

Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended, 2011), Regulation 22 – EIA Consent Decision

In Respect of:

ML2025053 (Construction licence), ML2025054 (Dredge Licence), ML2025055 (Disposal Licence)

Site: Site D3, Belfast Harbour Estate

EIA Consent Decision	
Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended, 2011) Regulation 22	
Marine Licensing Panel	08 May 2026
Ref: MLEIA 2025041	
Date Environmental Statement Received: 17 October 2025	
Accompanying Marine Licence applications: - ML2025053 (Construction licence) - ML2025054 (Dredge Licence), - ML2025055 (Disposal licence) - Shadow Habitats Regulation Assessment	
Application Category / Type	Proposed EIA consent in respect of : Construction, Dredge and Sea Disposal
Location:	Belfast Harbour – site D3
Agent Name & Address:	[REDACTED] (RPS), 74 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6RZ, [REDACTED]

Executive Summary

This report is provided under Regulation 21A of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended) which requires the authority to reach and document a reasoned conclusion on the likely significant environmental effects of the project and Regulation 22 goes on to provide for the formal EIA consent decision, including consideration of mitigation, monitoring and conditions as set out in the report.

The purpose of this Report is to support an EIA consent decision under Regulation 22 for Belfast Harbour Commissioners' applications for construction, dredging and sea disposal licences at Site D3, Belfast Harbour Estate. The proposal seeks to complete a new 340m multi-purpose quay and associated marine works to support cruise vessels of up to 350m, with off-season use for lay-by and transient cargo activity.

The development already benefits from extant marine and planning consents. The principle of this development at this site, is established and works have been ongoing and are well advanced. The applicant has been granted short time extensions to the licences previously to facilitate time delays with the Project. This is not unexpected with large scale schemes, the key issue was that the original Environmental Statement which was submitted in March 2016 and updated June 2017, along with the original licence applications for the project, was required to be updated before any further licences could be considered. The new updated Environmental Statement was submitted in October 2025 and is the subject of this report.

The current ES reflects current policy, updated environmental information and the cumulative effects of changes since the original 2017 ES. The current proposal involves limited amendments to the approved scheme, a 15-month time extension to September 2027 is requested, construction in a single phase rather than two, and a reduction in mooring dolphins from seven to four.

The updated ES was scoped and consulted on in accordance with the regulations, with advice provided prior to and throughout to the applicant and their agent, the applicant submitted the ES before the final scoping document could be issued, whilst the formal Scoping issued to the applicant after the ES had been received, officials are content that all the required information was provided.

No third-party representations were received. Statutory consultees raised no objections overall, though a number recommended conditions and informatives. The assessment concludes that, with mitigation and conditions, the project would not give rise to unacceptable significant adverse environmental effects.

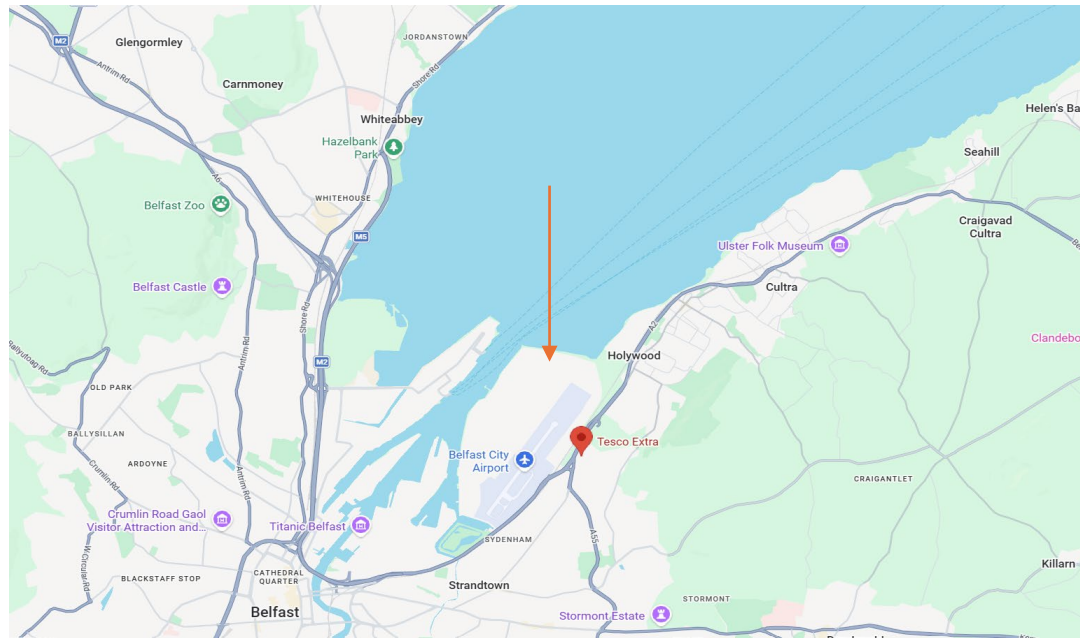


Figure 1 Site location



Figure 2: Aerial photo showing site context

Key findings are that marine ecology, water quality, ornithology, coastal processes, air quality, lighting, traffic, human health, archaeology and seascape effects can be appropriately managed and are not expected to be significant in the long term. Construction noise and vibration are acceptable with mitigation, while marine mammal protection, underwater noise controls, seasonal piling restrictions, archaeological safeguards, pollution prevention and ecological monitoring will remain essential. Terrestrial matters continue to be addressed through the planning regime.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that under Regulation 22 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended), subject to the proposed conditions and informatives, grant consent.

1.0 Introduction

This document constitutes an EIA consent decision under Regulation 22 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (Marine Works Regulations), in respect of an application submitted by Belfast Harbour Commissioners. The application is to construct a Quay at D3 within the harbour limits and is supported by an Environmental Statement.

2.0 The Decision

The Decision to be made is in accordance with Regulation 22 of the Marine Works Regulations. The application, its supporting information and responses received in relation to Regulation 17 and Regulation 21 have been considered by DAERA Marine Licensing (the Marine Licensing Authority) when making the recommendation.

3.0 Project Description

- 3.1 Belfast Harbour are applying to complete the construction of a new quay at their D3 site (a Marine Licensing EIA project) at Belfast Harbour involves the single phase construction (previously two phases) of a multipurpose facility at D3 for the berthing of cruise ships and vessels between 70 to 350m length, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk, and dry bulk during the cruise ship off season. The development comprises construction below the Mean High Water Spring (MHWS) with 4 number mooring dolphins (reduced from 7nr), with

associated back filling behind the new quay with imported clean fill material and land reclamation, totalling circa 4.81 acres.

- 3.2 The project also involves the capital dredging of a berthing pocket, and subsequent sea disposal of dredge material.
- 3.3 Planning permission includes the construction of a 25m wide piled reliving slab along the length of the quay and associated infrastructure (i.e., access road, security gates, lighting, fencing, modular terminal building etc.) will be constructed above MHWS within the terrestrial area.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 There is both an extant Marine Construction Licence MLVAR2025061 and Planning permission LA04/2016/0421/F on the site. The principle of this development at this site is well established and works have been ongoing and are well advanced. The applicant has been granted short time extensions to the licences previously to facilitate time delays with the Project. This is not unexpected with large scale schemes, the key issue was that the Environmental Statement which was submitted in March 2016 and updated June 2017 (along with the licence applications for the project) required to be updated before any further licences could be considered. The new updated Environmental Statement (ES) was submitted in October 2025 and is the subject of this report.
- 4.2 There is a history of Marine Licensing applications for this site as set out in Annex A. The proposed development was originally granted in July 2022, all three Marine licenses were extended in July 2025 and a further time extension was granted to the Construction Licence in November 2025, this licence expires on 1 July 2026. The Marine Licences propose very limited amendments to the approved Construction licence and no amendments to the dredge and disposal Licences as previously consented.
- 4.3 Planning permission does not cover any works beyond the highwater mark and works beyond this point require a Marine Licence under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Planning permission for the terrestrial elements was granted in July 2019 and was dealt with as a Regionally Significant application by DFI Strategic Planning. There is a current application to amend the approved scheme, under consideration by Belfast City Council. As the land use and operational development has been approved in principle, DFI have deemed the application to not to be regionally significant.
- 4.5 In July 2025 DAERA clarified for the applicant that whilst a short extension to the time to complete the works was acceptable that any extended period would require

a new updated ES. In considering the information provided in the Environmental Statement dated July 2017, the following plans and policies were not considered or have since been updated:

- The OSPAR Convention – updated June 2025
- The Water Framework Directive –updated in February 2025
- The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
- River Basin Management Plans – began their third cycle in 2021
- The Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland 2018

In addition, some of the baseline data used to inform the 2017 ES was already significantly dated at the time of submission. For example:

- INNS surveys were conducted in 2012 and 2013
- Fish data was collected between 1987 and 2014, with the most recent monitoring on the Lagan and Conn's Water between 2012 and 2014
- Seal surveys were carried out between 2015 and 2017
- Bat surveys were conducted in 2015
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey data was gathered between 2015 and 2017
- Traffic analysis was based on 2015 data

This highlighted the need for updated environmental data to ensure policy alignment when considering time extensions. In addition, the cumulative impact of nearly a decade of change must also be factored into any future decision-making.

4.6 Prior to both original licence and planning application submissions in 2016, DFI's Strategic Planning Team and the Marine Licensing Authority undertook extensive pre application discussions with the applicant, consultees and stakeholders to ensure that the project's required consents and its Environmental Impact Assessment requirements were considered holistically, this continued throughout the project consideration.

5.0 Development Proposed in the Marine Area

5.1 The proposed development remains as per the Approved ES (June 2017), save for the following changes:

- An extension of time of 15 months until September 2027 to the licences to facilitate completion of development in line with construction programme,
- The project is now being constructed in one phase instead of two.
- Number of mooring dolphins has reduced from seven to four.

Marine licences are required for the following works as part of the proposed project, the main elements of the scheme are as follows:

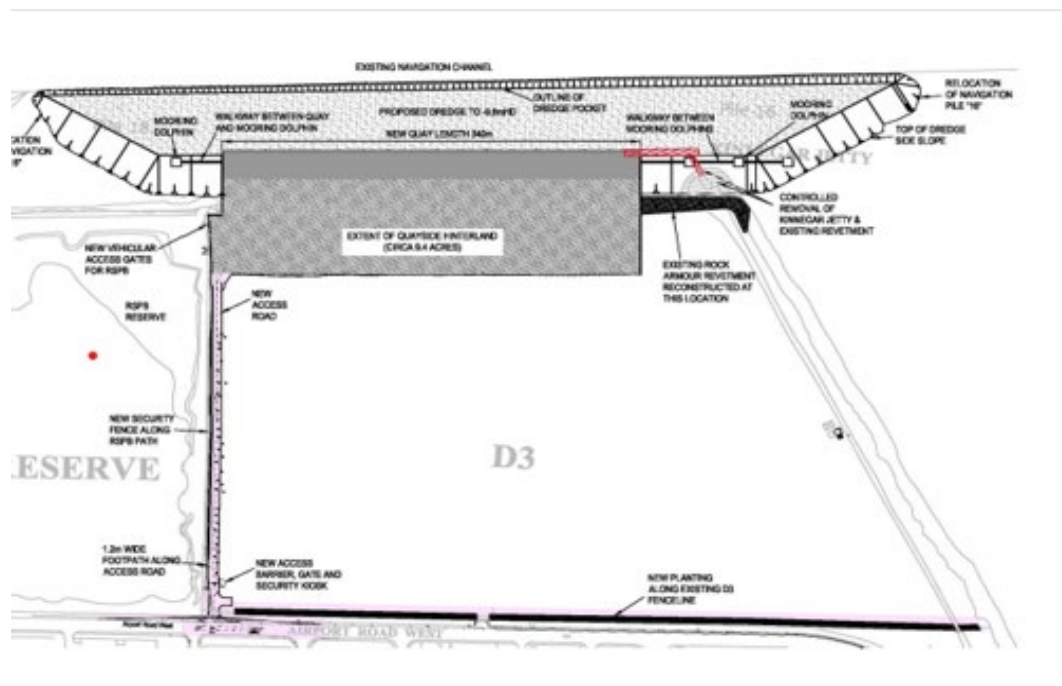


Figure 3 – Proposed site layout plan

Construction

5.2 The quay structure itself is 340m in length long steel piled combi-wall. A reinforced concrete beam will be cast along the top of the steel combi-wall, with mooring bollards and fenders cast into the beam at required spacing. Extending along the existing length of the D3 site foreshore from the mouth of Victoria Channel towards the D2 lagoon wildlife reserve. The quay extends 60m into Victoria Channel from the existing revetment, with a height of +6m CD.

- Clean fill material will be used to fill behind the new quay structure, creating circa 4.81 acres of land reclamation. This will be suitably compacted during placement.
- A 25m wide reinforced concrete piled relieving slab will be cast along the back of the capping beam, 2m below finished ground level.
- 4nr mooring dolphins will be constructed to accommodate vessels up to 350m long, adjacent to the RSPB reserve. Each dolphin will consist of steel tubular raking piles and a reinforced concrete pile cap. Steel walkways will be installed between the dolphins, connecting them to the main quay structure. This is a reduction from 7 originally granted a licence.

5.3 The approximate quantity of permanent deposits for this development are:

- 9,000 T of steel piles
- 7,000 m³ of concrete (poured and pre-cast)
- 110,000 m³ of stone/rock/gravel (infill)
- 215,000 T of sand/silt/gravel reclamation (infill)

the applicant seeks to renew this construction licence.

5.4 The controlled removal of Kinnegar Jetty was an early aspect of the project and was completed in quarter two of 2025 including the reworking of the jetty rock armour into the existing rock armour at the northern sea facing end of D3, carried out under the provisions of licence ML122_15. This was completed to facilitate dredging at the site scheduled in 2026 / 2027.

