Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Background and information to support a Habitats Regulations Assessment and protected sites network assessment for proposed Designated Point of Entry (PoE) at Belfast Port

1. Introduction

There is a requirement to extend the existing designation at Belfast Port Point of Entry (PoE), to cater for the enhanced number Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) checks required for imports into Northern Ireland at the end of the transition period.

Belfast Port is currently designated as a PoE for frozen Products of Animal Origin (POAO), fish (containerised and lorries), high risk food of non-animal origin, plastic kitchenware originating from China or Hong Kong food and plants and plant products. The PoE is also used for official controls on organic food and checking IUU/Catch certificates. Equines are also licensed to be imported through the port but there is no stabling on the current site.

Due to space constraints in the port, the existing facility is not fit for enhanced inspection requirements and split across three sites and the product inspection facility is distant from point of arrival for Lorries. The proposed new PoE will bring inspection facilities into one location and widen the scope of designations to designate for current trade and include additional commodities such as chilled and ambient Products of Animal Origin (POAO) and High Risk Feed.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have completed this report, based on the best available information, to provide information to inform the Competent Authority, Belfast City Council, of the potential for a likely significant effects on European sites from the construction and operation of the proposed development, as required by Regulation 43 (1) of the Habitats Regulations. The scope also extends to preliminary assessment of the protected sites network within the vicinity of the development.

2. Project description and location

The proposal is for the construction of inspection facilities at Belfast Port PoE to carry out SPS inspections. These inspection facilities will be required at the end of the transition period on 1 January 2021.

The site is located within the Belfast Harbour Estate in an area of industrial land that was reclaimed historically from the mud-flats on the western foreshore of Belfast Lough. The ground level was raised using hydraulic fill materials that were dredged from the main shipping channel.

The site is located at Dargan Drive, Belfast on approximate Irish Grid Coordinates (easting, northing): 335307, 377349. The site is within the Belfast Harbour industrial estate and is surrounded by industrial land uses to the west and is bounded by Dargan Road and a channel/ tidal ‘pond’ to the east. The site is currently used for other retail industries and associated activities and infrastructure is currently in place at the location of the proposed development.

The proposed context and location is shown in **Annex 1.0.**

3. Applicant details

The proposed developments are considered permitted development under Part 14 Class B of the Planning (General Development Order) 2015 (PD). To confirm this applications for proposed Certificate of Lawful Use or Development (CLUD) will be submitted for the proposed facility at Belfast Port. The proposed applicant is the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

4. Legislative context

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, commonly known as the Habitats Directive, is transposed into law in Northern Ireland by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.,) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (transposed by Regulation 43) establishes the requirement that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 Site(s) shall first be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the implications for the site(s), and further that competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned: *"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.*

For completeness, nationally designated sites – Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) – are also included in this assessment. The law relating to ASSIs is contained in the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002 (as amended). Article 38 of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 places general duties on public bodies relating to ASSIs and decision making. MCZs protect rare, threatened or nationally important marine habitats, species and geological features, and are designated under the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013. An assessment process is also required to ensure public authorities, with respect to authorising an activity that may affect (other than insignificantly) the features of an MCZ, consider the proposal appropriately.

5. Assessment Methodology – Desk Study

All European and Ramsar designated sites within 2 km of the proposed development were identified using the DAERA Natural Environment Division Mapviewer. Sites which could fall within a zone of influence through a pathway connection to the proposed development have been identified and included, where appropriate. European sites with grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) as qualifying species within a distance of 135 km from the proposed development and with harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) as qualifying species within a distance of 50 km from the proposed development, have also been included. Certain marine mobile species have also been placed within Management Units, which has been completed for the seven most common cetacean species in UK waters. The management units provide an indication of the spatial scales at which impacts of plans and projects alone, cumulatively and in-combination, need to be assessed for the key cetacean species, with consistency across the UK. Information on management units can be found as follows:

http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report_547_webv2.pdf

Publically available information on European and Ramsar sites has been used from the DAERA website to identify the qualifying features of those sites as set out in the Conservation Objectives for each site. Conservation objectives provide an indication of the type of effects which could affect the features of a European Site:

https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/protected-areas

The zone of influence for nationally designated sites was taken as 2 km from the proposed development boundary. The publically available DAERA citation documents have also been used to identify the qualifying interest features of the site(s):

https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/areas-special-scientific-interest
https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/marine-conservation-zones

