

Application by the Environment Agency for the Ipswich Flood Defence Management Scheme (FDMS): Tidal Barrier Works (MMO ref: MLA/2014/00344).

Introduction

EIFCA were asked to provide comments to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) regarding a marine licence application (MMO reference: MLA/2014/00344) by the Environment Agency to construct a new tidal barrier across the River Orwell, Suffolk as part of the Ipswich Flood Defence Management Strategy (FDMS) Tidal Barrier Scheme.

The proposed FDMS works are to comprise of construction of a tidal barrier with a moveable gate within the New Cut of the River Orwell and completion of ancillary works including: in-river tie in walls (eastern and western banks) with land reclamation, installation of in-river scour protection, dredging and dredge disposal.

The EIFCA's areas of concern about this marine licence application are as follows:

- The limited characterisation data for fish and shellfish in the specific area of the proposed works (New Cut and Cliff Quay);
- Potential impacts on the estuarine fish community and supporting benthic habitats from in-channel piling works;
- potential loss of bait-digging target species such as river crabs and harbour ragworm;
- the potential impact of works on stocks of recreationally fished species;
- Amount of riverine dredged material to be extracted /disturbed and the potential for releasing chemical and heavy metal contaminants;
- Potential cumulative effect of adding the disposal of material from this project to the same area used by other regular maintenance dredging projects; and
- potential that the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is not reflective of current activity in and around the Stour & Orwell Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site – particularly the non-inclusion of fishing as a relevant proposal for the in-combination assessment.

Conclusion

The EIFCA has made the following recommendations to the Applicant, the Environment Agency:

- updating the benthic characterisation with site-specific fish and shellfish data in (or confirming why these data are not available);
- consideration of the potential impact on bait collection fishing activity through loss of intertidal habitat;
- further consultation with local sea angling clubs and bait diggers in relation to fishery impacts;
- consideration of the cumulative effect of adding a further dredged material pressure to the Gabbards disposal area; and;
- updating the HRA to include fishing activities in the Stour & Orwell SPA as a potential in-combination activity .

EIFCA will continue to engage in discussions with the Applicant about our concerns with the proposed works.