

Maritime Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	John Evans Director of Maritime Usage Licensing	From:	Dr Ciar O'Toole Senior Marine Advisor
Date:	27/05/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL250021
Applicant:	National Oceanography Centre, Waterfront Campus, European Way, Southampton, Hampshire, UK.		
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	<i>7(2) Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of scientific discovery or research</i>		
Location of proposed maritime usage:	Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel, approx. 100 km off the South West coast of Ireland		
Licence application received:	10/12/2025		

1. Background

The National Oceanography Centre (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake marine environmental surveys for the purposes of scientific discovery or research, falling under Schedule 7(2) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The activities are 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. The project will assist with providing a more detailed environmental characterisation in these key deep-sea sites in Irish waters, 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.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

- i) **temporary deployment of short oceanographic moorings** (with no sea surface expression), which will be recovered after a period of approximately 12 months 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. Scientific instruments will be attached to the vertical mooring line that will include: a Teledyne Sentinel 600 kHz Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler; sediment trap and Seabird Scientific MicroCAT that measures temperature and salinity and an acoustic release link that will enable recovery of the mooring.
- ii) **sampling of seafloor sediments**. For each offshore campaign: 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 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).
- iii) **seafloor video surveys** acquired using a robotic underwater vehicle (RUV) controlled via fibre optic cable connected to the ship. Video transects will be performed at six key locations during the second offshore campaign across the submarine canyon/channel systems.
- 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.

v) **short-term (30 hour maximum) deployment of Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV – Autosub5)** 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), a camera system (AESA 2.5 Camera System), a Conductivity, Temperature and Density (CTD) sensor (Seabird CTD9+), a Hydroptic UPV6 and Fluidion Deep Water Sampler, and an Acoustic Doppler Current (ADCP) profiler. 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.

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). A Vertical Microstructure Profiler (VMP-2000) will also be used. 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 Subbottom profiler 2-9 kHz), AML Micro-X Sound Velocity probe and hull mounted ADCPs (75 kHz and 150 kHz RDI Ocean Surveyors).

Table 1 showing summary of proposed maritime usage activities.

Activity	Equipment Type	Frequency of Sampling	Duration
Deployment of short oceanographic moorings	Teledyne Sentinel 600 kHz Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler to measure currents; sediment trap and Seabird Scientific MicroCAT	Deployed at five locations	12 months deployment
Sampling of seafloor sediments	OSIL megacorer NIOZ box core sampler Standard Gravity Piston coring	0.5 m deep x 0.06 m diameter cores, 30 sampling locations proposed, with 4 cores at each location – 120 cores total per survey. 0.5 m deep x 0.5 wide – 15 cores proposed per survey up to 6 m deep x 0.1 m diameter cores – 16	Across survey time – max three weeks per year x 2 years

		cores proposed per survey	
Seafloor video surveys	Robotic underwater vehicle (RUV)	Six occasions per survey	Across survey time – max three weeks per year x 2 years
Autonomous underwater oceanographic gliders x 2	Kongsberg Seaglider with an integrated Nortek 1 MHz ADCP and a SeaBird Electronics CTD sensor	Multiple deployments across survey time	Across survey time – max three weeks per year x 2 years
Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV)	Multibeam echosounder, Sidescan Sonar, sub-bottom profiler, camera system Conductivity, Temperature and Density (CTD) sensor, Hydroptic UPV6 and Fluidion Deep Water Sampler, Acoustic Doppler Current (ADCP) profiler.	Multiple deployments across survey time	30-hour maximum deployment across 3 weeks survey time per year
Measurement of vertical profiles in the water column	CTD package and Lowered ADCP (two RDI 300 kHz Workhorse) mounted on a conventional CTD/Carousel frame and a Vertical Microstructure Profiler (VMP-2000)	Multiple deployments across survey time	Across survey time – max three weeks per year x 2 years
Shipboard measurements to be made while vessel is underway,	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 Subbottom profiler 2-9 kHz), AML Micro-X Sound Velocity probe and hull mounted ADCPs (75 kHz and 150 kHz).	Continuous	Across survey time – max three weeks per year x 2 years

