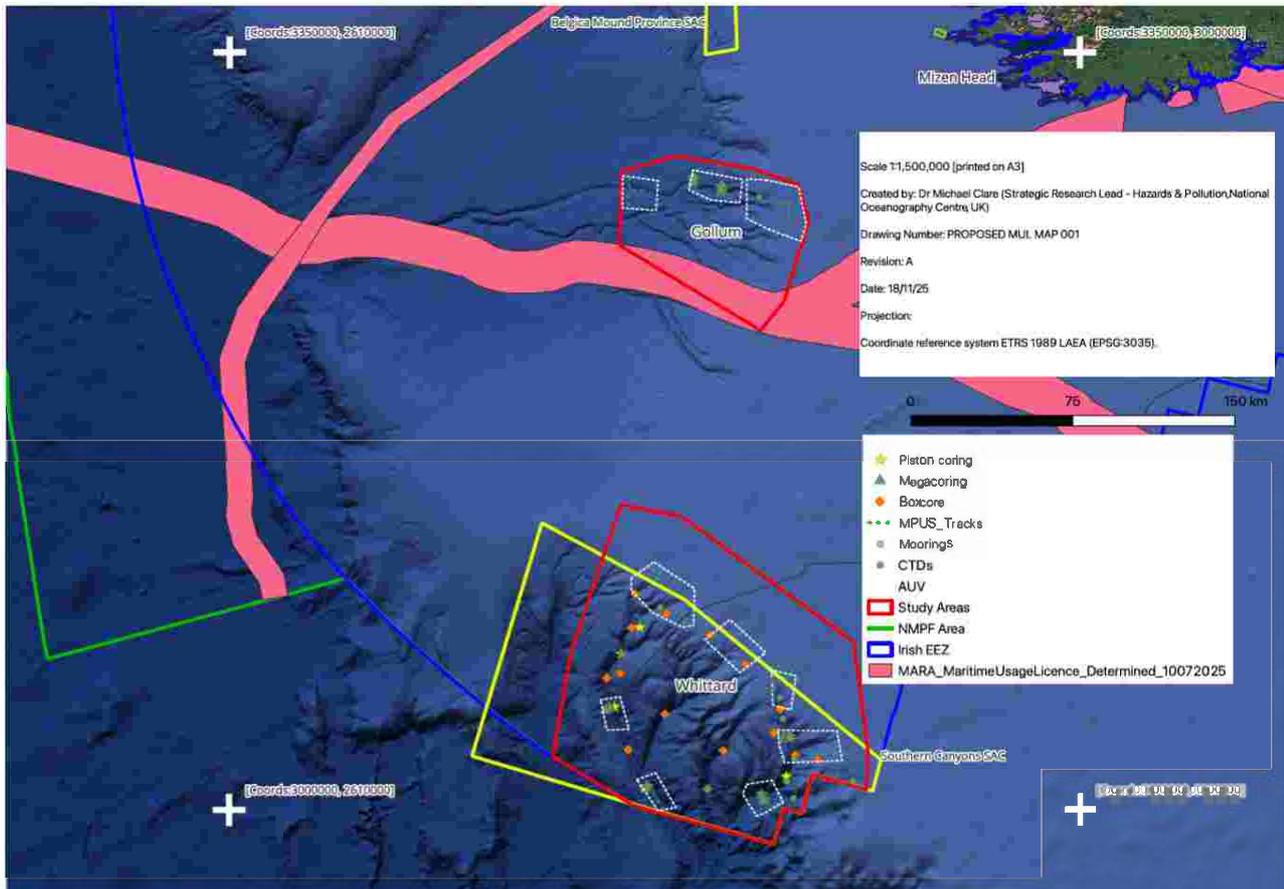


2.5 Other authorisations or consents

- A. Provide the reference number, a brief description and the status (e.g. application made or authorisation/consent granted) of any other authorisations or consents in the footprint, or otherwise in the vicinity of the proposed Maritime Usage area, held by the applicant.

If necessary, provide additional information as Attachment 2.5.

Part of the overall Gollum Channel study area overlaps with part of Maritime Usage Licence MUL230031, which is in reference to a geophysical survey and site investigations for a proposed subsea telecommunications cable; however, there is no spatial overlap with our proposed activities, nor would there be any conflict. Other known MULs are shown below in pink.



- B. Attachment 2.5 included.

Yes     No     Not Applicable



### Part 3 Details of Maritime Usage

#### 3.1 Maritime Usage

- A. Provide a brief description of proposed Maritime Usage.

Additional information can be provided as Attachment 3.1.

This application is in relation to offshore activities as part of a scientific research project funded by the United Kingdom's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) to conduct systematic scientific surveys in the deep-sea Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel, to perform a first of its kind characterisation of the transport of natural particles, nutrients, organic carbon and pollutants from the continental shelf to the deep-sea. The project will assist with providing a more detailed environmental characterisation in these key deep-sea sites in Irish waters. It will provide significant benefits for the associated high level objective "Environmental Ocean Health (Policy1)", which is particularly well-aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) of the European Union (Directive 2008/56/EC) and Commission Decision (ED) 2017/848. These policies, goals and directives underpin Ireland's MSFD, which aims to determine, achieve and maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) based on 11 qualitative condition descriptors, which in turn inform the environmental aspects of maritime spatial planning under Directive 2014/89/EU. This project will thus provide valuable scientific data to support these initiatives and will increase the understanding of environmental marine conditions within ecologically-important, but poorly understood deep-sea sites, characterise the transport pathways of pollutants such as microplastics into the deep-sea, and will aid in the wider understanding of similar sites that exist worldwide.

The proposed project scope includes:

i) **temporary deployment of short oceanographic moorings** (with no sea surface expression) to monitor near-seafloor currents and sediment transport, which will be recovered after a period of approximately 12 months. Seafloor moorings to be deployed at five locations in Irish waters between water depths of 1500m and 3400m. Each mooring will comprise: an anchor (1000 kg weight comprising chain or train wheels) connecting to a vertical wire (approximately 30 m long) that connects to buoyancy (provided by glass spheres and/or syntactic foam buoy). Scientific instruments will be attached to the vertical mooring line that will include: a Teledyne Sentinel 600 kHz Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler to measure currents; sediment trap (funnel that collects suspended sediment), and Seabird Scientific MicroCAT that measures temperature and salinity and an acoustic release link that will enable recovery of the mooring. These moorings follow a very similar design that has been deployed and recovered previously elsewhere in the Whittard Canyon (as previously agreed with MARA).

