



Falmouth Harbour
Commissioners

MEDIA RELEASE

Environmental Impact Assessment results announced

A major study into proposals to dredge a deep water channel to Falmouth Harbour opening it up to larger vessels including some of the world's biggest cruise liners has concluded the project can be carried out within the environmental constraints which protect the area.

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) was commissioned to look into proposals for channel dredging, wharf improvements and the building of a new cruise terminal to attract more visiting passenger liners to Falmouth as well as securing Falmouth's future as an operational port for a wide range of ever-larger commercial vessels.

The £410,000 EIA was carried out by world leading environmental consultants Royal Haskoning in consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency and with funding support from the South West RDA and the Objective One Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The project itself is being driven by Falmouth Harbour Commissioners and supported by a range of local marine businesses including A&P Falmouth Limited.

Falmouth Harbour Commissioner's Chief Executive, Captain Mark Sansom, comments: *"This project has the potential to make a significant impact on the local economy and so we are delighted that this study shows it could be achieved within the necessary environmental constraints."*

“We now need to work with our partners to further develop the economic case for the scheme to include the potential for opportunities which have arisen since the dredging scheme was first initiated. These include looking at how Falmouth could benefit from the significant future development of the offshore renewable energy sector such as providing deep water access for the deployment and servicing of wave and wind energy devices.”

“We will be co-ordinating a public exhibition with Royal Haskoning and will be showing the full findings of the EIA as well as answering questions about the proposed project. I hope that everyone with an interest in the project will come along to the event.”

Theo Leijser, the South West RDA’s director for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, said: *“This report is an important step in assessing the feasibility of the proposed dredging project and will allow an informed debate of the issues, so we very much welcome its publication. Environmental considerations are just one measure of feasibility and we are working with the Harbour Commissioners and other partners on the economic case for the project.”*

The headline findings of the EIA are:

- It is possible to dredge a channel which would accommodate the world’s largest cruise liners, with the ‘design vessel’ used being the 154,000 tonne Freedom of the Seas, which was the largest cruise ship in operation when it was launched in 2006.
- Dredging will not have an adverse long term effect on the integrity of The Fal and Helford Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- Removing dead maerl and relaying it over dredged areas in the new channel will maintain protected maerl habitats.
- The majority of dredged material (600,000 m³) could be disposed of at the existing Falmouth Bay offshore disposal site with only a negligible impact on sediment deposition outside the immediate vicinity of the site. Despite a temporary reduction in water quality, the disposal of clean dredged material offshore has been modelled as part of the EIA and the results suggest that the material will not be transported back into the SAC.

- Any dredged material containing residues from antifouling boats or other historic harbour activity can be safely removed and treated on land before being used as construction material for the new cruise terminal or taken to landfill.
- There would be no impact on bathing water quality on Falmouth's beaches.

The full findings of the EIA will be displayed at a public exhibition at the national Maritime Museum Cornwall in Falmouth from 10:00am – 16:00 on November 6.

Ends

6 November 2008

For Further details:

Shelley Fletcher
Deborah Clark Associates
01208 77900
07796 175634
shelley@dca-pr.co.uk

Fact file:

- The channel is planned to be deepened to -8.3m Chart Datum (CD)
- A Berth for cruise liners would be dredged to -9.5m CD to ensure that they are navigable for 75% of the time by modern cruise vessels
- It is predicted that approximately 700,000 cubic metres of material will require dredging
- Work to date:
 - A vibrocore survey has been completed to determine the nature of the sediments to be dredged
 - These samples from the sea bed have undergone chemical analysis
 - A diver survey has been completed to investigate the plants and animals currently living on the sea bed to determine project impacts on the potential effect on the natural environment
- An archaeological assessment is also underway to investigate the effect of the dredge on any historic environment

- This has comprised of an analysis of existing information and carrying out geophysical surveys by boat to detect the presence of anomalies on the seabed

Notes to Editors:

Falmouth Harbour, including the Carrick Roads, is reputed to be the third largest natural harbour in the world. Falmouth Harbour Commissioners are a statutory port authority with responsibility for the Inner Harbour at Falmouth (excluding Falmouth Docks), the Penryn River up as far as Boyers Cellars, the southern part of the Carrick Roads and a large part of Falmouth Bay. As well as providing regulation of its Harbour Area the Commissioners provide small craft facilities for residents and visitors.

Falmouth Harbour Commissioners is a statutory port undertaking created by an act of parliament in 1870. It operates as a trust port and has a board of eight commissioners who act as trustees. Falmouth Harbour Commissioners are committed to operating the harbour in an open and accountable manner and welcome feedback from harbour users.