Dredge

5.5 Dredging of 372,000m³ of material will be carried out to provide the required berthing pocket to a depth of -9.8CD. This quantum of material dredge has been approved since July 2022, the applicant seeks to renew this licence consent.

5.6 Extensive sampling and environmental testing has been undertaken within the proposed dredge pocket. 13nr surface grab samples were taken in May 2023, 8nr boreholes were carried out in December 2023/January 2024 and 25nr vibrocores were taken in November 2025. The planned dredging work will be a 12-hour per day operation with a rate of 400-500m³ of dredging per day planned between October 2026 and December 2026.

Sea Disposal

5.7 The total amount of dredged material to be disposed of at sea will be 372,000 m³

5.8 The sea disposal site for the dredged material site is at Belfast Dredging C (Live) – 54°45.300N, 05°29.600W. The disposal site is active and used for disposal in the Belfast Area. The disposal site is within the East Coast Marine proposed SPA.

Land Use and Cargo Handling

5.9 The primary proposed end use of the completed infrastructure is for the berthing of cruise ships during the cruise season, generally from March to September. It is anticipated that 200 cruise vessels will use the facility per annum, with an estimated 450,000 passengers and crew using the site. The size of cruise ships is increasing with larger vessels to accommodate greater passenger capacity and typically these larger vessels require approx. 350m of medium to deep water quayside and approximately 0.8ha of quay for linked transportation arrangements.

- 5.10 However, during the off season for the cruise industry, generally from October to March, it is proposed to use the berthing facilities for lay-by, and general cargo handling such as break-bulk cargo, project cargo, and dry bulk. The facility is not intended to be utilised for Lift-on/Lift-off (Lo-Lo), Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) or handling of liquid bulk cargo. There are no proposals for long term storage at D3, rather the proposal is for primarily transient storage which has no requirement for silos or storage buildings. The short-term storage of bulk materials will be restricted to c.4m in height with mobile bunker wall units employed as required to facilitate storage of loose cargo. It is proposed to utilise material handlers or road going mobile cranes for offloading vessels with no requirement for fixed cranes or hoppers.

Planning

- 5.11 Planning Application LA04/2016/0421/F for the Construction of a multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships and for lay by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk, dry bulk during cruise ship off season and included the terminal building, pavement surfacing and services such as drainage, water, power and telecoms was approved in June 2019.

6.0 Legislative and Policy Framework

- 6.1 The following legislation and Policy is relevant to consideration of the scheme:

Legislation:

- Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 – ‘MCAA’.
- Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007.
- The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.
- Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.
- Marine National Protected Species and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).
- Water Environment (Water Framework) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017
- Waste Regulation (Northern Ireland) 2011
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As amended)

Policy:

- Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland 2018.
- UK Marine Policy Statement 2011
- Joint Fisheries Statement 2022
- Water Framework Directive updated in February 2025

- River Basin Management Plans - began their third cycle in 2021
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015.
- OSPAR and London Conventions (& Protocol) updated June 2025
- Guidance for Marine Protected Areas assessments in the Northern Ireland inshore region 2023.
- Marine European Protected Species and Bateman Formula 1967 on coastal protection policy and Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026

The Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government 2024-2027 Doing What Matters Most

- 6.2 The PfG 2024-27 sets out the importance of supporting businesses and helping to grow a globally competitive and sustainable economy by having the right infrastructure to create the foundations for a more productive and prosperous economy whilst also moving to decarbonise our economy. The PfG also sets out the key aim to showcase Northern Ireland as a great place to visit, making visitors feel welcome while at the same time generating sustainable and inclusive economic growth. There is also a strong emphasis on protecting the environment, and addressing bio-diversity loss and climate change; reducing carbon emissions across energy, transport and land use change and working towards net zero.
- 6.3 This project is in line with current PfG ambitions as it will bring forward a major piece of Infrastructure to Northern Ireland that will be used to provide a bespoke facility for the cruise industry, which will accommodate large numbers of visitors to the region each year. The Environmental Statement sets out that the scheme, with sufficient mitigation can be achieved with no significant impacts to the environment and will incorporate into the scheme and the operational activity a number of features to ensure no climate change impacts.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

- 6.4 The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 provides legislation for Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs). HRAs are a legal process to ensure that proposed works or projects do not negatively impact designated European sites, like Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The HRA as submitted considers European sites including new designations in the years since the last ES, such as the North Channel SAC (designated in 2019),

6.5 The shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment was submitted with the ES, it has been reviewed and was adopted by DAERA on 29 November 2025 as the Department was content that the assessment included appropriate mitigations to negate any potential impacts of the project on protected sites. Officials and relevant consultees are content.

Water Framework Directive (Council Directive 2000/60/EC)

6.6 The project is located in Belfast Harbour, Under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Belfast Harbour is classified as a heavily modified water body (HMWB) due to significant port activities and therefore has different objectives to a natural marine water body. Belfast Harbour water body is currently at moderate ecological potential. Dissolved inorganic nitrogen, macroalgae and specific pollutants are the key issues currently preventing Belfast Harbour from reaching 'good ecological potential'. A key requirement of the WFD is that surface water bodies attain at least good surface water status, requiring both ecological status and chemical status to be at least good, and that there should be no deterioration in existing status. Mitigation measures are presented for implementation in order to ensure that the residual impacts on water quality are minimised and avoided where possible.

6.7 The Marine Licensing Authority is satisfied that the requirements of the Water Framework Directive have been adequately met in in this scheme.

Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011

6.8 Dredged material was considered under the waste hierarchy and will be regulated through the marine licensing process. Under marine dredge licence ML149_16, a surface sampling plan was submitted by Belfast Harbour Commissioners, and this was subsequently agreed by the department in May 2023, with the at depth sampling plan agreed in August 2023. Sediments therefore have been tested for contamination and the material was deemed suitable for disposal at sea to a licensed site. Any land based waste is a matter for the Planning authority.

6.9 The Marine Licensing Authority is satisfied that the requirements of the Waste Framework Directive have been adequately met in this decision.

The Marine Act 2013

6.10 Section 116 of the 2009 Act sets out powers brought forward through the Marine (NI) Act 2013 to designate sites as Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ). The aim is to create a network of ecologically coherent and managed marine protected areas.

6.11 The nearest MCZ is Outer Belfast Lough, 11.4 miles from the development site, designated to protect a well established population of Ocean Quahog and its associated habitat of sublittoral sand. No concerns have been raised in respect

of the MCZ. The Marine Licensing Authority is satisfied that no MCZ will be impacted as a result of the scheme

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1989 (as amended)

6.12 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) are designated and monitored by DAERA's Conservation, Designation and Protection branch. The site is situated in the Inner Belfast Lough ASSI, designated for its diverse fauna, particularly wintering wildfowl and waders including Redshank and Oystercatcher. The Environmental Statement sets out the potential for impact and presents mitigation measures through the Construction Environmental Management Plan, pollution prevention measures and monitoring.

6.13 Provided the mitigation is conditioned through the EIA and Licensing consents the proposal will not have an adverse effect on the site integrity.

UK Marine Policy Statement and Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

6.14 The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment. The Marine Licensing Authority must make licensing decisions in accordance with the MPS and Marine Plans (where in place) unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development is at the core of the Marine Plan and it will deliver on the three pillars of sustainable development: economy, environment and society. The Marine Plan will, through the ecosystem based approach, provide for economic growth and ensure that the provision of activities and uses are undertaken in a manner that respects and protects the marine area; while also bringing positive social benefits. This approach is in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the marine planning system, outlined in the UK MPS.

6.15 The proposal has been considered in respect of both the UK MPS and the Draft Marine Plan (dMPNI) for Northern Ireland 2018, of which the most relevant are Climate Change, Land and Sea Interaction, Marine Noise, Natural Heritage, Seascape; Use of evidence and Water Quality. Key Activity Policies most relevant are Dredging, Ports, Harbours and Shipping and; Tourism and Recreation.

7.0 The Environmental Statement

7.1 The EU Council Directive 2001/92/EU (the Directive) sets out measures for consideration of private and public projects which have the potential to impact the environment through their nature, scale or location. The Directive sets out assessment requirements to ensure project impacts are included in any consenting considerations. The Marine Works (EIA) Regulations 2007 transpose the Directive into UK law for marine licence applications.

- 7.2 The original D3 Environmental Statement (2017) was a Schedule A1 development under the Marine Works Regulations. Paragraph 88 of Schedule A2 of the Marine Works Regulations sets out that “any changes to or extension of development of a description listed in Schedule A1 where that development is already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed” is a Schedule A2 project. As the current proposal represents a “change or extension” to an authorised development and is “in the process of being executed” it falls to be considered as a variation to the existing as a Schedule A2 project.
- 7.3 The scoping request was received on 21 August 2025 and scoping under the regulations was carried out, with advice and guidance provided prior to and throughout to the applicant and their agent, the applicant submitted the Environmental Statement before the final scoping document could be issued, the formal Scoping was issued to the applicant in May 2026.
- 7.4 Under Regulation 21 A (1) and (2) of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended) in considering the Environmental Statement and reaching its conclusions the authority must consider any features of the project in relation to the regulated activity, or measures which the applicant proposes to take, which would have the effect of avoiding, preventing, reducing or offsetting any likely significant adverse environmental effects of the regulated activity.
- 7.5 Schedule 3 states that an ES should include a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development, in particular the following:
- Population & Human health
 - Fauna
 - Flora
 - Soil
 - Water
 - Air
 - Climatic factors
 - Material assets including architectural and archaeological heritage
 - Landscape
 - Inter-actions between the above
- 7.6 The Environmental Statement is extensive and includes 20 chapters which covers the statutory environmental matters set out above and additional topics specific to the development proposed.

Chapter	Environmental Statement October 2025
1. Introduction	1.1 Project Background, 1.2 requirement for an Updated Environmental Statement, 1.3 Extant Planning Permission and Conditions, 1.4 Marine Licences and Conditions, 1.5 Belfast

Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group

Marine & Fisheries Division

Marine Licensing Branch



	Harbour Growth, 1.6 Structure of the Environmental Statement (ES), 1.7 Procedural Context, 1.8 Methodology, 1.9 Content of an ES, Context of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), 1.11 Project Description
2. Alternatives, Site Selection & Need for the Scheme	2.1 Introduction, 2.2 Assessment Methodology, 2.3 Do Nothing Scenario, 2.4 Consideration of Alternative Sites, 2.5 Consideration of Alternative Construction Methods and Designs, 2.6 Need for the Scheme
3. Project Scoping	3.1 Introduction, 3.2 Consultation with DAERA Marine Licensing Team (DAERA MLT), 3.3 EIA Acceptance, 3.4 EIA Scoping, 3.5 Scoping Opinion
4. Policies and Plans	4.1 Introduction, 4.2 Assessment Methodology, 4.3 Regional & Local Policy Context, 4.4 Further Material Considerations, 4.5 Impact Assessment
5. Landscape and Visual	5.1 Introduction, 5.2 Assessment Methodology, 5.3 Existing Environment, 5.4 Proposed Development, 5.5 Predicted Impacts, 5.6 Cumulative Impacts, 5.7 Mitigation, 5.8 Conclusion
6. Marine Ecology	6.1 Introduction, 6.2 Impact Assessment Approach, 6.4 Impact Assessment, 6.5 Cumulative Effects, 6.6 Mitigation and Monitoring, 6.7 Conclusions
7. Air Quality	7.1 Introduction, 7.2 Assessment Methodology, 7.3 Legislation, 7.4 Atmospheric Pollutants & the Existing Environment, 7.5 Detailed Dispersion Modelling & Model Inputs, 7.6 Potential Impact, 7.7 Mitigation, 7.8 References
8. Noise and Vibration	8.1 Introduction, 8.2 Assessment Methodology, 8.3 Existing Environment, 8.4 Impact Assessment, 8.5 Mitigation Measures, 8.6 Residual Impact, 8.7 References
9. Terrestrial Ecology and Ornithology	9.1 Terrestrial Ecology, 9.2 Ornithology, 9.3 References & Bibliography
10. Flood Risk and Water Quality	10.1 Flood Risk, 10.2 Water Quality, 10.3 References
11. Coastal Processes and Hydrodynamic Modelling	11.1 Introduction, 11.2 Structure of EIA Approach, 11.3 Existing Environment, 11.4 Proposed development at Belfast Harbour, 11.5 Modelling Methodology, 11.6 Tidal Regime at Belfast Harbour, 11.7 Wave Climate at Belfast Harbour, 11.8 Sediment Transport at Belfast Harbour, 11.9 Conclusions
12. Contaminated Land	12.1 Introduction, 12.2 Assessment Methodology, 12.3 Existing Environment, 12.4 Construction Impacts, 12.5 Operational Impacts, 12.6 Sediment Dredging, 12.7 Cumulative Impacts, 12.8 Mitigation Measures, 12.9 Cumulative Impacts, 12.10 References
13. Artificial Lighting	13.1 Introduction, 13.2 Assessment Methodology, 13.3 Baseline Conditions, 13.4 Proposed Development Lighting Proposals, 13.5 Potential Impacts, 13.6 Mitigation Measures, 13.7 Conclusion, 13.8 References,
14. Traffic and Transportation	14.1 Introduction, 14.2 Methodology, 14.3 Historical Cruise Ship Analysis (Extant Permission), 14.4 Cruise Ship Analysis – 2025, 14.5 Historical Baseline Traffic Conditions (Extant Permission),