ii) **sampling of seafloor sediments** using scientific coring equipment. For each offshore campaign we proposed to use an OSIL megacorer (0.5 m deep x 0.06 m diameter cores – 30 sampling locations proposed, at each sampling location 4 cores to be acquired, so a potential total of 120 cores), NIOZ box cores (0.5 m deep x 0.5 wide sampler – 15 cores proposed), and Standard Gravity Piston coring (up to 6 m deep x 0.1 m diameter cores – 16 cores proposed) along transects within the canyon systems. On the basis of this plan, we anticipate a total volume of 0.7 m<sup>3</sup> of megacorer samples, 1.9 m<sup>3</sup> of box cores to be sampled, and 3.0 m<sup>3</sup> of Standard Gravity Piston cores – equating to a total of 5.6 m<sup>3</sup> of seafloor sampling, for each campaign; hence an anticipated recovery of 11.1 m<sup>3</sup> of sediment.

iii) **seafloor video surveys** acquired using Modular Platform Underwater System (MPUS), which is a modular, versatile, robotic underwater vehicle (RUV) capable of reaching depths of 6,000 metres, developed and operated by the National Oceanography Centre. Controlled via fibre optic cable connected to the ship, MPUS is equipped with high definition stills and video cameras used to observe conditions in the deep sea, specifically here to monitor seafloor



ecology and seafloor pollution. Video transects using MPUS will be performed at six key locations during the second offshore campaign across the submarine canyon/channel systems. The MPUS will be suspended above the seafloor and will not make contact with it.

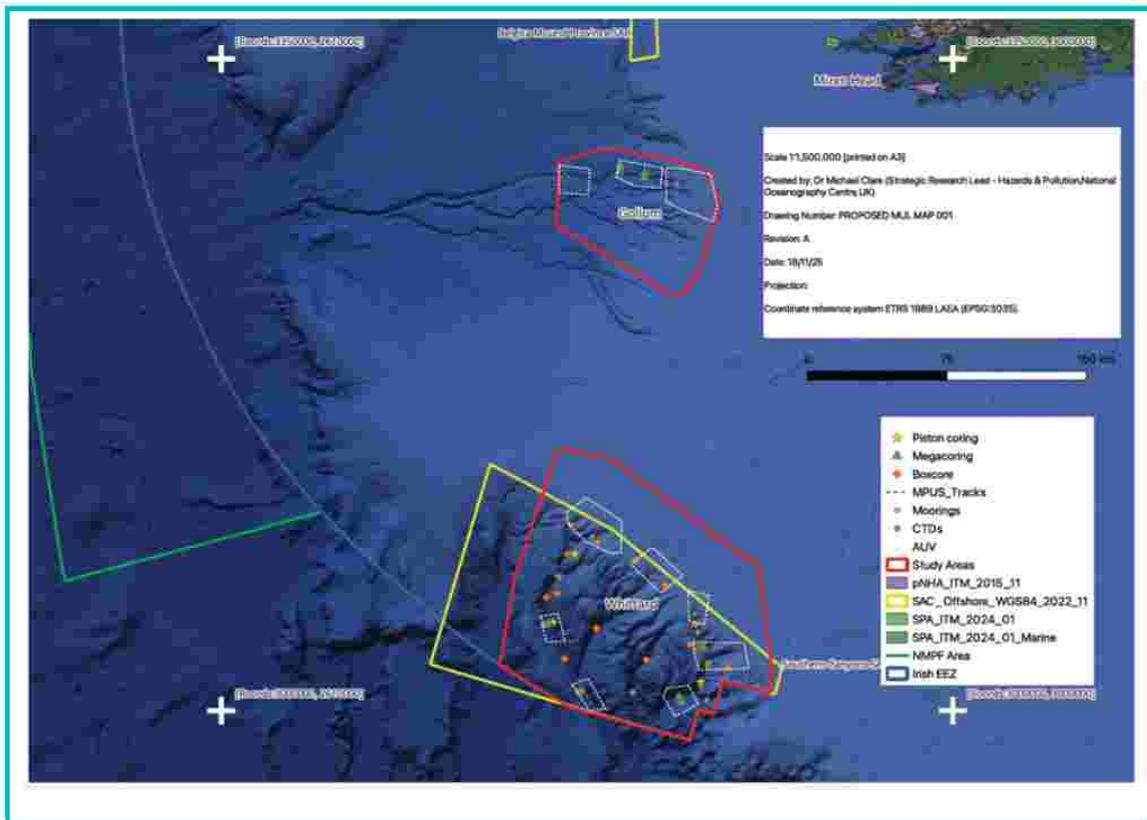
iv) **short-term (4 weeks maximum) deployment of two autonomous underwater oceanographic gliders** (Kongsberg Seaglider owned and operated by the National Oceanography Centre) to monitor ocean currents using an integrated Nortek 1 MHz ADCP and measure temperature and salinity using a SeaBird Electronics CTD sensor. The glider will be deployed at the start of the first offshore campaign and then recovered on the vessel that deployed it. The glider will dive from the surface to 1000 m and back approximately every 3 hours. At the end of each dive the data collected will be transmitted back to shore using Iridium satellite telemetry. During this phase of the dive cycle (approximately 10 minutes) the glider will have a small surface expression.

v) **short-term (30 hour maximum) deployment of Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV – Autosub5)** to map the seafloor and shallow subsurface using multibeam echosounder (Norbit WBMS 400kHz multibeam echosounder), side scan sonar (Edgetech 2205 Dual Frequency Sidescan Sonar - 420 kHz and 120 kHz), sub-bottom profiler (Edgetech 2205 Sub Bottom Profiler, 2-16 kHz), photograph the seafloor using a camera system (AESAs 2.5 Camera System), and characterise the water column using a Conductivity, Temperature and Density (CTD) sensor (Seabird CTD9+), characterise suspended sediments using a Hydroptic UPV6 and Fluidion Deep Water Sampler, and is also equipped with an Acoustic Doppler Current (ADCP) profiler to assist with navigation (Syrinx SprintNav, 600 kHz). Autosub 5 will be deployed and recovered multiple times during the two offshore campaigns, and aside from launch and recovery will move beneath the sea surface with no surface expression and will not involve any contact with the seafloor, instead flying above it for seafloor surveys.

vi) **measurement of vertical profiles in the water column to characterise temperature, salinity, current velocity and turbulent mixing.** This will include vertical profiles made using a CTD package and Lowered ADCP (two RDI 300 kHz Workhorse) mounted on a conventional CTD/Carousel frame. This will be deployed off the side of the vessel using a heave-compensated winch. A Vertical Microstructure Profiler (VMP-2000) will also be used for the measurement of turbulence kinetic energy dissipation rate through the water column. The VMP-2000 is equipped with cm-scale velocity probes (shear probes), high-resolution temperature sensors (fast thermistors), and a high-accuracy Seabird CTD.

vi) **shipboard measurements to be made while vessel is underway**, which include single beam echosounding (Kongsberg EA640 10/12 kHz), multi beam echosounding (Kongsberg EM122 12 kHz and EM710 70 to 100 kHz), sub-bottom profiler (Kongsberg SBP27 Sub-bottom profiler 2-9 kHz), AML Micro-X Sound Velocity probe and hull mounted ADCPs (75 kHz and 150 kHz RDI Ocean Surveyors).

