

MI Observations on MUL260002 - UCC CABLES Project.

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Summary

- The Seafood Climate Unit of DAFM requested MI observations on possible impacts that Marine Usage Licence ref: MUL260002 might have on the seafood sector, i.e. fish stocks, fisheries, aquaculture, or the environments on which they rely.
- Sustainability Institute, University College Cork has applied to place two enclosures, with associated moorings and lights in 6m of water to the East of Spike Island, Cork Harbour for up to two years to conduct experiments on Lesser Spotted Catsharks (*Scyliorhinus canicula*).
- Given the small size of the proposed structure and the shallow depth at which it will be placed, it is considered unlikely that this proposal will have a negative impact on commercial fisheries. However, the application is within an existing Fisheries Order area for aquaculture.

The MUL pertains to a scientific experiment which will track the movement of the lesser spotted catshark (*Scyliorhinus canicula*) within two (separate) enclosed mesocosms when exposed to the electromagnetic field from a buried high voltage cable. Each enclosure will have a dimension of 15m x 15m x 5m.

Location and depth

The proposed location is in the northeast portion of Cork Harbour, east of Spike Island and halfway between Aghada and Cuskinny Bay. It is proposed to be located at a shallow depth of no more than 6m at Spring High Tides.

The proposed maritime activities involved in the deployment, operation and retrieval of two 40 mm nylon mesh enclosures, anchoring systems, 6 HR2 acoustic receivers (per enclosure) and special marker buoys. This covers an area of 2 x 26,200 m².

Duration

Maximum of 2 years, including deployment and retrieval.

Protected Areas

There is no mention of SACs in the AIMU report. Great Island Channel SAC (IE001058) is located within Cork Harbour, although it is not adjacent to the MUL waterway.

The MUL application SSIA is inconsistent with the distance from the proposed project to the Cork Harbour SPA (<2km and >3km within the same document).

Impact on Fisheries and aquaculture

The application states “*It is unlikely that a disturbance of commercial fisheries will occur in the area. The proposed location does not overlap with any aquaculture or fishing activities. Although there will be a temporary exclusion of fishing activity in the proposed location, the scale of the project means the area is small. Due to these reasons, it is assessed that there will be no significant impact on fishing and aquaculture in the area.*”

