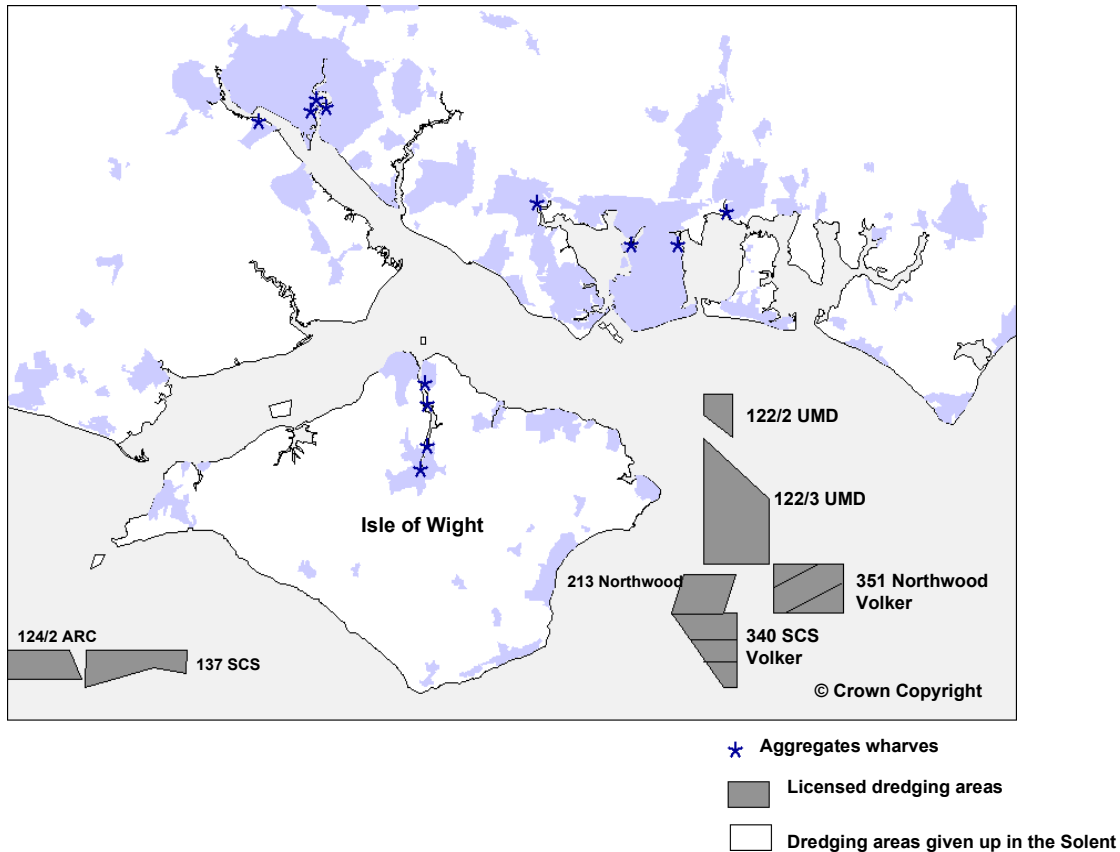


MARINE AGGREGATES AND AGGREGATE IMPORTS

Long-term aim: 'to recognise the needs of the aggregate industry, and ensure wise management of resources, seeking integration between the offshore and onshore aspects of the industry'.



The licensed dredging areas shown on the map are the maximum that may be worked and only a very small proportion of these areas are in use at any one time. Most dredging areas are zoned to exclude this activity over certain periods and the tonnage dredged can also be restricted. Licence conditions require the seabed to be returned to a similar condition to what it was before dredging commenced.

KEY FACTS:

- All of the dredging areas in the Solent have been surrendered in the last ten years.
- Landings of marine aggregates in the Solent average 1.5 million tonnes per annum.
- Consumption of marine dredged aggregates on the Isle of Wight is around 115,000 tonnes per annum.

The Position

The Solent is an active focus for the aggregates industry, this activity can be divided into two functions:

- extraction of aggregates, of which little takes place within the study area for the Strategic Guidance, although there is substantial activity off the south-east coast of the Isle of Wight, and in Christchurch Bay.
- landing of aggregates, including both marine dredged material and imported crushed rock. Landing for use on the mainland takes place at a number of wharves on the Rivers Itchen and Test, and at Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours. Marine aggregates are supplied to the Isle of Wight via wharves at Cowes and Newport.

