T: +44 (0)300 244 5046
E: ms.marinelicensing@gov.scot

Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)

Application for a licence to disturb or injure marine European protected species (EPS) for one of the following purposes

- **For preserving public health or public safety**
- **For an imperative reason of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment)**
- **For preventing the spread of disease**
- **For preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops,vegetables, fruit, growing timber or any other form of property, or to fisheries.**

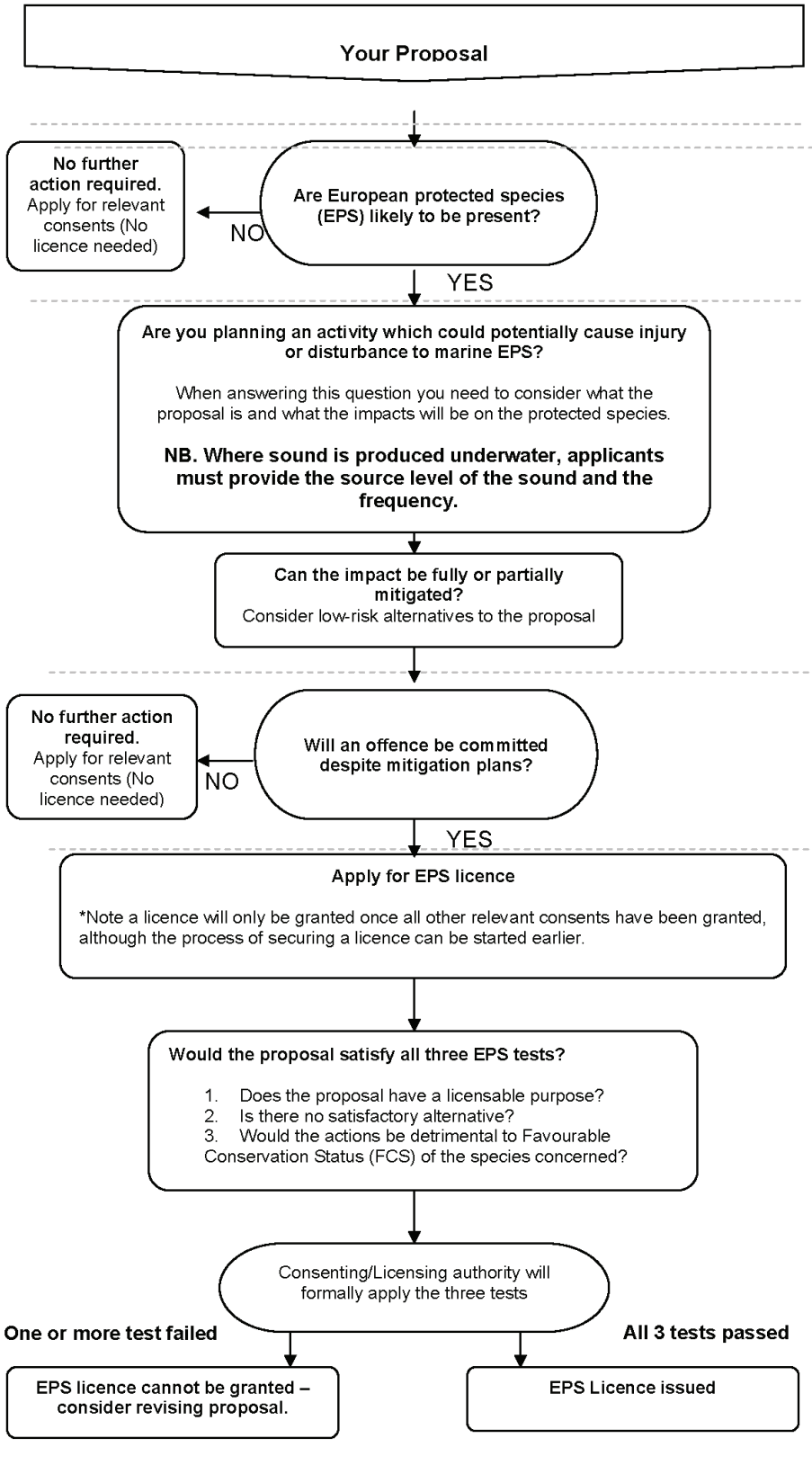
Please use this application form if you wish to undertake works/activities that would affect European protected species in the Scottish inshore marine area (0 – 12nm).

