

**Environmental Impact Assessment
Preliminary Examination**

**Proposed Extension
Port Pier, Inver , Co. Donegal.**

By

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for

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02 May 2024

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1.0 Introduction

This Preliminary Examination Report has been prepared by Jessica Devlin BSc. MSc. Project Management and Environmental Services for Donegal County Council.

This report has been compiled to provide the competent authority with adequate information to determine whether or not there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed extension of Port Pier, Inver, Co. Donegal. The purpose of the report is to determine whether or not it is required to screen the proposed works to establish whether it requires Environmental Impact Assessment and as a result the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

The screening process includes an assessment of the details of the proposal with reference to the relevant EIA legislation including the Planning & Development Regulations as amended by the European Union (Planning and Development,) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) and relevant EU Guidance.

Appropriate Assessment (NIS) has also been undertaken and can be referred to in a separate document.

2.0 Statement of authority

Jessica graduated from the National University of Ireland, Galway in 1997 with a BSc. honours degree in Geology and obtained a MSc. in Applied Environmental Science from Queens University Belfast in 2001. She attained a National Certificate in Eco-Tourism, from Sligo Institute of Technology in 2005 and in 2014 completed Geographical Information Systems for Environmental Investigations, University College Dublin.

Over the years, Jessica has gained a wide range of experience in research, consultancy and project management with particular emphasis on sustainable development in freshwater, marine and coastal environments.

As field scientist with the Queens University Marine Station in Portaferry, Jessica carried out habitat surveys with respect to the decline of salmonid populations in Northern Ireland Rivers. She progressed to research assistant with Queens University and the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development. As project manager for the Donegal County Council - Marine & Water Leisure Programme, she managed projects on sustainable development of the marine leisure product. Jessica also worked with the University College Cork Coastal and Marine Research Centre in partnership with Donegal County Council and the University of Ulster, as manager of the Donegal element of a North West Europe Interreg Project called IMCORE (Innovative Management of Europe's Changing Coastal Resource). For the past 11 years Jessica has been self-employed working as a project manager and environmental consultant, specialising in freshwater, marine, coastal and environmental projects. Her client base is wide reaching from state agencies to community groups, individuals, angling clubs and private developers.

3.0 Methodology

This report has been prepared using the following guidance. A full list of research sources and references can be seen in section 8.

- Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive, EU, 2015
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening, EU, 2017.
- OPR Practice Note PN02 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening June 2021

4.0 Legislative context

Environmental Impact Assessment comes from EU environmental policy. The initial Directive of 1985 and its three amendments have been codified by Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011. Directive 2011/92/EU has been amended in 2014 by Directive 2014/52/EU. Together these comprise the EIA Directive. The EIA Directive aims to ensure a high level of protection for the environment and human health. It requires that an assessment of the likely significant effects a project will have on the environment is carried out, where relevant, before development consent is given (OPR, 2021).

The EIA Directive is transposed into Irish legislation by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Both the EIA Directive and Irish legislation set out, in detail, the entire EIA process (OPR, 2021).

EIA legislation as it relates to the planning process has been largely brought together in Part X of the Planning and Development Acts as amended, and Part 10 and Schedules 5, 6 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations as amended. Part 1 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations lists project types included in Annex I of the Directive which automatically require EIA. Part 2 of the same Schedule lists project types included in Annex II. Corresponding developments automatically require EIA if no threshold is given, or if they exceed a given threshold. Developments which correspond to Part 2 project types but are below the given threshold, i.e. 'sub-threshold' projects, must be screened to determine whether they require EIA or not. There are three steps to the screening assessment: (1) Understanding the proposal: is it a project as defined by the EIA directive, is it listed in Schedule 5 (as detailed above), or has a schedule 7 report been supplied; (2) Preliminary examination and conclusion: is there is a likelihood of significant impacts and (3) Formal Screening determination: consideration of criteria set out in Schedule 7; these criteria relate to the characteristics of the development, the location of the development, and the type and characteristics of potential impacts (schedule 7 report / screening determination report).

5.0 Project proposals as supplied by Donegal County Council

Port Pier, Inver is located on the northwestern shoreline of Inver Bay in southwest Donegal between the towns of Killybegs and Donegal Town. It is owned and maintained by Donegal County Council. Activity at Port Inver has increased and diversified over the years, however the pier facilities have not improved to any degree. Modern vessels have been introduced and require better facilities to maintain and care for them.

