



IRISH NATIONAL HERITAGE PARK MARITIME USAGE LICENCE APPLICATION (MUL260005)



Attachment 4.6 Marine Strategy Framework Directive Compliance



Final | February 2026



Irish National Heritage Park Maritime Usage Licence Application

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) was appointed by Wexford County Council to undertake, on its behalf, the preparation of a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) Application in support of environmental surveys and ground investigation works proposed within the River Slaney at Ferrycarrig, Wexford ('the proposed works' hereafter).

The proposed works are required in support of the proposed development of a new Viking village "Vykingar" incorporating a new interactive visitor experience into the overall visitor offering at the Irish National Heritage Park (INHP). The proposed development includes permanent structures in the maritime area within the River Slaney adjacent to the existing INHP site including three jetties and an artificial beach area.

The proposed works subject to this MUL application are required to inform the design, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) which will be undertaken for proposed development at the INHP.

This MUL Application and all associated attachments (including this document) will be submitted to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) seeking authorisation under Part 5 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 for the maritime usage associated with the proposed works. The proposed development of a Viking Village at the INHP will be subject to a separate marine area consent application to be lodged with MARA.

1.2 Purpose of this report

This document has been prepared to support the MUL application for the proposed works and is referred to as Attachment 4.6 Marine Strategy Framework Directive Compliance. Part 4 of the MUL application form relates to 'Marine Planning and Environmental Considerations'. Specifically, Section 4.6 relates to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Ireland's Marine Strategy under the Directive with the following requirement:

Provide sufficient information addressing the consistency of the proposed Maritime Usage with the objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Ireland's Marine Strategy under the Directive.

The table below demonstrates how the proposed maritime usage is consistent with the MSFD objectives and Ireland's Marine Strategy under the Directive.

1.3 Preparation of this report

This report has been prepared by Laura Lynch, Senior Environmental Scientist with Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD). Laura holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Management from the Dublin Institute of Technology. She has over 10 years' experience in environmental consulting including Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) across a range of infrastructure projects. Laura is an Associate member of the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals.

This assessment has been informed by other supporting assessments included as part of this MUL application including:

- Attachment 4.3.1 Supporting Information to Support Appropriate Assessment Screening (SISAA) report
- Attachment 4.3.2 Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
- Attachment 4.4 Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species report.

Reference to these reports is made throughout this assessment.

2. THE MARINE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE (MSFD)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) aims to achieve Good Environment Status (GES) for all marine waters in Europe, and to protect the resource base for marine related economic and social activities. To determine GES, Member States must assess the status of their marine waters against 11 qualitative descriptors and associated national environmental targets. The descriptors are listed below:

1. Biological diversity
2. Non-indigenous species
3. Population of commercial fish / shellfish
4. Elements of marine food webs
5. Eutrophication
6. Sea floor integrity
7. Alteration of hydrographical conditions
8. Concentration of contaminations
9. Contaminants in fish / seafood for human consumption
10. Marine Litter
11. Introduction of energy including underwater noise.

The proposed works are assessed against these descriptors to ensure compliance with the objectives of the MSFD as provided in Table 2-1 below.

2.1 Ireland's Marine Strategy

The MSFD is implemented through a national Marine Strategy. Ireland's 2024 MSFD Marine Strategy Part 1 contains the most comprehensive and up to date assessment of the status of Ireland's marine environment, including a revised set of environmental targets for each of the 11 qualitative descriptors identified above. Ireland's overarching targets and status in achieving GES against the 11 descriptors is included in Table 2-1 below.

