

HURST FORT DREDGE DISPOSAL WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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1 Introduction

As part of the supporting evidence for the Mercury Yacht Harbour 10-year Dredge Marine Licence Application a second Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment has been completed to assess the disposal of dredge material to a total of 10% of the annual volume at Hurst Fort Disposal Site. This could equate to 1,000m³ per annum.

This is appropriate on the basis that this specific disposal site is within the Solent Waterbody, which is separate to the waterbody in which the dredge site is located.

Both WFD Assessments should therefore be viewed in conjunction to assess the full extent of the activity.

The WFD Assessment is comprised of three separate stages:

- Screening – To determine if the activity is excluded from the assessment. Activities which are not screened out are then taken forward into scoping.
- Scoping – To determine the receptors that are potentially at risk from the activity and need further assessment.
- Impact Assessment – A consideration of the potential impacts of the activity on the identified receptors along with methods or approaches to avoid or minimise impacts.

For the purposes of the Disposal Activity screening was not undertaken as the activity would not qualify to be screened out of WFD. This Technical note, which should be read in conjunction with the completed WFD disposal assessment scoping template, summarises the identified receptors and the impacts on them.

The WFD scoping activity identified that further assessment was required in four of the six categories. These quality triggers have been assessed against the context of the site, proposed activity, scale and supporting information to determine the level of pressures that the receptors may experience as a result of the activity.

WFD guidance states that the assessments should be tailored and proportional to the activity, location and potential risk to receptors and as such in this instance it is appropriate that desktop studies were utilised.

The WFD Scoping and Impact Assessments have been undertaken and completed using the most recent River Basin Management Plan data, which is the 2019 Cycle 3 data as available within the Catchment Data Explorer and labelled as released in August 2022. As such this is considered the current and most up-to-date information against which to complete the impact assessment

2 WFD Scoping Triggers

The scoping activity identified the following criteria needing further impact assessment. These receptors and the associated risk issue trigger is summarised in Table 2-1, which is taken directly from the Scoping Activity Template.

Table 2-1: Results of the scoping activity.

Receptor	Potential risk to receptor?	Note the risk issue(s) for impact assessment
Hydromorphology	Yes	Is in a water body that is heavily modified for the same use as your activity
Water quality	Yes	It disturbs sediment with contaminants above Cefas Action Level 1
Protected Areas	Yes	Within 2km of any WFD protected area
Invasive Non-Native species	Yes	Could introduce or spread INNS

This table forms the starting point for the impact assessment detailed in Section 3, where a consideration to the risks to each has been detailed below in the context of the proposed works and any other relevant historical information.

3 Impact Assessments

3.1 Hydromorphology

The Solent waterbody is assessed as heavily modified, therefore hydromorphology has been scoped in during the initial WFD assessment. The Hurst Fort site is located to the Northwest of the Isle of Wight and is approximately 1km². It is allocated by the MMO for disposal of dredge arisings and receives material from across the Solent area, mainly during periods of foul weather where safe navigation to the primary disposal site at Nab Tower is not achievable.

The disposal area is situated in an area of strong tidal currents which rapidly disperses material from the dredge barges and as such any suspended sediment concentration change is negligible on the basis of the small volumes, infrequent disposal activity and use only in foul weather which will exacerbate tide/wave energies across the site.

When transit time between the dredge and disposal area is considered, it is assessed that on average one load per day may be achievable with the disposal activity itself being extremely short duration. The infrequent nature and short duration of the activity means that any changes or impact would be very short lived or of temporary nature given the dynamic nature and the water depth at the disposal site.

3.2 Water Quality

3.2.1 It disturbs sediment with contaminants above CEFAS Action Level 1 and The chemicals are on the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (EQSD) list

As found during the dredging WFD assessment the arisings have some contaminants that are marginally above CEFAS Action Level 1 (Nickel & Zinc), however we would expect the analysis evidence to be supportive of a characterisation of the material being suitable for dredging and disposal at sea. The status of the waterbody is extremely unlikely to be changed as a result of this sediment being disposed to the Hurst Fort site given the controls on total volume permitted over the course of the licence period and infrequent nature of the activity combined with the associated weather use classification.

The Hurst Fort site is considered highly dispersive and so any deposits are unlikely to cause any measurable change in chemical contamination in the water column or seabed at the site. This chemical classification remains under review as part of the ongoing sampling and analysis regime associated with Marine Licencing.

3.3 Protected Areas

The Hurst Fort disposal site is located within 2km of the following WFD protected areas:

- Solent Maritime SAC (UK0030059)
- Solent & Southampton Water SPA (UK9011061)
- Shellfish Waters – Yarmouth (42)
- Shellfish Waters – Pennington (41)
- Bathing Waters – Colwell Bay

These protected areas are all within 2km of the proposed use area, which remains an open and categorised disposal site under Marine Licensing. Due to the limited volumes proposed under this application and infrequent use of the site only in foul weather the possibility of impacts on the site itself are minimised. The use of the site as a foul weather disposal site only helps to prevent any potential impact to the management objectives of these designations.

The foul weather use criteria only allows for 10% of the annual permitted volume to be taken to the site and so sets a specific and reduced cap on potential volume being placed within the site. In the context of the Mercury Yacht Harbour application a maximum of 1,000m³ per annum to a total of 10,000m³ over the 10-year period could be disposed of within the Hurst Fort disposal site and disposal against this cap would only occur during weather events.

As a result of the reduced volume permitted (10%), infrequency of use and use only during storm events, combined with the standard controls requiring even distribution and ongoing sediment sampling/analysis it is assessed that there will be no effects to the protected sites as a result of the disposal.

3.4 Invasive Non-Native Species

The risk of INNS has been reviewed and it is assessed that the activity does not increase or modify the baseline level of risk already found on a day-to-day basis on the grounds that whilst the material is being dredged in one waterbody and disposed within another the two water bodies are intrinsically connected through their geographical locations and tidal movements, with a multitude of vessels transiting between them daily.

The vessels associated with the dredge and disposal operation will be locally based and already working and functioning between these waterbodies and so will not introduce a new level of risk compared to use of vessels from outside of the geographical area or completely separate waterbody. They do not carry ballast water and so there is no additional pathway for INNS translocation. Where use of local vessels is not possible any external contractor plant deployed will be required to adhere to current legislation or best practice guidance.

4 Summary

The proposed disposal activity is considered to have only very short duration temporary effects and is not likely to create a permanent (i.e. non-temporary) effect or lead to a deterioration of the water quality elements within the Solent water body.

Deterioration of the Waterbody as a result of the activity is not predicted and the proposals do not prevent the waterbody from meeting its WFD management objectives. The disposal activity is therefore assessed as being compliant with the WFD criteria.