In order to improve the amenity provided by the pier, Donegal County Council (DCC) are proposing to construct an extension to the existing pier to accommodate the recent increased activity and improve facilities at the pier. Works will involve the dredging of an area to the east of the pier, piling and associated construction works.

Ayesa has been appointed by DCC as the Engineers for the design of the pier extension. The extension will include the addition of two sections: 44.5m x 10.1m to the south and 49.3m x 10.1m in an easterly direction. An area of approximately 1121m² behind the existing pier will be reclaimed using predominantly the dredged material. Information was provided by DCC and Ayesa describing how works will be implemented with site layout drawings, see figure 5.1 and 5.2. A construction method statement has been developed, see extracts below:

"....The pier structure will consist of two parallel rows of sheet piles adequately tied back with tie-rods. Dredge material will be used as fill between the sheet piles. The top layer of fill will be selected engineered fill. The pier structure will be capped with a concrete deck.

The following sequence describes the construction of the Pier:

- *Sheet piles will be driven into the seabed as shown on the drawings, using an excavator or crane fitted with a vibratory pile hammer (or similar).*

- The sheet piles tie-back system will be installed, which will consist of a series of tie-rods and waling beams.
- The pier will be filled with material either from the dredging operation or selected fill imported from commercial sources.
- The fill will be compacted in layers (approximately 300mm) using a 5t roller (or similar).
- Selected engineering fill will be used in the top 900mm, to create a base layer for the concrete slab.
- The selected fill will be compacted in layers (approximately 300mm) using a 5t roller (or similar).
- A reinforced concrete capping slab will be constructed on top of the sheet piles and engineered fill. This will involve installing rebar cages, shuttering, and concrete casting.
- Quayside services such as lighting, drainage, and utilities shall be installed in accordance with relevant standards and regulations.

Considerations During Construction

All construction activities that have the potential to generate excessive noise or vibration shall be carried out during permitted hours. Noise levels shall be limited to:

- 75 DBA between 8.00hrs – 20.00hrs (Mon to Sat).
- 45 DBA for all other times.

....

Vibration monitoring shall be carried out during piling operations to ensure that vibration levels are kept within acceptable limits.

A dredge pocket will be created, as indicated on the drawings, using an excavator. The dredging operation will either be conducted in the dry during low water, or a barge will be required to support the excavator when the site is inundated with water.

The dredged/excavated material will be used as fill for the new pier extension, if suitable. Furthermore, the area behind the pier will also be reclaimed using the dredged material. The excavator will either dump the dredged material directly between the sheet piles, or it will be loaded onto tipper trucks for transportation. A hopper barge may be required to load and transport the material when the site is inundated. Approximately 3,500m³ of material will be dredged.

If excess dredge material is available, or if the dredge material is unsuitable for use as fill, the material will be transported and disposed of at a suitable landside facility. The dredge material will first be stored in a bunded area and allowed to dry prior to transportation...."

....

A Traffic Management Plan (TMP) shall be agreed upon with Donegal County Council, the National Roads Authority or the National Transport Authority as required.

It is anticipated that the construction activities will have a negligible impact on local marine traffic. The Contractor will comply with the requirements of the local Harbour Master to ensure the construction works will not interfere with the operability of the Port.

...The plant and machinery shall be positioned in designated areas that shall not obstruct the existing quay or cause any safety hazards.

Dust and emissions may arise from delivering material and other goods to the site and storing material on the site.

- *All machinery used on site shall be properly maintained and serviced to minimize emissions.*
- *All vehicles and machinery shall be switched off when not in use to minimize emissions.*

Dust generated due to construction activities are not envisaged to be an issue.

....Measures shall be implemented to minimize the impact of construction activities on the environment. These measures include erosion and sediment control measures, suitable waste disposal, spill prevention and spill response procedures.

