

Compliance with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The key objective of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is to protect the marine ecosystem and biodiversity upon which our health and marine-related economic and social activities depend. Its aim is to achieve good environmental status (GES) of the EU's marine waters and sustainably protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend.

To support this objective, the MSFD defines 11 qualitative descriptors of GES. These address key aspects of marine environmental health including biodiversity, seabed integrity, water quality, underwater noise, marine litter, and the introduction of contaminants and non-indigenous species. Member States implement Programmes of Measures aimed at managing pressures and reducing risks to the marine environment.

The proposed marine site investigation (SI) works associated with the Rosslare Coastal Erosion and Flood Relief Scheme are temporary, localised, and largely non-intrusive in nature. Activities such as geophysical surveys are non-invasive and will not result in physical alteration of the seabed. Intrusive elements (e.g. boreholes, cone penetration tests and grab sampling) are limited in spatial extent and duration and will be undertaken using established best practice techniques to minimise disturbance to sediments and the water column.

The project is supported by Supporting Information for Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment (SISEIA), which assessed the potential for effects on the receiving marine environment. The assessment concluded that, having regard to the scale, duration and nature of the SI works, any impacts will be negligible and will not result in significant effects on marine environmental receptors.

In the context of the MSFD descriptors, the proposed works will not give rise to significant adverse effects on biodiversity (Descriptor 1), seabed integrity (Descriptor 6), water quality (Descriptors 5 and 8), or hydrographical conditions (Descriptor 7). Temporary and minor increases in underwater noise (Descriptor 11) and localised seabed disturbance may occur during certain activities. However, these will be short-term and managed in accordance with standard mitigation measures and best practice.

The SI works are being undertaken to inform the design of coastal erosion and flood relief measures, which aim to enhance the long-term resilience of the coastal environment at Rosslare Strand. Therefore, the project supports the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources which are consistent with the overarching objectives of the MSFD.

Table 1 below provides an assessment of the project against the descriptions of the MSFD.

Table 1: Assessment of compliance with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Descriptor	Analysis	Assessment
Descriptor 1: Biodiversity is maintained	The SISEIA provided a description of the biodiversity baseline of the proposed project location and its environs. In addition, a separate SISAA, Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Annex IV Risk Assessment were prepared for this project. All of which examined the potential for impact on various elements of the biodiversity of the proposed project area and potential for project related impacts on them. The NIS, Annex IV Risk assessment and SISEIA recommended mitigation to ensure no impact on identified sensitive receptors occurred	Provided the mitigation recommended in the NIS, Annex IV Risk assessment and SISEIA are adhered to no potential for impact on this descriptor is considered possible.
Descriptor 2: Non-indigenous species do not adversely alter ecosystems	No element of the proposed project has been identified that has the potential to introduce or spread non-indigenous species.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 3: Populations of commercial fish and shellfish species are healthy	No commercial fishing occurs within the proposed project area. The project SISEIA considered impacts on commercial fish and shellfish and has not identified any potential for impact.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 4: Food webs ensure long-term abundance and reproduction of species	No project related impacts with the potential to impact food webs or affect long-term abundance and/or reproduction of species is considered possible.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 5: Eutrophication is reduced	No impacts relative to eutrophication are possible.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 6: Sea floor integrity ensures the proper functioning of ecosystems	The proposed project will result in disturbance to the seabed within the MUL area. The SISAA considered that the resulting impacts would be short lived and no adverse effects to the integrity of the seafloor would occur. Therefore, no potential for impacts on the proper functioning of the ecosystem is considered possible.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 7: Permanent alteration of hydrographical conditions does not adversely affect ecosystems	The proposed project does not have the potential to cause any hydrographical changes.	No potential for impact.

Descriptor	Analysis	Assessment
Descriptor 8: Concentrations of contaminants give no pollution effects	The proposed project does not have the potential to lead to the introduction of any contaminants.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 9: Contaminants in seafood are at safe levels	The proposed project does not have the potential to add to or alter contaminants in the seafloor.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 10: Marine litter does not cause harm	The proposed project does not have the potential to lead to the littering.	No potential for impact.
Descriptor 11: Introduction of energy (including underwater noise) does not adversely affect the ecosystem	The project SISAA, SISEIA and Annex IV risk assessment identified the potential for the introduction of underwater noise and disturbance in the absence of mitigation. Mitigation to ensure no impact on identified sensitive receptors occurs.	Provided the mitigation recommended in the NIS, Annex IV Risk assessment and SISEIA is adhered to no potential for impact on this descriptor is considered possible.