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FALMOUTH DOCKS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC APPRAISAL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Ramboll UK Limited (Ramboll) has been appointed by Falmouth Docks and Engineering Company (FDEC) to prepare a Strategic Appraisal for Sustainable Development. FDEC is seeking permission for the redevelopment and modernisation of the existing facilities (“the proposed development”) at Falmouth Docks, Cornwall (“the site”), shown on Figure 1.1.
- 1.1.2 Parts of the site and numerous sections of its infrastructure are considered to be in poor condition, unsafe for operational use or reaching the end of their design life. The objectives of the proposed development are to repair and update the currently poor condition dock infrastructure in order to maintain existing business and future proof the docks with respect to cruise capacity, cargo capacity and renewable floating offshore wind (FLOW) (supporting the offshore wind market). The proposed development would reinstate full alongside berth capability and increase berth capacity at Falmouth Docks, and is described in greater detail in Section 1.2.

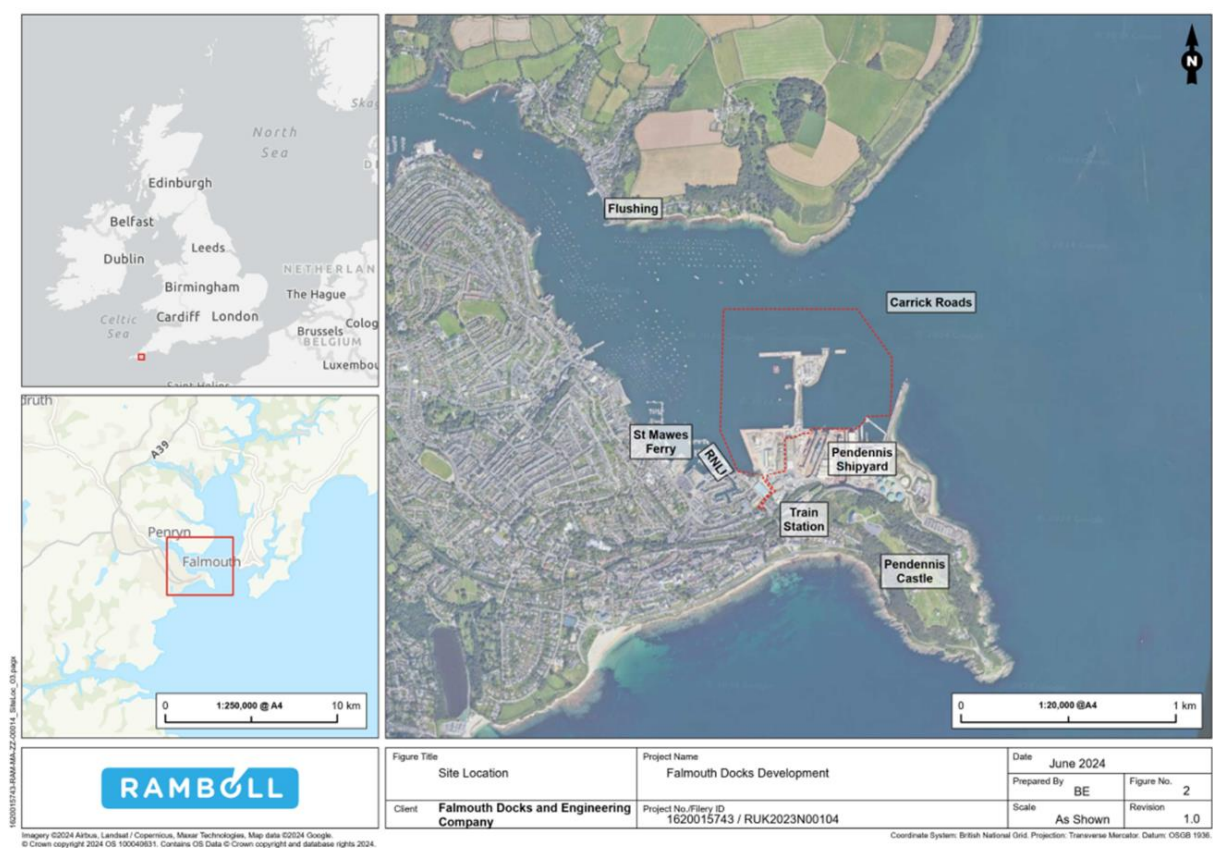


Figure 1-1: Site Location and Site Boundary

1.2 Proposed Development

The site boundary covers a total area of approximately 47.2 hectares (ha), comprising the proposed upgraded and extended suspended deck and wharf structures, terrestrial works, the deepened dredge pockets, space for vessels/FLOW devices, and temporary site working areas. The following activities are required to facilitate the proposed development (shown in Figure 1-2) and meet design objectives:

