# **Jacobs**

## Port Ellen Ferry Terminal

Habitats Regulations Appraisal

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Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited





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#### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Project Background

Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') are in the process of procuring a new vessel for the existing ferry route between Kennacraig and Port Ellen, Islay.

Kennacraig to Port Ellen is currently a two vessel service operating approximately two or three ferries a day. While MV Finlaggan entered service in 2011, the second vessel on the route is beyond its design life and due for replacement. The design of the new vessel is also intended to better accommodate the freight traffic on the route, which is a sizeable component of the traffic carried on the service.

This new vessel will have an increased depth into the water column compared to existing vessels on the route. The anticipated approximate dimensions of the new vessel are as follows; note that all measurements stated in this document are approximate:

- Beam; 18.7m (an increase of approximately 2.4m compared to the existing vessel, MV Finlaggan)
- Length; 95m (an increase of approximately 5m compared to the existing vessel, MV Finlaggan)
- Draught; 3.8m (an increase of approximately 0.4m compared to the existing vessel, MV Finlaggan).

The new vessel will use less fuel for the same length of journey (improving efficiency), thereby improving environmental and economic performance. To accommodate the safe passage of the new vessel into the port and to provide a deeper berth, dredging and other associated enabling works, such as a new retaining wall along a section of quayside and the repositioning of the linkspan, are required to be undertaken around the existing terminal pier at Port Ellen, Islay (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'). The enabling works are required as analysis has also shown that the existing retaining wall and support structure would be structurally unable to accommodate the increased dredge depths required, and therefore would require replacement as part of the Proposed Development. Replacement of the existing fenders with a new piled fender system is required as the displacement of the new vessel is larger than the current vessel's.

Jacobs UK Limited (hereafter referred to as Jacobs) has been appointed by the Applicant to assist with the consenting process for the Proposed Development. This report presents the findings of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) which has been undertaken in relation to the design of the Proposed Development based on information currently available. HRA is a multi-stage process which determines likely significant effects and assesses adverse impacts on the integrity of European/Ramsar sites.

## 1.2 The Bern Convention, Habitats Directive, Habitats Regulations and European/Ramsar Sites

The Habitats Regulations (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994) translated the European Union Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup>) into UK legislation to protect sites that are internationally important for threatened habitats and species (European sites), and to create a legal framework for species requiring strict protection.

The Habitats Regulations have been amended in Scotland, most recently in 2019 as a result of the UK leaving the EU (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019). This latest amendment ensures that the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive (European Union Council Directive 2009/147/EC) continue to be relevant to the management of European sites, so that the sites are protected and that they continue to operate as originally intended.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Habitats Directive was adopted in 1992 by the European Community (as was) as the Community's response to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention).



European sites are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (classified under the Birds Directive) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) (classified under the Habitats Directive) and form part of an international network of protected sites. Prior to leaving the EU Scotland's sites contributed to the Natura network and now form part of the Emerald Network<sup>2</sup>, spanning Europe and into Africa.

Whilst not a European site designation, wetland sites designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, known as Ramsar sites, are also relevant as they are afforded the same level of protection as European sites under domestic policy and treated in the same way as the UK site network. Most Ramsar sites in Scotland are either designated SPAs or SACs although not always sharing the same qualifying interests (NatureScot, 2021a).

This HRA is presented under the aegis of Regulation 48 of the Habitats Regulations, which transposes the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

The Habitats Regulations continue to require that an Appropriate Assessment (AA) be undertaken by a Competent Authority where any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the European/Ramsar site (i.e. a SAC or SPA, or candidate or potential SAC/SPA, or a Ramsar site), is likely to have a significant effect either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. HRA refers to the process that provides the Competent Authority with the information to enable them to make an AA determination. The HRA provides data concerning site integrity, and the AA must be undertaken 'in view of the site's conservation objectives'. With respect to this HRA, the Competent Authority will be Marine Scotland.

#### 1.3 The Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Process

#### 1.3.1 Introduction

The HRA process establishes whether the proposal:

- is directly connected with or necessary for site management for nature conservation;
- is likely to have a significant effect on the site; and
- will adversely affect the site's integrity.

If the assessment cannot ascertain that the proposal would not adversely affect site integrity, a consideration of alternative solutions is required. If no alternative solutions are available, a proposal may be carried out for Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) as indicated by Article 49 of the Habitats Regulations. As stated in Article 53 of the Habitats Regulations, where this is the case compensatory measures must be secured to ensure that the overall coherence of the site network is protected. The four stages of the HRA process are as follows:

- Stage One: Screening;
- Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment;
- Stage Three: Assessment of alternative solutions; and
- Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain (IROPI).

Diagram 1 (European Commission, 2001) provides a schematic representation of the HRA process. However, following the UK's exit from the EU, Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive are replaced by Articles 48 and 49 of the Habitats Regulations, and references to the Commission should be understood as the Scottish Ministers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Emerald Network was launched by the Council of Europe as part of its work under the Bern Convention.



