



May 29, 2026

licence@mara.gov.ie

RE: MUL260023 Donegal County Council

A Chara,

The Marine Divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) welcome the opportunity to provide comments Donegal County Council's application for a licence to conduct maintenance dredging in Buncrana Pier.

It is essential that the sea-fishing and aquaculture sectors are fully recognised and given a high priority as a long-standing, pre-existing, and traditional activity in the marine environment as the proposed dredging is being evaluated.

Fishers and aquaculture site holders are primary food producers dependent upon certain marine areas which are particularly important for food production. This primary production is critical to supplying the downstream indigenous seafood processing and export industries and in sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities. The importance of these primary and secondary food production activities is reflected in the Government's Food Vision 2030 policy.

To inform the DAFM comments, the observations of the Marine Institute (MI), the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) on the application were requested.

The MI note that fishing activities such as pelagic trawls occur further out from the harbour, and no fishing activity is observed in the proposed dredging area. The MI also note that due to the short duration of the dredging, there should be no significant impact to fishing (boating) activities, assuming necessary notices to mariners are published.

BIM highlight that there is multiple aquaculture site located within Lough Swilly (<https://dafm-maps.marine.ie/aquaculture-viewer/>) and request that timely notification of proposed timing of dredging activity is provided to aquaculture producers in the area to allow them to make informed shellfish harvesting decisions around the dredging and dumping periods.

The SFPA noted there were no negative impacts on existing wild fisheries in the area, or no foreseeable impact for SFPA official controls.

From an inshore fishing perspective, the proposed maintenance dredging at Buncrana Pier is not anticipated to significantly impact fishing activities, as the works are intended to be short in duration and operational practices at the pier are expected to remain unchanged. However, local inshore fishing organisations should be notified as early as possible about planned dredging, and Notices to Mariners should be issued to help fishers plan their activities, and to avoid any possible disruption.

It is recommended to maintain communication with inshore fishing groups such as the North Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum (North RIFF): NRIFF@inshoreforums.ie, the Irish Islands

Oifigí an Rialtais, An tIonad Náisiúnta Bia Mara, An Cloichín, Cloich na Coillte, Co. Chorcaí, P85 TX47.

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Marine Resource Organisation (IIMRO): <https://www.iimro.org/>, and the National Inshore Fishermen's Association (NIFA): <https://inshore.ie/>, and to monitor for any potential unforeseen impacts during dredging periods.

DAFM recognises that the developer's aim is to promote co-existence and minimise potential disruption to commercial fishing activities in the area. The evaluation of potential impacts of dredging on commercial sea fishing activities needs to be given consideration within the context of the requirements set out under the Maritime Area Planning Act and the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF). The principles in the NMPF of avoiding, minimising, or mitigating impacts on access to existing activities (including specific policies on Fisheries and Aquaculture) should be followed and any proposed development activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas.

All relevant fishing organisations should receive any applicable Marine Notices, and be made aware of any proposed works, at the earliest opportunity to ensure the optimum coordination of activities and to limit potential disturbances to fishing activities to the greatest extent possible.

Please also find attached documents from the MI, SFPA, and BIM which provide further comments for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Marine Divisions
An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine