

Project:	Donegal County Council Dredging Permits						
Client	Donegal County Council						
Subject	Maritime Usage Licence Application – NMPF Objectives						
Appendix	4.1						
Orig. by	DM	Appr. by	AA	Date	12/02/2026	Doc. Ref:	C1087-AYE-ZZ-XX-TN-MA-0002

NMPF Objectives

The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU), sets down European countries' common approach to the planning of maritime areas, allowing each county to plan its own maritime activities to a set of common requirements.

As part of the Irish Government's comprehensive approach to marine planning across three main areas of forward planning, development management, and marine planning enforcement, the NMPF sets the framework for the forward-planning component of the country's marine-planning system.

The NMPF is a national plan for Ireland's seas, setting out, over a 20-year horizon, how the sea is planned to be used, protected and enjoyed. It was published on 30th June 2021 and applies to the maritime area around Ireland and provides objectives, policies and visions for all marine-based activities and how these activities interact with one another. All applications for activity or development in Ireland's maritime area are considered in terms of their consistency with the objectives of the Plan.

The NMPF has been prepared with an ecosystem-based approach and informed by best available knowledge. It sets out Overarching Marine Planning Policies that will apply to all marine activities or development, including policies in relation to ocean health and environment, infrastructure, heritage, communities, seascape and access, among others. Compliance statements for the relevant NMPF policies are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Works NMPF Policy Compliance Descriptions.

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<p>Biodiversity Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals that protect, maintain, restore and enhance the distribution and net extent of important habitats and distribution of important species will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals must avoid significant reduction in the distribution and net extent of important habitats and other habitats that important species depend on, including avoidance of activity that may result in disturbance or displacement of habitats.</i></p>	<p>Refer to attachment 4.6 of this application that described the consistency of the proposed work to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and therefore its <u>compliance with Biodiversity Policy 2.</u></p>
<p>Protected Marine Sites Policy 1</p> <p><i>Proposals must demonstrate that they can be implemented without adverse effects on the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Where adverse effects from proposals remain following mitigation, in line with Habitats Directive Article 6(3), consent for the proposals cannot be granted unless the prerequisites set by Article 6(4) are met.</i></p>	<p>Refer to attachment 4.6 of this application that described the consistency of the proposed work to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and therefore its <u>compliance with Protected Marine Sites Policy 1.</u></p>
<p>Climate Change Policy 1</p> <p><i>Proposals should demonstrate how they:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>avoid contribution to adverse changes to physical features of the coast;</i> 	<p>Maintenance dredging allows the existing harbour operations to continue without new infrastructure. Sediment buildup at the harbour which is located at the river mouth could cause upstream flooding and maintaining a suitable depth allows adequate flow to occur.</p> <p>Attachment 4.3 details the potential impacts on the relevant sites and in combination with the proposed mitigation measures (related to</p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhance, restore or recreate habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services where possible. <p>Where potential significant adverse impacts upon habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services are identified, these must be in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> avoided, minimised, mitigated, if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, the reasons for proceeding must be set out. <p>This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments are required.</p>	<p>underwater noise) result in no adverse impact in <u>compliance with Climate Change Policy 1.</u></p>
<p>Seascape and Landscape Policy 1</p> <p>Proposals should demonstrate how the likely significant impacts of a development on the seascape and landscape of an area have been considered. Proposals will only be supported if they demonstrate that they, in order of preference: avoid, minimise, or mitigate significant adverse impacts on the seascape and landscape of the area. If it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals must set out the reasons for proceeding.</p> <p>This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments</p>	<p>Maintenance dredging is a temporary activity that is confined to an existing approach channel. Disturbance to the seascape and landscape is avoided in <u>compliance with Seascape and Landscape Policy 1.</u></p>

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<p>Heritage Assets Policy 1</p> <p><i>Proposals that demonstrate they will contribute to enhancing the significance of heritage assets will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPP. Proposals unable to contribute to enhancing the significance of heritage assets will only be supported if they demonstrate that they will, in order of preference: avoid, minimise, or mitigate harm to the significance of heritage assets, and if it is not possible, to mitigate harm, then the public benefits for proceeding with the proposal must outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage assets.</i></p>	<p>A desktop Archaeological Assessment confirmed that no known maritime or aviation archaeology within the proposed maritime usage area. It also confirms that there is low potential for underwater cultural heritage within the dredging sites. Licensed archaeological monitoring will be undertaken as a precaution. The proposed maritime usage is therefore <u>compliant with Heritage Assets Policy 1.</u></p>
<p>Tourism Policy 1</p> <p><i>Where appropriate, proposals enabling, promoting or facilitating sustainable tourism and recreation activities, particularly where this creates diversification or additional utilisation of related facilities beyond typical usage patterns, should be supported.</i></p>	<p>The promotion of tourism is supported by ensuring the Lough Swilly Ferry can provide a consistent transport link for local residents and tourists. Attachment XX details the support received from Lough Swilly Ferry and the impacts that the maintenance dredging has on its operations. The proposed maritime usage is therefore <u>compliant with Tourism Policy 1.</u></p>
<p>Tourism Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals must identify possible impacts on tourism. Where a potential significant impact upon tourism is identified it should be demonstrated how the potential negative consequences to tourism in communities will be minimised. This must include assessment of how the benefits of proposals are not outweighed by potential negative impacts.</i></p>	<p>It is envisaged that no negative impacts on tourism within Bunrana is expected due to the proposed maritime usage and is <u>compliant with Tourism Policy 2.</u></p>
<p>Sports and Recreation Policy 5</p> <p><i>Proposals should seek to enhance water safety through provision of appropriate International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and</i></p>	<p>An RNLI station is located on Bunrana Harbour and ensuring that adequate draft is provided at the RNLI berth through maintenance dredging is a priority. This ensures that responses in emergency events are not hindered and increases water safety within the area. Therefore</p>

