



Project:	Balbriggan Harbour Dredging						
Client	Fingal County Council						
Subject	MARA MUL Application – Marine Strategy Framework Directive						
Orig. by	CM	Appr. by	AA	Date	13/02/2026	Doc. Ref:	C0203-AYE-ZZ-XX-TN-MA-0405

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is European legislation which aims to achieve Good Environment Status (GES) for all marine waters in Europe and protect the resource base for marine-related economic and social activities. The determination of GES is based on eleven qualitative descriptors that cover a range of pressures on, and the state of, the marine environment, as outlined in **Table 1**.

Taking account of the small scale of the proposed works, the temporary nature of any effects and the proposed dredge methodology (largely in low tide conditions), it is considered that the MSFD objectives will not be adversely affected.

The MUL Application for these proposed works is accompanied by an NIS, which considers potential effects to three European Sites and/or on the conservation objectives of their Qualifying Interests (QIs)/Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) through surface water, air, and/or land pathways. The NIS has been prepared cognisant of the requirements of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). It included a series of mitigation recommendations where potentially significant adverse impacts were identified. These would ensure that the integrity of the QIs and SCI first and foremost, but by association and given the nature of the measures proposed, would also contribute generally to the protection of biodiversity interests, ocean health, water quality, underwater noise and sea-floor and water column integrity.

The NIS concludes that, considering the mitigation measures proposed and based on the best scientific knowledge available, there will be no significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the nearby European Sites as a result of the proposed works. Impacts are likely to be minor in nature, largely in part due to the proposed dredging methodology (to be conducted largely in low tide when the harbour basin is dry), the scale of the area to be dredged, and the short programme of works.

Table 1: Descriptors under the MSFD.

Descriptor	Description
D1 Biodiversity	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
D2 Non-indigenous species	Non-indigenous species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems
D3 Commercial Fish and Shellfish	Populations of all commercially exploited fish and shellfish are within safe biological limits,



Descriptor	Description
	exhibiting a population age and size distribution that is indicative of a healthy stock
D4 Food Webs	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
D5 Eutrophication	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
D6 Seabed Integrity	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
D7 Hydrographical Conditions	Permanent alteration of hydrographical conditions does not adversely affect marine ecosystems
D8 Contaminants	Concentrations of contaminants are at levels not giving rise to pollution effects
D9 Contaminants in Seafood	Contaminants in fish and other seafood for human consumption do not exceed levels established by Union legislation or other relevant standards
D10 Marine Litter	Properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment
D11 Energy, including underwater noise	Introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment

MSFD assessment of the proposed maintenance dredging work:

- **D1 Biodiversity:** Negligible/minor impacts on species, habitats, or ecosystem functionality.
- **D2 Non-indigenous Species:** It is anticipated that dredge equipment to be used will be mobilised from within Ireland which will minimise risk of introduction or spread of invasive species from other regions. No invasive species were noted in the proposed works area.
- **D3 Commercial Fish and Shellfish:** Negligible impact on the population and health of commercial species.
- **D4 Food Webs:** Negligible anticipated disruption to trophic relationships or food chain dynamics.
- **D5 Eutrophication:** Negligible anticipated contribution to nutrient enrichment.
- **D6 Seabed Integrity:** Negligible anticipated detrimental effects on the physical and biological structure of the seabed.



- **D7 Hydrographical Conditions:** Negligible anticipated alteration of hydrological characteristics, including water flow, temperature, and salinity.
- **D8 Contaminants:** Negligible anticipated release or increase in levels of harmful substances.
- **D9 Contaminants in Seafood:** No anticipated accumulation of hazardous substances in the marine food chain.
- **D10 Marine Litter:** No anticipated contribution to marine debris or pollution.
- **D11 Energy, including underwater noise:** Negligible/minor short term anticipated increase in energy inputs or underwater noise levels.

The overall conclusion is that the proposed works in isolation does not cause any concern for the achievement of GES in Irish sea waters and is not anticipated to have significant impacts on the various MSFD biological, hydro-morphological and physico-chemical descriptors.