

Maritime Usage Licence & Planning Advisory Directorate			
Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report			
To:	John Evans, Director	From:	Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor
Date:	15/06/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL260021
Applicant:		Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, Tom Johnson House, Haddington Road, Dublin, D04 K7X4.	
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:		Within the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan, from the nearshore out to the 75 m depth contour stretching from approximately 37 km southeast of Carnsore Point off the Wexford coast, west to Oysterhaven, County Cork.	
Licence application received:		20/04/2026	

1. Background

The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (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, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The proposed maritime usage is required in support of Ireland's Ocean Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS). The overall objective of the surveys is to characterise seabed and sub-seabed conditions and to collect baseline metocean, benthic and acoustic data to support the feasibility, design and environmental assessment of future offshore wind and grid infrastructure in the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SC-DMAP)¹.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed maritime usage activities (or site investigation activities) are shown on Table 1. The applicant has applied for a MUL duration of 5 years during which the surveys will be carried out on a phased basis annually. The applicant proposes to commence the activities in Q2 or Q3 2026 or 2027. The surveys will take place mainly in the four Maritime Areas identified in the SC-DMAP, namely Lí Bán (Area B), Manannán (Area C) and Danu (Area D), but with some additional surveys planned for Tonn Nua (Area A). Survey activity will also include potential transit lines from Cork Harbour and corridors between Maritime Areas A to D, with certain activities extending across the wider SC-DMAP area where required.

¹ [South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan](#)

Table 1: Proposed site investigation activities.

Equipment & purpose	Estimated equipment details & sound produced
Geophysical surveys (duration 3–4 months annually)	
Multibeam echo sounder (MBES)	Operating frequency (Freq.) 200–400 kHz. Sound Pressure Level (SPL) 210 dB re 1 μ Pa @1 m.
Sub bottom profiler	Freq. 3.5–12 kHz. SPL 223 dB re 1 μ Pa @1 m.
Side scan sonar	Freq. 300 – 900 kHz. SPL 228 dB re 1 μ Pa @1 m
Magnetometer	No noise produced
Gradiometer	No noise produced
Ultra-short baseline (USBL) acoustic positioning system	Freq. 15–40 kHz. SPL 190–210 dB re 1 μ Pa @1 m
Sparker system - surface towed, with 48 channel hydrophone array (length 300 m).	Freq 250 Hz – 1.75 kHz. SPL 223–226 dB re 1 μ Pa @1 m.
Mini air gun	Max. 12 in ³ . Freq. < 250 Hz. SPL 230 dB re 1 μ Pa @1 m.
Geotechnical surveys (duration 2–3 months annually)	
Cone Penetration Testing (CPT) or Thermal CPT (TCPT)	Up to 70 m below seabed. 20–40 No. Freq N/A. SPL 160–190 dB re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m
Boreholes (shallow and deep)	Up to 70 m below seabed, 10–45 no. Low Freq up to 600 Hz. SPL 145-190 dB @ 1 m
Day grab and/or Hamon grab	0.1 m ² , upper 10–20 cm of seabed, Max. 250 No.
Vibrocore sampling	Up to 6 m below seabed. 20–45 No. 75–120 mm diameter. Freq. 20–50Hz. SPL 160–190 dB re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m
Biological surveys* (duration 12–24 months)	
Static Acoustic Monitoring (SAM) using Autonomous Multichannel Acoustic Recorder (AMAR) and/or F-PODs (Full waveform capture POD)	Moored deployments Passive cetacean monitoring.
Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM)	Passive monitoring. Detection only. Towed 4 element hydrophone array
Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) or dropdown video/stills	Localised low level noise only from thrusters
Metocean Surveys (duration 12–36 months)	
Metocean Buoys with passive monitoring equipment, which may include floating Lidar, wind, current and water quality sensors and solar panels.	2 No. with associated moorings and anchors. Passive, no noise produced.
Conductivity Temperature Depth Profiler (CTD)	Sampled from a vessel. No noise produced.

Water Quality Sondes/Sensors	Sampled from a vessel or buoy mounted. No noise produced.
Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)/Global Positioning System (GPS)	Vessel mounted or on buoy system. No noise produced.
Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCPs)	Up to 3 No. Operating frequency ≥ 300 kHz. Installed in seabed frames, with clump weight.
Vessels	
Survey vessels including but not limited to the RV Tom Crean and/or suitable local vessels will be used. Geotechnical surveys will be undertaken from a vessel or a Jack-up barge (with tug vessel). Maintenance and data retrieval from fixed deployments (e.g. metocean equipment) will be required intermittently.	

*aerial surveys are proposed but these are outside of the scope of this application as they are not within the maritime area as defined in the MAP Act.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The MUL application area covers 5,654 km² and extends from the nearshore into the Celtic Sea. The depth range is approximately 10–75 m. There are a range of broad habitat types in the MUL application area. Shallow sublittoral sand and coarse sediments dominate the deeper (>40 m) sections and closer inshore there are areas of shallow sublittoral coarse mixed sediment, sublittoral rock and biogenic reef and shelf sublittoral rock and biogenic reef. The MUL application area is not within any European site, however it does provide foraging areas for seabirds and marine mammals likely to be connected with nearby European sites.