Trends in demand for aggregates are principally governed by the market responding to the construction industry, such as housing and road building. Long-term forecasts are for an increase in demand for aggregates, although recent years have seen a decline. The use of aggregates for beach nourishment is a growing market.

Marine aggregate extraction is currently governed by the licences issued by the Crown Estate, which are in effect controlled by the non-statutory 'Government View' procedure, operated by the Department of the Environment Transport and Regions (DETR). This provides for consultation with key interests, and it is Crown Estate policy not to issue licences unless a positive Government View is forthcoming. There are proposals to replace the Government View system by a statutory process, which would give the power to regulate dredging to the DETR. It is expected that the new system of regulation will be established within the lifespan of the Strategic Guidance project, although it will not operate on a statutory basis until parliamentary time allows for the appropriate primary legislation to be passed.

Environmental assessment is required for all dredging applications, which may include the cumulative impact of proposals. It is considered by some that the process of determining licences could be more transparent and that greater openness over proposals would assist in the clarification and resolution of concerns. The new procedures will be accompanied by planning guidance for marine aggregates extraction, which will provide a mechanism to consider these issues. Proposals for extraction from intertidal areas also require planning permission from the local Minerals Planning Authority (MPA).

The Crown Estate monitors the location of extraction through automatic position logging using an Electronic Monitoring System (EMS). This provides an effective enforcement and control mechanism to ensure dredging only takes place in licensed areas. The volume of material extracted is monitored by annual audits of wharf records including cargo records and ledgers. Such information is commercially sensitive and not a matter of public record, although it provides objective information in the event of any dispute.

On land down to low water mark, the responsibility for planning the supply of aggregates, including the identification of land for wharves and control of development, lies with the MPAs (County and Unitary Councils). Supply level requirements at a regional level are set by the Department of the Environment Transport and Regions through Minerals Planning Guidance Note 6, '*Guidelines for Aggregate Provision in England, 1994*'. The land-won sand and gravel supply requirement is apportioned between counties by the South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN), in consultation with the South East Regional Aggregates Working Party (SERAWP). In Hampshire, around 50% of demand is met from land-won sources, and on the Isle of Wight the figure is around 40%. Whilst the balance of the aggregates supply requirement is to be met from marine-dredged, imported and recycled materials, there is no apportionment of the requirements from these sources. The industry is, therefore, controlled and planned through two parallel systems - land use planning for land facilities, and sectoral licensing for marine extraction - and there is little direct contact between the two. This can hinder the process of identifying the right balance in supply between land-won and sea-won sources and the need for wharves.

A number of smaller wharves have closed within the last few years, and there may be a need for additional wharves for landing marine dredged aggregates after the turn of the century. Whilst the bulk of aggregates currently landed in Hampshire are sea-won, wharves are also required for imported crushed rock. It is expected that increasing quantities of crushed rock will need to be

imported into the South East Region. There can be difficulties in safeguarding existing wharves from other uses and providing new ones. The recent Inspector's Report on the public inquiry into objections to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan concludes that there is a strong need for an aggregate wharf for large-scale importation of crushed rock in Hampshire and recommends Dibden Bay as being a potentially suitable site for such development. However, these recommendations have been rejected by Hampshire County Council.

A range of concerns are raised about aggregate extraction. Research on impacts has been carried out, and in the Solent region this has focussed on the possible effects of extraction on coastal erosion. Studies have concluded that present dredging is in areas of immobile sediment and is therefore not a cause for concern. Concerns exist with regard to impacts on maritime archaeology, nature conservation and fisheries. The Code of Practice for Seabed Developers, produced by the Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee, provides a framework for activity with regard to Maritime Archaeology which is fully recognised by the British Marine Aggregates Producers Association (BMAPA) (see box, page 36).

What do we need to do?

1. Avoid future aggregate dredging in the Solent, unless environmentally acceptable

The extent of aggregate extraction within the area covered by the Strategic Guidance is very limited and in fact all of the aggregate licences within the Solent proper have been surrendered by the Crown Estate within recent years. The long-term policy should be to avoid future extraction from the Solent, and only to issue licenses where environmentally acceptable.

LEAD ROLE: Crown Estate, DETR (Minerals and Waste Planning Division).