Locations of proposed survey, sampling and moorings shown in map below:



B. Attachment 3.1 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable

3.2 Describe the purpose of the proposed Maritime Usage, with reference to the classes of usage in Schedule 7 of the MAP Act.

The purpose of the proposed Maritime Usage within this project relates primarily to the following class of usage in Schedule 7 of the MAP Act:

**Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of scientific discovery or research.** This is the overarching aim of this proposed work as the intention is to acquire new scientific data which is well aligned with many components of Ireland's National Marine Planning Framework (specifically focused on 'Ocean Health') that will more broadly benefit international research into better understanding: 1) the natural processes that occur within deep-sea submarine canyons (namely the Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel) through detailed monitoring of seafloor currents, characterisation of seafloor sediments, measurement of water column properties, remote mapping of the seafloor; and 2) the distribution of pollutants (particularly litter and microplastics) through video surveys and seafloor sampling.

In addition, the project will involve the following classes of usage:

**The deposit of any substance of object, either in the sea or under the seabed from a vessel.** As part of the project, short subsurface instrumented oceanographic moorings will temporarily be deployed from a research ship at four locations within the Whittard Canyon and one in the Gollum Channel in Irish waters for a period of approximately twelve months to measure near-seafloor currents in order to characterise hydrodynamic conditions, in order to understand the transport of natural particles including carbon, sediment and nutrients and human-created material including



litter and microplastics. These moorings will have a small physical footprint, and will be recovered after the monitoring period by a research ship, and hence will not be a permanent structure in the marine environment.

**The use of a vessel to remove any substance or object from the seabed.** The project will involve: 1) the recovery of the five oceanographic seafloor moorings, which will be enabled through use of an acoustic release that will return the mooring to the sea surface, without any physical disturbance of the seabed; and 2) physical sampling of seafloor sediments for scientific analysis (to characterise grain size, sediment type, organic carbon content and quantify concentrations of microplastics), which will involve multicoring (0.5 m deep x 0.06 m diameter cores), box cores (0.5 m deep x 0.5 wide sampler), and gravity piston coring (up to 6 m deep x 0.1 m diameter cores) along transects within the canyon systems. On the basis of the planned coring, we anticipate a total volume of 0.7 m<sup>3</sup> of megacorer samples, 1.9 m<sup>3</sup> of box cores to be sampled, and 3.0 m<sup>3</sup> of Standard Gravity Piston cores – equating to a total of 5.6 m<sup>3</sup> of seafloor sampling, for each campaign; hence an anticipated recovery of 11.1 m<sup>3</sup> of sediment.

### 3.3 Duration

- A. Indicate the overall MUL duration requested. Indicate the duration of any individual activities included in the overall activity. Give reasons for the proposed durations. Indicate any seasonal, vessel or other schedule constraints.

Additional information can be provided as Attachment 3.3.

The proposed marine survey activities will take place on the RRS James Cook from 26<sup>th</sup> June (depart Southampton, UK) to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2026 (return to Southampton, UK), which will involve deployment of oceanographic moorings (to be recovered approx. 12 months later), seafloor and water column surveys (including 4 week-long deployment of a subsurface autonomous glider, several up to 30 hour-long deployments of an AUV) and sediment sampling.

A subsequent 30 day offshore marine survey is proposed for Summer 2027 to recover the oceanographic moorings and to perform repeat seafloor and water column surveys and sediment sampling.

The dates for the second marine survey are not yet scheduled by the UK National Marine Facilities programme (the vessel will either be the RRS James Cook or the RRS Discovery); hence, we request a licence from June 2026-December 2027 to ensure this captures the planned work in case of schedule changes.

- B. Attachment 3.3 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable

### 3.4 Describe the area of proposed Maritime Usage

- A. State the total size of the Maritime Area (in m<sup>2</sup>, ha or km<sup>2</sup>, as appropriate), which is the subject of the application.

The proposed survey activities will be carried out at two different localities, as detailed in Attachment 3.4.



For the Whittard Canyon area the proposed study area encompasses 15,054 km<sup>2</sup> within which targeted scientific activities will occur.

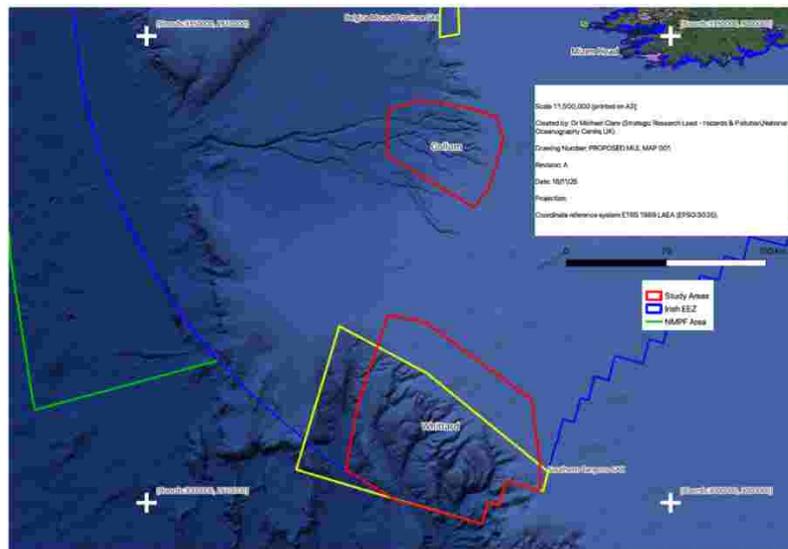
For the Gollum Channel area the proposed study area encompasses 4765 km<sup>2</sup> within which targeted scientific activities will occur.

This is a total area of 19,819 km<sup>2</sup> although it should be noted that survey activities will be locally focused within these broader areas. Water depths range between 170 m and 3400 m in these study areas.

