



Marine Licensing Decision

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009)

Applicant: Associated British Ports
Application reference no: DML1946

Port Talbot Dredge and Disposal at Swansea Bay
(Outer) LU130

30 April 2020

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OUR DECISION

Based on all the information available, and having regard to all relevant considerations NRW has decided grant the marine licence sought by the Application.

This decision document:

- explains how the application has been determined, having regard to the relevant legal framework outlined in section 4;
- explains how relevant considerations have been taken into account and how each of the legal requirements have been considered in determining the Application;
- provides a record of the decision-making process; and
- sets out the reasons for any conditions imposed in connection with any marine licence granted pursuant to the Application.

1 APPLICATION DETAILS

Applicant Name and Address	The Applicant is the person or organisation set out below: Company/organisation name: Associated British Ports Company number (if available): ZC00195 Address: 25 Bedford Street, London, WC2E 9ES
Application Reference Number	DML1946
Date Application was duly made	25 October 2019
Proposal[s] covered by the application	3,100,000 tonnes annum maintenance dredge at Port Talbot, using a trail suction hopper dredger, to be disposed at disposal site Swansea Bay (Outer) LU130
Licensable marine activities	Disposal of dredged material at disposal site Swansea Bay (Outer) LU130
Application documents:	Port Talbot table 1 and 2 Final (submitted 17 October 2019) Port Talbot Biosecurity dredging plan (submitted 07 January 2020) Biosecurity Plan (submitted 07 January 2020) Wash Down Grab (submitted 07 January 2020) Wash Down Trailer (submitted 07 January 2020) Wash Down Workboat (submitted 07 January 2020) ABPmer Technote (submitted 20 February 2020)

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2 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

2.1 The Application

The Application was accepted by Natural Resources Wales (**NRW**) considered duly made on 25 October 2019. This means we considered it was in the correct form and contained sufficient information for us to begin our determination, but not that it necessarily contained all the information we needed to complete that determination, and the documents considered may therefore include documents provided after the Application was first made.

2.2 Documents considered

In reaching its decision, NRW has considered the documents listed in section 1 of this decision document along with such other information provided by the Applicant or received by consultees as NRW considered relevant.

2.3 Commercial Confidentiality

The Applicant made no claim that any information forming part of the Application was subject to commercial confidentiality and we have not received any information in relation to the Application that appears to be commercially confidential.

2.4 Publicity and advertising

As required by s. 68 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (the 2009 Act), notice was given to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council on 28 October 2019.

As required by s. 68 of the 2009 Act NRW has required the Applicant to publish notice of the Application.

Public notice advertising the Project was placed in the Western Mail on 06 November 2019. The application documents were made available to the public at Port Talbot Civic Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 1PJ and they could also be requested from Natural Resources Wales Marine Licensing Team, Ty Cambria, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0TP.

The public were given a period of 28 days from the date of the Public Notice to provide comments on the application.

No public responses were received in response to the Public Notice.

2.5 Environmental impact Assessment

Council Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment aims to protect the environment and the quality of life by ensuring that projects which are likely to have significant environmental effects by virtue of their nature, size or location are subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA) before permission is granted.

Having considered the Application NRW has determined that it does not constitute a development requiring EIA under the Regulations.

3 CONSULTATION

3.1 Consultees

NRW considered it appropriate to consult the bodies listed in the table below on 28 October 2019, due to their particular expertise. These bodies were consulted for a period of 28 days. Those bodies have responded to the consultation an 'x' can be found in the response received column:

Consultee	Response received (x)	Date(s) of receipt
The Crown Estate	X	19 November 2019
NRW	X	22 November 2019
MoD - Safeguarding Defence	X	13 November 2019
Maritime & Coastguard Agency	X	25 November 2019
Trinity House	X	11 November 2019
Royal Yachting Association	X	11 November 2019
Local Biodiversity Officer	X	21 November 2019
Local Planning Authority		
Local Harbour Authority		
Local Port Authority		
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)		
Welsh Government Marine Enforcement Officers		
Welsh Archaeological Trust	X	21 November 2019
Royal Commission on Historic Monuments Wales		
Cadw	X	21 November 2019
Chamber of Shipping		
Cefas	X	13 November 2019

Consultees who did not provide a response were assumed to have no comment.

NRW has had regard to all consultation responses received in making its decision. Where these have impacted on NRW's decision making, this has been noted in the relevant paragraph in section 4 of this decision document.

4 BASIS FOR OUR DECISION

In determining this application, including the terms on which it was granted, and the conditions attached to it, NRW has had regard to the factors set out in section 4 below in accordance with the 2009 Act.

Under the 2009 Act NRW is required to have regard to the following:

- the need to protect the environment (see sub-section 4.1);
- the need to protect human health (see sub-section 4.2);
- the need to prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea (see sub-section 4.3);
- in the case of an application for a licence to authorise construction, alteration or improvement of works within the UK marine licensing area, the effects of any use intended to be made of the works in question when constructed, altered or improved (considered, if relevant in sub-sections 4.1 to 4.5 below);
- any representations which it has received from any person having an interest in the outcome of the application (summarised in section 3 and where relevant considered in sub-sections 4.1 to 4.5 below); and
- such other matters as it thinks relevant (see sub-section 4.5 below).