## Flow chart of the Article 6(3) and (4) procedure (from MN2000) in relation to the stages of the guidance

#### CONSIDERATION OF A PLAN OR PROJECT (PP) AFFECTING A NATURA 2000 SITE

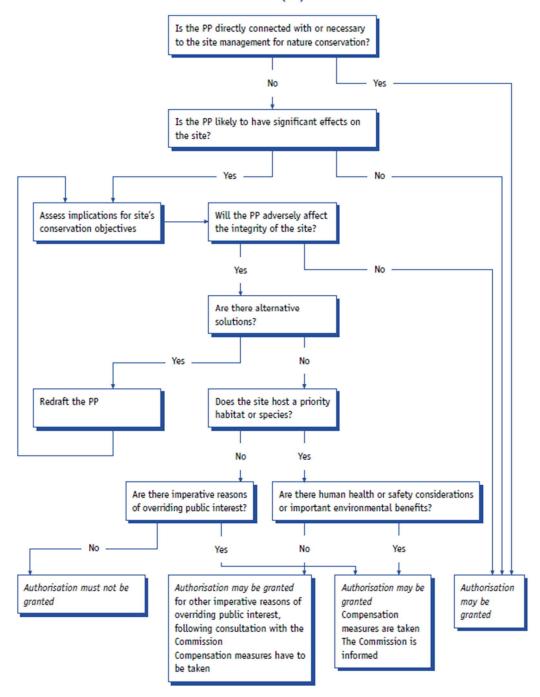


Diagram 1: The HRA process (source: European Commission, 2001). References to the Commission in the diagram should be understood as the Scottish Ministers.



#### 1.3.2 Stage One: Screening

Screening identifies the likely effects on a European/Ramsar site from a project or plan and considers whether these effects are likely to be significant.

The screening assessment is a test of the 'likelihood' of effects occurring rather than a 'certainty' of effects occurring. In accordance with the Waddenzee Judgement [ECJ case C-127/02], a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) is one that cannot be ruled out on the basis of objective information. This is underpinned by the precautionary principle which is enshrined in law in the Habitats Directive, and the test of something as being 'beyond reasonable scientific doubt', as presented in the Waddenzee Judgement. Paragraph 49 of the same judgement adds '...where a plan or project... is likely to undermine the site's conservation objectives, it must be considered likely to have a significant effect on that site. The assessment of that risk must be made in the light inter alia of the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the site concerned by such a plan or project'.

The People over Wind and Sweetman ruling [ECJ case C-323/17] rules out from consideration at the screening stage any measures embedded in a plan or project designed to avoid or mitigate potentially harmful impacts on the European site. The court ruled that '...it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site'. The ruling requires competent authorities to, at the HRA screening stage, distinguish clearly between mitigation measures specifically designed to avoid or reduce harmful impacts on the European site, and those which are not related to the integrity of the European site. Should there be a need for measures to be specifically designed to avoid or reduce impacts on the European site, the HRA should proceed to Stage Two.

#### 1.3.3 Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment (AA)

If the Stage One Screening process determines that the project or plan is associated with impacts which are 'likely to have a significant effect' upon a European/Ramsar site, the HRA proceeds to Stage Two.

An AA considers the effect of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, on the integrity of the European/Ramsar site, with respect to the site's structure and function, and its conservation objectives. Under the provisions of 48 of the Habitats Regulations, the objective is to ascertain that the integrity of the site will not be adversely affected.

Site integrity is defined as 'the coherent sum of the site's ecological structure, function and ecological processes, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitats, complex of habitats and/or populations of species for which the site is designated' (European Commission, 2019). The decision as to whether a site is adversely affected focuses on and is limited to the conservation objectives for the site (European Commission, 2019).

In carrying out an AA, mitigation measures, aimed at minimising or avoiding the negative effect of a plan or project during its operation or after its completion, may be considered as an integral part of the plan or project (European Commission, 2019). The Competent Authority has to be certain that the mitigation proposed would reduce/avoid the negative effects of the plan or project. It must be clear, therefore, what the mitigation measures are, how they would reduce or avoid the effects, and the details of how and by whom they would be implemented/managed and the timescale involved. In addition, the mitigation measures would require monitoring and enforcement, and procedures to rectify effects where measures have not been successful.

#### 1.3.4 Stage Three: Alternative Solutions

Stage Three is the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan, whilst avoiding AESI of the European/Ramsar site. Guidance (European Commission, 2007) indicates that all alternatives have to be analysed. This could involve alternative locations, different scales or designs of development, or alternative processes.



1.3.5 Stage Four: Assessment Where no Alternative Solutions Exist and Where Adverse Impacts Remain (Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI))

Where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse effects remain as a result of the project or plan, an assessment is undertaken of the IROPI to determine whether a project or plan should proceed. Where it is determined that there are IROPI it would be necessary to design, implement, manage and monitor compensation measures.

#### 1.3.6 Guidance

In undertaking this HRA the following guidance was referred to:

- Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (SNH<sup>3</sup>, 2016);
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2001);
- Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle (European Commission, 2000b);
- Guidelines on the Implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in Estuaries and Coastal Zones with particular attention port development and dredging (European Commission, 2011);
- Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans: Guidance for Plan-making Bodies in Scotland, Version 3.0 January 2015 (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015);
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2019); and
- Legislative Requirements for European Sites (NatureScot, undated).

#### 1.3.7 Structure of this Report

This HRA fulfils the requirements of Article 48 of the Habitats Regulations and covers the first two stages of the HRA process: Stage One (Screening) and Stage Two (Appropriate Assessment).

No requirement was found to progress to Stages Three (Alternative Solutions) and Four (IROPI).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Note that Scotland's nature agency, NatureScot, was known as Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) prior to August 2020. Within this document, all references to the organisation in the text and documents cited are provided with the name appropriate to the time at which the document was published or communication received, however the organisations are one and the same.



### 2. Description of Proposed Development

#### 2.1 Site Location and Context

The Proposed Development is located on the south coast of the Isle of Islay, at the existing Port Ellen Terminal (National Grid Reference NR 363 450), as shown on Figure 1 and Figure 2. The Terminal lies within the small town of Port Ellen.

