

THE CONSERVATION (NATURAL HABITAT, &c.) REGULATIONS 1994 (AS AMENDED)

LICENCE TO DISTURB MARINE SPECIES

Public Case Handling Report for Licence Number: EPS/BS-00011335

Site	
Company	QinetiQ QinetiQ Portsdown Technology Park, Southwick Road, Cosham Portsmouth PO6 3RU
Brief Description of Project	Geophysical and geotechnical surveys using multi-beam echo sounder ("MBES"), sub-bottom profiler ("SBP"), boomer and side scan sonar ("SSS") to inform the design of the redevelopment of Douglas Pier.
Associated Licences	

Species	harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>); bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>); minke whale (<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>); short beaked common dolphin (<i>Delphinus delphis</i>)
Inshore/Offshore	Inshore

TEST 1	Purpose of licence
	Imperative reasons of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment)
Comments	
<p>Is a specific need being met? The Applicant, Qinetiq, intend to carry out geophysical, surveys in order to gather data to inform the design replacement of the Douglas Pier structure in Loch Goil. Qinetiq are acting on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) who have a duty to protect the nation and its interests both at home and abroad. The MoD are responsible for the overall management of the UK's defence and military forces. Douglas Pier is an asset utilised by the MoD and without renewal work this pier will become unusable by the MoD. As well as impacts on the activities of the MoD this will also have an impact on a local source of employment.</p> <p>What benefit does the activity provide or what need does it address? Redevelopment of the pier will allow that pier will continue to be utilised and the load restrictions currently on the dilapidated existing structure may be lifted. This will allow continued use of the pier by MoD and also negate the need for large cranes to be brought on site, via local B roads, in order to lift equipment over the pier structure.</p> <p>Why is the activity essential? The purpose of the surveys is to:</p> <p>Map the seabed, measure water depths and define the sediment and rock below bed level. To inform the design of the redeveloped pier. Without these surveys the development could not safely proceed.</p>	
Test 1 satisfied?	YES

TEST 2	Satisfactory alternatives
Comments	
As the purpose of the surveys is to redevelop an existing pier, and safeguard the long-term use of this site and the socio-economic benefits that brings, these surveys are very location specific. Alternative locations were therefore not an option. The equipment selected for conducting the geophysical surveys was also considered to be the most effective available and it was deemed that alternatives were not viable to gather the necessary data. The do-nothing approach was also considered but if these surveys are not carried out then it will not be possible to carry out the redevelopment of Douglas Pier. This would result in the facility falling into increasing disrepair and becoming unusable by the MoD. This would then result in negative impacts on both socio-economic receptors locally and on defence planning nationally.	
Test 2 satisfied?	YES

TEST 3	Favourable conservation status
Comments	
In consultation NatureScot confirmed that providing mitigation measures were implemented and given the short time during which the SBP and boomer equipment will be deployed, there will be no adverse impact on the conservation status of the EPS concerned.	
Test 3 satisfied?	YES

Date application received: 10/07/2025

Consultation start date: 25/09/2025

Consultation end date: 23/10/2025

Notes

Date	title	Text
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National Marine Plan considerations:

The decision is: In accordance and no further action required
<p>Comments: This application is in keeping with the policies and objectives contained in Section 15 of the NMP which specifically cover defence interests.</p> <p>It also aligns with the following general principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presumption in favour of sustainable development and use of the marine environment where consistent with policies and objectives of Scotland's National Marine Plan. This work will contribute to the upgrade of HMNB Clyde and enable improved adherence to sustainable development and use of marine resources. 2 and 3. Sustainable development and use, which provides economic benefit to Scottish communities. The new pier forms part of HMNB Clyde which is a significant employer in the local area. Investment in long-term future of HMNB Clyde underpins economic and social benefits including, job creation, training and supply chain development.

9. Natural heritage. Following consultation with NatureScot it was concluded that this work would comply with legal requirements for protected areas and species, not result in significant impacts on the status of Priority Marine Features and would have minimal impacts on the species and habitats of designated sites.

12, 13 and 14. This work will not have a detrimental effect on water quality or air quality. The objective of upgrading the pier is to enable the direct loading of vessels and thereby negating the need to bring additional plant onto site, thereby reducing emissions in the area. The disturbance that may be caused in the short term by the survey equipment is acknowledged and shall be mitigated against.

The proposed survey is also in agreement with the Fisheries 1 and 2; Transport 1 and Recreation and Tourism 6 policies.

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