

Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications
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By email only : Jo.Coloe@decc.gov.ie

28/05/2026

Request for Additional Information: Section 117(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021

Maritime Usage Licence Application Reference: MUL260021

Dear Applicant,

I refer to the above referenced maritime usage licence application received by the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA).

MARA considers that it requires additional information as set out below in order to determine the licence application.

1. The Supporting Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) (page 26) considers that sites designated solely for wintering waterbirds or species (e.g. Chough) without a reliance on marine habitats, are outside of the Zone of Influence of the proposed maritime usage. Figure 2 of the SISAA gives indicative borehole and grab sampling locations. Clarify whether there are any proposed borehole or other geotechnical surveys within the MUL Application Area adjacent to any Special Protection Area designated for wintering waterbirds, including the Ballycotton Bay SPA [site code: 004022], Cork Harbour SPA [site code: 004030] and Ballymacoda Bay SPA [site code: 004023]. If there will be any borehole, or other surveys in this part of the MUL Application Area, provide details on the potential for above water noise disturbance (or disturbance from vessels, platforms, lighting, increased human presence for example) expected from such surveys.

2. Figure 7 of the Supporting Information for Screening for Environmental Assessment report shows potential reef habitat distribution in relation to the MUL application area. The report also states that no surveys are proposed for areas indicated to be comprised of shallow sublittoral rock and biogenic reef. Clarify how impacts on reef habitats will be avoided during the survey activities.
3. Clarify length of the towed equipment referred to in both the SISAA and the Annex IV Risk Assessment. Both reports refer to a '400 m tow cable' and also to a 'total towed instrumentation length approximately 200m'.
4. Clarify the size (volume) of the mini-airguns proposed to be used in cubic inches (in³).
5. Table 4 of the Annex IV Risk Assessment identifies that noise/vibration from geotechnical activities may have a potential impact on Annex IV species however this is not further discussed in the report. Provide information on the potential impact from the proposed geotechnical activities on Annex IV species.
6. Provide further information on the applicability of the underwater noise impact modelling study on Minke whale to the other cetacean species described in the Annex IV Risk Assessment, noting that Harbour porpoise is described as the species most sensitive to noise disturbance in UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee guidance.
7. Section 6.4 of the Natura Impact Statement refers to mitigation to avoid the potential for likely significant in-combination effects on marine mammals and birds, as follows:

'However, it is recommended that elements of the proposed project, that result in introduction of underwater noise into the marine environment, should not occur simultaneously with any underwater noise inducing element of the additional projects listed in Table 3, should they also be in receipt of a MUL or MAC'.

Provide details as to how this measure will be implemented in practice. Provide details on which 'elements' of the proposed site investigation activities this measure is referring to and the scientific reasoning for including those particular elements.

Please refer to MARA's [Guidance Note for Applicants applying for a Maritime Usage Licence \(MUL\)](#) when providing the information requested.

The requested information should be submitted to MARA within **4 weeks** of the date of this notice, i.e by **25/06/2026**, in order for MARA to assess the licence application.

Please direct any queries to licence@mara.gov.ie.

Yours faithfully,

Paula O'Toole
Maritime Usage Licensing Team
MARA