The Proposed Development is accessible via a small access road that leads from Frederick Crescent to the north, past properties and business premises onto the existing pier. The pier is bound to Kilnaughton Bay to the east, west and south. There is also a small marina, Port Ellen Marina, to the north east of the Proposed Development, served by the same access road. Port Ellen is visible from across the bay to both the east and west as well as potential views from Carraig Fhada Lighthouse, across the bay south-west, though visibility will be weather dependent given the relative distance (approximately 1.5km). The topography of the land is relatively flat to the north following the access road, and slopes uphill towards the north west.

#### 2.2 Summary of Proposed Development Elements

Works associated with the Proposed Development consist of the following:

- dredging of the areas indicated in the drawings (see Figure 1), from -4.5m Chart Datum (CD) to -5.5m CD. It is estimated approximately 33,000m<sup>3</sup> of material will be dredged of which 3,000m<sup>3</sup> is the rock armour scour protection which will be reused once the pocket that it sits in has been dredged<sup>4</sup>;
- construction of a new sheet pile retaining wall in front of the existing linkspan and moving the linkspan 2.5m forward of its current location, at the south berth; and
- removal of the existing MV fender units which are attached directly to the sheet piled wall which forms the pier. The existing fenders will be replaced with new parallel motion fenders (PMFs) which will be supported on new tubular steel piles.

#### 2.3 The Proposed Development – Construction

The Proposed Development will need to take cognisance of the continued operation of the port, where Calmac Ferries Ltd. operate a daily ferry service from Port Ellen to Kennacraig on the Kintyre peninsula, Argyll and Bute.

#### Dredging

The dredging elements of the works, demarcated in Figure 1, are anticipated to involve the dredging and reuse of the existing rock armour scour protection, which is in place around the perimeter of the pier, dredging of soft soil material (approximately 29,850m³), rock armour scour protection (approximately 3,000m³) and potentially small amounts of bedrock (approximately 150m³). To better quantify the exact volume of rock material requiring dredging, a geophysical survey will be recommended to assess the rock profile. The dredged rock armour would be stored on a storage barge before being placed again at a deeper level.

The dredging works would be carried out by marine-based plant and it is currently assumed that the dredged soil and bedrock material would be disposed of at sea, however this is subject to a Best Practicable Environmental Option Assessment (BPEO). It is anticipated that any disposal at sea would be undertaken at the nearest designated marine waste disposal site, approximately 1km from the site. This would be subject to a licence being granted by Marine Scotland. No material would be deposited within any European/Ramsar site. For the purposes of this HRA it is assumed that that the disposal arrangements are as described. Should this not be the case, additional HRA would be required to confirm the absence of significant effects on European/Ramsar sites.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Wet tonnage for soft material = 63,000 te, based on 2.1te/m³. Wet tonnage for rock armour = 8,100 te, based on 2.7te/m³.



150m³ bedrock material is to be dredged and this may need to be pre-fractured by drilling and splitting using Cardox, a pressurised blasting system using carbon dioxide. Explosives would only be used as a last resort. The use of explosives will only occur if the Contractor has reasonably demonstrated that other methods such as Cardox and predrilling are not suitable, and all necessary precautions are in place to protect property, people and wildlife. If explosives are required, a noise and vibration impact assessment will be undertaken to assess and mitigate the potential impacts of blasting, as well as having an appropriate Method Statement/Risk Assessment in place. This HRA Screening assumes that no explosives are required, and should this subsequently change, a rescreening would be required.

#### **Wall Construction**

The new sheet pile retaining walls in front the existing linkspan would have inclined rock anchors and would be backfilled with an imported granular material. This would involve the installation of a temporary piling gate and driving steel sheet piles to a defined level. The space between the new and existing walls would be filled with an imported granular fill up to anchor level. Once the fill reaches this level inclined rock anchors would be installed at a defined spacing along the length of the wall. When the anchors have reached sufficient strength, the remaining backfill is added. A concrete cope would be cast at the top of the steel wall.

The existing linkspan is supported on steel bearing piles and four new bearing piles would need to be installed to support the linkspan in its new location.

The pre-existing linkspan is currently housed within a concrete recess. This would be broken out and a new concrete recess cast to house the repositioned linkspan.

The sheet pile walls would be the same height as the existing structures. The sheet piling works would either be carried out exclusively from the land or using a mixture of both marine and land-based plant.

#### Fender Works

The fendering works will involve the removal of the existing fenders and their replacement with new PMFs. The PMFs are supported on new tubular steel piles which are driven into the seabed in front of the existing sheet piled wall which forms the pier. Installation of these piles would include the positioning of a temporary piling gate which could potentially be supported off the wall of the pier rather than from temporary piles.

Once the pile is in place a tubular steel sleeve is placed over the pile and the annulus between the pile and the sleeve filled with grout. The PMF units, consisting of rubber fender unit, steel facing panel and miscellaneous steelwork, are than attached to the tubular steel sleeve.

#### **Programme**

It is anticipated that the construction programme would last approximately 30 weeks, consisting of the indicative tasks and durations below. It is anticipated that works would begin in 2022, with the new ferry becoming operational in 2024.

- Installing sheet piles 3 weeks
- Installing anchors to sheet pile wall 6 weeks
- Backfilling new wall 3 weeks
- Linkspan bearing piles 1 week
- Pile head assembly 1 week
- Concrete for linkspan recess (including curing time) 4 weeks
- Linkspan lift in and commission 1 week
- Dredging 27 weeks
- Installing PMF piles 15 weeks (over a period of approx. 22 weeks)



Installing Sleeves and PMF Units – 13 weeks (over a period of approx. 22 weeks)

As part of mitigation required for the scheme and irrespective of any impacts on European/Ramsar sites or requirements associated with HRA, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be developed and implemented for the duration of construction works. In accordance with relevant standards and guidance, it will outline best practice measures to avoid significant air quality, noise, water environment and ecological impacts.

