

**REPORT OF THE MARINE LICENCE VETTING COMMITTEE  
(MLVC)**

**ON**

**FORESHORE LICENCE APPLICATION FOR**

**FS 006578 - MAINTENANCE DREDGING AT AUGHINISH,  
ASKEATON, CO. LIMERICK.**

**BY**

**AUGHNISH ALUMINA LTD**

**Barry Mc Donald,  
Marine Licence Vetting Committee,  
4 July 2016.**

## **Foreshore Licence Application for Maintenance Dredging at Aughinish Alumina, Askeaton, Co. Limerick by by Aughnish Alumina Ltd.**

### **Project Description,**

Aughinish Alumina Ltd have made a Foreshore Licence application to conduct maintenance dredging to maintain charted depths at their deep water jetty and at their adjacent pilot berth on the Shannon Estuary at Askeaton, Co. Limerick.

The dredging will consist of plough dredging at three locations, two at the deep water jetty and one at the pilot berth. They are proposing an 8 year annual programme of maintenance with an annual maximum of 8,000m<sup>3</sup>. The works are required to ensure the berths can accommodate the vessels that are essential to the working of the plant.

It is proposed to plough dredge both the outer and inner berths at the Aughinish Alumina Jetty having respective areas of 285m by 36m for the outer and 250m by 33m for the inner and also dredge at a third smaller pilot berth site measuring 75m by 25m. Occasional bed levelling will also be required within the areas. The dredging will attempt to restore sea bed depths to approximately 12.2m to 14.3m below Chart Datum at the Jetty. The quantities to be dredged will be in the region of 4,000 tonnes with an unlikely maximum dredge of 16,000 tonnes. The dredging licence application will apply for an 8 year duration with a maximum of 16,000 tonnes per annum.

As the area will be plough dredged, the dredge site and surrounding sea bed will act as the dredge disposal site availing of the strong ambient velocities to disperse the sediment widely within the middle estuary through bedload and suspended load. It is proposed that the dredging would be carried out either in September 2016 when the berths are unoccupied or at a time where the need and opportunity arises. The anticipated plough dredging rate is likely to be of the order of 1m<sup>3</sup> of sediment per minute which represents a dredging rate of 31.25kg/sec or 2,700 tonnes over a 24hour period. Typically a dredge event may take place over a four or five day period depending on quantity but could vary from 1000 to 4000m<sup>3</sup>.

- The location and details of the proposed development is shown in the following drawings that were submitted with the application,
  - Drg.No. 17076-5008 Rev. A, Drawn: 29/03/2016
  - Drg.No. 17076-5005 Rev. A, Drawn: 16/12/2015,
  - Drg.No. 17076-5006 Rev. A, Drawn: 16/12/2015,

**The proposed activity is not of a class that requires the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement**

### **Natura 2000 sites**

The applicants conducted a screening for Appropriate Assessment for these works that concluded that significant effects, potentially ensuing from the proposed activity, on the conservation objectives of two Natura 2000 sites, could not be ruled out. Therefore,

further assessment carried by way of a Natura Impact Statement was carried out to determine whether the proposed activity is likely to adversely affect the integrity of the following Natura 2000 sites:

- Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077)

The Natura Impact Statement concluded that the proposed project has the potential without mitigation measures to impact negatively on the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA. The main potential impacts on these sites are the risk of underwater noise and vibration to marine mammals, the impairment of water quality and alteration of aquatic and inter-tidal habitats. Mitigation measures proposed include the employment of a marine mammal observer, the presence of a Resident Engineer on-site throughout dredge activity, implementation of best practice guidelines in relation to dredge activity as well as other measures. Provided all mitigation measures proposed are fully implemented, it is not expected that there will be an adverse impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites.

### **Public Consultation**

The application was advertised in the Irish Times and Weekly Observer on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2016 and was available to view at Newcastlewest Garda Station from 9<sup>th</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016. One public submission was received on foot of the public notice.