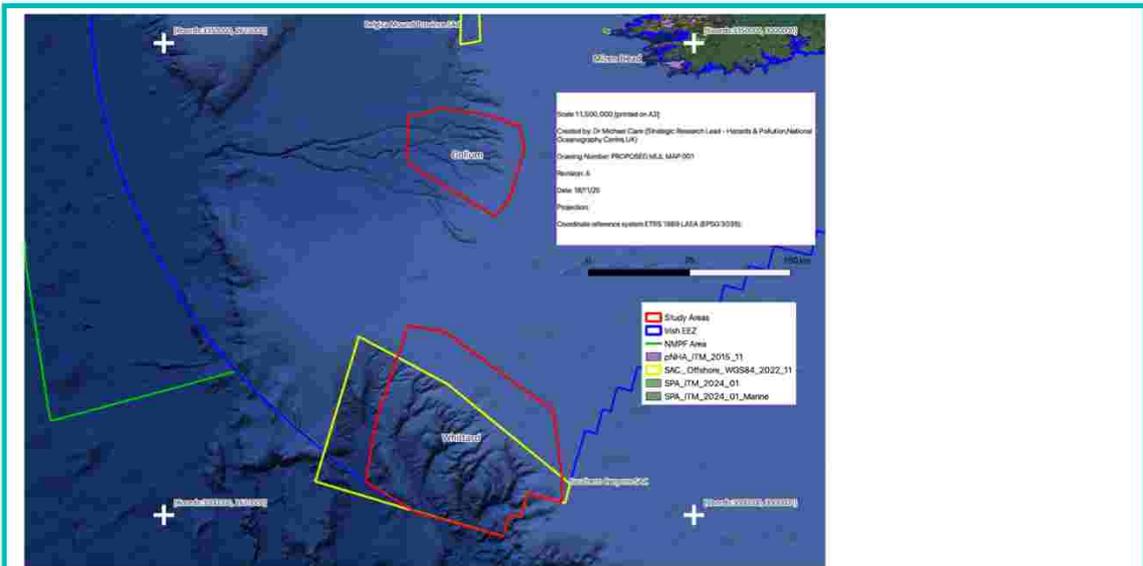
- B. Attach map, titled 'Proposed MUL Map' and GIS Shapefiles outlining the proposed Maritime Area(s). If the application relates to more than one area, each area should be labelled on the accompanying maps/drawings and its area provided. The map(s)/drawing(s) should be included as Attachment 3.4. List the attached map/drawing number(s) and map/drawing name(s) in the space below.

Map(s)/GIS Shapefiles must comply with 'MARA Technical Mapping Guidance Notes for MAC/MUL Applications in the Maritime Area under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAPA)'.

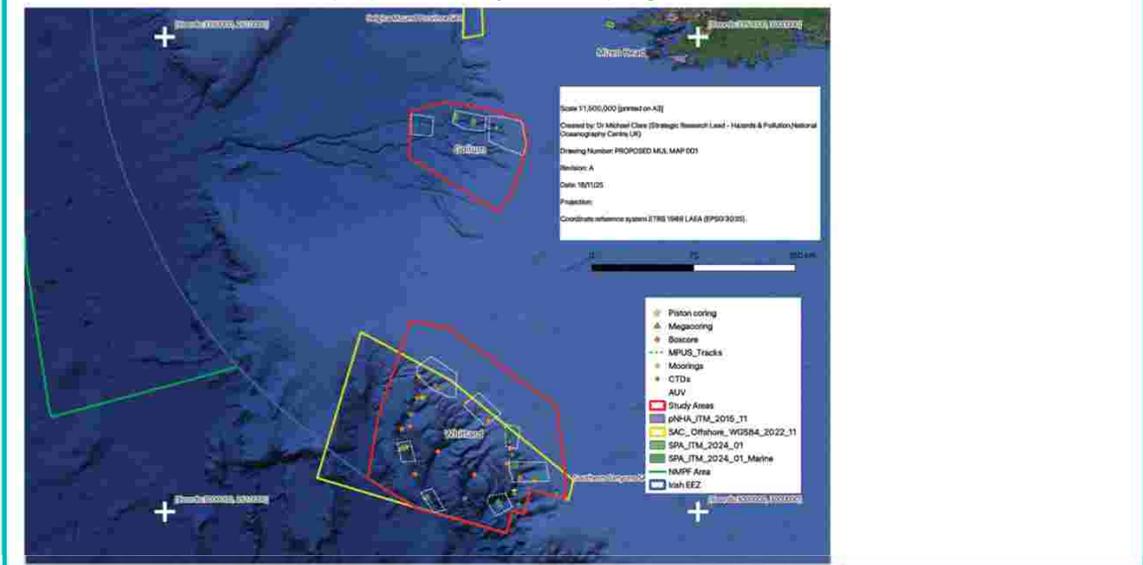
MUL MAP 001 – Study areas



MUL MAP 002 – Study areas relative to SACs and protected sites



MUL MAP 003 – Locations of proposed survey and sampling activities



C. Attachment 3.4 included.

Yes  No

3.5 Describe the location of proposed Maritime Usage

A. Provide the distance in kilometres and direction of the main body of the proposed Maritime Usage area from the shore at its closest point.

The proposed areas in proximity and direction from shore are as follows:

**Gollum Channel:** 108 km south-west of Dursey Island, County Cork

**Whittard Canyon:** 262 km south-south-west of Mizen Head, County Cork



- B. Attach map(s)/drawing(s) showing the location of the proposed Maritime Usage. The attached map/drawing number(s) and map/drawing name(s) should also be listed in the space below. The map(s)/drawing(s) should be included as Attachment 3.5.

Map(s)/GIS Shapefiles must comply with 'MARA Technical Mapping Guidance Notes for MAC/MUL Applications in the Maritime Area under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAPA)'.

MUL/039 MAP 001 – Study areas  
 MUL/039 MAP 002 – Study areas relative to SACs and protected areas  
 MUL/039 MAP 003 – Locations of proposed survey and sampling activities

- C. Attachment 3.5 included.

Yes  No

### 3.6 Ownership

- A. Is any part of the Maritime Area within the proposed site in private ownership?

Yes  No

- B. If yes, indicate on a drawing/map the area concerned in relation to the proposed maritime usage area and provide a letter confirming that the Applicant has obtained all necessary consents from the relevant owner(s).

- C. Is the Applicant aware of any actual or claimed legal rights or interests held by third parties in the proposed site that may be affected by the proposed Maritime Activity?

Yes  No

- D. If yes, indicate on a drawing/map the area concerned in relation to the proposed maritime usage area and provide a letter confirming that the Applicant has obtained all necessary consents from the relevant owner(s) of such legal rights or interests.

- E. The letter(s) and drawing(s)/map(s) referred to in B and D above should be included as Attachment 3.6. List the attached letters, map/drawing number(s) and map/drawing name(s) in the space below.

- F. Attachment 3.6 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable

### 3.7 Planning permission and/or other authorisation(s)



- A. Does the proposed Usage require planning permission and/or other authorisation(s), or is it ancillary to or part of to a proposed development which requires planning permission and/or other authorisation(s)?

Yes  No

- B. If yes, what is the status of the planning and/or other authorisation(s)? If applicable, provide a brief description of the proposed development, to which the proposed Maritime Usage is ancillary.

Provide the file reference number(s) and link(s) to the websites where information on the planning and/or other authorisation application(s) and/or planning permission/ authorisation(s) can be obtained.



## Part 4 Marine Planning and Environmental Considerations

### National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)

#### 4.1 NMPF Objectives

- A. Describe how the proposed Maritime Usage is consistent with the objectives of the NMPF. Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with the objectives of the NMPF. This information should be provided as Attachment 4.1.

- B. Attachment 4.1 included.