A marine construction licence and a dredging licence, potentially including a sea disposal licence, will be required to undertake the works. Dredging works have happened periodically at this location, with the most recent dredging operations having taken place in 2012.

#### 2.4 The Proposed Development – Operation

The Proposed Development would allow free passage of the new vessel between Kennacraig and Port Ellen. All activities required to achieve this are associated with construction. The operation of the new vessel itself is not considered within the scope of the Proposed Development. This HRA Screening therefore focuses on construction impacts only and operational impacts are not considered further.



## 3. Stage One (Screening)

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section details the Stage One Screening of the HRA process. The Proposed Development is not directly connected with, or essential for, the management of any European or Ramsar site.

#### 3.2 European Sites with Potential Effects from the Proposed Development

Guidance dictates that all European/Ramsar sites, and their qualifying interests, which have the potential to be affected by a plan or project should be considered as part of the HRA process. For the assessment of the Proposed Development, relevant European and Ramsar sites were identified by looking for potential source-receptor pathways. The Proposed Development does not lie within any European/Ramsar sites, however six sites with potential relevance to the Proposed Development were identified and are shown on Figure 2. All are within approximately 10km of the site, which is considered appropriate to the scale and nature of the Proposed Development, and taking into account connectivity and relevant receptors. The sites are:

- The Oa SPA (NatureScot, 2021b);
- South-East Islay Skerries SAC (NatureScot, 2021c);
- Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss) SPA (NatureScot, 2021d);
- Eilean na Muice Duibhe SAC (NatureScot, 2021e);
- Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss), Islay Ramsar (NatureScot, 2021f); and
- Laggan, Islay SPA (NatureScot, 2021g).

Qualifying interests, conservation objectives and pressures on feature condition are presented in Table 1 below. Information is as presented by NatureScot's Sitelink tool.



Table 1: European and Ramsar Sites to be Included in Stage One Screening

Qualifying Interests/Criteria	Condition Assessment (Date)	Conservation Objectives	Site Description	Identified Pressures
The Oa SPA - SNH Si	ite Code 9196, EU Site Code UK90	003058 (NatureScot, 2021b)		
Chough ( <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining* (January 2013)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  population of the species as a viable component of the site;  distribution of the species within site;  distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;  structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and  no significant disturbance of the species.	The Oa SPA covers 1,930.84ha and is located 4.0km west of the Proposed Development. It comprises part of The Oa peninsula in the south-west of Islay. It covers a mosaic of habitats including coastal and herb rich grassland, arable grassland and coastal heath which supports extensive sheep and cattle grazing.  The site regularly supports a population of European importance of chough, with an average of 7.8 breeding pairs annually between 2001 and 2005, over 2.2% of the British population.	None identified
South-East Islay Ske	erries SAC - SNH Site Code 8381, E	EU Site Code UK0030067 (NatureScot, 2021c; JNCC 2021a)		
Common (harbour) seal ( <i>Phoca vitulina</i> )	Favourable Maintained (August 2009)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  • population of the species as a viable component of the site;  • distribution of the species within site;  • distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;  • structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and  • no significant disturbance of the species.	South-East Islay skerries SAC on Islay covers 1,500.41ha and is located 4.3km from the Proposed Development. It is considered one of the best areas for common seal (also known as harbour seal) in the United Kingdom.  The skerries, islands and rugged coastline hold a nationally-important population of the species. The south-east coastline areas are extensively used as pupping, moulting and haul-out sites by the seals, which represent between 1.5% and 2% of the UK population.	None identified
Eilean na Muice Duik	ohe (Duich Moss) SPA - SNH Site (	Code 8494, EU Site Code UK9003054 (NatureScot, 2021d)		
Greenland white- fronted goose (Anser albifrons	Favourable Declining (April 2013)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and	Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss) SPA covers 577.27ha and is located 10.2km from the Proposed Development. The site is broadly	None identified



Qualifying Interests/Criteria	Condition Assessment (Date)	Conservation Objectives	Site Description	Identified Pressures
flavirostris), non- breeding		To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  • population of the species as a viable component of the site;  • distribution of the species within site;  • distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;  • structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and  • no significant disturbance of the species.	coincident with the SAC and Ramsar site of the same name.  The site is a patterned mire (peatland with extensive pool systems) occurring at the south-western limit of the distribution of this peatland habitat in the UK. The diverse nature of the peatland habitat includes hummocks, ridges and deep watershed pools as well as an unusual transition from blanket bog to raised mire habitats.  Eilean na Muice Duibhe is one of the largest single roost sites in the UK for Greenland white-fronted goose, regularly supporting a population of European importance. At the time of classification in 1988 this was over 600 wintering individuals, over 4.4% of the British population. The main feeding grounds for these birds are on surrounding agricultural areas although significant feeding also occurs on the roost site.	
Eilean na Muice Dui	bhe SAC - SNH Site Code 8250, El	J Site Code UK0019773 (NatureScot, 2021e; JNCC 2021b)		
Blanket bog	Unfavourable Declining* (November 2007)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to	Eilean na Muice Duibhe SAC on Islay covers 568.86ha and is located 10.2km from the	Invasive species
Depressions on peat substrates	Unfavourable Declining* (November 2007)	achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and  To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:  extent of the habitat on site;  distribution of the habitat within site;  structure and function of the habitat;  processes supporting the habitat;  distribution of typical species of the habitat;  viability of typical species as components of the habitat; and  no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat.	Proposed Development. The site is broadly coincident with the SPA and Ramsar site of the same name.  The largely active blanket bog site is at low altitude on a coastal plain and contrasts with the other Islay blanket bogs, which have different topographic features. The vegetation shows affinities to that found on many Irish bogs. There is a rich variety of surface patterning including small lochs and continuous Sphagnum lawns, and with hummock-forming species present.	Invasive species



