



VATERSAY SHELTERED BERTHING FACILITY EIA SCREENING REPORT

Client	Vatersay Pier Users Association (VPUA)
Project/Proposal No;	87
Version	V4
Date	22 June 2026

Document information

Project Name:	Vatersay Sheltered Berthing Facility
Document Title:	EIA Screening Report
Client Name:	Vatersay Pier Users Association (VPUA)
Author:	Ashleigh Macsween
Reviewed:	Sarah Murray and Laura Carse
Approved:	Laura Carse
Date:	22/06/2026
Version:	V4
Project Number:	87

Version No.	Date	Authored	Reviewed	Approved	Notes
V1	30/03/2026	AMcs	AM, RJ	LC	First issue to client for review and comment
V2	15/04/2026	AMcs	SM, LC	LC	Second issue to client for review and comment
V3	24/04/2026	AMcs	SM, LC	LC	Third issue to client, updated in line with comments from VPUA and Wallace Stone
V4	22/06/2026	AMcs	SM, LC	LC	Final issue for submission

DISCLAIMER

This report (including any enclosures, attachments, figures and appendices) has been prepared for the exclusive use and benefit of the addressee(s)/client named above and solely for the purpose for which it is provided. Unless we provide express prior written consent, no part of this report should be reproduced, distributed or communicated to any third party. We do not accept any liability if this report is used for an alternative purpose from which it is intended, nor to any third party in respect of this report.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
1 Introduction	9
1.1 Overview	9
1.2 Consenting Approach.....	10
1.3 Purpose of the EIA Screening Report	11
1.4 Approach to Screening	12
1.5 Consultation.....	13
1.6 Report Structure	16
2 Site Location	17
2.1 Site Location	17
2.2 Context	18
3 The Proposed Development	19
3.1 Need for the Development	19
3.2 The Proposed Development	20
4 Likely Significant Environmental Effects.....	24
4.1 Introduction	24
4.1 Environmental Topics.....	26
4.2 Other Environmental Topics	48
5 Summary.....	51
5.2 Supporting Information and Commitments.....	52
5.3 Applicant's View on the Requirement for EIA	53
6 References	54
Appendix A: Propose layout and proposed blast area plans.....	56
A.1 Proposed Layout Plan	57
A.2 Proposed Blast Area Plan.....	58
Appendix B: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA).....	59
Appendix C: Ornithology Desk-based Assessment (DBA).....	60
Appendix D: Gazetteer of undesignated cultural heritage assets within 1 km	61

Abbreviations

Term	Expanded Term
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
CnES	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
DBA	Desk-based Assessment
CD	Chart Datum
EASR	Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPS	European Protected Species
ha	hectare
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HRA	Habitats Regulations Appraisal
IAQM	Institute of Air Quality Management
INNS	Invasive Non-Native Species
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
MD-LOT	Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs
MLWS	Mean Low Water Springs
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MD-LOT	Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team
NLB	Northern Lighthouse Board
NMPi	National Marine Plan interactive
NSA	National Scenic Area
PAC	Pre-application Consultation
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation

Term	Expanded Term
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SPA	Special Protection Area
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Act
VPUA	Vatersay Pier Users Association

Executive Summary

Atlantic58 has prepared this EIA Screening Report on behalf of Vatersay Pier Users Association (VPUA) in support of a request for an EIA Screening Opinion for the proposed Vatersay Sheltered Berthing Facility. The Proposed Development is located within the Sound of Vatersay, adjacent to the existing Barra–Vatersay causeway, and is intended to improve berthing conditions, safety and access for local marine users who currently rely on basic slipway infrastructure and exposed moorings.

The Proposed Development is anticipated to comprise of:

- an armourstone breakwater of approximately 165 m in length;
- a 24 m long access bridge
- an area of approximately 0.2 hectares (ha) of reclaimed land; and
- a main pontoon with 14 finger pier berths.

During construction, the adjacent borrow pit will be temporarily reopened to provide rock and armourstone required for the breakwater. The full construction programme is expected to last approximately 12 months.

The Site extends across terrestrial, intertidal and marine areas. The overall Site boundary is approximately 2.86 ha, comprising around 1.62 ha above mean low water springs (MLWS) for the purposes of the terrestrial planning application and 1.85 ha below mean high water springs (MHWS) for the purposes of the marine licence application¹. Following consultation, the project is being progressed through a planning application to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and an associated marine licence application to the Marine Directorate. Statutory Pre Application Consultation (PAC) is required for the marine licence application.

The Site lies within a sensitive coastal environment, including the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides Special Protection Area (SPA). Other designated coastal and marine sites in the wider area include the Sound of Barra Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protected Area (MPA), Small Seal Islands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and nearby seal haul-out sites. The surrounding area also contains a range of terrestrial, intertidal, marine, ornithological, cultural heritage and human receptors. The immediate Site is a mixed, modified and active working coastal environment, influenced by the existing causeway, slipway, small scale fishing activity, nearby housing and commercial activity adjacent to a former borrow pit (previously used to provide aggregate for the causeway construction).

The screening assessment considers the potential for likely significant effects across the key environmental topics. The main topics requiring detailed consideration are:

- air quality;
- cultural heritage and archaeology;
- coastal processes and hydrodynamics;
- terrestrial and intertidal ecology and biodiversity;
- marine habitats and fish;
- marine mammals;
- ornithology;
- navigation, commercial fisheries and other marine users;
- noise and vibration;

¹ Note these areas overlap between MHWS and MLWS reflecting the overlap of the terrestrial and marine planning regimes.

- seascape, landscape and visual amenity; and
- socioeconomics.

Other topics considered on a proportionate basis include traffic and transport, climate change / resilience and greenhouse gases, ground conditions and geology, hydrology and flood risk, major accidents and disasters, and cumulative developments.

The assessment concludes that the Proposed Development is not likely to give rise to significant adverse environmental effects. This is due to the small scale of the project, the localised nature of the works, the existing modified baseline environment, and the proposed mitigation and standard good practice measures that will be in place. Construction effects are generally expected to be temporary and localised, while operational effects are expected to be negligible, localised or beneficial. Table 1 provides a summary of the screening conclusion for each environmental topic.

The Report identifies further supporting information to accompany the future planning and marine licence applications, including:

- archaeological desk-based assessment and walkover verification;
- verification of seabed / benthic habitats, including drop-down video survey as required;
- additional ornithological survey work if required;
- pre-construction protected species surveys, including otter surveys where required; and
- a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Overall, it is the Applicant's view that the Proposed Development does not constitute EIA Development and that a formal EIA is not required in support of the proposed planning application and marine licence application. The Applicant therefore seeks a Screening Opinion from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Marine Directorate confirming that EIA is not required or to confirm whether any supplementary info is required to reach that conclusion.

Table 1: Summary of screening conclusions

Topic	Main sensitivities / issues	Screening conclusion
Environmental Topics		
Air Quality	Temporary dust and minor exhaust emissions during construction, particularly from blasting, extraction, haulage and materials handling; nearby residential, recreational and ecological receptors.	Effects would be localised, short-term and limited to construction, with dust control measures in place during the works. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	Two scheduled monuments within 1 km; wider archaeological landscape; potential for non-designated remains, including lazy beds, within or adjacent to the blast area.	No direct effects on scheduled monuments anticipated. Potential effects on non-designated remains are localised and can be addressed through proportionate mitigation. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Coastal Processes and Hydrodynamics	Localised changes to wave conditions, sediment transport and seabed disturbance associated with the breakwater and marine works.	Effects would be confined to the immediate vicinity of the works within an already modified coastal system. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.

Terrestrial and Intertidal Ecology and Biodiversity	Otter activity on the Barra side of the causeway; localised habitat loss of existing modified environment and disturbance; intertidal habitat sensitivity.	Effects would be localised and can be addressed through standard surveys, buffers and construction controls. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Marine Habitats and Fish	Localised seabed disturbance and habitat loss; temporary increases in suspended sediment; temporary underwater noise and disturbance to fish and mobile marine fauna.	Effects would be temporary, localised and limited to the immediate marine footprint. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Marine Mammals	Connectivity with the Sound of Barra SAC and nearby seal interests; temporary disturbance from construction activity, underwater noise and intermittent blasting.	Effects would be small in scale, temporary, localised and reversible, with no pathway for significant effects on designated sites or marine mammal receptors. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Ornithology	Location within the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA; temporary disturbance and displacement during construction; intermittent blasting; small area of existing modified habitat loss.	Effects on ornithology are expected to be temporary, localised and limited in scale, notwithstanding the Site's location within the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA. Given the small footprint of the Proposed Development, the temporary nature of construction works, the negligible habitat loss and the mobility of qualifying species, no likely significant adverse effects are predicted.
Navigation, Commercial Fisheries and Other Marine Users	Temporary disruption to local vessel movements, slipway use and marine activity during construction; local reorganisation of berthing during operation.	Effects would be temporary, localised and confined to the immediate works area. Once operational, beneficial effects are predicted for local marine users. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Noise and Vibration	Temporary construction noise and vibration, including intermittent blasting, drilling, rock haulage and plant movement. Nearby receptors include residential properties, commercial unit, Hebridean Way users and local road users.	Effects on human receptors would be temporary, localised and controlled through standard mitigation and good practice measures. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity	Localised visual change associated with the berthing facility and blast area within an already modified working coastal environment and former borrow pit area.	Effects would be localised and would not materially alter the wider landscape or seascape context. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Socioeconomics	Temporary construction disruption; support for existing marine use, local businesses and community resilience during operation.	Construction effects would be temporary and limited; operational effects are neutral to beneficial overall. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.

Other Environmental Topics		
Traffic and Transport	Temporary increase in construction traffic and rock haulage across the causeway.	Effects would be temporary, limited in geographic extent and would occur within an already active transport environment. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Climate Change, Adaptation and Resilience and Greenhouse Gases	Temporary construction emissions from plant, vehicles, blasting, extraction and haulage; need for infrastructure to function within an exposed coastal environment and support local resilience.	Construction emissions would be temporary and limited in scale. The Proposed Development is not likely to give rise to significant adverse effects and may provide resilience benefits. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Ground Conditions and Geology	Localised disturbance from drilling, blasting, extraction and construction; interface with less disturbed ground near the blast area.	Effects would be confined to the construction footprint and managed through standard controls. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Hydrology and Flood Risk	Localised run-off, sediment release or pollution risk during construction, particularly near the coast and blast area.	Effects would be localised and manageable through standard drainage and pollution prevention measures. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Major Accidents and Disasters	Standard construction risks associated with plant, blasting, marine works and rock handling.	Risks are typical of construction projects of this nature and controlled through standard procedures. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.
Cumulative Developments	Potential short-term overlap with the consented storage bays development in the immediate harbour / causeway area, including temporary traffic, noise and visual activity.	Effects would be localised, temporary and capable of being coordinated through programming. No likely significant adverse effects predicted.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1.1 Atlantic58 has been commissioned by the Vatersay Pier Users Association (VPUA) (referred to as 'the Applicant') to prepare a request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for a proposed sheltered berthing facility located within the Sound of Vatersay, Outer Hebrides (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.1.2 Vatersay lies at the southern end of the Outer Hebrides and is connected to Barra via a causeway constructed in 1991. Vatersay supports a small inshore fishing fleet and a number of leisure craft; however, existing marine infrastructure is limited to basic slipway and mooring arrangements, with vessels typically moored on exposed swinging moorings. This results in limitations to activities, inefficiencies, safety risks, and constraints on maintenance and access.
- 1.1.1.3 The Proposed Development is to be constructed adjacent to the existing Barra–Vatersay causeway, on the eastern side of the Vatersay end of the causeway, immediately beside the existing slipway, as illustrated in Figure 1. The new development is proposed next to existing slipway/causeway infrastructure, rather than as a redevelopment of an existing pier or marina. The proposed marine works lie within the Vatersay Causeway harbour jurisdiction area defined by the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Various Harbours) Harbour Revision Order (HRO) 2002 as illustrated in Figure 1.

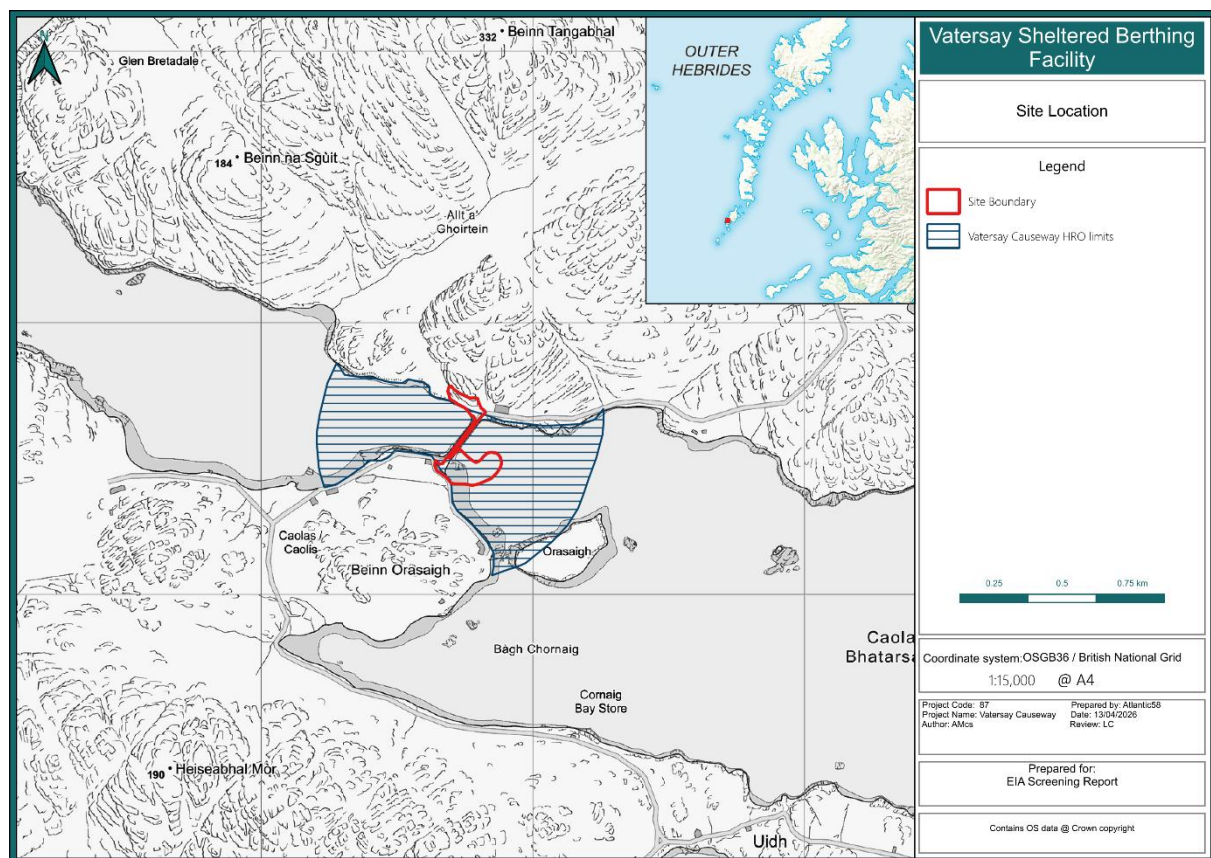


Figure 1 Site location.

- 1.1.1.4 The Proposed Development is anticipated to comprise an armourstone breakwater of approximately 165 m in length, an area of approximately 0.2 hectares (ha) of reclaimed land, an access bridge of 24 m, and a main pontoon with 14 finger pier berths (Appendix A.1: Proposed Layout Plan). During construction, the adjacent borrow pit (north of the causeway, on Barra) will be temporarily reopened to provide rock and armourstone required for the breakwater (Appendix A.2: Proposed Blast Area Plan). Rock extraction from the borrow pit forms an integral enabling component of the Proposed Development and will be assessed as part of the overall planning application, reflecting feedback received from CnES during early consultation (Table 1-2).

