



Licence Ref: MUL250015

(Please quote in all related correspondence)

26 March 2026

Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
2nd Floor
Menapia House
Drinagh Business Park
Drinagh
Wexford
Y35RF29

Via: licence@mara.gov.ie

Re: Maritime usage licence application for the harvesting of seaweed, *Ascophyllum Nodosum* and *Fucus vesiculosus*, from the intertidal foreshore in sustainable quantities at Kilkieran Bay, County Galway.

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I refer to correspondence on 28 January 2026 received in connection with the above.

Outlined below are heritage-related observations/recommendations co-ordinated by the Development Applications Unit under the stated headings.

Nature Conservation

The National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage recommend that further information is requested to inform the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the proposed seaweed harvesting in Kilkieran Bay. The applicant should provide detailed geospatial mapping of the proposed harvesting areas, including the boundaries of all sectors within the proposed licence area and their relationship to the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the Kilkieran Bay and Islands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 002111) and other Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence. In particular, the applicant should clearly demonstrate the spatial relationship between the proposed harvesting areas and any Annex I habitats, including reefs, intertidal mudflats and sandflats, maërl beds and seagrass (*Zostera marina*) communities known to occur within the bay.



Further information is required on the ecological baseline used to support the assessment. The applicant should provide the full survey data and methodologies used to characterise intertidal habitats and associated communities within the proposed harvesting areas. This should include details of survey design, spatial coverage and the extent to which sensitive habitats and species have been mapped and assessed. Clarification should also be provided on how the assessment concluded that harvesting will not adversely affect the ecological integrity of the SAC.

The applicant should also provide additional information on the biomass estimates and harvest calculations used to determine the proposed annual removal of seaweed. This should include the methodology used to estimate standing stock, the spatial distribution of biomass across sectors, and the assumptions used to support the proposed harvest level. The applicant should also clarify how uncertainty in biomass estimates and inter-annual variability in resource availability have been incorporated into the harvest management approach.

Finally, further clarification is required regarding potential disturbance to qualifying species and the assessment of cumulative effects. The applicant should provide a clearer evaluation of potential disturbance pathways for seabirds, marine mammals and other mobile species associated with nearby European sites and should expand the assessment of in-combination effects with other activities occurring within Kilkieran Bay, including aquaculture, seaweed harvesting, and other maritime developments. This information is required to enable the competent authority to complete the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

You are requested to send any further communications to this Department's Development Applications Unit (DAU) fem.dau@npws.gov.ie, or to the following address:

The Manager
Development Applications Unit (DAU)
Government Offices
Newtown Road
Wexford
Y35 AP90

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Amy Thornton
Development Applications Unit
Administration