Qualifying Interests/Criteria	Condition Assessment (Date)	Conservation Objectives	Site Description	Identified Pressures
Eilean na Muice Dui 2021)	ibhe (Duich Moss), Islay Ramsar - S	SNH Site Code 8422, EU Site Code UK13014 (NatureScot, 2021f; Ramsar, u	ndated; Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS), 2	2020; UK Government
Blanket bog	Unfavourable Declining (November 2007)	The Ramsar Convention mission statement is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable	Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss), Islay Ramsar covers 576.42 ha and is located 10.2km from the Proposed Development. The	Burning Invasive species: Rhododendron
Greenland white- fronted goose, non-breeding	Favourable Declining (April 2013)	development throughout the world".  The site qualifies under Criterion 1: "A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region."	site is broadly coincident with the SPA and SAC of the same name.  The site is an area of low-level blanket mire (also known as Duich Moss), bounded by the Duich River, the River Laggan and two roads, with scattered peaty pools and lochans. The mire vegetation is highly oceanic in character. Breeding birds using the site include red-throated diver ( <i>Gavia stellata</i> ), hen harrier ( <i>Circus cyaneus</i> ), dunlin ( <i>Calidris alpine</i> ) and common redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> ). The area forms a night-time roosting and feeding area for internationally important numbers of wintering Greenland white-fronted goose and barnacle goose ( <i>Branta leucopsis</i> ) of the Greenland breeding population.  Human activities include drainage of	None identified
Laggan, Islay SPA -	SNH Site Code 8422, EU Site Code	e UK13014 (NatureScot, 2021g)		
Barnacle goose	Favourable Maintained (April 2013)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  population of the species as a viable component of the site; distribution of the species within site; distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;	Laggan SPA covers 1,225.62ha and is located 5.3km from the Proposed Development. The SPA covers an area of blanket bog fringed by coastal and arable grasslands, connected to an 11km bay of sandy shoreline backed by fixed dunes, peatland and arable grassland. The site supports internationally important numbers of the two qualifying interests. One is barnacle goose, of which an average of approximately 6% (1,800 birds) the Greenland	None identified



Qualifying Interests/Criteria	Condition Assessment (Date)	Conservation Objectives	Site Description	Identified Pressures
Greenland white-fronted goose	Favourable Maintained (April 2013)	<ul> <li>structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and</li> <li>no significant disturbance of the species.</li> </ul>	population feed on the area over winter. The site also provides the feeding area for some of the geese which roost at the nearby Bridgend Flats site. Secondly, approximately 2% (300 birds) of the Greenland subspecies of the white-fronted goose use the site for daytime feeding during the winter.  Smaller numbers of the following species occur on site: peregrine (Falco peregrinus) (breeding), golden plover (Pluvialis apricaria) (autumn passage), common tern (Sterna hirundo) (breeding), Arctic tern (Sterna paradisaea) (breeding), little tern (Sterna albifrons) (breeding), short-eared owl (Asio flammeus) (wintering), and chough (breeding and resident). Numerous other migrant species, particularly waterfowl, also occur within the SPA.	None identified

<sup>\*</sup> SNH 2020b states that management measures are in place that should, in time, improve the feature to Favourable condition (Unfavourable Recovering Due to Management.)



#### 3.3 Screening Assessment

The construction phase of the Proposed Development as described in Section 2 (Description of Proposed Development) could result in a variety of potential impacts which could directly or indirectly affect the identified European/Ramsar sites including:

- loss and/or fragmentation of supporting habitat (temporary or permanent);
- changes in air quality as a result of construction machinery and vessels;
- changes in water quality as a result of construction vessels or accidental spillage;
- sedimentation and release of contaminants as a result of piling and/or dredging;
- mortality or injury of animals as a result of collision with construction vessels; and
- disturbance in the form of noise, vibration, and lighting.

The potential impacts were used to identify LSEs on the European/Ramsar sites in terms of the sites' conservation objectives. The screening process considered:

- potential for effects pathways between the site and the Proposed Development during construction; and
- the ecological characteristics of the qualifying interests, taking into consideration the sites' conservation objectives.

Should changes in water quality and air quality occur during construction, these have the potential to result in indirect effects on qualifying interests of the European/Ramsar sites. However, best practice measures which are intrinsic to the project as designed, and which will be captured through the CEMP, will avoid or reduce any potential changes in water quality and air quality.

The CEMP will include, amongst other plans, a pollution control and response plan and an oil spill contingency plan, and will detail additional measures such as the requirement to adhere to Pollution Prevention Guidelines and Guidance for Pollution Prevention (NetRegs, 2021). Measures relating to air quality will include: the requirement for all plant, vehicles and vessels to meet good industry standards and be powered off when not in use; the use of dust suppression during dry conditions; and the implementation of wheel-washing and speed restrictions on site. Changes in water quality and air quality are therefore not considered to differ significantly from the existing conditions and have not been considered further within this HRA.