IMPORTANT: Before completing this form, please read these notes carefully

Applicants are advised to read these notes in conjunction with The Protection of Marine European Protected Species from injury and disturbance:Guidance for Scottish Inshore Waters. If further clarification is needed please contact Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) on 0300 244 5046 or email: ms.marinelicensing@gov.scot

Flowchart showing the decision-making process

Please refer to the relevant chapter of The Protection of Marine European Protected Species from injury and disturbance:Guidance for Scottish Inshore Waters



Please complete all relevant sections of the form.

Please ensure that you answer questions fully in order to avoid delays.

The completed application should be sent to Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) at the address below or emailed to ms.marinelicensing@gov.scot.

We will not process unsigned application forms.

Please ensure that you provide appropriate information to support your application. Applicants can provide this supporting information in the form of an EPS Risk Asessment. Guidance can be found in The Protection of Marine European Protected Species from injury and disturbance:Guidance for Scottish Inshore Waters. Please contact MS-LOT if you wish to discuss the level of supporting documentation required for your application. Failure to provide sufficient supporting information may delay the consultation and licensing process.

MS-LOT will aim to determine whether a licence should be issued **within 6 to 8 weeks of acceptance of a completed application**. However, please note that for large scale or complex projects, the determination period may be longer.

If you experience any problems filling in this form, please contact MS-LOT.

Please use this application form if you wish to undertake works/activities that would affect European protected species in the Scottish marine area (0 – 12nm).

Please note that European protected species are also protected in the offshore marine environment (between 12 and 200 nautical miles). Species in this area are protected under The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Do not use this form if your application relates to scientific, research, conservation or educational purposes. Please contact Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH Licensing, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW, Telephone 01463 725000, email **licensing@snh.gov.uk** or visit their website) for a licence application for these purposes. SNH also issues licences for the purposes of marking animals or plants in relation to conservation or introducing them to particular areas for conserving natural habitats, and for protecting zoological or botanical collections.

Before a licence can be granted, it is essential that other relevant licences or consents have been secured for the proposed activity (eg Marine licence).

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain any other consents or authorisations that may be required.

Part A
Section 1 Personal details

Please provide details of the individual, company or partnership you wish to be named on the licence. The licensee is responsible for ensuring compliance with the licence and its conditions. Under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (as amended) it is an offence to fail to comply with the terms and conditions of a licence.

Section 2 Previous applications

Please provide details of any previous relevant licences.

Part B
Section 3

Species

Please provide details of the species that will be affected by the work, the number likely to be affected and a description of how this number was determined. This information can be described in detail in your supporting information. You will need to provide detailed proposals (to be included in the 'Supporting information') of all the mitigation work that you plan to carry out which will affect European protected species.

Location

Describe the location of the proposed works. Include a list of the latitude and longitude co-ordinates (WGS84) of the boundary points of the proposed project. WGS84 is the World Geodetic System 1984 and the reference co-ordinate system used for marine licence applications. Co-ordinates taken from GPS equipment should be set to WGS84. Coordinates taken from recent admiralty charts will be on a WGS84 compatible datum. Ordnance survey maps do not use WGS84. In a few cases, (e.g. laying of cables or pipelines) it may only be practicable to supply co-ordinates for the start and end points.

Example: For positions read from charts the format should be as in the example: 55◦55.555'N 002◦22.222'W (WGS84). The decimal point specifies that decimals of minutes are used and the datum is stated explicitly. If seconds are used then the format should be as in the example: 55°55'44''N 2°22'11''W (WGS84).

It is important that the correct positions, in the correct format, are included with this application, as any errors will result in the application being refused or delayed.

Section 4 Consideration of designated sites

Please provide details of any designated sites affected by your proposals. You are advised to consult Scottish Natural Heritage, or other appropriate regulator, if the work you propose to do affects a Natura site, an MPA or a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Section 5 Activities to be licensed

Please indicate the activities you intend to undertake that would otherwise be unlawful
Provide details of the proposed commencement and completion dates of the activities. **The licence start date will not be backdated, since to commence a project for which a licence has not been obtained may constitute an offence resulting in appropriate legal action.**

It is the licensee's responsibility to apply for any further licences or an extension prior to the expiry of the initial licence.