Table 2-1 Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Compliance

Descriptor	Description / Overarching Targets	Ireland's MSFD Status ¹	Compliance Assessment
D1 Biodiversity	<p>Biological diversity is maintained. The quality and occurrence of habitats and the distribution and abundance of species are in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic and climatic conditions.</p> <p>Overarching target: The population abundance of the species is not adversely affected due to anthropogenic pressures.</p> <p>Overarching target: The species distributional range and, where relevant, pattern is in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic and climatic conditions.</p> <p>Overarching target: The habitat for the species has the necessary extent and condition to support the different stages in the life history of the species.</p>	Partially achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>The SISAA report prepared as part of the MUL application identified aspects of the geophysical surveys required as part of the proposed ground investigation works which have the potential to cause Likely Significant Effects on the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is due to the sub-bottom profiler frequency output being within the hearing range of marine mammals and therefore, mitigation measures would be required. Subsequently the NIS was prepared for the proposed works and has been submitted as part of this MUL application. The NIS includes suitable measures required to be implemented to mitigate potential significant impacts.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>
D2 Non-Indigenous Species	<p>Non-indigenous species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems.</p> <p>Overarching target: Ireland has achieved Good Environmental Status when the number of non-indigenous species which are newly introduced via human activity into the wild, per assessment period (6 years), measured from the reference year as reported</p>	Achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>Due to the nature and extent of the proposed works, the risk of the introduction and / or spread of non-indigenous species is considered to be negligible.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>

¹ As per *Ireland's Marine Strategy Part 1 Article 8, 9 and 10 report 2024* published in December 2024

Descriptor	Description / Overarching Targets	Ireland's MSFD Status ¹	Compliance Assessment
	for the initial assessment under Article 8(1) of Directive 2008/56/EC, is minimised and where possible reduced to zero.		
D3 Commercial Fish and Shellfish	<p>Populations of all commercially exploited fish and shellfish are within safe biological limits, exhibiting a population age and size distribution that is indicative of a healthy stock.</p> <p>Overarching target: The Fishing mortality rate of populations of commercially exploited species is at or below levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY).</p> <p>Overarching target: The Spawning Stock Biomass of populations of commercially-exploited species are above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY)</p>	Partially achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>Potential impacts on the population and health of commercial species will be negligible given the small scale nature and duration of works.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>
D4 Food webs	<p>All elements of the marine food webs, to the extent that they are known, occur at normal abundance and diversity and levels capable of ensuring the long-term abundance of the species and the retention of their full reproductive capacity.</p> <p>Overarching target: The diversity (species composition and their relative abundance) of the trophic guild is not adversely affected due to anthropogenic pressures.</p> <p>Overarching target: The balance of total abundance between the trophic guilds is not adversely affected due to anthropogenic pressures.</p>	Unknown Environmental Status	<p>There will be no direct disruption to marine food webs. Potential indirect effects may occur where prey species are displaced or disturbed during the works, however these impacts would be negligible given the short term and minor nature of disturbance.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>

Descriptor	Description / Overarching Targets	Ireland's MSFD Status ¹	Compliance Assessment
D5 Eutrophication	<p>Human-induced eutrophication is minimised, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algae blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters.</p> <p>Overarching target: Nutrient concentrations are not at levels that indicate adverse eutrophication effects.</p> <p>Overarching target: Continue to ensure that chlorophyll a concentrations are not at levels that indicate adverse effects of nutrient enrichment.</p> <p>Overarching target: Continue to ensure that the concentration of dissolved oxygen is not reduced, due to nutrient enrichment</p>	Achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>The works are not likely to result in human-induced eutrophication effects.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>
D6 Sea-floor Integrity	<p>Sea-floor integrity is at a level that ensures that the structure and functions of the ecosystems are safeguarded and benthic ecosystems, in particular, are not adversely affected.</p> <p>Overarching target: The structure and functions of the ecosystems, and benthic ecosystems, in particular, are not adversely affected due to the spatial extent and distribution of physical disturbance or physical loss on the seabed.</p> <p>Overarching target: The extent of adverse effects from anthropogenic pressures on the condition of the habitat type, including alteration to its biotic and abiotic structure and its functions, does not exceed a specified proportion of the natural extent of the habitat type in the assessment area.</p>	Partially achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>The nature and tidal state of the habitat at the location of the sediment sampling sites is such that, with any movement or removal of the sediment will cause the immediate surrounding sediment to infill any area immediately and minimise potential impacts on the riverbed and associated habitat.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>

