Habitats Regulations Assessment

Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance

Name of Project or Plan.	Cushendun Boat Ramp Dredging
Reference (if available)	
Name and location of *National Site Networksite(s)*	Red Bay SAC is adjacent to the works. Waterfoot MCZ is 7.5km Maidens SAC is 27km away Rathlin 18km away (MCZ SPA SAC) 30km Skerries and Causeway SAC, North Channel 35km
***National Site Network* site features:** Refer to JNCC website for further information. Http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ Note: ensure that you assess all features that are classified as A, B, C. You may make mention of any site features of lesser presence i.e. D or E but this is mostly where they are connected to the existence of A, B, C features. Features that are of a presence or distribution below this are not considered European Site. See Data Form on the JNCC web page for the site.	**Red Bay SAC** ***1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time*** *The Red Bay site is located off the County Antrim village of Cushendun, Northern Ireland. It contains Annex I Sandbanks slightly covered by seawater at all times which are composed of maerl, sub-fossil maerl, coarse sands, gravels and cobbles. The sand bank is comprised of relic drowned drumlins from the last ice-age ca 15000 yr BP. The Red Bay sandbanks are dominated by both living maerl and sub-fossil maerl and have been thoroughly mapped and characterised as part of this SAC selection assessment. Unique to this site is the presence of large 2-3m high mega-ripples of sub-fossil maerl. These mega-ripples are comprised of maerl, gravel and sands on the crests, and cobbles and globular sub-fossil maerl in the troughs, with occasional sand patches on the slopes.* **Waterfoot MCZ** Seagrass bed (*Zostera marina*) on Subtidal (sublittoral) sand Maidens SAC ***1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time*** ***1170 Reefs*** ***Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection*** • ***1364 Grey seal Halichoerus grypus*** ***Rathlin SAC*** ***1170 Reefs*** ***1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts*** ***8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves*** ***Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site*** ***1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time*** ***1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines*** ***Rathlin SPA*** Marine areas, Sea inlets Habitats Alca torda Razorbill

	Rissa tridactyla	Black-legged kittiwake
	Seabird assemblage	Seabird assemblage
	Uria aalge	Common guillemot

Rathlin MCZ
Rathlin MCZ has been designated for Deep-sea bed, Black guillemot and Geological/Geomorphological features.

Skerries and Causeway SAC
1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time
1170 Reefs
8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves
Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

- ***1351 Harbour porpoise*** *Phocoena phocoena*

North Channel SAC
Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- ***1351 Harbour porpoise*** *Phocoena phocoena*

***National Site Network* site features:** Refer to JNCC website for further information. Http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ Note: ensure that you assess all features that are classified as A, B, C. You may make mention of any site features of lesser presence i.e. D or E but this is mostly where they are connected to the existence of A, B, C features. Features that are of a presence or distribution below this are not considered European Site. See Data Form on the JNCC web page for the site.	
Description of the Project or Plan **Suggested topics to be covered:** • Size and scale • Land-take • Distance from *National Site Network* site or keyfeatures of the site • Resource requirements (water ab- Straction etc.) • Emission (disposal to land, water or air) • Excavation requirements • Transportation requirements • Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc. • Other	Size and Scale • The removal of Sand from the Boat Ramp in the mouth of the Dun River and reprofiling the sand on the adjacent beach. C.2000 Tons. • Land Take This involves no net land take as the sand is moved from the harbour to the adjacent beach – natural processes of the movement of this sand are blocked due to the seawall. **Distance for NSN sites or key features** This project will occur adjacent to the Red Bay SAC **Resource requirements** This project will reposition sand from the boat ramp to the adjacent beach there will be no additional deposition on the seabed or extraction of water or sediment. **Emission** Other than emissions associated with the use of one tractor for removal there should be limited other emissions beyond disturbing the sediment (which is clean coarse sand as stated in the sediment analysis) and moving it to the beach where it will be reprofiled.

Emission (cont..)