The potential impact sources identified have been considered with respect to each of the European/Ramsar sites, the findings of which are presented in Table 2.



Table 2: Screening Assessment

Conservation Objectives	Distance/Connectivity to Proposed Scheme	Qualifying Interests	Potential Effects and Commentary	Screening Conclusion
The Oa SPA				
To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  population of the species as a viable component of the site;  distribution of the species within site;  distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;  structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and  no significant disturbance of the species.	The site lies 4.0km west of the Proposed Development.	Chough	There would be no loss of habitat at this site and no loss of supporting habitat. In Scotland, chough are primarily found on rocky coastal cliffs, and cliff-top pastures. They feed on grassland subject to low-intensity grazing, or along the strand line, on sand dunes and sometimes harvested arable fields. These habitats are not present in the immediate vicinity of the Port Ellen, which is characterised by its busy harbour.  The location of the SPA on the north, west and south sides of the Oa peninsula and the topography of the island, mean it would be shielded from any disturbance associated with construction.  Due to the nature and scale of the proposed works and the distance from the SPA, the possibility of LSE can be excluded.	No potential for LSE during construction. AA (HRA Stage Two) is not required.
South-East Islay Skerries SAC				
To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  • population of the species as a viable component of the site;  • distribution of the species within site;  • distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;	The site lies 4.3km east of the Proposed Development.	Common seal	As a busy working harbour, Port Ellen is not considered key supporting habitat for the common seal population associated with the SAC. No records are listed between 5 October 2020 and 10 May 2021 on the Seawatch Foundation sightings portal <sup>5</sup> . The Proposed Development is located 30km via hydrological connection from the nearest haul-out site designated under The Protection of Seals (Designated Sea Haul-out Sites) (Scotland) Order 2014 (Marine Scotland 2021). Animals are however likely to sometimes use the waters around the port, and there are occasional sightings.  Loss and/or fragmentation of supporting habitat (temporary or permanent)  Based on the relatively poorer quality of habitat of Port Ellen, and consequently the small numbers of seals using the port area and the	Potential for LSE during construction. AA (HRA Stage Two) is required.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/recentsightings/ Search on 11/05/21 within South-West Scotland and Inner Hebrides region.



Conservation Objectives	Distance/Connectivity to Proposed Scheme	Qualifying Interests	Potential Effects and Commentary	Screening Conclusion
<ul> <li>structure, function and supporting processes</li> </ul>			wide availability of alternative habitat, the port area and area to be	
of habitats supporting the species; and			dredged are considered not to be important to the SAC.	
<ul> <li>no significant disturbance of the species.</li> </ul>			Mortality or injury of animals as a result of collision with construction	
			<u>vessels</u>	
			Due to the regular vessel movements associated with the ferry terminal	
			and adjacent marina, animals are unlikely to be routinely close to these	
			areas and as such, the potential for collision is considered low. Any	
			animals which are in the harbour area will likely be habituated to vessel	
			movements. In addition, vessels associated with dredging and	
			construction will be exclusively slow-moving and as such pose minimal	
			collision threat as animals will be able to move away.	
			<u>Sedimentation and release of contaminants</u>	
			Sediment disturbance during the placement of each new pile will be	
			highly localised, with remobilised sediment dispersing quickly during	
			mid-tide and resettlement occurring in adjacent areas on the slack	
			tides. Given the physical characteristics of the seabed at the Proposed	
			Development, the localised disturbance of sediment is not anticipated	
			to result in any significant change to the topography or substrata and is	
			expected to be of low impact and temporary in nature while dredging	
			activities occur. Furthermore, Port Ellen is not considered key	
			supporting habitat for the common seal population associated with the	
			SAC.	
			There is potential for release of pollutants due to the dredging and	
			disturbance of the seabed. Given the scale of the receiving waters and	
			the comparatively small area over which dredging would occur, it is	
			considered that any increases in dissolved pollutants above	
			background levels would be highly localised, temporary and minimal,	
			quickly dispersing through the water column and with no resulting	
			significant effects on common seal prey or habitat.	
			Also as a result of dredging, and depending on seasonality, there is the	
			potential for algal blooms to occur as a result of increased nutrients in	
			the water column, which may have a detrimental effect on the levels of	
			oxygen in water. This effect would be expected to be limited in scale	
			and temporary.	



Conservation Objectives	Distance/Connectivity to Proposed Scheme	Qualifying Interests	Potential Effects and Commentary	Screening Conclusion
			In summary, no significant effects on the conservation objectives for common seal are predicted from sedimentation resulting from dredging and piling.  Disturbance in the form of noise, vibration, and lighting.  Underwater noise and vibration, in particular from piling and dredging, have the potential to cause disturbance and/or physical injury to marine mammals. Seals are sensitive to noise disturbance in particular, and as such the construction of the Proposed Development has potential to result in effects on common seal.	
Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss) SPA				
To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  • population of the species as a viable component of the site;  • distribution of the species within site;  • distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;  • structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and no significant disturbance of the species.	The site lies 10.2km north of the Proposed Development.	Greenland white- fronted goose, non- breeding	Greenland white-fronted geese winter in Scotland between October and April or early May. They roost on the pool systems and surrounding blanket bog, many also use the area for nocturnal feeding (SNH 2020h). Since the population is associated with the habitats at the SPA, which are not present within the Port Ellen harbour area, and due to the distance between the SPA and the Proposed Development, resulting in a lack of credible effect pathways, it is considered that there is no potential for loss or fragmentation of habitat, disturbance or any other LSE.	No potential for LSE during construction. AA (HRA Stage Two) is not required.



