



MERC Consultants
environmental and conservation services

Statement of Compliance with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Applicant: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE)

MUL application for: South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SCDMAP) Geophysical reconnaissance, metocean, geotechnical, benthic and passive acoustic surveys.

Document reference: Attachment 4.6

Date: 16/03/2026

The key objective of DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC (Marine Strategy Framework Directive- MSFD) is to protect the marine ecosystem and biodiversity upon which our health and marine-related economic and social activities depend. Its aim is to achieve good environmental status (GES) of the EU's marine waters and sustainably protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend.

To help EU countries achieve a good environmental status (GES), the directive sets out 11 illustrative qualitative descriptors. To achieve this goal of GES, the MSFD has set out a programme of measures to address identified stressors to achieving GES. A total of 28 separate measures have been set out. These measures are mostly focused on reducing pressures by improving water quality and preventing environmental damage. Negative impacts stated in the MSFD include, for example, pollution, biodiversity loss, seabed damage, overexploitation, spread of non-indigenous species, marine litter, underwater noise, and ocean warming and acidification.

This project is supported by Supporting Information for Screening for EIA (SISEIA). The SISEIA assessed the implications of the project on the receiving environment. It concluded that, based on the scale and scope of the proposed project, no impact on the marine environment is possible.

Table 1 below provides an assessment of the project against the descriptions of the MSFD.

Table 1. MSFD Analysis

Descriptor	Analysis	Assessment
Descriptor 1: Biodiversity is maintained	The SISEIA provided a description of the biodiversity baseline of the proposed project location and its environs. In addition, a separate SISAA, Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Annex IV Risk Assessment were prepared for this project. All of which examined the potential for impact on various elements of the biodiversity of the proposed project area and potential for project related impacts on them. The SISAA, SISEIA and Annex IV Risk assessment recommended mitigation to ensure no impact on identified sensitive receptors occurred	Provided the mitigation recommended in the NIS, Annex IV Risk assessment and SISEIA are adhered to no potential for impact on this descriptor is considered possible.
Descriptor 2: Non-indigenous species do not adversely alter ecosystems	No element of the proposed project has been identified that has the potential to introduce or spread non-indigenous species.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 3: Populations of commercial fish and shellfish species are healthy	The project SISEIA considered impacts on commercial fish and shellfish. The area supports active pot fisheries targeting species such as brown crab and whelk, as well as fish spawning and nursery areas along the south coast of Ireland. The SISEIA concluded that survey activities may temporarily interact with fishing operations, but that, given appropriate mitigation measures and the timing of the activities, these effects would be short-term, localised and operational in nature.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 4: Food webs ensure long-term abundance and reproduction of species	No project related impacts with the potential to impact food webs or affect long-term abundance and/or reproduction of species is considered possible.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 5: Eutrophication is reduced	No impacts relative to eutrophication are possible.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 6: Sea floor integrity ensures the proper functioning of ecosystems	The proposed project will result in temporary disturbance to the seabed within the MUL area. The SISAA considered that the resulting impacts would be short lived and no adverse effects to the integrity of the seafloor would occur. Therefore, no potential	No potential for impact.

	for impacts on the proper functioning of the ecosystem is considered possible.	
Descriptor 7: Permanent alteration of hydrographical conditions does not adversely affect ecosystems	The proposed project does not have the potential to cause any hydrographical changes.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 8: Concentrations of contaminants give no pollution effects	The proposed project does not have the potential to lead to the introduction of any contaminants.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 9: Contaminants in seafood are at safe levels	The proposed project does not have the potential to add to or alter contaminants in the seafloor.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 10: Marine litter does not cause harm	The proposed project does not have the potential to lead to the littering.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 11: Introduction of energy (including underwater noise) does not adversely affect the ecosystem	The project SISAA, SISEIA and Annex IV risk assessment identified the potential for the introduction of underwater noise and disturbance in the absence of mitigation. Mitigation was proposed to avoid disturbance to fish and fisheries receptors where relevant, Annex II cetaceans and pinnipeds, additional Annex IV cetaceans and Annex I seabirds. Mitigation was recommended in the project NIS, Annex IV risk assessment and SISEIA.	Provided the mitigation recommended in the NIS, Annex IV Risk assessment and SISEIA is adhered to no potential for impact on this descriptor is considered possible.

References

DIRECTIVE 2008/56/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

MERC (2026a). Supporting Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE): South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SCDMAP) geophysical reconnaissance, metocean, geotechnical, benthic and passive acoustic surveys.

MERC (2026b). Supporting Information for Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE): South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SCDMAP) geophysical reconnaissance, metocean, geotechnical, benthic and passive acoustic surveys.

MERC (2026c). Annex IV Risk Assessment: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE): Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE): South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SCDMAP) geophysical reconnaissance, metocean, geotechnical, benthic and passive acoustic surveys.