1.2 Consenting Approach

- 1.2.1.1 The Proposed Development is located within Statutory Harbour Limits for Vatersay Causeway (Figure 1) and extends across both terrestrial and marine areas associated with a new sheltered berthing facility adjacent to the existing causeway. The site boundary also includes part of a disused former borrow pit on the Barra side of the causeway, which is proposed to be temporarily reopened during construction to provide the rock and armourstone required for the breakwater.
- 1.2.1.2 Two potential consenting routes were initially identified for the Proposed Development:
- consent through a Harbour Revision Order (HRO) under the Harbours Act 1964; or
 - consent through planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 together with a marine licence under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.2.1.3 Based on consultation feedback from CnES (Table 1-2), the planning permission and marine licence route is taken forward as the most appropriate consenting mechanism for the Proposed Development. In consenting terms, the Proposed Development will be taken forward as a single project, with the onshore elements, including the temporary borrow pit works, forming part of the planning application to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, and the below Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) works forming part of the associated marine licence application.
- 1.2.1.4 The Proposed Development will require the following consents:
- **Planning Application** - the Proposed Development will require planning consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), which will be submitted to the CnES. The planning application will cover the terrestrial elements of the Proposed Development and works down to Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS), recognising the overlap in jurisdiction with the Marine Directorate within the intertidal area. The application will include the onshore and intertidal components of the Proposed Development including the landward abutment, access arrangements, reclaimed area, laydown and construction working areas, and the temporary reopening of the adjacent borrow pit on the Barra side of the causeway to provide rock and armourstone for construction of the breakwater.
 - **Marine Licence** - in parallel, a marine licence application will be submitted to the Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT) under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. The marine licence will relate to the marine and intertidal elements of the Proposed Development below mean high water springs (MHWS), including the construction of the breakwater, reclaimed area, pontoon berthing facility, access bridge, supporting piles and any other associated works or structures within the marine environment. The application will therefore cover those parts of the Proposed Development within the area of overlapping jurisdiction between the MD-LOT and CnES in the intertidal zone.
 - **Other authorisations** - In addition to the planning application and marine licence application, further approvals or consents may be required depending on the final design and construction methodology of

the Proposed Development. These may include any approval or agreement necessary in relation to the temporary reopening of the adjacent borrow pit on the Barra side of the causeway. Other potential authorisations may include European Protected Species (EPS).

1.3 Purpose of the EIA Screening Report

1.3.1.1 The Applicant is proposing to submit a planning application to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES Planning) and a marine licence application to Marine Directorate for consent to construct and operate a sheltered berthing facility. The Applicant is seeking a Screening Opinion from the following authorities to determine whether a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required:

- CnES in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations); and
- The Marine Directorate in accordance with Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended),

1.3.1.2 The Proposed Development is considered to fall under:

- Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, under the following sections:
 - Schedule 2. 1 (e) (Reclamation of land from sea). Since the Proposed Development includes an area of reclamation of approximately 0.2 ha;
 - Schedule 2. 10 (g) (Construction of harbours and port installations, including fishing harbours). Since the area of the Proposed Development application site is approximately 2.8 ha and exceeds the 1 ha threshold defined within the EIA Regulations; and
 - Schedule 2. 2 (a) (Quarries, open cast mining and peat extraction). Since the rock extraction from the adjacent borrow pit forms an integral enabling component of the Proposed Development.
- Schedule 2 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended), under the following sections:
 - Schedule 2. 1 (e) (Reclamation of land from sea). Since the Proposed Development includes an area of reclamation of approximately 0.2 ha; and
 - Schedule 2. 10 (g) (Construction of harbours and port installations, including fishing harbours). Since the area of the Proposed Development application site is approximately 2.8 ha and exceeds the 1 ha threshold defined within the EIA Regulations.

1.3.1.3 It is defined as 'Schedule 2' development under the respective EIA Regulations and the requirement for an EIA needs to be considered in relation to its potential for significant environmental effects.

1.3.1.4 This EIA Screening Report has been prepared by EIA practitioners in Atlantic58 on behalf of the Applicant. It has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations to provide an assessment of the potential for likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development, taking account of information available at this stage about the proposals, the development site and relevant mitigation measures which would be implemented during construction and operation of the proposals. This report will be submitted by the Applicant to provide relevant assessment information to support the request to CnES and the Marine Directorate for an EIA Screening Opinion under respective consenting regimes.

1.4 Approach to Screening

- 1.4.1.1 This screening assessment considers the potential for likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on relevant terrestrial, intertidal and marine receptors, having regard for the characteristics of the development, the sensitivity of the receiving environment and the relevant impact pathways.
- 1.4.1.2 The Screening Report will be issued to both regulators;
- CnES as the local planning authority; and
 - the Marine Directorate.
- 1.4.1.3 This report has been prepared having regard to two separate EIA regimes: the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended). For ease of reference, these are collectively referred to in this report as ‘the EIA Regulations’, except where it is necessary to distinguish between the two regimes.
- 1.4.1.4 The approach to the screening assessment presented in this report has been guided by the requirements of the EIA Regulations, in particular Regulation 8 (*Requests for screening opinion of the planning authority*). It also follows relevant aspects of current best practice in EIA in Scotland (Scottish Government 2017).
- 1.4.1.5 The requirement of the EIA Regulations in relation to screening and the required information to support a request for a Screening Opinion are summarised in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Screening Requirements of the EIA Regulations

Regulation	Requirement	Where Addressed in this Report
8 (2) (a)	A description of the location of the development, including a plan sufficient to identify the land	Section 2.1 (Site Location)
8 (2) (b)	A description of the proposed development, including in particular (i) a description of the physical characteristics of the proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works (ii) a description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected	Section 3 (The Proposed Development) Section 2 (Site Location)
8 (2) (c)	A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development	Relevant baseline characterisation in Sections 4.2
8 (2) (d)	A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from (i) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant. (ii) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity	Relevant findings of the prediction of environmental effects reported in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

Regulation	Requirement	Where Addressed in this Report
8 (3)	A description of any features of the proposed development, or proposed measures envisaged to avoid or prevent significant adverse effects on the environment	Section 3.2.5 (Environmental Management and Generic Mitigation) and specific mitigation commitments set out in Section 4.2.

1.4.1.6 The approach to prediction and evaluation of environmental effects has been informed by the *Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development* set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. These criteria provide a checklist of issues to consider in relation to:

- i. the characteristics of the development
- ii. the location of the development; and
- iii. the characteristics of the potential impacts.

1.4.1.7 They have been used to guide the assessment of effects, together with the judgement of the EIA practitioners undertaking the screening assessment.

1.4.1.8 The potential for significant effects has been considered for a series of environmental topics which reflect the environmental 'factors' set out in Regulation 4(3). These topics have been used to structure the findings of the assessment as presented in Section 4 of this report. The assessment of impacts has considered the characteristics of the proposed development and the nature and sensitivity of the receiving environment to predict and evaluate the likely significance of effects. Relevant baseline information has been collated from desk-based sources, consultation with key stakeholders and site surveys. Effects have been predicted for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the proposed development.

1.4.1.9 The prediction of significance of environmental effects considers mitigation, which has been developed through design of the proposals and based on industry best practice approaches to environmental management during construction. Predicted effects referenced in this report are adverse unless otherwise stated.

1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 Pre-Application Consultation

1.5.1.1 Pre-application consultation was undertaken to inform the consenting strategy and scope of the screening assessment. A summary of the consultation undertaken, and the main issues raised, is provided in Table 1-2.

1.5.1.2 The advice received confirmed the need for EIA screening and marine licensing, helped identify the most proportionate consenting route, and highlighted the main environmental sensitivities requiring consideration, particularly ornithology, marine mammals, and the potential implications of piling and blasting. NatureScot was consulted but no response was received prior to preparation of this report.

Table 1-2 Summary of pre-application consultation

Consultee	Date response received	Main points raised	Relevance to screening
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)	8 December 2025	Consenting Approach - CnES confirmed that, for the current proposal, Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) planning application and Marine Licence was likely to be the more proportionate consenting route, as opposed to consenting via Harbour Order. CnES clarified that a Harbour Order is a separate legal process and would not necessarily be the most proportionate route. Borrow Pit – CnES confirmed the extent of substantive works requiring planning permission are those above MLWS and extends to the first part of the breakwater and the anchor block for the pontoon bridge together with the borrow pit on the opposite side of the causeway (to provide a project specific rock source). CnES clarified that any application to win rock from this borrow pit would be the minimum necessary to deliver the project and any consent tightly tied to the breakwater project. The borrow pit does not require a separate planning application and should be consented with the overall proposal. Requirement for Screening – CnES confirmed that the project would require EIA screening. CnES highlighted likely connectivity with the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA and potential connectivity with Sound of Barra SAC harbour seal interests. CnES advised that effects would depend on the final definition of the works, particularly piling and blasting. PAC – CnES confirmed that if the area of terrestrial works did not exceed 2 ha, statutory Pre-application Consultation as it would not be considered a 'major development'.	- Confirmed the preferred consenting route (Planning Consent and Marine Licence). - Clarified that the Proposed Development should be taken forward as a single project with onshore elements and the temporary borrow pit works forming the planning application. - Confirmed EIA Screening is required and identified the main environmental sensitivities to be addressed within the screening assessment. - The total area above MLWS is approximately 1.62 ha and therefore PAC will not be required as they do not exceed 2 ha.

Consultee	Date response received	Main points raised	Relevance to screening
Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT)	30 January 2026	Requirement for Screening – MD-LOT confirmed that a screening opinion would be required from MD-LOT. Screening report structure – MD-LOT advised that, if a joint terrestrial and marine screening report is prepared, the matters relevant to each consenting regime should be clearly distinguished. Consultation – MD-LOT recommended consultation with statutory consultees including NatureScot, HES, the local authority and SEPA. PAC – MD-LOT advised that the works were likely to constitute a prescribed activity under the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, such that statutory PAC would be required.	- Confirmed the need for screening; - Reinforced the need for clear treatment of terrestrial and marine consenting issues; and - Confirmed likely PAC requirements as construction works taking place in / on the sea (below MHWS) exceed 1 ha.
NatureScot	None	NatureScot was provided with a briefing note and asked for views on: the ornithological impact pathways identified in the DBA; whether the desk-based conclusion on the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA appeared reasonable at screening stage; whether additional ornithological information was needed; the potential for effects on the Sound of Barra SAC and harbour seals; and whether there were any other sensitive receptors that should be considered. No response was received prior to preparation of this report.	n/a

1.5.2 Pre Application Consultation for Major Developments

- 1.5.2.1 Formal pre-application consultation (often known as PAC) is a statutory requirement, under the Town and Country Planning regime for proposals classified as either being 'major' or 'national' developments². A separate statutory PAC regime also applies in relation to marine licensing under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013. It applies only to certain prescribed classes of licensable marine activity in the Scottish inshore region (0–12 nautical miles).
- 1.5.2.2 The Marine Directorate has advised that the Proposed Development is likely to constitute a prescribed activity under the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, because it involves construction works in or over the sea, where the area of the works exceeds 1000 square metres. Statutory PAC is therefore required, noting that the total area of proposed works below MHWS is approximately 1.85 hectares (ha). A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) will be submitted, and a formal consultation event held in line with regulatory requirements. The outcomes of the consultation will be documented in a PAC report, which will accompany the marine licence application.
- 1.5.2.3 CnES confirmed during early consultation that statutory PAC is not required for the terrestrial elements of the Proposed Development under the T&CP regime. The area of works above MLWS is approximately 1.62 ha, which is below the 2 ha threshold for major development under the Town and Country Planning regime.

1.6 Report Structure

- 1.6.1.1 The remainder of this EIA Screening Report is structured as follows:
- Section 2 provides further information on the development site location, context, environmental sensitivities and land use.
 - Section 3 provides further information on the Proposed Development, including proposed infrastructure and construction phase details.
 - Section 4 presents a preliminary environmental assessment of the proposed development, and
 - Section 5 provides a concluding statement on the EIA screening based on the potential for likely significant environmental effects.
- 1.6.1.2 Documents cited in the report are presented in Section 6 (References).
- 1.6.1.3 This report is supported by the following documents:
- Appendix A.1 Proposed Layout Plan
 - Appendix A.2 Proposed Blast Area
 - Appendix B Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (2026)
 - Appendix C Ornithology Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) (2026)
 - Appendix D: Gazetteer (undesigned Archaeology)

² The classes of 'major' development are as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009. 'National' developments are those projects of national significance identified in the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4.

2 Site Location

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1.1 The Proposed Development (referred to as the 'Site') is located within the Sound of Vatersay, on the eastern side of the causeway connecting the islands of Barra and Vatersay in the Outer Hebrides (Figure 1). Figure 2 provides a representation of the development boundary on an aerial photograph to illustrate key surrounding features and provide context.
- 2.1.1.2 The Site comprises both terrestrial and marine elements associated with the proposed sheltered berthing facility. The Site boundary includes a footprint sufficient for the Proposed Development, including temporary laydown, welfare, construction compound and access routes. The boundary also includes an indicative area for aggregate extraction within, and adjacent to the redundant former borrow pit site.
- 2.1.1.3 The overall Site boundary for the Proposed Development is 2.86 ha. Of this, approximately 1.01 ha is located above MHWS and comprises the terrestrial / landward part of the Site. A further 0.61 ha lies within the intertidal zone between MHWS and MLWS. Approximately 1.24 ha is located below MLWS within the marine environment.
- 2.1.1.4 The Site extends to approximately 1.62 ha above MLWS for the purposes of the terrestrial planning application, and approximately 1.85 ha below MHWS for the purposes of the marine licence application, with the 0.61 ha intertidal area forming the zone of overlap between the two regimes.

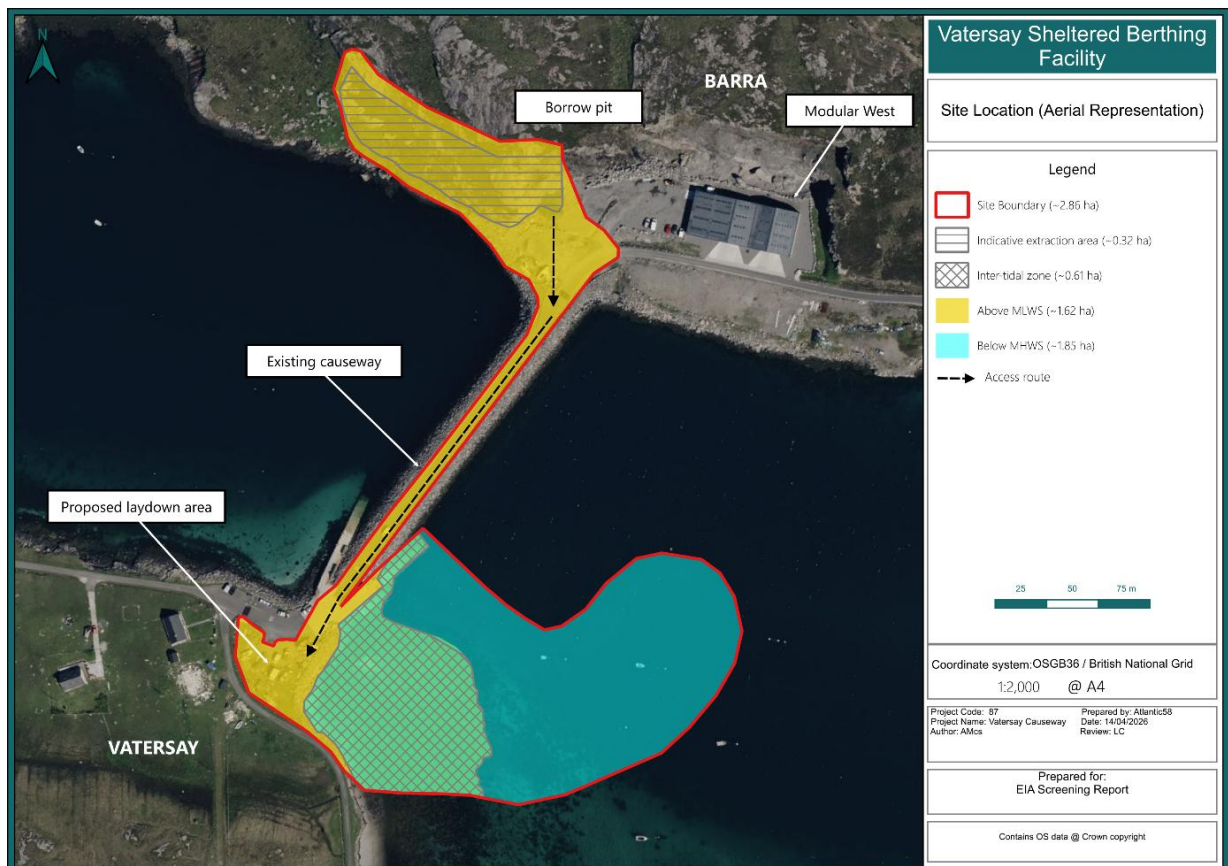


Figure 2 Site Location (Aerial Representation)

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Land Use

- 2.2.1.1 The Proposed Development is located within a rural coastal setting in the southern Outer Hebrides, at the eastern side of the Barra–Vatersay causeway within the Sound of Vatersay. The wider landscape is characterised by open moorland, coastal habitats and dispersed settlement, and reflects a combination of natural processes and long-standing human activity.
- 2.2.1.2 The Sound of Vatersay forms a relatively sheltered coastal waterbody between Barra and Vatersay, comprising rocky shoreline, intertidal habitats and shallow marine areas. A small uninhabited island, Orasaigh, lies to the east of the Site and contributes to the semi-enclosed character of the Sound. The Sound of Vatersay is bisected by a 250 m causeway constructed in 1991, using approximately 250,000 tonnes of rock sourced from the adjacent former borrow pit site.
- 2.2.1.3 The causeway provides a permanent connection between Barra and Vatersay and has also created a sheltered area in the lee of the structure, suitable for limited mooring activity. Although the wider area retains a rural coastal character, the immediate surroundings of the Site are influenced by existing infrastructure and human activity. Activity around the area includes, nearby residential development, traffic movements across the causeway, industrial activity associated with Modular West³, utilities, and the presence of moored vessels and marine equipment on the shoreline and immediate marine area. The baseline character of the Site is that of an already modified and active coastal environment.
- 2.2.1.4 Land use within and surrounding the Site reflects a mix of crofting, residential, industrial and marine-related activity, characteristic of a working coastal environment. Land to the south of the causeway is primarily divided into tenanted crofts associated with Caolis, while land to the north, within Bentangaval, is largely managed as common grazing. The Sound of Vatersay supports existing moorings, local fishing activity and small-scale recreational use, with the causeway and slipway providing established marine infrastructure. Recreational use is also present in the wider area, and a key recreational route, the Hebridean Way incorporates the causeway.

