Maritime Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	Dr. Ciar O'Toole, Senior Marine Advisor	**From:**	Ross Fitzgerald Marine Analyst
Date:	12/10/2026	**Maritime Usage Licence Application No:**	MUL260047
MUL Applicant Name:		Wexford County Council	
MUL Applicant Registered Address:		County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford, Y35WY93	
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:		*3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.*	
Location of proposed maritime usage:		River Slaney, around Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford	
Licence application received:		30/06/2026	

1. Background

Wexford County Council (the applicant) has applied to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) for a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) to undertake *Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000*, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The activities are required to inform the design of the N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour road scheme.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed maritime usage area is located in the Slaney River, in the vicinity of Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford (Figure 1) and covers a total area of 2.49 km^2. The western extent of the proposed MUL area is approximately 4.8km west of the existing Ferrycarrig bridge, near the townlands of Carrigmannon and Newtown Lower. The eastern extent of the proposed MUL area is approximately 3km west of the Ferrycarrig bridge, near the townlands of Park and Crosstown. The knowledge gained from the proposed maritime usage will be used to minimise uncertainty and reduce risk in relation to environmental constraints in designing the proposed N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour road scheme, specifically the proposed new bridge crossing to the east of the existing Ferrycarrig Bridge. Additionally, the results of the proposed surveys will be used to provide a baseline against which to monitor effects of construction and operation of the proposed development. The proposed programme and duration of site investigations to be undertaken is summarised in Table 1. The applicant has applied for a MUL duration of five years to allow for appointment of survey contractors and suitable weather conditions.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The proposed maritime usage is located in the tidal lower section of the River Slaney and as such, the substrate is composed of the Annex I habitat Estuaries (1130). Below Ferrycarrig Bridge, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) mapping indicates that the muddy, estuarine habitat is dominated by the polychaetes and crustaceans community complex. The Annex I habitat Mudflats and sandbanks not covered by sea water at low tide (1140) occurs along the banks of the river below Ferrycarrig Bridge. The proposed maritime usage occurs within the Slaney River Valley SAC and the Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA.