Section 6 Purpose of the licence application

Please indicate the purpose of the licence application, the first of the legal tests.
Please complete the relevant Annex to provide justification for the licensing purpose. This is the legal basis of the application.

Section 7 Satisfactory alternatives

Please provide your consideration of why there is no satisfactory alternative. This must include all other options that have been evaluated, the alternative sites that were considered by you and why they were rejected (if no other sites were considered, you must provide the reasons why), as well as all alternative methods of carrying out the work and alternatives dates / timings.

In relation to each alternative considered, please provide an explanation of why you consider it to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory. In respect of any alternative sites please provide the location(s) and details of the alternative site(s), or your views on how the activity/proposal might have been achieved differently, and any other helpful information; e.g., pros and cons of alternative sites, or whether there is likely to be demand for all suitable sites to be used to meet an identified need. Please explain how this conclusion was reached.

Section 8 Summary of the planning / licensing position

Detail all consents and licences required for the proposed project and indicate those that you have applied for or received.

Section 9 Noise Monitoring

Under the Marine Strategy Regulations (2010), there is now a requirement to monitor loud, low to mid frequency (10Hz to 10kHz) impulsive noise. This includes use of seismic airguns, other geophysical surveys (<10kHz), pile driving, explosives and certain acoustic deterrent devices. This monitoring requires completion of a form at the application stage (giving details of the proposed work) as well as completion of a 'close-out' form (giving details of the actual dates and locations where the activities occurred). The close-out form should be returned within 12 weeks of completing the 'noisy' activity or, in the case of prolonged activities such as piling for harbour construction or wind farms, at quarterly intervals or after each phase of foundation installation.
These forms are available at: https://mnr.jncc.gov.uk//

Section 10 Privacy notice

This section briefly describes the Scottish Ministers responsibilities in relation to Data Protection based on the requirements of the data protection laws and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Part D
Section 11 Declaration and warning

It is important to read the Declaration and Warning sections before signing the application form.

Site visits and compliance checks

It is possible that the licensing authority may undertake a site visit prior to the issue of a licence. The majority of site visits will be arranged several days in advance and will be conducted in the presence of the licensee (or applicant) however there may be occasions when a site visit will be made at short notice.

Licensees should be aware that they may receive a request for a site visit by the licensing authority, or a person authorised by the licensing authority, to assess site conditions against the conditions of the licence. It is essential that if any of the agreed mitigation measures contained in the application and supporting information are changed for any reason, the licensing authority is informed as soon as possible.

The Licensing authority will monitor compliance with licences issued based on the information included in licence reports.

Where to seek further information

Further information can be obtained from Licensing Operations Team at the address below.
If your proposal relates to one of the purposes for which SNH is the licensing authority, please contact your local office of SNH.

Licensing Operations Team
Marine Scotland
375 Victoria Road
Aberdeen
AB11 9DB

Tel: 0300 244 5046
Email: MS.marinelicensing@gov.scot

Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this document is accurate, nothing in this document should be taken to replace the current legislation in force at this time. You are advised to obtain qualified legal advice in relation to your rights and responsibilities under the 1994 Regulations and other legislation.

Part A. The Applicant: Personal details

These questions relate to the person who will be the **named licensee**. The licence can be issued to an individual or a company or a partnership and the licensee will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the licence and the conditions of the licence. Under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (as amended) it is an offence to fail to comply with any condition imposed by a licence.

1. Name of applicant

Title: <Redac | Forename(s): <Redacted> | Surname: <Redacted>

Company Name: Ardersier Port (Scotland) Limited

Business Title (if Appropriate): Project Director

Address: Ardersier Port Approach, Ardersier, Inverness, Scotland, IV2 7QX

Tel no. (inc. dialling code): 01667 656000

Email address: <Redacted>

2. **The Applicant: Previous applications**:

Have you previously held a wildlife licence issued in the UK? (please tick as appropriate)

Yes ☑ No ☐ (If yes, please complete below, if no, please go to Part B)

Who issued the licence? Marine Scotland

Licence number (most recent licence) MS EPS 06/2019/0

Year in which the licence was issued. 2019

What species were covered by the licence?

