

Maritime Usage Licence & Planning Advisory Directorate			
Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report			
To:	John Evans Director	From:	Maria O Connell Marine Analyst
Date:	04/08/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL250023
Applicant:		Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, County Hall, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, A96 K6C9, Ireland.	
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:		Specified areas within Dún Laoghaire Harbour and an area below the high watermark adjacent to the townland of Salthill specified as Area 1 on application maps and Figure 1 in this report.	
Licence application received:		13/03/2026	

1. Background

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (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, under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). As per S.I. No. 391/2018 - Harbours Act 2015, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council operate and manage Dun Laoghaire Harbour¹. The objective of the proposed maritime usage is to collate data on seabed conditions, subsurface geology, sediment characteristics and bathymetry within the defined MUL application area to inform the design, feasibility and environmental assessment for the development of proposed watersports infrastructure. Previous authorisations issued to this applicant include the Dún Laoghaire Marina: FS004490, St Michaels Pier: FS006786, Moorings: FS007613 and MUL250003 Site investigations.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

Brief description of the maritime usage

The total proposed MUL area is 26293m² which is subdivided into five zones. Zones B, C, D and E are located within Dún Laoghaire Harbour, while Zone A is located approximately 250m to the northwest of the harbour adjacent to the townland of Salthill (See Figure 1). The applicant has highlighted that the proposed site investigations will take place on tidal, sub tidal and terrestrial locations below the high-water mark (as per Figure 1.2 of the updated SISAA report). The proposed maritime usage activities are detailed in Table 1 below. A licence duration of 8 weeks is requested by the applicant however MARA considers a timeframe of one year more appropriate for the type of maritime usage in question, to allow for MARA's assessment across seasons. Indicative timeframes for site investigations at each zone have been provided in a submission from the applicant dated 09/06/2026, however the exact survey schedule will be dependent on factors such as weather windows, tidal flows, procurement and vessel availability.

¹ S.I. No. 391/2018 - Harbours Act 2015 (Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company Transfer and Dissolution Day) Order 2018

Table 1: Proposed site investigations -12 weeks duration maximum

Geophysical surveys Multi Beam Sonar (MBES) (sample frequency: 400 – 700 kHz) Zone E
Geotechnical surveys - Boreholes: (# 21) via sonic drilling or cable percussion boring, followed by rotary core drilling. Sample frequency: maximum 600 Hz. Max diameter 200mm and depth 3m. - Cone Penetration Tests (CPT): (#16). Sample Frequency: 20-200 Hz. - Vibrocores: (#6). Sample frequency, 50 Hz.
Survey vessels Compact site investigation jack-up barge (12m x 15m with 28m jack legs)

Brief description of the site characteristics

Dún Laoghaire Harbour extends for approximately 1.6km along the coastline of Dublin Bay with two breakwater arms (the East and West Piers) which creates the harbour's form. The harbour is situated in an area which is defined principally by a broad estuarine bay and shallow offshore waters². Water depths range from 0 to 14 meters "MHWS" and average tidal range in Dublin Bay ranges between approximately 2 -4.5m with tidal currents operating on average at 2-3 knots in a north-easterly/south-westerly orientation. Broad scale habitat mapping indicates the presence of infralittoral and circalittoral mud in the region of MUL application area(s)³.

The MUL application area is situated within the coastal water body of Dublin Bay (EPA ref: IE_EA_090_0000) classified under the Water Framework Directive as having good water quality and is deemed to be "not at risk" of failing to maintain its current classifications.

Spatial overlap exists between the proposed MUL area (Zone A) and the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area (004024) which is designated for wintering water bird species⁴. The nearest SAC is South Dublin Bay which is located 0.2km from MUL Zone 1 which is designated for mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, annual vegetation of drift lines, salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand as well as embryonic shifting dunes.