4.1 The need to protect the environment:

The reference to the “environment” includes the local and global environment; the natural environment; and, by virtue of section 115(2) of the 2009 Act, any site of historic or archaeological interest. The natural environment may include the physical, chemical and biological state of the sea, the sea-bed and the sea-shore, and the ecosystems within it, or those that are directly or indirectly affected by an activity, whether within the marine licensing area or otherwise.

In considering the need to protect the environment we have considered the relevant environmental legislation set out below.

4.1.1 Water Framework Directive, Groundwater Directive and Water Environment Regulations

(a) The legal framework

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (**Water Environment Regulations**) implement the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (**WFD**) (Directive 2000/60/EC) which requires consideration as to whether that proposals for development may cause deterioration or prevent a water body from achieving ‘good status’. Proposals likely to cause deterioration or prevent a waterbody from achieving good status should be rejected, unless derogation procedures have been applied.

Under the Water Environment Regulations, NRW must exercise its relevant functions to ensure compliance with the requirements of the WFD, the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (Directive 2008/105/EC) and the Groundwater Directive (Directive 2006/118/EEC).

(b) Factors relevant to our determination

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This project is a dredging activity and is a renewal of a current permission carried out in the same footprint and for the same quantities during the period 2006-2008. Therefore, it is considered not likely to have a significant effect on the deterioration of any WFD waterbody, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

4.1.2 Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty

(a) The legal framework

Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, having regard to biodiversity lists published under section 7, the State of Natural Resources Report and any area statement published under section 11.

(b) Factors relevant to our determination

NRW has considered its duties under section 6 of the 2016 Act and is satisfied that the Proposed Activities would not reduce biodiversity.

4.1.3 European Protected Sites and Ramsar Sites

(c) The legal framework

European sites are those designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (**Habitats Regulations 2017**) and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (**Offshore Habitats Regulations 2017**) as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

The Habitats Regulations 2017 and the Offshore Habitats Regulations 2017 require that any project that is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) must be subject to an appropriate assessment. NRW undertakes a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) to establish whether an appropriate assessment is required.

In addition NRW must exercise its functions under the 2009 Act so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the relevant European Directives. NRW also has a duty under the Habitats Regulations 2017 to support wild birds by protecting habitats and avoiding pollution.

A Ramsar site is a wetland which has been designated under the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Convention does not place specific legal requirements on its parties (though Ramsar sites are often SSSIs or SPAs, considered below), however Ramsar status is considered by NRW as matter of policy in its decision making.

Factors relevant to our determination

The Project may affect the following European Protected Site:

- Kenfig SAC

A Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Proposed Activities has been undertaken, and NRW (as Statutory Nature Conservation Body) consulted on the HRA.

The following conclusions of the HRA have been considered by NRW in making this decision. In light of the conclusions of an appropriate assessment, and taking account of the advice received from protected sites advisors, it has been established that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000/Ramsar site, taking into account any conditions or restrictions as applicable, either

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alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. (As documented in section 4 of this form, and section 5 if applicable). Further details are described within the Habitats Regulations Assessment.]

In addition the following relevant matters were taken into consideration. There is a potential impact pathway from the dispersal of disposed dredge material from the disposal site to the Kenfig SAC. The applicant provided a bathymetric survey which concluded, at present, there is no adverse effect on the Kenfig SAC as a result of dispersed sediment from the disposal site. Due to the applicant requesting a 10 year licence, the applicant must carry out further monitoring. This is covered by including condition 3.21.

4.1.4 Marine Conservation Zones**(d) The legal framework**

Marine Conservation Zones were established under the 2009 Act to protect nationally important, rare or threatened habitats and species. The only currently designated MCZ in Wales is Skomer Island.

Under the 2009 Act, NRW must exercise its functions in the manner which it considers best furthers the conservation objectives stated for any Marine Conservation Zone or, where that is not possible, in the manner which it considers least hinders the achievement of those objectives.

(e) Factors relevant to our determination

NRW is satisfied that there is no significant risk of the Proposed Activities on the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone. This is due to the distance between the proposed works and Skomer Marine Conservation Zone.

4.1.5 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**(f) The legal framework**

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (**1981 Act**) and protected by law to conserve their wildlife or geology. NRW must take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reason of which an SSSI is of special scientific interest.

(g) Factors relevant to our determination

NRW has considered the impact of the Project on the following sites:

- Blackpill SSSI
- Crymlyn Burrows SSSI

NRW is satisfied that the Proposed Activities do not have the potential to impact on Black Pill SSSI and Crymlyn Burrows SSSI.

Therefore NRW is satisfied that the Proposed Activities are not operations likely to damage the SSSI and that the method statement proposed as part of the Application appropriately addresses any risks arising from the Proposed Activities.

