

MI Observations on MUL260023 Donegal County Council maintenance dredging

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Summary

- The application submitted by Donegal County Council is for a Maritime Usage License to conduct maintenance dredging for the purpose of retaining navigable depth in the navigation channel and the RNLI berth at Buncrana Harbour.
- The site of Buncrana harbour lies within Lough Swilly on the north coast of Northern Ireland, at approximate coordinates (latitude: 55.0638, longitude: -7.54399).
- The proposed dredging activities, being relatively short in duration (7-10 days), should not significantly impact the seafood sector – fish, fisheries or aquaculture, assuming any necessary notices to mariners are published.

Background

The Seafood Climate Unit of DAFM requested MI observations on possible impacts that Marine Usage Licence application: MUL260023 might have on the seafood sector, i.e., fish stocks, fisheries, aquaculture, or the environments on which they rely.

The application, submitted by Donegal County Council, is for a Maritime Usage License to conduct maintenance dredging for Buncrana Pier to maintain navigable depth around the Pier. Dredging of the harbour is required to allow safe passage of boats from the harbour, in particularly RNLI boats during emergency call outs, and the ferry service between Buncrana and Rathmullan. Maintenance dredging has been carried out since 2011, and continued dredging is required to maintain sufficient navigational depth around the pier.

Observations/ Response/Analysis/Results

- The application submitted by Donegal County Council is for a Maritime Usage License to conduct maintenance dredging for Buncrana Pier.
- An eight-year licence is sought to allow for biannual dredging to occur, allowing for appropriate weather conditions. Each dredging campaign is expected to take seven to ten days to complete.
- Dredging is to ensure that navigational depth is maintained for RNLI rescue boats (called out on average 20 times per year, plus 65 times per year for practice drills) and for ferries travelling between Buncrana and Rathmullan. The RNLI stated that continued and regular dredging of the pier is critical for maintaining 24/7 operational availability.
- Dredging has occurred since 2011, and is required to continue for navigable depths in the harbour.
- The site of Buncrana harbour lies within Lough Swilly on the north coast of Northern Ireland, at approximate coordinates (latitude: 55.0638, longitude: -7.54399).
- Lough Swilly is designated a Special Area of Conservation due to several qualifying interests (see National Parks & Wildlife Service: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002287>).
- Fishing activities such as pelagic trawls occur further out from the harbour, and no fishing activity is observed in the proposed dredging area (see Marine Atlas: <https://atlas.marine.ie/>).
- Dredging activities being relatively short in duration (7-10 days), should not significantly impact fishing (boating) activities, assuming necessary notices to mariners are published.