What activity was covered by the licence e.g. disturb, injure? Capital dredging
Vibro-piling

Part B. The Application

3. **Species**

(a) Please indicate which species is / are affected by the proposed works.

Common name(s):

Bottlenose Dolphin
Harbour Porpoise
Minke Whale
White-beaked dolphin

Scientific name(s)

Tursiops truncatus
Phocoena phocoena
Balaenoptera acutorostrata
Lagenorhynchus albirostris

(b) How many individual animals will be affected by licensed work?

Bottlenose Dolphin - 6
Harbour Porpoise - 1
Minke Whale - 1
White-beaked dolphin - 1

Please provide a description of how this number was calculated / estimated

The risk of Permanent Threshold Shift (PTS) onset would only be present if a harbour porpoise were to stay within 570m of the dredging works for a 24 hour period, which is highly unlikely.

Most PTS ranges site between 20-400m (again if stationary). If you apply the standard 500m mitigation buffer to the application site boundary it covers an area of 1.79km2 (approx.), which can therefore be used against density estimate data for determining the number of individuals in this area.

Where available, Scans III block density estimates have been used to calculate the maximum numbers of individuals likely to be present within the area. Where this number was less than one the figure has been rounded up as it would not be possible to disturb less than one individual. For some species the Scans III density estimates are 0 individuals, however records indicate they may be present. In this case numbers of individuals have been estimated based on number of individuals reported within recent sightings from Ardersier on the Sea Watch Foundation (SWF) website (in the past year), with the highest figures used on a precautionary basis. For those species where Scans III and SWF have no data, but other record sources indicate they may be present (albeit records not within the past year), it will be considered at least 1 individual may be disturbed.

Bottlenose Dolphin - Scans III density estimates are 0. Recent records range from 1 - 23 and averaged at 6.
Harbour Porpoise - Scans III density estimates are up to 0.1 individuals per km2. 0.1 x 1.79 = 0.179
Minke Whale - Scans III density estimates are up to 0.01 individuals per km2. 0.051x 1.79 = 0.0179
White-beaked dolphin - Scans III density estimates are up to 0.02 individuals per km2. 0.02 x 1.79 = 0.0358

(c) **Location of proposed licensed action**

Latitude and Longitude co-ordinates (WGS84) defining the extent of the project. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

LATITUDE											LONGITUDE										
		°			.				'N					°			.				'W
		°			.				'N					°			.				'W
		°			.				'N					°			.				'W
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		°			.				'N					°			.				'W
		°			.				'N					°			.				'W

(d) Provide a brief description of the proposed activity and the methods to be used.
Detailed information should be included in your Supporting Information
Please provide details of the source levels and frequencies of underwater noise if relevant

The initial EPS license application (2019) was for undertaking the following project activities:

The original dredge application involved the dredging of the port entrance to -6.5m Chart Datum (CD) resulting in the removal of 2,300,000 m3 of sand by Cutter Suction dredger (CSD), with the material initially being deposited directly via a discharge pipeline to the inner channel as reinstatement to the inner spit (200,000 m3) and onshore storage at the site (2,100,000 m3). An area of the inner channel is proposed to be dredged to -3mCD and will be carried out by either plough dredging, backhoe dredger or land-based equipment.

Following on from the original application in association with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), a dredge variation to the existing consented dredge activity, whereby the proposed increase to the dredge is as follows:

i. Increase the dredge depth from the approved -6.5m CD to -12.9m CD; and
ii. Increase the associated dredging volume from the approved quantity of 4,600,000 wet tonnes (wt) (comprising 4,000,000 wt for beneficial reuse and 600,000 wt to form the permanent dredge spoil storage bund) to 8,600,000 wet tonnes (increasing the volume identified for beneficial reuse by 4,000,000 wt to 8,000,000 wt).

At time of writing, we are awaiting the outcome of this variation process.

It is anticipated that dredging will last for two months, with the plant working up to 24 hours a day (therefore including night-time dredging), seven days a week between April and end of June 2025.

Vibro-piling will be used for the extraction of existing sheetpiles which form part of the quay walls/hardstops within the area of Phase 1 Development area as detailed in DrawingArdPhase1-HAV-WP3-Dredge-DR-C-0004 (PO1)

It is anticipated that piling removal works works expected to be undertaken within a 7 month period in duration during normal working hours (<12 hrs a day) with the licence validity period out with this to allow flexibility around start and end dates.