4.1.6 Waste Framework Directive**(h) The legal framework**

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The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) establishes a legal framework for treating waste in the EU. This is designed to protect the environment and human health by emphasising the importance of proper waste management, recovery and recycling techniques to reduce pressure on resources and improve their use. Waste generated by a project or activity must in general terms be dealt with in an environmentally friendly way. To achieve this the Directive establishes a waste hierarchy which gives an order of preference for how waste is dealt with (prevention, re-use, recovery for other purposes such as energy, and finally disposal).

(i) Factors relevant to our determination

NRW is satisfied that the Proposed Activities meet the requirements of the Waste Framework Directive.

NRW is content that the proposals are in line with the relevant OSPAR guidelines for the management of dredged material. Licence condition 3.20 has been included, based on advice received from CEFAS dated 13 November 2019, to ensure sediment sampling and analysis is carried out every 3 years to ensure alignment with OSPAR guidelines.

4.1.7 Other matters in considered relevant to the need to protect the environment

To mitigate against impacts from the introduction of invasive species the applicant submitted a biosecurity assessment in support of their application. NRW agreed with the measures proposed within the biosecurity assessment submitted. Licence condition 3.19.1 has been included to ensure compliance with the biosecurity assessment submitted. Licence condition 3.19.2 has been included to ensure an updated biosecurity plan is submitted annually to make sure the measures proposed are still relevant.

4.1.8 Conclusion of our considerations under the need to protect the Environment

IN SUMMARY, having considered the need to protect the environment, NRW does not consider that any impacts of the Project on the environment (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are sufficient on their own to justify refusal of the application.

4.2 The need to protect human health

No comments or representations were received in relation to the need to protect human health and no other concerns in this regard have been identified.

IN SUMMARY, having considered the need to protect human health, NRW does not consider that any impacts of the Project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are sufficient on their own to justify refusal of the application.

4.3 The need to prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea

Legitimate uses of the sea include (but are not limited to): navigation (including taking any steps for the purpose of navigational safety); fishing; mineral extraction; and amenity use. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency responded to the consultation request stating that they had no comment or objections to the proposed disposal of dredge material at Swansea Bay (Outer) LU130.

IN SUMMARY, having considered the need to protect interference with legitimate uses of the sea, NRW does not consider that any impacts of the Project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are sufficient on their own to justify refusal of the application.

4.4 Marine Policy Documents

(a) The Legal framework

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NRW is required to take its decision in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise.

UK Marine Policy Statement 2011 (MPS)

The MPS is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment.

(b) Our determination

This decision has been taken in accordance with marine policy as set out in the UK Marine Policy Statement 2011.

This decision has been taken in accordance with marine policy as set out in the Welsh National Marine Plan.

4.5 Other matters NRW thinks relevant**4.5.1 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015****(a) The legal framework**

In making its decision, NRW is required to take all reasonable steps to meet its published well-being objectives, which are designed to maximise NRW's contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. NRW must also act in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

(b) Our determination

NRW has taken into account its well-being objectives and is satisfied that its decision is consistent with meeting those objectives.

In particular NRW acknowledges that the well-being objectives of "improving the resilience and quality of our ecosystems" and "ensuring land and water in Wales is managed sustainably and in an integrated way" are of particular relevance to this decision and that the decision may be made in such manner as to contribute to meeting those objectives.

NRW is satisfied that the carrying out of the Proposed Activities in accordance with the terms of the marine Licence and conditions proposed would contribute to meeting the objective of "Ensuring land and water in Wales is managed sustainably and in an integrated way" for the reasons set out in paragraphs 4.1.1-4.1.8.

NRW is satisfied that the carrying out of the Proposed Activities in accordance with the terms of the marine Licence and conditions proposed would contribute to meeting the objective of "improving the resilience and quality of our ecosystems" for the reasons set out in paragraph 4.1.2.

NRW is also satisfied that its decision is consistent with the sustainable development principle i.e. seeking to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In particular NRW is satisfied that the Project meets a future need for renewable energy and will do so without having a significant impact on the environment for future generations.

4.5.2 Sustainable management of natural resources**(a) The legal framework**

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NRW's general purpose is to pursue the sustainable management of natural resources in relation to Wales and applying the principles of sustainable management of natural resources as set out in section 4 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 so far as consistent with the proper exercise of its functions.

(b) Our determination

NRW is satisfied that this decision, when implemented in accordance with the attached conditions, is consistent with its general purpose of pursuing the sustainable management of natural resources in relation to Wales, and applying the principles of sustainable management of natural resources.

In particular, NRW acknowledges that it is a principle of sustainable management of natural resources to take action to prevent significant damage to ecosystems. NRW is satisfied, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 4.1.2 to 4.1.4 that appropriate action will be taken as part of the Project.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on all the information available, and having regard to all relevant considerations including consultation responses, NRW's decision is to grant the marine licence sought by the Application. We have reached this decision having had regard to the relevant legal framework outlined in section 4 and have also explained in section 4 how each of the legal requirements have been considered. NRW has determined that a Marine Licence for the Proposed Activities should be granted.

Conditions have been attached to the Marine Licence.

AUTHORISATION

Report by: Joe Thomas Position: Permitting Officer	Date: 30 April 2020	Signed: 
Authorised by: Position: Permitting Team Leader	Date: 05 May 2020	Signed: 