Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

MARINE LICENCE VETTING COMMITTEE:
RE: MUL260051 – MUL Application on behalf of Oriel Windfarm - Site Investigations for proposed Oriel offshore wind farm, Dundalk, County Louth.

Observation Request:
Request for observations from Ms. Paula O'Toole (MARA) dated 22/07/2026.

Overview:

Oriel proposes to undertake detailed geotechnical and geophysical investigations, ecological surveys and metocean surveys. This Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) application seeks approval to carry out additional site investigation works within the proposed offshore wind farm area and cable corridor. Previous surveys were conducted under Foreshore Licences granted in 2019 (FS006840) and 2023 (FS007383) findings informed the project's preliminary design. The geotechnical investigations will further assess seabed sediment stability to support the detailed design of wind turbine foundations, the offshore substation, and the routing of offshore cables. The MUL application proposes to undertake more detailed investigations on seabed soil conditions and stability.

This MUL application is for permission to undertake these survey works on the proposed development site. Oriel proposes to apply for a licence for a duration of 5 years.

IFI Comment:

General
Inland Fisheries Ireland's (IFI) brief includes conservation of relevant fish species. Of relevance in the present case are resident and migratory species traversing the coastline and entering into the Dundalk Bay area - including Atlantic salmon, sea trout, sea and river lamprey and European eel. Also, the Dundalk Bay area is within the spawning and nursery grounds of Atlantic Cod, Haddock, and within the nursery grounds of Herring, Mackerel and Horse Mackerel. The area is also within the distribution range of several marine mammal species including Bottlenose, Atlantic White-sided and Risso's Dolphins.

IFI would point out that the mitigation measures and guidance of NPWS in regard to marine mammals are not transferrable to fish species. The fish remain invisible to any shore- or boat-based observer. Mitigation measures should aim to reduce the sound generated, in intensity and duration. The use of soft-start and ramp-up procedures for any sound-generating surveys undertaken – both on a day-to-day basis and on re-start after any stoppages within any day should be undertaken. This measure should be a condition of the licence. The comments of IFI in this

regard relate to fish species of conservation significance and of leisure angling significance all of which constitute part of IFI's brief.

All mitigation measures proposed in the supporting documentation in relation to noise and potential effects on water quality should be a condition of the licence.

There is very little information about the habitat use of diadromous fish in coastal waters or on identifying the migration routes of these species as they migrate from freshwater to the marine environment. Habitat Directive listed species include Salmon, Twaite shad, sea lamprey and river lamprey along with the European Eel. Surveys should include these species. Some relevant information from the Interreg funded COMPASS project maybe useful in relation to salmonids in the vicinity (see links below). The effect of ORE cabling on elasmobranchs has been identified in the scientific literature. The presence of elasmobranch species in the vicinity should be identified.

In a marine context, the timing of the proposed surveying should be examined in regard to the spawning time and spawning area of recreational fish species. Species of note would be sharks, such as tope and smoothhound.

The ecological survey includes the use of sondes, potting and trawl surveys for fish and shell fish. It is not clear what kind of information will be gathered with the sonde method. It is important that any method tries to capture the use of this area by migratory fish species including but not limited to salmon, lamprey and eels.

Ciara O'Leary and Nicola O'Gorman (IFI, R&D)
17.08.2026

Additional resources:

https://compass-oceanscience.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COMPASS_Tagged-fish-tracks-mapped-report.pdf

https://compass-oceanscience.eu/reports-and-posters/

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jfb.70244

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jfb.15760

Barry, James, et al. "Atlantic salmon smolts in the Irish Sea: First evidence of a northerly migration trajectory." *Fisheries Management and Ecology* 27.5 (2020): 517-522.

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jfb.15162