Further details are available in the Underwater noise modeling report in Appendix B of the supporting Marine Mammal Risk Assessment (MMRA).

(e) Briefly state how you will minimise the impact of your proposed work on European protected species.
Detailed information should be included in your Supporting Information.

To minimise the impact of proposed work on EPS a Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan has been drafted. The marine mammal mitigation will comprise a standard Marine Mammal Observer (MMO) protocol (as per Joint Nature Conservation Committee guidance) which will be implemented during vibropiling and dredging operations. This will be implemented in optimal sea states and during times of optimal visibility, and avoidance of works commencing during low hours of visibility and when sea state exceeds 2.

Key mitigation is the use of a MMO who will use the MMO Protocol. The MMO will be competent in the identification of marine mammals at sea, and will be present during the vibratory piling and dredging. The MMO will undertake observation for marine mammals within the mitigation zone before and during vibropiling and dredging and will be dedicated to that one task for the duration of any watch. The MMO will advise the contractors and crews on the implementation of the procedures set out in the agreed protocol, to ensure compliance with those procedures.

Upon interpolation of the updated underwater modelling data, it is considered that a 500m mitigation zone would be sufficient to mitigate against vibropiling and dredging noise for all species. This 500m buffer is the area where a MMO keeps watch for marine mammals (and delays the start of activity should any marine mammals be detected).

Soft start methods will be used where appropriate.

Full details are provided in the supporting MMRA.

4. Consideration of designated sites

Designated Areas: National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar sites, Marine Protected Areas (MPA). Information on designated sites is available on Scottish Natural Heritage website (http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/) or from your local SNH office.

(a) Will any part of the proposed activity fall within /or adjacent to an area covered by a designated site eg SSSI, SAC, MPA? Yes ☑ No ☐

(b) Please give the name of the designated site(s) and either the outcome of your consultations or the reason why you have not consulted (see note 4). Please enclose any relevant correspondence.

5. **Activities to be Licenced**

Proposed Methods

(a) Please complete all relevant columns in the table below to indicate the methods you propose to use, the activity involved and the time period in which you propose to use each method. This information will be used when preparing the licence to cover activities that would otherwise be unlawful, and failure to give full details may result in an inappropriate licence being issued.

Activity to be licensed (please tick)						**Time period**	
Capture	Kill (exceptional circumstances only)	Injure	Transport	Disturb/ Harass	Method to be used, (e.g. piling)	From	To
☐	☐	☐	☐	☑	**Vibration piling**	**1/07/2024**	**1/07/2025**
☐	☐	☐	☐	☑	**CSD dredging**	**01/04/2025**	**30/09/2025**
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐			
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐			
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐			

6. Purposes of the licence application (tick one box only)

A licence can only be issued if 3 specific legal tests are met. The section below relates to the first of these tests. The options shown are taken from the **Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).**

Please indicate which purpose relates to the proposed works

(a) Preserving public health or public safety (we will require evidence that there is a risk to public health or public safety e.g. an imminent risk of flooding) Regulation 44(2)(e) ☐

Complete Annex A

(b) Imperative reasons of overriding public interest (*including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment)* Regulation 44(2)(e) ☑

Complete Annex B

(c) Preventing the spread of disease Regulation 44(2)(f) ☐

Complete Annex C

(d) Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or any other form of property, or to fisheries Regulation 44(2)(g). ☐

Complete AnnexD

7. **Satisfactory alternatives**

This relates to the second of the legal tests which must be satisfied. Please explain why there is no satisfactory alternative to carrying out the proposed work affecting the species. You must describe all possible alternatives which were considered and why they were considered unsuitable. You must also consider the option of not undertaking the work. **It is not acceptable to state that 'there is no alternative'.**

Generally, there are two methods of dredging: mechanical and hydraulic dredging. Mechanical dredging typically involves the use of an excavator or other heavy plant which is well suited for rock and gravel because it is robust. However, when used for finer materials such as sand and silt, mechanical dredging produces very high percentages of suspended sediment i.e. turbidity. Hydraulic dredging utilises suction in combination with a cutter head, so it minimises suspended settlement as material and water are pumped away. The high production rate of the cutter suction dredger means it is the best method for a project of this scale within the very limited permitted dredging window. Dredging by other means within the same timescale would require multiple dredgers working simultaneously and thus likely lead to increased levels of noise within the water environment, which could affect marine species. Not carrying out any dredging would render the consented project unviable as vessels would not be able to safely approach the port.

