

Project:	Port of Cork Expansion Works						
Client	Port of Cork Company						
Subject	Maritime Usage Licence Application – NMPF Objectives						
Appendix	4.1						
Orig. by	DM	Appr. by	POC	Date	05/12/2025	Doc. Ref:	CORE2-AYE-RE-XX-TN-MA-0002

NMPF Objectives

The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU), sets down European countries' common approach to the planning of maritime areas, allowing each country to plan its own maritime activities to a set of common requirements.

As part of the Irish Government's comprehensive approach to marine planning across three main areas of forward planning, development management, and marine planning enforcement, the NMPF sets the framework for the forward-planning component of the country's marine-planning system.

The NMPF is a national plan for Ireland's seas, setting out, over a 20-year horizon, how the sea is planned to be used, protected and enjoyed. It was published on 30th June 2021 and applies to the maritime area around Ireland and provides objectives, policies and visions for all marine-based activities and how these activities interact with one another. All applications for activity or development in Ireland's maritime area are considered in terms of their consistency with the objectives of the Plan.

The NMPF has been prepared with an ecosystem-based approach and informed by best available knowledge. It sets out Overarching Marine Planning Policies that will apply to all marine activities or development, including policies in relation to ocean health and environment, infrastructure, heritage, communities, seascape and access, among others. Compliance statements for the high-level objective or policy grouping are provided in Table 1.

4.1.1 Ports, Harbours, and Shipping

The objectives of the NMPF outlined in Section 18 are specifically for 'Ports, Harbours, and Shipping' and are therefore most relevant for the proposed works. They are as follows:

'Safeguard the operation of ports as key actors in the economic wellbeing of the State through the provision of safe and sustainable maritime transport.'

Facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services.

Sustainable development of the ports sector and full realisation of the National Ports Policy with a view to providing adequate capacity to meet present and future demand, and to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

Ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports, ports of regional significance, and smaller harbours are appropriately addressed in regional and local marine planning policy.'

A total of ten planning policies (Table 2) are set out to achieve the above objectives, and they cover issues including the protection of current port activity. They also commit to supporting future opportunities for expansion of port and harbour activities.

4.1.2 Offshore Renewable Energy

Chapter 13 of the NMPF has several key objectives and policies supporting Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE). The key objectives are:

- Support the development of ORE in Ireland as a driver to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate the move to cleaner energy in line with National and EU policy.
- Increase the sustainable ORE use of our extensive marine resource in an efficient and coordinated manner identifying, where possible, potential for synergies and opportunities for multi-use of our shared maritime area.
- Support Ireland's decarbonisation journey through increased use of ORE while delivering significant and sustained benefits, import substitution, fiscal return, national and local economic development and technology learning.
- Support the strategic growth of the ORE industry recognising the potential to derive benefits particularly for Ireland's coastal communities.
- Provide enhanced security of energy supply for Ireland in the short and medium term, in accordance with the Climate Action Plan.
- Develop a robust, effective transparent consenting process to ensure appropriate environmental protections are built-in, while enabling sustainable ORE developments to progress.
- Ensure good regulatory practices in ORE installation and generation, including decommissioning of existing facilities, at end of life, according to international best practice.
- The proposed site investigation works may help facilitate the development of the ORE industry in Ireland and thus are consistent with the overall policies and objectives relating to ORE.

A total of eleven planning policies are set out to achieve the above objectives. For each objective, a corresponding compliance response has been prepared in Table 2.

Table 1: Proposed Works Compliance with the Overarching Marine Planning Policies.

High Level Objective & Policy Grouping	Compliance Description
Environmental – Ocean Health	
<p>At the core of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is the determination, achievement and maintenance of Good Environmental Status (GES) according to 11 qualitative condition descriptors. This Overarching Marine Planning Policy is aligned to Ireland's achievement and maintenance of this and is derived from the ecosystem approach set out by OSPAR. The policies are set out under the main headings of:</p> <p>Environmental – Ocean Health</p> <p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Protected Marine Sites</p> <p>Non-indigenous Species</p> <p>Water Quality</p> <p>Sea-flood and Water Column Integrity</p> <p>Marine Litter</p> <p>Underwater Noise</p>	<p>The MUL Application for the proposed works is accompanied by a NIS which considered potential effects to three European Sites and / or on the conservation objectives of their QIs/SCIs through surface water, air, and/or land pathways. The NIS has been prepared cognisant of the requirements of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).</p> <p>The NIS included a series of mitigation recommendations where potentially significant adverse impacts were identified. These would ensure that the integrity of the QIs and SCI first and foremost but by association and given the nature of the measures proposed, would also contribute generally to the protection of biodiversity interests, ocean health, water quality, underwater noise and sea-floor and water column integrity.</p> <p>The NIS concludes that considering the mitigation measures proposed, and based on the best scientific knowledge available, there will be no significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed works. Impacts are likely to be minor in scale, and temporary in duration.</p> <p>With regards to non-indigenous species, the proposed works pose no risk to the spread of these. No non-indigenous species (as listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011) were identified anywhere within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site or immediate surrounding area.</p> <p>With regards to air quality and climate change, the nature and scale of the proposed works is such that they are unlikely to contribute significantly to air pollution, and carbon emissions.</p>

