



Historic England

MMO Case officer: Yvonne Golightly
Date received by Inspector: 18 July 2025
Response deadline: 1 September 2025

Our ref PL00799418
Your ref MLA/2025/00157
Telephone 07900 138612 mob.

Project outline: Falmouth Docks development

**Response made by: Phil McMahon, Inspector
of Ancient Monuments**

Date: 14 August 2025

Advice Summary: No objection, recommend that the proposed Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological watching brief be approved by MMO and secured as a condition of the Marine Licence, if granted.

Role of Historic England:

Historic England is the Government's advisor on all aspects of the historic environment in England. Historic England is an Executive Non-departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and we report to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The National Heritage Act (2002) gave Historic England responsibility for maritime archaeology in the English area of the UK Territorial Sea.

Detailed advisory note:

The applicant, via their heritage consultant, engaged in early-stage discussions with Historic England regarding the impacts upon marine archaeological remains that the proposed docks redevelopment would entail. Through these pre-application discussions it quickly became clear that the developer was adopting a best practice approach to the treatment of the marine historic environment.

Through archaeological and geoarchaeological assessment, the impact of previous dredging on the preservation of seabed deposits across the site was able to be understood. The assessment has identified the survival of some features and sedimentary structures of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental interest. The assessment also highlighted that the proposed dredging will impact on deposits of moderate to high geoarchaeological potential in the form of Pleistocene Head, Estuarine Alluvium and Peat deposits, which together will hold evidence for the early human environment of the area prior to inundation by rising seas following the end of the last Ice Age.

Marine archaeological mitigation proposals are proposed to comprise a programme of archaeological supervision and recording (commonly known as a 'watching brief'). In our view this proposed approach forms an appropriate response to the identified impacts upon the marine historic environment.

Recommendation

Should MMO be minded to grant a Marine Licence for the proposed development then a draft Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will be required for the archaeological watching brief. We recommend that this be secured as a condition of the licence, subject to approval by your Authority. Historic England would be pleased to offer advice to MMO on the draft WSI in due course.

SW Marine Plan alignment

The South West Marine Plan includes policy SW-HER-1 covering marine proposals and heritage assets. It states that:

Proposals that demonstrate they will conserve and enhance elements contributing to the significance of heritage assets will be supported. Proposals unable to conserve and enhance elements contributing to the significance of heritage assets will only be supported if they demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:

a) avoid

b) minimise

c) mitigate harm to those elements contributing to the significance of heritage assets

d) if it is not possible to mitigate, then the public benefits for proceeding with the proposal must outweigh the harm to the significance of heritage assets.

The policy aims to make sure that assets are considered in the decision-making process and make provisions for those assets that are discovered during the course of developments. In the case of this application, it is accepted that the identified archaeological impacts cannot be avoided or further minimised. The proposed WSI will therefore provide a suitable form of mitigation for the impacts the proposed development would have upon the marine historic environment.