	14.6 Baseline Traffic Conditions – 2025, 14.7 Impact Assessment, 14.8 Residual Impact, 14.9 Other Uses on Site (2015 Dataset), 14.10 Other Uses on Site (2025), 14.11 Construction Traffic, 14.12 Cumulative Impacts, 14.13 References
15. Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage	15.1 Introduction, 15.2 Methodology, 15.3 Baseline Conditions, 15.4 Impact Assessment, 15.5 Mitigation, 15.6 Residual Effects
16. Socio-Economic	16.1 Introduction, 16.2 Assessment Methodology, 16.3 Existing Environment, 16.4 Demographic Context, 16.5 Construction Related Industry, 16.6 Impact Assessment
17. Climate Change	17.1 Introduction, 17.2 Assessment Methodology, 17.3 Methodology for Assessment of Effects, 17.4 Data Limitations and Assumptions, 17.5 Baseline Environment, 17.6 Mitigation, 17.7 Assessment of Likely Effects, 17.8 Cumulative Effects, 17.9 Summary and Conclusions
18. Human Health	18.1 Introduction, 18.2 Study Area, 18.3 Legislative and Policy Context, 18.5 Baseline sources, 18.6 Assessment Methodology, 18.7 Baseline Environment, 18.8 Impact Assessment, 18.9 Cumulative Effects, 18.10 Mitigation Measures
19. Risk of Major Accidents and Disasters	19.1 Introduction, 19.2 Legislation and Policy Context, 19.3 Assessment Methodology, 19.4 Baseline & Future Baseline Environment, 19.5 Description of Potential Impacts, 19.6 Stage 3 – Impact Assessment, 19.7 Mitigation, 19.8 Assessment of Residual Effects, 19.9 Cumulative Effects, 19.10 Conclusion, 19.11 References
20. Interactions	20.1 Introduction, 20.2 Interactions and In-Combination Effects

Legislative Process

7.7 The process to be followed is set out in the following regulations of the Marine Works Regulations:

- Regulation 17 dictates the formal consultation requirements for proposed regulated activities.
- Regulation 21A requires the authority to reach and document a reasoned conclusion on the likely significant environmental effects of the project.
- Regulation 22 provides for the formal EIA consent decision, including consideration of mitigation, monitoring and conditions.
- Regulation 23 requires that the EIA consent decision is notified and published, including notification to the applicant and making the decision publicly available.
- Regulation 24 - links that EIA consent decision to the subsequent regulatory decision in respect of the licences

Consultation Process

7.8 The ES was received on 17 October 2025, following the submission of further information on 29 October the environmental statement contained all the information required and was advertised through public notices in the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News, and News Letter on the 22/12/2025 and the 29/12/2025.

7.9 There has been no third party comments received or representations made in respect of the Environmental Statement or licence applications.

7.10 As part of the consideration of the project and in accordance with Regulation 17 and 21 of the Marine Works Regulations, the authority undertook a consultation exercise. Consultations issued to relevant consultees on 12th December 2025. The target date for response was 23rd January 2026, a meeting with consultees was also conducted on 29th January 2026 and a short extension was given to allow some consultees additional time to respond.

7.11 The following bodies were consulted during the consultation process:

- DAERA MFD Monitoring and Assessment Team
- DAERA MFD Marine Strategy (Bathing Waters and Shellfish Team)
- DAERA MFD Sea Fisheries Inspectorate
- DAERA MFD Marine Conservation and Reporting – Marine Wildlife
- DAERA MFD Marine Conservation and Reporting – Sea Bird Conservation Advisor
- DAERA MFD Marine Conservation and Reporting – Marine Archaeology
- DAERA MFD Marine Conservation and Reporting – Coastal Processes
- DAERA NIEA Resource Efficiency Division Water Management Unit (WMU) Planning Team
- DAERA NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED) - Conservation Designation and Protections Branch
- DAERA NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED) - Biodiversity and Conservation Science Branch (Ornithology)
- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
- The Commissioners of Irish Lights
- The Crown Estate (NI Contact)
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency

7.12 Consultees responded with no concerns or objections with a number recommending conditions and informatives be added to the final licences. Consultee responses are considered further throughout the report and a list of consultees, response dates and general response is provided at Annex B.

8.0 Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed mitigation

Scale of works and Socio-Economic Considerations

- 8.1 The PfG 2024–27 supports infrastructure-led economic growth, sustainable tourism and decarbonisation, while emphasising environmental protection, biodiversity recovery and progress towards net zero. Relevant policy, the Draft Marine Plan, UK Marine Policy Statement, SPPS, Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy and Blue Growth Initiative, supports sustainable tourism and recreation where adverse effects are avoided, minimised or mitigated. The dMPNI also recognises the regional importance of ports and harbours, subject to environmental assessment of likely effects of any development.
- 8.2 Whilst the physical scale of the works proposed is significant as set out in paragraph 3.0 above, the D3 development will also have potential socio-economic effects in Belfast and across Northern Ireland. The Harbour Estate is Northern Ireland's main logistic and distribution hub. It handles 70% of NI's seaborne trade and a quarter of all seaborne trade across the island of Ireland. It is a base for more than 760 businesses and 20,000 jobs, directly and indirectly supporting 15.7% of NI's total annual output, enabled by trade. The BHC are planning to invest some £1.3 billion in critical port projects within the span of its current masterplan up to 2050. This scheme represents one of a number of large-scale strategic investments by BHC, of £90m to support Belfast Harbour's growing role as a cruise destination, to facilitate vessels of up to 350metres in length with a projected demand of around 200 vessels per year by 2050. This would bring around 450,000 passengers and crew, contributing over £50m GVA to the Northern Ireland economy.
- 8.3 The construction is expected to generate around 30 - 40 direct full and part-time jobs. Seasonal cruise operations would also support a small number of on-site roles, including security, tourism, facilities, car hire and ship agency staff.
- 8.4 The project would also free the D1 site on the Harbour Estate to potentially return to offshore wind use, supporting Northern Ireland's offshore wind objectives.

8.5 The scheme is expected to deliver economic benefits to Belfast and the region through tourism and port activity, although these must be balanced against climate and environmental obligations, as considered elsewhere in this report. Consultees raised no socio-economic concerns or concerns in respect of the scale of this development at this location.

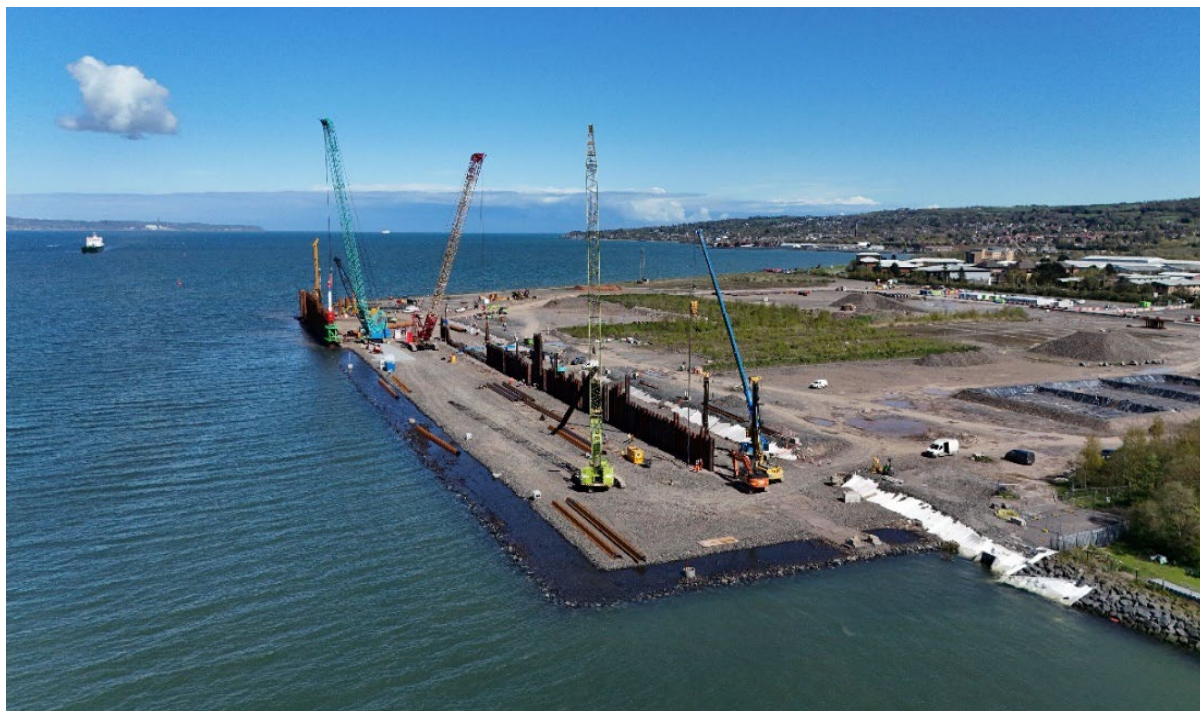


Figure 4: Aerial Photographs - works on-going at D3 April 2026

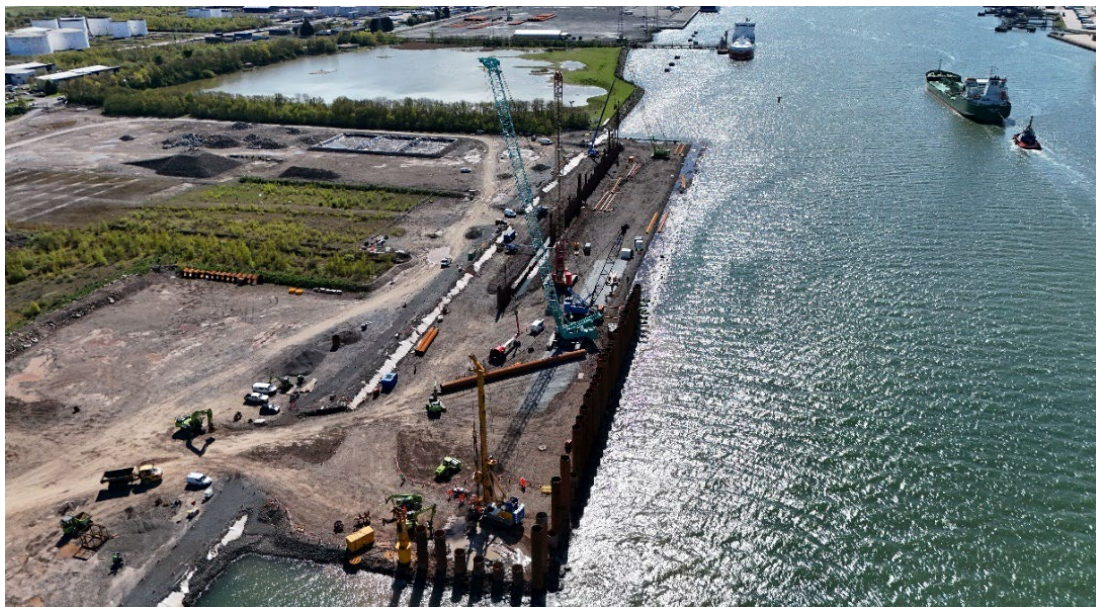


Figure 5: Aerial Photograph - works on-going at D3 April 2026, D2

Marine Ecology

8.6 Natural heritage is a core policy of the dMPNI. It states that public authorities must consider potential impacts from proposals on other habitats, species or features or importance. The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended) protects a number of marine species as well as the Habitats Directive and Bird Directive which are transposed into Northern Ireland law through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2019. Terrestrial impacts to marine ecology is considered under the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, however this is outside of the scope of Marine Licensing.

8.7 The D3 site is located close to designated sites, with multiple protected sites adjacent and in the surrounding area. The numerous designations reflect the ecological importance of Belfast Lough, particularly for ornithological and marine mammal features.

8.8 There is one designation on the site a number of designations apply to the surrounding area:

- The D3 site is designated as the Inner Belfast Lough ASSI
Designated for Invertebrate assemblage, Black-tailed Godwit, Great Cormorant, Curlew, Dunlin, Eider, Goldeneye, Great Crested Grebe, Knot,

Lapwing, Mallard, Oystercatcher, Red-breasted Merganser, Redshank,
Ringed Plover, Scaup, Shelduck, Turnstone

