

Staffin Community Trust
Church of Scotland Annexe
Staffin
Isle of Skye
IV51 9JX

Neil MacLeod & Gerry Millar
Marine Scotland
375 Victoria Road
Aberdeen
AB11 9DB

cc Hugh Ross, Staffin Community Trust [Redacted]

Rev02 22.12.2025

27.11.2025

Request for Screening Opinion to vary the layout and extend the expiry date of Marine Licence ref MS-00010741

Dear Mr MacLeod, & Mr Millar,

Staffin Community Trust request a screening opinion on the proposed variation & extension of MS-00010741 for improvement works at Staffin Harbour, Isle of Skye.

Works commenced on the 6th March 2024 with the construction of the hardstanding, upon which have been built 7 No. business units and space provided for the Trust's boat haulage & storage facilities. The project is well known in Holyrood and is seen as an exemplar & innovative community led project with 16 new jobs now reliant on the new shore based facilities built to date with money from Scottish Government infrastructure & marine funding streams. However it is very unlikely we will have secured enough funding to complete the development before the current Marine Licence expiry date of 31st March 2026, as such we request an extension for as long as possible.

The variation in design has arisen after the detailed design process highlighted the vulnerability of the proposed breakwater to storms from a certain direction. Staffin Community Trust cannot afford to build a larger breakwater so the decision was made to vary the design such that the project remains on budget and avoids the worst impacts from storms, please see the justification statement on drawing JG5462 rev02 for a more detailed explanation. Importantly note that the same quantities of materials are proposed and all within the existing Marine Licence boundary. Screening request details as follows;

Location

The proposed SCH development is located at the Staffin Community Harbour in Òb nan Ron, Garafad, Staffin, IV51 9JS in the north of Skye and has a grid reference of NG494 681 See attached JG5738 Location Plan.

The development is not part of a Statutory Harbour Authority.

Description of Proposed Works to be Varied & Extended

Drawing JG5462 rev02 provides a comparison plan and justification statement for the variation to the existing approved layout ref MS-00010741. The project components retain the same quantities of materials and lie within the same approved Marine Licence boundary and comprise of construction of a hardstanding, construction of a breakwater, construction of a slipway, installation of pontoons & associated moorings and removal of part of existing breakwater. Aside from the varied layout the main differences of the variation are the retention of part of the existing breakwater (less removal), and the introduction of underwater rock pecking (underwater noise) which are covered in the BWCMS & CEMD.

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Regulated Activities

Construction of new breakwater, construction of slipway, construction of hardstanding & removal of part of existing breakwater, as follows;

New Breakwater: One of the main aims of the project is to create sheltered berthing. This requires the construction of a breakwater using rock armour & rock fill. The curved breakwater has a centreline length of approximately 164 metres. The seaward end is located in water depths of -3.5 metres CD and the maximum height is +9.5 metres CD. The curved design provides a sheltered area for the pontoons and slipways respectively.

Rock armouring has been sized taking account of the detailed analysis & modelling of wave energy at various locations along the breakwater, as shown in attached Wallace Stone drawing 2297 – 301A (breakwater general layout).

Pontoons; To provide secure berthing floating pontoons are proposed. These will be able to accommodate up to 12 boats of up to 12m LOA. Provision has been made for a further 10 small open boats (i.e. dinghies and tenders) on the rear side of the berth. The pontoons will be accessible from the parking area over the new hardstanding with galvanised steel bridge structure linking the pontoons to the hardstanding as shown in attached Gaelforce drawing M-11731-001 (pontoon GA). The pontoons will include a water supply, electrical hook-up points and a fuel berth supplied with marine diesel from a storage facility on the hardstanding. Three pontoon decking surface options were proposed namely timber, composite, and GRP Mini Mesh during the PAC. The preferred option was GRP Mini Mesh as it does not get slippery when wet, this will therefore be utilised for the pontoons.

Slipways; A new 10m wide and 66 metre long concrete slipway with a slope gradient of 1 in 9 will be constructed, the last 8m of the slipway will be below MLWS and constructed using precast concrete sections, and will allow for launching & recovery of boats during low to mid tide. See drawing 2297- 401 (slipway GA).

The existing slipway will be left in situ as it will continue to be of use for temporary berthing & small craft launch & recovery. On removal of part of the existing breakwater the existing slipway will be modified to tie into the proposed new slipway as per drawing 2297-401.

