

Maritime Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	John Evans, Director	From:	Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor
Date:	07/09/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL260055
MUL Applicant Name:	National Roads Authority (operating as Transport Infrastructure Ireland)		
MUL Applicant Registered Address:	Parkgate Business Centre, Parkgate Street, Dublin 8, D08 DK10.		
Type of maritime usage activity in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021:	<i>3. Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000.</i>		
Location of proposed maritime usage:	The River Liffey between the Rosie Hackett Bridge and Butt Bridge.		
Licence application received:	31/07/2026		

1. Background

The National Roads Authority, operating as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (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, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The proposed maritime usage (or site investigations) is required to collect geotechnical data from the subsurface of the bed of the River Liffey, to inform the detailed design of the section of the Dublin MetroLink Project alignment located under the River Liffey. The proposed MUL area is in the River Liffey between the Rosie Hackett Bridge and Butt Bridge.

An Coimisiún Pleanála granted a Railway Order (case ref. ABP-314714-22) to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) on 12/01/2026 for the Dublin MetroLink Project, pursuant to Section 43 (2)(a) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 as amended. The Railway Order authorises TII to carry out railway works and all necessary works to enable the construction, maintenance, improvement and operation of the metro rail line from Estuary through Swords, Dublin Airport, Ballymun, Glasnevin and City Centre to Charlemont, Co. Dublin.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed maritime usage comprises a geotechnical site investigation of the riverbed subsurface. This will entail the drilling of three (3 No.) boreholes (diameter 200 mm) and associated sampling and testing. The boreholes will be drilled to depths of approximately 25–30 m below the riverbed.

The proposed site investigations will be carried out from a floating jack-up barge positioned within the proposed MUL area. The jack-up barge (with 4 No. spud legs, each 762 mm diameter) will be positioned within the river channel using a crane located on Burgh Quay. Drilling will be undertaken using a dual-purpose roto-sonic drilling rig (Eijkelpkamp Fraste CRS XL140/170 Duo) mounted on the jack-up barge. The underwater Sound Pressure Level (SPL) produced is expected to be in the range of 160–180 dB re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m, with peak levels rarely exceeding 185 dB re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m. The associated sound exposure levels (SELs) are typically lower, in the region of 145–165 dB re 1 μ Pa².s @ 1 m.

The full programme of works (mobilisation, drilling, core recovery and demobilisation) is predicted to take 10–21 days, subject to favourable weather and site conditions. It is predicted that drilling works will take 7 days to complete. The proposed MUL duration is 2 years to allow for project constraints including weather or seasonal constraints and traffic management requirements.

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The proposed MUL area lies within the tidal reaches of the River Liffey. It covers an area of 0.76 ha, with an average water depth of 4–5 m. The riverbed is comprised of mixed estuarine sediments (mud and sand). There are high retaining quay walls either side of the river channel, with channelled wrack seaweed *Pelvetia canaliculata*. The application area is within the Liffey Estuary Upper transitional Water Framework Directive waterbody (IE_EA_090_0400).

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 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 1 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 1 - Identification of relevant European sites, their qualifying interests (otherwise known as Special Conservation Interests for birds) and site-specific conservation objectives.

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
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA [004024]	2.1	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No significant S-P-R (see Table 2)	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

North Bull Island SPA [004006]	5	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>) [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No significant S-P-R (see Table 2)	No	NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
North-West Irish Sea SPA [004236]	7	Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) [A003] Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) [A009] Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>) [A013] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>) [A187] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188]	No significant S-P-R (see Table 2)	No	NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

		Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199] Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) [A200] Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) [A204] Little Gull (<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>) [A862] Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>) [A885]			
South Dublin Bay SAC [000210]	3	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	No significant S-P-R (see Table 2)	No	NPWS (2026) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
North Dublin Bay SAC [000206]	5	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	No significant S-P-R (see Table 2)	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]			
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC [003000]	11	Reefs [1170] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No significant S-P-R (see Table 2)	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