The possibility of significant effects is considered in this report using the source-pathway-receptor model:

- 'Source' is defined as the individual elements of the proposed works that have the potential to affect the identified ecological feature (or receptor).
- 'Pathway' is defined as the means or route by which a source can affect the ecological feature.
- An 'Ecological feature' is defined as qualifying features the SPA or SAC for which conservation objectives have been set for the European sites under consideration

Each element can exist independently however an effect is created when there is a linkage between the source, pathway and receptor.

In addition, an 'in-combination' assessment is required where the proposed development may have an effect on a European site, but on its own the effects would not be significant. Part of this desk top study has considered other plans or projects, either consented (started or not started), applications lodged, projects not requiring consent, appealed refusals and proposals in plans, which may need to be considered in-combination.

Finally, the assessment process for European and Ramsar sites has followed the methodology as applied in the DTA Handbook, which is utilised as a best practice guidance document for understanding and applying the Habitats Directive:

https://www.dtapublications.co.uk/

6. European and RAMSAR Site Designations and Considerations:

Natura 2000 site features: (refer to JNCC website) **and location**		**Distance from Site (approx.) km**
Natura 2000 site features that have	The application site is not situated within any Natura 2000 site. However, it is automatically assumed it is hydrologically linked to	

Natura 2000 site features: (refer to JNCC website) **and location**		**Distance from Site (approx.) km**
been screened within 2 km of the development proposal:	the Natura 2000 designations of Belfast Lough SPAs/Ramsar sites and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. The SPA and Ramsar sites immediately to the south of the proposal share the same site boundary. It is considered there is potential for the project to give rise to indirect impacts on the Natura 2000 sites from a source pathway receptor linkage. Additional sites are within a 15 km boundary of the application site but have been screened out because there is no impact pathway identified i.e. they are not hydrologically/ecologically connected to the site. **Belfast Lough SPA:** • Area: 432.14 hectares • Site code: UK9020101 • Date Classified: August 1998 • The SPA boundary contains sections of the Inner Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and is entirely coincident with the Belfast Lough Ramsar site Belfast Lough is a large intertidal sea lough situated at the mouth of the River Lagan on the east coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough comprises a series of mudflats, shell dominated banks and artificial lagoons. The outer lough is mainly rocky shores with a number of sandy bays on the southern shore with more extensive mixed sediment intertidal areas on the northern side. The principal interests are the breeding colony of Common and Arctic Tern and the wintering populations of Redshanks, Bar-tailed Godwit and Black-tailed Godwit. **Belfast Lough Open Water SPA:** • Area: 5592.99 hectares • Site code: UK9020290 • Date Classified: December 2009 The Belfast Lough Open Water area comprises the marine area below the mean low water mark. The site supports internationally important populations of overwintering Great Crested Grebe. **Belfast Lough Ramsar:** Belfast Lough Ramsar Site qualifies under Criterion 3c by regularly supporting internationally important numbers of redshank in winter. The site also regularly supports nationally important numbers of shelduck, oystercatcher, purple sandpiper, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit, curlew and turnstone. Belfast Lough as a whole is also used by several other waterfowl species including great crested grebe, scaup, eider, goldeneye and red-breasted merganser. The Ramsar boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Belfast	**0.1 km** **0.08 kmEast** **0.9 km North** **0.08 km East**

