



Fors na Mara
Marine Institute



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Memorandum of Understanding

Marine Institute

and

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
(National Parks and Wildlife Service)

The objective of this Memorandum of Understanding is to facilitate cooperation and coordination in areas of mutual responsibility and shared interest between the Marine Institute (MI) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), in understanding and monitoring the outbreaks of crayfish plague in Ireland, its potential carriers and vectors, and its impact on the native White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*.

Signed:

Paul Connolly

Chief Executive

Marine Institute

Signed:

Andy Bleasdale

Principal Officer

National Parks and Wildlife Service

DHLGH

Date:

27/10/22

Date:

24/10/22

1 Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Marine Institute and the National Parks and Wildlife Service is intended to provide a framework for enhanced cooperation in areas of mutual responsibility and shared interest, in understanding the outbreaks of crayfish plague in Ireland. This will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of the respective work programmes of both organisations.

The Institute has responsibility for the implementation of the Animal Health Regulation (EU) 2016/429. Whilst crayfish plague is not a disease which is listed under this legislation; it is however, listed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Marine Institute is charged with reporting the presence of diseases listed by the OIE. The Marine Institute has the diagnostic capabilities to detect the presence of this pathogen in relevant species.

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage oversees the protection and conservation of Ireland's natural heritage and biodiversity at national government level.

The Minister is, *inter alia*, responsible at national level for the protection of species, including the White-clawed Crayfish, listed on the Annexes of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and in national legislation. The Minister is further responsible for biodiversity policy and the implementation of the Wildlife Acts.

2 Purpose of Memorandum of Understanding

DHLGH and MI jointly affirm their commitment to cooperate and coordinate on common work areas in regard to the ecology and conservation of the White-clawed Crayfish in Ireland.

The memorandum does not override the statutory duties and powers of either organisation, rather it expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action to ensure that the best possible service is delivered.

The key areas of collaboration covered by this Memorandum of Understanding are:

1. the investigation of crayfish mortalities in Ireland, using appropriate testing methods to determine if crayfish plague is the causative agent in these mortality events
2. the use of eDNA sampling methods and real-time PCR methods to detect presence or absence of Crayfish Plague and selected non-indigenous crayfish species (NICS) in Irish freshwaters
3. the surveillance of the White-clawed Crayfish throughout its known habitats in Ireland using a combination of eDNA methods and ecological field survey
4. the investigation of the catchments confirmed positive for Crayfish Plague to determine the extent and persistence of the disease

5. the collation and exploration of data for the presence or absence of crayfish plague and White-clawed Crayfish to observe trends in persistence, density and range over time
6. the investigation of habitat status and recovery in relation to the conservation strategy adopted by NPWS for the White-clawed Crayfish in view of the unique status held by Ireland as a NICS-free area of the EU
7. the dissemination of information on crayfish plague and White-clawed Crayfish in Ireland including in scientific peer-review journals
8. the investigation of alternative and complimentary eDNA sampling methods and molecular detection technologies to increase efficiency and improve analytical productivity
9. the construction of proactive policies and conservation strategies for the White-clawed Crayfish in Irish freshwaters based on the latest research and analysis
10. the investigation of potential vectors of crayfish plague in order to further understand and monitor the possible routes of introduction of the disease
11. other tasks and activities as may be agreed by both parties during the period of this Memorandum of Understanding

3 Specific Points of Cooperation

The DHLGH commits to the provision of up to €276,000 over 4 years towards the joint work programme, to be paid according to the payment schedule below.

Payment schedule:

Invoice date	Amount	To cover programme work completed during:
01/11/2022	€69,000	July 2022 - June 2023
01/11/2023	€69,000	July 2023 - June 2024
01/11/2024	€69,000	July 2024 - June 2025
01/11/2025	€69,000	July 2025 - June 2026
Total	€276,000	

The Marine Institute commits to the provision of a total amount of €77,000 over 4 years towards the joint work programme, the assignment of specialist expertise for work outlined in paragraph 2 above, and the management of that work.

4 Operational Liaison

DHLGH and MI appoint Dr Brian Nelson and Dr Fiona Swords (or their replacements) as designated contacts for implementation of the MoU and they shall meet jointly on a bi-annual basis to monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of this MoU.

They shall report back to their parent bodies at the end of each MoU year (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026) outlining the effectiveness of the implementation of the MoU and setting out recommendations for further opportunities for cooperation if relevant.