Hardstanding; To increase the area available for development an area of 2550m m² will be reclaimed from the sea to a height of +7.35m CD. The area to be built up is to the north of the existing hardstanding area and will result in approximately 5170m² total area for onshore harbour facilities upon which 7 business units have already been built and several boats hauled ashore for repair & winter storage. The intent is to have two separate onshore areas, one for general public use and another for harbour users. This should exclude non-harbour traffic from the harbour area will help to ensure safe use of harbour facilities.

Removal of part of existing breakwater; the southern part of the existing breakwater will remain in situ and will form the western edge of the hardstanding. The northern 63 metres of the existing breakwater will be carefully dismantled after the new breakwater construction has progressed enough to provide shelter for the dismantling works with reduced risk of fines washout. All the rock armour & rock fill from the dismantling will be re-used in the new breakwater. Steel from existing berthing structure will be disposed of & recycled. See Wallace Stone drawing 2297 – 131B (existing breakwater demolition).

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Environmental Impacts

See attached;

- CEMD V3 (construction environmental management document),
- BWCMS (breakwater construction method statement)
- drawing JG5739 (Construction Phases 1 to 7)

Significant Effects

Removals;

- rock armour & core fill 9000 cu.m (part of existing breakwater & to be re-used in new breakwater.)
- Steel 20 ton, berthing structure
- concrete 100 tons, base of berthing structure

Deposits;

- Steel 150 ton, pontoon frames, anchors & chains, mooring rings, slipway levelling bars, handrails, pontoon walkway
- Timber 15 ton, pontoon fendering, slipway drying out poles
- Plastic & synthetics 30 ton, nav buoys, pontoon decks, pontoon floats, ducts, culverts, pipe, pontoon fendering
- Concrete 900 ton slipway, retaining walls, outfall
- Sand 1000 ton (rock fill fraction)
- Gravel 2200 ton (rock fill fraction)
- Cobbles 40,000 ton (rock fill)
- Boulders 40,000 ton (rockfill & armour)
- Tarmac 150 sq.m

Temporary structures;

- Timber 10 tons
- Plastic/synthetic 4 tons

All materials transported to site by road.

Description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed works; (extract from EIAR non-technical summary, *Staffin Community Harbour Development Environmental Impact Assessment Report Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary, September 2021, Affric Ltd*) [click on google cloud link below for full EIAR](#))

Benthic Ecology

In order to appropriately assess the potential effects on organisms on the seafloor (benthic ecology) from the proposed SCH development, the baseline condition had to be understood. This was achieved through an extensive literature review and field surveys. The survey operations consisted of divers carrying out video transects and the use of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) to cover the intertidal portion of the proposed SCH development. Analysis of the video footage from survey was used to identify the relevant biotopes found within the proposed SCH development footprint. The most frequently observed biotope noted across the survey site was *Laminaria hyperborea* and foliose red seaweeds on

moderately exposed infralittoral rock (Figure 7.1), with Kelp and seaweed communities on sublittoral sediment (Figure 7.2) being the second most frequently observed biotope. A patch of *Laminaria saccharina* and red seaweeds on infralittoral sediments (Figure 7.2) were observed within the middle of the survey area. All three of these are classed as Priority Marine Feature (PMF) in Scottish Terrestrial Waters. Inclusion in the PMF list does not provide any additional legal protection, however, these are considered sensitive species and/or habitats for the purpose of the impact assessment.



Figure 7.1: *Laminaria hyperborea* and Foliose Red seaweeds on Moderately Exposed Infralittoral Rock



Figure 7.2: Still image of kelp and seaweed communities on sublittoral sediment (A5.52) and *Laminaria saccharina* and red seaweeds on infralittoral sediments (A5.521)

The construction stage of the proposed SCH development may impact on benthic ecology of the site through habitat loss, physical disturbance especially from the removal and placement of rock, accidental spillage of hazardous substances, and introduction of non-native marine species.

There will be a permanent loss of intertidal benthic flora, fauna, and habitat within the footprint of the land reclamation, proposed breakwater and new slipway, the marine consenting boundary covers 40,300m², 11,100m² of this includes PMF's kelps and seaweed communities. However, the actual construction footprint is less than 10,000m² much of which being in the intertidal area which do not include PMF'. Hence, only 5% of the consenting area is covered by kelp habitats which could be subject to habitat loss by the construction activities (approximately 2,000m²) Kelp beds and kelp on sediments are a common and widespread habitat in the wider region. Additionally, the new breakwater rock armour will provide a new substrate which could potentially aid recolonisation of the area by kelp (and other organisms) after construction. Therefore, the loss of these biotopes within the proposed SCH development will be limited and will not have a significant effect. Disturbance of the seabed could be caused by activities such as rock pecking & rock placement on the seabed. The seabed within the proposed SCH development is characterised by cobbles, pebbles and hard rock substrate, with limited fine sand sediment. Therefore, any sediment disturbance is unlikely to cause sedimentation issues, or settlement of sands on the adjacent kelp habitats. The effect on PMF's resulting from increased sediment loading is not deemed to be significant.

