

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	ABERDEEN HARBOUR EXPANSION
Project Number:	2014-0759
Country:	United Kingdom
Project Description:	The project involves the design, construction and commissioning of a new deep-water multipurpose port at Nigg Bay, located 1 km south of the existing port of Aberdeen in Scotland.
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	no

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

Environmental procedures

The Project is included in Scotland's third National Planning Framework ("NPF3"), which sets out a long-term vision for the spatial development of Scotland. The NPF3 has been the subject of a full SEA² as required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005³ and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal as required by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended)⁴. Following a public consultation and review by the Scottish Parliament, the final version of the NPF3 and the corresponding SEA and HRA reports were adopted by the Scottish Parliament and published on 23.06.2014⁵.

The Project falls under Annex I of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU. In order to implement the Project a number of consents and licences are still required, including a Harbour Revision Order ("HRO") from Transport Scotland under the Harbours Act 1964, two Marine Licences⁶ from Marine Scotland under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and a Planning Permission from Aberdeen City Council under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). Each of these licensing regimes requires an EIA in accordance with the requirements of the relevant EIA Regulations: Schedule 3 of the Harbours Act 1964; the Marine Works (EIA) Regulations 2007⁷ (as amended by the Marine Works (EIA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011); and the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011.

After a formal Scoping Opinion from Transport Scotland in 2014 the project promoter, Aberdeen Harbour Board ("AHB") carried out the required environmental impact studies. The Environmental Statement ("ES") was concluded in November 2015. The ES non-technical summary ("NTS") was provided to the Bank. The ES was subsequently included in the

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100 000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20 000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

² Strategic Environmental Assessment

³ The SEA Directive 2001/42/EG is transposed into Scottish legislation by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005

⁴ The Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC is transposed into Scottish legislation by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended); the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which replace the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in England and Wales (and to a limited degree in Scotland - as regards reserved matters); and the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 and associated amendments.

⁵ The reports are available on the website of the Scottish Government <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Framework/Archive/Documents>

⁶ One Marine License for the construction works and one Marine Licence for the dredging and offshore disposal of materials

⁷ The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended 2011), transposes the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU into Scottish legislation.

various consent and licences applications and the review of these applications by the three consenting authorities is currently underway.

Compliance of the Project with the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (“WFD”) has been checked in the context of the EIA process. A WFD Assessment concluded that the Project will not cause deterioration in water body status or prevent a water body from meeting its WFD objectives. Following a screening exercise, AHB carried out a Habitats Regulation Appraisal (“HRA”) in accordance with Art.6(3) of the Habitats directive 92/43/EEC. The results of the WFD Assessment and the HRA are presented in the ES and subject to the same approval process as the EIA.

Main environmental impacts

The proposed port expansion site is located at Nigg Bay, a pocket cove confined by the two headlands of Greg Ness to the south and Girdle Ness to the north. The bay contains a single beach with coarse sand and cobble stones. Part of the bay has been used as a municipal refuse site for building rubble, which has produced an elevated platform acting as coastal erosion protection, and a water sewage treatment plant is located just behind the beach.

The principal negative impacts of the Project are related to the physical presence of the harbour. In fact, the Project is a major infrastructure development in a previously undeveloped site and, as such, will inevitably alter the characteristics of the area in which it is located, causing permanent loss of habitat, a change in wave impact and ocean current patterns, potential damage to the terrestrial and marine ecology and a fundamental change in the local landscape and seascape views. More specifically, in absence of any mitigation, the Project is likely to cause major adverse effects on three protected plant species⁸ that are present in the project site. Views into Nigg Bay from Girdle Ness and Greg Ness on either side will be affected by the Project, as well as views from the Torry neighbourhood and the setting of St. Fittick’s Church. Finally, although current patterns are anticipated to change, no significant changes in sediment transport or coastal erosion are expected due to the rocky nature of the coast south of Nigg Bay.

During the construction phase the Project is expected to cause temporary adverse impacts such as air pollutant emissions, underwater and ambient noise and vibrations, increased water turbidity, pollution through accidental spills, etc. In particular, underwater noise and vibrations from drilling, blasting and impact piling activities could, without mitigation, have a moderate to major adverse impact on marine mammals and migratory fish species such as the Atlantic salmon.

During the operation phase the Project is expected to have adverse impacts on water quality, air quality, sediment quality, noise levels and the terrestrial and marine ecology in the project area and immediate surroundings, caused by vessel movements, maintenance dredging works, port operations and increased road traffic. In particular, introduction of harmful species caused by international vessel movements could, without mitigation, have a major adverse impact on the fish and shellfish ecology. Overall, impacts during operations are expected to be of a greater magnitude than those arising from the construction works, largely because of the long-term nature of the operations’ impacts.

