Seaton Port Dredge, Able UK

Water Framework Directive Assessment

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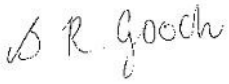
	Checked by	Sophie Gooch		18.05.2016
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Water Framework Directive Assessment has been prepared by Fairhurst on behalf of Able UK to accompany a Marine Licence application relating to capital dredging for three years and maintenance dredging for ten years. The proposed development site is located adjacent to the existing Able UK Seaton Port Dry Dock facility on the north bank of the River Tees. Drawings ASC-001-00006-A and ASC-001-00007-A show the existing and proposed dredging area and depth respectively.

2.0 Step 1 – Water Body Baseline Data

2.1 Able Seaton Port is located at Graythorp, Hartlepool on the North Bank of the Seaton on Tees channel at the western end of the Tees estuary. According to the Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plan, the River Tees is located within the Northumbria region. Using the 2015 Northumbria River Basin Management Plan it is evident that the proposed development site is located within an estuarine water body, which is classed as a Heavily Modified Water Body (HMWB). This water body is simply referred to as 'Tees' (Environment Agency reference number: GB510302509900).

2.2 As a HMWB, this water body was classified by the Environment Agency within the 2015 Northumbria River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) as 'Moderate Potential'.

2.3 Although the 2015 RBMP was updated in December 2015 and the revised document published on 18 February 2016, the measurement for Ecological Potential remains at 2015 and shows the Tees as 'Moderate'. Until this is updated with predictions for 2021 or 2027 we are unable to fully consider whether the proposed extension will prevent the Tees water body from achieving a 'Good' Ecological Potential or maintain a 'Moderate' Potential.

2.4 It is however considered very unlikely that predictions will be for the Tees to achieve 'Good' Ecological Potential, given that the Tees Estuary failure to meet 'Good' Ecological Potential is likely to be due to the levels of nitrogen in the water and the extent of opportunistic macroalgae present on the mudflats of Seal Sands SSSI. Poor water quality has the potential to impact on the benthic community and the bird species protected by the various designations in Seal Sands. It is highly likely, therefore, that the measurement for Ecological Potential beyond 2015 will remain as 'Moderate'.

3.0 Step 2 – Proposed Scheme Baseline Data

3.1 The proposed development site is located adjacent to the existing Able UK Seaton Port Dry Dock facility on the north bank of the River Tees.

3.2 The site has undertaken maintenance dredging until their previous Marine Licence expired at the end of January this year (Licence Number L/2012/00160/8), this provides a channel for vessels and oil rigs to the existing quays in operation.

3.3 The previous permitted application (2007) at Able Seaton Port was accompanied by an Environmental Statement. In this Environmental Statement, baseline data was assessed relating to Hydrological and Hydrodynamic effects, Impacts on Marine and Estuarine Ecology and the resuspension of contaminated sediments. These impacts were deemed acceptable with the granting of planning permission.

3.4 More specifically, the original 2007 permission for the dry dock facility included activities similar to this proposal such as a capital dredge, and ongoing maintenance dredging of the river channel.

3.5 The impacts associated with this new application are likely to be of similar nature as assessed in 2007. This is discussed further in Step 3.

4.0 Step 3 – Preliminary Assessment

4.1 The previous Environmental Statement (2007) stated that the main impact as a result of the construction activity would be the remobilisation of contaminated river sediments and an increase in water turbidity. This is associated with the dredging activities that were proposed, and consented, in the original application. However, these impacts were assessed as neutral overall as the impacts were found to be within the natural baseline currently experienced, and as the contaminated sediments had a relatively low solubility they were expected to quickly resettle and not become bio available.

4.2 As this Water Framework Directive relates to an application to extend the existing dredging licence (and pocket) any impacts will not alter the natural baseline.

4.3 In summary, based on Steps 1 and 2, using the Environment Agency resources, and previously collected baseline data for the area, Fairhurst do not consider that the proposed will cause any deterioration in water quality status, or result in a failure to meet water quality targets in the area.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Fairhurst consider that this report constitutes a valid Water Framework Directive assessment and takes into account all relevant information required for the regulating authorities to make a comprehensive and concise recommendation on the outcome of the Marine Licence application.

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