Natura 2000 site features: (refer to JNCC website) **and location**		**Distance from Site (approx.) km**
	Lough Special Protection Area and potential impact on the Ramsar site is assessed as an integral element of the HRA process. **East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA:** East Coast (NI) Marine SPA • Area: 96668.34 hectares • Site code: 004078 The East Coast (NI) Marine Special Protection Area includes coastal and near shore waters from Ringfad near Carnlough, Co. Antrim in the north, the marine area of Larne Lough, the marine area of Belfast Lough, waters around the Copeland Islands and offshore of the Ards Peninsula to Cloghan Head, near Ardglass in the south. The SPA covers a diverse range of seabed habitats, from extensive coastal fringing reefs of various lithologies to the fine silt of inner Belfast Lough. The principal interests are as follows – marine area used by – Non-breeding population of Great Crested Grebe Non-breeding population of Red-throated Diver Rafting Manx Shearwater in the breeding season originating from an adjoining colony Foraging Sandwich, Common and Arctic Tern in the breeding season originating from adjoining tern colonies. The conservation objectives for the East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA are: To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species • Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population • To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species • To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained; • To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species.	
European sites with grey seals as a qualifying feature screened within a distance of 135 km from the proposed	**The Maidens SAC** • Area: 7461.36 hectares • Site code: UK0030384 • Date Classified: August 2012 The Maidens SAC is a group of rocky reefs detached from the coast, north east of Larne, Northern Ireland. The primary reason for the proposed designation of The Maidens as an SAC is for the Annex I	**30 km North East**

Natura 2000 site features: (refer to JNCC website) **and location**		**Distance from Site (approx.) km**
development and with harbour seals as qualifying feature within a distance of 50 km from the proposed development:	habitat Reef and is an important haul out area for grey seals. The conservation objectives for the Maidens are as follows: • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate the extent of the reefs • Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and distribution of the habitats associated with the reefs, to operate appropriately. • Maintain the extent and volume of sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time, subject to natural processes. • Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure and extent of sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, to operate appropriately • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the viability, distribution and diversity of typical species within this habitat. • Maintain (and if feasible enhance) population numbers and distribution of Grey Seal. • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, physical features used by Grey Seals within the site **Strangford Lough SAC** • Area: 15.398.54 hectares • Site code: UK0016618 • Date Classified: August 1996 Strangford Lough is a large (150 km2) marine inlet on the east coast of County Down, of which about 50 km2 lies between high water mark mean tide (HWMMT) and low water mark mean tide (LWMMT). The Lough supports an impressive range of marine habitats and communities with over 2,000 recorded species. It is important for marine invertebrates, algae and saltmarsh plants, for wintering and breeding wetland birds, and for marine mammals, including Harbour Seals. Conservation Objectives are as follows: to maintain (or restore where appropriate) the: • Large shallow inlet and bay • Coastal lagoons • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide • Reefs • Annual vegetation of drift lines • Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) • Perennial vegetation of stony banks • Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand • Harbour (Common) Seal Phoca vitulina	**17 km south**

Natura 2000 site features: (refer to JNCC website) **and location**		**Distance from Site (approx.) km**
	- to favourable condition. **Skerries and Causeway SAC** • Area: 10,862 ha • Site Code: UK0030383 • Date Classified: SCI August 2012 The Skerries and Causeway site is located adjacent to the coastline of Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills and the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site (which lends part of its name to the SAC site; the other half of the SAC name comes from the Skerries islands and rocks off Portrush). The site contains the qualifying Features: Annex I Reef; Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater at all times; Annex I Submerged or partially submerged sea caves; and Annex II Harbour porpoise. It also contains non-qualifying Annex II species, grey seal, common seal, and bottlenose dolphin. The conservation objectives are as follows: To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the: • Reefs • Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, and • Submerged and partially submerged sea caves • Harbour porpoise (Phocoena phocoena) to favourable condition. **North Channel SAC** The site lies adjacent to the North Channel SAC, which is designated for harbour porpoise. Conservation Objectives aim to ensure for harbour porpoise that, subject to natural change, the following attributes are maintained or restored in the long term: - 1. The species is a viable component of the site. - 2. There is no significant disturbance of the species. - 3 The condition of the supporting habitats and processes, and the availability of prey is maintained.	**70 km North** **15 km east**

