



**Screening for Appropriate Assessment
for a
Maritime Usage Licence Application**

MUL240035

From Gas Networks Ireland

FOR

**Marine Environmental Surveys for the purpose of site
investigations**

AT Cork Harbour



Assessment, Research and Data Unit

Step 1 - Description of Project/Proposal and local site characteristics

Brief description of the project

The purpose of the marine surveys is to assist the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) to identify locations suitable for development as a Strategic Gas Emergency Reserve.

The studies will provide baseline data for any future environmental assessment should the development be taken forward to planning/consent stage.

The proposed works will consist of the following:-

- Deployment and retrieval of one static acoustic monitoring device (SAM)
- Deployment and retrieval of two Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCP)

Each moored device is likely to consist of:-

- two mooring weights (circa 20 kg each)
- an acoustic release system
- one or two hydrophones (SAM devices) / one ADCP
- multiple subsurface buoys.

The ADCP devices will typically be required for 1 to 12 months in any one location with a total time of 1 – 12 months. The SAM devices will be required for 3 months to 2 years in any one location with a total time of 12 to 24 months. The moored devices will be retrieved every 3 to 4 months for maintenance and redeployment for at least one or 2 years. The redeployment may be in the same location or moved to new locations within the study area depending on data needs. Deployment will take 1 day to retrieve and one day to deploy.

The marine survey area is within Cork Harbour including a jetty off Corkbeg Island.

The vessel(s) to be used are not known at this stage but it is estimated that with two years of data collection and maintenance every three months will equate to 8 days of vessel activity per study area per year. The marine study area extends from Corkbeg island, including the deep water channel down to the harbour entrance with a buffer area of 200 m for a total area of 625.90 ha (Figure 1).

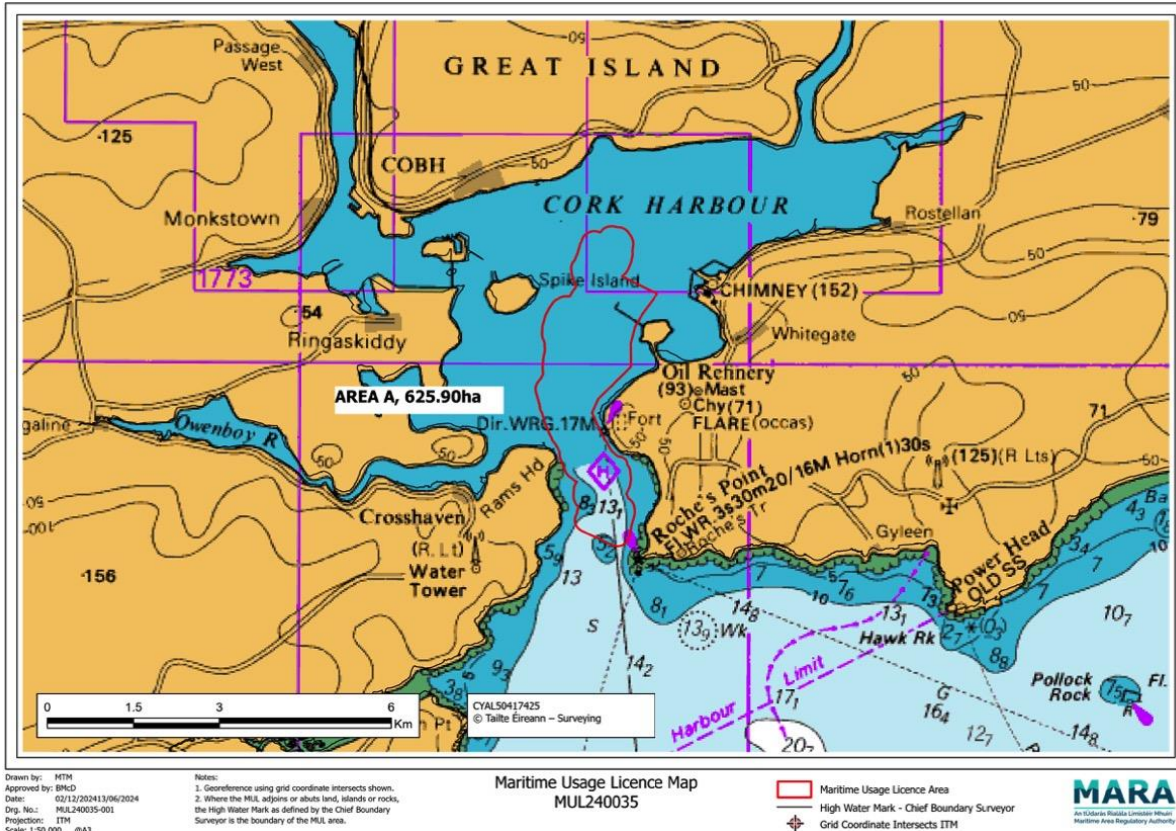


Figure 1 Study Area

Brief description of the site characteristics

Cork Harbour is a large, sheltered bay system, with several river estuaries - namely those of the Rivers Lee, Douglas, Owenboy and Owennacurra. The sediment in the area is largely coarse sediments as well as intertidal flats that are often muddy in character and support a range of macro-invertebrates. The harbour has sheltered conditions and water depths that range from the intertidal to around 30 m below chart datum.