- Pocket dredge of berth areas to achieve required underkeel clearance for larger cruise vessels (up to Excellence class) and the FLOW renewable energy device underkeel requirements (considered to be -10.5 m CD);
- Removal of foul ground within areas of the former Kings and Empire Wharves;
- Surface skim of seabed on the eastern side of the site to maintain -5.5 m Chart Datum (CD);
- Demolition of the remaining existing Western Wharf timber piles and above surface infrastructure;
- Construction of a new Western Wharf suspended deck structure;
- Demolition of the Northern Arm concrete structure and substructure to below seabed level and removal of the gang walkway and old timber piles that are located west of this structure;
- Construction of a suspended deck structure (Northern Wharf) in the existing 90 m gap between Queen's Wharf and the Northern Arm to create a longer functional wharf length;
- Upgrades to the existing Queen's Wharf structure;
- Extension of the Queen's Wharf suspended deck structure 50 m westward;
- Installation of a 290 m deck (the 'FLOW Deck') to facilitate a FLOW device;
- Upgrades to the existing Duchy Wharf structure to facilitate a FLOW device;
- Potential strengthening works to Duchy and County Wharf piles;
- Demolition of on-site buildings and re-configuration of Falmouth Dock activities.

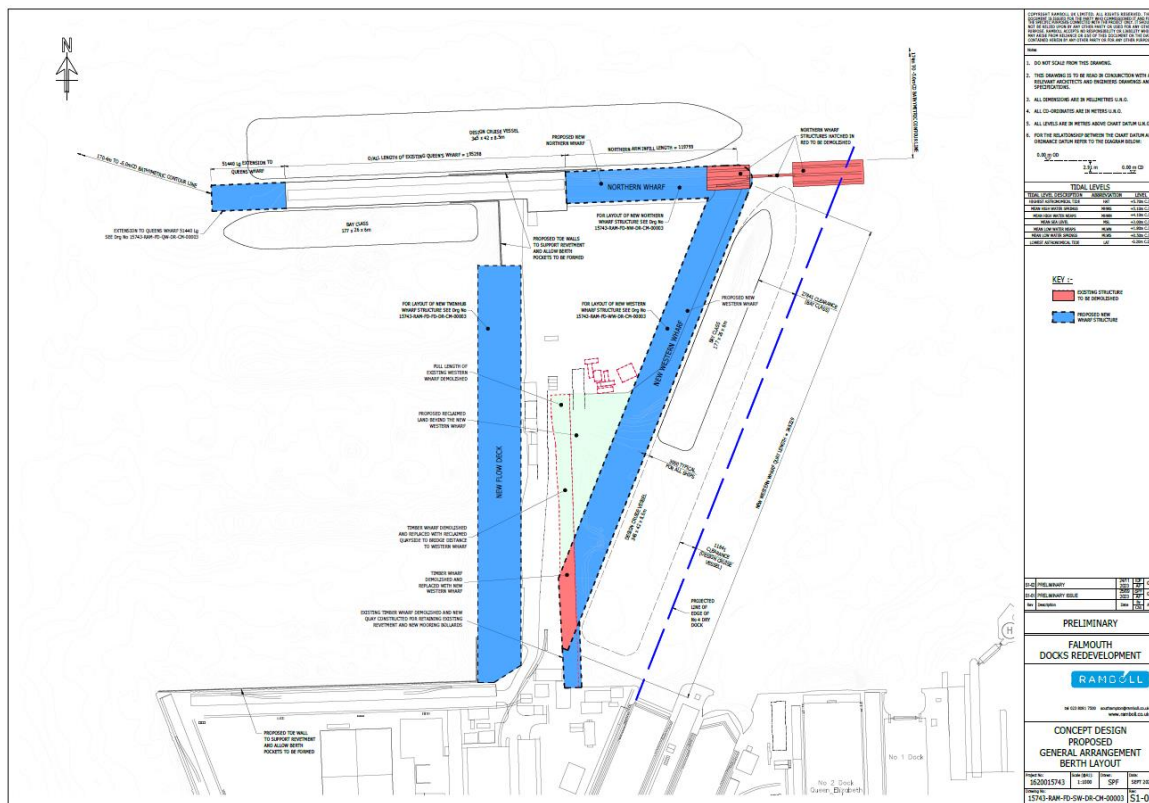


Figure 1-2: Proposed Development General Arrangement

1.3 Strategic Appraisal Requirements

- 1.3.1 The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) recommends a strategic appraisal is completed for marine licence applications. The aim of this Strategic Appraisal is to provide sufficient information on the proposed development. The MMO require the following to be addressed in strategic appraisals:
- Identification of any conflicts between the project and the relevant marine plan.
 - Identification of alignment of the project with the Marine Policy Statement and any relevant National Policy Statement.
 - Identification of the environmental, social and economic drivers for a project that have been identified through existing feasibility studies or discussions with other public bodies (e.g., Local Authorities or Local Economic Partnerships).
 - Identification of any potential issues that may arise due to UK law (e.g. Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, Marine Strategy Regulations 2010, Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017), and how these can potentially be avoided, or mitigated, at the strategic level.
 - Identification of any priority issues that may need addressing with regard to cumulative effects.
 - Options appraisal undertaken by the applicant, and the social, economic and environmental reasoning behind why the preferred option has been chosen.
- 1.3.2 Each of the requirements listed (i-vi) are addressed in Section 2. Where applicable, Section 2 provides a summary of relevant information and refers to those documents which contain further detail and are on the MMO's Marine Case Management System.

2. STRATEGIC APPRAISAL

2.1 Identification of any Conflicts between the Project and Relevant Marine Plan