2.2.2 Environment

- 2.2.2.1 The Site is located within the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA and has connectivity with other designated coastal and marine sites in the wider area, including the Sound of Barra SAC, Sea of the Hebrides Nature Conservation MPA, Small Seal Islands SSSI and nearby seal haul-out sites. Relevant ecological, coastal and cultural heritage sensitivities are considered in the topic-based sections of this report. Figure 3 summarises the principal environmental constraints identified within 10 km of the Proposed Development and illustrates the wider environmental context relevant to the screening assessment.

³ A timber frame and design company specialising in kit homes for coastal locations.

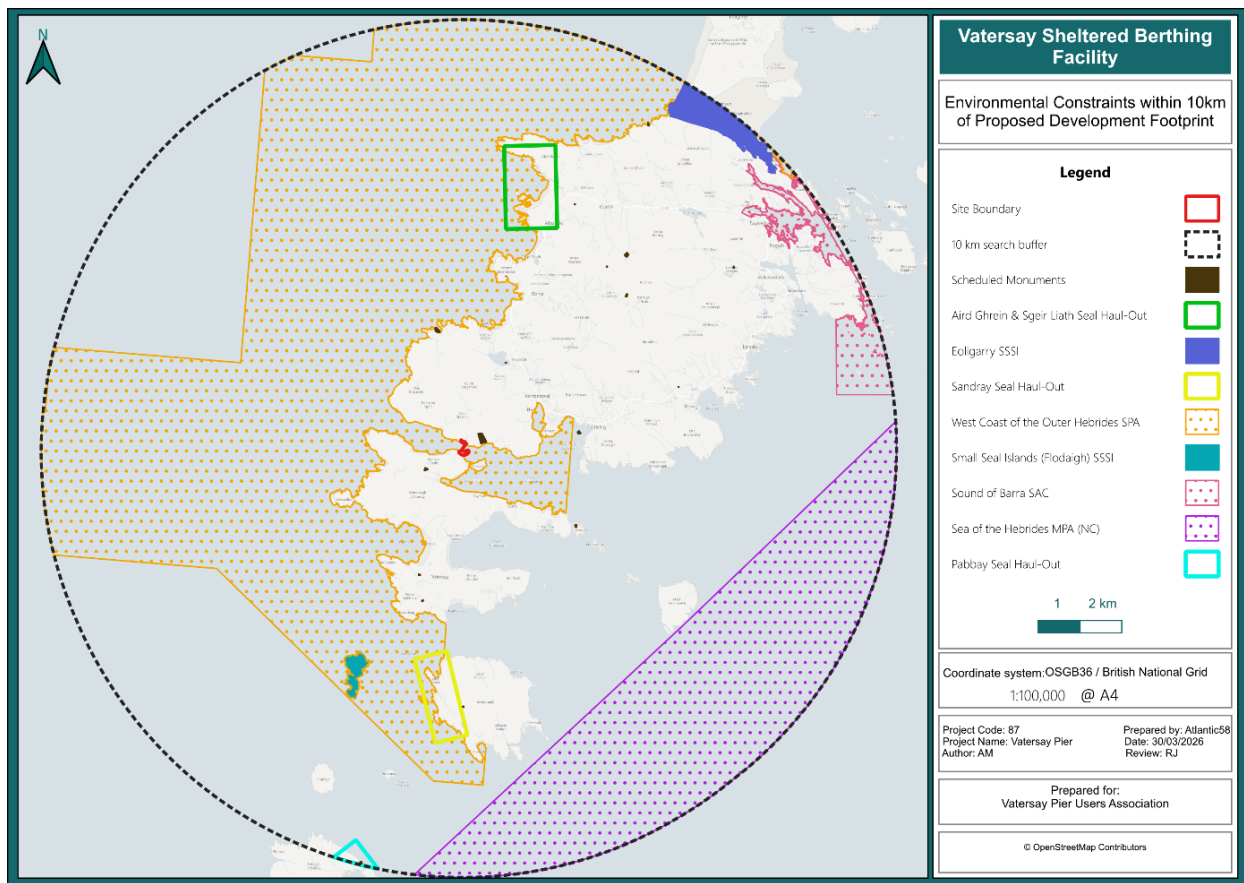


Figure 3 Environmental constraints and sensitivities within 10 km

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 Need for the Development

3.1.1.1 The Proposed Development aligns with priorities set out in the following plans and strategies:

- **Barra and Vatersay Local Place Plan (2025)** - identifies the need to improve marine infrastructure and access within the islands. The Plan highlights that existing facilities are limited and, in some cases, oversubscribed, with a recognised need for improved berthing, access and safety for local vessels. The proposed Vatersay Pier development is identified as a priority project to support a more sustainable marine economy, enhance safety and create local employment opportunities.
- **Barra and Vatersay Community Climate Action Plan (2023)** - which recognises the importance of strengthening local infrastructure to support community resilience in the face of environmental and economic pressures. In this context, improved marine infrastructure is identified as an important component in maintaining safe, reliable access to marine resources and supporting the long-term viability of island livelihoods.

3.2 The Proposed Development

3.2.1 Permanent Infrastructure

3.2.1.1 The Proposed Development comprises the components illustrated in Figure 4 and in more detail in the Proposed Layout Plan in Appendix A.1 / Proposed Blast Area Plan in Appendix A.2). Project components are as follows:

- a rock armour breakwater (proposed crest ~ 165 m long and ~ 6 m wide) to provide shelter for all berths;
- a pontoon berthing facility (~ 92 m long) comprising main pontoon with 14 berths on 6-finger pontoons, providing berthing for:
 - 13 vessels up to 12 m in length;
 - 1 vessel (e.g. tourist / leisure boat or workboat) up to 18 m in length; and
 - approximately 8–10 small boats along the inner face of the pontoon;
- a 24 m long access bridge connecting the shore to the pontoon; and
- an armoustone reclaimed land area of approximately 0.2 hectares (ha), incorporating the breakwater structure and associated infrastructure.

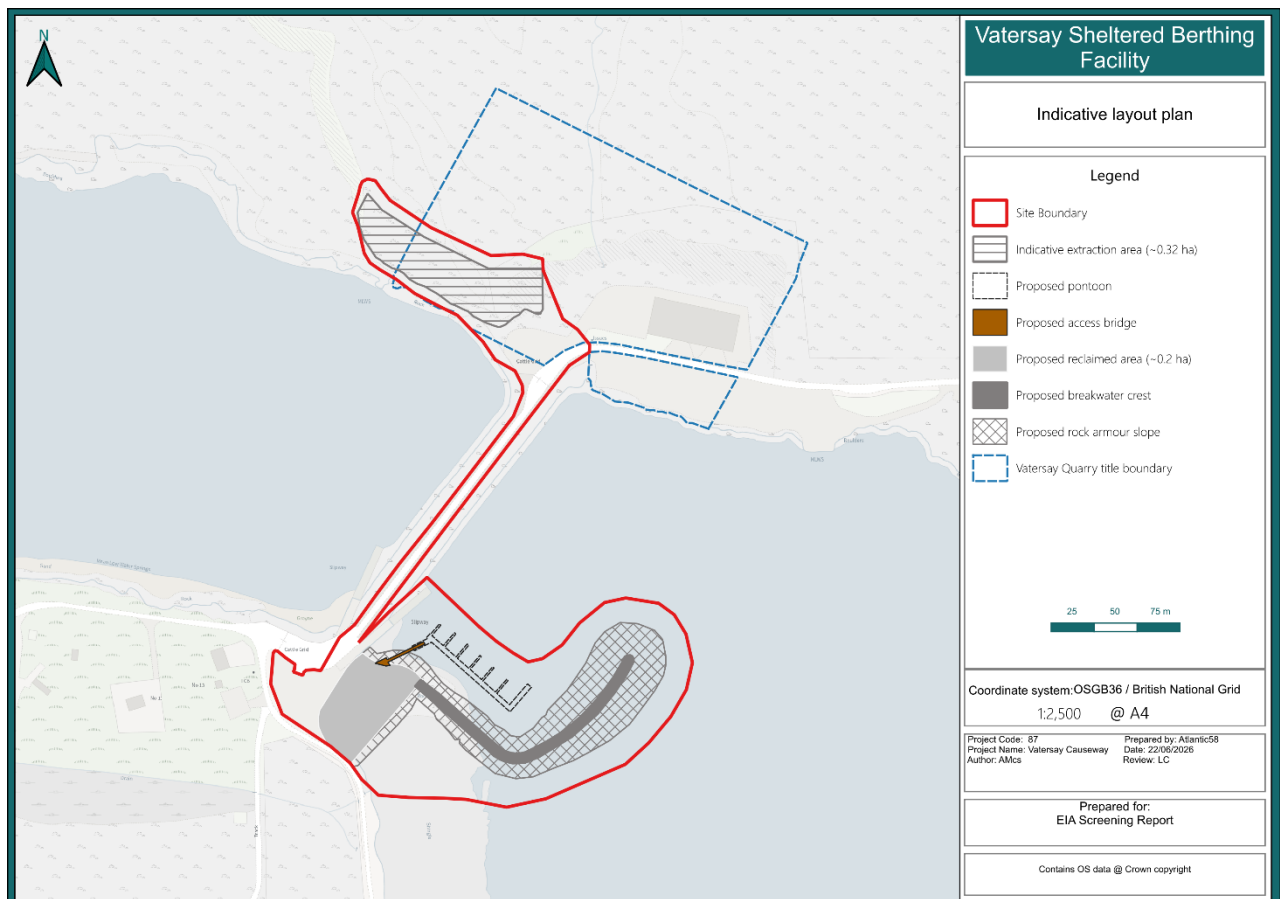


Figure 4 Indicative layout plan

3.2.2 Construction

Programme

3.2.2.1 The construction programme for the Proposed Development remains under development. However, subject to securing the necessary consents, construction is anticipated to commence following contract award in Q2 2027. Construction is expected to last 12 months in total. Table 3-1 below gives an indicative overview of the construction stages and an indicative duration of each, noting that some activities overlap and will be undertaken in parallel.

Table 3-1 Indicative overview of construction stages, activities and durations.

Stage	Activity	Duration (months)
1	Establish temporary road access	1
1	Establish work compound and welfare facilities	1
1	Install temporary power, water, fuel etc.	1
1	Create laydown area	1
2	Open up borrow pit face on Barra side of the causeway	1
2	Commence rock extraction for land reclamation and breakwaters	1
3	Excavate, transport and lay blasted rock	7
3	Install rock armouring to secure the reclaimed area	4
3	Lay surfacing on reclaimed area and breakwaters	1
3	Install piles for pontoons	1
4	Install pontoons and access bridge	1
5	Demobilise site	1

Construction Infrastructure

3.2.2.2 The main construction infrastructure is:

- **Borrow Pit** - rock (~ 85,000 tonnes, see Table 3-2) required for fill and armour stone will be sourced locally from an indicative extraction area centred on the former Vatersay quarry, as shown in the Proposed Blast Area Plan (Appendix A) and Figure 4. While most of the indicative extraction area lies within the historic quarry title boundary (approximately 0.2 ha), part extends into adjacent land outwith that boundary (approximately 0.08 ha), resulting in a total indicative extraction area of approximately 0.32 ha. The former borrow pit was previously used to source aggregate for construction of the Vatersay Causeway and is currently redundant and unlicensed. Image 1 illustrates the current appearance of the former borrow pit facility.
- **Construction Compound / Laydown Area** - located on the Vatersay side of the causeway, within the existing tarmac/car park area (~ 0.11 ha). The Site will be accessed via the causeway (from the borrow pit) and along the shoreline, avoiding the use of local roads on the Vatersay side as far as practicable.



Image 1 Current appearance of the former borrow pit site (source: Wallace Stone)

Construction Materials

3.2.2.3 Table 3-2 provides an indicative summary of the aggregate / concrete requirements likely to be required for the Proposed Development, together with approximate quantity ranges. These values are included to provide a reasonable indication of the likely scale of material use for the purposes of EIA screening only. They are preliminary estimates at this stage and will be subject to further refinement through detailed design, procurement and construction planning.

Table 3-2 Summary of aggregate requirements

Item	Quantity (estimated range)	Unit of measure
Aggregate	75,000 - 90,000	tonnes
Aggregate gravel/fines	1,000 – 1,500	tonnes
Concrete	50 - 75	tonnes

Construction Activities

3.2.2.4 Main construction activities are:

- **Blasting** - rock extraction will require a series of controlled blasting events during the construction programme, corresponding to the establishment of the extraction area, rock extraction, and the subsequent excavation, transport and placement of blasted rock (Table 3-1). Based on current assumptions, approximately 12–15 controlled blasting events may be required (assuming ~3,000m³ of material per blast), with typically around one to two weeks between blasts to allow for material movement, sorting and stockpiling of armourstone, and drilling for the subsequent blast. The final blast design, frequency and total number of blasts will be determined by the appointed contractor, taking account of the required material volumes, site constraints and the need to minimise disturbance. Blasting controls,

including any relevant limits and restrictions, will be established through the planning / consenting process and implemented through the works specification and construction contract.

- **Drilling and charging activities** - associated with blasting operations within the construction-phase extraction area associated with the former borrow pit.
- **Material / aggregate transport** – 2 x dump trucks will transport rock material across the causeway to the construction site. This route is approximately 250 m from the borrow pit site, across the causeway and to the Site.
- **Rock processing and placement** - excavators will be used for sorting, handling and placing rock material to form the breakwater and reclaimed area.
- **Pontoon installation and piling works** – there are two fixing methodologies being considered for installation of the pontoon:
 - Drill and grout - secured using four drilled (bored) and grouted rock-socketed steel piles. Drilling into the underlying bedrock from a marine platform, inserting the piles, and grouting them into place. This method generates relatively low noise compared with impact pile driving; piling activities. This option will require the use of a piling rig and associated marine plant, likely including a barge or similar temporary working platform, to facilitate drilling, pile installation and associated construction activities within the marine environment.
 - Chain based mooring - a chain-based mooring arrangement, may be considered during detailed design.