² . [Dún Laoghaire Masterplan A3 Compressed 2.pdf](#)

³ . [EMODnet Map Viewer](#)

⁴ [NPWS website](#)



Figure 1 Proposed maritime usage application area (solid red boundary)

Dún Laoghaire Harbour supports a range of commercial and recreational marine activities. Maritime usages within and adjacent to the proposed maritime usage application area include but are not limited to shipping catering for cruise and survey vessel primarily, search and rescue facilities, recreational boating, shore angling, training and walking⁵. Several organisations operate within the harbour, including four sailing clubs. The landward hinterland of the MUL area is urbanised by a mix of residential, commercial and cultural spaces, road and railway corridors. There are two bathing areas proximal to the proposed MUL locations - Seapoint to the north and Sandycove to the south.

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 a European site(s), in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites.

⁵ marineplan.ie

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 (SACs n and 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 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	Approx. distance from MUL application area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
SACs					
South Dublin Bay SAC (000210)	0.2km	<i>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</i> <i>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]</i> <i>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</i> <i>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2013) . Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (03000)	2.7km	<i>Reefs [1170]</i> <i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</i>	Yes -potential underwater noise impacts (total operation 8-12 weeks, 21 Boreholes)	Yes	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
North Dublin Bay SAC (003000)	5.3km	<i>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</i> <i>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]</i> <i>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</i> <i>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2013) . Conservation Objectives: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<i>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)</i> [1410] <i>Embryonic shifting dunes</i> [2110] <i>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes)</i> [2120] <i>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)</i> [2130] <i>Humid dune slacks</i> [2190] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort)</i> [1395]			
Codling Fault Zone SAC	29.8km	<i>Submarine structures made by leaking gases</i> [1180] <i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise)</i> [1351]	Yes -potential underwater noise impacts (total operation 8-12 weeks, 21 Boreholes	Yes	
Lambay Island SAC (000204)	21.7	<i>Reefs</i> [1170] <i>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</i> [1230] <i>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise)</i> [1351] <i>Halichoerus grypus (Grey Seal)</i> [1364] <i>Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal)</i> [1365]	Yes -potential underwater noise impacts (total operation 8-12 weeks, 21 Boreholes)	Yes	NPWS (2024) . Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SAC 000204. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
SPAs					
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024)	0	<i>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota)</i> [A046] <i>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus)</i> [A130] <i>Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula)</i> [A137] <i>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola)</i> [A141] <i>Knot (Calidris canutus)</i> [A143] <i>Sanderling (Calidris alba)</i> [A144] <i>Dunlin (Calidris alpina)</i> [A149] <i>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica)</i> [A157]	No	No	NPWS 2015 Conservation Objectives: NPWS (2015) South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

		<i>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</i> <i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i> <i>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</i>			
Dalkey Islands SPA (004172)]	5.3km	<i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2024). Conservation Objectives: Dalkey Islands SPA 004172. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
North-west Irish Sea SPA (004236)	5.3km	<i>Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]</i> <i>Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]</i> <i>Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009]</i> <i>Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013]</i> <i>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</i> <i>Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018]</i> <i>Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus)</i> <i>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</i> <i>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]</i> <i>Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]</i> <i>Great Black-backed Gull (Larus marinus) [A187]</i> <i>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]</i> <i>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]</i> <i>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</i> <i>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]</i> <i>Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199]</i> <i>Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200]</i> <i>Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

		<i>Little Gull (Hydrocoloeus minutus) [A862]</i> <i>Little Tern (Sternula albifrons) [A885]</i>			
North Bull Island SPA (004006)	5.29	<i>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]</i> <i>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]</i> <i>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]</i> <i>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]</i> <i>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]</i> <i>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</i> <i>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]</i> <i>Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143]</i> <i>Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144]</i> <i>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]</i> <i>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]</i> <i>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]</i> <i>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]</i> <i>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]</i> <i>Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169]</i> <i>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</i> <i>Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857]</i> <i>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2015) . Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Howth Head Coast SPA (004113)	8.9km	<i>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]</i>	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Howth Head Coast SPA 004113. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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 location, nature, duration and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Table 3 Potential direct and indirect impact summary

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Potential for underwater noise disturbance, displacement from survey activities.	There is potential for underwater sound sources from intrusive geotechnical investigations to be at a level that would cause a significant impact on the site-specific conservation objectives for relevant QI/SCI due to the operating parameters, location and scale of investigations.
Potential impacts from airborne noise and visual impacts -birds.	The potential for airborne noise and visual impacts to be at a level and duration that would cause a significant impact on site-specific conservation objectives for relevant QI/SCI was not identified in this application. This is due to the short duration, scale and low magnitude of the potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage on birds in this busy harbour environment.
Potential physical damage of habitats and species caused by disturbance/turbidity/siltation.	The potential for physical damage and degradation of habitat from proposed site investigations is considered unlikely to have a significant effect on habitat specific conservation objectives for South Dublin Bay SAC and the River Tolka SPA due to the non permanent, short duration (1 week at Zone A) and low magnitude of the potential impacts. For Zone A – proposed works include 2x boreholes -max diameter 200mm and depth 3m, 2 CPT and vibrocores.

