

19/062 - WO064 Marine Modelling Studies - Lot 1 Greater Dublin & Northeast Region

Compliance with Objectives of the National Marine Planning
Framework (NMPF)

Uisce Éireann

October 2026

Quality Information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
P1	26 March 2026	Draft for Client review	SR	Sundar Rangasamy	Project Manager
P4	06 October 2026	Updated following MARA Request for Further Information	SR	Sundar Rangasamy	Project Manager

Distribution List

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1. Compliance with Objectives of the National Marine Planning Framework

1.1 Introduction

This Attachment has been prepared in support of the Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) Application for marine surveys associated with the Marine Modelling Study (MMS) being undertaken by Uisce Éireann along the Irish coast, from Carlingford Lough to Kilcoole. The marine surveys comprise the deployment and recovery of Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCPs), bathymetric surveys, and passive water quality sampling (hereafter referred to as the Marine Surveys), within Proposed Licence Areas A–D. Further details of the Marine Surveys and Proposed Licence Areas A–D can be found in Part 3 of the MUL Application.

The current attachment forms a suite of 11 attachments (the current attachment is highlighted in **bold**) including:

- Attachment 3.1: Proposed Maritime Usage
- Attachment 3.4: MUL Map and GIS Shapefiles
- Attachment 3.5: Other Maps and Drawings
- **Attachment 4.1: Compliance with Objectives of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF);**
- Attachment 4.3.1: Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA);
- Attachment 4.4: Risk Assessment for Annex IV Species;
- Attachment 4.5: Compliance with Objectives of the Water Framework Directive;
- Attachment 4.6: Compliance with Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- Attachment 4.7: Information for EIA Screening; and,
- Attachment 4.11: Compliance with National or European Strategic or Policy Objectives.

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear and proportionate assessment of compliance with the *National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) 2021* and its implementing Irish legislation. It demonstrates that the proposed Marine Surveys will be compliant with the Irish Government's vision, objectives and marine policies.

1.2 Quality Assurance and Statement of Authority

This report, and the assessment described within it, has been completed in accordance with the AECOM Integrated Management System (IMS). AECOM's IMS places emphasis on professionalism, technical excellence, quality, as well as covering health, safety, environment and sustainability management. All AECOM staff members are committed to maintaining this accreditation to those parts of BS EN ISO 9001:2015 and 14001:2015, as well as BS OHSAS 18001:2007 that are relevant to the provision of consultancy services.

1.3 NMPF Objective

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) 2021 for Ireland is the country's first comprehensive spatial planning framework which brings together all marine-based human activities and outlines the Irish Government's vision, objectives and marine policies for each marine activity, including policies for protecting biodiversity and marine protected sites (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2021). The NMPF sets out Overarching Marine Planning Policies that will apply to all marine activities or development. These include policies in relation to, inter alia, co-existence with biodiversity, coastal and island communities, and infrastructure. The relevant environmental policies and objectives of the NMPF 2021 are under the Environmental – Ocean Health pillar, which aim to protect marine ecosystems while enabling sustainable use of the maritime area. The relevant policies include:

- Biodiversity (Policies 1 - 4): Protect, conserve and restore marine biodiversity, avoiding significant adverse effects on habitats and species;
- Protected Marine Sites (Policies 1 - 4): Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (SACs/SPAs) and support conservation objectives;

- Non-Indigenous Species (Policy 1): Prevent introduction and spread of invasive non-native species;
- Water Quality (Policies 1 - 2): Maintain and improve marine water quality and prevent deterioration;
- Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity (Policies 1 - 3): Avoid significant disturbance to seabed habitats and maintain natural processes;
- Marine Litter (Policy 1): Minimise marine litter and prevent pollution;
- Underwater Noise (Policy 1): Avoid significant adverse impacts from anthropogenic underwater noise;
- Air Quality (Policies 1 - 2): Minimise emissions to air from marine activities; and
- Climate Change (Policies 1 - 2): Support climate mitigation and adaptation, including minimising greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ports, Harbours and Shipping (Policies 1 - 4): Ensure continued shipping activity and freedom of navigation while avoiding significant impact to current and future opportunities for port expansion and harbour activities.
- Safety at Sea (Policy 3): Ensure any temporary or permanent fixed infrastructure must ensure navigational marking in accordance with appropriate international standards and ensure inclusion in relevant charts where applicable.

These objectives are assessed in the context of the scale, duration and nature of the Marine Surveys.

1.4 Compliance Check

The Marine Surveys have limited interaction with the water environment and are restricted to short-term, localised activities, including the temporary deployment and recovery of seabed-mounted instruments and vessel-based survey operations. These activities may result in minor, localised disturbance to seabed sediments and very small, short-lived increases in suspended sediment concentrations in the immediate vicinity of Marine Surveys.

The only direct interaction with the seabed will arise from the placement and recovery of ADCPs units, which may result in minor and temporary disturbance to sediments and discrete locations. Survey vessels will operate over short timeframes within a receiving environment that already accommodates routine maritime activity. No discharges to the marine environment are proposed. Given the scale and nature of the marine surveys, any disturbance to the seabed or water column will be temporary and rapidly reversible, with no potential to result in measurable changes to water quality or benthic conditions at the scale of the relevant water bodies. The receiving environment is already subject to routine maritime activity, and the marine surveys are consistent with this baseline.

There is a very low risk of accidental pollution associated with vessel operations; however, no discharges are proposed, and all vessels will operate in accordance with the International Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Convention and standard industry controls. As such, the likelihood of any pollution event is minimal, and any effects would be localised and short-term.