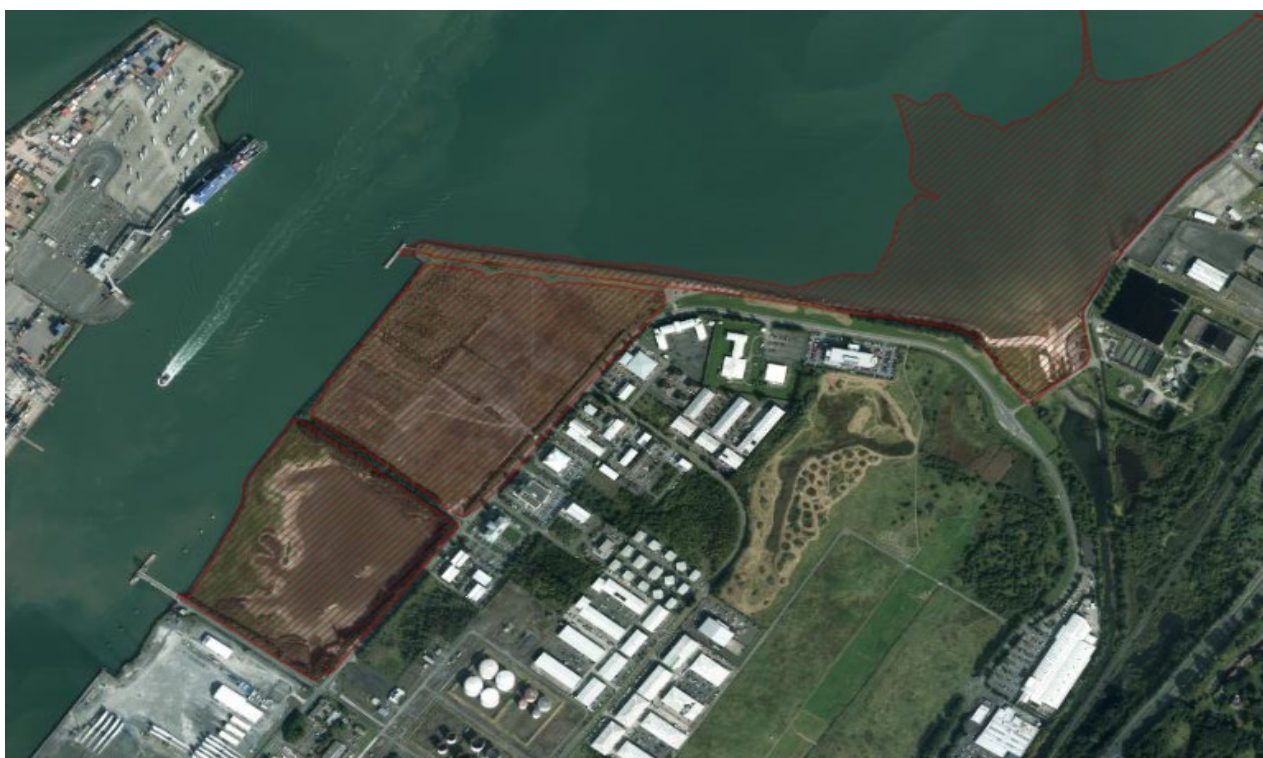


Figure 6: Inner Belfast Lough ASSI designation

- Belfast Lough RAMSAR site is adjacent
Designated for its importance as a wetland habitat, particularly for wintering wildfowl and waders, including internationally important numbers of Redshank
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA adjacent
Designated to protect internationally important populations of wintering birds, particularly Great Crested Grebes
- East Coast Marine pSPA is adjacent
Designated to protect wintering populations of Red-throated Diver and Eider Duck, as well as rafting Manx Shearwater and foraging Sandwich, Common and Arctic Tern originating from adjoining colonies
- Belfast Lough SPA is adjacent

Designated to protect internationally important numbers of winter waterfowl and waders, particularly Redshank

- North Channel SAC is approximately 10.8 miles from the site
Designated to protect Harbour Porpoise, which use this site as a wintering area
- Outer Belfast Lough MCZ is approximately 11.4 miles from the site
Designated to protect a well-established population of Ocean Quahog and its associated habitat of sublittoral sand
- The Maidens SAC is approximately 17 miles from the site
Designed to protect a range of primary marine features, including reef, sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater, and Grey Seal.

8.9 The proposed works have the potential to impact marine ecology features in three main ways, through the construction of the quay wall, dredging of the berthing pocket and the disposal of dredged material at sea. Potential impacts during the operational phase through vessel movement and underwater noise have also been considered.

8.10 A full analysis of overall impacts to ornithological features has been undertaken separately. Marine mammals most commonly occurring in the lough were considered through the ES and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) including Harbour Porpoise, Bottlenose Dolphins, Grey Seals and Common Seals connected impacts from visual changes, water quality, and noise, to marine mammal features have also been considered.

8.11 There is a risk of disturbance to marine mammals through underwater noise during the piling works and dredge activities, as well as ongoing impacts during the operational phase such as continuous vessel movement and associated noise generation. Whilst the ES has assessed the risks as minor, effective mitigation is in place under the extant licence and the proposed conditions for the new licences for the protection of marine mammals. Mitigation includes soft start procedures and time limitation on piling operations, the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) and Marine Monitoring Observer (MMO) for marine mammal monitoring, and continuous monitoring of suspended sediments and dissolved oxygen throughout the dredge activity. A Notice to Mariners will also be issued to marine users berthed at D3 and observational evidence has suggested that seals are habituated to existing harbour activities, therefore, the construction related impacts are considered acceptable with appropriate mitigation.

8.12 Consultees have raised no concerns in respect of the impacts to ecology from the proposals. Consultees have provided advice on required mitigation as noted above, and there will be a high level of ongoing engagement with relevant consultees throughout the proposed licensable period of works. Marine licensing is content that adherence to the mitigation and monitoring will ensure no long lasting significant impacts on marine mammal features as part of this proposal.

Water Quality

8.13 All elements of the proposed works have the potential to impact water quality, the construction of the quay, dredging of the berthing pocket and disposal of dredged material at sea, and in surface water drainage/management during operation. The construction phase of the project involves the use of a significant quantity of concrete (7,000 m³ below the HMWS mark) which, when unset, is highly alkaline and will impact water quality if washed into the marine environment. Dredging and disposal activities can stir up sediment, suspending it in the water column, facilitating movement of sediment for considerable distances where it can have significant impacts following resettlement, particularly on sessile or sedentary organisms and filter feeders, which can be quickly smothered. Runoff from terrestrial sites can carry pollutants for example fuel and oil into the marine environment through drains and outfalls.

8.14 Water quality is also a core policy of the dMPNI and requires public authorities and developers to consider and address any impacts of proposals on water quality. It also requires the applicant to have regard to River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) and the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The WFD is transposed into domestic law by the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations 2017. While the WFD sets the legal framework for managing water resources, RBMPs outline specific actions to achieve the WFD's objectives within each designated river basin district. The new ES includes consideration of the 2021-2027 cycle of the RBMPs, which were previously absent from the 2017 ES.

8.15 Under the WFD, Belfast Lough and the River Lagan fall within the Northeastern River Basin District. Belfast Harbour is classified as a heavily modified water body and is currently at moderate ecological potential. Inner Belfast Lough is currently at moderate ecological status, predominately due to dissolved inorganic nitrogen and specific pollutant concentrations. The objectives of the 2021 – 2027 RBMP are that Belfast Harbour is of good ecological potential and Inner Belfast Lough is of good ecological status by 2027. However, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) review in 2024 found that Northern Ireland is not on track to meet it's 2027 objectives. A report from the Department of Infrastructure titled "Living with Water in Belfast", published in 2021, also makes specific note of the deteriorating water quality in Belfast Lough.

- 8.16 The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the 'OSPAR Convention'), governs the disposal of dredged material at sea and has a strong focus on water quality. This sets out the requirements for sediment sampling prior to dredging works to ensure that sediment is not contaminated and thus will not have significant negative effects on water quality at or near disposal sites. This was a consideration for the proposed works and was a principal reason for the requirement for sediment samples to be collected in 2023/24 in support of the applications for the D3 project. These new samples found no contamination of sediments for disposal.
- 8.17 Monitoring ahead of works will establish a baseline level of water quality, which can then be compared during and after the works have been completed. The methods for both the dredging and disposal works are such that they reduce the amount of sediment released. For example, the dredging will use an environmental bucket or clamshell grab bucket to minimise disturbance and reduce the amount of material which escapes during works. The modelling detailed within Chapter 11 of the ES also shows that the likely sediment plumes generated by dredging activities are likely to be highly localized and short-lived. All run-off from the terrestrial portion of the site will pass through oil interceptors prior to discharge. Marine Licensing are content that the issues detailed above are effectively mitigated against in respect to the proposed works.
- 8.18 While the proposals are unlikely to aid the achievement of WFD targets, they are also unlikely to hinder them significantly. Consultees were also content with the proposed works, with no objections on grounds of water quality. As such, Marine Licensing are content with the proposed mitigation and adherence to DAERA standing advice on pollution, the proposed works, while likely to have impacts on water quality in the short term, are unlikely to have significant long-term effects on water quality within Belfast Harbour or the wider Belfast Lough.

Flood Risk

- 8.19 The strategic Flood Maps (NI) indicate that the site may be partially situated in the Q200 coastal flood plain and therefore flood risk is relevant, both under the present-day scenario and the climate predictions (see Fig. 5.). The flooding under both scenarios covers an area in the northern margin of the site which under revised plans, now being considered by Belfast City Council shows the access road to the site.
- 8.20 DfI Flood Maps (NI) Climate Change- Floodplain Rivers, indicated that there is no floodplain rivers in the locality of the D3 site and no likelihood of river flooding at the D3 site under either the present or climate scenarios. The D3 site is at risk of surface water flooding in low-lying areas and hollows, under both scenarios.

Again, the access road in its new position may be affected, prior to regrading and flood mitigation works detailed in the updated D3 ES.

- 8.21 Under Planning application LA04/2016/0421/F the flood risk was considered in relation to Policy FLD1 of PPS 15 Planning and Flood Risk, it was considered to be an exception under the policy as a 'water compatible development such as boat mooring, navigation and water based recreation, which for operational reasons has to be located in the flood plain', and was dealt with within the ES, Rivers Agency made a number of recommendations that were conditioned including raising the development out of the Q200 coastal flood plain of 3.17 OD Belfast and also to build a freeboard of 600mm across the site flood plain. There is further consideration given to this matter under Coastal Processes and Climate Change below.



Figure 7. Coastal flooding under the 2080 climate scenario.

Ornithology

- 8.22 The proximity of the proposed works to both the D2 RSBP wildlife reserve, Belfast's Window on Wildlife (WOW), as well as to numerous European and national sites designated for their birdlife, highlights the importance of the proposed works in an ornithological context. There are risks to ornithological features from the construction phase, including disturbance from workers,

artificial lighting, and noise, as well as on-going threats from operational activities, for example noise from arriving and departing ships, as well as the presence of large vessels blocking flight paths in to and from the D2 reserve.

- 8.23 Natural Heritage is a core policy of the dMPNI, which states that public authorities must consider any potential impacts from proposals on other habitats, species or features of importance. It is also a criminal offence to harm or kill a statutorily protected species or to damage their habitats, breeding sites, or resting places. The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 also offers strict legal protection to all wild birds, while the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, amended the Wildlife Order by including protection for nests, making it an offence to recklessly take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. As such nesting boxes for black guillemots were installed in 2025 to provide breeding space to compensate for potential habitat loss during construction, to comply with these restrictions. The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 also puts in place a general duty on public bodies to further the conservation and enhancement of ASSI features; the proposed works lie within the Inner Belfast Lough ASSI. As such, protection of ornithological features is a priority for the department when making EIA and marine licence decisions in or near protected sites.
- 8.24 The observations made in the surveys to inform the ES show that most birds are more than capable of altering their behaviours and flight paths in response to minor or moderate disturbance. Indeed, Belfast Harbour is an inherently busy and noisy environment, and so birds are subject to disturbance on a regular basis and are acclimatised to regular, minor disturbance. For example, all species of bird observed during the pre-application observations often flew over or around docked cruise ships when travelling to or from feeding grounds and their roosts in the D2 reserve, without a significant change in direction. Oystercatchers are identified in the ES as the species most likely to be negatively impacted by longer-term operational activities due to their fixed flight paths and habits when entering and leaving the D2 reserve, particularly as they seem reluctant to cross the line of screening trees and generally enter through a fixed point on the seaward side of the reserve. However, flocks of Oystercatchers were observed splitting and regrouping to pass obstacles and it is anticipated that they would behave similarly in respect to moored cruise ships.
- 8.25 There are unlikely to be significant risks to ornithological features caused by the dredging and disposal works, outside the impacts of spilled and suspended sediment on the populations of key prey items (e.g. fish), which are likely to be negligible and short-term in their nature.
- 8.26 While the impacts of the physical presence of moored cruise ships are difficult to negate, the impacts of physical disturbance by workers, both during construction

and normal operations, as well as noise have been mitigated through noise monitoring, planting of additional trees to screen D2, controlled lighting spill from site lights, and bird monitoring by independent ecologists. A notice to mariners is also in effect instructing cruise ships not to engage either the horn or the entertainment systems until outside the confines of the navigation channel within the Harbour Estate to reduce noise of ships arriving or leaving the development. Marine Licensing are content that the issues raised above are mitigated sufficiently, wherever possible.

- 8.27 Consultees have no concerns in respect of the impacts of the proposed works on ornithological features; the NIEA Ornithology team now sit on the D3 Steering Group and are engaged with regular conversation with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners as works progress. The RSPB are also engaged with the works to ensure that any impacts on the D2 reserve are identified quickly and rectified. Marine Licensing are content that there will be no long-lasting, significant impacts on ornithological features due to the proposed works.

Coastal Processes

- 8.28 The construction of a 340-metre quay wall, along with associated dredging of a significant berthing pocket, is likely to have an impact on coastal processes. The new development has the potential to affect current flow, wave environment, and sediment transport of the immediate environment of the Victoria Channel and could have impacts further afield into the wider Belfast Lough.
- 8.29 Coastal processes is a core policy of the dMPNI, which defines the broad term incorporating a number of processes in the marine area and includes, but is not limited to, sediment transport, coastal change through erosion and accretion, wave dynamics, current flows, and inundation of the land by the sea through coastal flooding. The dMPNI requires public authorities and proposers to consider and address any adverse impacts from proposals on coastal processes and conversely, how coastal processes may impact on proposals. Regulation 43 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 as amended also states that projects or developments which could disrupt coastal processes must be evaluated to ensure they do not adversely affect the integrity of a European site. There are designated European sites, including an SPA and a Ramsar site, adjacent to the D3 site.
- 8.30 The Bateman Formula 1967 is a UK administrative arrangement relating to coastal development strategies. Under the Bateman Formula, cost-benefit analysis often favours defending existing structures and coastline position through the use of hard structure, which can put it at odds with conservation goals and the more modern Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, which attempts to move away from this restrictive approach. The Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Strategy for Northern Ireland provides a long-term framework to balance the

requirements for sustainable economic activity with environmental protections. As set out above Belfast Harbour is a heavily modified waterbody and is host to a significant hard coastline, including quays, revetments, and other coastal defence. The site at D3 is reclaimed land and, as such, was already protected by hard rock armour revetments for its entire seaward boundary. As such, the development of a long (340 m) quay wall is unlikely to significantly alter the character of the area, in terms of the land-sea interface.