Description of the Project or Plan • **Size and scale;** • **Land-take;** • **Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;** • **Resource requirements (water abstraction etc);** • **Emission (disposal to land, water or air);** • **Excavation requirements;** • **Transportation requirements;** • **Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc;** • **Other.**	• **Size and scale** The footprint size is estimated at 4,180 m^2 • **Land-take** It is not proposed there will be any land take. • **Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site** Adjacent to Belfast Lough SPA/Ramsar • **Resource requirements (water abstraction etc)** No anticipated resource requirements • **Emission (disposal to land, water or air)** Traffic movements will result in air emissions of NOx and SOx and particulate matter. Disposal of waste water (surface or otherwise) is assumed will connect to foul systems/existing drainage systems. Any cattle/equine waste will be removed. • **Excavation requirements** None – site is existing hard standing but there will be new road infrastructure • **Transportation requirements** There will be traffic moving on and off the site facilities – as personnel and hauliers move around the site – and new flow lines for traffic movement. • **Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc** Early preliminary site works are Planned to commence mid-August with construction September to December, facilities delivery required for 1 January 2021. This will be confirmed when Procurement is initiated and then delivery timelines can be realigned.
Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to management of the site for conservation of N2K features? **If yes proceed no further.**	No

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.	Planning applications were identified in the vicinity of the proposed development. The list was correct at the time of writing (August 2020) and includes significant applications detailed from a search of PlanningNI planning portal for applications within the vicinity of the proposed site over the 5 years previous to the search being carried out. The search has revealed there is development proposed within the harbour, including Giant's Park and also two new film studios in the harbour. Following consideration of the proposals and due to the location and nature of the infrastructure to be constructed at the intended location, it is not proposed there will be any further assessment of in-combination impacts with other plans or projects. The application site is not located within any of the Natura 2000 designated areas and no associated works will be undertaken within the identified SACs and SPAs. Applying the source-pathway-receptor model for the assessment it is therefore assessed that no direct impacts e.g. habitat loss will occur. Construction of the proposed development may involve the use of plant and machinery as well as the associated temporary storage of construction materials, oils, fuels and chemicals in designated areas within the site compound. Impacts could arise through activities such as additional vehicle movements, movement of material to the site, piling for foundations, disturbance of contaminated material, creation of pollution pathways through works on site with the associated potential for disturbance. During construction, there may be a potential pathway for effects on the features of the European Sites (namely bird species listed as qualifying features). The potential effects may arise from habitat degradation and/or disturbance. It is not envisaged there will be impacts from the operation of the development. Further consideration is given below.

N2K Feature: Mention all features	**Describe any likely direct or indirect effects to the N2K features arising as a result of:** • **loss;** • **reduction of habitat area;** • **disturbance;** • **habitat or species fragmentation;** • **reduction in species density; changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. water quality, climate change).**	***Effect Significant/Not Significant? Why?**