Conservation Objectives	Distance/Connectivity to Proposed Scheme	Qualifying Interests	Potential Effects and Commentary	Screening Conclusion
Eilean na Muice Duibhe SAC				
To avoid deterioration of the habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and  To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:  extent of the habitat on site;  distribution of the habitat within site;  structure and function of the habitat;  processes supporting the habitat;  distribution of typical species of the habitat;  viability of typical species as components of the habitat; and  no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat.	The site lies 10.2km north of the Proposed Development.	Depressions on peat substrates	There would be no direct or indirect loss of habitat at this site.  The designated features at the site are not sensitive to noise, vibration or lighting disturbance.  Due to the nature and scale of the proposed works and the distance from the SAC, resulting in a lack of credible effect pathways, the possibility of LSE on the conservation objectives of Eilean na Muice Duibhe SAC can be excluded.	No potential for LSE during construction. AA (HRA Stage Two) is not required.
Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss), Islay Ramsa	nr			
The Ramsar Convention mission statement is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".  The site qualifies under Criterion 1: "A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland	The site lies 10.2km north of the Proposed Development.	Greenland white- fronted goose, non- breeding	There would be no direct or indirect loss of habitat at this site and the receptor is not sensitive to noise, vibration or lighting disturbance.  Due to the nature and scale of the proposed works and the distance from the Ramsar site resulting in a lack of credible effect pathways, the possibility of LSE can be excluded.  Whilst the conservation objectives for the Ramsar and SPA designations differ, the potential effects and commentary are the same – refer to row Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss) SPA above.	No potential for LSE during construction. AA (HRA Stage Two) is not required.
type found within the appropriate biogeographic region."				



Conservation Objectives	Distance/Connectivity to Proposed Scheme	Qualifying Interests	Potential Effects and Commentary	Screening Conclusion
Laggan, Islay SPA				
To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:  • population of the species as a viable component of the site;  • distribution of the species within site;  • distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species;  • structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and  • no significant disturbance of the species.	The site lies 5.3km northwest of the Proposed Development.	Barnacle goose  Greenland white- fronted goose	Both species winter in Scotland between October and April or early May. Barnacle geese roost on the beach at Laggan Bay when tidal conditions are appropriate and at other times they roost on arable grassland inland from the dunes (SNH 2020i). Greenland white-fronted geese roost on the bog pools at Laggan Peninsula. The dune grassland and arable grassland provide feeding for both species throughout the winter. Since the populations are associated with the habitats at the SPA which are not present within the Port Ellen harbour area, and due to the presence of the Oa peninsula between the SPA and the Proposed Development, it is considered that there is no potential for loss or fragmentation of habitat, disturbance or any other LSE.	No potential for LSE during construction. AA (HRA Stage Two) is not required.



#### 3.4 Screening Conclusion

Based on the construction method as outlined in Section 2.3, the Proposed Development has potential for LSEs on the South-East Islay Skerries SAC, as identified in Table 2. An AA (HRA Stage Two) is therefore required for this site.

No LSEs on the five other European/Ramsar sites identified in Section 3.2 were identified from the Proposed Development. This was due either to the lack of effects pathways or because impacts of the Proposed Development would be imperceptible such that there would be no LSE. There is therefore no requirement to carry any of these five sites forward to Stage Two (AA) for further assessment, and no requirement for further consideration of the sites in combination with other plans and projects.

Should the construction method be revised to require the use of explosives as part of the construction methodology, it is recommended that the potential for LSEs on European/Ramsar sites is re-screened in order to assess whether or not this remains the case.

Similarly, should the waste disposal method not be at the waste disposal site 1km from Port Ellen,, the potential for LSEs on European/Ramsar sites should be reassessed.



## 4. Stage Two (Appropriate Assessment)

#### 4.1 Introduction

This section forms the Stage Two (AA) of the HRA process which was identified as required in Stage One (Screening) for the South-East Islay Skerries SAC in relation to disturbance. The AA considers the effects of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, on the integrity of a European/Ramsar site, with respect to the site's conservation objectives. Where applicable, it details the measures required to protect the conservation objectives and therefore the integrity of the site.

#### 4.2 South-East Islay Skerries SAC: Disturbance

Underwater noise and vibration, in particular from piling and dredging, have the potential to cause disturbance and/or physical injury to marine mammals. As noted in Section 2.3, this HRA assumes that there is no requirement for explosives. However, seals are sensitive to noise, particularly underwater.

A study of the effects of underwater impact piling on marine mammals in the Moray Firth found that the zone with the potential to cause auditory damage to pinnipeds such as common seal was up to 100m around the piling activity (1.8m diameter tubular steel piles). A strong behavioural response could potentially be elicited up to 215m away and a weaker response up to 14km away (Bailey, Senior, Simmons, Rusin, Picken and Thompson 2010).

Based on the relatively low quality of habitat and the presence of existing disturbance, it is considered that very few, if any, seals would be present within a distance from the works that could result in auditory damage or a strong behavioural response, and that any animals would be able to leave the area quickly. In the context of the disturbance created by the existing operational ferry terminal and other vessel movements, the likely habituation of animals in the Port Ellen area to background noise, and the wide availability of higher quality alternative habitat, the noise and vibration arising from construction of the Proposed Development it is considered that no long-term effects on the site conservation objectives will result. Nevertheless, short-term disturbance could occur to a limited number of individuals.