3.2.2.5 The final fixing solution will be confirmed through detailed design. For the purposes of this screening assessment, both options are treated as part of the current project design envelope, recognising that they give rise to different, but limited and localised, impact pathways.

3.2.3 Operation

3.2.3.1 During operation, the Proposed Development will provide essential berthing facilities for local fishing vessels and other marine users, supporting the sustainability and resilience of the local community. Once the Proposed Development is operational, it is expected to result primarily in the formalisation and modest reorganisation of existing vessel activity within Vatersay Sound and is not anticipated to result in a substantial increase in vessel activity.

3.2.3.2 Following completion of construction, the borrow pit will be closed and the temporary access tracks reinstated, returning it to a non-operational (redundant) state. Its use is limited solely to the construction of the Proposed Development.

3.2.3.3 Maintenance and management requirements for the Proposed Development are expected to be minimal and will comprise routine inspection and upkeep of the pontoon, access bridge and breakwater structures. Initial project engineering feedback indicates that ongoing dredging is not anticipated.

3.2.4 Decommissioning

3.2.4.1 The Proposed Development is intended to operate over a long-term design life, and no decommissioning is anticipated in the foreseeable future.

3.2.4.2 At the end of its operational life, or if the infrastructure is no longer required, decommissioning may involve the removal of above-water structures (e.g. pontoons and access bridge), with any below-water structures (e.g. piles and breakwater) either removed or left *in situ*, subject to best practice and regulatory requirements at that time.

3.2.5 Environmental Management and Generic Mitigation

- 3.2.5.1 Construction activities will be undertaken in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will set out the environmental management measures, controls and mitigation required for the Proposed Development in line with standard best practice construction methods. The CEMP will be developed prior to the commencement of works and will be secured as a requirement of the relevant consents.
- 3.2.5.2 The CEMP will include, as appropriate:
- measures to control noise and dust associated with blasting activities;
 - measures to control sediment release and water quality;
 - pollution prevention and incident response procedures;
 - management of noise and vibration, including consideration of marine receptors;
 - waste management and materials handling; and
 - measures to manage construction traffic and access, including use of the causeway.
- 3.2.5.3 Development and implementation of the CEMP will be a contractual requirement of the Principal Contractor. Compliance with the CEMP will be monitored throughout the construction period by suitably qualified and experienced personnel acting on behalf of the Applicant, with procedures in place to ensure that any non-compliance is promptly addressed.
- 3.2.5.4 The adoption of standard good practice measures through the CEMP will ensure that construction effects are appropriately controlled and minimised.

4 Likely Significant Environmental Effects

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1.1 This section considers whether the Proposed Development is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects in terms of the EIA Regulations, having regard to the characteristics of the development, the sensitivity of the receiving environment, and the nature, extent and duration of potential impacts. The assessment has been undertaken for the Proposed Development as a whole, recognising that the project extends across both the terrestrial planning and marine licensing regimes and includes interrelated onshore, intertidal and marine components. Each topic sets out:
- information about known environmental baseline constraints and sensitivities and references information on surveys and other relevant investigations and consultations undertaken to date.
 - relevant specific mitigation measures which have developed as part of the project design or will be implemented during construction to avoid or reduce the potential for significant environmental effects, and
 - a summary of the predicted residual environmental effects taking account of the nature of the proposals, the sensitivity of the baseline environment and the mitigation commitments, highlighting the significance of the predicted effects.

- 4.1.1.2 Section 4.1 presents the environmental topics identified as being of greatest relevance to the screening assessment i.e. those considered to be the clearest potential for likely significant effects to arise and where more detailed screening discussion is therefore warranted.
- 4.1.1.3 Section 4.2 addresses other environmental topics considered as part of the screening process but not identified as key topics for detailed consideration. These topics have been reviewed on a proportionate basis and, taking account of the characteristics of the Proposed Development, the scale of likely impacts and the nature of the receiving environment, are not considered to give rise to significant effects.
- 4.1.1.4 For clarity, and in response to the dual consenting route requirements for the Proposed Development, Table 4-1 indicates the environmental topics that are likely to be of relevance principally to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES), Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT), or to both authorities. This table is provided as a guide to assist review of the screening assessment; however, the Proposed Development has been considered as a whole, and some topics are relevant across both consenting regimes because of the overlap between terrestrial, intertidal and marine components of the works.

Table 4-1 Summary of topics principal relevance

Environmental topic	Section	Principal relevance to:		Notes
		CnES	MD-LOT	
Environmental Topics				
Air Quality	4.1.1	✓	✓	Relevant to both authorities due to overlap of onshore, intertidal and marine receptors.
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	4.1.2	✓	✓	Relevant to onshore and intertidal ground disturbance, particularly in relation to the blast area and the overlap of consenting regimes.
Coastal Processes and Hydrodynamics	4.1.3	✓	✓	Relevant to onshore and intertidal ground disturbance, particularly in relation to the blast area and the overlap of consenting regimes.
Terrestrial and Intertidal Ecology and Biodiversity	4.1.4	✓	✓	Relevant to onshore, intertidal and causeway-margin habitats, including protected species interests.
Marine Habitats and Fish	4.1.5	x	✓	Principally relevant to marine licensing considerations and marine ecological receptors.
Marine Mammals	4.1.6	x	✓	Principally relevant to marine licensing considerations and marine mammals receptors.
Ornithology	4.1.7	✓	✓	Relevant to both authorities due to SPA interests and the terrestrial / marine overlap of the project.
Navigation, Commercial	4.1.8	x	✓	Principally relevant to marine works, marine safety and use of the surrounding waters.

Fisheries and Other Maritime Users				
Noise and Vibration	4.1.9	✓	✓	Relevant to both authorities due to potential effects on terrestrial and marine receptors, although this section focuses on human receptors.
Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity	4.1.10	✓	✓	Relevant to both authorities due to visual effects associated with both onshore and marine elements.
Socioeconomics	4.1.11	✓	✓	Relevant across both regimes because effects arise from both construction activity and operation of the completed facility.
Other Environmental Topics				
Traffic and Transport	4.2.1	✓	x	Principally relevant to the terrestrial planning application, including construction traffic and haulage across the causeway.
Climate Change, Adaption and Resilience and Greenhouse Gases	4.2.2	✓	✓	Relevant across both regimes in relation to resilience, construction emissions and operation of the completed facility.
Ground Conditions and Geology	4.2.3	✓	x	Principally relevant to terrestrial works, including the temporary borrow pit, blasting and local ground disturbance.
Hydrology and Flood Risk	4.2.4	✓	✓	Relevant to both authorities due to the interaction between terrestrial drainage, intertidal areas and the coastal water environment.
Major Accidents and Disasters	4.2.5	✓	✓	Relevant across both regimes, particularly in relation to construction activities and marine safety.
Cumulative Developments	4.2.6	✓	✓	Relevant across both regimes, cumulative considerations have been reviewed for the project as a whole.

4.2 Environmental Topics

4.2.1 Air Quality

- 4.2.1.1 Background air quality in Barra and Vatersay is good with modelled ambient concentrations for the key pollutants of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) well below legislated guideline values (Air Quality in Scotland 2025). This reflects the absence of significant industrial emission sources and the generally remote nature of the area. While traffic levels are low compared to urban environments, site observations identified regular vehicle movements across the Barra–Vatersay causeway, reflecting its role as a key local transport link. As such, traffic volumes may be locally elevated but remain relatively low in a wider regional context. Air quality in such locations

is therefore typically dominated by natural processes, including marine aerosols (sea spray) and wind-driven particulates, rather than anthropogenic sources.

4.2.1.2 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS) within the vicinity of the Site, indicating that existing pollutant concentrations are below national air quality objectives.

4.2.1.3 Sensitive receptors in relation to air quality and dust include:

- nearby residential properties on the Vatersay side of the causeway;
- recreational receptors, including users of the Hebridean Way and the local road network; and
- ecological receptors associated with coastal, intertidal and marine environments, including the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides Special Protection Area (SPA).

Air Quality Mitigation

Standard good practice measures will be implemented through the CEMP, and these include:

- damping down of working areas during dry and windy conditions.
- appropriate storage, handling and containment of materials.
- minimisation of drop heights during material handling.
- management of vehicle movements and site access; and
- regular inspection and site housekeeping.

4.2.1.4 The Proposed Development may give rise to temporary dust and minor exhaust emissions during construction, particularly in connection with blasting, rock extraction and haulage from the extraction area associated with the former borrow pit, together with drilling, material handling and vehicle movements. However, these effects would be localised, short-term and limited to the construction period. The majority of construction material will comprise coarse rock, such that dust emissions are expected to be dominated by larger particles that settle relatively quickly close to source (IAQM 2016). While fine particulates can be generated during activities such as drilling, blasting and handling, these effects would be temporary, localised and controlled through standard mitigation measures.

4.2.1.5 The Site is located within an active working environment that already experiences regular traffic, industrial activity associated with Modular West, and other local construction and maintenance activity.

Air Quality Summary

Potential air quality effects are limited to temporary and localised dust and exhaust emissions during construction. Given the nature of the materials handled, the active baseline environment and the implementation of standard mitigation measures, **no significant adverse effects on air quality receptors during construction, operation or decommissioning are predicted.**

4.2.2 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

4.2.2.1 A search was made for designated and undesignated cultural heritage assets within the site boundary and within a 1 km buffer around the site boundary. There are no designated sites of cultural heritage importance within the Site boundary, however there are two undesignated features located within the Site boundary:

- Feature 47 - Allt Chrìsal, Rock Shelter (NRHE: 69643)
- Feature 135 – Barra Vatersay Causeway (NRHE: 277884)

4.2.2.2 A gazetteer of undesignated cultural heritage assets within 1 km of the boundary is provided in Appendix D. A total of 123 undesignated cultural heritage records are recorded within 1 km of the development. These are dominated by agricultural/subsistence and domestic remains, with frequent occurrences of shelters, clearance cairns, buildings, hut circles and walls. Most entries are recorded as 'period unassigned', although post-medieval remains are well represented together with a smaller number of prehistoric features, including probable Iron Age, Neolithic and Bronze Age sites. Taken together, the baseline indicates a dispersed historic landscape characterised by settlement, agricultural activity and occasional funerary or ritual remains.

4.2.2.3 No maritime archaeology was identified within the site boundary or wider 1 km study area, including Historic MPAs, Sites and Vessels Designated under the Military Remains Act 1986 or other wrecks, losses or obstructions. A summary of the cultural heritage assets are provided in Appendix D and illustrated on Figure 5.

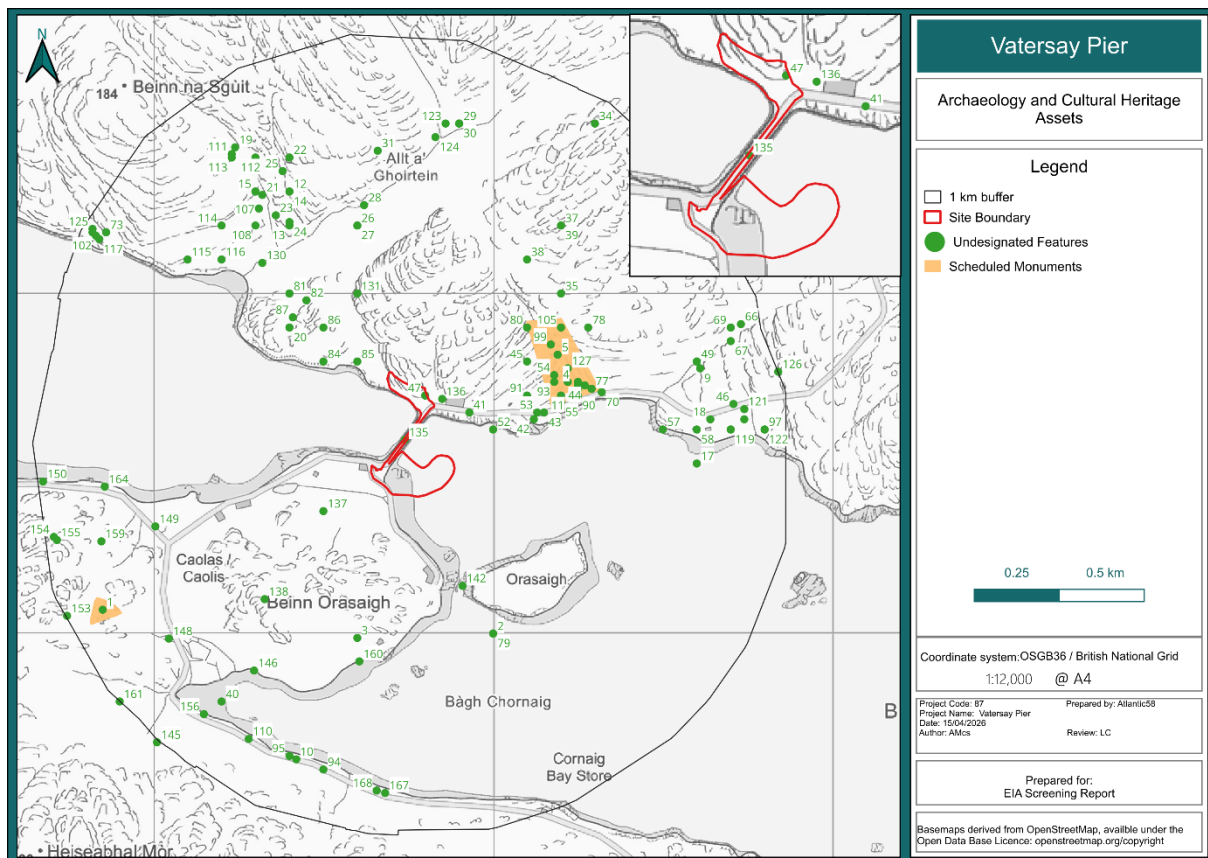


Figure 5 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage assets within 1 km

4.2.2.4 The closest designations to the development based on a 1 km search area are:

- Scheduled Monument - Alt Chrìsal, multi-period settlement (SM11251), located approximately 349 m east of the Proposed Development; and
- Scheduled Monument - Dun a' Chaolais, Vatersay (SM5205), located approximately 849 m south-west of the Proposed Development.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Mitigation

Embedded mitigation measures incorporated into the Proposed Development include:

- archaeological desk-based assessment and walkover survey of the blast area and other areas of potential ground disturbance
- preparation of a WSI, if required, informed by the results of that DBA and walkover
- minimisation of the extent of ground disturbance
- avoidance, where practicable, of unnecessary encroachment into less disturbed ground
- incorporation of archaeological constraints into detailed design and construction planning

Direct Impacts

- 4.2.2.5 No designated cultural heritage assets would be directly affected by the Proposed Development. There is therefore no pathway for significant direct effects on designated cultural heritage assets.
- 4.2.2.6 In relation to undesignated assets, the current proposal does not involve demolition, physical alteration or removal of the Barra–Vatersay Causeway (Feature 135) as a heritage asset. A limited possibility remains that previously unrecorded buried archaeological remains may survive within areas of disturbed or reclaimed ground associated with the shoreline and causeway margins. However, the relatively small scale of the berthing proposal, and in the context of previous disturbance / construction work of the causeway, the potential for significant direct effects is low.
- 4.2.2.7 The proposed blast area on the Barra side of the causeway represents the principal archaeological consideration associated with the Proposed Development. This area appears to extend, at least in part, beyond the historic borrow pit edge (Figure 4) into less disturbed ground near the coast. As such, non-designated archaeological remains, may be present within or adjacent to the rock extraction area.
- 4.2.2.8 An archaeological desk-based assessment and walkover survey will be undertaken to inform the planning application and detailed design in relation to the proposed blast area and any other areas of potential ground disturbance. The findings will identify whether any specific mitigation is required. Any necessary measures would be secured through the CEMP and, where appropriate, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). On this basis, significant adverse direct effects on undesignated archaeological remains are not considered likely.