Belfast Lough – SPA/RAMSAR *Qualifying Feature of interest:* *Redshank* *Common Tern* *Artic Tern* *Bar-tailed Godwit* *Black-tailed Godwit* **East Coast (NI) Marine SPA** *Qualifying Feature of Interest:* *Wintering Great Crested Grebe* *Wintering Red Throated Diver* *Breeding Arctic Tern* *Breeding Sandwich Tern* *Breeding Common Tern* *Breeding Manx Shearwater* *Wintering Eider Duck* Belfast Lough Open Water SPA *Qualifying Feature of Interest:* *Great Crested Grebe*	There is a potential impact on SPA/Ramsar features from disturbance due to the proximity of the new facility to the SPA/Ramsar boundary. Disturbance to birds can come from a number of sources and different species react to different noise levels differently (depending on source/duration etc.) and lighting may also be a disturbance factor to sensitive species. As the works may take place during the over wintering period for birds, there is therefore an increased potential for disturbance, due to a higher occurrence of SPA/Ramsar species in the vicinity – although it is acknowledged this part of the SPA is less utilised in terms of species numbers. Disturbance is also a complex factor and influenced by other variables, such as habituation and weather patterns. Other factors from the proposal that may have a significant effect would be an indirect impact via hydrological link from the development area into the SPA. The nearest important location for SPA features is the tidal 'pond' or channel directly to the west of the development. It is not anticipated there will be likely significant effects on SPA features from other factors such as habitat degradation as the compound is already in existence bound by roads and other infrastructure either side. There will be no direct habitat loss or impacts of SPA foraging ground. Contaminated land has not been identified as an issue and will be addressed separately if found to be the case Any potential air quality impacts from NOx and SOx and particulate matter have been ruled out given the development is taking place in a heavily industrialised location and there is no intended increase in traffic.	For the purposes of this assessment, the main issue is the potential for disturbance to bird species and habitat degradation. It is assumed that disturbance will take the form of noise disturbance (vehicle/mechanical etc.) and/or increased human activity and also a potential pathway for a hydrological connection from the development site to the SPA, which could lead to an indirect effect from the source to the receptor. It is acknowledged that anthropogenic light may also be a source of disturbance, however, as this section of the Port is utilised frequently day and night for commercial purposes, it is assumed birds will show some level of habituation and records do not indicate this area of the lough is utilised for roosting. It is anticipated there will be no long term impact on species populations or permanent displacement from this area of the port as a foraging location. Given this is a busy commercial port and Belfast Lough is a well utilised lough by marine traffic – for both social and commercial purposes – plus this part of Dargan road is frequented numerous times throughout the day by traffic and other forms of activity take place in this area, it is not anticipated that disturbance via noise (human or machine originated) will lead to a situation that it would affect the integrity of the SPA and therefore undermine the conservation objectives. WeBs bird counts for this section of the SPA are quite low in number, and it is acknowledged SPA features do forage in the mudflats adjacent to the proposal. There is a Redshank roost in proximity to the development but NIEA have noted these birds are habituated to industrial activity and significant disturbance unlikely. NIEA also note construction impact could be mitigated by screening along the southern end of the site Furthermore, birds in the vicinity of this part of the port, would be habituated to high noise levels and it is not assumed that disturbance from noise would be a significant effect, due to current operational traffic levels, especially with HGV movement from the retail facility nearby. With regards to any noise generating activities, such as piling, hammering etc., it has been shown that birds in Belfast Lough can habituate quickly in response to noisy activities such as piling, with no long term impacts (data via Marine Licence ML 203/13). Significant effects on SPA features north of the development – Dargan Road North – are not considered likely due to the fact there is a busy road in-between the development and the SPA foraging areas and as it is nearly 700 m away, effects from any significant noise sources are also not considered likely (though it is acknowledged this is a heavily utilised

		area for SPA features). It is anticipated all drainage will connect into existing foul system. Any potential contamination via surface run off will be collected and standard mitigation will be applied via a Construction Method Statement and a Construction Method Plan, such as pollution buffers and contamination treatment before any surface water is discharged, if necessary. An underground tank suitably sized to accommodate drainage from all livestock and equine facilities with level alarm to prevent overflow will be utilised. This waste will be removed off site. Prior to any water discharge, if required, relevant government bodies will be consulted for any legislative requirements that must be adhered to. Taking into consideration the screening assessment above for Belfast Lough SPA it is considered there will be no likely significant effects from the proposed development on Belfast Lough SPA(s)/Ramsar sites or East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. Further consideration will be given to any air dispersion modelling that is required due to the underground tank storage facilities for livestock onsite and also removal of slurry from the site.
The Maidens SAC: *Qualifying Feature of interest:* *Grey Seal* **Strangford Lough SAC** *Qualifying Feature of interest:* *Harbour Seal* **Skerries and Causeway SAC** *Qualifying feature of interest:* *Harbour Seal* *Harbour porpoise* *Grey Seal* **North Channel SCI** *Qualifying Feature of interest:* *Harbour porpoise*	SACs designated for Harbour Porpoise and also for grey and Harbour seals, are screened out as it is considered to be extremely unlikely that there would be any effects arising from works on site which would impact on these features and therefore, the potential for likely significant effects on Maidens, Strangford Lough, Skerries and Causeway SAC and North Channel SCI are ruled out.	Harbour seals have a breeding colony at the northern end of ferry terminals at Musgrave Channel with peak counts of at least 60 individuals. Previous studies have shown that piling in the vicinity of the colony (VT2) has no discernible effect on the populations or their behaviour and the location of the proposal (not in the marine environment and a significant distance away) would indicate there would be no likely significant effect on the harbour seal population from the proposal. Grey seal and Harbour Porpoise occur in low numbers in the vicinity of the development and similarly there would be no likely significant effect on their populations. However, noisy activities on land (not just in the riverine or marine environment) can disturb marine mammals, depending on the type of activity undertaken and although it is not foreseen that any prolonged noisy activity will take place that will cause a long term disturbance issue for marine mammals, all recommended SNCB guidance will be followed, if an activity with potential for noise disturbance (on land) was to occur.

