

Consultations/Comments received:
NatureScot

Protected sites:

1.1 Loch nam Madadh (SAC)

The proposal lies within the Loch nam Madadh SAC designated saline lagoons, large shallow inlets and bays, intertidal mud and sandflats, subtidal sandbanks and otter population of international importance.

The site's status means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the "Habitats Regulations") apply

The proposal will result in a significantly larger biomass and cage surface area which will have a correspondingly larger depositional footprint on the seabed. We advise that significant effects are likely on new areas of seabed. These areas of seabed have the potential to support habitats of the Loch nam Madadh SAC.

The designated marine features of the Loch an Duin SSSI are closely aligned with those of the Loch nam Madadh SAC. We advise that significant effects on the SSSI are likely.

1.2 Inner Hebrides & the Minches (SAC) & Sea of the Hebrides MPA

The proposal lies within 3km of the Inner Hebrides and the Minches Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for its harbour porpoise and the Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protected Area (MPA) selected for its minke whale, basking shark, fronts and seabed geomorphology.

Should ADDs be in use or proposed at this site then we advise that significant effects are likely on the harbour porpoise feature of the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC and ADDs would also be capable of affecting, other than insignificantly, the minke whale feature of the Sea of the Hebrides NCMPA. Therefore, information will need to be supplied to enable an Appropriate Assessment.

All cetaceans are protected under EPS legislation, and under Regulation 39(2), an EPS licence for disturbance is required if there is the risk of disturbance to a single individual.

The typical frequencies of ADDs are within the hearing range of harbour porpoise. A significant body of evidence exists to suggest that in some instances ADDs can result in the disturbance and displacement of harbour porpoise.

No ADDs can be deployed until an application for an EPS licence has been determined by Marine Scotland – Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT). As part of the EPS licence process MS-LOT will be required to carry out a HRA for harbour porpoise and an NCMPA appraisal for minke whale before issuing an EPS licence, unless they conclude that the deployment of ADDs is not capable of resulting in any disturbance of harbour porpoise or minke whale.

1.3 South Lewis, Harris & North Uist (NSA)

The site lies within the South Lewis, Harris & North Uist NSA in an area characterised by rocky coastline and moorland. The shoreline adjacent to the site forms the north coast of Loch nam Madadh as the numerous islands and bays of the inner part of the loch opens out to more exposed coast. The sea area has several navigation marks and the existing fish farm developments. Given the location and the arrangement of the existing pens and addition of 2 extra pens to the south east of the site we advise that significant effects are not likely on the special qualities of the NSA.