### Description of the Project

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was required to support an application for a Marine Licence to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to allow Northwood (Fareham) Ltd (NFL) and Volker Dredging Ltd (VDL) to continue dredging marine aggregate in Area 351, east of the Isle of Wight. EIA is a requirement under the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amended) Regulations 2011.

Area 351 was first licenced for aggregate dredging in 1989 for a period of 25 years and covered an area of approximately 18.6 km². The 2013 application was for 15 years and covered a reduced licence area of 7 km² within the original dredging site (shaded area in the location figure).

### Key Issues

The purpose of the Marine Licence application is to meet ongoing market demands for marine won aggregates for markets in the south of England and elsewhere.

Given the number of existing licence areas in the region a Regional Environmental Characterisation (REC) survey was undertaken along with a Marine Aggregates Regional Environmental Assessment (MAREA).

The aim of the REC surveys was to acquire high quality data to enable broad scale characterisation of the seabed habitats, their biological communities and potential historic environment assets within the region.

The MAREA is an industry funded programme which provides a focussed description of the environment potentially affected by aggregate extraction. It provides an impact assessment benchmark for site specific aggregate dredging EIAs.

The following site specific studies were also undertaken to address specific issues: Coastal Impact Study, benthic ecology study, navigation risk assessment and archaeology study.

The results of the site specific studies along with the outputs from the REC and the South Coast MAREA were used to inform the EIA.
The significant residual impacts of the proposals, taking into account the mitigation measures, are identified as follows.

Residual potential impacts of **Minor** significance to:
- marine geology, geomorphology and superficial sediments;
- water quality;
- benthic ecology; and
- fish and shellfish ecology.

Residual potential impacts of **Minor and Moderate** significance to:
- marine archaeology and cultural heritage.

The **Minor** and **Moderate** rating for marine archaeology is related to the uncertainty about the potential presence of unknown prehistoric archaeology.

A set of draft licence conditions, incorporating the mitigation measures were included in the ES.

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**Lessons Learnt**

The EIA considered the Physical, Biological and Human impacts from continuing dredging in Area 351. Where a number of similar projects occur in an area and impacts on the same receptors are predicted, a common approach to assessing cumulative impacts using a common data set is important. The MAREA standardised the approach to assessing cumulative impacts across all of the licence areas within the same region, ensuring consistency in the EIA process and aiding the decision making process.

The regional assessment approach identified key issues and data gaps to be addressed in the individual EIAs, as well as those which did not require further detailed assessment at a licence specific level. This allowed the individual ESs to be streamlined with cross-reference to the MAREA reports where necessary.

The approach also made efficiency savings in baseline data gathering and data interpretation, for example the industry was able to collaborate in designing and undertaking surveys and studies where there were similar potential impacts.

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