Indirect Impacts

- 4.2.2.9 During construction, the site clearance, earthworks and associated activities have the potential to result in temporary changes to the setting of designated cultural heritage assets within 1 km of the Site, notably two Scheduled Monuments identified above. However, any such effects would be localised, temporary and experienced in the context of an existing working landscape already influenced by the causeway, slipway, borrow pit activity, industrial unit and other local construction and maintenance activity. In this context, the Proposed Development is not expected to materially alter the key characteristics of the features wider setting, and significant effects on setting during construction are not considered likely.
- 4.2.2.10 During operation, there is potential for some localised change in the setting of the Scheduled Monuments, particularly if the modified blast area and restored borrow pit profile are perceptible in views beyond the existing borrow pit extent. Any such change would, however, remain limited in extent and would be experienced within a partially altered landscape. The wider topographic, landscape and archaeological

context of the Scheduled Monuments would remain appreciable. Accordingly, operational effects on setting would not be significant.

- 4.2.2.11 On the basis of the known baseline, the nature and scale of the Proposed Development, the absence of designated assets within the Site, the limited extent of the relevant impact pathways, and the mitigation identified above, the Proposed Development is not likely to give rise to significant effects on cultural heritage or archaeology.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Summary

No designated heritage assets would be directly affected by the Proposed Development. The main sensitivity relates to possible non-designated remains within the proposed blast area, which will be addressed through further archaeological assessment and any necessary mitigation. Permanent or long-term effects on the setting of designated cultural heritage features are not expected to be significant in the context of the existing baseline nature of the site as a small working berthing facility and scale of the proposals.

Overall, effects on archaeology and the setting of nearby Scheduled Monuments are expected to be localised and no likely significant adverse effects are predicted.

4.2.3 Coastal Processes and Hydrodynamics

- 4.2.3.1 The Proposed Development is located within the Sound of Vatersay on the eastern side of the Barra–Vatersay causeway, within a shallow inshore coastal environment influenced by tidal processes, wave action and local sediment transport. The site lies within a sheltered coastal setting that has already been materially modified by the existing causeway and associated shoreline engineering. The surrounding shoreline comprises a mix of rock armour and engineered structures, shingle and boulder shoreline, and areas of intertidal sediment including sand and mud. The existing causeway appears to have altered local coastal processes by increasing shelter in the lee of the structure and some sediment deposition to its eastern side in contrast to the western side.
- 4.2.3.2 The wider coastal setting is influenced by the Barra–Vatersay causeway, which forms a physical barrier between the more exposed western side and the more sheltered waters to the east. Earlier feasibility and environmental work (Wallace Stone 2022) records that the development area lies within a relatively sheltered bay and that there is approximately 6 km of water between the site and the open Sea of the Hebrides, within an approximately 1 km channel, such that easterly winds may influence local fetch conditions. MHWS and MLWS are identified as approximately +4.3 m CD and +0.6 m CD respectively.
- 4.2.3.3 Bathymetric, hydraulic and seismic surveys were previously undertaken as part of the initial feasibility work to inform the earlier layout to assess wave climate and potential sedimentation (Wallace Stone 2022). Initial work suggests a relatively benign wave climate at the site, with wave heights in the worst conditions (1 in 200 year return storm event) of less than 2 m.
- 4.2.3.4 The PEA (Atlantic58 2026) records that the eastern shore of the causeway comprises a sheltered intertidal environment where the causeway may have promoted the accumulation of sand and fine sediment. It also notes that the shoreline is already influenced by artificial coastal protection, surface water outfalls, shoreline use for boat berthing and wider harbour-related activity. The receiving environment is therefore not an undeveloped or unmodified coastal system.
- 4.2.3.5 Construction activities will involve placement of rock armour and fill, seabed disturbance within the footprint of the works, and installation of the pontoon piles by drilled methods. These activities have the

potential to result in temporary and localised sediment disturbance, short-term increases in suspended sediment, and minor disturbance to local flow conditions around active works areas.

Coastal Processes and Hydrodynamics Mitigation

The Proposed Development has been designed as a relatively small-scale intervention within an already modified coastal environment influenced by the existing causeway and shoreline engineering. Good practice and embedded mitigation include:

- siting and configuration of the breakwater and associated structures to limit disruption to local wave and sediment dynamics.
- controlled placement of rock armour and other construction materials to minimise unnecessary seabed disturbance.
- use of standard construction practices to reduce sediment mobilisation during the works; and
- design and construction of permanent structures to ensure long-term stability.

4.2.3.6 Good practice and embedded mitigation will be implemented within the design of the Proposed Development, the duration of active disturbance will be temporary, and the receiving environment is already naturally dynamic and influenced by tidal and wave processes. The shoreline and intertidal area are also already characterised by mixed sediment and engineered coastal edge conditions, including sheltered intertidal mud and sand, rock armour and disturbed coastal habitats. Any sediment disturbed during construction is expected to be redistributed within the local coastal system rather than alter wider coastal behaviour.

4.2.3.7 During operation, the main effect on coastal processes will arise from the presence of the breakwater, pontoon and reclaimed area, which will modify local wave energy and flow patterns in the immediate vicinity of the structure. The breakwater is specifically intended to provide shelter for the berthing area, and some degree of localised change to wave conditions and sediment behaviour close to the structure is expected.

4.2.3.8 The likely extent of those changes is constrained by the scale and configuration of the development. The Proposed Development sits within a coastal setting already modified by the existing causeway, which itself influences shelter, sediment deposition and local wave conditions. The wider Sound of Vatersay will remain hydrodynamically open, and no significant change to broader sediment transport pathways has been identified. Any permanent changes to wave climate, flow patterns or sediment distribution are expected to be confined to the immediate vicinity of the new structure.

Coastal Processes and Hydrodynamics Summary

The coastal environment within the Sound of Vatersay is already influenced by existing infrastructure, including the causeway. The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to localised changes in wave conditions, minor alterations to sediment transport and deposition, and limited seabed disturbance; however, these effects are expected to be confined to the immediate vicinity of the structure. Taking account of the small scale of the Proposed Development, the existing modification of the receiving environment, and the implementation of mitigation measures, any effects on coastal processes are expected to be localised, minor in magnitude and not significant.

No significant adverse effects on coastal processes are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.2.4 Terrestrial and Intertidal Ecology and Biodiversity

4.2.4.1 The Proposed Development is located within or in proximity to the following designated sites illustrated in Figure 3;

- West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA (within);
- Sandray Seal Haul-Out (4.7 km south);
- Aird Ghrein & Sgeir Liath Seal Haul-Out (5.3 km north);
- Small Seal Islands (Flodaigh) SSSI (5.3 km south);
- Sea of the Hebrides MPA (approximately 6.5 km east);
- Sound of Barra SAC (8.6 km north);
- Eoligarry SSSI (9.2 km north); and
- Pabbay Seal Haul-Out (9.5 km south).

4.2.4.2 Ornithological considerations are evaluated specifically in Section 4.2.7. The Proposed Development is located within a modified coastal environment associated with the Vatersay–Barra causeway, comprising a mix of terrestrial, intertidal and anthropogenically influenced habitats.

4.2.4.3 The site and surrounding 250 m buffer (the PEA study area) support a range of semi-natural habitats, including:

- wet and dry dwarf shrub heath;
- acid grassland (semi-improved), often heavily grazed and species-poor;
- marshy grassland and acid flushes;
- small areas of swamp and standing water; and
- disturbed ground associated with infrastructure, access tracks and the disused borrow pit.

4.2.4.4 These habitats are subject to grazing pressure, trampling and human activity, resulting in reduced structural diversity in some areas. The grassland initially identified in desk assessments as machair was instead verified as acid grassland, lacking the typical characteristics of a fixed dune system. The surrounding grassland was subject to high levels of grazing and associated low diversity.

4.2.4.5 The intertidal zone comprises:

- mud and sand flats in sheltered areas east of the causeway;
- shingle and strandline deposits;
- boulder and rock armour associated with coastal defence; and
- small (under 1 m²), fragmented patches of saltmarsh.

4.2.4.6 The causeway has created a locally sheltered depositional environment, influencing sediment distribution and habitat character. These habitats are already influenced by coastal infrastructure, surface water outfalls and ongoing marine use (e.g. boat berthing). Strandline vegetation is present in places, including species such as sea rocket (*Cakile maritima*) and sea sandwort (*Honckenya peploides*), indicating typical upper shore coastal communities.

4.2.4.7 Otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity is a key ecological constraint because they are a European Protected Species (EPS) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The southern side of the site supports lower suitability habitat, with limited freshwater and higher disturbance. Surveys

recorded a high level of otter activity on the northern side of the causeway, concentrated around freshwater inputs and adjacent coastal habitat. Evidence included confirmed active resting places, washpools associated with culverts, prey remains, sprainting sites and well-defined access paths. The main confirmed features of highest importance were located approximately 200 m east of the northern, Barra-side, portion of the Site. In addition, a potential resting place was identified within the borrow pit, although this feature could not be confirmed during the survey. Taken together, the survey evidence indicates sustained use of this area and possible breeding-related activity, rather than confirmed breeding. See Appendix B for more details.

4.2.4.8 The potential for other species is as evaluated as follows;

- Bats - negligible potential due to lack of roosting and commuting features.
- Mountain hare – low habitat suitability and no evidence recorded.
- Reptiles - low habitat suitability and no evidence recorded.
- Freshwater ecology - negligible due to limited hydrological connectivity.
- Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) - no invasive flora recorded; however potential mink signs were noted.
- Intertidal Priority Marine Features (PMFs) – no evidence within boundary of the PEA.

4.2.4.9 Overall, the relevant terrestrial and intertidal ecology pathways are:

- direct and indirect habitat loss or disturbance affecting terrestrial and intertidal habitats within the footprint of the works (including potential borrow pit land take).
- temporary disturbance to otter during construction, particularly in relation to works near the borrow pit, shoreline and freshwater features;
- direct damage to, or disturbance of otter resting and the disturbance and displacement of otter if works are undertaken too close to active features;
- pollution or sedimentation affecting intertidal habitat quality during construction; and

4.2.4.10 Otter is a key ecological receptor, with high levels of activity recorded on the northern side of the causeway, including resting places, commuting routes and foraging areas.

4.2.4.11 The PEA identified a potential otter resting place within the Site boundary, within the borrow pit area. This is of particular relevance, and without mitigation, there is potential for disturbance. Construction activities may result in temporary increases in suspended sediment and risk of pollution incidents affecting intertidal habitats. Given the dynamic coastal environment, any minor sediment deposition is expected to be rapidly dispersed and not materially alter baseline conditions.

4.2.4.12 With the implementation of standard mitigation measures, secured through a CEMP, potential effects during construction are expected to be temporary, localised and not significant.

Terrestrial and Intertidal Ecology and Biodiversity Mitigation

- Pre-construction ecological surveys - an updated walkover survey will be undertaken prior to construction to confirm the presence or absence of protected species (including otter) and any changes in baseline conditions.
- Otter protection measures - pre-construction otter surveys will be undertaken, and appropriate buffers applied to any identified resting places. Care will be taken in proximity to the borrow pit and blasting areas, with works adjusted where necessary to avoid disturbance. An EPS license will be applied to if required and commitments will be adhered to.
- Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) - a suitably qualified ECoW will be appointed to provide advice during sensitive stages of works, including site clearance and works near the shoreline, freshwater features and identified ecological constraints.
- Habitat protection and reinstatement - temporary disturbance to terrestrial habitats will be minimised, and disturbed areas reinstated where practicable following completion of works.
- Peat probing - prior to finalising the borrow pit blasting footprint, detailed peat probing will be undertaken across the red line area of search, with particular attention to borrow pit area, wet heath, flushed habitat and any areas where peat depths are indicated to exceed 0.5 m. The results will inform a peat depth plan and to inform micro-siting of the blasting area, access, stockpile locations and temporary working areas.
- Pollution prevention and sediment control - standard pollution prevention measures will be implemented in accordance with best practice (e.g. SEPA guidance) to protect intertidal habitats and water quality.
- Toolbox talks and site awareness - all site personnel will receive toolbox talks outlining ecological sensitivities, legal protections and procedures to follow if protected species are encountered.
- Biosecurity measures - measures will be implemented to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive non-native species during construction.

4.2.4.13 During construction, otter may experience temporary and localised disturbance from blasting, plant movement, increased human activity and works near shoreline and freshwater features. These effects will, however, be confined to the construction period and reduced by the intermittent nature of blasting, with typically around one to two weeks between blast events limiting the frequency and duration of disturbance. With pre-construction survey, appropriate stand-off distances and standard otter protection measures in place, otter are expected to continue using the wider surrounding habitat. Significant construction effects on otter are therefore not anticipated.

4.2.4.14 The Proposed Development will result in the permanent loss of a small area of intertidal and coastal habitat, including mud/sand, shingle and rock armour habitats. However:

- these habitats are limited in extent within the footprint (approximately 0.61 ha);
- they are already influenced by existing infrastructure and marine use; and
- similar habitat is widely available in the surrounding area.

- 4.2.4.15 In addition, areas of heathland underlain by shallow peat soils are present alongside acidic flushes with up to 1 m peat depth, within the northern section of the PEA study area, particularly in association with the hillside adjacent to the borrow pit. These areas may be subject to habitat loss and disturbance as a result of excavation and associated works.
- 4.2.4.16 Prior to finalising the borrow pit blasting footprint, peat probing will be undertaken across the red line area of aggregate extraction. The results will inform a peat depth plan and to inform micro-siting of the blasting area, access, stockpile locations and temporary working areas.
- 4.2.4.17 With appropriate management of excavated materials and reinstatement where practicable, effects on peat habitats are considered to be minor and not significant.
- 4.2.4.18 During operation, the Proposed Development will function as a small-scale sheltered berthing facility, with limited ongoing ecological effects. Permanent habitat change will be limited to the footprint of the infrastructure and aggregate extraction area. The affected habitats adjacent to the causeway are of low to moderate ecological value locally and well-represented in the wider coastal environment. The aggregate extraction area is within and adjacent to the former borrow pit. As such, the loss of these habitats is not considered to represent a significant effect.
- 4.2.4.19 Otter are likely to continue using the wider area, with no loss of key foraging habitat and continued availability of freshwater sources and shelter. Given existing levels of disturbance, otter are considered likely to remain habituated to ongoing activity, and no significant operational effects are anticipated. Operational activity (e.g. vessel movements) will be similar in nature to existing baseline conditions and low intensity.

Terrestrial and Intertidal Ecology and Biodiversity Summary

The Proposed Development has the potential to result in small-scale habitat loss within the intertidal zone and localised areas of coastal and peat-associated habitat, together with temporary disturbance during construction, particularly in relation to otter and birds. However, taking account of the findings of the PEA and supporting ornithological assessment, the limited scale and extent of the works, the availability of similar habitat in the surrounding area, and the implementation of standard mitigation measures, effects are expected to be temporary, localised and not significant.

With mitigations, no significant adverse effects on terrestrial and intertidal ecology and biodiversity are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.2.5 Marine Habitats and Fish

- 4.2.5.1 The Proposed Development is located within the Sound of Vatersay, a shallow inshore marine environment characterised by mixed coastal substrates, including rock, sand and mud, within a setting already influenced by the existing causeway, slipway infrastructure and marine use. The project footprint extends across the intertidal and shallow nearshore marine environment, with approximately 1.85 ha below MHWS within the marine licence application area and a reclaimed area of approximately 0.2 ha (excluding breakwater) forming part of the permanent works.

- 4.2.5.2 The Site is not located within a designated marine habitat site. However, the Sound of Barra SAC, designated for reefs and subtidal sandbanks, lies approximately 8.6 km north of the Site and is relevant to the wider marine habitat context (see Figure 3). The Site also lies within a broader coastal and marine environment that supports habitats and mobile fish species typical of shallow inshore waters.
- 4.2.5.3 Public available habitat data is not available at the resolution to accurately describe habitats at the scale of the proposed development. A review of National Marine Plan Interactive (NMPI) mapping did not identify any mapped Priority Marine Features (PMFs) within the Site boundary. However, sensitive habitats and fish species are known to be present in the wider region include kelp beds, maerl beds, tide swept algal communities and tide swept coarse sands (Figure 6). More recently, distinctive sea grass communities have been recorded in the region, although these are not currently mapped in publicly available datasets. Given the shallow, sheltered nature of parts of the receiving environment, the presence or absence of seagrass and other sensitive shallow benthic habitats will require verification.