Overall, the scale, duration and nature of the marine surveys are such that no deterioration in Ireland's seas is anticipated. The Marine Surveys are therefore consistent with the objectives of the NMPF. A summary of compliance with the relevant NMPF policy objectives is provided in Table 1.

1.5 Conclusion

The Marine Surveys are aligned with the Environmental – Ocean Health objectives of the NMPF, with all potential impact pathways determined to be temporary, localised and therefore not significant. The development of water quality models to support water quality assessments through Marine Surveys supports and enhances the policy objectives of the NMPF, by providing the ability to assess water quality against environmental legislation.

The Marine Surveys are therefore considered to be fully compliant with the overall objectives and policies of the NMPF.

1.6 References

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. (2021). National Marine Planning Framework. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/60e57-national-marine-planning-framework/>. [Accessed: 25 March 2026].

Table 1. NMPF Compliance Assessment

NMPF Policy	Overall Policy Intent	Potential Interaction	Potential Effects	Compliance Check
Biodiversity (Policies 1-4)	Avoid significant adverse impacts on marine biodiversity, support protection and restoration, and apply an ecosystem-based approach	Localised seabed disturbance and temporary vessel presence	Effects are highly localised, temporary and reversible, with no impact on species populations, habitats or ecological functioning. No disruption to ecosystem processes is predicted	Compliant
Protected Marine Sites (Policies 1-4)	Ensure no adverse effect on integrity of European sites and other designated areas	Surveys within/near designated sites	No significant effects on any European sites or Annex IV species were determined as a result of the marine surveys in accordance with legislative requirements. Further details on these assessments can be found in Attachment 4.3: SISAA and Attachment 4.4: Annex IV Risk Assessment	Compliant
Non-indigenous Species (Policy 1)	Prevent introduction and spread of invasive non-native species	Vessel movement between survey locations	Standard vessel biosecurity and operational practices minimise risk. No mechanism for introduction or spread identified given short duration and limited port interaction	Compliant
Water Quality (Policies 1-2)	Maintain and improve water quality and avoid deterioration	Minor sediment disturbance and low pollution risk	No discharges proposed. Any sediment disturbance is temporary and localised. No measurable effect on water quality at water body scale	Compliant
Sea-floor Integrity (Policies 1-3)	Protect seabed habitats and avoid significant disturbance to seabed structure and function	Placement and recovery of ADCPs	Disturbance is discrete, temporary and limited to small footprints. No alteration of seabed structure or function at a meaningful scale	Compliant
Marine Litter (Policy 1)	Prevent marine litter and ensure appropriate waste management	Vessel operations and equipment handling	No disposal of waste at sea. All materials managed and returned to shore in accordance with MARPOL requirements	Compliant
Underwater Noise (Policy 1)	Avoid or minimise impacts of anthropogenic underwater sound on marine fauna	Vessel noise and survey equipment	Noise levels are low, short-term and consistent with baseline vessel activity. No potential for significant behavioural or ecological effects. No significant impacts from underwater noise on Annex IV species have been identified (see Attachment 4.4 for further details).	Compliant
Air Quality (Policies 1-2)	Minimise emissions to air from marine activities	Vessel emissions	Emissions are temporary and negligible relative to existing marine traffic levels. No measurable air quality impact	Compliant
Climate Change (Policies 1-2)	Support climate mitigation and resilience and avoid adverse climate effects	Temporary vessel use and survey activity	Negligible emissions due to short duration. Surveys support data collection for environmental management and climate-informed decision-making	Compliant

NMPF Policy	Overall Policy Intent	Potential Interaction	Potential Effects	Compliance Check
Ports, Harbours and Shipping (Policies 1 - 4)	Ensure continued shipping activity and freedom of navigation while avoiding significant impact to current and future opportunities for port expansion and harbour activities.	Temporary vessel-based survey operations and seabed-mounted ADCP deployments within/near areas used by commercial and recreational vessels; no works within port limits or established shipping lanes.	The surveys have been designed to avoid the placement of instruments in areas of navigation such as navigation channels, unless a deep part of the channel is considered acceptable by the local harbour authority. No interference with shipping lanes, port approaches, or harbour activities. Survey vessels will operate in accordance with International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), maintain Automatic Identification System (AIS), and coordinate with relevant Harbour Masters where surveys are in the vicinity of ports. When installed on the seabed, the ADCP units are in a low-profile trawl resistant casing. If a seabed-mounted instrument would present a navigational hazard, then it would not be installed, and a vessel mounted survey would be considered. This would undergo similar considerations for navigational safety. Effects on shipping and harbour activity are therefore negligible.	Compliant
Safety at Sea (Policy 3)	Ensure any temporary or permanent fixed infrastructure must ensure navigational marking in accordance with appropriate international standards and ensure inclusion in relevant charts where applicable.	Temporary deployment of seabed-mounted ADCPs and short-term vessel-based survey activities.	ADCP locations will be recorded with precise coordinates and, where required, notified to the Commissioners of Irish Lights and included in relevant Notices to Mariners. Seabed-mounted ADCP instruments are in a trawl resistant casing and installed at discrete locations to avoid any obstruction to navigation or create safety issues for other maritime users. No permanent structures are proposed. Survey vessels will maintain AIS and display appropriate day shapes and lighting. If a seabed-mounted instrument would present a navigational hazard, then it would not be installed, and a vessel mounted survey would be considered. This would undergo similar considerations for navigational safety. All measures ensure navigational safety and compliance with charting requirements.	Compliant