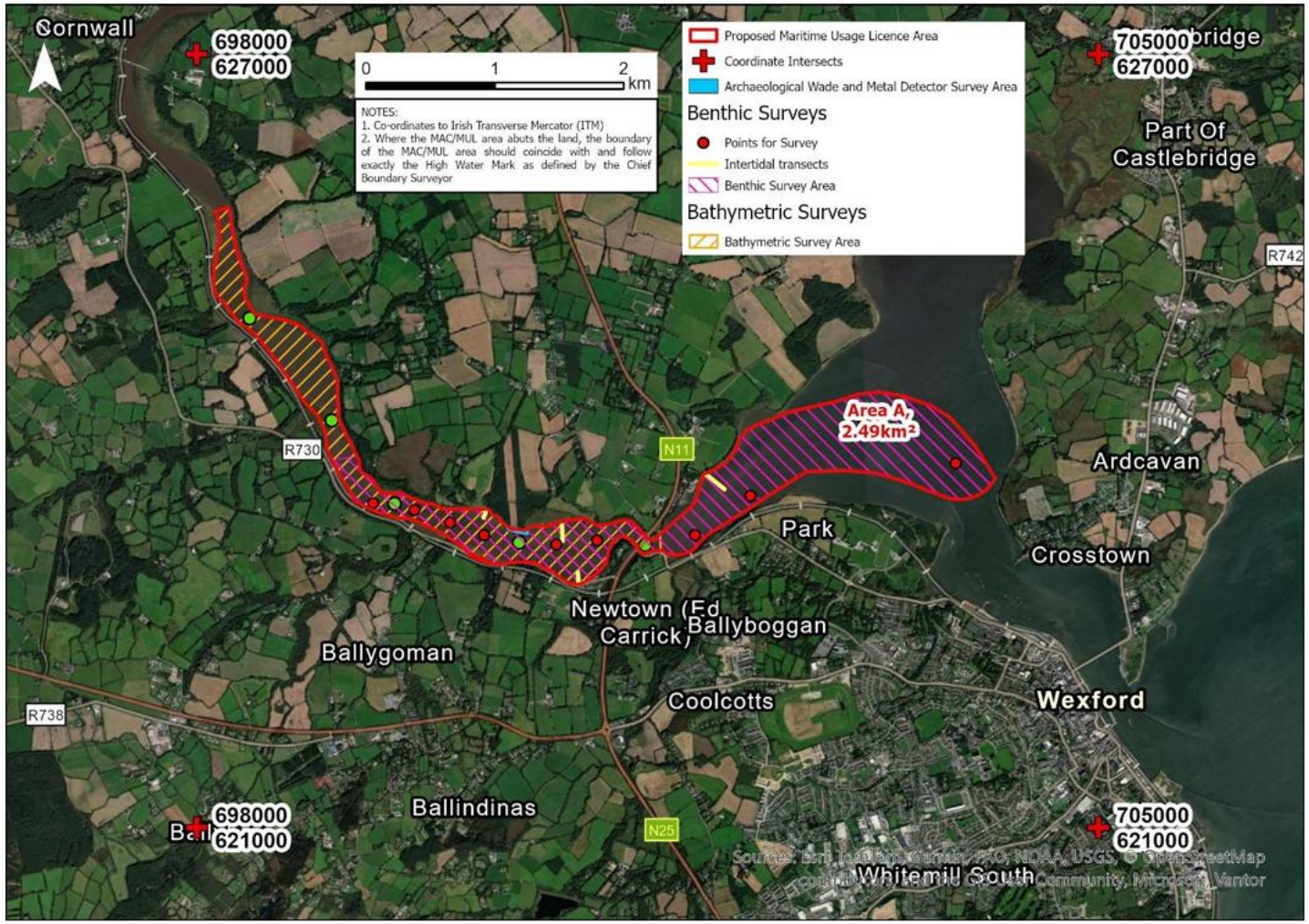


Figure 1 – Location of the proposed maritime usage (applicants map)

Table 1 – Summary of proposed maritime usage activities

Proposed activity	Details	Duration
Geophysical survey • *Multibeam echo sounder* • *Side-scan sonar* • *Sub-bottom profiler* • *Vessel deployed Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP)*	To take place in the orange hatched area in Fig. 1 Deployed from either a boat or Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) 5 no. to be deployed within the survey area (indicative locations in green in Fig. 1)	Four weeks
Archaeological wade and metal detector survey	On foot in the intertidal area within a c.190m stretch of the north bank of the river (area in blue in Fig. 1) along a series of 10m interval transects	One day
Subtidal benthic survey	10 no. locations (indicative locations in red in Fig. 1) ➢ 0.025m^2 Van Veen grab ➢ 3 no. faunal grab samples ➢ 1 no. sample for particle size analysis and organic carbon Grab deployed from rigid inflatable boat	One day

Intertidal benthic survey	Phase 1 – Walkover Survey ➢ At low spring tide ➢ Covering 1km stretch of north and south riverbanks in the vicinity of the proposed bridge crossing ➢ Occasional dig-overs to assess benthic fauna Phase 2 – Quantitative Transect Survey ➢ Along 4 no. transects perpendicular to shore (indicative locations in yellow in Fig 1) ➢ 3 no. quadrats at each transect (upper, mid and lower shore) ➢ Dig-overs at each quadrat ➢ 4 no. 15cm core samples Phase 2 survey may be on foot or boat based, depending on safety of access	One day

3. Identification of relevant European sites

The MUL application is subject to screening for appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European site(s), in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites. The applicant submitted a *Report for the Screening of Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement* in support of the application which was referred to during this assessment.

The proposed maritime usage is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s). The European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) listed on Table 2 have been considered for appropriate assessment, given the nature, scale and Zone of Influence of the maritime usage, the conservation objectives of the European sites and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

Table 2 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests and site-specific conservation objectives. Those Qualifying Interests marked in bold have been screened in for Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

European site & site code	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-pathway-receptor)	European Site Screened in	Site-specific conservation objectives
SACs					
Slaney River Valley SAC [000781]	Within proposed MUL area	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation [3260] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0] *Margaritifera margaritifera* (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] *Lampetra planeri* (Brook Lamprey) [1096]	No	Yes	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Slaney River Valley SAC [000781]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		***Petromyzon marinus* (Sea Lamprey) [1095]** ***Lampetra fluviatilis* (River Lamprey) [1099]** ***Alosa fallax fallax* (Twaite Shad) [1103]** ***Salmo salar* (Salmon) [1106]**	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance,		