Sediment control/prevention measures will be implemented to minimise the impact of sediment dispersion on the receiving environment. The measure includes the use of:

- *Silt Curtains/Turbidity barriers to contain sediment plumes and prevent dispersion.*
- *Sediment retention ponds to allow sediment to settle out before being discharged.....”*

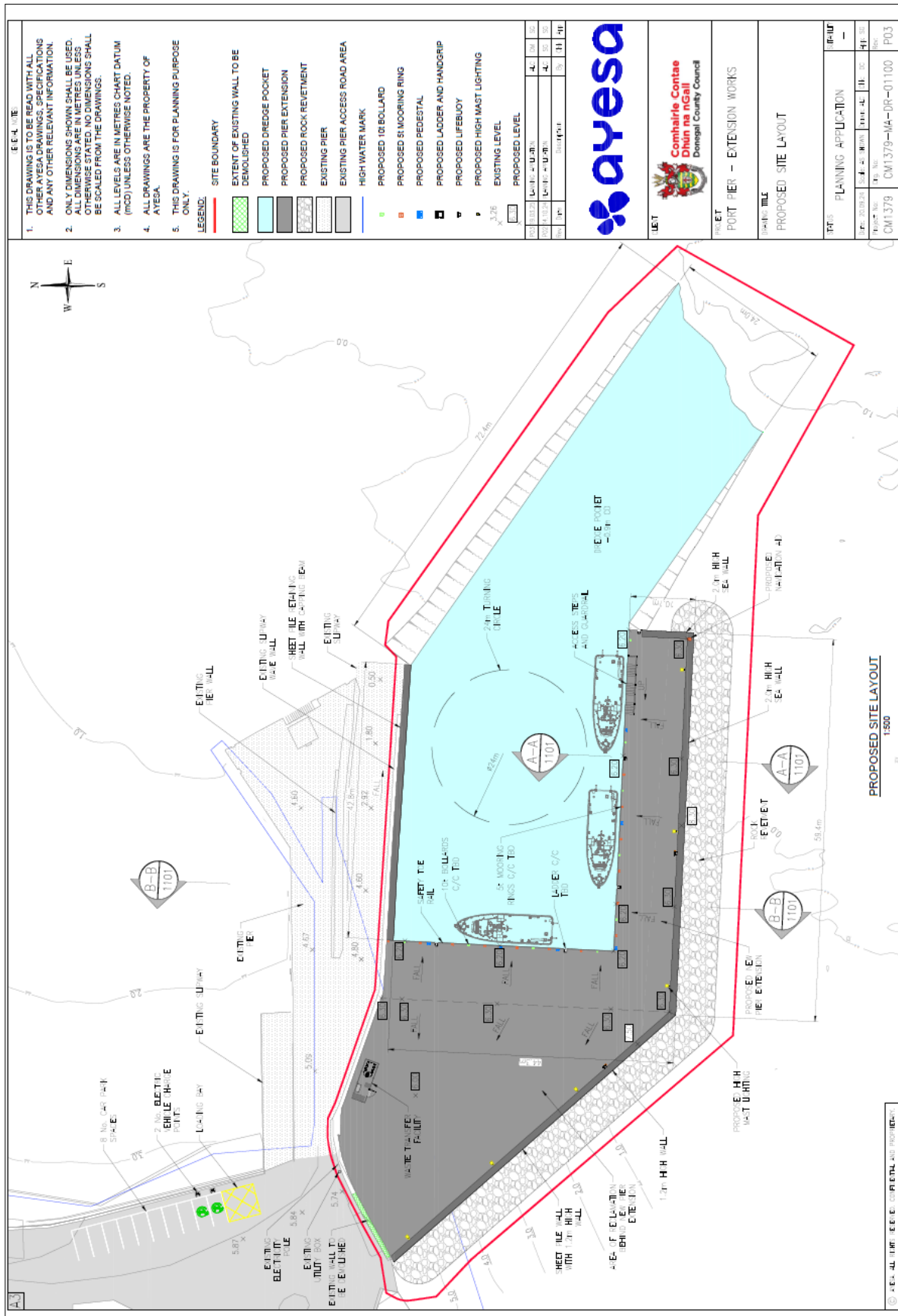


Figure 5.1 Proposed extension layout and dredging pocket, as supplied by Ayesa.



Figure 5.2 Proposed location of site compound to the north of the existing pier outlined in black.

Construction is anticipated to take place during 2024 / 2025 within a 6 month period; dredging is likely to take 2-3 weeks and piling activities 2-3 months assuming 4-8 piles per day.

A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared and mitigation measures are included for the protection of Natura 2000 sites, and species that are protected under Natura 2000 outside of the designated network i.e. bats, otters, cetaceans and Atlantic salmon. Basking shark has also been considered. Measures include a Marine Mammal Observer, construction and environmental management measures, and in water noise dispersion controls.