There will be no debris and any marine or land litter collected during the proposed works will be appropriately disposed of to prevent litter entering the marine environment to prevent adverse impacts to Marine Protected Areas, Habitats and Species, as required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, The Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

National Trust and any contractors hired to complete the works shall adhere to the appropriate pollution prevention guidelines including DAERA Pollution Standing Advice To prevent adverse impacts to Marine Protected Areas, Habitats and Species, as required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, The Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

and also DAERA Marine Wildlife Disturbance Standing Advice To prevent marine mammal disturbance as required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995(as amended) and The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended).

National Trust and the contractors will ensure that there is no storage of materials in the ASSI below High Water Mean Spring (HWMS) tide mark.

In addition, National Trust and the Contractors will ensure invasive non-native species biosecurity measures are in place for all stages of the project and all equipment used. This is to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species as required under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended).

Excavation Requirements
The contractors will not be using percussive equipment such as rock breakers or piling on site therefore there should not be significant marine mammal disturbance.
DAERA Marine Wildlife Disturbance Standing Advice will be adhered to.

Transportation requirements
There will be one tractor used to support the removal of the sand from the boat ramp and reprofiling on the beach in the least damaging and disturbing way possible.

All work will be carried out with consideration, to negate the impact on over-wintering and breeding birds, avoid disturbance to

	breeding seals and to minimise the impact on soils and vegetation. No vehicles, machinery or works will occur below the High Water Mean Spring (HWMS) tide mark (except in direct vicinity of removal and reprofiling of the sand. This work is expected to completed in no more than 3 days over the spring tides in May..

Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to management of the site for conservation of European Site features?	**No**

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the National Site Network site.	The aim of this project is to remove sand from the boat ramp and reprofile it on the adjacent Cushendun Beach. This work provides a benefit to the local community as they can then use the boat ramp to access their recreational boats safely. There is likely to be negligible impact on the *Annex I Sandbanks slightly covered by seawater at all times which are composed of maerl, sub-fossil maerl, coarse sands, gravels and cobbles.* *This is because the sand removed and repositioned is in the intertidal area only. There is no more than 2000 tonnes removed and repositioned and the is no net loss or additions to the sediment cell. The sand is 'clean' and is currently prevented from moving along the shore due to the seawall which causes it to collect in the boat ramp area.* *This clearing of the boat ramp happens annually and there have been no known impacts during the previous years works.* *Please see the BPEO for further information.* The Coastal Processes Team have been out on site last year with the Marine Licencing Team.

EUROPEAN SITE **Feature: Mention all features** **Only for EF also consider ASSI Features.**	**Describe any likely direct or indirect effects to the EUROPEAN SITE features arising as a result of:** • **Loss;** • **Reduction of habitat area;** • **Disturbance;** • **Habitat or species fragmentation;** • **Reduction in species density;** • **Changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. Water quality, climate change).**	**Effect significant / not significant? Explain why?** **Loss/not significant – This will reprofile sand within the same sediment cell and not remove it from the area.** **Reduction of habitat area/none – There is no reduction in habitat as this repositions the bare sand from the boat ramp to the adjacent beach.** **Disturbance – There will be no significant disturbance the Features of the adjacent SAC in Red Bay only to the intertidal sand accreted around the Cushendun Boat Ramp.** **Fragmentation/none N/A** **Reduction in species density/not significant N?A** **Changes in key indicators/none** NONE
RED BAY SAC Features; *Sandbanks slightly covered by seawater at all times*	**The project is NOT likely to have any significant negative effects on any of the features on this site in regards to loss, fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of conservation value.**	This project is redistributing sediment within the sediment cell from where it is accumulating on the boat ramp to the adjacent beach where it is still within the same sediment cell and in line with the direction of travel of natural processes.

	The project is NOT likely to have any significant negative effects on any of the features on this site in regards to loss, reduction of habitat area, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, or changes in key indicators of conservation value.	**Not significant.** **The project aims to improve site integrity and condition in Cushendun and will help the sand and sediment move past the artificial barrier of the seawall to allow long shore drift aligned with natural coastal processes.**

Describe any potential effects on the *National Site Network* site as a whole in terms of: interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site	**There are no potential negative effects** on the NSN as a whole, as sediment will remain within the sediment cell and not be removed from the system.. This will not have a significant effect on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the Red Bay SAC adjacent to the site as long as National Trust and the Contractors follow the plans they have set out and liaise appropriately with DAERA and relevant authorities.