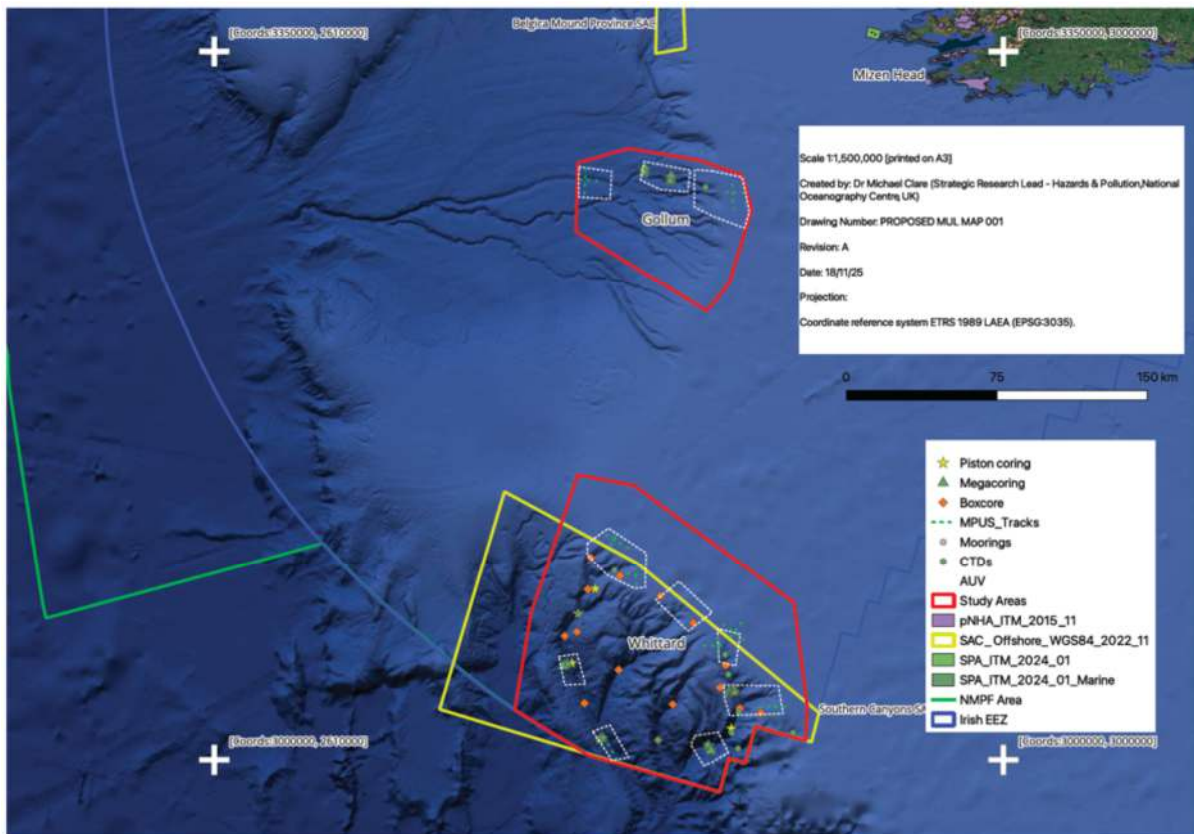


Figure 1 showing indicative sampling locations within the two red line areas and showing the Southern Canyons SAC (yellow line).

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

Whittard Canyon area - the proposed maritime usage area covers 15,054 km². This area lies 262 km south-south-west of Mizen Head, County Cork and a large section of the proposed MUL area falls within the Southern Canyons SAC [Site code 002278]. It is the more southerly of the two red line areas shown in Figure 1. Water depths are between 400m and 3500 in this area. The benthic environment is composed primarily of a series of deep canyons sloping down to the Biscay Abyssal Plain. The proposed MUL area contains both geogenic and biogenic reef habitat. Within the canyons systems there are known to be bedrock cliffs and boulders, carbonate cliffs, boulders and small mounds.

