

Maritime Usage Licence and Planning Advisory Directorate

Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination Report

To:	John Evans, Director	From:	Dr. Micheál Mac Monagail Marine Analyst
Date:	28/09/2026	Maritime Usage Licence Application No:	MUL260056
MUL Applicant Name:	Marina Quarter Ltd		
MUL Applicant Registered Address:	Block C, Maynooth Business Campus, Straffan Road, Maynooth, Kildare, W23F854		
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:	Intertidal and subtidal areas within Castletown Estuary and Inner Dundalk Bay.		
Licence application received:	07/09/2026		

1. Background

Marina Quarter Ltd. 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 SI activities will characterise the current intertidal and subtidal ecological conditions within the receiving environment before wastewater discharges from the Haggardstown and Marshes Upper Large-Scale Residential Development begin.

The proposed SI activities are expected to take 1-2 weeks to complete. However, the Applicant has applied for a four-month MUL to accommodate potential delays arising from weather conditions, tidal constraints and other unforeseen circumstances. MARA will assess the application over a 12-month period to ensure all seasonal variations are considered. A one-year licence is also the recommended length of time for this application.

2. Description of maritime usage and local site characteristics

2.1 Brief description of the maritime usage

The proposed MUL area overlaps the Castletown, Ballymascanlan and Inner Dundalk Bay estuaries, County Louth. The MUL area is directly adjacent to the high-water mark.

The proposed SI activities comprise temporary, small-scale ecological, benthic and intertidal surveys, undertaken on foot or by vessel.

The proposed survey programme of works will consist of the following;

Subtidal surveys will involve non-intrusive seabed imaging at five sampling stations using a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) or drop-down video (DDV) system which will be undertaken in order to determine substrate suitability. Subsequent targeted grab sampling at the five sampling stations will then be undertaken using a Van Veen grab sampler deployed from a vessel, where appropriate.

Intertidal surveys will be broken down into Phase I and Phase II surveys. Phase I will consist of four intertidal walkover surveys involving habitat and biotope characterisation and mapping. Phase II will involve quantitative sampling along four transects extending across the upper, middle and lower shore. Where conditions do not allow for access on foot, sampling may be undertaken from a RIB (See Table 1 below for further details).

Table 1: Survey phase, activity, description of methodologies and indicative timeframes of the proposed marine usage licence.

Survey Phase	Activity	Methodology	Indicative timeframe
Subtidal sediment sampling	Subtidal benthic faunal and sediment characterisation.	Subtidal sampling will be undertaken at five stations using a 0.025 m ² Van Veen grab sampler. Samples will be collected at each subtidal station for benthic faunal analysis. One additional sediment sample will be collected for PSA and organic carbon analysis, for a total of 15 subtidal samples. A DDV or ROV system will also be used to characterise seabed habitats and substrate conditions prior to grab sampling.	One - two weeks.
Phase I	Intertidal walkover survey.	Four intertidal walkover surveys will be undertaken - each survey will be 500 m. A handheld GPS, camera and standard field-recording equipment will be used for biotope and habitat mapping and recording.	
Phase II	Quantitative intertidal sampling across upper, middle and lower shore stratus.	Four transects will be surveyed, with sampling undertaken at the upper, middle and lower shore levels, resulting in 12 sampling stations in total. Two replicate samples for benthic faunal analysis will be taken. One sediment sample for PSA and carbon analysis will also be taken, for a total of 36 samples. Sampling will be undertaken using a 0.025 m ² Van Veen grab sampler, deployed from a RIB, where conditions allow.	
Total sampling effort	Subtidal survey and Phase II intertidal survey.	51 Van Veen grab samples will be taken in total across intertidal and subtidal areas; 34 samples for benthic faunal analyses and 17 samples for PSA and organic carbon analysis.	

2.2 Brief description of the site characteristics

The proposed MUL area covers 90.02 ha and lies adjacent to the townlands of Bellurgan to the northeast, Marsh North to the northwest, and Point to the south. Nearshore waters depths range from approximately 0-5 m.

The surrounding coastal environment is characterised by estuarine wetland habitats, including extensive tidal flats and saltmarsh communities, notably *Salicornia* and other

annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] and Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*) [1330]. Sediments within the proposed MUL area are dominated by Muddy Fine Sand Community and Fine Sand Community Complex habitats, reflecting the sheltered estuarine conditions of the Inner Dundalk Bay, Castletown, and Ballymascanlan estuaries.