At the SAC itself, the source of noise will be over 4km away, and as such animals in the water there will likely experience the noise and may exhibit a weak behavioural response. Seals have markedly different hearing capabilities in air and underwater, and studies have shown that pinnipeds are sensitive to a broader range of sound frequencies in water than in air (Kastak and Schusterman 1998 and Southall et al. 2007, as reported by Scottish Government 2013). Since the SAC's coastline areas are used primarily for pupping, moulting and as haul-out sites, animals are likely to spend a proportion of their time on land, where they exhibit lower sensitivity to noise.

Furthermore, the construction period of 30 weeks includes at least 19 weeks of piling over a 22 week period, and 27 weeks of dredging. No night works will occur except in the event of urgent commercial need and in agreement with Argyll and Bute Council, although some work during the hours of darkness will likely be required during the winter. As such, the noise and vibration generated by construction of the Proposed Development will be short-term and intermittent, and is expected to provoke little or no behavioural response to animals at the SAC.

Due to the distance from site there is no potential for lighting disturbance on animals at the SAC and no adverse effect on site integrity is predicted.



#### 4.3 Mitigation

To address the potential for noise and vibration disturbance to any common seals that may be present within the vicinity of Port Ellen, the Contractor will employ a 'soft-start' to all noisy activities to avoid sudden and unexpected disturbance during construction. Each time the activity is started up after a period of inactivity, the noise levels will be gradually increased over a period of 30 minutes to allow marine mammals to move away from the disturbance.

#### 4.4 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

Detailed assessment of the implications from the Proposed Development on the South-East Islay Skerries SAC concluded their conservation objectives would not be compromised and there would be no adverse effect on site integrity if the required mitigation is implemented.



#### In-Combination Assessment

#### 5.1 Introduction

Article 48 of the Habitats Regulations requires that Appropriate Assessments of projects should include a consideration of other plans or projects which could affect site integrity in combination with the proposal under assessment.

Following screening, LSEs from the Proposed Development were identified for the South-East Islay Skerries SAC. This section of the report describes the in-combination assessment that has been undertaken to identify whether there are any other plans and projects which could affect the integrity of this European site in combination with the Proposed Development.

#### 5.2 Approach to Assessment

Based on the scale and nature of works and the sensitivity of common seal to noise, 15km from Port Ellen along the coast was assessed as being an appropriate search area for plans or projects with the potential to cause in-combination adverse effects on the South-East Islay Skerries SAC with the Proposed Development. Applications on the far side of the Oa peninsula, from Laggan Bay and beyond, were excluded.

A search was undertaken on 1 May 2021 for consented or pending projects and plans within a two-year period of the search date, using the Argyll and Bute mapping tool on the planning portal (Argyll and Bute Council, 2021). The following exclusions applied to the search to identify relevant proposals for inclusion within the assessment:

- householder applications for improvements/extensions;
- local commercial and business applications for minor improvement works and alterations;
- change of use (where external building work is not required);
- applications for advertisement consent;
- consultation applications;
- enforcement actions; and
- applications that have been withdrawn.

#### 5.3 Results

The only schemes identified are considered to have no identified pathways for effects with the Proposed Development, for example small-scale construction such as one or two dwellings.

One application (19/02555/PP), approved in December 2020, seeks to develop a distillery with associated maltings and vaulted maturation warehouse, visitor's centre with shop, restaurant and meeting facilities, tasting lodge and associated infrastructure including: sewage treatment plant and pumping station, new junction, access roads, car parking, tankfarms, SuDS pond, reservoir and sea water intake.

The site is located less than 1km east of the Proposed Development.

A consultation response from NatureScot (NatureScot, 2020) advised that they were satisfied that the proposal would have no LSE on the seal populations from construction or operation. Based on the



information available there is no identified potential for in-combination effects with this or any other identified application.

Other works proposed at Port Ellen include a new marshalling area due to the limited marshalling space of the existing layout. These proposed works are still at feasibility stage and a preferred option has not yet been determined therefore it is not yet possible to assess the potential for in-combination effects with the Proposed Development. A Habitats Regulations Appraisal screening would be undertaken for the marshalling area once the proposals are further progressed, which would consider the potential for incombination effects with the Proposed Development as outlined in this HRA as appropriate.



### 6. Summary and Conclusions

#### 6.1 Screening

Relevant European and Ramsar sites were selected by identifying ecological connectivity and the potential effects pathways from the project. Six sites were identified to be considered within the screening: The Oa SPA; South-East Islay Skerries SAC; Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss) SPA; Eilean na Muice Duibhe SAC; Eilean na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss), Islay Ramsar; and Laggan, Islay SPA.

Through screening, it was concluded that the Proposed Development has the potential to result in LSEs on the qualifying feature of the South-East Islay Skerries SAC (common seal) in relation to disturbance, therefore there was a requirement to progress to AA for this LSE. No LSEs were identified on the remaining sites.

#### 6.2 Appropriate Assessment

It is considered that there would be no long-term effects on the site conservation objectives of the South-East Islay Skerries SAC, but short-term disturbance notably from piling and dredging could occur which could affect the conservation objectives. As such, as a precautionary measure, a soft-start process is recommended. This measure will also contribute to safeguarding the conversation of other ecological receptors.

With mitigation in place it is concluded that there will be no implications for the conservation objectives of any European/Ramsar site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Although a precautionary approach has been taken in relation to the assessment, the Contractor may have need to amend elements of the work, for example modified methods or programme. If elements of the Proposed Development do change in nature or timing then a Not Environmentally Worse Than assessment will be undertaken by the Contractor, and NatureScot and/or Marine Scotland (as appropriate) will be consulted to confirm the protection of European and Ramsar sites is assured and that the conclusions of the HRA remain valid.



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## Appendix A. - Figures

