

Victoria Rampart Ltd

Stone Pier Yard, Shore Road, Warsash,
Southampton, Hampshire SO31 9FR

RHHA HWC Briefing Note

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Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Background to the proposed dredge.....	2
3	Dredging.....	3
4	Additional documents	3
5	MMO Process	4
5.1	EIA Screening	4
5.2	Sample Plan	4
5.3	Marine Licence application.....	4
5.4	MMO HRA.....	5
5.5	Shellfish	5
5.6	Benthic survey & British Trust for Ornithology Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data	5
5.7	Winter Bird Survey.....	6
5.8	Licence conditions	6

1 Introduction

This document is provided as a guide to the long process in obtaining a Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Marine Licence for the proposed dredging works. There are several other documents provided with details, but due to the multiple revisions during the application this document seeks to summarise the key points.

2 Background to the proposed dredge

It is important to understand the need for the proposed dredge. The site was last dredged in 2006 when the River Hamble Harbour Authority's area (just south of the Stone Pier Yard site) was dredged. This dredge was a capital dredge due to the 10-year trigger on the definition of a capital dredge. The 10-year trigger has always been contentious as it assumes that after 10 years the material has formed a permanent/stable bed. This has no real scientific basis as the upper bed material will always be recent deposit. The industry generally regards a capital dredge where the material is not recent deposit (such as compacted clay or gravel) and the plant production rate is different. Capital dredging is also regarded as a one-time event with maintenance dredging required to maintain such depths. The material to be dredged at Ston Pier yard is all soft fine sediment.

For small yards situated in estuaries, the natural deposition may be small and any requirement for what is effectively maintenance dredging is not required at intervals of less than 10 years. Such a dredge then falls into the capital category.

Stone Pier Yard is an established boat yard with pontoon moorings and has been in operation since the early 1960s. A large area of the site has become intertidal. The pontoon area has been identified in various local documents as a dredged area from before 2006.

The change of ownership of the yard has highlighted the issue of a lack of maintenance dredging. In an ideal world the pontoon area would provide non tidal moorings (so no restriction on vessel access) with a maintained dredged channel for access to the crane area. Such a crane area is essential for the efficient operation of a boatyard.

Due to the historic lack of maintenance, it is accepted that full non tidal access is no longer viable under today's current restrictions. The applicant has therefore proposed a minimum acceptable increase in depth of 1m.

Marine Plan – The proposed works are necessary to maintain operation of an existing, well established, boatyard. The works therefore meet many key objectives of the South Marine Plan. Failure to undertake the proposed works would eventually lead to the loss of the facility due to an inability to operate at a reasonable level.

3 Dredging

The dredging for the current Harbour Works application relates only to the Capital Dredge, i.e. the initial dredge. This is hoped to occur during the winter months of 2026. The plant used will be the same type of plant as is currently used for marina dredging in the river. The contractor is likely to be one of the two usual contractors who dredge the marinas.

Due to natural siltation, it is anticipated that a maintenance dredge will be required at 5 yearly intervals. This dredge will only remove material that is shallower than the post dredge of the Capital dredge. The maintenance dredge will require a new Harbour Works Consent.

4 Additional documents

The following documents are relevant:

MMO Marine Licence L/2026/00101/1 – This is the formal licence for dredging and disposal. This is the licence that is required for all dredging and disposal works on the River Hamble. The MMO licence addresses two dredge campaigns, one between 22:07:26 & 21:07:29 for the Capital dredge and one between 22:07:27 & 21:07:36 for maintenance dredging. The overlap is intended to provide some flexibility in actual dredge dates (to allow for contractor availability etc). The key numbers are the dredge volumes – 3750m³ for capital material and 3000m³ for maintenance material. Licence total 6750m³.

The licence addresses the disposal volumes in a different manner. The tables indicate the amount of material (in tonnes, not cubic metres) that may be disposed in each year of the 10 year licence. They have done this to provide flexibility for the actual dredging date, It does **NOT** mean that the stated volumes can all be utilised every year. The licence maximum of 6750m³ **CANNOT** be exceeded.

202605_MLA2024000125_HRA_Draft_V8.pdf - This is the MMO's final draft of their HRA.

J2024_0126_StonePierMMO_v0.1 Final v2 LTS.pdf - This is the Shellfish Ecological Impact Assessment as requested by the MMO.

J2025_0157_LTS_StonePier_May_2025.pdf – This contains additional Benthic survey data and analysis of WEBS data as requested by the MMO.

J2025_0183_LTS_WinterBirdSurvey VBPT.pdf – This is the Winter Bird Survey Report as requested by the MMO.

Stone Pier Yard MMO 2025v2.pdf – This is an earlier version for the MMO application. The only change is the drawings were revised during consultations, as were the dredge volumes.

The reference to impact on Brown Crabs at the Nab Tower is no longer valid. No evidence has been provided to indicate this is an issue.

MMO Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Decision Letter – 2026 – This is the MMO decision that no EIA is required

MMO EIA Response Schedule – This is the MMO EIA Screening document

The following drawings are relevant:

Drawing 11003/10 This is a plan view of the proposed dredge. The dredge area, slope areas and current depths are indicated. The drawing also shows the MLWS and MLWN tide levels.