Gollum Channel area - the proposed maritime usage area covers 4765 km² within which targeted scientific activities will occur. This area lies 108 km south-west of Dursey Island, County Cork and is the more northerly of the two red line areas shown in Figure 1. It is also an area of marine canyons and water depths are between 400m to over 1000m.

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 sites, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites. 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 on Table 2 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.

Table 2 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives. Those Qualifying Interests 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
Slyne Head Islands SAC [Site code IE000328]	300 km approx.	Reefs [1170] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Slyne Head Islands SAC 000328. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Slyne Head Peninsula SAC [Site code IE002074]	300 km approx.	Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Slyne Head Peninsula SAC 002074. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<p>Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110]</p> <p>Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130]</p> <p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. [3140]</p> <p>European dry heaths [4030]</p> <p><i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p> <p>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410]</p> <p>Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p><i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]</p> <p><i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833]</p> <p><i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]</p>			
West Connacht Coast SAC [Site Code IE002998]	300 km approx.	<p><i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]</p> <p><i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</p>	Yes – possible underwater noise	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: West Connacht Coast SAC 002998. Version 2. National

			disturbance from proposed activities		Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Duvillaun Islands SAC [Site code IE000495]	380 km approx.	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Duvillaun Islands SAC 000495. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Belgica Mound Province SAC [Site code: IE002327]	70 km approx.	Reefs [1170] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Belgica Mound Province SAC 002327. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Porcupine Bank Canyon SAC [Site code:IE003001]	270 km approx.	Reefs [1170] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Porcupine Bank Canyon SAC 003001. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
South-west Porcupine Bank SAC [Site code:IE002329]	250 km approx.	Reefs [1170] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: South-west Porcupine Bank SAC 002329. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of

					Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Southern Canyons SAC [Site code: IE002278]	Overlaps	Reefs [1170]	Yes – possible physical disturbance or destruction	Yes	NPWS (2026) Conservation Objectives: Southern Canyons SAC 002278. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Mers Celtiques – Talus du golfe de Gascogne [Site code FR5302015]		<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Yes – possible physical disturbance or destruction	Yes – possible physical habitat disturbance or destruction	No CO available – similar Irish CO used instead: NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: West Connacht Coast SAC 002998. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Récifs du talus du golfe de Gascogne [Site code FR5302016]		<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Yes – possible physical disturbance or destruction	Yes – possible physical habitat disturbance or destruction	No CO available – similar Irish CO used instead: NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: West Connacht Coast SAC 002998. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
SPAs					
Inishmore SPA [Site code:	250 km approx.	Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]	Yes – possible underwater noise	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Inishmore SPA

0004152]		Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199]	disturbance from proposed activities		004152. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Cliffs of Moher SPA [Site code: 0004005]	250 km approx.	Chough (<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Cliffs of Moher SPA 004005. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Loop Head SPA [Site code: IE0004119]	200 km approx.	Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Loop Head SPA 004119. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Kerry Head SPA [Site code: IE004189]	190 km approx.	Chough (<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Kerry Head SPA 004189. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Dingle Peninsula SPA [Site code: IE004153]	150 km approx.	Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Chough (<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Dingle Peninsula SPA 004153. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local

					Government and Heritage.
Blasket Islands SPA [Site code: IE004008]	140 km approx.	Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Chough (<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Blasket Islands SPA 004008. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Puffin Island SPA [004003]	120 km approx.	Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Puffin Island SPA 004003. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Iveragh Peninsula SPA [Site code: IE004154]	120 km approx.	Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Chough (<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Iveragh Peninsula SPA 004154. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Skelligs SPA [Site code: IE004007]	110 km approx.	Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]		Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Skelligs SPA 004007.