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<p><i>European Committee for Standardization (CEN) compliant safety signage. In general the safety of persons should be a key consideration for planners and due consideration should be given to best practice guidance for marine and coastal recreation areas endorsed by the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group.</i></p>	<p>the proposed maritime usage <u>complies with Sports and Recreation Policy 5.</u></p>
<p>Access Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals demonstrating appropriate enhanced and inclusive public access to and within the maritime area, and that consider the future provision of services for tourism and recreation activities, should be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF</i></p>	<p>The proposed maritime usage aims to improve the public access through maintenance dredging. No significant adverse impacts are expected and therefore the proposed maritime usage should be supported in <u>compliance with Access Policy 2.</u></p>
<p>Social Benefits Policy 1</p> <p><i>Proposals that enhance or promote social benefits should be supported. Proposals unable to enhance or promote social benefits should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference: minimise, or mitigate significant adverse impacts which result in the displacement of other existing or authorised (but yet to be implemented) activities that generate social benefits</i></p>	<p>The proposed maritime usage enhances the social benefits of the transport link between Buncrana and Rathmullan. It also enhances the social benefits of water safety through a well-functioning RNLI response by providing adequate water depth at the required facilities.</p> <p>The proposed maritime usage should be supported in <u>compliance with Social Benefits Policy 1.</u></p>
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 1</p> <p><i>To provide for shipping activity and freedom of navigation, the following factors will be taken into account when reaching decisions regarding development and use:</i></p> <p><i>The extent to which the locational decision interferes with existing or planned routes used by shipping, access to ports and harbours and</i></p>	<p>Marine activity related to the Port will remain operational during the proposed maritime usage works.</p> <p>The navigational safety improves as a result of the proposed work.</p> <p>The Contractor and the Harbour Master will coordinate the scheduling of the proposed maritime usage works accordingly.</p>

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<p><i>navigational safety. This includes commercial anchorages and approaches to ports as well as key littoral and offshore routes;</i></p> <p><i>A mandatory Navigation Risk Assessment;</i></p> <p><i>Where interference is likely: whether reasonable alternatives can be identified; and</i></p> <p><i>Where there are no reasonable alternatives: whether mitigation through measures adopted following the principles and procedures established by the International Maritime Organisation can be achieved at no significant cost to the shipping or ports sector.</i></p>	<p>The Contractor will abide by the Harbour Master's instructions.</p> <p>The proposed maritime usage is therefore <u>compliant with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 1.</u></p>
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 2</p> <p><i>Proposals that may have a significant impact on current activity and future opportunities for expansion of port and harbour activities should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference: avoid, minimise, or mitigate significant adverse impacts and if it is impossible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on current activity and future opportunities for expansion of port and harbour activities, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.</i></p>	<p>The proposed maritime usage will not adversely impact current activity and future opportunities to expand the Harbour activities. The maintenance dredging will position the harbour to allow future opportunities to expand to be more attractive. The proposed maritime usage is therefore <u>compliant with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 2.</u></p>
<p>Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 7</p> <p><i>Proposals for maintenance dredging activity will be supported where:</i></p> <p><i>Relevant decisions by competent authorities incorporate the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes, as well as necessary compliance assessments associated with authorisations, including in relation to the planning process;</i></p>	<p>This application includes an Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Assessment Statement as Attachment 4.3 in compliance with the required statutory environmental assessment process. Additionally, the proposed maritime usage will be subject to a Dumping at Sea permit application process.</p> <p>Therefore, the proposed maritime usage is <u>compliant with Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 7.</u></p>

Policies	Compliance Descriptions
<p><i>There will be no significant adverse impact on marine activities or uses or the maritime area. Any potential adverse impact will be, in order of preference, avoided, minimised or mitigated;</i></p> <p><i>dredged waste is managed in accordance with an internationally agreed hierarchy of waste management options for sea disposal;</i></p> <p><i>if disposing of dredged material at sea, existing registered disposal sites are used, in preference to new disposal sites; and</i></p> <p><i>where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF.</i></p>	