- 2.1.1 The proposed development lies within the South West Inshore and South West Offshore Marine Plan area¹, specifically within the south west inshore area. The South West Marine Plan is a statutory consideration in all relevant planning decisions.
- 2.1.2 The proposed development involves the repair, upgrade and extension of currently poor condition port infrastructure, to reinstate full alongside berth capability and increase berth capacity at Falmouth Docks. This would future-proof and provide efficiency to dock operations, ensuring the long-term viability and significance of Falmouth Dock and the industries and employment it supports. The design and construction solutions aim to avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts to the environment. The proposed development is therefore considered to align with the South West Marine Plan's vision of achieving sustainable economic growth, while protecting the marine environment and respecting local communities, which have a strong maritime heritage and are intrinsically linked to the marine area.
- 2.1.3 A detailed assessment of the proposed development's response to the South West Marine Plan's policies is provided in the Marine Plan and Policy Statement (Ramboll, 2025). The project is not considered to create conflicts with the South West Marine Plan.

2.2 Identification of Alignment of the Project with the MPS and any Relevant National Policy Statements

- 2.2.1 The Marine Policy Statement (MPS)² is the framework for preparing Marine Plans in the UK and taking decisions affecting the marine environment. The proposed development supports the MPS high-level objectives and the UK vision to deliver 'clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas' in line with the principles for sustainable development. The proposed development

¹ South West Inshore and South West Offshore Marine Plan, June 2021 [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-south-west-marine-plans-documents> [Accessed 09/01/2024]

² HM Government, 2011. UK Marine Policy Statement, online. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-marine-policy-statement> [Accessed 09/01/2024]

aims to repair, upgrade and extend the infrastructure and facilities at Falmouth Docks in a way that avoids, minimises and mitigates impacts to the environment. The proposed development would allow Falmouth Docks to continue to accommodate cruise ships, cargo and ship maintenance and repair operations, whilst future proofing operations to allow larger cruise vessels to dock alongside. In addition, it would provide the port and quayside infrastructure to support FLOW and the wider economic benefits this brings to the local economy and the UK's energy security, thereby contributing to the achievement of a sustainable marine economy.

2.2.2 The National Policy Statement (NPS) for Ports³ is the framework for decisions on proposals for new port development. Whilst not a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), the proposed development is considered to align with the Government's aim for sustainable port development. It would allow Falmouth Docks to remain an engine for economic growth, supporting the growth of offshore sources of renewable energy and marine related skills and employment.