		***Phoca vitulina* (Harbour Seal) [1365]** ***Lutra lutra* (Otter) [1355]**	displacement or injury Yes – possible above water noise and visual disturbance		
Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC [000710]	5.7	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190]	No	No	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC [000710]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
Long Bank SAC [002161]	12.7	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]	No	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Long Bank SAC [002161]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Blackwater Bank SAC [002953]	14.4	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]	No	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Blackwater Bank SAC [002953]. Version 3.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		***Phocoena phocoena* (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]**	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance or injury		
Carnsore Point SAC [002269]	15.5	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170]	No	Yes	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Carnsore Point SAC [002269]. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		***Phocoena phocoena* (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]**	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance or injury		
Saltee Islands SAC [000707]	19.4	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]	No	No	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Saltee Islands SAC [000707]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		***Halichoerus grypus* (Grey Seal) [1364]**	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance, displacement or injury		
Hook Head SAC [000764]	26.6	Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	No	Yes	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Hook Head SAC [000764]. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
		***Tursiops truncatus* (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]** ***Phocoena phocoena* (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]**	Yes – possible underwater noise disturbance or injury		
SPAs					
Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA [004076]	Within proposed MUL area	**Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004]** **Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) [A005]** **Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017]** **Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) [A028]** **Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) [A037]** **Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038]** **Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046]** **Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048]** **Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052]** **Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) [A053]** **Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054]** **Scaup (*Aythya marila*) [A062]**	Yes – possible above water noise and visual disturbance	Yes	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA [004076]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) [A067] **Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) [A069]** **Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) [A082]** **Coot (*Fulica atra*) [A125]** **Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130]** **Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]** **Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141]** **Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142]** **Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143]** **Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144]** **Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149]** **Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156]** **Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157]** **Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160]** **Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162]** **Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]** **Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183]** **Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395]** **Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*) [A855]** **Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons*) [A885]** **Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]**			
The Raven SPA [004019]	5.9	Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*) [A001] Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017] Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) [A065] Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144] Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No	No	NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: The Raven SPA [004019]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Seas off Wexford SPA [004237]	7.5	Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*) [A001] Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) [A009] Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) [A013] Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) [A016] Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017] Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) [A018] Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) [A065] Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) [A176] Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183] Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) [A184] Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) [A188] Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) [A192] Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193] Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) [A194] Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) [A199] Razorbill (*Alca torda*) [A200] Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) [A204] Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) [A863] Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons*) [A885]	No	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Seas off Wexford SPA [004237]. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 3 identification of potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of European sites, taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed maritime usage.

Potential Impacts	**Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)**
Disturbance from underwater noise	Potential for sound sources from survey activities to be at a level that would cause a significant negative impact (disturbance, displacement or injury) on marine mammals and/or migratory fish.
Visual and above water noise disturbance	Possible temporal impacts (disturbance and displacement) on birds and otter.
Physical habitat disturbance	The potential habitat disturbance as a result of the proposed maritime usage is not likely to cause significant effects on protected habitat types due to the small areas potentially disturbed and the short term (3 days total) of the proposed inter- and subtidal surveys.
Effects on water quality	The potential effect on water quality as a result of the proposed maritime usage is not likely to cause significant effects on protected habitats or species due to the small areas potentially disturbed, the short term (3 days total) of the proposed inter- and subtidal surveys and the limited level of vessel use.

<u>In-combination effects</u>

The potential impacts of the proposed maritime usage must be considered individually and also in combination with other plans or projects. All types of plans or projects that could, in-combination with this application, have a significant effect, have been considered. This in-combination assessment has been undertaken using professional and scientific judgement and is assessed primarily in terms of potential spatial and temporal impacts.

The spatial scope of the in-combination assessment is the proposed MUL area, plus a 3km buffer and is based on the maximum distance of underwater noise generated by Sub Bottom

Profilers and the Effective Deterrent Range[1] of Harbour porpoise, which is most sensitive to underwater noise. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. The applicant has applied for a five-year licence and thus the temporal scope is five years.

A search of relevant databases (including MARA MUL and Maritime Area Consent (MAC) applications, Wexford County Council planning applications, Environmental Protection Agency Dumping at Sea Permits, An Coimisiún Pleanála planning applications, Department of Agriculture, Food and The Marine *Aquamis* viewer, Foreshore consents), was undertaken on 09/10/2026. Table 4 below outlines those activities which are considered to have the potential to act in-combination with the proposed maritime usage.

Table 4: List of projects which were considered to have potential in-combination impacts on European sites

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
MUL260005	MUL application – Wexford Co. Co.	Overlap	Applied
MUL240026	MUL application – Uisce Éireann	Overlap	Granted
MAC260007	MAC application – Wexford Co. Co.	Overlap	Granted

The following plans, related to the development of the maritime environment were also considered:

- The Climate Action Plan 2025,
- River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022-2027,
- Wexford County Development Plan,
- National Marine Planning Framework.

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above and projects listed on Table 4 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report cannot be excluded at this stage. This is due to the potential for spatial and temporal overlap, which may result in additive underwater noise disturbance, displacement or injury.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?
No

[1] Effective Deterrence Range – the radius of a circular area assumed to be disturbed

5. Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:

Having considered the legal framework applicable to appropriate assessment, the information on file, and having regard to:

- The nature and scale of the proposed development
- The distance to the nearest European sites
- Possible disturbance, displacement or injury from underwater noise
- Possible above water noise and visual disturbance
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects,

it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Wexford County Council, County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford, Y35WY93 to carry out marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000 on the River Slaney at Ferrycarrig (MUL260047) will require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

Signature and Date of Recommending Officer	Ross Fitzgerald Marine Analyst	Date: 12/10/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	Dr Ciar O'Toole Senior Marine Advisor	Date:13/10/2026