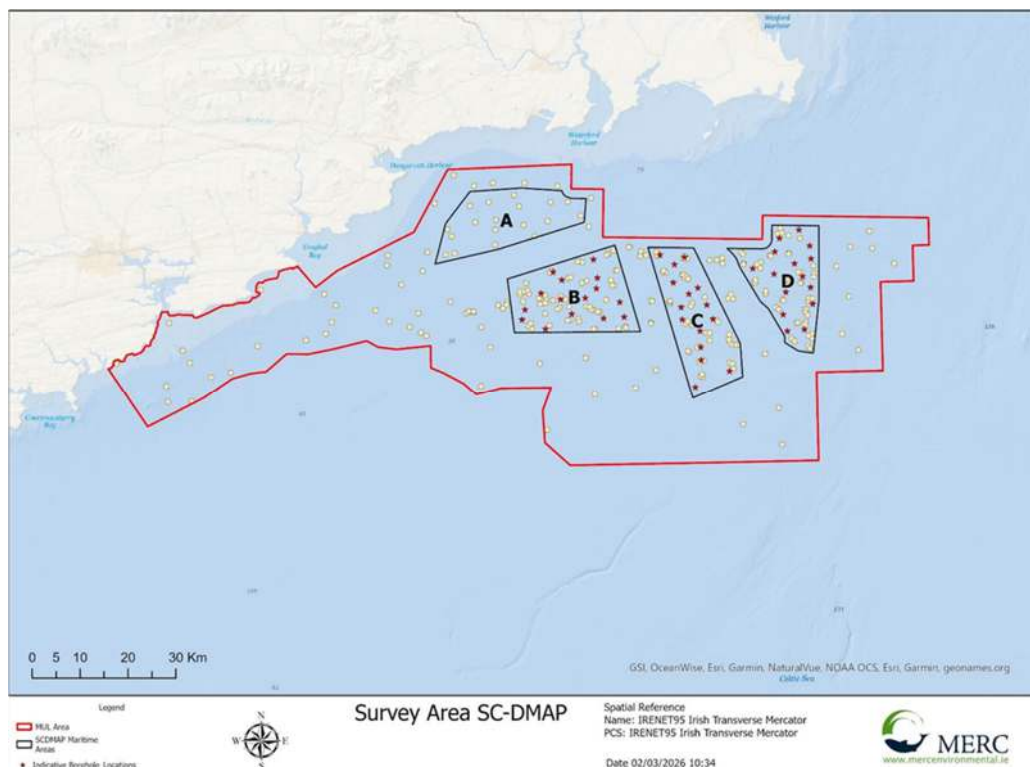


Figure 1: Proposed MUL area (red line) showing SC-DMAP Maritime Areas A to D and with indicative borehole (in red) and grab (in yellow) survey locations (applicant's map).

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. 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 (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed on Table 2 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the proposed site investigation activities, the conservation objectives of the European sites and 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					
Hook Head SAC [000764]	0 (i.e. directly adjacent to SAC)	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	Yes Potential for underwater noise disturbance or harm from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Hook Head SAC 000764. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
		Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	No		
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC [002170]	7	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	No	No	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC 002170. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

		Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985]			
River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162]	14	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] European dry heaths [4030] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

		Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985]			
Lower River Suir SAC [002137]		Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]	No	No	NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Suir SAC 002137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

		<i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]			
Saltee Islands SAC [000707]	15	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]	Yes Potential for underwater noise disturbance, or harm from survey activities. No	Yes	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Saltee Islands SAC 000707 and Saltee Islands SPA 004002. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Carnsore Point SAC [002269]	20	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170]	Yes Potential for underwater noise disturbance, or harm from survey activities. No	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Carnsore Point SAC 002269. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Blackwater Bank SAC [002953]	32	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]	Yes Potential for underwater noise disturbance, or harm from survey activities. No	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Blackwater Bank SAC 002953. Version 3. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Slaney River Valley SAC [000781]	40	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	No	No	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Slaney River Valley SAC 000781. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC [000101]	72	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] European dry heaths [4030] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]	Yes Potential for underwater noise disturbance, or harm from survey activities. No	Yes	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC 000101. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		<i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364]			
SPAs					
Seas off Wexford SPA [004237]	0 (i.e. directly adjacent to SAC)	Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>) [A176] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) [A191] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Seas off Wexford SPA 004237. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Sovereign Islands SPA [004124]	1	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Sovereign Islands SPA 004124. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	1.2	Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>) [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No		
Ballycotton Bay SPA [004022]	1.4	Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and	No	NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Ballycotton Bay SPA 004022. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife

			vessel activity from survey activities.		Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No		
Ballymacoda Bay SPA [004023]	2.5	Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	
		Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No		