Descriptor	Description / Overarching Targets	Ireland's MSFD Status ¹	Compliance Assessment
D7 Hydrographical Conditions	<p>Permanent alteration of hydrographical conditions does not adversely affect marine ecosystems.</p> <p>Overarching target: The spatial extent and distribution of permanent alteration of hydrographical conditions to the seabed and water column, is at a level that ensures that the structure and functions of the ecosystems are safeguarded and that benthic ecosystems, in particular, are not adversely affected.</p>	Achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>Minor impacts may occur for the duration of the proposed works due to the process of obtaining borehole and sediment samples and installing ADCPs. These activities on the riverbed may temporarily increase turbidity. No significant effects are anticipated due to the minor, temporary and short-term nature of the proposed works. The proposed works will not permanently alter hydrographical conditions and will not adversely affect marine ecosystems.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>
D8 Contaminants	<p>Concentrations of contaminants are at levels not giving rise to pollution effects.</p> <p>Overarching target: Within coastal and territorial waters, continue to ensure the concentrations of contaminants do not exceed the threshold values set in accordance with Directive 2000/60/EC.</p> <p>Overarching target: Concentration of contaminants in marine matrices assessed in accordance with OSPAR Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP) do not exceed OSPAR Environmental Assessment Criteria (EAC) and concentrations are not increasing.</p> <p>Overarching target: The degree of biological or ecological effects that can be specifically attributed to contaminants continues to be below the agreed</p>	Achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>There is a risk of suspending contaminants from the proposed works which could lead to heavy metals or other contaminants entering the water column. However, given the small volume of sediment and given the dilution capacity of the Slaney Estuary, this risk to water quality is negligible.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>

Descriptor	Description / Overarching Targets	Ireland's MSFD Status ¹	Compliance Assessment
	<p>OSPAR criteria. At present, this is limited to evaluation of reproductive impairment in marine gastropods associated with tributyltin (TBT).</p> <p>Overarching target: Spatial extent and duration of significant acute pollution events are minimised.</p>		
D9 Contaminants in seafood	<p>Contaminants in fish and other seafood for human consumption do not exceed levels established by Community legislation or other relevant standards.</p> <p>Overarching target: Levels of contaminants in fish and shellfish caught or harvested for human consumption comply with maximum limits listed in EU Regulation 1881/2006 (as amended).</p>	Achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>As above the works are not expected to contribute to increased concentrations of contaminants therefore there will be no potential effect to contaminants in seafood.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>
D10 Marine Litter	<p>Properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment.</p> <p>Overarching target: The composition, amount and spatial distribution of litter in the coastline, and on the seabed, are at levels that do not cause harm to the coastal or marine environment.</p>	Partially achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>The proposed works will not involve any waste disposal and due to the temporary nature of the proposed works are unlikely to contribute to any marine litter in the area.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>
D11 Energy and Noise	<p>Introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment.</p> <p>Overarching target: The spatial distribution, temporal extent, and levels of anthropogenic impulsive sound sources do not exceed levels that adversely affect populations of marine animals.</p>	Achieved Good Environmental Status	<p>The SISAA report prepared as part of the MUL application identified aspects of the geophysical surveys required as part of the proposed ground investigation works which have the potential to cause Likely Significant Effects on the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is due to the sub-bottom profiler frequency output being within the hearing range of marine mammals and therefore, mitigation measures would be required. Subsequently a NIS was prepared</p>

Descriptor	Description / Overarching Targets	Ireland's MSFD Status ¹	Compliance Assessment
			<p>and has been submitted as part of this MUL application. The NIS includes suitable measures required to be implemented to mitigate potential significant impacts.</p> <p>The proposed works are compliant with the MSFD descriptor and objectives.</p>