6.0 Screening considerations

According to the OPR guidelines, screening should be carried out following 3 steps: step 1 - understanding the proposal; step 2 (if required) - preliminary examination and conclusion; and step 3 (if required) - formal screening determination see figure 6.1.

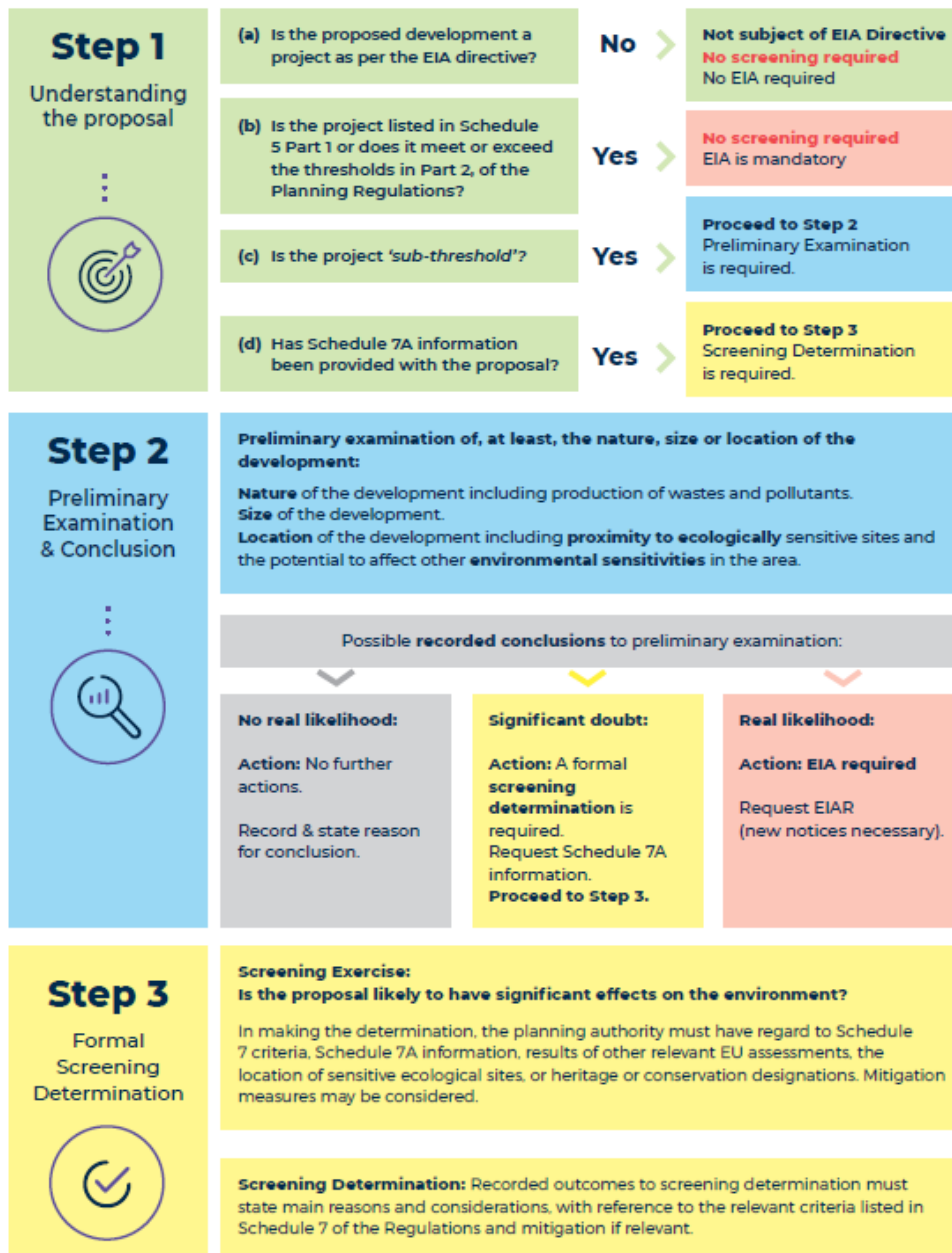


Figure 6.1 Step by step approach to EIA screening for development projects (extract from OPR, 2021)