- 8.31 The relevant legislation and policies therefore require consideration of coastal processes when considering environmental impacts. The bulk of the evidence on impacts to coastal processes in the ES comes from computational modelling, which perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of the site and the surrounding harbour environment, predicts little change to current flows, sediment transfer, or the wave environment within Belfast Harbour or Belfast Lough as a result of the construction of the quay wall or the berthing pocket. The ephemeral impacts of the dredging works, while potentially generating high suspended sediment concentrations (between 100 mg/L and 1,000 mg/L), are predicted to be localised and short-lived, with little change to bed thickness adjacent to the berthing pocket after dredging ends. There are no expected impacts on coastal processes from the sea disposal of dredged sediment.
- 8.32 DAERA MFD Conservation and Reporting - Coastal Processes noted the importance of considering rising sea levels and the increased intensity of storm events which the applicant has considered in more detail in the updated ES. Impacts of the proposed works on coastal processes therefore also considers the impacts of climate change, the analysis predicted little change in wave climate in Belfast Harbour, even during simulated 1 in 100-year storm events.
- 8.33 The potential risks have however been mitigated against and are embedded in the project design and the methods used for dredging the berthing pocket. For example, the design of the quay wall and the berthing pocket have been designed with gradual slopes to reduce turbulence and the rate, timing, and sequence of the dredging works and the use of closed systems for barge transport to the disposal area reduces the sediments loss to the marine environment during works. Marine Licensing are content that the potential for negative effects of the proposed works on coastal processes has been sufficiently examined with design and operational measures proposed.
- 8.34 The UK Hydrographic Office also raised no concerns with the proposed works, stating in their response that they are in regular contact with the Port of Belfast and receive all the relevant information required to update their charts directly from the port. Marine Licensing are content that there will be no significant impacts of the proposed construction, dredging, or disposal works on coastal processes.

Noise and Vibration

- 8.35 Potential noise and vibration impacts on nearby receptors were assessed using worst-case assumptions and cruise ship data from D1 was used to inform predictions for D3. Baseline noise was found to be generally low to moderate, construction noise, including night-time dredging, is expected to remain temporary, controlled and within acceptable limits. Operational noise is predicted to remain below relevant background levels, with no significant adverse effects expected and; Cruise ship noise is also predicted to remain within acceptable daytime and night-time thresholds, subject to normal operational controls.
- 8.36 Construction vibration was also assessed, with piling identified as the main source. Nearby non-residential buildings may experience noticeable vibration, but within safe and tolerable levels, especially with prior notification. Homes are much farther away and are not expected to experience noticeable vibration. Predicted levels are well below those that could cause cosmetic or structural damage.
- 8.37 Standard mitigation measures will control construction noise and vibration, including the use of quieter plant, shutting down idle equipment, careful plant siting, temporary barriers where needed, vibration monitoring, and keeping local communities informed. Good operational management will keep noise controlled once the berth is in use, any exceedances will be controlled by Belfast City Council as the relevant authority.
- 8.38 However, the ES does not assess underwater noise effects on marine mammals or other wildlife, so it does not fully address marine ecological or species protection requirements. Activities such as drilling and piling can generate intense underwater noise that may injure, disorient or kill marine life. These effects therefore require careful assessment and, where needed, mitigation.
- 8.39 The dMPNI and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 require development to support sustainable use while protecting the marine environment. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is in place and has guided site operations to date, in addition other safeguards include an independent Ecological Clerk of Works and a suitably qualified Marine Mammal Observer. These specialists will be required to continue to oversee works, ensure piling follows recognised soft-start procedures, and provide monitoring and reporting to the licensing authority. Advance notification, test periods and compliance with national marine noise reporting requirements will also help protect marine wildlife throughout construction.
- 8.40 Inland Fisheries supported the proposed mitigation and recommended a precautionary approach to protect migratory fish, particularly Atlantic salmon and sea trout. Conditions for seasonal restrictions on marine-based percussive piling,

including further limits on night-time piling during key migration periods, will help protect vulnerable life stages while allowing the project to proceed responsibly.

Contamination

- 8.41 The principal sources of contamination in relation to the proposed works are contaminants in the dredged material and contaminated ground, groundwaters, and ground gas. The development could cause contaminated sediment to be released into the water column, either during dredging, or disposal, or both. There is also risk of the development leading to contaminated soil, groundwater, or ground gas being released from the site and impacting human or environmental health.
- 8.42 Sediment samples taken prior to submission of the original licence application in 2016 showed a localised area of tributyltin (TBT) contamination within the material to be dredged. This led to plans to remove around 25,000 m³ of the dredged material to the Musgrave Bund within the harbour, rather than to dispose of it at sea. However, following further sediment sampling in late 2024 and early 2025, it was shown the contamination was not present and that the previous results showing high levels of TBT were likely due to the presence of chips of anti-fouling paint within the sample. As such, the entirety of the dredged material is planned to be disposed of at sea. The material complies with the OSPAR convention on the disposal of sediment at sea. There is limited risk of significant contamination during the construction works, but those risks which exist are covered in the Water Quality section of this case officer assessment.
- 8.43 Contamination in the terrestrial area is outside the remit of the DEARA and has been dealt with through the planning regime. However, in brief, intrusive ground investigations were carried out to assess the contamination of soils, groundwater, and ground gases around the terrestrial portion of the site, alongside a desk-based study to examine the potential sources for contamination and pollutant linkages. The results found that there was no significant contamination of soil or groundwaters, and that ground gas posed no meaningful risk to users of the site.
- 8.44 Mitigations to avoid negative effects of contaminated sediment on the marine environment are embedded in the project plan and the methods for dredging and disposal works. For example, the dredging of any suspected contaminated material will be carried out using environmental bucket or a clamshell grab bucket, which reduces spill of sediment during works. Any contaminated sediment will be transported to the Musgrave Bund by barge, and no overspill will be permitted. As such, Marine Licensing are content that risks of contamination in terms of dredged sediments are effectively mitigated against.
- 8.45 Consultees raised no concerns in respect of contamination of marine and Marine Licensing is content that there is no risk of contamination or spread of contaminants as a result of the proposed works.

Climate

- 8.46 There is a need to consider duties under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, especially those set out in section 52(1), which imposes legal duties on all Northern Ireland Departments to exercise their functions in a manner consistent with achieving emissions reduction targets. The applicant proposes putting measures in place to reduce the impact on emissions generated from the methods involved in both the construction and operational phases of this project. Two main areas were assessed- the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from the construction and operational phases, as well as evaluating risks from climate change to the project itself.
- 8.47 This chapter has been significantly updated since the initial ES was submitted in 2017 to reflect the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 (CCA). Calculations set out in this chapter and associated appendices have been determined through a high level of dependency on existing baseline data from reliable professional sources, aligned with climate change policies and objectives, extensive desk-based modelling, with a 'worst case scenario' approach being applied and future policy related decarbonisation schemes not accounted for.
- 8.48 Under section 13 of the CCA, each Northern Ireland government department has a duty to develop and publish sectoral plans to assess and set out how their sector will contribute to achieving targets within the Climate Change Act (NI) (CCA) and their potential impacts. To date, Department for Energy (DfE) is the only executive department with a sectoral plan in place for the energy sector; no other department has published plans to date. In the absence of a sectoral plan to assess the infrastructure sector and impacts on GHG emissions, marine licensing officials cannot comment on climate change considerations across departments.
- 8.49 Belfast Harbour Commissioners also have their own de-carbonisation schemes in place the 'Belfast Harbour Energy Policy Statement', Since 2015 they have seen a 71% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in their own operations, and by 2027 they expect to have reduced these by over 93%. Since 2019, they have worked towards net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions (by 2030), cutting emissions by 35% in 2024 to 1,188 tCO₂e through fleet decarbonisation, HVO fuel and renewable electricity.

They have also improved the transparency of wider emissions reporting and employed updated methodologies to strengthen the accuracy and consistency of their reporting. Under Scope 3 BHC track emissions from ocean-going vessels entering the port, even though they do not control these operations directly. This enhances transparency and helps prepare for future changes in maritime fuels and regulatory frameworks.

- 8.50 This chapter recommends measures in addition to those set out above to reduce the impact of the project on GHG emissions and recommends that all embedded mitigation measures already committed to under the extant consents should continue to be implemented. Measures include, use of corrosion-resistant metals and high-quality concrete with protective coatings for all marine/offshore elements; sustainable design techniques to withstand high wind loads and use of materials designed to withstand temperature fluctuations and employing a range of energy efficiency measures. The measures proposed are considered sufficient to ensure no new or significant climate change effects arise from the proposal.
- 8.51 Marine licensing officials note that the conclusions and recommendations are reasonable and in line with the existing Climate Change core policy under the dMPNI and general guidance for measures appropriate to the type and scale of development and operational use. A condition is recommended to ensure the measures are carried out as proposed.

General Impacts:

Air Quality

- 8.52 The D3 proposal was assessed for construction and operational air quality effects, including impacts on nearby sensitive ecological receptors. Baseline air quality is influenced by existing harbour and transport activity, but relevant pollutant levels remain below statutory objectives and the site is outside an AQMA.
- 8.53 Detailed modelling indicates no exceedance of UK or EU air quality objectives and negligible changes at all receptors. Construction dust and odour effects are low and can be managed through standard mitigation. Operational traffic- and shipping-related emissions are also predicted to be negligible, with no significant cumulative effects. Overall, the assessment is policy compliant, aligned with the Draft Marine Plan and Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and raised no consultee concerns.

Marine Archaeology & Cultural Heritage

- 8.54 The proposed development has potential to impact upon marine archaeology and cultural heritage, including both known and previously unrecorded heritage assets. For the purposes of the assessment, cultural heritage includes marine and terrestrial archaeology, historic wrecks, architectural heritage and other historic assets. There is a potential for effects arising during construction, particularly dredging activities, which without proper mitigation could serve as a major risk to the historic environment.

- 8.55 The site lies within a heavily modified industrial harbour of reclaimed land and dredged channels, repeatedly disturbed by historic harbour works and maintenance dredging.
- 8.56 Desk studies, walkover survey and historic mapping identified no recorded cultural heritage assets within the site. A small number of archaeological features are known within the wider 1 km study area, including submerged prehistoric landscapes and a few ship and aircraft wrecks, none of which are designated or within the development footprint.
- 8.57 Previous archaeological monitoring during dredging at Belfast Harbour, including nearby D1 and Victoria Terminal, found no material of significance. This suggests low archaeological potential, although previously unrecorded marine heritage assets cannot be ruled out entirely.
- 8.58 The main construction risk is that capital dredging could disturb previously unrecorded archaeological material, including historic wrecks and submerged prehistoric deposits. Proposed mitigation includes appointing a qualified maritime archaeologist, implementing a Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries, monitoring and reporting dredging works as required, applying a Written Scheme of Investigation where conditioned, and halting works to consult DAERA if archaeological material is found.
- 8.59 During operation, the development is not expected to adversely affect the setting of historic buildings, scheduled monuments or other designated heritage assets, given its location within an established harbour with large-scale maritime infrastructure. Cumulative effects with other marine and terrestrial projects in Belfast Harbour have been considered. DAERA agreed the proposed construction-phase mitigation, archaeological monitoring and discovery protocol are proportionate to the assessed risk and confirmed that no additional archaeology-specific marine geophysical survey is required. Consultees raised no objections on marine archaeology or cultural heritage, subject to implementation of the mitigation.

Seascape

- 8.60 The proposal of the D3 development is of a scale that could have an impact upon the visual Seascape of Belfast Harbour. Seascape is defined as 'landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other'.
- 8.61 Seascape is a core policy of the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, which requires public authorities to consider a proposal's effects on seascape, including existing character, value and capacity for change. The UK Marine Policy Statement is also relevant and similarly requires consideration of existing character and quality, value and capacity to accommodate development.

- 8.62 Chapter 5 of the ES assesses seascape and visual effects from nine key viewpoints, using a worst-case scenario with the largest cruise ship berthed at D3. Marine Licensing also tested the viewpoints and were content they represented the most impactful views and realistic impacts. Landscape and visual effects were also considered under previous marine licences and the extant planning permission. Consistent with the Marine Plan, the assessment recognises that seascape includes both marine and terrestrial components.
- 8.63 No significant seascape effects were identified, with most assessed as minor to moderate. Although berthed cruise ships would be visually prominent, they would not appear incongruous within an established industrial harbour where large vessels are already characteristic. In the absence of cruise ships, the new quay would have little visual effect and would remain compatible with the existing harbour setting. Cumulative effects have also been considered and are not judged harmful. Internal consultees raised no concerns and no additional design conditions are required.

Artificial Lighting

- 8.64 The proposed development of D3 will introduce artificial lighting during both construction and operational phases. Artificial light at night impacts the environment by disrupting nocturnal ecosystems, altering wildlife behaviour, and fragmenting habitats. It can act as an environmental pollutant that disrupts breeding, foraging, and migration for species like birds and insects while contributing to climate change via energy waste. In the marine environment, it can be disorienting to the natural species reliant on natural light cycles.
- 8.65 Therefore, an assessment to consider the adverse effects on surrounding receptors is required and has been completed by the applicant. In design, the lighting must also meet operational and safety requirements whilst minimising light spill, glare and wider light pollution.
- 8.66 Policies that have relevance to lighting within Northern Ireland legislation are: the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which identifies artificial light as a potential statutory nuisance; Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01/21, published by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP); and Environmental considerations for exterior lighting published by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE).
- 8.67 The applicant has assessed the potential effects of artificial lighting in terms of light spill, glare, sky glow and light intrusion, taking account of receptor sensitivity, duration of lighting, distance from lighting sources and existing background conditions. Due to location, commercial premises and road users are identified as the primary receptors and are considered to have a low sensitivity to change in lighting levels.