		<p>Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013]</p>	<p>Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities</p>		<p>Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>
<p>Deenish Island and Scariff Island SPA [Site code: IE004175]</p>	<p>110 km approx.</p>	<p>Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013]</p>	<p>Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Deenish Island and Scariff Island SPA 004175. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>
<p>Beara Peninsula SPA [Site code: IE004155]</p>	<p>100 km approx.</p>	<p>Chough (<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]</p>	<p>Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Beara Peninsula SPA 004155. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>
<p>The Bull and the Cow Rocks SPA [Site code: 004066]</p>	<p>100 km approx.</p>	<p>Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]</p>	<p>Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: The Bull and The Cow Rocks SPA 004066. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>
<p>Cruagh Island SPA [Site code: IE004170]</p>	<p>320 km approx.</p>	<p>Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013]</p>	<p>Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Cruagh Island SPA 004170. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service,</p>

			disturbance from proposed activities		Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
High Island, Inishark and Davillaun SPA [Site code: IE004144]	320 km approx.	Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: High Island, Inishshark and Davillaun SPA 004144. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Clare Island SPA [Site code: IE004136]	350 km approx.	Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Clare Island SPA 004136. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Duvillaun Islands SPA [Site code: IE004111]	320 km approx.	Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>) [A014] Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) [A045] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009]	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance from proposed activities	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Duvillaun Islands SPA 004111. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 3 identifies 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.)
Disturbance from underwater noise	Possible temporal impacts on marine mammals and birds that are Qualifying Interests from a number of identified European sites from noise generated from a number of proposed activities which will be occurring within their foraging ranges.
Physical habitat disturbance or destruction	Possible habitat disturbance or destruction of habitat to protected reef habitat within the Southern Canyons SAC which overlaps with one of the two proposed red line areas.

In-combination effects

The potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage activities 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.

The spatial scope of the in-combination assessment is 5km and is based on the maximum distance of underwater noise generated by the geophysical equipment proposed in this application and the Effective Deterrence Range¹ of Harbour porpoise which is the marine mammal most sensitive to underwater noise. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is two years, the period over which the activities are proposed.

A search of relevant databases, including those of the EPA, An Coimisiún Pleanála and MARA's own database was undertaken on the 26/05/2026. Table 4 below outlines those activities which are considered to have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

¹ Effective Deterrence Range – the radius of a circular area assumed to be disturbed, JNCC, 2025, <https://jncc.gov.uk/resources/2e60a9a0-4366-4971-9327-2bc409e09784#jncc-report-803.pdf>

Table 4: List of projects which were considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
LIC230033 (MUL) Apollo Submarine cable System Ltd.	Proposed installation and operation of the 2Africa Submarine Cable System within the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The planned cable will extend from Widemouth Bay in Cornwall to a number of countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East	Overlaps with the more southerly of two red line areas.	Granted on 28/06/2024
MUL230031 Amazon MCS Ltd.	Geophysical survey and site investigations for a proposed transatlantic subsea fibre optic cable having a landfall at Castlefreke, County Cork to evaluate options for the route across the Celtic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to a landfall on the East coast of the USA.	Overlaps with the more northerly of two red line areas.	Granted on 22/04/2025
MAC250018 Amazon MCS Ltd.	The installation, operation, monitoring, maintenance, repair and decommissioning of a subsea fibre optic cable system.	Overlaps with the more northerly of two red line areas.	Applied for on 11/12/2025

The following plan relating to the development of the maritime environment was also considered:

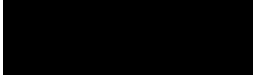

- The Climate Action Plan 2025

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above and projects listed on Table 4 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage as there is the possibility of spatial and temporal overlap of activities between this proposed maritime usage and those shown in Table 4. This could result in in-combination impacts on Qis and SCIs of European sites highlighted in Table 3 above.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

5. Screening Determination Statement

<p>The assessment of significant effects:</p> <p>Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, the information on file, and having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 disturbance from underwater noise • Possible physical habitat disturbance and destruction <p>it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage National Oceanography Centre, Waterfront Campus, European Way, Southampton, Hampshire, UK. to carry out 7(2) Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of scientific discovery or research at Whittard Canyon and Gollum Channel, approx. 100 km off the SW coast of Ireland (MUL250021) 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.</p>		
Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Dr Ciar O'Toole Senior Marine Advisor	Date 27/05/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director, Maritime Usage Licensing	Date: 27/05/2026