2.2.3 A discussion of the alignment of the proposed development with relevant national marine policy is provided within the Marine Plan and Policy Statement (Ramboll, 2025).

2.3 Identification of Environmental, Social and Economic Drivers for the Project

2.3.1 The objectives of the proposed development are to repair, update and extend the currently poor condition dock infrastructure in order to reinstate full alongside berth capability and increase berth capacity at Falmouth Docks. This would maintain existing business and future proof the docks with respect to cruise ships, cargo and FLOW. By increasing the number and size of available berths, the proposed development would resolve existing conflicts between the different site uses and activities at Falmouth Docks.

2.3.2 The key economic and social drivers of the project are to ensure the long-term viability, safety and efficiency of operations at Falmouth Docks, alongside promoting the growth and diversification of the activities supported by the dock. By increasing the dock's capacity to accommodate cruise, the proposed development supports the local and regional tourism industry and economic growth of Falmouth (and Cornwall more widely). Furthermore, the design of Western Wharf ensures that access to the dry docks immediately east of the proposed development, which are used for ship repair, is maintained. Consequently, the proposed development is anticipated to both maintain existing employment and skills at the Dock and create new employment opportunities.

2.3.3 By facilitating FLOW, the proposed development supports the UK's transition to renewable energy and contributes to the mitigation of climate change, as well as increasing skilled employment opportunities.

2.3.4 Consideration of the environment has been a key driver in the design of the proposed development. The design has evolved to ensure that it avoids and minimises environmental impacts. Existing infrastructure has been used and repaired as far as practicable whilst meeting design objectives and ensuring the structural integrity of the dock. Avoidance of dredging in the approach channel (where sensitive habitats are located) was a key design parameter, and the development has been carefully designed to limit dredging to the vicinity of the wharfs only and make best use of the tides in order to operate and enable larger vessels to dock. The choice of the proposed dredging methodology and timings (dredging on an adjusted flood tide) has also been driven by environmental factors, to reduce fine suspended sediment deposition over sensitive habitat areas. For further detail, refer to Chapter 3: Alternatives of the Environmental Statement (ES).

2.3.5 During both the demolition and construction and operational stages, the proposed development would avoid, minimise, and mitigate any likely significant adverse effects on statutory designated sites for ecology, marine protected areas, natural habitats and species, and the water environment, as described in the accompanying reports: Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment, Habitats

³ Department for Transport, 2012. National Policy Statement for Ports, online. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/3931/national-policy-statement-ports.pdf [Accessed 19/01/2024]

Regulations Assessment (HRA), the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), ES Chapter 6: Coastal Processes and Sediment Regime, ES Chapter 8: Marine Water and Sediment Quality and ES Chapter 9: Marine Ecology.

2.4 Identification of any potential issues that may arise due to UK law and how these can potentially be avoided, or mitigated, at the strategic level

- 2.4.1 A series of technical reports and environmental assessments have been produced to support the marine licence application for the proposed development, some of which have also been informed by survey outcomes. These reports include (but are not limited to) an HRA, a Marine Plan and Policy Statement, a WFD Assessment, a Wintering Bird Survey report, a Benthic Ecology survey report and a marine Ground Investigation report.
- 2.4.2 As the proposed development also requires an application for full planning permission, other surveys including a UKHab survey, Bat Survey and a Ground Conditions walkover have been undertaken in order to inform associated reports.
- 2.4.3 An ES has also been prepared, which presents the findings of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) undertaken for the proposed development.
- 2.4.4 Where required, these reports have been prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and/or guidance, such as the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017⁴, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)⁵, The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017⁶ and The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended)⁷.
- 2.4.5 The reports identify the likely significant effects of both the demolition and construction and operational stages of the proposed development and detail any embedded and/or additional mitigation measures that will reduce and/or remove significant effects on receptors. The proposed development therefore adheres to requirements to prevent harm to protected species and habitats and the marine and terrestrial environment under UK law.

2.5 Identification of any priority issues that may need addressing with regard to cumulative effects

- 2.5.1 No other projects have been identified which could interact with the scale or scope of the proposed development, therefore no inter-project cumulative effects are considered possible. Intra-project cumulative effects are assessed in Chapter 20: Intra-cumulative effects of the ES.

