

Maintenance Dredging Decision Making Framework

The PLA, in common with other UK ports, has historically acted under its own Act of Parliament and has not generally needed to liaise with other stakeholders. Over the past 10-15 years, however, the ability of the UK ports sector to ‘operate in isolation’ has changed for a variety of reasons: a general increase in environmental awareness; an appreciation of the need for environmental activities to be conducted transparently; and increased environmental legislation. In making decisions on maintenance dredging, the PLA needs to ensure a balance between meeting expectations, discharging its responsibilities under environmental regulations, and being able to operate the Port of London in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

The PLA has sought to respond to the above pressures in a constructive and innovative manner, undertaking various initiatives including the development of a strategic framework to guide decisions on maintenance dredging and ensure sustainability. This framework, which formalises the PLA’s commitment to environmental self-regulation, is being taken forward with the TEP and other members of the DLG.

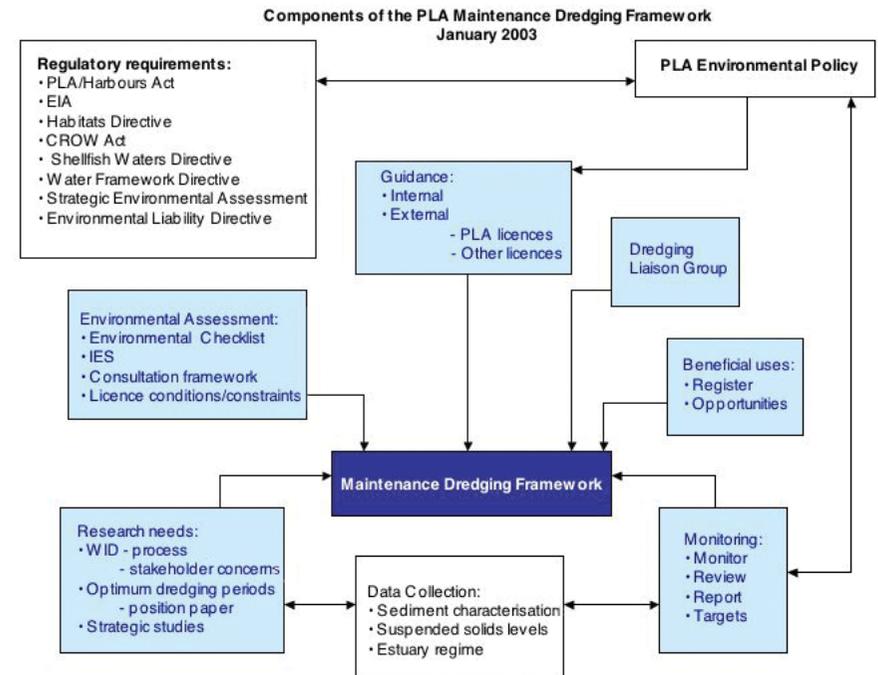


Figure 8 “PLA Maintenance Dredging Framework.”

As shown above, the ‘Maintenance Dredging Framework’ comprises an ongoing and continually evolving collection of initiatives:

- an information exchange system;
- environmental impact assessment and appraisal procedures;
- a beneficial uses register;
- information for berth owners and operators;
- consultation mechanisms;
- data collection and monitoring; and
- collaborative research.

An important consideration in developing this framework is the need to understand the estuary at a strategic (ie. ‘whole estuary’) level, and to make decisions in full awareness of strategic as well as site-specific issues. In combination, the components of the framework will help to ensure that the PLA is aware of such issues and is able to take them into account.

As part of the development and implementation of this framework, the PLA intends to encourage improved forward planning along with an explanation and justification for maintenance dredging campaigns



Figure 7 “Ham 701.” Copyright Van Oord

wherever this is practical. This is particularly relevant in the case of berths that are dredged regularly (sometimes several times each year). The decision making framework should enable many of the potential environmental issues associated with maintenance dredging to be identified and resolved well in advance of dredging taking place. It must, however, also be recognised that either storm events (eg. moving sediments into the navigation channel) or certain operational requirements (eg. the need to dredge a berth which is only used infrequently) will continue to lead to situations in which dredging needs to be undertaken more quickly. The framework needs to be able to cope with such situations equally well.



Figure 9 "Waves." Copyright Derek Tothill