Describe any potential effects on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of: interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site	**Effect considered significant/non-significant: Finding of No significant effects Matrix**
None considered likely	None considered likely

List of Agencies Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address.	N/A – This however has been prepared for consultation with appropriate SNCBs and consultee responses will be considered appropriately.
Above consultee response.	N/A

7. Summary of Potential Effects on additional ASSI Features

ASSI Feature: (Mention all features).	**Describe any likely direct or indirect effects to the ASSI features arising as a result of:** • **loss;** • **reduction of habitat area;** • **disturbance;** • **habitat or species fragmentation;** • **reduction in species density;** • **changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. water quality, climate change).**	.
The 2 km screening distance for nationally designated sites has identified Inner Belfast Lough ASSI requires further assessment. *Qualifying features for the site are as follows:* *Turnstone* *wintering population* *Cormorant* *wintering population* *Shelduck* *wintering population* *Mallard* *wintering population* *Scaup* *wintering population* *Eider* *wintering population* *Goldeneye* *wintering population*	The assessment for the ASSI features has identified there is potential for the project to cause disturbance to over wintering birds that may feed adjacent to the proposed application site from noisy activity – machinery or human. However, it is not anticipated that noise levels will be beyond what is currently experienced in the port at the moment – this would apply either in construction or operation phase - and it is assumed the birds will habituate quickly. As the proposal is within a working harbour, it is expected that birds will be used to some level of noise disturbance. There is potential for pollution/siltation impacts on the mudflats and saltmarsh that may be in the vicinity of the works – NED Mapviewer did not return any habitat points but it is assumed this area is associated feeding grounds - but it is not anticipated that any direct impacts from pollution, siltation etc. will occur due to the aforementioned built in mitigation plans for the project. It is acknowledged, however, the site drainage and management of water on the site may require further assessment once details are known and this also applies to potential for contamination. Therefore certain assumptions are made in this assessment but guarantees are built into the project design that any mitigation necessary will be utilised. It is acknowledged that anthropogenic light may also be a source of disturbance, however, as this section of the Port is utilised frequently day and night for commercial purposes, it is assumed birds will show some level of habituation and records do not indicate this area of the lough is utilised for roosting. It is anticipated there will be no long term impact on species populations or permanent displacement from this area of the port as a foraging location.	

Red-breasted Merganser wintering population *Oystercatcher wintering population* *Ringed Plover wintering population* *Lapwing wintering population* *Knot wintering population* *Dunlin wintering population* *Black-tailed Godwit wintering population* Curlew wintering population	The overall conclusion, is there may be some disturbance to ASSI features through noise, but no direct impacts will occur and noise levels are not anticipated to be above current levels in a port. Hence a certain amount of habituation is expected from a species level. . Further mitigation for sensitive wintering ASSI birds may need discussion in the implementation phase of the project and this is acknowledged, if works are to take place during this period. Comments from Natural Environment Division:

8. Air Quality Impacts Considerations

As the proposed development also falls within 7.5 k of the following protected sites:
Inner Belfast Lough ASSI;
Outer Belfast Lough ASSI;
Belfast Lough SPA/Ramsar and Belfast Lough Open Water SPA;
Inner Belfast Lough ASSI;
Outer Belfast Lough ASSI;
Craigantlet Woods ASSI;
Bellevue ASSI;
Belvoir ASSI;
Belfast Lough SPA/Ramsar and
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA

Consideration must be given to potential ammonia emissions from holding pens and slurry storage for holding pens for equine/commercial animals. A SCAIL assessment will be undertaken of the potential for impacts from ammonia emissions on protected sites to ensure the facility is within current DAERA operational protocol guidelines.

