

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

**Trevor J Graham
Pick Everard
The Beacon,
176 St Vincent Street,
Glasgow,
G2 5SW**

Date: **06 September 2021**

Dear Mr Graham,

SCREENING OPINION UNDER THE MARINE WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

Thank you for your screening opinion request dated 16 July 2021 in regards to the proposed coastal protection works at Stornoway Airport, Isle of Lewis (“the Proposed Works”).

The Scottish Ministers consider the Proposed Works to fall under paragraph 10(m) of schedule 2 of The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (“the 2017 MW Regulations”), with the Proposed Works meeting the corresponding threshold in column 2 of schedule 2. Consequently, the Scottish Ministers are obliged to adopt a screening opinion as to whether the Proposed Works are, or are not, an Environment Impact Assessment Project (“EIA project”) under the 2017 MW Regulations.

The Scottish Ministers have considered the information provided in the screening opinion request which includes details of the applicant’s consultation with NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage). The Proposed Works all lie above mean low water springs (“MLWS”) and have already been granted planning permission by Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar.

When making a determination as to whether schedule 2 works are an EIA project, the Scottish Ministers must take into account such of the selection criteria set out in schedule 3 of the 2017 MW Regulations as are relevant to the works. In this regard, the Scottish Ministers have considered the following:

Characteristics of the works

Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. propose to construct a series of coastal defences to combat current and future erosion of land occupied by Stornoway Airport and the impact this could have on its operating capabilities.

The Proposed Works are for sea defences along the coastal edge of the existing airfield, through a combination of rock armour, Reno mattresses and gabion baskets. Parts of this proposed development will key into existing rock armour defences. The location for the majority of the development is a low-lying area comprising of machair dunes along the coastline of Broad Bay with small areas of saltmarsh to the western portion of the site, where the replacement rock armour is proposed.

The coastal protection at the existing beach and sand dune interface consists of

- 1180m of Reno mattress and gabion baskets, laid on a slope on the dune face along the north-eastern boundary of the airport
- 100m of Reno mattress on the estuary side.

Sand removed prior to the installation of mattresses and gabion basket will be returned to reinstate a natural dune profile.

Part of the main runway is sited on the headland, an existing structure supported by a rock armour installation that is failing. Proposed works involve reparation of the toe of the armour by extending the existing rock armour from the mean sea level to a point whereby the base of new anchor rocks will be 1.5m below beach level. A minor area of the beach will be lost to this extension. The existing rock armour defence at the runway end will be repaired and reinforced with further rock armour placed at its toe for a length of 400m

The Scottish Ministers are content that the size and design of the Proposed Works are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.

Location of the works

The works site consists of the stretch of sandy coastline located on the north eastern boundary of Stornoway Airport, and returns along the western edge of the main runway of Stornoway Airport. The main portion of the site is located in the Rural Settlement of Melbost, Isle of Lewis, with the edge of the proposed rock armour being sited in the area of Steinish. The site comprises of sand dunes, salt marsh and mud flats. There are currently some coastal protection measures, largely in the form of rock armour, where the runway extends into Broad Bay. The site is wholly bounded by the sea to the north, the airfield to the east and south, and the open saltmarsh and shore to the west.

There are no European designated sites at the location of the works. The closest designated site is the Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC which is approx. 2.7 km away and designated for Harbour Porpoise. All works are located above MLWS and therefore it is considered unlikely that the Proposed Works will have an impact on marine mammals.

The works are partly located within the Tong Saltings SSI designated for coastal habitats and breeding birds. Connicks Environmental Constraints Survey undertaken in 2020 for the planning application considered breeding bird colonies with the SSI notably Artic Tern, and Little Tern. Nesting waders were found to use the vegetated areas to the west of the runway in the spring/summer months. Corncrake has also been recorded in and around the work area. There is the potential for disturbance to bird colonies during construction, and ground nesting birds within the work zone may sustain damage to nests. The applicant has proposed mitigation that includes working outside the bird breeding season or establishing buffer zones if this is not possible. Access to the work zone will also avoid the saltmarsh. The screening opinion request notes that the applicant has been in discussion with NatureScot regarding the requirements of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP). The EMP will contain the proposed mitigation.

Otter signs have been recorded during ecological surveys with potential rest spots existing throughout the headland and dune systems. No holts were observed. The establishment of exclusion zones around suspected rest sites is proposed as mitigation.

With regard to historic features, areas of archaeological interest including a dyke and rectilinear enclosure have been identified to fall within the construction zone. Mitigation for this impact will include a suitable written scheme of investigation and the effects are considered slight with this mitigation in place.

The screening opinion request concluded that the residual impact on sensitive habitats, species and archaeological features is likely to be minimal.

Characteristics of the potential impact

The Scottish Ministers are content that the mitigation proposed in the screening opinion request as detailed above, is sufficient to conclude the Proposed Works are not likely to have a significant impact on the environment.

Conclusion

In view of the findings above, the Scottish Ministers are of the opinion that the Proposed Works **are** not an EIA project under the 2017 MW Regulations and, therefore, an EIA **is not** required to be carried out in respect of the Proposed Works.

If you increase, alter or extend the Proposed Works, you are advised to contact Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team again to confirm if the screening opinion is still valid.

A copy of the screening opinion has been forwarded to Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar planning department. The screening opinion has also been made publicly available through the Marine Scotland Information website at: [Marine Licence - Construction of Coastal Protection - Stornoway Airport, Isle of Lewis - 00009183 | Marine Scotland Information](#).

If you require any further assistance or advice on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ellie Noble

Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team