Extraction of sheet piles using a vibratory hammer is industry standard practice. Simply pulling piles out through applying a lifting force with a crane would likely not be appropriate as the cohesive forces between the sheet pile and soil would likely be too strong to overcome with a reasonable crane pull. In addition, the age and poor condition of the piles mean that they are not likely to be able to withstand significant pulling forces. Another alternative is to cut the piles at seabed level using a dive team and underwater burning equipment, lifting them out and leaving part of the pile in the ground. This is not considered suitable in this particular case, as dredging is to occur below the existing piles. The only remaining option would be to excavate either side of the piles before lifting them out, which is considered to be far more disruptive to the marine environment than vibrating the piles out, which is a commonly preferred method by environmental agencies in the UK. The vibrations move the soil and break the cohesion, making the piles much easier and safer to remove.

8. **Other Licences / Consents**

Please detail below all licences / consents you have applied for or received. **Before a licence can be granted, it is essential that other relevant licences or consents have been secured for the proposed activity (eg Marine licence).**

Type of Licence / Consent (e.g. Marine Licence, Local Planing Authority, Local Works Licence)	**Date Applied for**	**Reference no.**	**Date of issue of licence / consent**
EPS Licence - Dredging and Vibratory Piling	19/03/2019	06/2019/0	19/09/2019-31/03/2024
Marine Licence - Capital Dredging and Sea Deposit	12/10/2023	MS-00010328	08/09/2022-31/08/2024
Marine Licence - Quay wall construction	22/11/2018	00009479	01/10/2021-31/08/2024

9. Noise Monitoring

Please indicate if any of the following noise generating activities will be taking place during the operations:

Use of explosives ☐ Piling ☑ Use of Acoustic Deterrent Devices ☐
Survey equipment operating in the range 10 Hz – 10kHz ☐

If you have ticked any of the above boxes please complete a Proposed Activity form in the Marine Noise Registry at: https://mnr.jncc.gov.uk/.

Please note the form must only be completed once for each activity. If you have already completed a form for this activity (eg through the marine licensing process) please give details.

Note piling will be vibratory rather than impact as so noise registry not completed.

EPS licence applications will not be accepted until this form has been completed and submitted.

11. **Privacy notice**

The Scottish Government's Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) has a range of statutory responsibilities including determining applications for licences to disturb or injure marine European protected species (EPS) under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Basking shark licences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

MS-LOT will, where necessary, process personal information including: names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers to determine a licence application. Personal information will be stored securely in the Scottish Government's official corporate record.

A full privacy notice can be found at: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Licensing/marine/PrivacyNotice. If you are unable to access this, or you have any queries or concerns about how your personal information will be handled, contact MS-LOT at: Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB. Email: ms.marinelicensing@gov.scot

Have you remembered to enclose Supporting Information with your application, as described in the accompanying guidance? Please check

Completed Application form	☑
Completed Annex	☑
Map / Chart	☑
Correct co-ordinates	☑
Additional information / EPS risk assessment	☑

Part C. Declarations

11. I have read and understand the guidance provided in this application form. I declare that the particulars given are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I apply for a licence in accordance with these particulars.

I authorise employees or representatives of the Scottish Ministers to enter the site which is subject to this application for the purpose of monitoring and inspecting the permitted works.

Warning

Under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) it is an offence to fail to comply with the conditions imposed by a licence. The licensee is responsible for ensuring compliance with the licence.

The Scottish Ministers can modify or revoke a licence at any time, provided there are good reasons. Any licence that may be issued is likely to be revoked immediately if it is discovered that false information was provided and resulted in the issue of a licence.

Under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, any person who in order to obtain a licence knowingly or recklessly makes a statement or representation, or furnishes a document or information which is false in a material particular, shall be guilty of an offence and may be liable to criminal prosecution. Any person found guilty of such offences is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000), or to both imprisonment and a fine.

Note: Previous convictions for wildlife offences will be taken into account and in some cases may mean that the Scottish Ministers do not consider it appropriate to grant a licence.

