Updated - Compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Report

1 INTRODUCTION

The key objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) are set out in Article 4 of the Directive. It requires Member States to use their River Basin Management Plans and Programmes of Measures to protect and, where necessary, restore water bodies in order to reach good status, and to prevent deterioration. Thereby ensuring good qualitative and quantitative health, *i.e.*, on reducing and removing pollution and ensuring that there is enough water to support wildlife at the same time as human needs.

This proposed project is supported by Support Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) and Supporting Information for Screening for EIA (SISEIA). The SISAA did not identify any potential for likely significant significant effects on water quality within the receiving environment.

The proposed SI works are being undertaken to inform the design and development of coastal erosion and flood protection measures at Rosslare Strand. In the long term, these measures are expected to contribute positively to the resilience of the coastal environment, helping to manage erosion processes and reduce flood risk, thereby supporting the protection of coastal water bodies.

2 ZONE OF INFLUENCE

For WFD purposes, the Zone of Influence (ZoI) is defined as the area over which the proposed maritime usage could result in a water-quality effect. Given the nature and scale of the proposed marine and intertidal SI works, the principal potential pathways are localised physical disturbance and mobilisation of suspended sediment during intrusive works, together with the potential for accidental release of fuels or other pollutants.

On this basis, the WFD ZoI comprises the waterbodies within which the proposed works are located and the directly connected receiving waters where a water-quality effect could reasonably occur. The relevant transitional and coastal waterbodies are the Lower Slaney Estuary transitional waterbody (IE_SE_040_0200), the Wexford Harbour coastal waterbody (IE_SE_040_0000) and the Southwestern Irish Sea coastal waterbody (IE_SE_010_0000).

Waterbody	Code	Type	2019–2024 status	WFD risk	Relevant Issues/Pressures
Lower Slaney Estuary	IE_SE_040_0200	Transitional	Poor	At Risk	Nutrients; agriculture; urban wastewater
Wexford Harbour	IE_SE_040_0000	Coastal	Moderate	At Risk	Nutrients; organic; urban wastewater; agriculture
Southwestern Irish Sea	IE_SE_010_0000	Coastal	Good	Not at Risk	No significant issue/pressure identified in the Cycle 3 dataset

The WFD overall status of a surface waterbody reflects the relationship between ecological and chemical status. The latest EPA reporting (2019-2024) identifies the Lower Slaney

Estuary as Poor Status, Wexford Harbour as Moderate Status and the Southwestern Irish Sea as Good Status.

The available EPA/Catchments information indicates that the existing status of the Lower Slaney Estuary and Wexford Harbour reflects wider catchment pressures, including nutrient, agricultural and urban wastewater pressures. These pressures are not attributable to the proposed temporary SI works.

Hydromorphology is a supporting component of ecological status for transitional and coastal waters. The current EPA public Cycle 3 summary information does not provide a separate overall hydromorphological status class for the three waterbodies identified above in the same manner as the overall ecological status.

3 PROTECTED AREAS WITHIN THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE

The principal protected areas within the ZoI identified for the proposed MUL are:

- Slaney River Valley SAC (Site Code 000781), which overlaps MUL Area A.
- Seas off Wexford cSPA (Site Code 004237), which overlaps MUL Area B.
- Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA (Site Code 004076), associated with the wider Slaney/Wexford Harbour marine environment.
- Relevant designated shellfish waters in Wexford Harbour, including Wexford Harbour Inner and Wexford Harbour Outer shellfish areas.

The SISAA and NIS accompanying the MUL application provide the detailed assessment of potential effects on European sites and their conservation objectives.

4 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON WFD STATUS

Intrusive SI activities, including boreholes, grab sampling and other geotechnical works, have the potential to result in localised disturbance of seabed or intertidal sediments and a temporary increase in suspended sediment concentrations. Access and egress for intertidal working may also result in localised physical disturbance.

The scale and duration of the proposed SI works are limited. Disturbance will occur at discrete investigation locations rather than across the waterbody as a whole and will cease on completion of each investigation. No permanent removal of a significant area of seabed or intertidal habitat is proposed. The resulting sediment mobilisation will therefore be localised and temporary and will not alter the prevailing physical or ecological characteristics of the receiving waterbodies.

There is potential for accidental release of fuels, oils or other pollutants associated with survey vessels, plant or equipment. The proposed SI works will be undertaken in accordance with standard pollution-prevention and marine survey best-practice measures, including appropriate control of fuels and hazardous substances, inspection and maintenance of plant and equipment, and appropriate spill response arrangements.

These measures will minimise the likelihood of a pollutant entering the water environment. The works do not involve a planned discharge of wastewater, process effluent or other chemical pollutants to a WFD waterbody.

The SISEIA also assessed the implications of the project on the potential for effects on water quality within the receiving environment. It concluded that, based on the scale and scope of the proposed project, no impact on the any receiving waterbody will occur.

5 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON RELEVANT PROTECTED AREAS

Potential effects on the Slaney River Valley SAC and Seas off Wexford cSPA have been considered in detail within the SISAA and NIS. From a WFD perspective, the principal potential pathway to protected areas is through temporary changes in water quality, particularly suspended sediment/turbidity, or an accidental pollutant release.

The proposed works are temporary and localised, and the embedded pollution-prevention measures will minimise the potential for water-quality effects. No permanent change to the hydrology, morphology or water-quality regime of the relevant waterbodies is proposed. Consequently, the proposed MUL will not adversely affect the water-quality conditions supporting the relevant WFD protected areas.

6 MITGATION

Standard mitigation measures will be implemented during all SI activities, including the use of appropriate pollution prevention controls, adherence to best practice for marine sampling, and careful management of sediments during intrusive works. These measures will ensure that there is no deterioration in water body status, in compliance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

7 CONCLUSION

The proposed project is compliant with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, as it will not result in deterioration of water body status and will support sustainable coastal management in the study area.