Application for Derogation under Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 for the Intake, Rehabilitation and Release of Stranded Loggerhead Sea Turtles

1. Purpose of Application

This application seeks a derogation to allow Dingle Oceanworld to take possession of, transport, medically treat, rehabilitate and subsequently release **stranded sea turtles (often loggerhead sea turtles- Caretta caretta)** found in Irish waters or on the Irish coastline.

The derogation is required to ensure the survival of turtles that strand in Ireland due to cold-stunning, injury, dehydration or exhaustion and are at imminent risk of death without intervention.

2. Legal Basis (Test 1 – Valid Reason under Regulation 54(2))

The activities covered by this application are justified under:

- **Regulation 54(2)(a)** — *to protect wild fauna and conserve natural habitats*
- **Regulation 54(2)(c)** — *for the purpose of research and education contributing to the conservation of the species*

Rehabilitation and controlled release of loggerhead turtles directly contribute to their conservation by preventing mortality of vulnerable individuals and returning them to the breeding population within their natural range.

3. No Satisfactory Alternative (Test 2)

Without the measures requested in this derogation:

Alternative	Outcome
• Leaving stranded turtles in situ	-High probability of death from cold shock, starvation or injury
• Immediate release to Irish waters	-Not viable — cold conditions physiologically incompatible with the species
• Relocation to another Irish facility	-No equivalent facility exists with the veterinary or husbandry capacity
• Euthanasia	-Contrary to conservation objectives; rehabilitation is feasible in most cases

Therefore, the only viable option that avoids mortality is temporary possession, treatment, rehabilitation and controlled release.

4. No Negative Impact on Conservation Status (Test 3)

Granting this derogation **does not negatively impact loggerhead conservation status** because:

- No turtles are removed from a healthy wild population — only already compromised individuals are admitted.
- Rehabilitation improves survival outcome compared to non-intervention.
- All turtles are released into warm-water habitats within their natural migratory range, ensuring reintegration into the wild population.
- Dingle Oceanworld employs strict veterinary, welfare, biosecurity and reporting protocols.

5. Scope of Activities to Be Authorised

To ensure legal clarity, the derogation is requested to cover:

- Possession of stranded loggerhead turtles for the purpose of care and recovery
- Handling and veterinary treatment, including sedation and surgical intervention if required
- Transport within the State and internationally for release
- Maintenance in tanks for a temporary period required for recovery
- Marking / tagging for conservation tracking
- Release of rehabilitated individuals into suitable warm-water habitat

6. Mitigation and Conservation Measures

- Intake only of genuine strandings reported through NPWS / IWDG / authorised networks
- Veterinary protocol for initial triage, diagnostics and treatment
- Environmental and biosecurity control measures to prevent contamination and cross-infection
- Minimised handling and stress-reduced husbandry methods
- Daily veterinary monitoring and recordkeeping
- Pre-release fitness assessment and sign-off
- Transport protocols to ensure safe return to native range waters
- Data-sharing with scientific conservation partners where possible

7. Existing Credentials

- Dingle Oceanworld holds **active CITES certificate**, permitting possession and international movement for conservation and rehabilitation purposes.
- The aquarium maintains a veterinary and husbandry team experienced in **marine turtle medical care**.

8. Past Successful Rehabilitation

Dingle Oceanworld has a **proven track record of successful rehabilitation and release of stranded sea turtles**, with previous individuals transported to warm-water marine areas and

confirmed alive post-release through follow-up monitoring and collaboration with international conservation partners. These outcomes directly demonstrate the conservation benefit of the requested derogation.

9. Reporting Commitments

Dingle Oceanworld will:

- Notify NPWS on intake of each stranded turtle
- Provide full veterinary and progress reports on request
- Notify NPWS in advance of release and confirm location and method