The identified negative project impacts will be reduced through a range of mitigation and offsetting measures as proposed in the Environmental Management Plan (“EMP”) and as identified through discussions with the regulators and statutory consultees. The EMP covers both the construction phase and the operation phase and is included within the ES. The selected contractor will be required to develop the final EMP for the construction phase in line with the project approvals and to implement the measures detailed within the plan. Implementation of the EMP will be monitored and enforced by AHB. Provided that the EMP is properly implemented, the negative residual impacts arising from the Project are expected to be negligible to minor, with the exception of the Project’s visual effects on the local landscape and seascape. In fact, the ES recognises that it is unlikely that mitigation measures will be able to significantly reduce the predicted visual effects arising from the Project.

⁸ curved sedge, sea-pea and oyster plant

Biodiversity issues

There are a number of nature conservation sites surrounding the Project that are designated under European Directives and international agreements, the closest being the River Dee Special Area of Conservation ("SAC") located at 1 km. Following a screening exercise, AHB carried out an HRA in accordance with Art.6(3) of the EU Habitats directive 92/43/EEC in order to assess potential effects of the Project on these designated sites, including possible cumulative effects with other projects. The HRA concluded that the Project will not have any significant adverse effect on the site integrity of the identified SACs, Special Protection Areas ("SPA") or protected species.

Furthermore, there is a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest ("SSSI") on the southern side of Nigg Bay. The presence of the SSSI has been carefully considered in the project planning and design and the presence of the breakwaters will reduce any potential erosion of the cliffs due to wave action. Hence, the Project is not expected to have any adverse effects on the Nigg Bay SSSI. However, to help achieve the management objectives for the SSSI, AHB will work with Scottish Natural Heritage to agree a management programme, which will include including regular inspections and vegetation clearing.

Climate change aspects

The breakwaters and quay walls have been dimensioned at a height of +12m and +6.5m above CD, respectively, providing protection against flooding from extreme events, while taking into account an allowance for sea level rise over the design life of the structures as a climate change adaptation measure.

Social Assessment, where applicable

The Project is expected to have positive effects on employment in the wider region, both during construction and operation, and hence make a considerable contribution to the regional economy.

The Project is expected to negatively affect the recreational users of the bay and local creel fishermen. However, due to the close proximity of nearby alternative sites, coupled with the relatively low usage of Nigg Bay, and the mitigation measures proposed to improve local environmental and social amenities, these adverse social impacts are expected to be minor.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The Project has been the subject of several rounds of public consultation. Firstly, as part of the approval process of the NPF3 and the corresponding SEA and HRA reports, public consultations took place between 30.04.2013 and 23.07.2013. The analysis of the responses was published on 28.10.2013⁹.

Secondly, AHB have taken a proactive approach to public and stakeholder consultation throughout the entire course of the Project preparation. For the purpose of the feasibility study and the EIA scoping exercise, AHB organised workshops on topics such as transportation, planning and environmental considerations with several statutory and non-statutory stakeholders¹⁰. Furthermore, during 2015 several events, such as public information days and public exhibitions, were organised to present the Project and its main impacts to the local community.

Finally, as part of the approval process of the ES in view of issuing the HRO, the Marine Licences and the Planning Permission, the Project's ES and NTS were on public display for six weeks as from 05.11.2015 in the Aberdeen Maritime Museum and at Torry Library and are available on AHB's website¹¹.

⁹A total of 549 responses were received to the consultation on the NPF3 Main Issues Report, including from all planning authorities in Scotland, businesses, public, third sector and professional bodies. In addition, 75 consultees specifically commented on the Environmental Report. The responses were analysed by independent consultants, and their report was published online in autumn 2013:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Framework/Archive/Documents>

¹⁰ including Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Aberdeen City Council, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, Marine Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, etc.

¹¹ <http://www.aberdeen-harbour.co.uk/future/nigg-bay-documents>

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

AHB's health, safety and environmental management systems have been approved by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance as meeting international standards OHSAS 18001 and ISO 14001 in November 2014.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Bank will condition the financing on (i) the delivery of documentary evidence issued by the Competent Authorities that the Harbour Revision Order, the Marine License for the construction works, the Marine Licence for the dredging and offshore disposal of materials and the Planning Permission have been granted, (ii) the delivery of documentary evidence issued by the Competent Nature Conservation Authority that the requirements of the Habitats Directive have been fulfilled; and (iii) the completion and implementation of the EMP in accordance with the project environmental authorisations.

Subject to the above conditions and undertakings being met, the overall residual environmental and social impacts of the Project are expected to be mostly negligible to minor, with the exception of the Project's significant residual visual impacts on the landscape and the seascape. However, considering the outcomes of the study of alternatives and the various public consultations, the Project's environmental and social risks are considered manageable and the Project is acceptable for EIB financing in E&S terms.

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