

Maritime Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	John Evans, Director	From:	Tom Manning Marine Analyst
Date:	07/05/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL250022
Applicant:	Uisce Éireann Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot Street, Dublin 1 D01 NP86		
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.		
Location of proposed maritime usage:	The River Suir Estuary adjacent to the townlands of Kilmurry, Gorteens, Little Island, Ballycanvan Big and Faithlegg.		
Licence application received:	20th February 2026		

1. Background

Uisce Éireann (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The site investigations are required to determine the optimal route for a new marine outfall and to inform the engineering design of an upgrade to the Waterford City Wastewater Treatment Plant.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

Table 1. Proposed Maritime Usage

Site investigation	Proposed methodology and quantities
Geophysical surveys	<p><u>Multibeam Echo Sounder</u>: Proposed frequency range of 300–700 kHz (peak ~400 kHz) and sound pressure level of 210dB in 1 μPa @1m.</p> <p><u>Side-scan sonar</u>: Proposed frequency range of 600/900kHz and sound pressure level of 220-230dB re1μPa @1m.</p> <p><u>Sub-bottom profiler (Boomer)</u>: Proposed frequency range of 0.5 kHz to 5 kHz and sound pressure level in the range of 205-211dB re1μPa @ 1m.</p> <p><u>Sub-bottom profiler (Sparker)</u>: Proposed frequency range of 0.4kHz to 5kHz and a sound pressure level of 203dB re1μPa @1m.</p> <p><u>Sub-bottom profiler (Parametric Sub Bottom Profiler)</u>: with Proposed frequency ranges of 85-115kHz and 2-22kHz and sound pressure level of 232 dB (typically operated at <200dB).</p> <p><u>Sub-bottom profiler (Chirp system)</u>: Proposed frequency range 2-10 kHz and sound pressure level of 149.0 dB to 157.5 dB.</p> <p><u>Marine Refraction Seismic</u>: Airgun impulse energy proposed frequency range of 5kHz and 90kHz and sound pressure levels of 186-220dB re 1μPa @1m.</p> <p>Marine Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) - 20 ERT lines of 315m length.</p>
Geotechnical surveys	<p>10 no. Boreholes using cable percussion and rotary coring techniques. In-river boreholes will be drilled from a jack-up barge during tidal or flowing water conditions. The drilling will have a sound pressure level of 145–190 dB in 1 μPa @1m.</p> <p>Standard Penetration Testing (SPT) will be undertaken in the 10 no. boreholes located within the river channel.</p> <p>14 overboard geotechnical grab samples are proposed within the proposed MUL area.</p>
Marine Environmental/Ecological surveys:	<p>30 no. subtidal and 30 no. intertidal grab samples will be collected within the proposed MUL area. Drop-down camera survey for benthic ecology - 30 transects of up to 30 m each. Intertidal walkover/drone surveys.</p> <p>Intertidal handheld benthic coring to a depth of 20cm for benthic faunal analysis.</p>

Archaeological surveys	Magnetometer for archaeological investigation. Underwater inspections, walkovers, metal detectors, dive surveys.
Oceanographic and other surveys	Deployment of tidal gauges Deployment of Multi parameter Sonde for the collection of Conductivity/Salinity measurements Collection of water samples. CCTV survey of the existing outfall by diver-operated cameras or Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV).

*aerial/drone surveys are proposed but these are outside of the scope of this application as they are not within the maritime area as defined in the MAP Act.

A shallow draught multipurpose vessel platform and Jack-up barge will be used for the proposed site investigation. The proposed vessel platform is in the 16m length range and gross tonnage of 45 tons. The duration of the proposed site investigation is approximately 16 weeks. The deployment of geophysical components e.g. multibeam and sub-bottom profilers are proposed for a period of approximately 10 days. The proposed licence duration is sought for 3 years.