Spills of hazardous substances into the sea can lead to a reduction of water quality as a result of pollution. The source of any spill is expected to be localised and the relatively small volumes. Therefore, no significant effects on PMF's are anticipated as a result of a spill. Mitigation identified in Section 6.2 will reduce the likelihood of a spill occurring.

The impacts resulting from the potential introduction of non-native marine species were assessed. There is the potential that species from other regions could be transported to the SCH development site via sediment trapped in equipment previously used at different locations. However, it is deemed extremely unlikely that construction works could lead to the introduction of non-native marine species.

During the operation of the proposed SCH development, potential impacts may arise from release of hazardous materials from the oil storage tanks and litter into the marine environment, as well as the introduction of non-native marine species. However, with the implementation of the mitigation considered within Section 6.2, impacts on water quality from accidental releases or litter and the introduction of non-native marine species are not deemed significant.

Fish Ecology

A desk-based review identified basking sharks and three diadromous fish species (fish with the ability to migrate between fresh and saltwater environments): Atlantic salmon, sea trout, and European eel, as being potentially present in the marine environment near the proposed SCH development. Salmon and eel are of international value, whilst sea trout are considered to be of national value. The Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protection Area (MPA), designated for basking sharks, and Red Rocks and Longay urgent MPA, designated for flapper skate, were included in the assessment, but no designated sites for diadromous fish were considered, due to the lack of ecological connectivity to any sites designated for those species.

The literature review identified migratory routes and timings and habitat preferences for diadromous fish. This found that Atlantic salmon, sea trout, and European eel are likely to be present in coastal areas close to where their respective riverine habitats meet the marine environment. Most notably, two rivers Stenscholl River, located 1.1km north-west of the proposed SCH development and River Brogaig, located approximately 1.8km north-west along the coastline from the proposed SCH development. Both are known spawning sites for salmon and sea trout. It is also possible that migrating diadromous fish will transit through the SCH development area from watercourses to the south of the site such as the River Lealt, and hence be present in the waters in the vicinity of the proposed construction works. Although not expected to be present in very high numbers, basking sharks utilise the habitats of the Minch to the north and the Sound of Raasay and Inner Sound to the east of Skye. The relatively shallow waters around the proposed SCH development do not provide

ideal habitat for the species, and it is considered unlikely that basking shark will be present in the immediate vicinity of the proposed SCH development.

A potential effect on diadromous fish as a result of the construction activities associated with the proposed SCH development was identified due to the new breakwater causing a potential obstruction to migratory pathways. Juvenile fish were considered particularly sensitive, as they generally utilise shallower waters than adults during migration. However, it was deemed to be non-significant due to the topography of the coastline around the SCH development and the fact the development will be largely constructed on a shallow rocky outcrop that is unlikely to form the principle route for fish migrating through the area. If any fish should enter the harbour area, the energetic cost of navigating around and out of its mouth was deemed to be low. The relatively undeveloped nature of the coastline around the proposed SCH development means it will not be adding to any existing pressures or obstructions to the migration pathways of diadromous fish species.

Due to their international value, the likely effect of water quality issues resulting from the accidental release of hazardous substances on Atlantic salmon and European eel will be significant. When utilising the matrix approach to impact assessment the effect on sea trout of national value was deemed non-significant. Taking account of the mitigation identified to minimise the likelihood of a pollution event covering and to mitigate the effects if an incident does occur, see Section 16.2, the effect significance level becomes non-significant for all species. The preference of basking shark and flapper skate for deeper waters mean they are too far from the development to be significantly affected by a pollution incident.

The only potential effect arising from the operation of the proposed SCH development is water quality issues resulting from the accidental release of hazardous substances. As with the construction phase, the effect of pollution incident associated with loss of containment of oil from the storage tanks is considered to have significant effects on salmon and eels, with non-significant effects on other fish species. Once pollution prevention mitigation as discussed in Section 16.2, is considered, the likelihood of a spill occurring is reduced and the effect is deemed non-significant on all fish species.