Yes  No

#### 4.2 Designated Marine Area Plan

- A. Is the proposed Maritime Usage located in an area for which a Designated Marine Area Plan has been published?

Yes  No

- B. If yes, indicate if the proposed Usage is consistent with the Designated Marine Area Plan. Additional information can be provided as Attachment 4.2.

Not Applicable

- C. Attachment 4.2 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable

### Habitats and Birds Directives

#### 4.3 Report for Appropriate Assessment Screening

- A. Is the proposed Maritime Usage directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site?

Yes  No

- B. If not, provide an Appropriate Assessment screening report to provide sufficient information for MARA to undertake screening to determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required of the implications of the proposed Maritime Usage alone, or in combination with other plans or projects, for any relevant European site, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

If the Applicant has already determined that it is likely that an Appropriate Assessment will be required and have prepared an NIS, it may be submitted.



The Appropriate Assessment screening report and/or NIS must be prepared by a suitably qualified person, and a summary of the person's qualifications and experience must be included in the report/NIS.

The Appropriate Assessment screening report and/or NIS should be provided as Attachment 4.3.

Attachment 4.3 included.

Yes  No

#### 4.4 Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species

- A. Do species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive occur in the zone of influence of the proposed Maritime Usage?

Yes  No

- B. If yes, the Applicant should provide an assessment of the risk posed to such species by the proposed Maritime Usage. The Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species report must be prepared by a suitably qualified person, and a summary of the person's qualifications and experience must be included in the report.

The Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species report should be provided as Attachment 4.4.

Attachment 4.4 included.

Yes  No

#### Water Framework Directive

- 4.5 Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive. This information should be provided as Attachment 4.5.

Attachment 4.5 included.

Yes  No

#### Marine Strategy Framework Directive

- 4.6 Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with the objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Ireland's Marine Strategy under the Directive. This information should be provided as Attachment 4.6.

Attachment 4.6 included.

Yes  No

#### Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive



#### 4.7 EIA Screening

- A. With reference to Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, S.I. 600 of 2001, as amended confirm that the activity:
- Is not of a class listed, where no quantity, area or other limit is specified in that Part, or
  - Does not either equal or exceed, any relevant quantity, area or other limit specified for a class listed in that Part.

Yes – is not of a class/does not equal or exceed a threshold	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No – is of a class/equals or exceeds a threshold	<input type="checkbox"/>

- B. If yes, confirm if the activity is of a class listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, S.I. 600 of 2001, as amended, but does not equal or exceed the relevant quantity.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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- C. If yes to '4.7 B', provide the information for EIA screening specified in Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, S.I. 600 of 2001, as amended. The information specified in Schedule 7A should be provided as Attachment 4.7.

Attachment 4.7 included.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
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#### UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Maritime Jurisdiction Act

- 4.8 Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with the Irish State's obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Maritime Jurisdiction Act.

Additional information can be provided as Attachment 4.8.

The proposed project—comprising temporary deployment of oceanographic moorings, gliders, AUVs, seafloor sampling equipment, and non-intrusive video surveys within the Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel—is fully consistent with the Irish State's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Maritime Jurisdiction Act. The project respects Ireland's rights, jurisdiction, and duties in its maritime zones and adheres to the international legal framework governing marine scientific research, environmental protection, and the lawful use of the marine environment.

##### **1. Consistent With Ireland's Sovereign Rights and Jurisdiction Under the Maritime Jurisdiction Act**

The Maritime Jurisdiction Act (2021) codifies Ireland's maritime zones (territorial sea, contiguous zone, EEZ, and continental shelf) and affirms the State's sovereign rights to:

- explore, exploit, conserve and manage natural resources,
- regulate and authorise marine scientific research, and



- protect and preserve the marine environment.

The proposed project is consistent with these obligations because:

- All activities occur within Irish maritime zones where the State has authority to regulate scientific research.
- The project will only occur once authorised through the appropriate Irish licensing framework, satisfying the requirement that marine scientific research in the EEZ or on the continental shelf can take place.
- The research directly supports Ireland's responsibilities to conserve and manage marine biological and physical resources in accordance with national and EU law.

## **2. Fully Conforms with UNCLOS Provisions on Marine Scientific Research (Part XIII)**

UNCLOS grants coastal States the right to regulate marine scientific research in their EEZ and continental shelf while encouraging peaceful, cooperative research activities.

The project complies with these provisions in that the:

- marine scientific research shall be conducted exclusively for peaceful purposes; consistent with Article 240.
- Undertaking peaceful, non-military scientific research, consistent with Article 246(3).
- A formal application for Diplomatic Clearance will be made to the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs as required under UNLOS Article 249.
- Being carried out with the explicit consent of the Irish State, as required under Articles 246 and 249 (through this current application and discussions with the Marine Institute and Wildlife and National Parks Service).
- Sharing details of research objectives, methods, and equipment used with the licensing authority.
- Ensuring that all deployed equipment (moorings, gliders, AUVs) is temporary, recoverable, and non-permanent, consistent with Article 258.

The research therefore fully respects the balance UNCLOS establishes between promoting scientific knowledge and protecting coastal State rights.

## **3. Consistent With Ireland's UNCLOS Duties to Protect and Preserve the Marine Environment (Part XII)**

Ireland has obligations under UNCLOS Articles 192–194 to protect the marine environment, prevent pollution, and conserve marine ecosystems. The project contributes positively to these obligations by:

- Providing environmental data vital for understanding deep-sea ecosystem functioning, pollutant pathways (including microplastics), and hydrographic conditions.
- Supporting Ireland's implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which helps fulfil UNCLOS requirements related to pollution prevention and ecosystem protection.
- Employing low-impact methodologies:
  - No seabed contact for AUVs, gliders, or ROV platforms
  - Temporary mooring deployments with no surface structures
  - Controlled, limited-volume sediment sampling
  - Full recovery of all equipment
- Avoiding any activity that could result in marine pollution, habitat damage, or adverse environmental effects, thereby supporting Article 194(5) on protecting rare or fragile ecosystems.



#### 4. Respect for Navigation, Safety, and Other Lawful Uses of the Sea

Under UNCLOS, coastal States must balance their rights with the freedom of navigation and the rights of other maritime users.

The project complies by:

- Having no surface expressions (gliders, AUVs, and moorings remain subsurface), minimising interaction with navigation routes.
- Maintaining temporary deployments only, with rapid recovery capability.
- Ensuring vessel operations comply with COLREGS and safe navigation requirements.
- Ensuring that research equipment does not interfere with fishing, shipping, or submarine cables.

This is consistent with UNCLOS Articles 58 and 87 regarding lawful uses of the sea and freedom of navigation.

#### 5. Supports Ireland's International and Regional Cooperation Obligations

UNCLOS encourages States to promote international cooperation in marine scientific research (Articles 242–244).