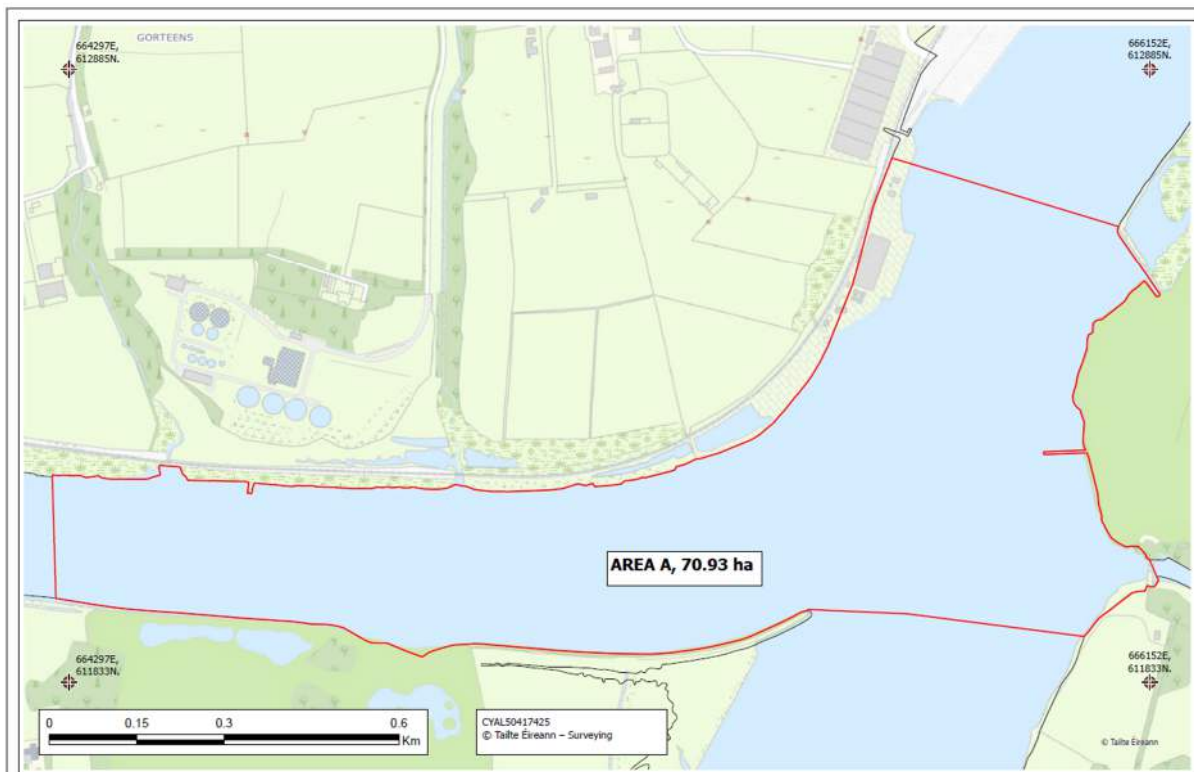


Figure 1. Site Location Map showing the proposed maritime usage area outlined in red.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The site is located adjacent to Little Island on the Lower River Suir estuary. The benthic community present is classified as “Muddy estuarine community complex”. The biotope

recorded within the proposed MUL area is EUNIS code A5.321 – *Polydora ciliata* and *Corophium volutator* in variable salinity infralittoral firm mud or clay. There are possible Annex I Salt meadows habitats located along the northern boundary of the MUL application area. The MUL area is 70.93ha with a water depth ranging from 0-10m.

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on European sites, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites. The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report in support of the application which was referred to during this assessment

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed on Table 2 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

Table 2 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives. Those Qualifying Interests marked in bold have been screened in for Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
Lower River Suir SAC (Site code: 002137)	Overlaps with MUL area	<p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</p> <p><i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaiite Shad) [1103]</p> <p><i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p><i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p><i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Potential physical disturbance to Atlantic salt meadow habitat; Potential underwater noise disturbance to migratory fish species and Otters; potential impacts due to changes in suspended solids on migratory fish; potential for above water noise and physical disturbance on Otters.</p>	Yes	<p>NPWS (2017)</p> <p>Conservation Objectives: Lower River Suir SAC 002137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.</p>