2.6 Options appraisal undertaken by the applicant, and the social, economic and environmental reasoning behind why the preferred option has been chosen

- 2.6.1 The proposed development is considered to represent the most viable option to meet the project objectives and operational requirements of Falmouth Docks, whilst minimising environmental impacts. An Alternatives Workshop was held with FDEC in May 2022 to discuss the business case and need for the proposed development and alternative options, including the 'do nothing' and 'do less' scenarios and alternative locations and designs, taking environmental considerations into account.

⁴ UK Legislation, 2017. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, online. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/407/contents/made>

⁵ UK Legislation, 2017. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, online. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>

⁶ UK Government Legislation, 2017. Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as amended, online. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/571/contents/made>

⁷ UK Government Legislation, 2007. Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007, as amended, online. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1518/contents/made>

- 2.6.2 Chapter 3: Alternatives of the ES provides a more detailed description of the alternatives to the proposed development, however the social, economic and environmental reasoning behind the proposed option is summarised below.
- 2.6.3 In the 'do nothing' scenario, part of the infrastructure at Falmouth Dock would remain unsafe for operational use and access, and other sections would reach the end of their design life. The Northern Arm structure would also continue to act as a navigational obstruction. The lack of berth capacity would continue to cause conflicts between the various activities and vessels at the Dock. The Dock would also remain unable to accommodate modern cruise ships alongside, as these require deeper water and longer berths than those which currently exist at the site. The limited landside space, loading capacity and bollard condition of existing structures would continue to prevent the servicing of larger vessels to allow the Dock to meet the growth of imports and exports and the Dock would not be able to meet targets for export of glass.
- 2.6.4 In a possible 'do less' scenario, the existing infrastructure could be repaired and strengthened, but neither the wharves extended and upgraded nor the dredge pockets deepened to accommodate FLOW and modern cruise ships. This option would create a safe environment for dock users and would restore the currently poor condition infrastructure. However, this 'do less' scenario would not allow the design objectives to be achieved – Falmouth Dock would not be future proofed with respect to the increase in cruise ship sizes, the demand for dock infrastructure to support FLOW and the future growth of trade volumes. The long-term business potential of the Dock would be compromised in this 'do less' scenario.
- 2.6.5 The proposed development has been designed in order to align with the geometry of the existing structures as far as possible. In terms of the general arrangement of the site (see Figure 1-2), the proposed design is the preferred option to provide flexibility on the berths and the quayside for a variety of vessels and activities, to maximise the economic and social benefits of the proposed development. The design has also evolved in order to avoid, minimise and mitigate environmental effects. Specifically, the proposed development has been designed to avoid dredging of the approach channel to the Docks and has minimised dredging as far as possible, to avoid impact on maerl habitat whilst still meeting design objectives.
- 2.6.6 Alternative methods for capital dredging have been explored to reduce environmental effects. In an iterative process, the timing of the capital dredging operations was adjusted within repeated sediment plume modelling runs. The proposed solution (dredging 1.75 hours before low water to 1.75 hours before high water) reduces the deposition of mobilised sediment over sensitive habitats in comparison to dredging at all tides or on a flood tide. With respect to the disposal of dredge arisings, alternative management and disposal options were scoped and assessed with regard to the waste hierarchy, within the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) Assessment for Dredging.
- 2.6.7 No viable alternative location for the proposed development has been identified that delivers the project objectives. The proposed development aims to maintain the existing importance of Falmouth Dock to the local and regional economy and communities, by ensuring the viability and longevity of current and future Dock operations. The design involves the modernisation of the existing Dock facility and re-uses and upgrades the existing infrastructure as far as possible. Furthermore, the proposed development would make use of the site's location in proximity to the Celtic Sea, enabling it to service the FLOW market and providing much needed quayside infrastructure. The site is sufficiently sheltered, meets the space requirements for FLOW storage and assembly, and is located within the 72-hour weather forecasting window and towing distances required for FLOW. No other site has been identified which meets these criteria and would represent a potential alternative location.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1.1 On the basis of the above, the proposed development is considered to be the preferred and most feasible option to meet the aims and requirements of the scheme, and is the preferred option environmentally. It is considered to align and support local and national marine policy and significantly contribute to the local and regional economy.