The project advances these obligations by:

- Being conducted in partnership with the UK Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and participating academic institutions. This includes Professor Andrew Wheeler - Chair of Geology, Head of Geology, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University College Cork; Dr Martin White - Senior Lecturer, School of Natural Sciences, Earth & Ocean Sciences; Ryan Institute, University of Galway; Dr Aaron Lim, PhD - Lecturer in Marine Geoscience, Principal Investigator, Environmental Research Institute, Department of Geography, University College Cork; Dr Lucy Harding - Marine Ecologist - Scientific Advice and Research Directorate, An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra - National Parks and Wildlife Service; Dr Robert Hall, Scottish Association of Marine Science (SAMS); Dr Ian Kane, Manchester University (UK); Esther Sumner, University of Southampton (UK); Dr Furu Mienis, Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (Netherlands); Dr Sophie Hage, University of Brest (France); Dr Claudio Lo Iacono, Spanish National Research Council, ICM-CSIC (Spain).
- Committing to the open dissemination of research results, as encouraged under Article 249.
- Contributing to international scientific knowledge of deep-sea canyons and particle transport processes relevant to global marine science initiatives.

The proposed maritime scientific research activity is therefore fully consistent with Ireland's obligations under UNCLOS and the Maritime Jurisdiction Act. It respects Ireland's sovereign rights, supports environmental protection duties, ensures lawful and controlled scientific research within Irish maritime zones, and contributes to international cooperation. The project upholds the principles of UNCLOS: responsible marine science, environmental stewardship, and non-interference with other lawful uses of the sea.

Attachment 4.8 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable



- 4.9 Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with achieving the National Climate Objective, as defined in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act of 2015, as amended.

Additional information can be provided as Attachment 4.9.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, establishes Ireland's National Climate Objective to pursue, achieve, and sustain a climate-neutral economy by no later than 2050, in a manner consistent with a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, and environmentally sustainable future.

The proposed project is fully consistent with this national objective. The project supports Ireland's transition to a climate-resilient future by improving scientific understanding of deep-sea processes, carbon cycling, and climate-relevant marine environmental change in Irish offshore waters. Its contributions are outlined below.

### **1. Supports Climate-Resilient Environmental Management and Policy**

The National Climate Objective requires that climate action and environmental governance be underpinned by robust, best-available scientific evidence.

This project contributes to that requirement by:

- Generating new climate-relevant datasets on deep-sea circulation, sediment transport, organic carbon flux, and pollutant pathways within the Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel systems.
- Providing information essential for understanding how Ireland's deep-sea ecosystems respond to climate change, including changes in:
  - ocean temperature, salinity, and density structure
  - turbulence and mixing
  - particulate and carbon transport
  - benthic ecosystem function

These data will help improve Ireland's capacity to design climate-resilient marine policies, consistent with the Act's requirement for evidence-driven climate governance.

### **2. Enhances Understanding of Ocean Carbon Cycling and Long-Term Carbon Storage**

The deep sea is a key component of the global carbon cycle, acting as a long-term sink for organic carbon. This project:

- Characterises down-canyon transport of organic carbon from shelf areas into the deep ocean.
- Improves understanding of natural carbon sequestration mechanisms in submarine canyon systems.
- Helps determine how changing oceanographic conditions may affect Ireland's capacity for marine carbon storage.

These outcomes directly support the National Climate Objective by informing climate mitigation strategies that rely on accurate accounting of marine carbon pathways.

### **3. Supports Climate-Related EU Obligations (MSFD, MSPD, SDG14)**

The Climate Act requires Ireland to implement climate action in a manner aligned with other environmental and marine obligations.

The project contributes to:



- MSFD Good Environmental Status assessments relevant to climate-linked descriptors (e.g., hydrography, benthic integrity, pollution)
- Marine Spatial Planning Directive requirements for evidence on climate-change vulnerability and environmental resilience
- UN SDG 14 – Life Below Water, which underpins sustainable marine climate action

By improving baseline environmental data in deep-sea regions, this research helps ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are integrated across national marine governance.

#### **4. Minimal Emissions and No Long-Term Impact on Marine Carbon Stores**

The project involves temporary, small-footprint scientific deployments and controlled sampling, all of which:

- have no lasting impact on deep-sea habitats or carbon-rich sediments
- avoid disturbance of sensitive carbon-sequestering features
- do not alter marine ecosystem functioning or long-term carbon storage processes

Thus, the maritime usage is consistent with the Act's requirement to support climate action while safeguarding environmental integrity and biodiversity.

#### **5. Strengthens Ireland's Research Capacity for Climate Action**

The National Climate Objective recognises the need for enhanced scientific capability to support the transition to a climate-neutral and climate-resilient society.

This project provides:

- International scientific collaboration (via partnerships)
- Advanced monitoring technologies (AUVs, gliders, moorings, benthic imagery, turbulence profilers)
- Long-term datasets needed for climate modelling and environmental forecasting

These contributions directly support national climate research capacity and environmental monitoring frameworks outlined in the Climate Act.

The proposed scientific research project is therefore consistent with the National Climate Objective established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. It strengthens the scientific basis for climate-resilient marine management, enhances understanding of carbon cycling and climate-linked environmental change, contributes to Ireland's climate and marine policy obligations, and is carried out with minimal, temporary, and environmentally responsible maritime usage.

Attachment 4.9 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable

### **4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2030**

4.10 Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2030.



Additional information can be provided as Attachment 4.10.

The proposed project supports and aligns strongly with the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023–2030, particularly in relation to improving the evidence base for the assessment, protection, and sustainable management of Ireland’s deep-sea ecosystems.

NBAP emphasises four overarching objectives. The project contributes directly to each of them as follows:

### **1. NBAP Objective 1 – Mainstream biodiversity across decision-making and marine policy**

The NBAP prioritises integration of biodiversity considerations into marine planning, marine licensing, and the implementation of ecosystem-based management (EBM).

The proposed project contributes to this objective by:

- Providing high-resolution environmental data (currents, sediment transport, water-column structure, pollution pathways, benthic ecology) from Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel—deep-sea areas where information is currently limited.
- Supporting Ireland’s obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, and the Marine Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) by enhancing the scientific evidence base used for:
  - assessing Good Environmental Status (GES)
  - informing spatial management in offshore waters
  - supporting future designations and conservation measures

This aligns directly with NBAP Action 1.3 (improve biodiversity data flows and inform policy).

### **2. NBAP Objective 2 – Reduce pressures on biodiversity and safeguard ecosystems**

A core NBAP priority is reducing impacts on vulnerable habitats—including deep-sea reefs, canyons, sediment ecosystems, and species protected under national or EU legislation.