Provide details of any other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could (directly or indirectly) affect the site.	**The CMAP (Coastal Monitoring and Adaptation Planning project) is working with the community over the next three years to explore developing recommendations for a coastal adaptation plan for the Cushendun Bay area which will be more long term in exploring the potential and impacts of natural processes in the Bay. There will be additional monitoring (monthly of the beach profiles by Ulster University and at least annually of the hard rock by GSNI within the Bay. Any potential works will be discussed with the relevant teams in DAERA and other Government departments where relevant to determine their practicality. This work is funded through PEACEPLUS and DAERA part fund the works and sit on the Advisory Group.**

Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant? :	No
Alone?	No
In-combination with other projects of plans?	No

List of Agencies / Organisations Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address.	Joanne Hanna in Marine Division – Coastal Processes and Marine Licencing came out to visit in 2025.
Habitats Regulations Assessment Summary	**The project is not likely to have any significant negative effects on any of the sites including Red Bay SAC .**

Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on a EUROPEAN site?	No

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?	this updated Shadow HRA was completed by [redacted], Coastal Advisor National Trust, 01/05/2026 [redacted]
Sources of data	DAERA ASSI/SAC/SPA Citation, Reasons for Designation and Conservation Objectives documents for Red Bay SAC; Maidens SAC, Skerries and Causeway SAC, Waterfoot MCZ, Rathlin SAC/SPA/MCZ; DAERA Marine Map Viewer; DAERA Coastal Observatory National Trust commissioned survey work from Ken Pye on Cushendun Bay Coastal Processes Cushendun SOTEC Sediment Analysis Results JNCC Summary of Red Bay SAC; Consultation with DAERA/NIEA personnel regarding, coastal change DAERA Coastal Observatory
Level of assessment completed	Test of Likely Significance
Where can the full results of assessment be accessed and viewed?	
Summary of Findings.	**The project is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on site/feature integrity/condition across the Red Bay SAC designation as the modelled sediment processes predict that removal of the sand from the boat ramp will support more natural coastal processes to take place by moving it around the artificial barrier which is the sea wall.**

Grade 7 Sign Off **(only if not progressing to stage 2)**	

DO NOT PROCEED FURTHER IF YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT

THIS PROPOSAL IS UNLIKELY TO IMPACT A EUROPEAN SITE

AND NO MITIGATION IS REQUIRED

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Fig 1 Assessment of Effects of the Project or Plan on the Integrity of the Site

Describe the elements of the project or plan (alone or in combination with other projects or plans) that are likely to give rise to significant effects on the site (from screening assessment)	
Set out the Conservation objectives of the site	
Describe how the projector plan will affect key species, key habitats and the integrity of the site (determined by structure and function and conservation objectives). **Acknowledge uncertainties and any gaps in information.**	
Describe what mitigation measures are to be introduced to avoid or reduce the adverse effects on theintegrityofthe site. **Acknowledge uncertainties and any gaps in information**	

Fig 2 Appropriate Assessment: Mitigation Measures

List measures to be introduced	Explain how the measures will avoid the adverse effects on the integrity of the Site.	Explain how the measures will reduce the adverse effects on the integrity of the Site.	Provide evidence of how they will be implemented and by whom.
(i)			

(ii)			
(iii)			
List mitigation measures (as above)	**Provide evidence of the degree of confidence in their likely success**	**Provide time-scale, relative to the project of plan, when They will be implemented**	**Explain the proposed monitoringscheme and how Any mitigation failure will be addressed**
(i)			
(ii)			
(iii)			

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment Sign Off

Who carried out the assessment?	
Sources of data	
Where can the full results of assessment be accessed and viewed?	
Summary of findings.	
Grade 7 Sign Off	

If there cannot be appropriate mitigation conditioned at this point then please refer the assessment to the EF Grants Team.