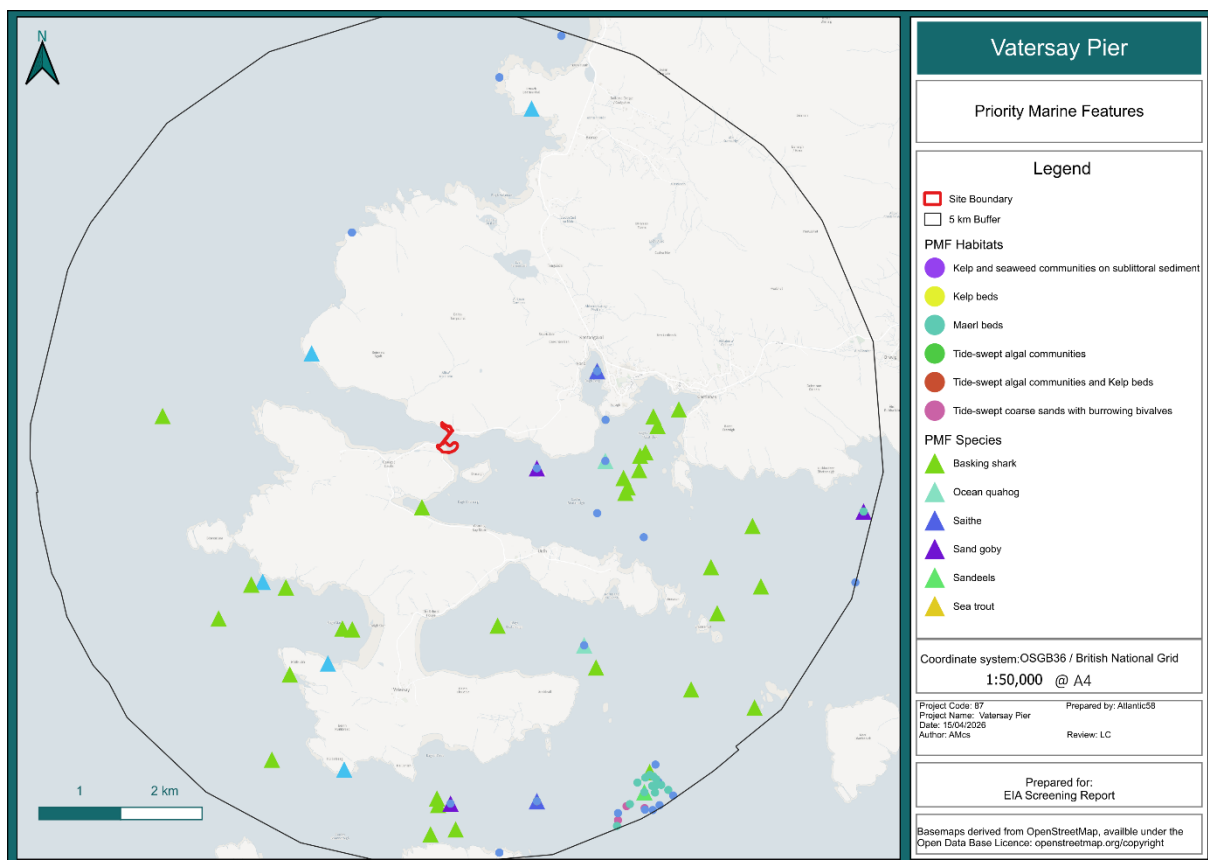


Figure 6 Priority Marine Features within 5 km (excluding marine mammals)

Potential impacts are:

- permanent loss of a small area of intertidal and shallow subtidal habitat within the footprint of the permanent works
- temporary seabed disturbance and habitat damage during construction of the breakwater, reclaimed area, pontoon and associated infrastructure
- temporary increases in suspended sediment and associated localised reductions in water quality during marine construction activities

- potential accidental pollution or release of contaminants during construction
- temporary underwater noise and vibration effects on fish and other mobile marine fauna, including from drilling and intermittent blasting
- temporary disturbance or displacement of fish and mobile marine invertebrates from the immediate construction area.

4.2.5.4 Further surveys will be undertaken to support the planning application and detailed design of the Proposed Development. These will include verification of seabed habitats. The findings will be used to inform detailed design, refinement of construction methods and the identification of marine habitat and fish protection measures that will be secured and implemented through the CEMP.

Marine Habitats and Fish Mitigation

Detailed design of the Proposed Development will include the following embedded mitigation measures:

- Minimisation of marine footprint - marine works will be confined to the minimum area necessary for construction of the breakwater, reclaimed area, pontoon and associated infrastructure.
- Controlled placement of rock and fill - rock armour, fill and other construction materials will be placed in a controlled manner to minimise unnecessary seabed disturbance and sediment mobilisation.
- Pontoon installation methodology - piles for the pontoon will be installed using a drilled, bored and grouted rock-socketed method, avoiding percussive piling and reducing underwater noise and vibration effects on fish. Alternatively, a chain based option may be selected on the basis of detailed engineering design.
- Sediment and water quality control - construction activities will be managed to minimise increases in suspended sediment and to prevent deterioration in water quality.
- Pollution prevention measures - standard pollution prevention measures will be implemented, including appropriate storage and handling of fuels, oils and chemicals, and procedures for spill prevention and response.
- Good practice marine construction methods - marine works will be undertaken using standard best practice methods to reduce unnecessary disturbance to the seabed and surrounding marine environment.
- Blasting management – blasting associated with rock extraction will be controlled, intermittent and programmed to minimise disturbance to marine receptors, including fish.
- Benthic habitat verification and design refinement – verification of benthic habitats. Survey findings will inform detailed design, including micro-siting or refinement of the final layout where practicable, and the development of appropriate construction controls to avoid or minimise effects on sensitive habitats.

4.2.5.5 Construction of the breakwater, reclaimed area, pontoon and associated infrastructure will result in localised seabed disturbance within the marine footprint. The final pontoon fixing solution remains subject to detailed design.

4.2.5.6 The drilled, bored and grouted rock-socketed pile installation method is expected to give rise primarily to localised disturbance at the pile locations and temporary increases in suspended sediment during drilling,

rather than the more extensive disturbance associated with impact piling. If a chain-based mooring arrangement is adopted instead, underwater noise effects would be expected to be lower, but this option may give rise to a slightly wider footprint of localised seabed disturbance associated with anchors, chains or other seabed-fixed mooring components. Effects are expected to remain small in scale, confined to the immediate footprint of the works, and not significant.

- 4.2.5.7 Temporary increases in suspended sediment may also arise during placement of rock armour and fill. However, the receiving environment is already a dynamic coastal system, influenced by tidal and wave processes and by the existing causeway. The scale of the marine works is small, the affected area is limited, and any sediment mobilisation is expected to be short-term and confined to the vicinity of the works. Similar habitat is present more widely within the Sound and surrounding coast.
- 4.2.5.8 Fish and mobile marine invertebrates may experience temporary local disturbance during construction, including from increased activity, suspended sediment and underwater noise. Blasting associated with the rock extraction, from the indicative extraction area (Figure 4), is intermittent and temporary, and the piles are to be installed by drilled rather than percussive methods. Section 4.2.6, outlines typical mitigations for marine mammals which also apply to mobile marine species. Mobile species are therefore expected to avoid the immediate works area and return following completion. No pathway has been identified for habitat fragmentation, significant prey depletion or long-term deterioration in habitat function across the wider Sound.
- 4.2.5.9 With the implementation of standard mitigation measures, secured through the CEMP, including pollution prevention, sediment control and good practice marine construction methods, no adverse significant effects on marine habitat and fish are predicted.
- 4.2.5.10 During operation, the Proposed Development will function as a small-scale sheltered berthing facility. No dredging is anticipated, and the facility will not introduce routine seabed disturbance or high-intensity underwater noise. Any future maintenance works will be undertaken using appropriate environmental controls to avoid unnecessary disturbance to marine habitats and fish.
- 4.2.5.11 During operation, the principal effect on marine habitats and fish will be the permanent presence of the infrastructure and the associated loss of a small area of seabed habitat. This change will be limited to the immediate footprint of the breakwater, reclaimed area, pontoon and piles. The scale of habitat loss is very small in the context of the wider available habitat resource.
- 4.2.5.12 Operational effects on fish are expected to be limited. The completed facility will formalise and modestly reorganise existing vessel activity within the Sound rather than introduce a wholly new use into a previously undisturbed marine area. No continuing source of significant seabed disturbance or high-intensity underwater noise will be present during operation.

Marine Habitats and Fish Summary

With standard mitigation secured through the CEMP, construction effects on marine habitats and fish are expected to be localised, temporary and not significant. Operational effects will be limited to the small permanent footprint of the infrastructure, with no ongoing dredging or significant underwater noise.

No significant adverse effects on marine habitats and fish during construction, operation or decommissioning are predicted.

4.2.6 Marine Mammals

- 4.2.6.1 The Site is not located within a site of designated nature conservation importance, such as a SAC, MPA, SSSI or seal haul-out; however, a number of designations relevant to marine mammals occur within the wider surrounding area. These include:
- Sandray Seal Haul-Out (4.7 km south);
 - Aird Ghrein & Sgeir Liath Seal Haul-Out (5.3 km north);
 - Small Seal Islands (Flodaigh) SSSI, designated for breeding and haul-out seal populations (5.3 km south);
 - Sea of the Hebrides MPA, designated for basking sharks and minke whales (approximately 6.5 km east);
 - Sound of Barra SAC, designated for harbour seal, reefs and subtidal sandbanks (8.6 km north); and
 - Pabbay Seal Haul-Out (9.5 km south).
- 4.2.6.2 These designations indicate that the wider area supports important populations of marine mammals, particularly harbour seal, as well as other mobile marine species. The Outer Hebrides Scottish Marine Region (SMR) (2020) also identifies seals and cetaceans as components affected by marine pressures at a regional scale.
- 4.2.6.3 The immediate Site is an active and modified coastal setting influenced by the causeway, vessel movements, shoreline engineering and marine-related use. The PEA records that the eastern side of the causeway forms a sheltered environment with finer sediment accumulation and disturbed intertidal habitat, and the Site is not identified as a seal haul-out or other particularly sensitive marine mammal location.
- 4.2.6.4 The main impact pathway is the potential for temporary disturbance to seals, and potentially to other transitory marine mammals, arising from underwater noise and increased activity. The project does not involve impact piling. Instead, piles are proposed to be installed by a drilled, bored and grouted rock-socketed method (considered the 'worst case' installation method for this impact, Section 3.2). This method is expected to generate substantially lower underwater noise than impact piling, as it does not involve repeated hammer strikes and avoids the high-amplitude impulsive sound characteristics associated with driven piling.
- 4.2.6.5 An activity-specific Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan will be prepared where the final blasting, piling or marine construction methodology identifies potential for underwater noise exposure to marine mammals. The MMMP will set out pre-start watches, soft-start requirements in line with JNCC guidance (JNCC 2010) or licence requirements. In addition, underwater noise transmission is expected to be reduced by the containment effect of the existing causeway to the west and the proposed breakwater to the east.

Marine Mammals Mitigation

Marine mammal protection measures will be secured and implemented through the CEMP during construction:

- Marine works will be undertaken using construction methods that minimise underwater noise where practicable, including the proposed drilled pile installation method rather than percussive piling.
- Blasting will be intermittent, programmed and managed to minimise disturbance to seals and other marine mammals.
- Implementation of marine mammal mitigation plan, which may include visual checks for marine mammals will be undertaken over an appropriate pre-start period and soft starts. Any necessary species licensing / consents will be obtained before works proceed.
- Construction vessel movements will be kept to the minimum necessary, with vessel activity managed to reduce unnecessary disturbance to marine mammals.
- Standard pollution prevention measures will be implemented to avoid indirect effects on marine mammals through deterioration in water quality or accidental spills.

- 4.2.6.6 Short-duration airborne disturbance would also be generated by intermittent blasting associated with rock extraction area shown on Figure 4, together with associated marine plant and construction activity. Based on the current assumptions, blasting would occur intermittently, typically with approximately one to two weeks between events. The infrequent and short-duration nature of these events reduces the potential for prolonged or continuous disturbance. Where any blasting has the potential to generate underwater noise, or where there is a credible risk of marine mammal exposure, the works should be supported by an activity-specific Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan and, where relevant, undertaken in accordance with the current JNCC guidance for explosive use in the marine environment

Marine Mammals Summary

The Site already experiences vessel movements and general marine-related activity. Construction may therefore result in temporary local avoidance by seals or other mobile marine fauna in the immediate area. However, the Site is not within or adjacent to a haul-out, the nearest designated seal interests are around 5 km or more away.

With the implementation of standard mitigation and good practice controls through the CEMP, including management of marine works and pollution prevention, construction effects on marine mammals are expected to be temporary, localised and not significant.

During operation, the Proposed Development will formalise and reorganise existing marine use within the Sound. Operational effects on marine mammals are expected to be limited to low-level disturbance associated with vessel movements and routine use of the facility. Given the existing baseline activity, the separation distances to designated seal sites, and the absence of any direct interaction with haul-outs or SAC features, it is considered unlikely that construction and operation of the facility would result in significant effects on seals or other marine mammals.

No significant adverse effects on marine mammal receptors are predicted from construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.2.7 Ornithology

- 4.2.7.1 The Proposed Development is located within the West Coast of the Outer Hebrides SPA, designated for:

- breeding red-throated diver (*Gavia stellata*) (foraging areas only); and
- non-breeding aggregations of Annex I and migratory waterbird species, including divers, seaducks and grebes.

4.2.7.2 Qualifying species relevant to the site include:

- red-throated diver (breeding foraging)
- great northern diver, black-throated diver (non-breeding)
- Slavonian grebe
- common eider
- long-tailed duck
- red-breasted merganser

4.2.7.3 The SPA covers an extensive coastal and marine area (approximately 132,170 ha), encompassing a wide network of inshore waters around the Outer Hebrides. These habitats support mobile bird species which utilise large areas for foraging, resting and transit. The Sound of Vatersay forms part of this wider inshore system and comprises rocky shoreline, intertidal habitat and shallow marine waters suitable for foraging seabirds and waterfowl.

4.2.7.4 Field observations recorded a range of common coastal and marine bird species within and adjacent to the Site, including gulls, waders and diving birds. These observations are consistent with the ecological character of the wider SPA and reflect typical use of the area by foraging and commuting birds.

4.2.7.5 The baseline environment is not undisturbed. Site observations confirm the presence of:

- existing moored vessels within the Sound;
- regular marine activity associated with fishing and leisure use;
- traffic movements across the causeway; and
- ongoing works and human activity in the vicinity.

Ornithology Mitigation

- CEMP, (including pre-construction nesting bird checks and buffers) will be implemented to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- Blasting management - blasting will be intermittent and controlled, with typically around one to two weeks between events to minimise disturbance.
- Lighting - artificial lighting will be minimised and directed away from the marine environment where practicable.
- Pollution prevention - standard pollution prevention measures will be implemented to protect water quality and supporting habitats.
- Ecological awareness - site personnel will receive toolbox talks on bird sensitivities and procedures to follow if nesting birds are encountered.

4.2.7.6 Birds using the marine area are subject to a degree of background disturbance and are likely habituated to intermittent human and marine activity. The operational phase of the development is not expected to materially alter the existing ornithological baseline, as it would primarily formalise and consolidate existing activity rather than introduce a new disturbance source. The permanent loss of marine habitat is considered negligible in the context of the overall SPA extent and does not represent a considerable

reduction in available foraging habitat for the qualifying species, particularly in relation to current marine activities in the area. A small area of terrestrial habitat adjacent to the borrow pit will also be lost, subject to reinstatement activities.