The nature of this project supports this objective through:

- Non-intrusive research methods, with no seabed contact from MPUS, AUV, gliders, or shipboard acoustic systems except for planned sediment coring at defined locations.
- Short-term, temporary mooring deployments with no surface presence, minimal spatial footprint, and full recovery after use.
- Scientific sampling volumes (11.1 m<sup>3</sup> across both campaigns) that are small relative to the large scale of the deep-sea environment and are unlikely to create significant or lasting habitat disturbance.
- Provision of new insight into:
  - Sediment transport processes
  - Carbon cycling and sequestration
  - Pollutant (including microplastic) pathways into the deep sea

This information directly supports NBAP Target 2.1, which calls for improving understanding of pressures affecting marine biodiversity and enhancing the scientific basis for reducing them.

### **3. NBAP Objective 3 – Enhance knowledge, data quality and access regarding biodiversity**

The project’s main contribution lies here. The NBAP stresses the need for improved baseline data in poorly understood offshore and deep-sea areas, including submarine canyons, which are ecologically important but often data-deficient.



This project contributes by:

- Conducting first-of-its-kind characterisation of deep-sea particle, nutrient, organic carbon, and pollutant transport from the continental shelf to depths >3000 m.
- Providing high-quality physical, chemical, biological and ecological datasets, including:
  - deep-sea current records
  - sediment trap data
  - benthic ecology video transects
  - microplastic transport and concentration analyses
  - seafloor morphology and habitat data from MBES, SSS, and SBP
- Improving understanding of deep-sea ecosystem functioning, a stated priority under NBAP Action 3.5 (improve monitoring of marine biodiversity indicators).

This will directly support:

- MSFD Descriptor assessments (D1, D4, D6, D10, D11)
- EPA and NPWS evidence programmes
- Future mapping of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) and deep-sea biodiversity hot spots

#### **4. NBAP Objective 4 – Strengthen conservation governance and international cooperation**

The project is funded by the UK Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and involves collaboration with multiple research institutions, contributing to NBAP actions promoting cross-border scientific partnerships.

This aligns with:

- NBAP Action 4.2 – strengthen international engagement on marine and deep-sea biodiversity.
- Enhanced sharing of marine environmental data within European networks such as EMODnet, ICES, MSFD monitoring programmes, and the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance.

The project thus supports Ireland's commitment to international marine science, monitoring and reporting obligations.

The proposed offshore scientific research project is strongly aligned with the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (2023–2030). It will:

- Help enhance Ireland's capacity to assess, protect and manage deep-sea biodiversity.
- Generates new data essential for MSFD GES assessments, Marine Spatial Planning, and national conservation strategies.
- Supports evidence-led decision-making and reduces knowledge gaps in ecologically sensitive deep-sea environments.
- Involves temporary, highly controlled activities with minimal spatial footprint and negligible long-term environmental effects.

The proposed project directly supports the implementation of NBAP through the collection of critical scientific data needed to safeguard and manage Ireland's deep-sea biodiversity.

Attachment 4.10 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable



## National or European Strategic or Policy Objectives

4.11 Provide any additional relevant information with regard to the overall purpose of the proposed maritime usage, with reference to, e.g. National or European strategic or policy objectives and national targets, and strategic research objectives.

Additional information can be included as Attachment 4.11.

The overall purpose of the proposed maritime usage is to undertake non-intrusive, time-limited scientific investigations in the Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel systems in order to characterise the transport of natural particles, nutrients, organic carbon and pollutants (including microplastics) from the continental shelf to the deep sea, and to document associated benthic habitats and ecosystems within Irish waters. These activities are fully consistent with, and directly supportive of, key Irish and European marine policy objectives, environmental targets and strategic research priorities.

The project is closely aligned with the objectives of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD, 2008/56/EC), which establishes the overarching framework for achieving and maintaining Good Environmental Status (GES) in EU marine waters through 11 qualitative descriptors, including biodiversity (D1), food webs (D4), eutrophication (D5), seafloor integrity (D6), contaminants (D8) and marine litter (D10). Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848 further specifies the criteria and methodological standards for determining GES and for standardised monitoring and assessment.

By deploying deep-sea moorings, seafloor sediment sampling, water-column profiling, autonomous gliders, AUV surveys and video transects, the project will generate high-resolution physical, biogeochemical and ecological datasets that:

- Contribute directly to improving assessments of GES under the MSFD, particularly for biodiversity, seafloor integrity, contaminants and marine litter (including microplastics);
- Support the refinement of monitoring programmes and indicators that Ireland must maintain under the MSFD implementation cycle.

The project also underpins the EU framework for Maritime Spatial Planning (Directive 2014/89/EU), which requires Member States to implement ecosystem-based maritime spatial plans that promote sustainable use of marine resources while preserving and improving the environment. By providing baseline environmental characterisation of ecologically important, deep-sea canyon and channel systems, the work will strengthen the evidence base needed for environmental aspects of maritime spatial planning in offshore Irish waters, including the identification and management of sensitive habitats, potential pressures and cumulative impacts.

The proposed activity is also consistent with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which sets a target to legally protect at least 30% of EU seas by 2030, with at least 10% strictly protected. Deep-sea submarine canyons are recognised as biodiversity-rich and vulnerable environments; improved knowledge of ecosystem structure, function and stressors in Whittard Canyon and the Gollum Channel will support future designation, management and effectiveness assessment of marine protected areas and other spatial conservation measures in line with these EU commitments.

With respect to pollution and microplastics, the project directly supports the European Green Deal's "zero pollution" ambition and associated Zero Pollution Action Plan, which includes a 30% reduction target for microplastic releases by 2030 and broader efforts to reduce harmful pollution to levels that are no longer detrimental to ecosystem and human health. By tracing the pathways by which microplastics and other contaminants are transported from shelf seas into the deep ocean, the project will generate essential knowledge for understanding fate, accumulation zones and potential



ecological impacts of microplastic pollution, thereby informing implementation of EU microplastics restrictions and wider plastics policy.

More broadly, the project is clearly aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life Below Water, particularly targets on preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution of all kinds, sustainably managing and protecting marine ecosystems, and enhancing scientific knowledge, research capacity and the transfer of marine technology.

Ireland has transposed and is implementing the MSFD through national marine strategies and monitoring programmes designed to achieve and maintain GES in Irish marine waters. Recent assessments highlight that GES is not yet achieved for key descriptors, including aspects of fish biodiversity and ecosystem health in the Irish maritime area, underscoring the need for improved scientific understanding and monitoring, particularly offshore and in deep-sea environments. The proposed project responds directly to this need by focusing on poorly characterised, but ecologically important, deep-sea canyon systems within Irish waters.

The work is closely aligned with the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), which is Ireland's overarching marine spatial plan bringing together all marine-based human activities and setting objectives and planning policies, including those relating to environmental protection and ecosystem health. In particular, the project supports and provides evidence for:

- Environmental – Ocean Health Policy 1, which requires compliance with MSFD-related policies on biodiversity, non-indigenous species, water quality, sea-floor and water column integrity, marine litter and underwater noise, and demonstration of contribution to relevant MSFD targets.
- Biodiversity and Protected Marine Sites policies, which support proposals that protect, maintain, restore and enhance the distribution and extent of important habitats and species, and require that activities avoid significant adverse effects on protected sites and ecological networks.
- Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity policies, which seek to protect the quality and character of the seabed and sediments and to avoid significant effects on seabed morphology and sediment processes.

