Anchorsholme New Stormwater Pumping Station and Long Sea Outfall

United Utilities

Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement

November 2015

Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

United Utilities is planning to build a new stormwater pumping station and 3.75 km long sea outfall at Anchorsholme, Blackpool, in order to help the bathing waters of the Fylde Coast to meet new European rules. The new facilities would replace an existing pumping station and shorter pipe, located on the sea front at the end of Anchorsholme Lane West.

The new facilities would operate in the same way as the current ones, meaning that they would be used only during storms. The important difference would be that the stormwater would be piped further out to sea to avoid affecting water quality near the beaches.

Why the Project is Needed

There are eight areas officially identified as 'bathing waters' along the Fylde Coast. The new European Bathing Water Directive is introducing new, tighter standards for bathing water quality. The proposed project at Anchorsholme aims to help improve local bathing water quality. By replacing the 1 km outfall with a 3.75 km outfall, the stormwater would disperse and avoid impacting on the bathing waters.

Bathing water quality is affected by various sources including: rainfall runoff from towns and farms; animal and bird droppings; mis-connections of dirty water to surface water drains; and discharges from United Utilities' sewer network and treatment works.

Objective

The objective is to help the bathing waters of the Fylde Coast to meet the new standards and be safe for swimming.

Consideration of Alternatives

Storage

United Utilities' main sewerage system on the Fylde already contains a large volume of storage, which reduces the volume of stormwater spilled to the sea. If additional storage were to be provided, there may be no time to empty it between storms, and treatment works may become overloaded.

Treatment

The existing treatment works at Fleetwood has no extra capacity available, and there is no room to expand the site. Any new treatment works would be expensive to build and operate, would take a lot of land, and would have to operate all the time to be effective, even though the capacity would be needed only occasionally. A new consent would be needed from the Environment Agency for a new outfall for the treated effluent. All these reasons mean that treatment of the stormwater would not be practical.

Description of the Project

The project would involve the construction of a new pumping station and long sea outfall, with additional elements necessary for their operation.

The main site would be within Anchorsholme Park. The outfall pipe would pass from there, beneath the sea wall and then be installed in a trench beneath the beach and out to sea.

The park would be closed to the public during the construction period, although one of the bowling greens would be available to the bowling club for most of the time. The park would be improved after construction, and would include a new café, bowling club house, maintenance building, children's playground and multi-use games area. The park would be re-landscaped.

The Surrounding Environment

Anchorsholme Park is in a suburban area, north of Blackpool. The western side of the park is separated by a wall from Princes Way, just above the beach. Blackpool Council is currently improving the sea defences alongside Princes Way. Anchorsholme Lane West forms the northern boundary of the park, and Queen's Promenade follows the eastern edge of the park. Houses on Parkland Close and College Avenue overlook the park.

Figure 1 : Anchorsholme Park, February 2015

Anchorsholme Park is currently affected by the construction of an underground storm-water storage tank for United Utilities.

Along the coast and out to sea in this area, there are a number of areas that have been given ecological designations because of their importance at a national and European level. The outfall would extend into the Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) and would be 5 km east of the Shell Flat and Lune Deep Special Area for Conservation (SAC), 11 km north of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar wetland, 6 km south of the Morecambe Bay SAC/SPA/Ramsar site and 5 km north of the Fylde Coast Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).

Figure 2 : The beach at Anchorsholme, February 2015

Environmental Impacts

Ecology and Nature Conservation

An assessment has been made of the predicted impacts of the proposed project on ecology, including on land and in the sea. The assessment has considered mammals, birds, crustaceans on the sea bed, fish, plankton, amphibians, invertebrates and plant species.

Measures would be taken to avoid or reduce potential impacts. These measures include seasonal working in the marine environment to minimise adverse impacts on sensitive species. With these measures in place, the construction and operational phases would have slight impacts on marine ecological receptors.

