

Best Practice Environmental option
Nairn Dredge
Marine Directorate 2026

Need to dredge

Due to its location and proximity to the adjacent river, Nairn Harbour approach and entrance is subject to a build-up of sediment from the river and sand from the beach. During recent extended period of wind the situation has worsened.

Dredging must be carried out due to the following reasons:

- Safe navigation in and out of the harbour.
- Maintain the jobs and livelihoods of the commercial harbour users through the continued use of the harbour.
- Maintain the facility for leisure users.
- Not dredging would eventually result in the closure of the harbour due to it silting up to the point it is too shallow to navigate the entrance.

Dredging options & chosen method

- Option 1 – dredge vessel / barge
This option is expensive and would likely result in the project not being able to go ahead due to the financial restraints the Highland Council are facing. Resulting in loss of the facility for commercial and leisure users.
The flow of the river would make it difficult to manoeuvre a barge / vessel.
The dredge material disposal area is shallow and difficult for a vessel to manoeuvre safely.
The area is exposed to the prevailing wind limiting the windows for operation.
- Option 2 – dredge by excavator **Chosen Method**
Dredge by excavator and movement of material by dumper.
This method would be carried out at LWS which will be less affected by the flow current of the river.
Due to dredging at LWS the weather will have less affect allowing works to progress.
It is a short distance from the dredge site to the disposal site.
- Option 3 – do nothing
This is not an option as it will result in the closure of entrance and loss of the facility for commercial and leisure users.
Commercial users depend on the facility for their livelihoods.

Disposal area options & chosen method

Disposal at a waste disposal site is not an option due to the increased cost this would add to the project and the remoteness of the location.

Disposal by contractor is not an option as the materials to be dredged are not suitable for recycling in the construction industry.

Chosen Method - Disposal on the beach adjacent to the harbour:

- The preferred method of disposal is to deposit on the beach between HW and LW to allow for natural dispersion by wave action.
- Material to be dredged is natural deposits from the beach and river.

Area A on the below extract shows the area to be dredged, Area B shows the disposal site.