- 4.2.7.7 The ornithology desk based assessment (Appendix C) identifies disturbance and displacement as the primary impact pathway during construction. However, the magnitude of effect is limited by:
- the temporary and localised nature of construction works;
 - the intermittent nature of blasting, with typically around one to two weeks between blast events; and
 - the high mobility of qualifying species, which are able to utilise alternative areas of suitable habitat within the wider SPA.
- 4.2.7.8 The PEA also identifies the potential for breeding birds within the wider area. While no substantial concentrations of sensitive species were recorded within the immediate footprint, appropriate safeguards (pre-construction nesting bird checks and buffers) will be implemented to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

Ornithology Summary

Potential ornithological effects are limited mainly to temporary disturbance and displacement. Given the small scale of the Proposed Development, the temporary and localised nature of construction, the negligible habitat loss and the existing baseline of marine activity, **no significant adverse effects for construction, operation or decommissioning on ornithology receptors are predicted.**

4.2.8 Navigation, Commercial Fisheries and Other Maritime Users

- 4.2.8.1 The Proposed Development lies within the Vatersay Causeway statutory harbour limits defined by the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Various Harbours) Harbour Revision Order 2002, i.e. an established area of local harbour jurisdiction. Existing use is local in character and includes slipway activity, informal moorings, fishing vessel use and other small craft movements within the Sound.
- 4.2.8.2 NMPi mapping indicates that the waters around the Site are used principally by small-scale inshore static gear fisheries. The Site falls within the highest mapped value band for creels, pots and traps used by Scottish under 12 m vessels, with shellfish landings also recorded at relatively high levels within the wider ICES rectangle. By contrast, demersal fish landings are present at lower levels, while dredging and trawling are restricted and no mapped Vessel Management System (VMS) activity for these methods is shown within or around the Site. This indicates that the principal fisheries receptor is likely to comprise local creel / pot / trap fishing (under 10 m vessels), rather than larger dredging or trawling vessels.
- 4.2.8.3 In navigational terms, the baseline is characterised by local marine access and working use, rather than strategic shipping or port activity. NMPi review does not identify a port, fisheries office, aquaculture site, military exercise area, danger area or historic munitions disposal site within the Site or immediate surrounds, and available information reviewed to date does not indicate the presence of a major designated vessel route or anchorage within the footprint of the Proposed Development. Taken together, this indicates that the principal marine user receptors are local navigation, existing marine users and small-scale inshore commercial fishing activity.
- 4.2.8.4 Prior to construction works commencing appropriate notifications will be issued, by Notices to Mariners, prior to and during construction to inform marine users of the timing and location of works.

Navigation, Commercial Fisheries and Other Maritime Users Mitigation

Mitigation measures during construction are to be secured through a CEMP:

- Marking of works area - the construction area will be clearly marked, where required, to ensure safe navigation around works.
- Management of construction vessels and plant - construction activities will be planned and managed to minimise obstruction to navigation and maintain safe passage for other marine users.
- Temporary access arrangements - access for marine users will be maintained where practicable, with any temporary restrictions kept to the minimum necessary.
- Timing of works - construction activities will be planned and sequenced to reduce potential conflict with peak periods of marine use, where practicable.
- Good practice construction management - works will be undertaken in accordance with standard good practice to ensure safety and minimise disruption to marine users.

- 4.2.8.5 Construction of the Proposed Development will require marine plant, movement of materials and temporary occupation of part of the nearshore waters adjacent to the causeway and slipway. This has the potential to result in short-term disruption to local navigation, manoeuvring, informal mooring arrangements and slipway-related activity within the immediate works area. Local creel fishing and other small-vessel use may also experience temporary inconvenience or displacement while the works are underway.
- 4.2.8.6 These effects will, however, be temporary and localised. The construction footprint is small and confined to the immediate Site, and the works will not interrupt a strategic navigation route, prevent access to the wider Sound of Vatersay or materially affect the availability of local fishing grounds. The main effect will be short-term local inconvenience, with marine users needing to navigate around active works or make minor temporary adjustments to existing operating patterns.
- 4.2.8.7 With the implementation of standard mitigation measures, including notification to local users, marking of the works area and management of construction vessels and plant, potential effects during construction are expected to be temporary, localised and not significant.
- 4.2.8.8 During operation, the Proposed Development will provide a small-scale sheltered berthing facility that formalises and improves existing marine use within the Sound of Vatersay. While the presence of the breakwater, pontoon and associated infrastructure will result in a localised change to vessel manoeuvring and berth use in the immediate vicinity of the Site, these changes are expected to be beneficial overall. In particular, the facility will improve safety, reliability and organisation for local marine users, including fishing vessels, by reducing reliance on exposed moorings and supporting more efficient access and berthing. The Proposed Development is not of a scale likely to impede wider navigation, materially restrict access to fishing grounds or conflict with other marine users.

Navigation, Commercial Fisheries and Other Maritime Users Summary

Construction effects on navigation, fisheries and other marine users will be temporary, localised and limited to the immediate works area. During operation, the Proposed Development is expected to improve berthing, safety and access for local marine users, with beneficial effects overall. **No significant adverse effects for construction, operation or decommissioning on navigation, commercial fisheries and other maritime users receptors are predicted.**

4.2.9 Noise and Vibration

- 4.2.9.1 This section considers the potential for noise and vibration effects on human receptors, principally nearby residential properties, the adjacent Modular West facility, users of the Hebridean Way and local road users. Potential effects on ecological, marine and cultural heritage receptors arising from construction noise or vibration are considered separately in the relevant topic-specific sections of this report.
- 4.2.9.2 The Site is located within a working coastal environment. Site observations (10 February 2026) confirm that the baseline noise is characterised by regular traffic across the Barra–Vatersay causeway, slipway activity and repair works, utility works, nearby house construction, marine activity and industrial / operational activity associated with Modular West on the Barra side of the causeway (a farbrication facility for modular housing). Existing ground-borne vibration levels are expected to be low, with no substantial continuous source of baseline vibration.
- 4.2.9.3 The principal human receptors⁴ are:
- nearby residential properties on the Vatersay side of the causeway, adjacent to the Proposed Development;
 - the Modular West business and associated yard / parking area within the former borrow pit;
 - users of the Hebridean Way in the wider area; and
 - users of the local road network and causeway.

Noise and Vibration Mitigation

Mitigation measures during construction are to be secured through a CEMP:

- Construction activities will be undertaken within agreed site working hours.
- Blasting will be undertaken as a controlled and intermittent activity over a defined construction period. The relevant blasting controls, including acceptable vibration limits, will be established through the planning process, with detailed requirements set out in the works specification and implemented by the contractor.
- Construction plant and vehicles will be operated in accordance with standard good practice to minimise unnecessary noise.
- Construction traffic and rock haulage will be managed through a contractor-prepared Traffic Management Plan (TMP) and associated traffic management system to reduce avoidable disturbance.

- 4.2.9.4 Construction noise will be temporary and localised. General works associated with excavation, rock placement, haulage, drilling and plant operation will increase noise levels at nearby human receptors for the duration of the construction period; however, the Site is already experienced as an active working environment.
- 4.2.9.5 Blasting within the borrow pit has the potential to generate short-duration, high-intensity noise and vibration events. However, these effects will be intermittent and temporary. Individual blasts are expected to be relatively small due to the proximity of nearby buildings and infrastructure, and there will typically be around one to two weeks between events to allow for material movement, sorting and stockpiling of rock armour, and drilling of the next blast holes. Based on current assumptions, approximately 12–15 blasts may be required over the borrow pit opening and rock extraction phases, although the final number

⁴ Ecological receptors are considered in the relevant sections.

will depend on the contractor's detailed blast design. The relevant controls, including vibration limits, will be established through the planning process and implemented through the works specification and associated construction controls. Although the area already experiences industrial and construction-related activity, the potential for temporary effects on nearby receptors, including Modular West, will be considered. Taking account of the intermittent nature of blasting, the relatively small blast sizes and the proposed controls, significant effects are not anticipated.

Noise and Vibration Summary

Construction will give rise to temporary and localised noise, including intermittent blasting-related effects. These will be managed through standard mitigation and good practice controls.

Operational noise will be limited to routine vessel activity and occasional maintenance, within an area already used for marine access and local working activity. The Proposed Development will not introduce any substantial continuous noise or vibration source, and no significant operational noise or vibration effects on human receptors are predicted.

No significant adverse effects on human receptors from noise and vibration are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.2.10 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity

- 4.2.10.1 The Proposed Development is located within the Sound of Vatersay, adjacent to the Barra–Vatersay causeway, in a coastal landscape that combines open moorland, crofting land, rocky shoreline and shallow marine waters. The Site as an already modified and active coastal environment, influenced by the causeway, slipway infrastructure, moored vessels, shoreline engineering, the former borrow pit, the Modular West building, nearby housing and regular traffic across the causeway.
- 4.2.10.2 The Site does not fall within, and is not in proximity to, any National Scenic Area (NSA), Wild Land Area (WLA) or other statutory landscape designation identified for scenic value. In planning terms, the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (2018) identifies the area as part of the wider marine and shore environment and surrounding rural coastal landscape, rather than as a nationally or locally designated scenic area.
- 4.2.10.3 In landscape / seascape terms, the wider Barra–Vatersay area is described in the Outer Hebrides pilot study, commissioned by Scottish National Heritage (SNH) (now NatureScot) in 2011, as a distinctive southern island landscape of rounded moorland hills, crofting land, beaches and rocky coastline, with broad seaward views and a strong relationship between land and sea. The same study identifies the wider area as falling within the Island of Vatersay Regional Coastal Character Area, the landscape is characterised by a mix of coastal island scenery, crofting land, machair, rocky moorland and rounded upland hills.
- 4.2.10.4 The principal visual receptors are:
- nearby residential properties on the Vatersay side of the causeway;
 - road users on the causeway;
 - users of the Hebridean Way and local shoreline / slipway users; and

- elevated receptors on surrounding hills, including Beinn Tangabhal, Beinn na Sguith and Beinn Orasaigh.
- 4.2.10.5 Ferry routes are not identified as a relevant visual receptor in relation to the Site, given the project's very localised position within the Sound adjacent to the causeway.

Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity Mitigation

- Outline Borrow Pit Reinstatement Plan, to confirm how the area would be restored following use
- Mitigation measures during construction are to be secured through a CEMP and will include:
 - Temporary working areas, laydown and plant will be confined to the minimum area necessary.
 - Materials, plant and temporary infrastructure will be stored and managed in an orderly manner to reduce unnecessary visual clutter.
 - Construction activities will be programmed efficiently to reduce the duration of visually intrusive activity.
 - Permanent infrastructure will be located next to the existing causeway / slipway setting, reflecting the established working coastal character of the Site.
 - The existing borrow pit face is currently unfinished and visually prominent. While no detailed restoration plan has been prepared at this stage, the proposed works may provide an opportunity to leave the extraction area in a more regular and visually improved condition than at present.
 - Temporary disturbed areas will be reinstated on completion of construction where practicable.

Effects on Coastal and Landscape Character During Construction

- 4.2.10.6 Construction will result in temporary disturbance to the immediate coastal edge through plant, material storage, active works and temporary occupation of parts of the shoreline and causeway-side setting. These effects will be experienced within an already modified working environment and will be short term. The proposed blast area on the Barra side will also give rise to temporary landform change and disturbance within the former borrow pit area, although this remains closely associated with an existing disturbed borrow pit / industrial context.

Effects on Visibility and Visual Amenity During Construction

- 4.2.10.7 Construction activities will be visible from nearby houses, the causeway, the Hebridean Way and local shoreline locations, and may also be evident from more elevated viewpoints such as Beinn Tangabhal, Beinn na Sguith and Beinn Orasaigh. However, the works are temporary, the Site is already visually influenced by infrastructure and active land use, and the scale of the project is modest in the context of the wider open coastal landscape.

Effects on Coastal and Landscape Character During Operation

- 4.2.10.8 During operation, the breakwater, pontoon, access bridge and reclaimed area will introduce a new but small-scale engineered element into the Sound. This will result in a localised change to coastal character; however, the effect will be seen in the context of the existing causeway, slipway, moorings, shoreline engineering and wider marine use. The proposed blast area may also alter the local character of the borrow pit edge; however, this will be addressed through an Outline Borrow Pit Reinstatement Plan, which will guide the final profiling and treatment of the area following use. This change would remain

localised. Overall, effects on coastal and landscape character are expected to be localised and not significant.

Effects on Visibility and Visual Amenity During Operation

- 4.2.10.9 During operation, the completed facility will be visible at close range, particularly from the causeway, nearby residential properties and local recreational routes. Visibility from the surrounding hills will also be possible, but the development will be viewed within broad panoramic coastal views in which it will form a small component adjacent to the existing causeway. The Proposed Development will therefore introduce a localised and perceptible visual change, but not one that materially alters the wider visual structure or scenic composition of the area. Overall, effects on visibility and visual amenity are expected to be localised and not significant.
- 4.2.10.10 Taking account of the modest scale of the infrastructure, the existing modified baseline, and the implementation of standard mitigation measures, including an Outline Borrow Pit Reinstatement Plan, effects on coastal / landscape character and on visual amenity are expected to be temporary or localised. The proposed blast area may also allow the borrow pit to be left with a more stepped landform than the unfinished and visually harsh cliff faces that currently exist. No further surveys are recommended based on the existing design given the scale and nature of the impact.

Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity Summary

Effects on seascape, landscape character and visual amenity will be temporary or localised. Construction effects will be short term, while operational effects will relate to the small-scale presence of the completed facility within an already modified coastal setting. The proposed blast area may also allow the borrow pit to be left with a more stepped landform than at present.

No significant adverse effects on seascape, landscape and visual amenity receptors are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.2.11 Socioeconomics

- 4.2.11.1 Barra and Vatersay are small, remote island communities in the southern Outer Hebrides with a combined population of around 1,264 people. The local economy reflects a typical rural island context, with employment supported by the public sector, community-led services and a diverse private sector including fisheries, crofting, retail, tourism and small-scale marine industries. Fishing is a particularly important part of the local economy and community identity. Existing marine infrastructure at Vatersay is limited, with vessels reliant on exposed moorings and basic slipway access, constraining safety, efficiency and opportunities for growth. Improved marine infrastructure is therefore identified in local planning and community documents as a priority to support economic resilience and sustainability.
- 4.2.11.2 The principal socioeconomic receptors are:
- the local community of Barra and Vatersay;
 - local fishing and marine users;
 - small marine-related businesses; and
 - the wider network of local contractors, suppliers and service providers who may benefit from, or be temporarily affected by, the Proposed Development.

- 4.2.11.3 The key socioeconomic pathways are temporary construction-related expenditure and disruption, and longer-term operational effects associated with improved berthing, safety and resilience for existing marine users.
- 4.2.11.4 During construction, the Proposed Development is expected to give rise to limited temporary beneficial effects through expenditure on labour, materials, plant hire and associated services. The use of local contractors and locally sourced rock from the adjacent borrow pit has the potential to retain a proportion of this expenditure within the local economy. Construction may also result in some short-term inconvenience to existing marine users and local working practices in the immediate area; however, these effects will be temporary, localised and confined to the construction period. Overall construction effects are considered to be limited to short-term disruption and modest temporary economic benefit. Significant adverse effects are not considered likely.
- 4.2.11.5 During operation, the Proposed Development is expected to result in beneficial socioeconomic effects by improving berthing conditions, access and safety for local fishing vessels and other marine users. The facility will reduce reliance on exposed moorings, support more efficient day-to-day marine activity, and improve the resilience of existing marine-based livelihoods. It may also provide modest wider benefits for related businesses and services by supporting the continued viability of the local marine economy.
- 4.2.11.6 The Proposed Development will not displace a major existing land use, sever access to homes or community facilities, or give rise to any significant adverse effect on population, employment or local services. Operational effects are therefore expected to be beneficial overall and not significant.

Socioeconomic Summary

During construction, the Proposed Development is expected to result in modest temporary economic benefits through local expenditure, alongside short-term and localised disruption. During operation, the facility is expected to provide beneficial socioeconomic effects by improving berthing, safety, access and resilience for local fishing vessels and other marine users, with wider benefits for the local marine economy.

No significant adverse effects on socioeconomic receptors are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.3 Other Environmental Topics

- 4.3.1.1 The topics addressed in this section have been reviewed as part of the screening process but are treated separately from the key environmental topics above because, having regard to the nature, scale and location of the Proposed Development, they are not considered to present the same potential for likely significant effects. They have therefore been assessed on a proportionate basis, taking account of the characteristics of the Proposed Development, the sensitivity of the receiving environment and the likely impact pathways. On this basis, these topics are not considered to require the same level of detailed screening discussion as the principal topics addressed in Section 4.1.

