

14th August 2026

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KPMG,
Dockgate,
Dock Road,
Galway,
H90V6RR

By email to: jfk@arramara.ie

CC: Laura Brien, CEO, Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

Re: Update on MARA's assessment of Schedule 7(10) licence applications for seaweed harvesting.

MUL Application References: **MUL240049, MUL250014, MUL250015, MUL250016, MUL250017, MUL260044, MUL260045 & MUL260046**

Dear Jim,

I am writing to update you on MARA's assessment of Schedule 7(10) licence applications for seaweed harvesting under Part 5 of the Maritime Area Planning Act, as amended. At the time of my writing to you MARA currently has 13 of these applications on hand.

MARA has made significant progress in clearing the application backlog that arose when the Authority began operating. We now prioritise projects that support Critical State Infrastructure, including Offshore Renewable Energy projects, in line with Government policy. Some other applications have also been progressed where their scale and nature allowed assessment within available staff schedules.

While this has delayed progress on individual seaweed harvesting applications, including yours, MARA has been considering how best to assess these applications. This has included resolving legal issues relating to what usages require a Maritime Usage Licence and, specifically for seaweed harvesting, how do existing property rights for seaweed harvesting interact with a MUL issued by MARA.

However, other issues remain which are specific to seaweed harvesting. These include, but are not limited to, determining biomass baselines and sites suitable for harvesting, establishing monitoring mechanisms for sustainable harvesting, and considering how issuing a licence or licences in an area impacts on protected species and habitats. Seaweed harvesting applications received to date vary significantly in how they estimate seaweed resources, assess harvesting impacts, and propose

seoladh:

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An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí
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monitoring. For this reason, MARA considers that positive decisions in relation to seaweed licences will be difficult to determine without clear policy guidance. It is MARA's view that a planned and consistent approach to these issues is required to enable sound and transparent regulatory decision making. MARA's CEO, Laura Brien, outlined this position to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Fisheries and Maritime Affairs on the 28th of April 2026. MARA also notes that, at a later hearing on the 14th of July, officials from the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment said the current regulatory framework for wild seaweed harvesting is being examined and is expected to include consultation with key stakeholders. The Government has also approved a new marine planning policy statement, which proposes the development of an appropriate regulatory framework for seaweed harvesting and policies to protect key seaweed species and coastal communities.

MARA expects to clear most Critical State Infrastructure applications, and other applications in the current backlog, by the end of this year. We expect to resume active consideration of seaweed-related applications in early 2027, while continuing to engage with and monitor seaweed harvesting policy developments from the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

I will write to you again if there are any significant developments.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Evans", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

John Evans,

Director of Maritime Usage Licensing and Planning Advisory

seoladh:

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