



**Marine Engineering Division**  
**Report on Aquaculture Licence Application**

**Application Reference No:** T10/028A

**Report Prepared By:** Edwina Forde

**Date:** 23/02/2022

**Applicant** North Mayo Development Co-op Society Ltd,  
C/O Eddie O'Toole, Tallagh, Belmullet, Co. Mayo

**Location** Blacksod Bay, Co. Mayo ( incl. Elly Harbour and  
Saleen Harbour)

**Applicant Type** Aquaculture/Foreshore Licence Application

**Sites**

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**Site Area (Ha)**

205.7
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**Species** Native flat Oysters (*ostrea edulis*)

**Cultivation Method** Bottom culture

**Intertidal/Non-Intertidal** Subtidal

**Annual Production Estimates** 15 Tonnes (Year 4)

**Shellfish Waters Designation** Yes  No   
Reference: S.I.268 of 2006 Blacksod Bay

**Environmental Designation** Yes  No   
Reference: Blacksod/Broadhaven SPA (Site Code 004037)  
Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (000470)

**Development Plans** Yes  No   
Reference: Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020  
Section 2 –Economic & Development Policy MF-02

**Pre-Consultation Meeting** Yes  No   
Date:

### Drawing Validation Sheet

**OSI Maps**

Yes  No

Comment:

6" scale maps prepared by GIS Mapping Section.

**BA Chart**

Yes  No

Comment:

BA Charts prepared by GIS Mapping Section.

**Farm Layout Drawing**

Yes  No

Directional Arrow Yes  No

Scale Yes  No

Title Block Yes  No

Date Yes  No

Comment: Bottom culture.

**Drawings of structures**

Yes  No

Comment:

Bottom culture, no structures

**Details of Proposed Navigation Marking**

Yes  No

Comment:

Bottom culture, no structures.

**Site Access Indicated**

Yes  No

Comment:

Access by boat from 3 piers at Belmullet, Ardelly and Saleen

**Site Co-Ordinates Indicated**

Yes  No

Comment:

Site co-ordinates indicated in application

**Site Overlap**

Yes  No

Comment:

Overlap with protected habitats detailed in AA

**Oyster Fishery Order Overlap**

Yes  No

Comment:

**The application is submitted with each of the requirements listed and is therefore deemed to be a valid application.**

**AFMD should be aware that insufficient details have been submitted as per above.**

## Site Suitability Assessment

### Site Location

Site location maps have been submitted with the application. The site is located at Blacksod Bay, Belmullet, Co. Mayo. Blacksod Bay is bounded on its western side by the Mullet Peninsula. The Bay is fed by numerous small rivers and streams and a canal links Blacksod Bay to Broadhaven Bay to the north through the town of Belmullet. The aquaculture at this location has been in existence for many years, the North Mayo Co-Op has held this license since 1994 which indicates that the hydrodynamic regime is suitable for this type of aquaculture. The consistency of the seabed at this location is intertidal mudflats and sand flats with a firm substrate and suitable for the aquaculture proposed. The Wild Atlantic Way surrounds Blacksod Bay with a point of interest at Blacksod Harbour. The area applied for is a significant public amenity. There is a quay in Belmullet, Ardelly and Saleen that harbours relatively large boats. Any access to these quays should not be restricted. There is a water sports leisure centre and summer college in Elly Bay and any aquaculture activity should not interfere with people using this facility. Nor should the any aquaculture activity interfere with the public beaches in the area.

### Site Management

The applicant has indicated that they intend to cultivate native flat oysters extensively on the seabed. They propose to use a 4ft dredge which is fished from the side or back of a boat. There is a restricted season of approximately 8 to 12 days in February and March, and only registered fishing vessel and members of the co-op are allowed to fish. Each vessel (12-15 boats) has to obtain a dredge license from Inland Fisheries Ireland and there is a legal minimum size for oysters to be sold. The application implies that there would be no equipment used or left on the seabed that may be hazardous to other users of the area.

The activities associated with this culture practice (dredging of the seabed) are considered disturbing and can lead to removal and or destruction of infaunal species and changes to sediment composition. The development can be considered as minor and reversible and no new infrastructure is required. Given the nature and the short duration of harvest period, significant impact on fishing and marine leisure are not considered likely. The site is currently in use and is satisfactorily managed.

The Marine Institute Appropriate Assessment Summary Report of Aquaculture states “*For most species there are no potentially significant impacts that are likely to arise from the cultivation and harvesting of oysters in sub tidal waters, with the exception of:*

***Zostera-dominated community***- *This habitat is not tolerant of any overlap of any activity. The cumulative pressure of likely impacting activities on this habitat is 53.78%.*

***Maerl-dominated community*** - *This habitat is not tolerant of any overlap of any activity. The cumulative pressure of likely impacting activities on this habitat is significant at 83.54%.*

***Serpula vermicularis dominated community*** - *The cumulative pressure of likely impacting activities on this habitat is 8.9%. “*

These habitats have been removed from the application and new drawings submitted.

### Proposed Site Layout and Structures

This application is for bottom culture of oysters and no structures will be used.

### Land Based Facilities / Site Access

The operators propose to access the site using existing routes from the quay in Belmullet, Ardelly and Saleen Harbours. Details of the access route were included with the application.

### **Navigation**

As there are no structures navigation aids are not required.

### **Visual Impact**

The Mayo County Development Plan 2017-2023 indicates there are scenic routes surrounding Blacksod Bay. As this application is for extensive bottom culture there will be no visual impact.

### **Impact / Cumulative Impact**

This application is part of the overall oyster aquaculture industry in Blacksod Bay. This existing aquaculture has been in place for some time and there is no significant impact due to this application. There is other fishing and marine leisure in the area. A group navigational marking scheme is in place for other aquaculture which reduces the impact on navigation in the area. Protected habitats identified under the AA have been removed from the application area. The 2017 report supporting Appropriate Assessment of Aquaculture and risk assessment of fisheries in Mullet/Blacksod Bay complex SAC(site code: 0470) should be consulted for details of the aquaculture activity that may pose a potential significant negative impact on the Mullet Blacksod Bay complex SAC.

**Marine Engineering Division has no objection to the licencing of this site subject to the above.**