		<p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]</p> <p>Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</p> <p><i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0]</p> <p><i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p><i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]</p> <p><i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p>	<p>No significant S-P-R identified.</p>		
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River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site code: 002162)	2.3	<p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p>	<p>Yes Potential underwater noise disturbance impacts on migratory fish species.</p>	Yes	<p>NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p>
		<p>Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] European dry heaths [4030] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]</p>	<p>No significant S-P-R identified.</p>		

		Petrifying springs with tufa formation <i>(Cratoneurion)</i> [7220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White- clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985]			
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4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 3 identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Habitat disturbance	Possible physical disturbance to Annex I Salt Meadows during jack-up barge positioning and access to proposed site investigation works.
Underwater noise disturbance	Possible adverse effects on populations of migratory fish species and Otters during proposed geotechnical and geophysical site investigations.
Visual and above water noise disturbance	Possible disturbance to Otters during proposed site investigations.
Changes in suspended solids	The potential impacts caused by sediment mobilisation and increased turbidity would not have a likely significant effect on SAC qualifying interests due to the short duration and low magnitude of the proposed site investigation. It is considered that any potential impacts on migratory fish species would be localised and temporary in nature.

In-combination effects

The potential impacts of the proposed site investigations must be considered individually and also in combination with other plans or projects. All types of plans or projects that could, in-combination with this application, have a significant effect, have been considered. This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement and is assessed primarily in terms of potential spatial and temporal impacts.

The spatial scope of the in-combination assessment is 2km and is based on the maximum distance of potential underwater noise impacts from the proposed site investigations in relation to migratory fish. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. The applicant has applied for a 3-year licence and thus the temporal scope is 3 years.

A search of the Kilkenny County Council, Waterford County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála planning registers, the EPA GIS Map viewer and the MARA GeoPortal was undertaken on the 27/04/2026. Table 4 below outlines those activities which are considered to have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

Table 4: List of projects which were considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites.

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
MARA MAC ref. MAC20230001. An Coimisiún Pleanála ref. ACP-323575-25	ORE Operations and Maintenance facility, which includes a 250m extension to existing wharves, suspended quay, two pontoons, rock armour and reclamation of 1.2 hectares	<1	Applied
MARA MUL ref. LIC230013	Geotechnical investigation required to support the design of a proposed 250m Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) capable quay extension in the River Suir at the Port of Waterford, Belview, Co. Kilkenny.	<1km	Permitted
MARA MUL ref. LIC230025 & EPA Dumping at Sea permit ref. S0012-05.	Dredging – Port of Waterford Company maintenance dredging licence.	Overlaps	Permitted
MARA MUL ref. MUL240003	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation. Wexford County Council propose to undertake pre dredging surveys in the River Barrow.	<5km	Permitted
MAC240021	ESB Installation of a new 38KV electricity underground cable.	<5km	Permitted

The following plans, related to the development of the maritime environment were also considered:


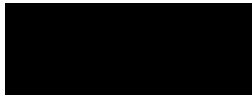
- The Climate Action Plan 2025,
- River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022-2027,
- Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2025

The projects listed in Table 4 above have the potential to overlap spatially and temporally to give rise to cumulative underwater noise disturbance impacts on species of migratory fish. Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the proposed Port of Waterford berthing facility extension listed on Table 4 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

5. Screening Determination Statement

<p>The assessment of significant effects:</p> <p>Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, on the basis of the information on file, and having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature and scale of the proposed development; • The distance to the nearest European sites; • The Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives of the European sites assessed; • Possible physical habitat disturbance; • Possible underwater noise disturbance; • Possible visual and above water noise disturbance; • Possible changes in suspended solid concentrations; and • Potential in-combination effects with other plans and projects. <p>it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Uisce Éireann, Colvill House, 24-26 Talbot Street, Mountjoy, Dublin, D01 NP86 to carry out Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000 at the River Suir Estuary adjacent to the townlands of Kilmurry, Gorteens, Little Island, Ballycanvan Big and Faithlegg (MUL250022) will require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on European sites.</p>		
Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Marine Analyst	Date: 07/05/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director of Maritime Usage Licensing	Date: 11/05/2026