3 April 2019

Wick Harbour Authority are seeking to re-open an area up to the maximum ½ hectare square

(maximum permitted area) within the South Spoil Ground centred on co-ordinates

58.25.865 N and 3.01.708 W. ( chart attached )

In order to ensure continued safe navigation for all Wick Harbour Authority stakeholders maintenance dredging was previously undertaken in the following areas most recently 2018 :

River Harbour Navigation Channel, River Harbour Entrance, Outer Harbour Entrance, Outer Harbour and Inner Harbour.

These operations were covered by Marine Licence 06498/17/0 which expired 1 October 2018 and the dredged material was disposed at the North Dumping Ground. We are unable to now use the North Dumping Ground due to its proximity to the MPA Horse Mussel Bed . The nearest suitable disposal site we believe is the South Spoil Ground.

**ASSESSMENT OF SITE SUITABILITY**

Short and Long -term disposal needs of the project

Wick Harbour Authority require to ensure continued safe naviagable waters for all our customers. To facilitate this we will require to conduct Maintenance Dredging activities annually or bi-annually dependent on requirements. By regularly maintaining the required depths through more frequent dredging, we will reduce the impact of large scale disposal at sea, therefore allowing the materials to disperse more naturally, and the area to recover to its natural state in a shorter period of time.

Suitability and capacity of existing disposal sites nearest to the project

We are unable to dispose of dredged material from the harbour within the North Dumping Ground due to the MPA protecting Horse Mussel species.

The South Spoil Ground historically was used by WHA over many years for dredge material disposal and its distance is comparable from the harbour to the North Dumping Ground. It is located well to the south of the MPA which will ensure no adverse impact on the Horse Mussel Bed.

Potential alternative disposal options

In the earlier application for Maintenance Dredging for the previous licence , options were considered to have materials dumped on land. The BPEO and EIA concluded that the only viable option would be to continue to dispose of dredged materials at sea. We can confirm that we have

reviewed the BPEO 13 July 2017 ref 4 R163065-01 and determine that the conclusions of this report remain relevant to future dredging activities at Wick Harbour.

Determination of the acceptability of the material to be disposed of to sea

In 2017 samples analysed from the areas to be dredged within Wick Harbour were submitted to Marine Scotland . The licence granted 06498/17/0 for Maintenance Dredging used these samples. As these samples have been taken within 3 years and the dredged areas remain unchanged we request that these samples are again considered for the purposes of this application for disposal at sea ( albeit in a the South Dumping Ground) in line with advice from Marine Scotland.

South Dumping Ground – Sand Samples

Sampling was undertaken in the above area. Due to the size and scale of the site 3 samples were taken – spread out from within the area. In all cases the soil is described on test results as Brown Sand and Gravel with Shells.

The Test Reports are included with this application.

Photographic and video evidence of the seabed undertaken by Marine Scotland in 2018 & 2017 and shared with Wick Harbour Authority appears to confirm that the site is dominated by sands and gravels .

Consultation

Wick Harbour Authority consulted stakeholders by way of letter and also through public display on their Noticeboard. We have engaged with Scottish Natural Heritage to seek their support for the re-opening of the South Dumping Ground. In 2014 discussions took place surrounding Dredged Material Deposit and their conclusion at that time stated that an alternative site to the north disposal site be considered due to its promiximity to the MPA. SNH concluded that the south disposal site appears to be a suitable alternative. ( Copy of correspondence attached)

We can confirm that we have reviewed the BPEO 13 July 2017 ref 4 R163065-01 and determine that the conclusions of this report remain relevant to future dredging activities at Wick Harbour.