High Level Objective & Policy Grouping	Compliance Description
<p>Air Quality</p> <p>Climate Change</p>	
Economic – Thriving Maritime Economy	
<p>The objectives here are to promote the sustainable development of a thriving ocean economy, of vibrant, accessible and sustainable rural coastal and island communities and to help realise the potential of marine resources. The policies are set out under the main headings of:</p> <p>Co-existence</p> <p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>The proposed maritime usage <u>aligns with the co-existence objective</u> by supporting the future development of the Port of Cork to cater for ORE operations which is considered a sustainable economic activity. Furthermore, the site investigations can also be used for other future projects and does not cause any conflict with future uses of the footprint.</p> <p>Regarding the infrastructure policy, the proposed maritime usage will be in support of developing land-based infrastructure in the marine environment that will diversify the marine industries in the Port of Cork by including ORE marshalling, storage and assembly operations <u>in compliance with the infrastructure policy 1.</u></p>
Social – Engagement with the Sea	
<p>The main objectives here are to promote the development of vibrant, accessible, resilient and sustainable coastal and island communities, promote the preservation and enjoyment of marine related cultural heritage assets, strengthen maritime identity, enable sustainable utilisation of marine resources and promote integration, co-ordination and coherence between land and marine planning systems. The policies are set out under the main headings of:</p>	<p>The proposed maritime usage will reduce the risks during the design of the future development of the Port of Cork for ORE operations. The ORE market is an emerging industry, and this development will support as well as provide employment within it. By executing the proposed maritime works the investment into the larger development of the Port of Cork for ORE operations is more attractive as the risks are reduced, increasing the potential for the works to commence and create employment. This <u>fully aligns with the employment policy 1</u></p> <p>Since the proposed maritime usage is temporary and small in nature, aligning with the existing port operations, no significant visual impacts are expected <u>aligning with the seascape policy.</u></p>

High Level Objective & Policy Grouping	Compliance Description
<p>Access</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Heritage Assets</p> <p>Rural Coastal and Island Communities</p> <p>Seascape and Landscape</p> <p>Social Benefits</p> <p>Transboundary</p>	

With regards to compliance against the policies set out in Section 18 'Ports, Harbours and Shipping' and Section 13 'ORE' of the NMPF, the following is noted:

Table 2: Proposed Works Compliance with the Section 18 & 13 Policies.