Drawing 11003/11 This drawing shows 3 cross sections through the dredge area and the relationship with Mean Low Water.

5 MMO Process

The application process consists of a number of phases:

5.1 EIA Screening

This is a new approach by the MMO (which was revised following some legal challenges). All works relating to ‘marinas’ are now required to submit an EIA Screening opinion request as a separate application. For information, the definition of ‘marina’ is unclear but for the River Hamble this is expected to cover all sites that require a MMO Marine Licence.

The MMO EIA Screening concluded that no EIA was required (FYI this is likely to be the case for all such works in the River Hamble, but a screening application will still be required).

5.2 Sample Plan

This is required for all dredging applications and requires details of the dredge area and depth of removal and volumes. For Stone Pier Yard this was obtained on 23:10:2023. The required samples were collected and analysed by an MMO accredited laboratory (SOCOTEC Ltd).

5.3 Marine Licence application

This is the main application and follows directly from the Sample Plan. The application includes various supporting documents, drawings and technical information on the proposed works. The MMO consult with many statutory consultees and public notices are placed. The MMO pass comments and objections to the applicant for a response to the MMO. This usually results in clarifications and revisions to the application. Requests by the MMO for additional information (such as ecology) are provided by the applicant (as in this case). The MMO (as the competent authority) also undertook a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

The clarifications and additional ecology information have been approved by the MMO. The sample analysis was assessed by CEFAS (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture

Science) for the MMO and approved for sea disposal. This has resulted in the issue of the Marine Licence.

5.4 MMO HRA

As the competent authority the MMO has undertaken a Habitats Regulations Assessment (their final draft is provided as a separate document for information, the MMO does not routinely publish such documents). The regulations require HRAs to be approved by Natural England (NE). Natural England's approval is provided as a separate document.

The key part of NE's response states:

Your appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the proposal will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any of the sites in question. Having considered your assessment, Natural England advise that we concur with the assessment conclusions, based on the understanding that the proposed works are located solely within the operational footprint of a pre-existing marina in order to maintain access to pre-existing pontoon structures and that there is no proposal to increase the footprint of the structures within this marina following the proposed dredge.

5.5 Shellfish

This report was related to a MMO request for more detail as raised by Southern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (SIFCA). Their request is provided in the Shellfish Report and led with the statement 'Southern IFCA appreciates that maintenance dredging is necessary within Stone Pier Yard in order to continue safe operations'. The report is an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of fish receptors regarding a proposal for capital dredge works in order to continue safe operations at Stone Pier Boat Yard.

The report concluded that during dredging no significant effects at importance levels from Site to International (native oyster) and Site to National (shellfish) are predicted because of the works, nor as a result of the completed works.

5.6 Benthic survey & British Trust for Ornithology Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data

This report was in response to the MMO's Request for Further Information (RFI). The main concern being potential impacts to designated sites. The report considered the impact to habitats because of the dredge; survey of the existing communities; use of the site by birds at low water.

The report concluded:

There will be no net loss of functional habitat within the wider estuary as the intertidal will be converted to mudflats covered by seawater habitat all the time.

The area proposed for dredging supports low waterbird usage based on available WeBS data and field observations.

The site is highly unlikely to be a critical feeding area for internationally important bird populations listed under the Special Protection Area (SPA) given historical modifications and high levels of disturbance. This disturbance is from users of the nearby English Coastal path to the east; and the users of Stone Pier boatyard itself as well as the surrounding boatyards in this location at the entrance to the River Hamble from Southampton Water.

5.7 Winter Bird Survey

To address any remaining concerns regarding overwintering birds, it was agreed with the MMO that a winter bird survey be undertaken.

Survey results demonstrate that use of the mudflat by SPA-qualifying species and assemblage species is intermittent, low-intensity and strongly constrained by tidal conditions, with feeding limited to discrete low-water windows.

The proposed dredging works are not considered likely to adversely affect the integrity of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA, Ramsar site or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The scale and magnitude of impact are assessed as minor and non-significant, and the project can be screened out at the Likely Significant Effect stage under the Habitats Regulations.

5.8 Licence conditions

The MMO licence contains several conditions; some are standard such as spills etc. The following are more relevant to the RHHA:

- Sediment sampling and analysis required at least 6 weeks prior to the end of 2028. This effectively means a Sample Plan application early in 2028. This is ensure that the dredged material remains suitable for sea disposal.
- 'The deliberate overfilling of the split hopper or bottom dumping barge, leading to overspill of the silt material and / or water, is not permitted'. This is more commonly know as overspill and is not permitted in the River Hamble.
- The licenced activities must only take place between 16th September and 1st May inclusive. This is to avoid the key sensitive migration periods for sea trout and salmonids. This is a standard condition for the River Hamble.

- 'An assessment of alternative uses for the sediment at the sediment sampling review stages in years three and eight of the licence must be undertaken. This assessment must be submitted at least six weeks prior to the proposed commencement of the licensed activities. The licensed activities must not recommence until written approval is provided by the MMO'. This is a relatively new condition and fully supported by the applicant and LTS Ltd.