Signature of the Applicant <Redacted> Date 22/02/2024

(The person named at part 1)

Name in BLOCK LETTERS <Redacted>

Note – If signing on behalf of a company, please append you signature with "on behalf of *Company Name*".

The completed application should be signed and sent to Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) at the address below or emailed to MS.Marinelicensing@gov.scot

Please remember to include all supporting information.

Licensing Operations Team
Marine Scotland
EPS Division
375 Victoria Road
Aberdeen
AB11 9DB

Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this document is accurate, nothing in this document should be taken to replace the current legislation in force at this time. You are advised to obtain qualified legal advice in relation to your rights and responsibilities under the 1994 Regulations and other legislation.

Annex A

Only to be completed if you selected *for Preserving public health or public safety* in Question 6 of the application form

Please complete all questions

Give details of the risk to public health or safety

How has the risk been identified. Please give details of any expert advice received.

How will the proposed activity address the identified risk

Annex B

Only to be completed if you selected for *Imperative reasons of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment)* in Question 6 of the application form

Please complete all questions

What benefits will be provided by the proposed activity? Give details and indicate if they are social, economic or environmental. Please indicate if the benefits are short or long term.

From the 1970s until 2001), Ardersier Port operated as a McDermott oil and gas fabrication yard. Thousands of local people were employed at the facility during this time. The Ardersier Port is therefore a significant regeneration project for the local economy and builds on the site's proud history.

They aim to create and enable thousands of direct and indirect jobs and re-skilling opportunities in the community across industries related to the energy transition, including construction, offshore wind and decommissioning. Ardersier Port is considered to provide a key facility in delivering the UK's 50GW offshore wind energy target by 2030, and is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a global hub for renewable energy in Scotland.

The scale and location of the project mean that over time, Ardersier's activities can diversify to include more industries related to the energy transition, including renewable energy fabrication.

In the long term, Ardersier holds the potential to create a circular economy manufacturing model that supports the UK's energy security and decarbonisation priorities.

What public interest will be served? Who will benefit from the proposed activity? Does the proposed activity address a need?

The public interest and need is outlined within the benefits text above. Future users of the port will benefit directly as well as the wider public and businesses within Ardersier and the north of Scotland. Further details on the need for the project can be found at: https://www.haventus.com/

Why is it imperative the proposed activity goes ahead?

Please see text in the first and second boxes. Further details on the need for the development and alternatives (and lack of) can be found in section 4 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

The methodology to be implemented are considered imperative as no other alternatives as detailed in Section 7 offer suitable options.

Using mechanical dredging would lead to very high percentages of suspended sediment, whilst cutter suction dredging utilises suction in combination with a cutter head, so it minimises suspended settlement and has a high production rate, meaning it is the best method for a project of this scale within the very limited permitted dredging window. Dredging by other means within the same timescale would require multiple dredgers working simultaneously and thus likely lead to increased levels of noise within the water environment, which could affect marine species.

Extraction of sheet piles using a vibratory hammer is industry standard practice and is a commonly preferred method by environmental agencies in the UK. The vibrations move the soil and break the cohesion, making the piles much easier and safer to remove. Other methods would likely not be appropriate (lifting with crane) or possible (cutting of piles at seabed level) or be more disruptive to the marine environment (excavate piles).

Does the proposed activity support any local regional or national policies? Please give details. Are you fulfilling a statutory role?

Yes, full details of how the project is supporting regional and national policies are provided within the EIA accompanying the planning application. A separate Planning Supporting Statement (Graham + Sibbald 2018) provides an assessment of the Proposed Development's compliance with these policies, was submitted with the application to renew the existing planning permission in principle.

The Highland Council fulfills the statutory role.

Annex C

Only to be completed if you selected for *Preventing the spread of disease* in Question 6 of the application form

Please complete all questions

What disease(s) is / are at risk of being spread if the proposed activity does not go ahead? Please give details of any expert advice received.

How will the proposed activity prevent the spread of disease? Please give details of any expert advice received.

Annex D

Only to be completed if you selected for *Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or any other form of property, or to fisheries* in Question 6 of the application form.

Please complete all questions

What serious damage has occurred or will occur if the proposed activity does not go ahead. Please give details of any expert advice received.

How will the proposed activity prevent serious damage? Please give details of any expert advice received.