The proposed MUL area is located within the Northeastern Irish Sea Islands and Beaches Seascape Character Type and forms part of the Broad Estuarine Bays and Complex Low Plateau and Cliff Coastline Seascape Character Area.

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 sites, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the sites. The applicant submitted a Supporting Information for Screening of Appropriate Assessment (SISAA) report 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.

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
Dundalk Bay SAC [000455]	0	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Dundalk Bay SAC 000455. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC [002299]	30	Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC 002299. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC [003000]	47	Reefs [1170] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No significant S-P-R	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.
Lambay Island SAC [000204]	60	Reefs [1170] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> (Grey Seal) [1364] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SAC 000204. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Codling Fault Zone SAC [003015]	84	Submarine structures made by leaking gases [1180] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Codling Fault Zone SAC 003015. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Dundalk Bay SPA [004026]	0	Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Dundalk Bay SPA 004026. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

		Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] 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] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184]			
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		Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
Carlingford Lough SPA [004078]	11	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	No significant S-P-R	No	NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Carlingford Lough SPA 004078. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
North-west Irish Sea SPA [004236]	17	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]	No significant S-P-R	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.

		Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>) [A187] Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] 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]			
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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.)
Sediment disturbance impacting saltmarsh habitats.	Not significant – level of disturbance limited to small area.
Visual disturbance from vessels and intertidal SI activities.	Not significant – vessel use will be restricted to one vessel operating at slow speeds; intertidal sampling will not be at a duration or scale to cause significant disturbance to birds or marine mammals.
Above water noise disturbance from vessels and intertidal SI activities.	Not significant – the short duration of SI activities and limited vessel usage limit potential above water noise disturbance.
Habitat modification as a result of grab sampling.	Not significant – sampling effort will be small-scale, localised and reversible resulting in no permanent or significant habitat loss.
Water quality deterioration.	Not significant – no potential for significant disturbance or impact to water quality.
Disturbance to roosting birds.	Not significant – sampling will be limited to a discrete area and will be undertaken in a short duration (1-2 weeks).

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 is the red line boundary (MUL area). The temporal scope of the in-combination assessment is based on the period over which the activities are proposed. e.g. the temporal scope is 1 year.

A search of relevant databases, including MARA, *An Coimisiún Pleanála*, the EPA and Louth County Council, was undertaken on the 23/09/26. 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
MUL260007	To deliver subtidal and intertidal marine ecology surveys for the Dundalk WWTP Capacity Upgrade Project, County Louth.	Overlap	Active
MUL260049	To conduct a survey to support a strategic modelling study of water currents along the Irish coast from Carlingford Lough to Kilcoole.	Overlap	Active
FS004510	Uisce Eireann Outfall pipe infrastructure, located at five locations from Soldier's Point to the Castletown River, County Louth.	Overlap	Active
FS006425	Foreshore licence application for maintenance dredging, Soldiers Point, Dundalk Harbour, County Louth.	Overlap	Consultation

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,
- Dundalk Local Area Plan 2024-2030, and
- Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

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 can be excluded at this stage.

MUL260007 involves works of a similar nature to the current application. However, MUL260007 will be at a level that would not be considered significant and will not result in a significant disturbance to the marine environment, in combination with the current Application.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

No.

5. Screening Determination Statement

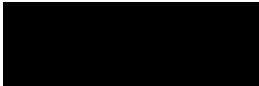
The assessment of significant effects:

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

- The nature and scale of the proposed development,
- The distance to the nearest European sites,
- The potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects,
- Sediment disturbance impacting saltmarsh habitats,
- Visual disturbance from vessels and intertidal SI activities,
- Above-water noise disturbance from vessels and intertidal SI activities,
- Habitat modification as a result of grab sampling,
- Water quality deterioration,
- Disturbance to roosting birds.

It was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Marina Quarter Ltd., Block C, Maynooth Business Campus, Straffan Road, Maynooth, Kildare, W23F854, 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, within the Intertidal and subtidal areas of Castletown Estuary and Inner Dundalk Bay, County Louth (MUL260056), **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. Micheál Mac Monagail, Marine Analyst	Date: 28/09/2026
Signature and Date of Decision Maker	 John Evans, Director of Maritime Usage Licensing	Date: 29/09/2026