By documenting deep-sea benthic communities, seafloor morphology, sediment dynamics and pollutant transport, the project provides baseline data that will help Ireland demonstrate progress towards its MSFD targets and inform application of NMPF policies in any future licensing or plan-making affecting these offshore areas. The work is also consistent with the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act framework, which supports evidence-based, sustainable use and protection of Ireland's maritime area.

The nature of the proposed usage is also compatible with the NMPF's precautionary and ecosystem-based approach: all offshore activities are temporary, have no permanent surface expression, and largely avoid direct physical disturbance of the seabed (with sediment coring limited in extent and volume relative to the spatial scale of the environment). The use of autonomous and remotely operated platforms (gliders, AUV, MPUS) further minimises environmental footprint while maximising data return.

At the research and innovation level, the project directly advances the objectives of Ireland's National Marine Research and Innovation Strategy 2017–2021, which provides the framework for targeting marine research funding to areas of strategic importance, including: Biodiversity, Ecosystems & Food-webs; Pollution and Litter; Climate Change; and Ocean Observation and Seabed Mapping. The proposed work contributes to these themes by:

- Quantifying deep-sea transport and burial of organic carbon and suspended particulate matter (relevant to climate change, blue carbon and ecosystem functioning);
- Mapping and monitoring deep-sea habitats and communities in submarine canyons (biodiversity, ecosystems and food webs);



- Characterising the transport and fate of pollutants, including microplastics and other contaminants, into the deep sea (pollution and litter);
- Deploying and integrating advanced ocean observing systems (moorings, gliders, AUVs, shipboard mapping) and seafloor mapping tools (multibeam, sub-bottom profiling), directly supporting national priorities in ocean observation and seabed mapping.

The project's emphasis on high-quality, systematic monitoring campaigns is also consistent with Ireland's emerging "Ocean Knowledge 2030" Strategy for Marine Research, Knowledge and Innovation, which aims to enhance ocean knowledge and provide the information base needed to support sustainable management of Ireland's marine area. At the wider European level, the work aligns with ongoing efforts under programmes such as Horizon Europe to develop integrated, long-term ocean observing systems and to improve understanding of climate-relevant ocean processes and pollution pathways.

In summary, the primary purpose of the proposed maritime usage is the collection of important scientific data on deep-sea environmental conditions, with relevance to ecosystem structure and pollutant transport in Whittard Canyon and the Gollum Channel within Irish waters. This purpose is strongly aligned with:

- European policy frameworks (MSFD and Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848; the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive 2014/89/EU; the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030; and the Zero Pollution and microplastics-reduction objectives of the European Green Deal);
- Irish national policy and planning frameworks (Ireland's implementation of the MSFD; the National Marine Planning Framework, particularly Environmental – Ocean Health Policy 1 and related biodiversity and sea-floor integrity policies; and the Maritime Area Planning Act); and
- National and European marine research strategies, notably the National Marine Research and Innovation Strategy priority themes and the forthcoming Ocean Knowledge 2030 agenda.

The project will therefore provide valuable, policy-relevant scientific evidence to support Ireland and the EU in assessing and achieving Good Environmental Status, designing and managing marine protected areas, implementing maritime spatial planning, and meeting international commitments under UN SDG 14 and related global biodiversity and pollution-reduction targets, while imposing only a minimal and temporary physical footprint in the marine environment.

Attachment 4.11 included.

Yes  No  Not Applicable



### Declaration and Consent

I declare that all information provided with this application, including this completed form and all attachments confirmed as included in the application checklist, is correct at the time of submission and that I will notify MARA of any changes to this information that may arise during the application process. MARA may, by notice in writing given to the applicant, require the applicant to provide in the specified form, by affidavit or otherwise, such additional information in relation to any matter to which the application relates as MARA reasonably considers necessary to assist it to determine the application.

By submitting this application form, I agree that certain details provided may be published on MARA's website and that the information provided in this form will be processed and retained by MARA and may be shared with bodies appropriate to assessing aspects of this application in furtherance of consideration of the granting of a MUL in accordance with the MAP Act.

This consent relates to this application and to any further information provided by me, or on my behalf, for the purposes of this application.

Name of Signatory:

Michael Andrew Clare

Position held:

Strategic Research Lead – Hazards and Pollution

Date:

26th November 2025

Signed for and on behalf of the applicant:





### Application Checklist

Complete the below application checklist

Section No.	Document	Required	Submitted
<b>Application Form</b>			
<b>Part 1</b>	Activity in Schedule 7	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Part 2</b>	Applicant Details	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Part 3</b>	Details of Maritime Usage	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Part 4</b>	Marine Planning and Environmental Considerations	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Declaration and Consent</b>	Signed Declaration and Consent	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Application Checklist</b>	Application Checklist	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Supporting Documentation</b>			
<b>1.3</b>	Attachment 1.3 – Existing Foreshore Authorisation(s) wish to transition	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.1</b>	Attachment 2.1 – List of Directors	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.4</b>	Attachment 2.4 – Details of Foreshore Authorisation(s)	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.5</b>	Attachment 2.5 – Details of Other Authorisation(s)	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.1</b>	Attachment 3.1 – Proposed Maritime Usage	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.3</b>	Attachment 3.3 – MUL Duration	Yes (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.4</b>	Attachment 3.4 – MUL Map and GIS Shapefiles	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.5</b>	Attachment 3.5 – Other Maps and Drawings	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.6</b>	Attachment 3.6 – Private Ownership Details	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.1</b>	Attachment 4.1 – Compliance with Objectives of NMPF	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.2</b>	Attachment 4.2 – Designated Marine Area Plan Compliance Details	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.3</b>	Attachment 4.3 – Appropriate Assessment Screening Report	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.3</b>	Attachment 4.3 – NIS	Yes (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.4</b>	Attachment 4.4 – Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species report	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.5</b>	Attachment 4.5 – Compliance with Objectives of the Water Framework Directive	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.6</b>	Attachment 4.6 – Compliance with Objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.7</b>	Attachment 4.7 – Information for EIA screening	Yes (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.8</b>	Attachment 4.8 – UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the	Yes (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



	Maritime Jurisdiction Act Compliance Details		
<b>4.9</b>	Attachment 4.9 – National Climate Objective Compliance Details	Yes (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.10</b>	Attachment 4.10 – National Biodiversity Action Plan Compliance Details	Yes (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.11</b>	Attachment 4.11 – National or European strategic or policy objectives Compliance Details	Yes (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>0.0</b>	Confirmation of Payment of Fee	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Please return completed applications, by email, to: [licence@mara.gov.ie](mailto:licence@mara.gov.ie)