- 8.68 The assessment concludes that construction and operational lighting effects will be negligible and that no significant impacts on surrounding receptors are expected. This reflects the site's location within an existing industrial and commercially lit environment, with background lighting already provided by street, harbour, car park, shipping and aviation sources.
- 8.69 Construction lighting will be temporary, directed away from sensitive areas and used only when required. Operational lighting to the quay, access road and perimeter will use directional fittings, shields and controlled mounting heights to minimise spill and glare while maintaining safety. The assessment follows recognised Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance, no consultees raised concerns, and no additional mitigation was requested. Marine Licensing is therefore satisfied that the proposed lighting is acceptable and will not result in significant adverse effects.

Traffic and Transport

- 8.70 The Traffic and Transport chapter assesses traffic generation and related effects for the proposed D3 Cruise Berthing Facility. 200 cruise vessels are expected to use the facility each year, typically in the cruise season March to September. The survey relies on observed traffic data from cruise operations at the adjacent D1 berth, including surveys from 2015 and 2025, rather than solely on theoretical modelling.
- 8.71 The comparison of 2015 and 2025 survey data indicates that differences between cruise and non-cruise days are generally below 10%, which falls within normal daily traffic variation. The applicant's data also shows lower baseline traffic in 2025 than in 2015, reducing the likelihood of capacity impacts on the surrounding road network.
- 8.72 In addition to cruise operations, the applicant considers the other uses proposed for D3. This includes bulk cargo, project cargo and lay-by activity. HGV-equivalent calculations indicate that traffic levels associated with these non-cruise uses will remain within the traffic impacts already accepted for cruise ship operations at D1. As such, the alternative uses of D3 are not expected to give rise to greater transport impacts than those currently experienced.
- 8.73 Construction traffic associated with the development is assessed as modest. Peak construction flows are estimated at approximately 15 vehicles per hour in two-way movements, which is substantially lower than peak traffic associated with cruise ship days. On this basis, construction traffic is assessed as having a negligible impact on the local road network.
- 8.74 Marine Licensing considers the chapter acceptable overall, but notes some limitations. The reported reduction in baseline traffic between 2015 and 2025 is unexpected given wider evidence of increasing congestion in Belfast, and the

10% daily variation benchmark may be less reliable on congested roads. The chapter also gives limited attention to future modal shift, wider transport decarbonisation policy and active travel measures, and relies mainly on PCU-based metrics focused on traffic volume.

- 8.75 Despite these limitations, the chapter is robust from a traffic engineering perspective and traffic generated in the marine area. It shows that cruise activity produces less than 10% traffic variation, no significant highway capacity issues are predicted, and construction and alternative D3 uses remain within acceptable limits. The assessment is also broadly aligned with the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, as no significant increase in road traffic, emissions or cumulative transport effects is identified. Consultees raised no concerns on traffic and transport. The extant Planning permission considered these impacts and the current amendment application will review impacts again and will also consider DFI Roads' assessment of the terrestrial elements.

Terrestrial Ecology

- 8.76 Terrestrial ecology falls outside DAERA Marine Licensing's remit and is addressed through the Planning system. The D3 development could affect terrestrial ecology through habitat loss and disturbance. The D3 access road relocation retains some habitat for conservation, including an exclusion zone for the recorded Bee Orchid.
- 8.77 The applicant completed ecological surveys between 2015 and 2017, including Phase 1 habitat and species surveys for bats, otters, common lizards, smooth newts, badgers and marsh fritillary butterflies which was extensively assessed by DFI Planning and Shared Environmental Services through the HRA and Appropriate Assessment under LA04/2016/0421/F and any potential impacts were mitigated as part of the application. These effects are addressed primarily through ecological monitoring and retained habitat measures.
- 8.78 There is also an updated ES submitted as part of a current application LA04/2026/ 0442/F and terrestrial ecology will be considered again by Belfast City Council and Shared Environmental Services who have been consulted.

Human Health

- 8.79 The D3 proposal was assessed for potential human health effects during construction and operation, including transport, air quality, noise and vibration, water quality and employment, using a population-health methodology aligned with Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and WHO guidance.

- 8.80 The surrounding area includes communities with above-average health inequalities and nearby sensitive receptors such as schools, care homes and recreational areas. Construction impacts are expected to be small, temporary and not significant. Short-term impacts on traffic, air quality, noise and water quality can be managed through standard mitigation, leaving only minor residual effects. Operational impacts are expected to be minor overall, with some benefits identified, mainly through job creation, employment and income, with no significant adverse effects and no significant cumulative health effects identified.
- 8.81 Overall, the assessment supports sustainable development with no significant health risks, is consistent with relevant marine and climate policy, and raised no consultee concerns.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Environmental Statement, supporting information and consultation responses demonstrate that the proposed construction, dredging and disposal works at Site D3 can proceed without unacceptable significant adverse environmental effects, provided the proposed mitigation, monitoring, conditions and informatives are imposed through the Marine Licences:

ML2025053 (Construction licence)

ML2025054 (Dredge Licence)

ML2025055 (Disposal licence)

- 9.2 The proposal is consistent with the relevant legislative and policy framework, including the Marine Works Regulations, the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and the UK Marine Policy Statement. Consultees raised no objections in principle, whilst a number recommended conditions and informatives to ensure appropriate environmental safeguards.
- 9.3 Overall, the assessment finds that likely effects on marine ecology, water quality, ornithology, coastal processes, noise and vibration, air quality, archaeology, seascape, lighting, traffic and human health are either not significant, temporary and manageable, or acceptable subject to mitigation. Matters outside Marine Licensing's remit, including terrestrial planning considerations, continue to be addressed through the planning process. On this basis, the proposal is considered environmentally acceptable over both the construction period and the operational life of the licensed marine activities.

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1 It is therefore recommended that, under Regulation 22 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended), EIA

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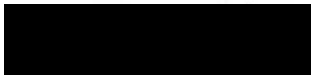
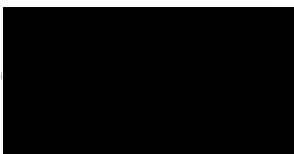
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consent is granted for the proposed works, subject to the proposed conditions and informatives.

10.2 Proposed draft conditions are attached at Annex C

10.3 The applicant has discharged a number of conditions, some of these conditions may be repeated and amendments may be required to conditions which have not been discharged to date.

Lead Case Officer	Name: 	Signature:  Date: 15 May 2026
Support Case Officer	Name: 	Signature:  Date: 15 May 2026
Head of Branch	Comments: Agree Case Officers report and recommendations Name: 	Signature:  Date: 15 May 2026

ANNEX A - Marine and Planning History

Relevant Marine Licensing and Planning History

Licensing History

Ref ID: ML122_15 Marine Construction Licence

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Marine Construction Licence granted

Decision date: 01/08/2022 valid to 31 July 2025.

Ref ID: ML149_16 Dredging of the Berthing Pocket
Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Marine Dredge Licence granted

Decision date: 01/08/2022 valid to 31 July 2025

Ref ID: ML150_16

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates,

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access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Marine Disposal Licence Granted

Decision date: 01/08/2022 valid until 31 July 2025

Ref ID: MLVAR2025026 Marine Construction Licence

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Variation to Marine Construction Licence granted

Decision date: 31/07/2025 valid to 30 Nov 2025.

Ref ID: MLVAR2025027 Marine Dredge Licence

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Variation Marine Dredge Licence granted

Decision date: 31/07/2025 valid to 30 Nov 2025.

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Ref ID: MLVAR2025028 Marine Disposal Licence

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Variation to Marine Disposal Licence granted

Decision date: 31/07/2025 valid to 30 Nov 2025

****Current extant licence**

Ref: MLVAR2025061 Marine Construction Licence

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: D3 at Belfast Harbour

Decision: Marine Construction Licence granted

Decision date: 29/11/2025 valid to 01/07/2026

Note: The Kinnegar Jetty removal was completed in quarter two of 2025 under the previous licence ML122_15. This was completed to facilitate planned dredging at the site in 2026 and 2027

Current Marine Licences

Ref ID: ML2025053 Marine Construction Licence

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Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of 340m long solid quay with mooring dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length. Associated terrestrial works include heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing and landscaping. The works are located at

Address: D3, within Belfast Harbour Estate, opposite Victoria Terminal 4.

Decision: Pending

Ref ID: ML2025054 Marine Dredge Licence

Proposal: The capital dredging of 372,000 m³ of seabed material to create a berthing pocket to -9.8m CD, in relation to the construction of a new multipurpose facility at D3 for berthing cruise ships in addition to lay by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk and dry bulk during cruise ship off season.

Address: D3, within Belfast Harbour Estate, opposite Victoria Terminal 4.

Decision: Pending

Ref ID: ML2025055 Marine Disposal Licence

Proposal: The sea disposal of 372,000m³ of capital dredge material removed from the harbour seabed to create a berthing pocket in relation to the construction of a new multipurpose facility at D3 for berthing cruise ships in addition to lay by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk and dry bulk during cruise ship off season. TBT contaminated material will be removed with an environmental bucket and moved for containment within the Musgrave bunded site. Sea Disposal is at the North Channel Disposal Ground

Address: D3, within Belfast Harbour Estate, opposite Victoria Terminal 4.

Decision: Pending

Planning History

Ref ID: LA04/2016/0421/F

Proposal: Construction of a new multi-purpose facility at D3 for berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk & dry bulk during cruise ship off-season. Development comprises the construction of a 340m long solid quay with mooring

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dolphins, dredging of the berthing pocket & infilling behind the new quay wall using imported clean fill materials, construction of a 25m wide piled relieving slab along the quay length, with heavy duty paving surfacing on the quay/slab hinterland, access road, security gates, access barrier & kiosk at Airport Road West, modular terminal building, shore side facilities, lighting, fencing, and landscaping.

Address: Land at D3, adjacent to the RSPB Reserve. Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9DY.

Decision: Granted

Decision date: 23/07/2019

Ref ID: LA04/2025/0904/PAN

Proposal: Revisions to terrestrial elements of Planning Permission ref: LA04/2016/0421/F (Construction of a new multi-purpose berthing facility at D3) comprising upgrade of existing access track along eastern boundary of site and installation of associated street lighting/parking area; security hut; relocation of main cruise terminal building and associated parking/drop-off areas; additional baggage building; and other associated site works in respect of lighting, landscaping, ancillary infrastructure and existing access adjacent to RSPB lands.

Address: Land at D3, adjacent to the RSPB Reserve. Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9DY.

Status: Served

- To note: Applicant received a Section 26 determination from DFI confirming that this proposed application could be dealt with as a Major development by the council.

Current Planning Application

Ref: LA04/2026/0442/F

Revisions to terrestrial elements of Planning Permission ref. LA04/2016/0421/F (Construction of a new multi-purpose berthing facility at D3) comprising upgrade of existing access track along northeastern boundary of site and installation of associated street lighting/parking area; additional security hut; relocation and extension of main cruise terminal building and associated parking/drop-off areas with covered walkways; additional baggage building; and other associated site works in respect of lighting, landscaping and ancillary infrastructure. Retention of approved cruise quay with minor relocation of mooring dolphins, 25m wide piled relieving slab along quay length, associated hardstanding on hinterland, tower lights (with one to be relocated), security hut, access road adjacent to RSPB lands and other ancillary works.

Address: Land at D3 adjacent to the RSPB Reserve Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9DY

Decision: Pending

ANNEX B - Table of Consultation Responses

Consultation with Statutory Authorities

Responses were received from the following bodies with a statutory remit during the EIA and Marine Licence consultation process.

Consultation Body	Response Received	Response	Mitigation Required Y/N
[REDACTED] - Consultation Register – D3 ML2025053 / ML2025054 / ML2025055			
DAERA MFD Monitoring & Assessment Team	30/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA MFD Marine Strategy (Bathing Waters & Shellfish Team)	30/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA MFD Sea Fisheries Inspectorate	06/02/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA MFD Aquaculture	29/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA MFD Marine Conservation & Reporting - Marine Wildlife	30/01/2026	No objection subject to Conditions	Y
DAERA MFD Marine Conservation & Reporting - Marine Archaeology	12/01/2026	No objection subject to Conditions	Y
DAERA MFD Marine Conservation & Reporting - Coastal Processes	19/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA NIEA Resource Efficiency Division Water Management Unit (WMU) Planning Team	16/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA, NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED), Biodiversity and Conservation Science Branch (Ornithology)	20/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA, NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED), Biodiversity and	16/12/2025	No objections noted	N

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Conservation Science Branch (Wildlife Team)			
DAERA, NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED), Biodiversity and Conservation Science Branch (Species Team)	14/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA, NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED), Biodiversity and Conservation Science Branch (Habitat Survey Team)	26/01/2026	No objections noted	N
DAERA MFD Inland Fisheries	23/01/2026	No objections subject to Conditions	Y
The Commissioners of Irish Lights	20/01/2026	No objections noted	N
Maritime & Coastguard Agency	03/02/26	No objections noted	N
RSPB	23/01/2026	No objections subject to Conditions requested in previous responses	Y
UK Hydrographic Office	12/12/2025	No objections noted	N

ANNEX C – Draft Conditions

Draft Conditions – D3 Belfast Harbour Estate

The draft conditions are set out under each topic area for ease of reference and not in the order they will appear on any subsequent licences, which will be set out as pre-commencement, during the works and post construction / operational conditions. The rationale for the imposition of conditions is set out in the case officer report attached and the consultee responses.