Step 2 - Identification of relevant Natura 2000 sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor Model and compilation of information on qualifying interests and conservation objectives.

Plans or projects that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site do not require AA. The proposed project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 site. Therefore this project is subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment to determine if it alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to cause significant effects to a European site. A European site is only at risk of likely significant effects where the Source-Pathway-Receptor link exists between the proposed development and the European site (OPR 2021). This includes direct, indirect and in-combination effects.

The Table below outlines the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Areas (SPA) considered. This project is being undertaken in the marine environment and therefore only marine and coastal Natura 2000 sites were considered in this screening process. In this case international Natura sites were screened out as there is no source-pathway-receptor link to Qualifying Interest species (cetaceans).

European Site Code	Distance (approx.) from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-Pathway Receptors)	Qualifying Interests considered further in Screening Y/N	European Site Screened In for stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
Great Island Channel SAC	3 km	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide Atlantic [1140] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]	No	No	No
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC [Site code IE002170]	29 km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Salicornia 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	No	No

European Site Code	Distance (approx.) from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-Pathway Receptors)	Qualifying Interests considered further in Screening Y/N	European Site Screened In for stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
		Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-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] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421] Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] Alosa fallax fallax (Twait Shad) [1103] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]			
Ballymacoda SAC [Site code 000077]	25 km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]	No	No	No

European Site Code	Distance (approx.) from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-Pathway Receptors)	Qualifying Interests considered further in Screening Y/N	European Site Screened In for stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
Cork Harbour SPA (004030)	Within SPA boundary	Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]	No	No	No

European Site Code	Distance (approx.) from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-Pathway Receptors)	Qualifying Interests considered further in Screening Y/N	European Site Screened In for stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
		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] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
Old Head of Kinsale SPA [IE 004021]	27 km	Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) [A188] Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) [A199]	No	No	No
Seven Heads SPA [IE 004191]	35 km	Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346]	No	No	No
Ballycotton Bay SPA [IE004022]	16 km	Wigeon [A050] Teal [A052] Ringed plover [A137] Golden plover [A140] Lapwing [A142]	No	No	No

European Site Code	Distance (approx.) from the Proposed Development (km)	List of Qualifying Interests	Connections (Source-Pathway Receptors)	Qualifying Interests considered further in Screening Y/N	European Site Screened In for stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
		Sanderling [A144] Dunlin [A149] Black-tailed godwit [A156] Bar-tailed godwit [A157] Curlew [A160] Redshank [A162] Turnstone [A169] Black-headed gull [A179] Common gull [A182] Lesser black-backed gull [A183] Grey plover [A141]			

Step 3 Assessment of likely significant effects

- (a) Identify all potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the project

Potential Impacts	Possible significance of Potential impacts (duration, magnitude, etc.)
Physical disturbance and habitat loss	Not significant - the area of the moorings is very small and will recover quickly following their removal
Noise disturbance from vessel or equipment	The low intensity noise from the equipment is considered to be not significant and will not impact the marine mammals. Impact of one vessel 8 days a year per location in a busy shipping area is also not significant
Potential risk of accident or pollution event	Not significant - standard operating procedures will be in place

In-combination effects

MARA has developed a stepwise approach for identifying other In-Combination plans and projects.

Using professional and scientific judgement, the key steps for assessing cumulative effects are as follows:

1. Defining the Cumulative Effects Spatial Scope (CESS)
2. Defining the Cumulative Effects Temporal Scope (CETS)
3. Impact identification
4. Pathway identification
5. Prediction
6. Identification of Plans or Projects that could act in combination
7. Screening Stage Cumulative Effects Assessment conclusion
8. Managing cumulative impacts - to be carried out as part of Stage 2 AA process

The CESS has been defined as the study area and the CETS as 2.5 years.

Using the above 8 step approach, and following a search of relevant databases undertaken in November 2024 no projects were identified as potential in-combination projects.

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

- Th Climate Action Plan 2024;
- Water Action Plan 2024;
- Port of Cork Masterplan 2050
- Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028;

These plans promote sustainable development in the maritime environment.

Were mitigation measures considered during the screening process?

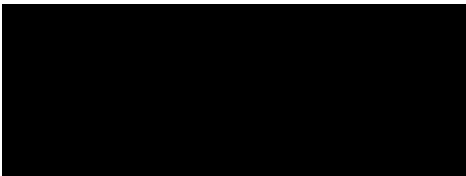
No


Step 4 Screening Determination Statement

The assessment of significant effects:
 On the basis of 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
- Physical disturbance and habitat loss
- Possible noise disturbance from vessel or equipment
- Potential for accident or pollution event

Having considered the legal framework applicable to Appropriate Assessment, it was concluded that the proposed maritime usage by Gas Networks Ireland to conduct marine surveys in Cork Harbour (LIC240035) 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.*

Conclusion		
	Tick as appropriate	Recommendation
(i) It is clear that there is no likelihood of significant/possible effects on a European site	√	Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment not required
(ii) It is uncertain whether the proposal will have a significant/possible effect on a European site		
(iii) Significant effects are likely		
Signature and Date of Recommending Officer		9 th December ,

<p>Signature and Date of Decision Maker</p>	 <p>16th December 2024</p>
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