6.1 Step 1 - Understanding the proposal

6.1.1 The concept of 'project'

Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive defines 'project' as: *'the execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes*. The definition of 'project' has been complemented by the Court, which concluded that *'demolition works come within the scope of Directive 85/337 and, in that respect, may constitute a 'project' within the meaning of Article 1(2) thereof'* (C-50/09, paragraphs 86-107). The Court concluded that demolition works cannot be excluded from the scope of national legislation enacting the EIA Directive. Based on case law, and in order to ensure a high level of protection of the environment, the amended EIA Directive provides that the screening procedures and environmental impact assessments should take account of the impact of the whole project in question and, where relevant, demolition phases (Annex II A, point 1 (a), and Annex IV, point 1 (b) and 5(a)). In rulings related to the EIA Directive, the Court has consistently emphasised the fundamental purpose of the Directive as expressed in Article 2(1), i.e. that those projects *'likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to a requirement for development consent and an assessment with regard to their effects'*.

The proposal meets the criteria and is considered a project in terms of the EIA Directive.

6.1.2 Class of development

The objective of Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the Environmental Impact Assessment, or EIA, Directive) is to ensure that projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment are adequately assessed before they are approved. Annex I and II to the Directive list the projects that fall under its scope (EU, 2015). The projects referred in Annex I and II must be interpreted in the light of the concept of 'project' (Article 1(2) and the general objective of the EIA Directive (Article 2(1)). The wording of the EIA Directive indicates that it has a wide scope and broad purpose (EU, 2015).

In terms of Irish Regulation Part 1 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations lists project types included in Annex I of the Directive which automatically require EIA. Part 2 of the same Schedule lists project types included in Annex II. Corresponding developments automatically require EIA if no threshold is given or if they exceed a given threshold. Developments which correspond to Part 2 project types but are below the given threshold i.e. a 'sub threshold' development, **must** be screened to determine whether they require EIA or not.

It must first be determined whether the project is of a type or class that requires EIAR, see table 1.

Schedule 5 Part 1: The extension works proposed do not correspond to any of the projects listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations.

Schedule 5 Part 2: The extension works have been be considered under **Schedule 5, Part 2, 10. (e) Infrastructure projects** as this would be the closest fit:

Infrastructure project: New or extended harbours and port installations, including fishing harbours, not included in Part 1 of this Schedule, where the area, or additional area, of water enclosed would be 20 hectares or more, or which would involve the reclamation of 5 hectares or more of land, or which would involve the construction of additional quays exceeding 500 metres in length.

The project proposal is the extension of an existing pier: The extension will include the addition of two sections: 32.4m x 10m to the south and 49.9m x 10.1m in an easterly direction. An area of 303m² behind the existing pier will be reclaimed. The project corresponds to a part 2 infrastructure project, however it is well below the thresholds under **Schedule 5, Part 2, 10. (e) Infrastructure projects**, it is therefore a sub threshold development.

The extension works have also been be considered under **Schedule 5, Part 2, 13 (a) Changes and extensions:**

Any change or extension of development already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed (not being a change or extension referred to in Part 1) which would:-

- (i) result in the development being of a class listed in Part 1 or paragraphs 1 to 12 of Part 2 of Schedule 5, AND
- (ii) result in an increase in size greater than 25 per cent, or an amount equal to 50 per cent of the appropriate threshold, whichever is the greater

NOTE: Both criteria have to be met in order to have a finding of mandatory EIA:

After extension port pier will not be of a class listed in Part 1 or Part 2. Therefore mandatory EIA does not apply in this case.

Criteria	Options	Assessment of Port Pier, Inver, Co. Donegal
Is it a project in the context of the EIA Directive	No: Not subject of EIA Directive, No screening required, No EIA required. Yes: Subject of EIA Directive, Follow next steps	Yes
Is the project listed in Schedule 5 Part 1 or does it meet or exceed the thresholds in Part 2, of the Planning Regulations?	Yes: No screening required, EIA is mandatory.	Schedule 5, Part 1 = <u>NO</u> Schedule 5, Part 2, 10. (e) Infrastructure project: <u>NO</u> Schedule 5, Part 2, 13 (a) Changes and extensions: <u>NO</u>
Is the project Sub-threshold	Yes: Proceed to step 2 Preliminary Examination	If the proposed project is of a class set out in Schedule 5, Part 2 but does not meet or exceed the relevant threshold, it is a ' <i>sub-threshold development</i> ' and must be screened for EIA. <u>= YES</u> EIA screening required

Table 1. Project Assessment using guidance from OPR Practice note PN02 Environmental Impact Assessment.