- **Scale of works and Socio-Economic Considerations**
- **Marine Ecology**
- **Water Quality**
- **Flood Risk**
- **Ornithology**
- **Coastal Processes**
- **Noise and Vibration**
- **Contamination**
- **Climate**
- **Air Quality**
- **Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**
- **Seascape**
- **Artificial Lighting**
- **Traffic and Transport**
- **Terrestrial Ecology**
- **Human Health**

Construction Licence Conditions

General Conditions

1. The Licensee(s) must commence works with **12 months** of the date of this licence.

2. All conditions of this licence bind any persons whom, for the time being, owns, occupies or enjoys any use of the works for which this licence has been granted, in relation to those licensed activities authorised under section 66 of the 2009 Act, whether or not the licence has been transferred to that person.

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3. The Licensee(s) must receive written authorisation from the licensing authority to assign or transfer the consent. The licensing authority must confirm in writing to both the original Licensee(s) and any proposed new Licensee(s) that the licence has been transferred/assigned before any works may commence under the new Licensee(s).

4. The Licensee(s) must not carry out any licensable activity other than that detailed in the Marine Licence application documents received by the licensing authority on 17th October 2025 and deemed complete on 10th December 2025.

5. The Licensee(s) must contact the licensing authority if it is proposed to vary the materials or methods to be used from those described in the documentation supplied in connection with the Marine Licence application.

6. The Licensee(s) must commence works in line with Condition 1 and complete works within the valid dates of this licence. After that date, the licence will expire in accordance with section 71(4) of the Act.

7. The Licensee(s) must ensure that the Department is informed of any contractor appointed to carry out part or all of the works. This information should be provided to the Department by email to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk no less than 24 hours before the commencement of the licensed activity. The licence holder must ensure that a copy of this licence and any subsequent revisions or amendments has been provided to, read and understood by any agents, contractors or sub-contractors that will carry on any licensed activity authorised by this licence on behalf of the licence holder.

Reason: To ensure the Department has an up-to-date record of all contractors working in the marine environment.

8. Any person authorised by the licensing authority will be permitted to inspect the licensed activity at any reasonable time and at regular periods throughout the licensable period, under Part 4, Chapter 2, Section 247 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

9. The Licensee(s) must ensure that copies of the licence are available for inspection by any authorised Enforcement Officer at:

- a. The premises of the Licensee(s)
- b. The premises of the operating facility
- c. The site of the works (including on board vessels)

Reason: Conditions 8 & 9 To ensure the works have no adverse impacts on the marine environment, that appropriate equipment is used, that best practice is being followed, and mitigations are in place.

26. The Licensee(s) must inform the licensing authority of the finishing date of the licensed work within **28 days** of completion.

27. The Licensee(s) must, within **eight weeks** after the completion of the licensed works, make a written report to the licensing authority stating the quantity and description of all articles and substances deposited under the authority of this licence. This report is to be submitted to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk

Water Quality

10. A final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) or Construction Method Statement (CMS) must be submitted to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk at least **8 weeks** prior to the commencement of construction to ensure effective avoidance and mitigation methodologies have been planned for the protection of the water environment. The CEMP/CMS should include:

- References to current Guidance for the Prevention of Pollution (GPP) documents and other relevant good practice documentation.
- References to the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 and supporting mitigation measures in regards to how works will be carried out in compliance with the legislation;
- In-depth site-specific details on the mitigation measures for silt and spoil treatment, cement / concrete / grout, oil / fuel storage and any other potentially polluting discharge generated from the proposed works.
- Details should also be provided of how waste / effluent generated by these activities will be disposed of (e.g. contained and tankered away for disposal at appropriately licenced facilities);
- Specific method statements should be provided for any in-water works (e.g. any proposed piling work);
- Construction phase mapping should also be included, showing the location of features such as silt fencing, settlement ponds, concrete wash-out, wheel washes, refuelling areas, temporary welfare facilities etc, along with any lines of drainage / discharge points.
- The NIEA Pollution Hotline number (0800 80 70 60) which should be added to the list of emergency contacts, along with a timeframe for response, e.g. "In the event of a pollution incident, NIEA should be notified within 30 minutes of the incident occurring.

Human Health Conditions

11. The Licensee(s) must notify The Source Data Receipt team, UK Hydrographic Office, Taunton. Somerset, TA1 2DN (Email: sdr@ukho.gov.uk; Tel: 01823 337900) at least **4 weeks** before commencement of the works, to allow for any necessary amendments to nautical charts. The UK Hydrographic Office must also be notified

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upon completion of the works. MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk must be copied into all notifications.

Reason: To adhere to Maritime Safety Legislation and to protect human health and marine users.

Marine Ecology

12. A biosecurity plan must be submitted and agreed by the Department at least **4 weeks** before works commence. MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk must be copied in on the correspondence.

13. The Licensee must appoint an independent and suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) for the period of this licence. The department must be informed of this appointment prior to any commencement of licenced works by notifying MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk

Reason: To ensure avoidance and mitigation measures have been planned and are followed for the protection of the environment.

15. The Licensee must submit an Environmental Management Plan (EMP)/ Construction Method Statement (CMS) to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk for approval by the licensing authority. This must detail the mitigation and monitoring agreed with the licensing authority, Marine Mammal Observer and the Ecological Clerk of Works. The EMP should include:

- a. An Environmental Management & Monitoring Plan to include vantage-based surveys of the main East Twin Island harbour seal colony before, during and after construction.

Reason: The purpose of these surveys is to monitor seal numbers attending the colony and to help detect any changes in seal behaviour over this period.

29. At the decommissioning stage, the Licensee(s) must ensure the seabed is returned to its original profile. MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk must be consulted 8 weeks in advance on what licensing requirements may be to complete any works.

Ornithology

14. Construction works are not permitted to the original stone embankment between 1 March and 31 August unless a survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ornithologist / Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) confirms that no black guillemots are actively nesting in the construction area, and the results of the survey are submitted in writing to the Department. If black guillemots are found to use the site as a nesting location, then mitigation for the new development must include the provision of nesting boxes.

Reason: To prevent the disturbance of black guillemots as required under The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Noise and Vibration

16. The Licensee(s) must inform the licensing authority **one month** in advance of commencement of piling. A noise risk impact assessment must be produced and submitted to the licensing authority for approval before impact piling can begin.

Reason: To prevent disturbance to sensitive receptors

Reason: To allow the licensing authority time to address any potential risks of noise thresholds being exceeded for nearby Special Areas of Conservation and to prevent disturbance to sensitive receptors.

17. The Licensee shall appoint an independent, JNCC approved, Experienced Marine Mammal Observer(s) (MMO) to ensure suitable coverage for the work at the time of piling operations.

Reason: To ensure there is minimal disturbance and no injury/harm to marine mammals wherever they are present.

18. The appointed MMO shall work in conjunction with the Ecological Clerk of Works.

Reason: To ensure that mitigation to reduce the impacts on seals is adapted and implemented as required and agreed with the licensing authority.

19. The Environmental Management Plan (as per Condition 15) shall be carried out in line with current JNCC Guidelines as appropriate, in particular the guidance for piling in relation to marine mammals: *Statutory nature conservation agency protocol for minimising the risk of injury to marine mammals from piling noise (August 2010)*.

- Piling will be undertaken with a soft start as detailed within JNCC guidelines and as required/adapted by direction of the Marine Mammal Observer.
- The licensing authority must be made aware of any adverse reactions identified through the monitoring as soon as possible.
- A test period to ascertain an appropriate pattern of piling/breaks should be factored into the schedule of works. If the MMO identifies that mitigation is inadequate and that seals are being significantly affected, then works must cease until adequate mitigation proposals have been agreed with the licensing authority.

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The licensing authority will confirm in writing that works can continue on agreement of adequate mitigation.

- A noise report must be submitted to the licensing authority detailing noise inputs to the marine environment as advised by the JNCC Noise Registry guidance. This data should also be submitted online to the [JNCC Marine Noise Registry](#).
- The Marine Noise Register (MNR) is a two-part database, one section providing a 'forward look' and the other providing a 'backward look'. The 'forward look' section collates estimated, planned information for proposed activities, while the 'backward look' section collates the actual (accurate) activity information, after the activity has taken place:
 - The 'forward look' data should be submitted to the MNR database at least one month in advance of commencement of piling or other significant noise disturbance activity.
 - The 'backward look' data should be submitted to the MR database within 8 weeks after the completion of the licensed works.
 - The licensing authority should be notified when this data has been submitted.

Reason: To minimise injury and disturbance to Marine European Protected Species.

20. No percussive marine based piling associated with the marine dolphin piling is to take place between 1 April and 31 May inclusive in any calendar year. (For clarification this excludes quay wall-related piling which is land-based.)

Reason: To minimise the potential impact on the more vulnerable earlier life stages of Atlantic Salmon and sea trout (i.e. during the smolt migration period).

21. No percussive piling within the marine environment is to take place during the hours of darkness between 1 April - 31 May; and 1 July – 31 August inclusive in any calendar year.

Reason: To minimise the potential impact on the migration periods of juvenile (smolt) Atlantic Salmon (April-May) and the primary migration period (July-August) of adult Atlantic Salmon and sea trout

28. The Licensee(s) must maintain records of impact piling or blasting required during construction. The record should include the beginning and end times and duration, e.g. hammer energy blow or explosive charges. Records must be submitted to the licensing authority MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk within **eight weeks** of completion of the licensed works

Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

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22. In the event of a discovery of an archaeological object and/or remains during the works the licensee(s) must: (1) record the position and details of the site; (2) not disturb the site further and (3) report your discovery to and contact MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk immediately so further advice may be sought.

Reason: To ensure that historic monuments and archaeological objects are protected.

23. In the event of a discovery of wreck material during the works, the Licensee must report it to the 'Receiver of Wreck' (Maritime and Coastguard Agency) **within 28 days**

Reason: To ensure that recovered wreck material is declared and dealt with appropriately.

Artificial Lighting

24. Lighting must be constructed to provide shielding to prevent spill into RSPB reserve.

Reason: In the interests of the protection of a designated site and protected wildlife

25. Contractors accessing the RSPB reserve at D2 must, as best as practicably possible, provide advance notification to RSPB.

Reason: In the interests of the protection of a designated site and protected wildlife

30. The specification of new lighting associated with the berth must ensure that light is directed downwards and lateral spill onto the area known as D2 is avoided.

Reason: To ensure the protection of birds

Dredge Licence Conditions

General Conditions

1. The Licensee(s) must commence works with 12 months of the date of this licence.

2. All conditions of this licence bind any persons whom, for the time being, owns, occupies or enjoys any use of the works for which this licence has been granted, in

relation to those licensed activities authorised under section 66 of the 2009 Act, whether or not the licence has been transferred to that person.

3. The Licensee(s) must receive written authorisation from the licensing authority to assign or transfer the consent. The licensing authority must confirm in writing to both the original Licensee(s) and any proposed new Licensee(s) that the licence has been transferred/assigned before any works may commence under the new Licensee(s).

4. The Licensee(s) must not dredge any other material other than that detailed in the Marine Licence application documents received by the licensing authority on 17 October 2026 and deemed complete on 10 December 2025.

5. The Licensee(s) must contact the licensing authority if it is proposed to vary the materials or methods to be used from those described in the documentation supplied in connection with the Marine Licence application.

6. The Licensee(s) must commence works in line with Condition 1 and complete works within the valid dates of this licence. After that date, the licence will expire in accordance with section 71(4) of the Act.

7. The Licensee(s) must ensure that the Department is informed of any contractor appointed to carry out part or all of the works. This information should be provided to the Department by email to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk no less than 24 hours before the commencement of the licensed activity. The licence holder must ensure that a copy of this licence and any subsequent revisions or amendments has been provided to, read and understood by any agents, contractors or sub-contractors that will carry on any licensed activity authorised by this licence on behalf of the licence holder.

Reason: To ensure the Department has an up to date record of all contractors working in the marine environment.

8. Any person authorised by the licensing authority will be permitted to inspect the licensed activity at any reasonable time and at regular periods throughout the licensable period, under Part 4, Chapter 2, Section 247 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

9. The Licensee(s) must ensure that copies of the licence are available for inspection by any authorised Enforcement Officer at:

- a. The premises of the Licensee(s)
- b. The premises of the operating facility
- c. The site of the works (including on board vessels)

Reason: Conditions 8 & 9 To ensure the works have no adverse impacts on the marine environment, that appropriate equipment is used, and that best practice is being followed, and mitigations are in place.

25. The Licensee(s) must inform the licensing authority of the finishing date of the licensed work within **28 days** of completion.

28. The Licensee(s) must ensure that certified returns of quantities of substances deposited under this licence are submitted to the licensing authority. Returns must be submitted for each six-month period within which dredging occurred for any given calendar year; January – June and July – December. Returns shall be submitted within four weeks of a six-month period having passed.

29. The Licensee(s) must provide the licensing authority with post dredge survey data indicating the new bathymetric depths of the dredged locations.

Water Quality

10. The dredging operators must have operational and active AIS vessel tracking during **all** operations. If AIS or vessel positioning systems are faulty, dredge and/or disposal activities must not continue until all systems are repaired/replaced and fully operational.

Reason: To ensure material is being dredged within the appropriate area

17. The Licensee must submit an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) which includes dredge and disposal management to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk for approval by the licensing authority, **4 weeks** prior to dredging activities commence. This will specifically detail further management of:

- Contaminated material, which is not suitable for sea disposal, and will be disposed of within the Musgrave Channel bund.
- Detailed control measures and procedures for dredge management to include monitoring of suspended solids and dissolved oxygen

Reason: To ensure effective avoidance and mitigation measures have been planned for the protection of the water environment and fisheries and aquaculture interests.

