



Marine
Management
Organisation

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Jordana Chell
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Your reference: MLA/2025/00263

15 September 2025

Dear Jordana,

In response to the application MLA/2025/00263

Thank you for consulting the Marine Conservation Team (MCT). Please note that the following consultation response constitutes advice relating to Marine Wildlife Licensing, however additional consents may be required which are beyond MCT's remit.

The application concerns the disposal of dredged material to maintain the navigable channel and berths in the Tees Estuary, Hartlepool. If granted the licence will be for a period of ten years, from January 2026 until December 2035.

Wildlife Licensing

The Marine Licensing Team has identified grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*), harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*), harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*), white beaked dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*), short beaked dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) and minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) for consideration during the determination of this application.

From 0 to 12 nautical miles (nm) seals are protected under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 and regulation 45 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (CHSR). When within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) where they are listed as a feature of special interest, seals are protected from disturbance under section 28P(6A) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA). Please see MMO's webpage guidance with details of offences for seals [here](#).

From 0 to 12 nm cetaceans are protected by regulations 43 and 45 of the CHSR and section 9 of the WCA. Please see MMO's webpage guidance with details of offences for cetaceans [here](#).

Works will not take place within an SSSI in which seals are a feature of special interest, therefore disturbance of seals resulting from proposed works would not constitute an offence. However, wherever possible disturbance to seals should be avoided as best practice.

The application describes the disposal of maintenance dredged material at the Tees Bay A site in 12 areas which will be used on rotation to avoid mounding. Dredging will maintain the navigable channel and berths in the Tees Estuary. Two trailing suction hopper dredgers with bottom door dumping systems will remove the dredged material and deposit this, once removed, at the Tees Bay A site.

Works will temporarily increase noise and vibration levels in the vicinity of the site, primarily from dredging. Because of the mobility of marine mammals, should they be in close vicinity of the works, it is expected that they would move away from uncharacteristic levels of noise.

Given that the site is already in operation under a previous licence and given the customary level of human activity in the area, collision risk to marine mammals from equipment is not expected to rise significantly, as seals and cetaceans are likely to avoid dredging activities. It is therefore unlikely that the proposed works will cause a significant risk of injury to the identified protected species.

Proposed dredging may increase levels of suspended sediment which could disrupt prey visibility within the vicinity of the site, however sedimentation effects will be temporary and localised. It is therefore likely that marine mammals will be able to find alternative forage areas.

Given the nature of the proposed works, MCT are minded to consider that a wildlife licence is likely not required for this application for the identified protected species. It is the applicant's responsibility to identify which activities and species are likely to require a wildlife licence to avoid an offence.

We would advise that any SNCB and specialist advice is taken into account when considering this application and note that the applicant is reminded that they are

responsible for satisfying themselves that their activities will not result in an offence. If the applicant deems their activities may cause an offence, it is their responsibility to consider the need for a wildlife licence. If any concerns regarding protected species are brought to the attention of the Marine Licensing Team from SNCBs or specialist advisers, please re-consult us.


Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require anything further.


Kind regards,



Laura Trowsdale

Marine Conservation Officer

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