



NMPF COMPLIANCE REPORT

**Maintenance Dredging Sarsfield Lock,
Limerick City**

Waterways Ireland

June 2026

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1. Introduction

This compliancy statement describes how the maintenance dredging at Sarsfield Lock aligns with the goals and objectives outlined in the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), where applicable, published in 2021. The NMPF outlines the government's vision, objectives, and marine planning policies for each marine activity and how these activities will interact with each other. The NMPF had been prepared with an ecosystem-based approach and is informed by the best available knowledge. The objectives mirror those being adopted globally, in particular the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The NMPF is at the highest level of hierarchy of plans and strategies and aligns with the position of the National Planning Framework which provides a similar approach for land-based planning. The NMPF does not determine the precise location of any development project or designate or allocate specific uses. **Table 1-1** identifies the relevant NMPF policies that they include.

Table 1-1: Objectives and Policies of NMPF

High Level Objective	Policy Grouping	Planning Policies
Environmental – Ocean Health	Environmental – Ocean Health	Environmental – Ocean Health Policy 1
	Biodiversity	Biodiversity 1
		Biodiversity 2
		Biodiversity 3
		Biodiversity 4
	Protected Marine Sites	Protected Marine Sites 1
		Protected Marine Sites 2
		Protected Marine Sites 3
		Protected Marine Sites 4
	Non-indigenous Species	Non-indigenous Species 1
	Water Quality	Water Quality 1
		Water Quality 2
	Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity	Sea-floor Integrity 1
		Sea-floor Integrity 2
		Sea-floor Integrity 3
	Marine Litter	Marine Litter 1
	Underwater Noise	Underwater Noise 1
	Air Quality	Air Quality 1
		Air Quality 2
	Climate Change	Climate Change 1
		Climate Change 2
Economic – Thriving Maritime Economy	Co-existence	Co-existence 1
	Infrastructure	Infrastructure 1
Social – Engagement with the Sea	Access	Access 1
		Access 2
	Employment	Employment 1
	Heritage Assets	Heritage Assets 1
	Rural Coastal and Island Communities	Rural Coastal and Island Communities 1
	Seascape and Landscape	Seascape and Landscape 1
	Social Benefits	Social Benefits 1
		Social Benefits 2
	Transboundary	Transboundary 1

1.1 Project Description

Malachy Walsh & Partners was commissioned by Waterways Ireland to prepare applications for a Dumping at Sea (DaS) and Marine Usage License (MUL) to carry out maintenance dredging at Sarsfield Lock, Co. Limerick. Waterways Ireland is the North / South Implementation Body responsible for the inland navigable waterways systems in Ireland. The main functions of Waterways Ireland are the management, maintenance, development and restoration of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island of Ireland, principally for recreational purposes.

There are five areas to be dredged along Sarsfield Lock, which will be undertaken by a DOP submersible pump and discharged via floating pipes into the main channel of the River Shannon to be dispersed by the tidal current. There will be three discharge areas. There is approximately 70m³ of hard granular material that will be removed via long reach excavator to a barge and removed from the site via Limerick Dock.

2. Objective Compliance

2.1 Environmental – Ocean Health

The policy groupings in the following sections are identified under this objective and are discussed in relation to the proposed maintenance dredging, to which this Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) applies.

2.1.1 Designated Areas

The maintenance dredging will be undertaken in the River Shannon, which is part of the Lower River Shannon SAC (002165). The River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077) is located a short distance downstream and at Limerick Dock where the hard granular material will be removed from the barge. The proposed dredging has had an Annex IV Risk Assessment and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) completed as part of the submitted Dumping At Sea application and are submitted with this MUL application along with the Statutory Information Supporting Appropriate Assessment (SISAA).

2.1.2 Biodiversity

‘Biological diversity is maintained. The quality and occurrence of habitats and the distribution and abundance of species are in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic, and climatic conditions.’

The proposed dredging will take place over a short period of 15 days initially and will occur annually thereafter sticking to the short-term operation. A SISAA, Risk Assessment of Annex IV Species and NIS are submitted with this application and highlight there would be no likely significant impacts were identified that would arise due to the maintenance dredging.

2.1.3 Non-Indigenous Species

‘Non-indigenous species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems.’

All dredging and operational plant will be thoroughly cleaned before deployment to prevent the accidental introduction non-indigenous species.

2.1.4 Water Quality

There will be a slight impact to water quality during the proposed maintenance dredging through suspended sediments and turbidity, this will be dispersed quickly by the tidal regime in the area. A dispersion model has been generated and is submitted with this application. A monitoring buoy will also be set up downstream from the dredging site to monitor water quality during the dredging operation. All vessels and equipment will be maintained and checked for any issues prior to deployment to ensure there is minimal chance of leakage of fuel or hydrocarbons. Overall, there will be no likely significant negative impacts on water quality resulting from the proposed maintenance dredging.

2.1.5 Marine Litter

The dredging will be short-term which represents a reduce risk of marine litter generated by operational personnel. The vessel will be equipped with a rubbish bin that will be brought ashore and contents disposed of at the end of each dredging session.

2.1.6 Underwater Noise

A Risk Assessment of Annex IV Species report was carried out by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and deemed that there would be no significant negative impact from the use of the submersible pump, discharge and additional vessels on marine mammals.

2.1.7 Air and Climate

The short-term nature of the maintenance dredging periods will have no significant impact on air or climate in the area.

2.2 Economic – Thriving Marine Economy

The policy groupings below are identified under this objective and are discussed in relation to the proposed surveys.

2.2.1 Co-Existence

Notice will be given to users of Sarsfield Lock and the Arthur's Quay jetties prior to the commencement of the proposed dredging to prevent any user/user conflicts in the marine space. Notice will also be given to Limerick Port prior to any dredging activity being undertaken.

2.2.2 Infrastructure

The dredging will allow the existing Sarsfield Lock and areas at Arthur's Quay to become easier to navigate with the return of the bed to historic levels.

2.3 Social – Engagement with the Sea

The policy groupings below are identified under this objective and are discussed in relation to the proposed surveys.

2.3.1 Access, Heritage Assets, and Social Benefit

Access will be temporarily affected during the dredging periods as the floating jetties will be removed to allow the dredging to take place. This would be short term and overall will allow for easier navigation along the channel and quay areas. An underwater archaeology assessment was undertaken and is submitted with this application showing there is no significant negative impact on any heritage assets in the vicinity of the proposed dredging area.

2.3.2 Employment and Rural Coastal Communities

The proposed dredging will have no impact on employment or rural coastal communities.

2.3.3 Seascape and Landscape

The short-term nature of the proposed dredging will have no effect on the seascape and landscape in the area.

3. Conclusion

Upon assessment of the objectives and the review, it is determined that the proposed maintenance dredging works are consistent with the relevant objectives of the NMPF. The dredging works are in determined areas, and consideration was given to the biodiversity present in the area. Protocol will also be in place to prevent accidental introduction of non-indigenous species. The proposed dredging also considered the effects on the receiving environment, and these were assessed to be negligible and short-term, with no permanent negative impacts perceived. The dredging work will restore the bed to its historic depth, increasing navigability and provide economic benefits through increased accessibility in the vicinity. Consideration was also given to heritage assets, with the Underwater Archaeology assessment confirming there are no likely negative impacts on heritage assets in the vicinity of the proposed maintenance dredging. In conclusion, the dredging works are not intrusive and are short-term in nature and have been assessed to have no or negligible impacts in the area.