The project has also been assessed in relation to the potential to affect terrestrial and marine European designated sites (e.g. SPA, SAC, Ramsar), in accordance with the Habitats Regulations. This found that the project considered alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would have no likely significant effects on the designated sites.

Water Quality, Hydrology and Flood Risk

In terms of water quality, the assessment considered the disturbance of sediments, and the potential for accidental spills of oils, chemicals or other pollutants during construction, and the potential impacts of discharges from the long sea outfall. The assessment has also considered whether there would be any effects on the status of the Mersey Mouth waterbody, under a piece of European legislation called the Water Framework Directive.

The potential impact of increased sediment loads would lead to a slight adverse impact on marine water quality during the construction phase. Operation of the new outfall would have a large beneficial impact on the quality of local bathing waters.

All potential sources of flooding were considered, including from surface water runoff, the sea, sewers, and groundwater. The assessment found that the key risk in the area of the project is flooding from the sea. However, according to the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning, the site is within Flood Zone 1 (low risk) with only the Queen's Promenade entrance located within Coastal Flood Zone 2. No other significant risk of flooding has been identified.

The project would not change the risk of flooding at the site or elsewhere.

Land Quality and Soils

Information relating to soil type and underlying geology in the study area has been found through desk study and the interpretation of ground investigations.

Some asbestos fibres have been found in topsoil samples from the site, meaning that safety measures would need to be put in place to protect construction workers and members of the public from exposure to asbestos. Procedures would also be put in place for dealing with unforeseen contamination, should any be found during construction. Contaminated soils would not be reused as surface cover in areas of public open space or landscaping.

There would be the potential for some reduction in soil quality during construction, if topsoil from the park was not stored appropriately during construction; hence a management plan would be put in place.

A site waste management plan and materials management plan would be developed in order to minimise the use of raw materials, maximise re-use of materials within the project, and minimise the production of waste.

Cultural Heritage

This topic covers built heritage, archaeology and historic landscapes, and the assessment has assessed potential impacts both on land and on the sea bed. The study area extended 500m beyond the proposed works on land and at sea.

Within the study area, eight heritage features were identified. These included peat deposits from the early Holocene period, the former location of a medieval farm, an 18th century farmhouse, the Blackpool to Fleetwood tramway, two shipwrecks and the remnants of a cobbled outfall pipe. A third shipwreck has been entirely salvaged, and so does not need to be considered. There is low potential for unknown archaeology to be present on land and negligible potential for unknown archaeology to be present in the sea bed.

An exclusion zone would be used to ensure that construction works did not affect the wreck of the Abana. No other mitigation measures would be needed, and no significant impacts would be expected to occur.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

An assessment was carried out in accordance with best-practice guidance. The findings of the assessment are summarised as follows.

The largest changes in views would affect nearby residents and users of Anchorsholme Park, with the largest adverse impacts happening during construction. For many people there would be improved views afterwards, due to the improvements to the park.

After construction, views over the northern part of the park would include clear views of the operational area, control building and ventilation stacks. Some of the residents in this area would have their existing views towards the seafront reduced. Other residents would experience more minor changes to their views.

The views from the beach and seafront promenade (Princes Way) would be affected during the installation of the outfall pipe. The pipe would not be visible after construction, although the control building and vents would be visible, with a slight change in the character of this particular part of the coast.

The permanent improvements to the park facilities would benefit the local landscape.

Noise and Vibration

A construction contractor has yet to be appointed, meaning a detailed assessment of construction impacts could not be undertaken. There is the potential for adverse noise and vibration impacts during construction, and so a number of best-practice noise and vibration control methods would be adopted.

There is the potential for an increase in noise levels as a result of construction traffic. However, these noise impacts have been predicted to be within acceptable limits. It will be necessary to consider these impacts again once the noise of the construction activities can also be taken into account, in order to assess the total noise impact during construction (see the list of recommendations below).

Vibration impacts due to construction traffic are likely to be low.