Marine Mammals

A desk-based review identified a variety of marine mammals as being potentially present in the marine environment near the proposed SCH development. This included several species of whales, dolphins and seals. A review of protected areas which include marine mammals within their designation was also carried out to identify those which were within the range of the designate species and hence could be affected by the development. The relevant designated sites considered are the:

- Inner Hebrides & the Minches Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which the proposed development overlaps with and is protected for harbour porpoise;
- Ascrib, Isay, & Dunvegan SAC located 28km west of the proposed development and is protected for common seal;
- Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protected Area (MPA) located 46km southwest of the proposed development and is protected for minke whale;
- North East Lewis MPA located 52km north of the proposed development and is protected for Risso's dolphin; and
- Monach Islands SAC located 102km west of the proposed development and is protected for grey seal.

Impacts to marine mammals as a result of the construction activities are associated with water quality issues arising from the accidental release of hazardous substances and litter, and physical injury and disturbance associated with moving equipment and rock pecking (underwater noise) & placement. Once the proposed SCH development becomes operational, impacts are only likely to arise from water quality issues due to pollution incidents.

Cetaceans (harbour porpoise, dolphins, killer whales and minke whales) inhabit deeper water than those around the proposed development so it is unlikely that they will be

impacted by a spill during the construction or operational phase of the project, as pollution effects will be localised. The impact is therefore deemed non-significant, and risks reduce even further once the pollution prevention mitigation discussed in Section 16.2 is considered. Cetaceans will not be in the immediate vicinity of the construction site due to the shallow water depths. It is therefore highly unlikely they will be injured or disturbed through interaction with construction activities and equipment.

Pinnipeds (common and grey seals) are more likely to be present within the shallow waters surrounding the proposed SCH development and are therefore more likely to be impacted as a result of an oil or chemical spill during construction or operation of the proposed SCH development. Due to their international value the likely effect on seals will be significant. However, once the mitigation discussed in Section 16.2 is considered, it will be reduced to a non-significant effect.

Seals could be in the vicinity of the construction works, hence there is a potential for them to be physically injured through the removal and placement of rock or the movement of equipment onsite. However, the increased levels of human activity and plant movement in the vicinity of construction will cause a level of disturbance which will reduce the chance that a seal would enter an area where it is at risk of being injured. The impact of physical harm to seals was therefore assessed as being non-significant. To further minimise the risk, site operatives will be instructed to stop works if a seal approaches closer than 50m, and to not resume until such a time that the seal has moved further than 50m away.

With regards to disturbance, the area is not designated as a seal haul-out site (i.e. location on land where seals come ashore to rest, moult, breed or have pups). The increased human activity at the proposed SCH development site may result in seals avoiding the site, however, this is unlikely to cause any noticeable long-term effects.

Cumulative effects on marine mammals were considered for three offshore projects, namely the Stornoway Deep Water Port, Lochmaddy Ferry Terminal and the Uig Ferry Terminal Development. There is potential that the construction phases of each of these projects may overlap with the construction of the proposed SCH development. There will be a slight increase in the risk of pollution incidents impacting marine mammals during the construction phases of each of the projects. Any potential impacts associated with the proposed SCH development are expected to be very localised, and due to the large distances between the projects it is very unlikely the same marine mammal receptors would be impacted by water quality issues arising from another development. Therefore, no significant cumulative effects are anticipated.

Palaeontology

During the construction and operation of the proposed SCH development the receptors identified for assessment was the An Corran GCR but also the palaeontological features within the GCR namely the Fossil dinosaur footprints in the Duntulm Formation.

During construction, the foreshore to the west of the slipway will be avoided, thereby not encroaching on the An Corran GCR. It is however, noted that with the removal of the breakwater, there is potential for new discoveries which have been covered up by the existing breakwater. The effects on the An Corran GCR and the dinosaur footprints are not anticipated to be significant.

Landscape

The landscape, seascape and visual assessment considered the effects of the proposed SCH development and Borrow Pit on the landscape and visual character of the area.

The proposed SCH development lies within the Trotternish National Scenic Area (NSA) and will be constructed within a previously developed site and comprises a slipway, breakwater and supporting land based infrastructure.

Significant effects

The significant effects identified are summarised in Table 19.1 of the EIAR; (*Staffin Community Harbour Development Environmental Impact Assessment Report Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary, September 2021, Affric Ltd*)

Click on google cloud link below to access the non technical summary

The use of natural resources

Fresh water is sourced from an existing spring south of the proposed development and stored and filtered on site.

Rock for construction of hardstanding and breakwater is sourced from Lealt Borrow pit as per planning consent ref 21/04525/FUL.

All plans & documents listed above can be viewed on the cloud here;

[Redacted]

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information, otherwise we look forward to receiving your screening opinion soon.

Regards

Jock Gordon

[Redacted]

(for Staffin Community Trust)