6.1.3 Conclusion Step 1

The proposal is considered a *project* in terms of the EIA Directive. The proposal is a *sub threshold development*. Continue to step 2 of screening process.

6.2 Step 2 Preliminary examination

Preliminary examination requires consideration of, at least, the Nature, Size and Location of the project. Preliminary examination is a high level assessment.

6.2.1 Nature

The construction works will be short term over a period of c. 6 months. Construction will involve pile driving over a period of 2-3 months, and dredging activities ($3,500\text{m}^3$) over 2-3 weeks. Other construction associated with completion of the pier will also occur.

The small size of the site means that there will be localised disturbance at the pier location and approach road for deliveries of materials and machinery.

Dredge material will be reused on site and any excess removed to landfill. Sediments were found to be marine beach deposits: typically, silty occasionally gravelly sands with sandy gravels closer to shore. According to the *Guidelines for the assessment of dredge material for disposal in Irish waters*, sediments sampled are classified as Class 1:- Contaminant concentrations less than level 1. Uncontaminated: no biological effects likely. They have been deemed suitable for dumping at sea which requires a higher criterion, than that for landfill. They therefore do not pose a risk in terms of pollution or contamination of the Bay and the marine environment.

Operation after construction is unlikely to change significantly.

6.2.2 Size

The extension will include the addition of two pier sections: $44.5 \times 10.1\text{m}$ to the south (449.45m^2) and $49.3\text{m} \times 10.1\text{m}$ (497.9m^2) in an easterly direction. An area of 1121m^2 behind the existing pier will be reclaimed.

Total constructed extension area = $2,037\text{m}^2$ (or 0.503acres)

The new harbour area (water) inside the pier structure will be $1,617\text{m}^2$.

6.2.3 Location of the development

Port Pier is in the townland of Port, Inver, Co. Donegal, off the L-1565-2 local road, just off the main N56 national road. It is a rural location with single dwellings dotted along the approach road to the pier. There are 5 terraced houses 60m behind the pier.

The project site is located at an existing pier within Inver bay. The beach surrounding the area is a mosaic of sheltered rocky shores, mixed sediment shore and stone walls. The upper shore is dominated by serrated wrack (*Fucus serratus*). Rocks and boulders are scattered throughout the site. A sea wall and slipway are on the southern side of the pier, with rock armour for protection. The marine environment has a wide diversity of marine mammals and fish. Aquaculture is a licensed activity in Inver Bay. Inver Bay is a substantial body of water directly connected to the Atlantic, there is a large tidal influx of seawater from the Atlantic into the Bay; access to the pier is restricted at low tide. There appears to be a good hydroactive system, with good flushing capacity; WFD status for Inver Bay is High.

A construction method statement and NIS have been prepared and include mitigation measures in relation to traffic, dust, noise, contamination, sediment and turbidity controls. Measures will protect the marine environment, the protected species and habitats therein, and activities in Inver Bay.

Preliminary Examination	Comment	Yes /No/ Uncertain
Nature of the development: Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment? <i>Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in significant emissions or pollutants?</i>	Not exceptional: Extension of an existing structure. A construction method statement and NIS have been prepared and include mitigation measures in relation to traffic, dust, noise, turbidity, contamination and sediment controls during construction.	No
Size of the development: Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment? <i>Are there cumulative considerations having regard to other existing and/or permitted projects?</i>	Not exceptional: Size of the extension is in keeping with the rural area and existing structure. No other projects of this type proposed in the area. NIS concludes no in-combination effects from the project.	No
Location: <i>Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location?</i> <i>Does the proposed development have the potential to affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?</i>	In a marine location; project has Source - Receptor- Pathway relationships with St. John's Point SAC, Donegal Bay SAC, and Donegal Bay SPA. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared and mitigation measures are included for the protection of Natura 2000 sites, and species that are protected under Natura 2000 outside of the designated network i.e. bats, otters, cetaceans and Atlantic salmon. Basking sharks are also included in the assessment. Measures include a Marine Mammal Observer, construction and environmental management measures, and in water noise dispersion controls. After mitigation NIS concludes no significant residual effects from the project. Measures will protect the marine environment, the protected species and habitats therein, and activities in Inver Bay. The subject site is not sensitive in terms of cultural (archaeological or architectural) heritage.	No

Table 6.2 Preliminary Examination of project proposal in terms of nature, size and location

6.2.4 Other considerations

A brief assessment of any additional potential impacts has been undertaken using the expected contents of an EIAR. This approach provides a comprehensive description of the aspects likely to be affected by the proposed development, if not already identified.