The detailed design of the pumping station is not yet available, and so it has not been possible to assess the noise from the proposed pumps and equipment. During operation, the potential for adverse vibration impact is considered low. Noise-limit values have been proposed for the normal operation of the pumping station, following discussion with Blackpool Council's environmental health department.

The following recommendations have been made:

1. A more detailed assessment of construction impacts should be undertaken once a contractor is appointed. Additional noise and vibration control measures should be considered if necessary.

2. A noise and vibration monitoring scheme shall be agreed with the environmental health department of Blackpool Council, and limits should be set for the construction phase.

3. Noise limits during operation of the pumping station should also be agreed with Blackpool Council.

4. A more detailed assessment of operational noise impacts should be undertaken once detailed design information is available. Control measures may need to be proposed, depending upon the results.

Traffic and Transport

The assessment was carried out in line with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) document "Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic". Traffic counts were included in order to understand the current levels of use of the road network.

Construction activities would lead to a relatively small increase in vehicle numbers on local roads, which would not significantly change the traffic conditions on those roads. There would be capacity available on the proposed access routes to allow for the construction traffic.

The construction access route has been agreed with the local highways authorities. In addition, a construction traffic management plan would be developed, to cover vehicle movements, access routes, signing and parking provision.

After the end of construction, traffic visiting the pumping station would be very limited, and would follow the same pattern as for the current pumping station.

Air Quality and Odour

Existing air quality within the study area is good and meets air quality objectives. Blackpool Council (BC) have received a small number of odour complaints relating to sewerage smells in the area over recent years. Modelling also shows that there is the potential for loss of amenity due to odour at some locations at the current time.

The impact of vehicle exhaust emissions from construction traffic on local air quality is likely to be negligible. The risks linked to construction dust and fumes during construction would be managed through good practice measures on site, and would not be significant.

An odour control unit (OCU) would be installed in the new pumping station to treat odour emissions. The existing pumping station is currently the main source of odour emissions from the site. Total odour emission rates associated with the pumping station would be reduced following installation of the new OCU.

Socio-Economics

This topic covers the effects of the project on the local and regional economy, including changes in tourism, employment, land use, and the local community.

The project would help the bathing waters along the Fylde Coast to achieve updated European water quality standards. If this were not to be achieved, there would be a large impact on tourism in the area, which would lead to millions of pounds of losses from the local economy. The proposed project is therefore seen to be very important in terms of protecting the local economy and local jobs related to tourism. The construction jobs involved in the development would also help the local economy.

Anchorsholme Park would be closed to the public during construction, and so local people would lose their recreational facility at this location. One bowling green would remain available to the bowling club for most of the time. The park would be redesigned and reopened to the public after construction and landscaping, with improved facilities including a new café, games area and landscaping. No private property or business premises would be directly affected by the construction works.

Construction works, including construction vehicles, would affect the amenity of the local area. However, in the long term, taking into account the re-designed park and the improvements in bathing water quality, the project would be expected to improve local people's perceptions of their local area.

Cumulative Effects

An assessment has been made of the predicted effects that would arise as a result of either:

- Multiple impacts from this project affecting the same receptor(s); or
- Impacts from this project and other project(s) together affecting the same receptor(s).

Residents of properties close to Anchorsholme Park, who would experience visual impacts as a result of the construction works would also be affected to some extent by construction noise and by the temporary loss of recreational facilities due to the closure of Anchorsholme Park.

A number of planned developments in the area have been considered in terms of their potential to contribute to cumulative effects. The majority of effects would not be significant; however, construction vehicles accessing the various development projects would cause an increase in traffic on the A585, with a slight cumulative effect.

What Happens Next

The findings of the environmental impact assessment will be used by both Blackpool Council and the Marine Management Organisation to help them to decide whether to grant the necessary permissions for the project to go ahead.

As part of the planning process, Blackpool Council will give local people and organisations the opportunity to provide comments, before they make their decision.