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 1</p> <p><i>To provide for shipping activity and freedom of navigation, the following factors will be taken into account when reaching decisions regarding development and use:</i></p> <p><i>The extent to which the locational decision interferes with existing or planned routes used by shipping, access to ports and harbours and navigational safety. This includes commercial</i></p>	<p>Marine activity related to the Port will remain operational during the proposed maritime usage works.</p> <p>There are no navigational safety implications arising from the proposed work.</p> <p>The Contractor and the Harbour Master will coordinate the scheduling of the proposed maritime usage works accordingly.</p> <p>The Contractor will abide by the Harbour Master's instructions.</p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<p><i>anchorages and approaches to ports as well as key littoral and offshore routes;</i></p> <p><i>A mandatory Navigation Risk Assessment;</i></p> <p><i>Where interference is likely: whether reasonable alternatives can be identified; and</i></p> <p><i>Where there are no reasonable alternatives: whether mitigation through measures adopted following the principles and procedures established by the International Maritime Organisation can be achieved at no significant cost to the shipping or ports sector.</i></p>	
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals that may have a significant impact on current activity and future opportunities for expansion of port and harbour activities should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <p><i>a) avoid,</i></p> <p><i>b) minimise, or</i></p> <p><i>c) mitigate</i></p> <p><i>significant adverse impacts and</i></p> <p><i>d) if it is impossible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on current activity and future opportunities for expansion of port and harbour</i></p>	<p>The proposed maritime usage will not adversely impact current activity and future opportunities to expand the Harbour activities as it is only Site Investigation (SI) work.</p> <p>The SI work will inform the further development and result in improved opportunities for the development of the port.</p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
activities, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.	
Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 3 <i>Proposals that may have a significant impact upon current activity and future opportunities for expansion of port and harbour activities must demonstrate consideration of the National Ports Policy, the National Planning Framework, and relevant provisions related to the TEN-T network.</i>	<p>The proposed maritime usage will not significantly impact current and future opportunities to expand operations. It is only proposed to carry out the Site Investigation work.</p>
Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 4 <i>Proposals within ports limits, beside or in the vicinity of ports, and/or that impact upon the main routes of significance to a port, must demonstrate within applications that they have:</i> <i>been informed by consultation at a pre-application stage or earlier with the relevant port authority;</i> <i>have carried out a navigational risk assessment, including an analysis of maritime traffic in the area; and</i> <i>have consulted the Department of Transport, MSO and Commissioners of Irish Lights.</i> <i>Applicants must continue to engage parties identified in pre-application processes as</i>	<p>The proposed maritime usage (Site Investigation Work) is within the Port's limits and will not have an impact upon the main routes to the Harbour.</p> <p>There are no navigational safety implications arising from the proposed works. Therefore, no navigational risk assessment is required.</p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<i>appropriate during the decision-making process.</i>	
Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 5 <i>Proposals for capital dredging will be supported where it is necessary to safeguard national port capacity and Ireland's international connectivity and where required compliance assessments associated with authorisations have been carried out and incorporated into subsequent competent authority decision(s).</i>	Not applicable. No capital dredging is involved in the proposed maritime usage.
Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 6 <i>In areas of authorised dredging activity, including those subjects to navigational dredging, proposals for other activities will not be supported unless they are compatible with the dredging activity.</i>	The proposed Site Investigation (SI) works are local and temporary in nature and will not adversely impact the authorised dredging activity. The Port of Cork Company (the applicant) is also the party authorised to execute the maintenance dredging activities in the area. All works shall be scheduled as not to influence the authorised maintenance dredging campaign within the harbour.
Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 7 <i>Proposals for maintenance dredging activity will be supported where:</i> <i>Relevant decisions by competent authorities incorporate the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes, as well as necessary compliance assessments associated with authorisations, including in relation to the planning process;</i>	Not applicable. No maintenance dredging is involved with the proposed maritime usage (Site Investigation Works).

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<p><i>There will be no significant adverse impact on marine activities or uses or the maritime area. Any potential adverse impact will be, in order of preference, avoided, minimised or mitigated;</i></p> <p><i>dredged waste is managed in accordance with an internationally agreed hierarchy of waste management options for sea disposal;</i></p> <p><i>if disposing of dredged material at sea, existing registered disposal sites are used, in preference to new disposal sites; and</i></p> <p><i>where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF.</i></p>	
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 8</p> <p><i>Proposals that cause significant adverse impacts on licensed disposal areas should not be supported. Proposals that cannot avoid such impact must, in order of preference,"</i></p> <p><i>a) minimise,</i></p> <p><i>b) mitigate, or</i></p> <p><i>c) if it is not possible to mitigate the significant adverse impacts, proposals must set out the reasons for proceeding.</i></p>	<p>Not applicable. The proposed maritime usage (Site Investigation works) will have no significant impacts on licensed disposal areas from these activities.</p>
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 9</p>	<p>Not applicable. The proposed maritime usages are Site Investigation works and not dredge material management.</p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<i>Proposals for the management of dredged material must demonstrate that they have been assessed against the waste hierarchy.</i>	
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 10</p> <p><i>Proposals identifying new dredge disposal sites which are subject to best practice and guidance from previous studies should be supported where:</i></p> <p><i>competent authority decisions incorporate necessary compliance assessments associated with authorisations and</i></p> <p><i>they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF.</i></p> <p><i>Proposals must include an adequate characterisation study, be assessed against the waste hierarchy and must be informed by consultation with all relevant stakeholders.</i></p>	Not applicable. There are no new dredge disposal sites proposed.
<p>ORE Policy 1</p> <p><i>Proposals that assist the State in meeting the Government's offshore renewable energy targets, including the target of achieving 5GW of capacity in offshore wind by 2030 and proposals that maximise the long-term shift from use of fossil fuels to renewable electricity energy, in line with decarbonisation targets, should be supported. All proposals will be rigorously assessed to ensure compliance with</i></p>	The proposed maritime usages (Site Investigation works) will inform the expansion of the port facilities and would be able to support the ORE industry in Ireland. The future facilities would aid Irelands transition from fossil fuels to offshore wind by providing deployment facilities. This aligns with the <u>ORE policy 1</u> .