Mid-Waterford Coast SPA [004193]	7.7	Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Mid-Waterford Coast SPA 004193. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
		Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346]	No		
Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA [004192]	6.8	Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA 004192. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
		Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) [A103] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346]	No		
Old Head of Kinsale SPA [004021]	10	Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Old Head of Kinsale SPA 004021. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Saltee Islands SPA [004002]	20	Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) [A016] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184]	Yes Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Yes	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Saltee Islands SAC 000707 and Saltee Islands SPA 004002. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018]	No		
Keeragh Islands SPA [004118]	23	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	No	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Keeragh Islands SPA 004118. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 3 Potential direct and indirect impacts on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Marine mammals - Potential for underwater noise disturbance or harm from survey activities.	Although there are no European sites within the MUL application area, there is the potential for underwater sound sources from survey activities to be at a level and duration that could have a significant negative impact on Qualifying Interest marine mammal species that may be foraging within the MUL application area. Likely significant impacts on Otter are not likely due to the location of the proposed MUL area.
Birds - Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity from survey activities.	Potential for survey activities generating underwater noise or above water noise and vessel activity to be at an intensity and duration could result in a likely significant effect on seabird populations based on species foraging ranges. Impacts on waders and waterbirds in SPA wetland habitats are not likely as there will be no activities within 1 km of overwintering waterbird SPAs).
Diadromous fish	Qualifying Interest diadromous fish may migrate through the MUL application area however likely significant impacts are not expected considering the applicant's modelled zone of underwater noise impact on fish, the temporary nature of the activities and the spatial scale over which the activities are proposed.
Habitat disturbance	No likely significant impact to habitats or associated community complexes due to location of proposed maritime usage and nature of the activities.

In-combination effects

MARA has developed a stepwise approach for identifying other plans and projects that may impact on European sites in-combination with the proposed maritime usage. Using professional and scientific judgement, the key steps for assessing cumulative effects are as follows:

1. Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)
2. Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)
3. Impact identification
4. Pathway identification
5. Prediction
6. Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination
7. Screening Stage Cumulative Effects Assessment conclusion
8. Managing cumulative impacts - to be carried out as part of Stage 2 AA process

The CESS has been defined as 5 km from the MUL application area and the CETS as 5 years. The definition of the CESS is based on acoustic survey equipment (mini-airguns of ≤ 12 in3) effective deterrence ranges as per JNCC Guidance and the CETS is the proposed MUL duration². A search of relevant databases (including MARA, An Coimisiún Pleanála, EPA and local authority planning databases) was undertaken on the 12/06/2026. Relevant projects within the CESS and the CETS were considered. Table 4 lists the projects which have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed site investigation activities.

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

Application Ref. & Applicant	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Status
MUL240036 EirGrid plc.	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation covering a 2,333 km ² area including seven landfall zones.	overlap	granted
LIC230017 Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd.	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	granted
MUL250019 Helvick Head Offshore Wind DAC	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	granted

² [JNCC, 2025](#)

MUL240026 Uisce Eireann	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	granted
MUL230015 Uisce Eireann	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	granted
MUL240042 Port of Cork Company	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	granted
MUL260003 Oceyon Ag	Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation	overlap	applied
MUL250008 Port of Cork Company	Deposit of dredged material	overlap	applied
FS007436 Voyage Offshore Array Ltd.	Foreshore licence application for site investigations	overlap	applied
FS007136 ESB Wind Development Ltd.	Foreshore licence application for site investigations	overlap	applied
FS006982 Energia	Foreshore licence for site investigations	overlap	granted
FS007318 RWE Renewables	Foreshore licence for site investigations	overlap	applied
FS007621 Pearla Offshore Wind Ltd.	Foreshore licence for site investigations	overlap	applied

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

- The Climate Action Plan 2025,
- National Marine Planning Framework,
- The National Development Plan 2021–2030,
- South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (SC-DMAP),
- The Port of Waterford Masterplan 2020–2040, and
- The Port of Cork Masterplan 2050.

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above and projects listed on Table 4 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

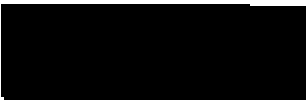
5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects.

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

- The nature and scale 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 for underwater noise disturbance or harm to marine mammals from survey activities, and
- Disturbance and displacement from above or below water noise and vessel activity to seabirds from survey activities.

it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by **the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, Tom Johnson House, Haddington Road, Dublin, D04 K7X4** 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 the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan, from the nearshore out to the 75 m depth contour stretching from approximately 37 km southeast of Carnsore Point off the Wexford coast, west to Oysterhaven, County Cork (MUL260012) 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 have a significant effect on a European site.

Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	 Senior Marine Advisor	15/06/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans Director of Assessment, Research and Data Unit	15/06/2026