9. Marine Conservation Zone Considerations

MCZ SCREENING Matrix **All applications to be screened to determine whether section 23 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 should apply to the application.**	
(i) Name of Project or Plan.	**Construction of SPS Inspection facilities at Belfast Port**
(ii) Application number/reference.	**N/A**

MCZ SCREENING Matrix **All applications to be screened to determine whether section 23 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 should apply to the application.**	
(iii) Brief description of the plan/project.	DAERA are intending on applying for permitted development rights under relevant planning legislation, to construct **Inspection facilities** at Belfast Harbour, to allow for additional product checks, after the EU Exit transition period.
(iv) Name and location of the MCZ site(s) potentially affected.	**Outer Belfast Lough MCZ**
(v) Description of MCZ site(s).	Belfast Lough is a large sea inlet situated at the mouths of the Lagan, Farset and Blackstaff Rivers on the eastern coast of Northern Ireland. Outer Belfast Lough MCZ is an exposed area and is located within Northern Ireland's busiest sea-lough. Home to a variety of species, the Outer Lough encompasses a wide range of habitats such as subtidal sand and subtidal mixed sediments, sediment dominated bays and rocky shores. The MCZ has been designated due to the presence of a well established population of Ocean quahog that lives buried in the Subtidal (sublittoral) sand habitat. Although distributed throughout Northern Ireland, Ocean quahog is present in a dense aggregation in Outer Belfast Lough; it is thought that the species is well conserved here due to continuous recruitment and high population numbers. The MCZ species feature, the Ocean quahog, is a large, slow-growing bivalve mollusc, which lives buried in muddy and sandy sediments. The oldest recorded Ocean quahog from Belfast Lough was approximately 220 years old. Ocean quahog is currently listed on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats but is not considered Threatened and/or Declining in the region in which the MCZ is located, OSPAR Region III, (OSPAR agreement 2008-6; OSPAR, 2009). It is also a Nationally Important Marine Feature (NIMF).

MCZ SCREENING Matrix **All applications to be screened to determine whether section 23 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 should apply to the application.**	
(vi) Summary of activities that may potentially affect the MCZ.	• Extraction of living resources • Fishing – dredging (scallops and potential clam dredging) • Fishing – demersal trawling (fish & mussels) Fishing – traps (potting/creeling) • Energy generation (potential) Renewable energy – Tidal Resource Zone • Coastal infrastructure Coastal docks, ports & marinas Coastal defence & land claim • Waste management activities Sewage disposal (Waste water treatment Works & outfalls) • Dredge disposal • Transport Shipping – general at sea (Moorings, Anchorage & Vessel movements Shipping – port operations within Harbour Authority limits (mooring, beaching, launching, ferry route, etc.) • Recreation and leisure Recreational activities (SCUBA Diving, Sailing, Windsurfing, Kayaking/canoeing, Bird watching Recreational fishing) • Marine research Scientific and Archaeological activities • Other man-made structures Submarine cable & pipeline operations
(vii) Is the activity capable of affecting (other than insignificantly) the protected features of the MCZ? **If the answer is "no" proceed to next question; if "yes" detail the features and proceed to the next question.**	No
(viii) Is the activity capable of affecting (other than insignificantly) any ecological or geomorphological process on which the conservation of any protected feature of an MCZ is (wholly or in part) dependent? **If the answer is "no" to vii <u>and</u> viii, no further assessment is required.** **If the answer is "yes", detail the processes.** **If the answer is "yes" to either vii or viii proceed to Stage 1 assessment.**	No - Given the nature of the proposed works and the distance to the MCZ it is anticipated there will be no impact on the site selection features and therefore, the assessment will not be taken to the next stage.