Environmental factors	Comments and conclusion
Population, human health	Some noise and localised increase in traffic related to construction phase. Short term project in rural area. Construction method statement and mitigation proposed. No significant impact likely.
Biodiversity	Construction in the marine environment, marine mammals and fish present. Construction method statement and NIS with mitigation to protect marine environment and biodiversity. No significant impact likely.
Land and soil	Small scale, not in protected area. Dredge sampling results suitable for dumping at sea (high criteria). No significant impact likely.
Water	Potential for construction related run off or pollution and noise. Construction method statement prepared and NIS with mitigation including with regard to noise in water. NIS concluded no residual effects after mitigation. No significant impact likely.
Air	Potential for construction related dust. Construction method statement prepared to include dust management, NIS includes mitigation with regard to noise in air. No significant impact likely.
Climate	Small project, no discernible impact.
Material assets	Extension and upgrading of an existing facility. Aquaculture will be protected by mitigation in the Construction method statement and NIS. No negative impact likely. Proposal will provide an important material asset for local users and the local economy. Positive impact.
Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape	Proposal supports strong fishing culture and heritage in the area. Positive impact. No archaeological or architectural records in the vicinity of works. No significant alteration of landscape. No negative impact likely.

Table 6.3 Assessment of proposal in terms of EIAR contents

Once constructed the operation of the pier will not change significantly from current day use, no negative impacts expected. There will be a positive impact due to the improved facility.

Given the small scale and temporary nature of construction works and the mitigation included in the construction method statement and NIS, it is considered that any of the previously identified relatively minor impacts would not in themselves be considered significant nor would they cumulatively result in a likely significant effect on the environment.

6.2.5 Conclusion Step 2

No real likelihood of significant impacts.

7.0 Overall conclusion

This EIA preliminary examination report has been carried out in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations as amended 2001- 2021 (which give effect to the provisions of EU Directive 2014/52/EU). Taking account of the scale, nature and location of the proposed development, it is the opinion of the author that the preparation of an EIAR is not a mandatory requirement (under Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Acts 2001).

The project does not fall under projects listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 or Schedule 5, Part 2. The development is a sub-threshold development.

A preliminary examination has been completed taking into account the project description, the nature, size and location of the project, and the Natura Impact Statement (including an Annex IV risk assessment and Marine Mammal Risk Assessment) which concludes that, after mitigation, no significant effects are likely to arise (Devlin, 2024).

The development will not result in the production of any significant waste or result in emissions or pollutants over the long term. It is considered that the issues arising from the connectivity to Natura 2000 sites, other Annex species protected under Natura 2000 and marine megafauna protected under the Wildlife Act 1976-2022 (as amended) can be adequately dealt with in the Natura Impact Assessment (and associated supporting documents) under the Habitats Directive, as there is no likelihood of other significant effects on the environment.

Taking account of the nature, size, and location of the proposed project and based on the above information, the overall probability of impacts on the receiving environment arising from the proposed project is considered to be low.

The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required for the proposed works at Port Pier, Inver, Co. Donegal. There is no requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment Report to be prepared.

8.0 References and sources

The following research documents/ sources were used in the preparation of this report:

Dept. of Environment Heritage and Local Government (2009) Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects, Guidance for planning authorities.

Devlin, J. (2024) Natural Impact Statement. Proposed Extension of Port Pier, Inver, Co. Donegal for Ayesa on behalf of Donegal County Council.

Donegal County Council (2018) Donegal County Development Plan 2018 – 2024.

DoHPLG (2018) Environmental Impact Assessment – Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

European Union (2018) Planning and Development, Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2018.

European Union (2015) Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive.

European Union (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening.

European Commission Environment DG (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC November 2001.

Environmental Protection Agency (2022) Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.

Ayesa (2023) Construction Method Statement, Port Pier, Inver, Co. Donegal.

OPR (2021) OPR Practice Note PN02 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening June 2021.

Law Reform Commission (2021). FORESHORE ACT 1933 REVISED Updated to 25 March 2021.

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