### **MLVC Considerations**

The following documents were considered:

- Foreshore Licence Application and associated maps, drawings and documents;
- Report: Natura Impact Statement, Proposed Maintenance Dredging Aughinish, Co. Limerick, Malachy Walsh and Partners.
- Report: Impacts on the receiving Environment. Maintenance Dredging & Dumping at Sea Aughinish Alumina Jetty, Malachy Walsh and Partners.
- Report: Assessment of Risk to Marine Mammals from Proposed Maintenance Plough Dredging at Auginish Jetty, Co. Limerick, Dr. Joanne O'Brien.
- Report: Sediment Transport Modelling of Proposed Maintenance Dredging of the Outer and Inner Berths at the Aughinish Marine Terminal, Shannon Estuary, Hydro Environmental Ltd.
- Report: Aughinish Baseline Characterisation Report, AQUAFACT International Services Ltd.
- Report: Archaeological Impact Assessment Report, Rusal Ltd, Aughinish, Co.
- Written submissions from Inland Fisheries Ireland, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Unit), Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, Marine Institute, D.A.U. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Nature Conservation and Underwater Archaeology Unit), Marine Survey Office, D.E.C.L.G. Water and Marine Advisory Unit and Cappagh Farmers Support Group & applicant responses.

### **MLVC Conclusions**

On the basis of the information provided by the applicant and the observations provided by the State Bodies consulted it is concluded that subject to compliance with the specific conditions set out below, the proposed works would not have a significant negative impact on navigation, fishing, the marine environment or protected species, would not have a significant impact on other legitimate uses or users of the foreshore area in question and would not have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the any Natura 2000 site. It is recommended, therefore, that a licence be issued subject to the following conditions.

### **Proposed Licence Conditions.**

1. The Licensee shall use that part of the Foreshore lined red on the Foreshore Licence Map, Drg.No. 17076-5008 Rev. A, Drawn: 29/03/2016 for the purposes as outlined in the application and for no other purposes whatsoever;
2. The dredging works shall be conducted in accordance with documents submitted and specifically drawings Drg.No. 17076-5005 Rev. A, Drawn: 16/12/2015 and Drg.No. 17076-5006 Rev. A, Drawn: 16/12/2015;
3. All mitigation measures proposed in the Natura Impact Statement titled Proposed Maintenance Dredging Aughinish, Co. Limerick prepared by Malachy Walsh and Partners and lodged with the licensor shall be implemented in full;
4. The Licensee shall inform the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, An Daingean tel. 066/9152122 [dingle@sfpa.ie](mailto:dingle@sfpa.ie) and the operator of the adjacent oyster farm 2 weeks in advance of any dredging operations;
5. The licensee shall be fully compliant with the requirements set out in the “Guidance To Manage The Risk To Marine Mammals From Man-Made Sound Sources In Irish Waters” a copy of which can be found at <http://www.npws.ie/marine/best-practice-guidelines>;
6. The licensee shall inform the British Admiralty Hydrographic Office at Taunton, UK, of the location and nature of the proposed works (fax. 0044 1823 284077, email [hdc@hdc.hydro.gov.ie](mailto:hdc@hdc.hydro.gov.ie));
7. The licensee shall arrange the publication in a locally circulated newspaper of a local marine notice giving a general description of operations and approximate dates of commencement and completion;
8. The licensee shall liaise with the Shannon Foynes Port Harbour Master during all stages of the operation;
9. All vessels engaged in the work shall comply fully with certification requirements;

10. A valid Dumping At Sea Permit for the dredging works shall be in place and a copy of the permit shall be lodged with the Licensor prior to the works proceeding;
11. The Department shall be notified 2 weeks prior to any works proceeding;
12. The Licensee shall engage the services of a suitably qualified Archaeologist, with underwater /maritime / marine dredging experience to monitor all seabed disturbance works. The Archaeological monitoring shall be licensed under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 and a detailed method statement shall accompany the licence application. The methodology shall include a definite finds retrieval strategy that looks to assess the dredge material for artefactual bearing potential. The logistics of this shall be devised by the monitoring archaeologist in tandem with the Licensee and plant and machinery operators.
13. The Licensee shall accommodate the monitoring archaeologist on-board the dredging plant and sufficient archaeological monitoring staff shall be engaged to enable full monitoring of all works on the foreshore.
14. Should archaeological remains be found during the course of the monitoring the monitoring archaeologist shall have the power to have the works stopped in that area pending a decision on how best to deal with the archaeology. In this event the National Monuments Service, of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, shall be contacted immediately.
15. The Licensee shall ensure that the services of a suitably qualified underwater archaeological dive team are available on call, with the necessary dive licence in place, to enable immediate inspection of any identified or potential archaeology impacted during the works.
16. The Licensee shall be advised by the Underwater Archaeology Unit of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with regard to any necessary mitigation actions e.g. preservation in situ, dive survey or excavation. The applicant shall facilitate the Archaeologist, in recording any material found.
17. The Underwater Archaeology Unit, of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht shall be furnished with a report describing the results of the monitoring once completed.