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<i>environmental standards and seek to minimise impacts on the marine environment, marine ecology and other maritime users</i>	
<p>ORE Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals must be consistent with national policy, including the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA) and its successor. Relevant Projects designated pursuant to the Transition Protocol and those projects that can objectively enable delivery on the Government's 2030 targets will be prioritised for assessment under the new consenting regime. Into the future, areas designated for offshore energy development, under the Designated Marine Area Plan process set out in the Maritime Area Planning Bill, will underpin a plan-led approach to consenting (or development of our marine resources)</i></p>	Not applicable.
<p>ORE Policy 3</p> <p><i>Any non-ORE proposals in or affecting sites held under permission or subject to ongoing permitting for renewable energy generation must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) avoid,</i> <i>b) minimize,</i> 	Not applicable. Non-ORE proposal not in or affecting sites for ORE.

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<p>c) <i>mitigate adverse impacts, or</i></p> <p>d) <i>justify proceeding if mitigation is not possible.</i></p> <p><i>Applicants should engage ORE developers during pre-application processes.</i></p>	
<p>ORE Policy 4</p> <p><i>Decisions on ORE developments should consider space required for other nationally important activities described in the NMPF.</i></p>	Not applicable. Proposed Site Investigation work not an ORE development.
<p>ORE Policy 5</p> <p><i>Proposals for activities that may adversely impact ORE test projects (within or adjacent to test sites or between site and landfall) should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:</i></p> <p>a) <i>avoid,</i></p> <p>b) <i>minimize,</i></p> <p>c) <i>mitigate adverse impacts.</i></p>	Not applicable. Proposed Site Investigation work will not adversely impact any ORE test projects.
<p>ORE Policy 6</p> <p><i>Proposals for infrastructure enabling local use of excess energy generated from emerging marine technologies (wave, tidal, floating wind) should be supported.</i></p>	Not applicable. Proposed Site Investigation work not a proposal for infrastructure enabling local use of excess energy generated from emerging markets.
<p>ORE Policy 7</p>	The Port of Cork has been identified as a key strategic port for the development of ORE in Ireland. The proposed maritime usage (Site Investigation works) will inform the expansion of

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<i>Where potential for ports to contribute to ORE is identified, plans and policies related to the port must encourage development to facilitate ORE and related supply chain activity.</i>	<p>the port facilities and would be able to support the ORE industry in Ireland. Specifically, it would provide port facilities for storage, marshalling and assembly of wind turbine components which is part of the supply chain.</p> <p>Therefore, the proposed maritime activity <u>aligns with ORE policy 7.</u></p>
<p>ORE Policy 8</p> <p><i>Proposals for ORE must demonstrate consideration of existing cables passing through or adjacent to development areas, ensuring repair and remedial work is not significantly compromised. This should be included in statutory environmental assessments where required.</i></p>	Not applicable.
<p>ORE Policy 9</p> <p><i>Permissions for ORE must include a visualisation assessment to inform design and layout. Assessments should involve consultation with communities that may view the proposal and consider cumulative visual impacts. Until specific guidelines are available, best practice should be applied. This must be included in statutory environmental assessments where required.</i></p>	Not applicable.
<p>ORE Policy 10</p> <p><i>Opportunities for land-based, coastal infrastructure critical to and supporting ORE</i></p>	<p>The Port of Cork has been identified as a key strategic port for the development of ORE in Ireland. The proposed maritime usage (Site Investigation works) will inform the expansion of the port facilities and would be able to support the ORE industry in Ireland. Specifically, it would provide port facilities for storage marshalling and assembly of wind turbine components.</p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<i>development should be prioritized in plans and policies where possible.</i>	Therefore, the proposed maritime activity <u>aligns with ORE policy 10 and should be prioritised.</u>
ORE Policy 11 <i>Where appropriate, proposals that enable the provision of emerging renewable energy technologies and associated supply chains will be supported.</i>	Not applicable.