4. Assessment of likely significant effects

Table 2 - 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	The site investigations are proposed within a busy urban area with high levels of continuous background noise from traffic and human presence. Given the location and short-term nature of the proposed activities as well as the predicted noise levels that will be produced, there will be no significant underwater noise impact on the QIs of any European site.
Visual and above water noise disturbance	The site investigations are proposed within a busy urban area with high levels of continuous background noise from traffic and human presence. Given the location and short-term nature of the proposed site investigations as well as the predicted noise levels that will be produced, there will be no significant above water noise or visual disturbance impact on the QIs of any European site.
Habitat disturbance	Given the nature, scale and location of the proposed site investigations, there will be no habitat disturbance to any European site.

In-combination effects

The potential impacts of the proposed site investigations 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 included the Dublin Bay and the Inner Liffey Channel spanning a 2 km distance from the proposed MUL area, based on a precautionary distance for noise disturbance. The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is 2 years, based on the period over which the site investigations are proposed.

A search of relevant databases (including EPA, Planning and MARA) was undertaken on the 07/09/2026. Table 3 below outlines those activities with the potential to act in-combination with the proposed site investigations.

Table 3 - List of projects with potential for in-combination impacts on European sites from the proposed site investigations.

Application Ref.	Project description	Distance from proposed MUL area (km)	Project Status
ABP-314714-22	Transport Infrastructure Ireland Railway Order to carry out railway works and all necessary works to enable the construction, maintenance, improvement and operation of the metro rail line from Estuary through Swords, Dublin Airport, Ballymun, Glasnevin and City Centre to Charlemont, Co. Dublin.	overlap	Granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála
MUL260049	Uisce Éireann. MUL application for marine site investigations	overlap	Applied to MARA
ABP-317679-23	National Transport Authority. Works associated with the Ringsend to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme under the Roads Act.	0.4	Approval granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála
ABP-313738-22	Dublin City Council – development application for Grand Canal Storm Water Outfall Extension.	1.2	Permission granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála.
LIC230007	Dublin City Council - MUL for marine site investigations	1.6	MUL granted by MARA
LIC230007MA	Dublin City Council – Material Amendment application to MUL for marine site investigations	1.7	Applied to MARA
ABP-320250	Dublin Port Company. Strategic Infrastructure Development Project - 3FM Project	1.8	Permission granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

The following plans were also considered:

- Dublin Port Masterplan 2040;
- Dublin City Development plan 2022–2028;

- National Development Plan 2021–2030;
- The Climate Action Plan 2025, and
- River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022–2027.

Likely significant in-combination effects between this application and the plans listed above and projects listed on Table 3 on the conservation objectives of the European sites considered in this report can be excluded at this stage. This is due to the scale of the proposed site investigations and predicted noise output (see Section 2) compared with background noise levels at this location. Furthermore, the proposed MUL area is > 2 km away from the closest European site and not in a location providing valuable foraging habitat for QI species.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No

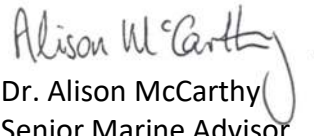
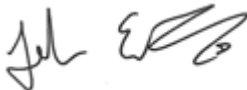
5. Screening Determination Statement

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 site investigations;
- the location of the proposed MUL area;
- the distance to the nearest European sites;
- background noise levels at the proposed MUL area and predicted noise levels from the proposed site investigations, and
- the absence of in-combination effects with other plans and projects;

it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by the National Roads Authority, operating as Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Parkgate Business Centre, Parkgate Street, Dublin 8, D08 DK10, to carry out Schedule 7(3) Marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation or in support of an application under Part XXI of the Act of 2000, in the River Liffey (MUL260055) will not require Stage 2 appropriate assessment. It can 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	 Dr. Alison McCarthy Senior Marine Advisor	07/09/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 Director of Maritime Usage Licensing	11/09/2026