4.3.2 Traffic and Transport

- 4.3.2.1 The Proposed Development may give rise to temporary traffic and transport effects during construction, particularly in relation to site establishment, delivery of plant and materials, and haulage of rock from the adjacent borrow pit across the causeway to the construction site. Construction is currently anticipated to last approximately 12 months, with the main traffic-generating phase associated with opening the borrow pit and the excavation, transport and placement of rock. The use of a local borrow pit and established

access via the causeway will minimise wider HGV movements and avoid unnecessary use of local roads on the Barra and Vatersay side as far as practicable. A contractor-prepared Traffic Management Plan and traffic management system will be implemented to manage the interface between public and construction traffic. While these activities will result in some temporary local inconvenience, effects will be confined to the construction period and experienced within an area that already accommodates regular causeway traffic and other working activity. During operation, the Proposed Development is not expected to generate a material increase in road traffic.

- 4.3.2.2 No significant adverse traffic and transport effects are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.3.3 Climate Change, Adaptation and Resilience and Greenhouse Gases

- 4.3.3.1 The Proposed Development is located within an exposed coastal environment in the Outer Hebrides, where climate-related pressures such as increased storminess, heavier rainfall, sea level rise and coastal change are relevant to the long-term resilience of infrastructure and communities. Wider local climate evidence (OHCPP, 2024) highlights that, regardless of global emissions reduction, the Outer Hebrides will continue to experience climate impacts and therefore requires adaptation and resilience measures, particularly in coastal locations.

- 4.3.3.2 In terms of potential impacts, the principal considerations are:

- whether the Proposed Development is vulnerable to current and future climate conditions;
- whether it supports local resilience and adaptation; and
- the extent to which it gives rise to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, primarily during construction.

- 4.3.3.3 Construction will generate temporary emissions from plant, vehicles, blasting, drilling, rock extraction and material haulage. However, these emissions will be limited to the construction period and reduced, where practicable, through the use of locally sourced rock from the adjacent borrow pit and the use of local contractors and plant, thereby avoiding longer-distance material transport and associated travel. The Proposed Development will also be constructed and managed using standard good practice measures through the CEMP.

- 4.3.3.4 During operation, the Proposed Development is expected to have beneficial effects in climate adaptation and resilience terms. The breakwater and sheltered berthing facility will reduce reliance on exposed moorings, improve safety and accessibility during adverse weather, and provide more robust marine infrastructure for existing users. Operational GHG emissions are expected to be negligible, as the facility will not introduce any substantial new emission source beyond routine local marine use.

- 4.3.3.5 Overall, the Proposed Development is not expected to give rise to significant adverse effects in relation to climate change, adaptation, resilience or greenhouse gas emissions, and this topic does not represent a constraint requiring EIA.

4.3.4 Ground Conditions, Peat and Geology

- 4.3.4.1 The Proposed Development is located within a coastal environment influenced by the existing causeway, shoreline infrastructure and the former borrow pit site on the Barra side of the causeway. The project will involve temporary reopening of the borrow pit to provide rock and armourstone for the breakwater, together with drilling, blasting, excavation and construction works within a project boundary.

- 4.3.4.2 British Geological Survey mapping indicates that the bedrock geology within the site comprises Lewisian Complex – Gneiss. The Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map classifies the area as Class 3, where dominant vegetation cover is not priority peatland habitat but is associated with wet and acidic soil types. Occasional peatland habitats may be present, and most soils are carbon-rich soils, with some areas of deep peat. This classification indicates that peat and carbon-rich soils are a relevant baseline consideration for the Proposed Development, particularly around the borrow pit margins and any undisturbed areas within the wider area of search.
- 4.3.4.3 Preliminary survey work informing the PEA indicates that affected habitats within the area of search for the borrow pit are predominantly wet heath, with shallow peaty soils generally less than 0.5 m in depth. However, localised areas of habitat were identified where peat depths were greater, extending up to approximately 1.0 m (Appendix B). These survey findings are consistent with the Class 3 peatland classification, confirming that while extensive deep peat has not been identified within the preliminary survey area, localised deeper peat and peat-forming or hydrologically sensitive habitats may be present and require consideration in the final siting and construction methodology. The main sensitivities are localised disturbance of bedrock and any management of shallow peat or present near the borrow pit margins and wider borrow pit area.
- 4.3.4.4 Potential construction effects on ground conditions, peat and geology include localised disturbance and removal of bedrock within the borrow pit; excavation / compaction of peat and peaty soils and disruption to drainage pathways supporting wet heath or flushed habitats.
- 4.3.4.5 Prior to finalising the borrow pit blasting footprint, detailed peat probing will be undertaken across the red line area of search, with particular attention to borrow pit area, wet heath, flushed habitat and any areas where peat depths are indicated to exceed 0.5 m. The results will inform a peat depth plan and to inform micro-siting of the blasting area, access, stockpile locations and temporary working areas.
- 4.3.4.6 Standard good practice measures secured through the CEMP, including appropriate excavation control, materials handling, pollution prevention and reinstatement of temporary working areas where practicable, will minimise adverse impacts. No significant geotechnical or contamination pathway has been identified at screening stage, and operational impacts on ground conditions and geology are expected to be negligible. Overall, impacts are expected to be temporary, localised and no adverse effects are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.
- 4.3.4.7 Operational effects on ground conditions, peat and geology are expected to be negligible, as disturbance would be confined primarily to the construction phase and the reopened borrow pit area.

4.3.5 Hydrology and Flood Risk

- 4.3.5.1 The Proposed Development is located within a low-lying coastal environment at the interface between terrestrial, intertidal and marine systems in the Sound of Vatersay. Freshwater features within and adjacent to the Site are limited to minor drainage features, culverts and local surface water runoff pathways, with no significant watercourses or freshwater bodies likely to be sensitive to hydrological change. The main sensitivities are therefore the coastal water environment, local surface drainage and the potential influence of tidal flooding and extreme weather.
- 4.3.5.2 Potential impacts are limited primarily to the construction phase and include temporary disturbance to local drainage pathways, sediment mobilisation, increased turbidity and the risk of accidental pollution, particularly in relation to borrow pit works, material haulage, drilling and rock placement close to the coast. These impacts would be localised, short term and managed through standard good practice

measures secured through the CEMP, including drainage management, sediment control, pollution prevention and incident response procedures.

- 4.3.5.3 During operation, the Proposed Development will comprise a small-scale water-compatible coastal structure and is not expected to result in any material increase in flood risk elsewhere. Any hydrological or flood risk impacts are therefore expected to be temporary, localised and no adverse effects are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.3.6 Major Accidents and Disasters

- 4.3.6.1 The principal potential impacts relate to the construction phase and include the use of plant and vehicles, marine works, drilling, blasting, rock extraction and haulage of materials from the borrow pit to the construction site. These are standard construction activities for a project of this nature and will take place within a defined site and controlled programme of works. Geotechnical risks and safety considerations associated with the blasting operations
- 4.3.6.2 Potential impacts would be managed through standard health, safety and environmental controls, including detailed construction planning, pollution prevention measures, emergency response procedures and implementation of the CEMP. The Site is also located within an existing working coastal environment that already accommodates marine activity, road traffic and industrial / construction activity.
- 4.3.6.3 During operation, the Proposed Development will function as a small-scale sheltered berthing facility and is expected to improve local marine safety and resilience rather than introduce a new source of major accident risk. Overall, impacts in relation to major accidents and disasters are expected to be low and no adverse effects are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.3.7 Cumulative Developments

- 4.3.7.1 One relevant nearby development has been identified in the vicinity of the Proposed Development: the creation of fenced storage bays adjacent to Vatersay Causeway (planning reference 24/00147/PPD, non-EIA development), promoted by VPUA. The storage bay proposal is located on the Vatersay side of the causeway, adjacent to the slipway / harbour area, and comprises seven storage bays with associated fencing and surfacing.
- 4.3.7.2 Given the small scale and localised nature of both developments, the principal potential cumulative impacts would be limited to short-term overlap in construction activity, including temporary increases in traffic, noise, visual disturbance and local working activity in the immediate harbour / causeway area. However, as both projects are being progressed by the same client, construction programmes can be coordinated to minimise overlap and manage any temporary disruption efficiently. Operationally, the developments are complementary in nature, with the storage bays supporting the wider marine use of the area rather than introducing a conflicting land use. On this basis, no adverse cumulative effects are predicted during construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

5 Biodiversity Enhancement

- 5.1.1.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) requires development proposals to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity and, where relevant, to restore degraded habitats, strengthen nature networks and integrate nature-based solutions. The Proposed Development will be considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 3. The proposals are relatively small in scale and is located within an already

modified coastal environment opportunities for biodiversity enhancement will be incorporated into the final design where practicable.

6 Summary

- 6.1.1.1 This EIA Screening Report has provided an overview of the Proposed Development, the baseline conditions at the Site and an initial environmental assessment of the likely significant effects of the proposals. The Proposed Development comprises a small-scale sheltered berthing facility adjacent to the Barra–Vatersay causeway, together with temporary reopening of the adjacent borrow pit to provide rock and armourstone for breakwater construction. The Site lies within a sensitive coastal setting, but also within an already modified and active working environment influenced by the causeway, slipway, marine activity and former borrow pit.
- 6.1.1.2 The screening assessment identifies several topics requiring consideration, including ornithology, ecology, marine receptors, coastal processes, cultural heritage, navigation and borrow pit / blasting activities. However, given the small scale of the Proposed Development, the localised extent of the works, the modified baseline and the embedded mitigation and standard good practice measures proposed, no likely significant effects have been identified. Effects are generally predicted to be temporary and localised during construction, and negligible, localised or beneficial during operation. Beneficial effects are expected in relation to marine safety, local resilience and support for existing marine users and the local economy.

6.2 Supporting Information and Commitments

- 6.2.1.1 The Applicant will provide supporting environmental information and technical documentation with the planning application and marine licence application in order to inform detailed design, support the consenting process and provide confidence that environmental effects will be appropriately managed. This is expected to include, as appropriate:
- A CEMP, including topic-specific measures for pollution prevention, sediment control, ecology, dust, noise, traffic and marine user management.
 - Submission of blast design / blasting method statement, including vibration controls, notification procedure and monitoring where required.
 - Outline Borrow Pit Reinstatement Plan, to confirm how the area would be restored following use.
 - Archaeology desk-based assessment and walkover verification of the proposed blast area and any other areas of potential ground disturbance, with accompanying WSI if required.
 - Verification of seabed / benthic habitats with specific identification / mapping of any seagrass or other sensitive shallow benthic habitats.
 - Pre-construction protected species surveys to inform any licensing / species protection plans if required.
 - Breeding bird checks and exclusion buffers where works are undertaken during the breeding season.
 - Peat probing and peat depth plan before finalising the borrow pit footprint, access, stockpile and temporary working areas.
 - Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan if the final methodology identifies an underwater noise or marine mammal risk, incorporating relevant JNCC guidance where applicable.

- Notices to Mariners / local marine user notifications prior to and during construction and marking of the works area and management of marine plant to maintain safe navigation.
- Traffic management measures for causeway movements and construction/public traffic interfaces.
- Pollution prevention, sediment control, spill response and water quality protection measures.
- Biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction or spread of INNS.

6.3 Applicant's View on the Requirement for EIA

- 6.3.1.1 In view of the findings of this screening assessment, it is the Applicant's view that the Proposed Development does not constitute EIA Development under the relevant EIA Regulations and that a formal Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in support of the proposed planning application and marine licence application. The Applicant therefore seeks a Screening Opinion from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Marine Directorate on whether or not an EIA is required for the Proposed Development.

7 References

Air Quality in Scotland (2025) Maps of annual concentrations [Online] Available from: Maps of annual concentrations Accessed March 2026.

Atlantic58 (2026). Ornithology DBA – Vatersay Sheltered Berthing Facility.

Atlantic58 (2026). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) – Vatersay Sheltered Berthing Facility.

Barra and Vatersay Community Planning Group (2023). Barra and Vatersay Community Climate Action Plan.

Barra and Vatersay Community Planning Group (2025). Barra and Vatersay Local Place Plan.

British Standards Institution (2014). BS 5228-1: Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction sites (Noise).

British Standards Institution (2014). BS 5228-2: Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction sites (Vibration).

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Available from: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-preliminary-ecological-appraisal/> Accessed: March 2026

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2018, updated 2022). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. Available from: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/> Accessed: March 2026

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar & Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) (2022). Outer Hebrides Local Flood Risk Management Plan. Available from: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/flooding/flood-risk-management-plans/> Accessed: March 2026

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (2018). *Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan*.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Various Harbours) Harbour Revision Order 2002 (No. 410).

Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018.

Harbours Act 1964.

IAQM (2016), Guidance on the Assessment of Mineral Dust Impacts for Planning

Impact Hub (2023), Business Plan for a Marine Development Zone At Vatersay in the Western Isles

Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) (2014). Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction. Available from: <https://iaqm.co.uk/text/guidance/construction-dust-2014.pdf> Accessed March 2026

JNCC (2010). Statutory nature conservation agency protocol for minimising the risk of injury to marine mammals from piling noise.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2023). UK BAP Priority Habitats. Available from: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-habitats/> Accessed: March 2026

Just Enterprise (2022) The Community Business Case, Proposed New Vatersay Pier and Sheltered Berthing Facility

Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2010/5/contents> Accessed: March 2026

Marine Scotland. National Marine Plan Interactive (NMPi). Available from: <https://marine.gov.scot/maps/nmpi> Accessed: March 2026

Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013.

NatureScot (2020). Assessing the Significance of Impacts from Onshore Developments on Wild Mammals. Available from: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/assessing-significance-impacts-onshore-developments-wild-mammals> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2023). Standing Advice for Protected Species. Available from: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/planning-and-development-advice/protected-species> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2024). Aird Ghrein & Sgeir Liath Seal Haul-out – Site Information. Available from: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2024). Sandray Seal Haul-out – Site Information. Available from: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2024). Sea of the Hebrides Nature Conservation MPA – Site Documentation. Available from: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2024). SiteLink – Designated Site Information (SAC, SPA, SSSI, MPA). Available from: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2024). Small Seal Islands SSSI – Site Documentation. Available from: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/> Accessed: March 2026

NatureScot (2024). Sound of Barra Special Area of Conservation – Site Documentation. Available from: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8602> Accessed: March 2026

Scottish Government (2017). Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-circular-1-2017-environmental-impact-assessment-regulations-2017/> Accessed: March 2026

Scottish Government (2021). Climate Change Plan: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/> Accessed: March 2026

Scottish Government (2022). National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/> Accessed: March 2026

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) (2021). Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPPs). Available from: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/guidance/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-gpps/> Accessed: March 2026

Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020. *Outer Hebrides Scottish Marine Region*.

SNH (2011), Commissioned Report No. 460, *Landscape/seascape capacity for aquaculture: Outer Hebrides pilot study*, Available from: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-07/Publication%202011%20-%20SNH%20Commissioned%20Report%20460%20-%20Landscape%20seascape%20capacity%20for%20aquaculture%20-%20Outer%20Hebrides%20pilot%20study.pdf> Accessed April 2026

The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021.

UK Climate Change Committee (2022). UK Climate Risk Independent Assessment. Available from: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/independent-assessment-of-uk-climate-risk/> Accessed: March 2026

Wallace Stone (2022) Feasibility Study – Vatersay Sheltered Berthing Facility.

Western Isles Community Planning Partnership (latest available). Community Risk Register for the Western Isles. Available from: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/emergency-planning/community-risk-register/> Accessed: March 2026

Appendix A: Propose layout and proposed blast area plans

A.1 Proposed Layout Plan

A.2 Proposed Blast Area Plan

Appendix B: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

Appendix C: Ornithology Desk-based Assessment (DBA)

Appendix D: Gazetteer of undesignated cultural heritage assets within 1 km



Atlantic58 Ltd

The Old Weaving Shed
UHI North, West and Hebrides
Stornoway
HS2 0XR
01851 827310
office@atlantic58.co.uk
www.atlantic58.co.uk

Company Number: SC594983
VAT Number: 320179433