

November 2018

Warrenpoint Harbour Authority – Proposed new dredged material disposal site Carlingford Lough

- Most ports and harbours require routine maintenance dredging of sediment to ensure navigational channels and berths can remain operational and to ensure safe navigation. Disposal of the dredged material is usually to established sea disposal sites, which is regulated by DAERA Marine Licensing under the Part 4 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.
- Only material which is tested for known contaminants, and found to be suitable against the UK standards, can be disposed of at approved sea disposal sites.
- Warrenpoint Harbour Authority (WHA) is exploring the potential for opening a new dredged material disposal site within Carlingford Lough. The primary reason is to save on the costs of transport to the existing Irish Sea disposal site, but the carbon costs of a site closer to shore is also a consideration.
- This is at discussion stage only, and WHA has not made a licence application to DAERA. No permission has been granted for disposal of dredge disposal material within Carlingford Lough.
- WHA recently undertook an independent public engagement exercise on the proposal, which included a public meeting on October 15th, where a number questions were raised.
- The purpose of this document is to answer some of those questions.

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Q 1) Does the proposal require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the EIA Directive?

Answer: The Department originally screened the proposal under The Marine Works (EIA) Regulations 2007 (as amended). ‘Screening’ is the process outlined under the Directive to establish whether an EIA is required. Although most of the responses to the screening suggested an EIA was required, DAERA has since been advised that the correct environmental assessment process for the potential new site, is under the OSPAR¹ Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic. This is because a licence application has not yet been made. It is accepted that this has caused some confusion with consultees. Please see the OSPAR guidance at <https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/dredging-dumping>.

Q2) How will DAERA ensure the environmental impacts are fully assessed?

Answer: OSPAR has produced [guidelines](#) for management of dredged material and opening new disposal sites. A thorough site characterisation of the site is required by WHA under this OSPAR Guidance. WHA is required to consider potential impacts of this proposal on the environment and other activities and uses of Carlingford Lough when exploring the potential for the new site. Any use of a dredge disposal site is licensed by DAERA and environmental impacts are assessed as part of that process by the department.

Q3) What is the site characterisation assessment and how will DAERA ensure a thorough assessment is carried out?

Answer: A site characterisation assessment is a process by which WHA undertakes new surveys and gathers information in order to establish the characteristics of the proposed location for the dredged material disposal site. The survey and assessment requirements must be agreed with DAERA. The scope of what is required has been published on the [DAERA website](#) and incorporates all the requirements of the consultees, including those from Republic of Ireland (ROI) who responded to the initial DAERA consultation exercises. This includes, for example, seabed surveys, bird surveys, wave modelling etc. The information WHA gathers to complete the report, will be assessed by Government technical experts, before a final site characterisation assessment report is ready. DAERA does not expect this stage to be completed before Autumn 2019.

¹ The name OSPAR derives from two earlier Conventions, Oslo and Paris.

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Q4) Will transboundary impacts be included in any assessment?

Answer: WHA is required to consider any potential transboundary impacts in the site characterisation assessment. DAERA has already consulted with those who have a statutory remit in ROI, in order to identify any potential transboundary or environmental impacts to be considered for the site characterisation assessment. DAERA will continue to engage with our counterparts in ROI throughout and will fully consult with them throughout the decision making process.

Q5) Will any other assessments be required, apart from the site characterisation assessment?

Answer: A Habitats Regulation Assessment will be a necessary part of this process to assess any likely effects on Natura 2000 sites. This will be required, regardless of any other information gathered or supplied by WHA. Cumulative and in-combination effects will also be part of this consideration. Although the site characterisation assessment will be a comprehensive assessment, this is at an early stage and additional information or assessments may be required.

Q6) Will I be able to comment or provide input to the site characterisation assessment report when it is available?

Answer: Yes, the public will have an opportunity to provide comment, once the site characterisation report is produced. DAERA intends to mirror the EIA consultation process to ensure we have clear and transparent timelines/consultation. This will include a full public consultation of 42days.

Q7) What will happen once the site characterisation assessment report is submitted to DAERA?

Answer: Once WHA has completed the site characterisation assessment report, then DAERA will, in consultation with stakeholders, make a decision around the suitability of a new disposal site. At that stage, if a new dredged material disposal site is opened in Carlingford Lough, and WHA wishes to use the site, WHA would still need to apply to DAERA for a marine licence under the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009. The licence application will be subject to a full consultation process, including public advertisement in the local press and consultation with ROI.

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DAERA guidance on dredging and disposal:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dae/marine-licensing-guidance-dredging-disposal-and-aggregate-dredging-under-part-4-marine-and-coastal-access-act-2009-may-2016.pdf>

Documents relating to the current in-lough disposal proposal:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/carlingford-lough-new-disposal-site-site-characterisation-report-and-site-characterisation-opinion>

OSPAR guidance: <https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/dredging-dumping>

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