19. The Licensee(s) must implement a monitoring programme to ensure suspended sediment levels are kept under control. This will consist of monitoring stations no greater than 200m from the edges of the dredge pocket, one located towards the Lagan end of Victoria Channel, one between the dredge pocket and the shellfish beds in Belfast Lough, and a suitable control site to monitor suspended sediment resultant from the dredging operation.

Reason: To align with appropriate assessment monitoring identified within the sHRA (dated October 2025) as required to ensure no impacts occur to designated sites or species.

20. The monitoring station must be capable of both real time monitoring and reporting of threshold breaches. The thresholds are:

- Suspended solids shall not exceed 300mg/l for more than six hours and not exceed 600mg/l at any point. If these limits are breached, then dredging shall cease immediately until levels of suspended solids drop to less than 300mg/l;
- Dissolved oxygen levels shall not fall below 4mg/l. If this limit is breached, then dredging shall stop until dissolved oxygen rises above 5mg/l.

Reason: To align with appropriate assessment monitoring identified within the sHRA (dated October 2025) as required to ensure no impacts occur to designated sites or species.

21. The Licensee(s) must provide weekly notification to the licensing authority that monitoring is operating as required, including details of times when operations ceased due to control level breaches.

Reason: To align with appropriate assessment monitoring identified within the sHRA (dated October 2025) as required to ensure no impacts occur to designated sites or species.

22. The Licensee(s) must work under the precautionary principle within a Best Practical Environmental Option in the EMP. Under this approach the sediment identified as TBT contaminated above action level two, through the sampling programme shall not be disposed at sea. This material must be removed by an environmental bucket or closed clamshell bucket and transported to the Musgrave bund site for containment.

Reason: To align with appropriate assessment monitoring identified within the sHRA (dated October 2025) as required to ensure no impacts occur to designated sites or species.

30. Within six months of the dredge completion, the Licensee(s) must provide the licensing authority with a post- dredge surface sample analysis from the location of contaminated sediment to confirm the dredging operations have not resulted in exposing or spreading contaminated sediments.

31. The Licensee(s) must ensure that the environmental bucket/clam is fully operational and closed when removing dredged material from the contaminated area

of seabed to avoid unnecessary release of contaminated material to the marine environment. Dredging operations must cease if the environmental bucket or clam shells closing ability is compromised, until such time as the equipment is fully functional.

Human Health

11. The Licensee(s) must notify The Source Data Receipt team, UK Hydrographic Office, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2DN (Email: sdr@ukho.gov.uk; Tel: 01823 337900) at least **4 weeks** before commencement of the dredging activities, to allow for any necessary amendments to nautical charts. The UK Hydrographic Office must also be notified upon completion of the works. MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk must be copied into all notifications.

Marine Ecology

12. A biosecurity plan must be submitted and agreed by the Department at least **4 weeks** before dredging activities commence.

MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk must be copied in on the correspondence.

16. The Licensee must appoint an independent and suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works for the period of this licence. The department must be informed of this appointment prior to any commencement of licenced dredging activity.

Reason: To ensure avoidance and mitigation measures have been planned and are followed for the protection of the environment.

18. No dredging within the marine environment is to take place during the hours of darkness between 1 April - 31 May; and 1 July – 31 August inclusive in any calendar year.

Reason: To minimise the potential impact on the migration periods of juvenile (smolt) Atlantic Salmon (April-May) and the primary migration period (July-August) of adult Atlantic Salmon and sea trout

26. The licensee(s) must, within 8 weeks after the completion of the licensed works, make a written report to the licensing authority stating the quantity and description of all dredging works carried out under the authority of this licence. The report must contain a map showing the areas dredged and bathymetry survey results. This report is to be submitted to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk. This report will be held by the licensing authority and details considered 'Commercial in confidence' should be marked on the report by the Licensee(s).

Reason: To ensure this work had no adverse impact on the marine environment, that appropriate equipment was used, and the best practice was followed, and mitigations were in place.

Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

13. The Licensee(s) must prepare a revised Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) or Programme of Works (PoW) to detail archaeological assessment, and mitigation works necessary for the capital dredge aspect of the project. Capital dredging must not commence until the DAERA Marine & Fisheries Division archaeologist has provided written approval of the WSI/PoW. This should be submitted to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk at least **4 weeks** prior to commencement of dredging activities.

Reason: To ensure that archaeological remains within the application site are properly identified, and protected or appropriately recorded.

14. No capital dredging must take place other than in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). To include the implementation of a Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries (PAD) and a discretionary watching brief. The Licensee(s) will contact these offices to confirm that the mitigation as outlined in the WSI is being implemented through the services of a Retained Archaeologist prior to commencement of works.

Reason: To ensure that archaeological remains within the application site are properly identified, and protected or appropriately recorded.

15. The Licensee(s) will notify this office of any unforeseen Archaeological Exclusion Zones (AEZs) within 24 hours of their discovery.

Reason: To ensure that archaeological remains within the application site are properly identified, and protected or appropriately recorded.

23. In the event of a discovery of an archaeological object and/or remains during the works the licensee(s) must: (1) record the position and details of the site; (2) not disturb the site further and (3) report your discovery to and contact MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk immediately so further advice may be sought.

Reason: To ensure that historic monuments and archaeological objects are protected.

24. In the event of a discovery of wreck material during the works, the Licensee must report it to the 'Receiver of Wreck' (Maritime and Coastguard Agency) **within 28 days**.

Reason: To ensure that recovered wreck material is declared and dealt with appropriately.

27. A programme of post-excavation analysis, preparation of an archaeological report, dissemination of results and preparation of the excavation archive shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). These measures shall be implemented and a final archaeological report shall be submitted to the licensing authority no more than 3 months after completion of works.

Reason: To ensure that the results of archaeological works are appropriately analysed and disseminated and the excavation archive is prepared to a suitable standard for deposition.

Sea Disposal Licence Conditions

General Conditions

1. All conditions of this licence bind any persons whom, for the time being, owns, occupies or enjoys any use of the works for which this licence has been granted, in relation to those licensed activities authorised under Section 66 of the 2009 Act, whether or not the licence has been transferred to that person.

2. The Licensee(s) must ensure that the Department is informed of any contractor appointed to carry out part or all of the works and a copy of this licence is given to each contractor no less than 24 hours before the commencement of the licensed activity. The licence holder must ensure that a copy of this licence and any subsequent revisions or amendments has been provided to, read and understood by any agents, contractors or sub-contractors that will carry on any licensed activity authorised by this licence on behalf of the licence holder.

3. The Licensee(s) must commence works with **12 months** of the date of this licence.

4. The Licensee(s) must receive written authorisation from the licensing authority to assign or transfer the consent. The licensing authority must confirm in writing to both the original Licensee(s) and any proposed new Licensee(s) that the licence has been transferred/assigned before any works may commence under the new Licensee(s)

21. The Licensee(s) must ensure that a log of all the disposal operations is kept and be made available on request by the Department.

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

22. The Licensee(s) must ensure that copies of the licence are available for inspection by any authorised Enforcement Officer at:

- a. The premises of the Licensee(s)
- b. The premises of the operating facility
- c. The site of the works (including on board vessels)

Reason: To ensure the works have no adverse impacts on the marine environment, that appropriate equipment is used, and that best practice is being followed, and mitigations are in place

24. The Licensee(s) must inform MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk of the finishing date of the work within **28 days** of completion.

25. Certified returns to be submitted to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk by end of January 2027 for disposal during the period January (2026) to December (2026). Please note, a NIL return must be submitted, where applicable.

Reason: To allow annual disposal returns to be made to CEFAS for disposal returns in the preceding calendar year, to meet International Maritime Organization and OSPAR reporting requirements.

Water Quality

5. The Licensee(s) must ensure that valid sediment analysis data is supplied to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk and approved by the Department prior to any sea disposal. To ensure the validity of this licence the licensee(s) must submit sediment analysis data **at least 60 days** before the expiration date of the current data sets which expire between **November 2026 and January 2027**.

6. The licence holder must ensure that dredging and disposal operations may only commence once the sampling has been undertaken and that the licensing authority has confirmed in writing that it is satisfied that the material should not be precluded from dredging and disposal activities at the designated sites.

7. The Licensee(s) must ensure no sediments from areas identified as contaminated, through the Licensing Authorities consideration of sediment analysis results, are included for sea disposal. Sediment analysis must be obtained within 3 years of the dredge and disposal unless otherwise authorised by the licensing authority.

8. The licence holder must ensure that, at each 3 year sediment sampling review, alternative uses for the sediment are considered. This information must be supplied to the licensing authority along with the request for a sampling plan.

9. The Licensee(s) must, no less than 24 hours prior to disposal commencing, confirm in writing to the licensing authority that the disposal vessel(s) shall have position fixing capability within a +/- 20m range.

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

10. Recordable position fixing equipment must be used at all times on the disposal vessel to ensure disposal within a 0.50 nautical mile radius of the stated disposal site.

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

15. The Licensee(s) are required to dispose of materials at the Disposal Area(s) stated above. If in the case of 'force majeure' (stress of weather or any other cause threatening the safety of human life or the vessel) dredged material is deposited in any other area, full details of the circumstances should be notified to the licensing authority in writing *within 24 hrs*.

16. The dredging operators must have operational and active AIS vessel tracking during all operations.

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

17. If AIS or vessel positioning systems are faulty, dredge and/or disposal activities must not continue until all systems are repaired/replaced and fully operational. This must be reported immediately to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

18. A timed and dated track plot of position for each disposal run from the dredge site to disposal site shall be provided to the licensing authority one week after the end of each month of dredged material disposal

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

19. The Licensee(s) must ensure that vessel log details (attached as an Annex to this licence) should be completed **within one week** after the end of each month of dredging and disposal operation.

- a. The Licensee(s) may decide to use their own vessel log template with prior written agreement of the licensing authority.
- b. The vessel log should be accompanied by timed and dated tracked plots indicating the route taken, to and from, each disposal event in addition to the position and time for each disposal.

- c. If Licensee(s) cannot provide track plots they must reach agreement with the licensing authority on a suitable method of recording and reporting the position and time for each disposal prior to disposal commencing.

Reason: To ensure material is deposited within the appropriate disposal area

20. The licensee(s) shall confirm to the licensing authority by way of a report and map the specifics of each dredged area which produced the disposal material within **8 weeks** of the dredge completion. This report is to be submitted to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk. This report will be held by the licensing authority and details considered 'Commercial in confidence' should be marked on the report by the Licensee(s).

Reason: To ensure this work will have no adverse impact of the marine environment, that appropriate equipment is used, and that best practice is followed, and mitigations are in place.

Marine Ecology

11. The Licensee(s) must submit a **Disposal Monitoring Plan**, to the licensing authority for agreement prior to disposal. Monitoring of the disposal ground and a suitable control site shall occur pre and post disposal. The licensee(s) shall survey the seabed of the disposal site before disposal operations in addition to a reference site. The Licensee(s) shall agree the survey location and design with the licensing authority prior to its initiation. The survey must include photography/video of the benthos and grab sample. This survey information should be provided in a report format (including still images) to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk within **8 weeks** upon completion of each sea disposal campaign (as per Condition 22).

23. The Licensee(s) must survey the seabed of the disposal site after disposal operations in addition to a reference site. The survey must include photography/video of the benthos and grab sample. This survey information should be provided in a report format (including still images) to MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk within **8 weeks** upon completion of each sea disposal campaign (as per Condition 10).

Human Health

12. The Licensee(s) must ensure they meet all the requirements of Merchant Shipping Regulations.

13. The Licensee(s) must notify The Source Data Receipt team, UK Hydrographic Office, Taunton. Somerset, TA1 2DN (Email: sdr@ukho.gov.uk; Tel: 01823 337900) at least 4 weeks before commencement of the works, to allow for any necessary

Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group

Marine & Fisheries Division

Marine Licensing Branch



amendments to nautical charts. The UK Hydrographic Office must also be notified upon completion of the works. MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk **must be copied into all notifications.**

14. The Licensee(s) must ensure that details of each campaign are sent to maritime users through Notice(s) to Mariners and/or radio navigational warnings and publication in appropriate bulletins. This should take place prior to the commencement of disposal operations, as stated within the Notice(s) to Mariners guidance notes, which is usually ten days. MLComplianceandEnforcement@daera-ni.gov.uk **must be copied into all notifications.**

MLEIA2025041 – D3 Belfast Harbour

EIA Consent – Ministerial Decision

Decision Date	02/06/2026
Applicant	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Agent	RPS Tetra Tech
Project name	Completion of a multipurpose facility at D3 for a 340m Quay for the berthing of cruise ships, and for lay-by and transient storage of project cargo, break bulk, and dry bulk during the cruise ship off season, with associated dredge of cruise berth pocket and sea disposal at the North Channel Disposal Ground.
Ministers Decision	On 2 nd June 2026, Minister Muir agreed the marine licensing case officer recommendation to grant an EIA Consent under Regulation 22 of the Marine Works (EIA) Regulations in support of the ongoing development at D3, Belfast Harbour, subject to conditions
Date of Decision	2 nd June 2026
Date EIA Consent Decision issued	The EIA Consent Decision notification was issued to the agent, Tetra Tech (formally RPS Tetra Tech), acting on behalf of the applicant, Belfast Harbour Commissioners on 2 nd June 2026
Date of EIA Consent Decision publication under Regulation 23	EIA Consent Decision published to the Marine Licensing Public Register on 5 th June 2026 Written confirmation of publication to relevant newspapers was received by the Department on 4 th June 2026
Next steps	Marine Licensing officials to progress to determining three marine licences: ML2025053 – Marine Construction Licence ML2025054 – Marine Dredge Licence ML2025055 – Marine Sea Disposal Licence