10. Priority Habitats and Species

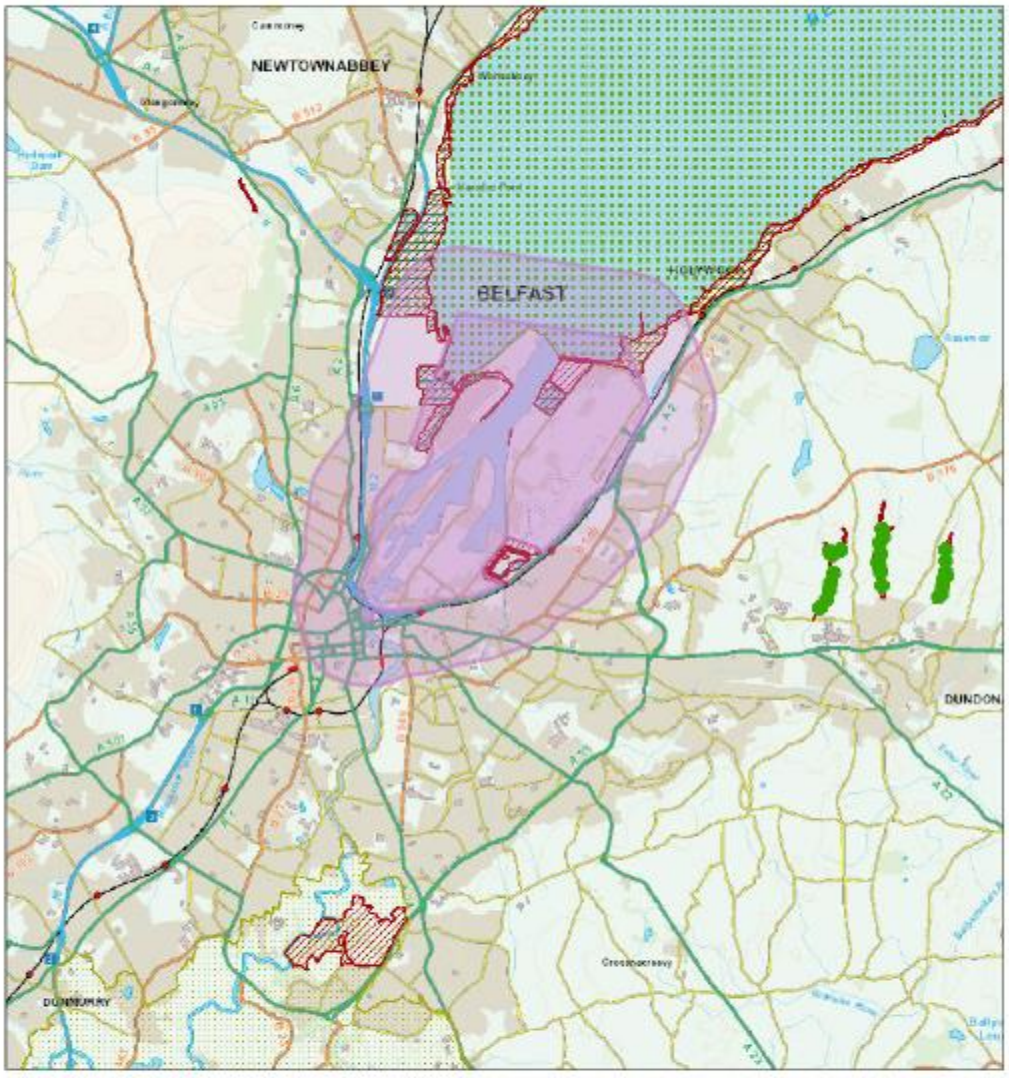
- Priority Habitat:

Open Mosaic Habitats (a Northern Ireland priority habitat) are a possibility on sites in these types of location. https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2020/01/Identifying-open-mosaic-habitat.pdf

From an inspection of aerial photographs it appears that the chosen Belfast site is likely not to have priority habitat present.

Annex 1.0

Belfast Harbour Commissioners' Boundary HRA Screening



17/06/2020, 12:38:39

1:79,833

0 0.5 1 2 mi

0 1 2 4 km

- World Heritage Site
- Natura2000 Sites - Special Protection Area
- Natura2000 Sites - Special Area Of Conservation
- Ramsar
- Nature Reserve
- Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty