

Uisce Éireann

# Marine environmental surveys for Dundalk WWTP upgrade

Attachment 4.11 Additional information for the overall purpose of the proposed Maritime Usage (strategic National/European policy objectives, national targets, research objectives)

Dr Aidan Long



**AQUAFACT**  
APEM Group

AQUAFACT Ref: (P19597)

February 2026

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

**Client:** Uisce Éireann

**Address:** Colvill House,  
24-26 Talbot St,  
Mountjoy,  
Dublin, D01 NP86

**Reference no:** P19597

**Date of issue:** 18/02/2026

---

**AQUAFACt contact:** Aisling Hearty

**Position:** Principal Ecologist

**E-mail:** [aisling@aquafact.ie](mailto:aisling@aquafact.ie)

**Telephone:** +353 (0) 91 756812

**Website:** [www.aquafact.ie](http://www.aquafact.ie)

---

**Address:** AQUAFACt International Services Ltd,  
9A Liosban Business Park,  
Tuam Road,  
Galway,  
Ireland.  
H91 K120

**Registered in Ireland:** No. 493496

**Tax Reference Number:** 97733840

**Tax Clearance Number:** 936172

## Report Approval Sheet

<b>Client</b>	Uisce Éireann
<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Attachment 4.11 Additional information for the overall purpose of the proposed Maritime Usage (strategic National/European policy objectives, national targets, research objectives)</b>
<b>Job Number</b>	P19597
<b>Report Status</b>	Final
<b>Issue Date</b>	20/04/26

Rev	Status	Issue Date	Document File Name	Author (s)	Edits	Approved by:
1	Draft	18/02/2026	<b>Attachment 4.11 Additional information for the overall purpose of the proposed Maritime Usage (strategic National/European policy objectives, national targets, research objectives)</b>	AL		AH
2	Final	20/04/2026	<b>Attachment 4.11 Additional information for the overall purpose of the proposed Maritime Usage (strategic National/European policy objectives, national targets, research objectives)</b>	AL		AH



## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. National Policy Alignment and Strategic Objectives</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. EU-Level Consistency and National Targets</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4. Regional and Local Plan Consistency</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>2</b>

## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviated Term	Definition
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant
PE	Population Equivalent
RIB	0.025 m <sup>2</sup> Van Veen deployments (Rigid Inflatable Boat) — inferred vessel type acronym
RIB	Rigid Inflatable Boat
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
RIB	RIB (survey vessel type – Rigid Inflatable Boat)
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SAC/SPA	Special Area of Conservation / Special Protection Area combined designation
NHA	Natural Heritage Area

## 1. Introduction

The proposed maritime usage will generate essential marine environmental baseline data through intertidal and subtidal sediment and macrofaunal grab sampling (0.025 m<sup>2</sup> Van Veen deployments from a RIB) and qualitative walkover surveys within Inner Dundalk Bay and the Castletown Estuary. These surveys will inform the Environmental Impact Assessment for the capacity upgrade of the existing Dundalk WWTP, located at Soldiers Point, County Louth. The usage is strictly limited to short-duration, spatially minimal baseline sampling to characterise intertidal/subtidal habitat and associated infaunal assemblages in the receiving environment surrounding the existing treated effluent outfall and across relevant transitional and coastal habitats in Inner Dundalk Bay.

## 2. National Policy Alignment and Strategic Objectives

At a national level, the surveys align with Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan 2021–2030, which prioritise investment in critical wastewater infrastructure to safeguard public health, enable sustainable regional growth, and meet statutory environmental obligations. The Dundalk WWTP capacity upgrade from 71,000 PE to 122,400 PE is explicitly sequenced within County Louth on the EPA Priority Areas list (Authorisation D0053-01, action plan completion 2030) due to significant pressure on coastal waters at risk of pollution.

## 3. EU-Level Consistency and National Targets

The survey programme supports Ireland's obligations under key EU marine and water directives, including the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Water Framework Directive, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, by providing the baseline data required to appraise receiving-environment condition and to underpin impact avoidance, minimisation, and mitigation planning as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

## 4. Regional and Local Plan Consistency

The surveys actively support multiple national, regional, and local development frameworks by enabling evidence-led design and environmental appraisal for upgraded wastewater infrastructure in Dundalk. Specifically, the upgraded WWTP supports:

- The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020–2032, which identifies Dundalk as a Regional Growth Centre, prioritising infrastructure capacity to support compact, sustainable urban expansion, economic competitiveness, and environmental protection.
- The Louth County Development Plan 2021–2027, which designates Dundalk as the principal driver of population and economic growth in County Louth, emphasising the need for resilient wastewater treatment to support future development, protect coastal water quality, and safeguard designated ecological assets in the estuarine and bay receiving environment.
- The Castletown Estuary and Dundalk Bay catchment management objectives under Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan 2022–2027, which seek to protect and improve waterbody status through reduction of nutrient and pollution pressures, ensuring future wastewater infrastructure is underpinned by independent monitoring, baseline characterisation, and best-available environmental evidence.
- Local coastal amenity and marine-use objectives associated with Dundalk Bay SAC/SPA, Ramsar, and proposed NHA designations, where ecological condition and coastal water quality underpin recreation, tourism, shellfish waters, and sustainable marine-resource use.

## 5. Conclusion

The Proposed Maritime Usage will:

- Improve the evidence base for marine biodiversity assessment in a nationally prioritised WWTP upgrade project;
- Reinforces alignment with national and EU marine-environmental protection targets; and
- Underpins sustainable co-existence planning with existing marine users in Inner Dundalk Bay and the Castletown Estuary.