

FEAS Observations on MUL240047 – RNLI Site Investigation Works to Inform Jetty & Berth Design, at Courtmacsherry, County Cork

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Summary

- Fisheries Ecosystems Advisory Services (FEAS) at the Marine Institute were requested by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to provide observations on application MUL240047, submitted by the RNLI, to undertake site investigation works to inform the design of a new jetty and berth at Courtmacsherry, Co. Cork. The application is being administered by the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA).
- The following response considers potential impacts on sea fisheries and the seafood sector, including aquaculture.
- The applicant proposes undertaking on-site works to include the sinking of three boreholes with a target depth of 25m, and the collection of 12 vibrocore sediment samples with a target depth of 4m each. A small jack-up barge, and a shallow water vessel will be used to carry out the works. Further sediment analysis is to be done off site.
- At time of application, it was expected that works would begin in July 2026, subject to consenting, and would last a total of ten days.
- The approximate total area of the site where the proposed works will be carried out is 0.606 ha.
- Vessels operating out of Courtmacsherry include a very small fleet of inshore commercial fishing boats, and charter angling boats. The barge & shallow water vessel being used for the works could conflict with movements of other users, including the local fleet. However, the RNLI has stated they will engage with those users in advance of the proposed works to advise on their work schedule, and vessel movements. In addition, the works will be transient across the site, with work vessels moving between sample and bore locations.
- Fishing operations in the locality take place outside of the inner bay and estuary, away from the area of proposed works.
- The area of proposed work overlaps with spawning grounds of whiting. It also overlaps nursery areas for a few commercially important species including cod and mackerel.
- The lower Argideen estuary, adjacent to the site, has a high tidal exchange rate (https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/water/Research_Report_359_.pdf), which suggests that fish would not generally be retained in the area near the site for extended periods.
- Courtmacsherry Bay, like much of the south coast, is adjacent to herring spawning areas, but the area of proposed works is not within close proximity of any of the main spawning beds.
- There are no licensed aquaculture sites within or adjacent to the area of proposed works. Courtmacsherry Bay does not have designated shellfish waters.
- The short duration of the proposed work, and the small area involved, suggest that these investigations should not interfere with fishing activities, or fish biology/ecology, assuming all necessary Marine Notices are made.