

BRIEFING UPDATE NOTE (JUNE 2021)

SANDWINNING AT ST ANNES FORESHORE

Introduction

Heatons are a minerals focused planning consultancy acting for both independent and blue-chip minerals operators in the UK with offices in Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and Lancashire. Heatons are supported on this project by Golder Associates who are an environmental consultancy.

Background

The St Annes Foreshore sandwinning site has been in operation since the 1970s and is an important supplier of sand into the region.

In order to restart the sandwinning operation on the foreshore, it is necessary to obtain planning permission from Lancashire County Council (LCC) and a Marine Extraction Licence from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

Progress to date

Following an initial meeting between Fylde BC (FBC) officers and LCC in January 2020 to explain the background to the scheme and seek feedback from LCC officers, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping report was drafted which set out the proposed scope of works for the above submissions. This was submitted to LCC and the MMO in November 2020.

LCC and the MMO consulted with various organisations to seek their comments on the proposed scope and to identify any areas that would require less or additional assessment.

LCC and the MMO produced Scoping Opinions in March 2021 to confirm their position as to the eventual scope of EIA that they would require to be undertaken.

An initial schedule of proposed costs for undertaking the work associated with the planning application and EIA was provided, prior to the EIA Scoping process, in 2020. Assessment work has been progressing during 2021.

The EIA Scoping Opinions from LCC and the MMO identified several specific topic areas where they require further assessment. The principal areas of additional assessment relate to:

- Coastal Geomorphology
- Ecology (reptile surveys and phase 2 botanical survey)
- Beach Sediment / Land Quality / Health & Safety

We had initially proposed to scope out the requirement to assess Cultural Heritage in detail. However, whilst LCC agreed with this approach, the MMO considered that this should be included.

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LCC also considered that air quality and noise could be scoped out of the assessment. However, given that the MMO did not scope this work out, we have taken the view that the more robust approach to the EIA would be to include these assessments as originally proposed.

The scope of the additional Coastal Geomorphology assessment was the subject of a further detailed meeting with LCC and their advisors, Atkins, in April 2021. Following the meeting, Golder produced a technical note to clarify the proposed scope and in consultation with FBC, it was suggested to LCC that the application would be likely to cover an initial 15 year period, during which time monitoring data could be collected. A further application to extend the timescales could then be made at a future date. LCC / Atkins have since reviewed this technical note and confirmed that:

- the proposed method for undertaking a sediment budget calculation seems fair;
- the data sources to be used should be representative of the sediment conditions above and below the water line for the local and regional; and
- it will be important for mitigation measures to be reviewed.

Other unforeseen additional fees that have been incurred during early 2021, relate to:

- MMO fees for their work associated with the EIA Scoping (higher than anticipated). An adjustment in their fees going forward, covering the application period, has therefore been factored in; and
- A topographical drone survey of the site's compound area, stockpiling area and the length of dunes from St Annes Pier to the Squires Gate junction has been completed – it was considered that the extended scope of area covered by the survey was beneficial in terms of data for the EIA and also for FBC's wider dune assessments / works.

Next Steps

The preparation of the planning application, licence application and Environmental Statement is now ongoing and we are aiming to finalise for submission during October / November 2021. Following submission, it would be usual for the determination of the applications to then take a further 4-6 months minimum.

An updated schedule of proposed costs has been provided to FBC officers, outlining the costs of undertaking the additional assessment work identified within the EIA Scoping Opinions.

Outcome

Meetings with LCC, MMO and NE to date have been fairly positive. As previously highlighted, it must be recognised that this is not a straightforward proposal, in particular given the fact that the operations would take place within areas of European ecological designation. However, taking into account that the site has operated successfully for several decades without any obvious ecological or other impact, together with the regional importance of the site for providing a long-term secure supply of sand in the north-west, Heatons and Golder remain of the view that the grant of planning permission and the securing of a marine extraction licence is more likely to succeed than not. As preparation of the EIA and planning application progresses during Summer 2021, regular updates will be provided to advise FBC Officers and Members further.

Dated: 1 June 2021