2. Ensure any new licensing regime for aggregate dredging meets the needs of the Solent

The replacement of the Government View procedure will change the way in which the system of regulating mineral dredging operates, and may give opportunities to improve the integration of sea-use and land-use planning aspects of the industry. There is a need to ensure good contacts are established and maintained with the DETR Minerals and Waste Planning Division, in order to ensure that the new arrangements take account of the needs of the Solent, and that good consultation mechanisms are in place. It also provides the opportunity to identify and agree a standard for the information provided in relation to licence applications, and review the decision making process and normal conditions imposed.

LEAD ROLE: DETR (Minerals and Waste Planning Division).

3. Maintain and develop liaison arrangements

Liaison arrangements have been put in place to facilitate dialogue between the aggregates industry and interested parties. A committee is convened by MAFF every six months in Chichester, to consider issues regarding marine dredging and fisheries throughout the south coast. The aggregates industry have a lead body which represents their interests: BMAPA. The Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee (JNAPC) brings together aggregates interests with archaeological interests and other seabed developers. It is desirable to re-examine the liaison arrangements in the Solent to ensure that effective contacts are in place with marine nature conservation organisations.

LEAD ROLE: MAFF, BMAPA and JNAPC.

4. Keep the environmental assessment regime under review

The established environmental assessment regime for aggregate dredging proposals needs to be kept under review, in conjunction with the review of the licensing regime. There is a need to clarify the extent and nature of environmental concerns with regard to aggregates dredging, and determine how these should be taken into account in discussion with the industry, Crown Estate, DETR and MAFF. There is a need to consider whether a strategic environmental assessment of the cumulative impact of dredging activity is required, and additional research needs should be identified and addressed. The Construction Industries Research and Information Association (CIRIA) have commissioned research on the impacts of dredging off the Isle of Wight, which will be considering the environmental assessment needs of future dredging applications.

LEAD ROLE: DETR (Minerals and Waste Planning Division).

5. Improve integration of onshore and offshore aspects of the industry

Notwithstanding the guidance to local authorities of Minerals Planning Guidance Note 6, the advice given by the South East Region Aggregates Working Party (SERAWP), and the regional policy developed by SERPLAN, there is a need to seek clarification of the implications of guidance for different local authorities. The lack of forward planning of aggregate dredging offshore means there is

a risk of mismatch between the need for and provision of wharfage facilities and in the balance of supply between land-won and sea-won sources. It would be desirable to improve the information on marine dredging available to land-use planning authorities, and to consider how realistic forward planning of licensed dredging from the sea-bed could be achieved.

LEAD ROLE: DETR (Minerals and Waste Planning Division), SERAWP, SERPLAN.

6. Better understand the demands for aggregates for soft coastal engineering

The move towards the promotion of softer engineering solutions for coastal defence represents a growing market for marine-dredged aggregates, with the prospect of increased proposals for beach recharge and recycling of materials within sediment cells. The possible future demand for such materials has not yet been quantified; better information is required to determine whether the possible sources of material match the demands, and to assess the possible environmental implications of greater use of these coast defence techniques.

LEAD ROLE: SCOPAC.

KEY ORGANISATIONS: MARINE AGGREGATES AND AGGREGATE IMPORTS

Lead organisations

DETR (Minerals and Waste Planning Division)
Crown Estate
Hampshire County Council
Southampton City Council
Portsmouth City Council
Isle of Wight Council
West Sussex County Council
SERAWP
SERPLAN
British Marine Aggregate Producers Association (BMAPA)
Aggregate Companies

Other key organisations:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
British Geological Survey
English Nature
Chichester District Council
New Forest District Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Fareham Borough Council
Gosport Borough Council
Havant Borough Council
Southern Sea Fisheries Committee
Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee
SCOPAC
Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA)

BMAPA and Maritime Archaeology

The following undertaking has been made by the British Marine Aggregates Producers Association with regard to maritime archaeology.

Companies carrying out operations on the seabed who are members of the British Marine Aggregates Producers Association will co-operate with the Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee (JNAPC) in the pursuit of aims to preserve archaeological remains.

In the case of a company seeking a licence for seabed mineral extraction, it is normal for the company to carry out a seismic and a bathymetric survey of the area as a first priority and before any other activity takes place. Companies who are members of the British Marine Aggregates Producers Association will be glad to make relevant details of such surveys available to an archaeologist or a body proposed by the JNAPC, provided that they undertake to guarantee complete commercial confidentiality of the information supplied. When possible, companies will invite an archaeologist to witness the surveys and also to witness a dredging operation.

(The JNAPC Code of Practice is set out in full within the Strategic Guidance chapter on Historic Heritage and Maritime Archaeology).