In-combination effects

The potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage(s)/activities/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 MUL area. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. The recommended term for the licence is 1 year. Therefore, the temporal scope is considered to be 1 year.

A search of relevant databases undertaken on the 24/07/2026. Table 4 below outlines those activities which are considered to have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage. Relevant projects within the CESS and the CETS were considered.

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

Application Ref. & Applicant	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area	Status
MUL250003	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.	Spatial overlap	Granted
MUL240023	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.	Spatial Overlap (Zone A)	Granted
MUL230034	Codling Wind Park Ltd. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	0.36km	Granted
MUL240010	Eirgrid - Site investigation works	Spatial overlap	Granted
MAC20230012 B	ORE Operations and Maintenance facility	Directly adjacent	Granted
MAC240020 A	Operations and Maintenance Facility for ORE	Directly adjacent	Granted
FS004490	Dún Laoghaire Marina	Directly adjacent	Granted
FS006786	St Michaels Pier	Directly adjacent	Granted
FS007613	Moorings	Spatial overlap	Granted
MAC20230009	Iarnród Éireann (IÉ)	Spatial Overlap	Granted
MAC250050D	Slipways, a pontoon and the creation of areas of reclaimed land within designated zones.	Spatial Overlap	Granted

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

- Dún Laoghaire Harbour Master Plan
- Dublin Bay Biosphere Biodiversity Conservation and Research Strategy 2022-2026.
- Dublin City Council Development Plan 2022–2028
- Dublin City Council - Climate Neutral Dublin 2030, 2024
- Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
- Dún Laoghaire County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
- Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR) Biodiversity Action Plan for 2021-2025
- Climate Action Plan 2025 and Water Action Plan 2022–2027
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031
- National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027
- National Port Policy 2013 and Consultation draft 2026.

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report can be excluded at this time as no mechanism was identified for in-combination effects. However, the potential for this application to cause likely significant in-combination effects with other projects, where there is spatial and temporal overlap cannot be excluded.

Six projects have been identified with a potential spatial overlap and potentially three projects with potential for both temporal and spatial overlap which could generate in combination impacts in terms of underwater noise and airborne noise and visual impacts. The potential for combination impacts in terms of underwater noise impacts on the conservation objectives for the Harbour Porpoise (a qualifying interest at Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, Coding Bank SAC, Lambay Island SAC) and also Grey and Harbour Seals (qualifying interests at Lambay Island SAC) cannot be excluded at this stage.

It is considered unlikely that in combination impacts would lead to significant impact on the conservation objectives for South Dublin Bay and the River Tolka SPA in terms of airborne noise and visual impact given the geospatial and temporal restrictions imposed by MARA on MUL240023 (no surveys December to March annually) and MUL240010 (No surveys October to March annually) and habituation of the birds at this busy urban coastal area to airborne noise and visual impacts.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

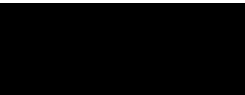
5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, the information on file, and having regard to:

- The nature, scale and duration of the proposed site investigation activities,
- The distance to the nearest European sites.
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects,
- Potential impacts from underwater noise disturbance, displacement from survey activities on marine mammals.
- Potential impacts from airborne noise and visual impacts.
- Potential physical damage of habitats and species caused by disturbance/turbidity/siltation.

It was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, County Hall, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, A96 K6C9, Ireland 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*' within Dún Laoghaire Harbour, Co Dublin **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 not have a significant effect on a European site.

Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Maria O Connell Marine Analyst	4 th August 2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director, Maritime Usage Licensing	4 th August 2026