

15 OTHER SEABED USES

This section considers the potential interference and effects on other seabed uses from the proposed placement operations. Any in-combination effects for the various projects are discussed in Section 16.

15.1 Existing Environment

The Thames Estuary is heavily used by a variety of marine industries including shipping, aggregate extraction, cables, fishing and, more recently, the renewable energy industry. Two windfarms have been consented on banks near to the Essex and Kent coasts and the Thames Estuary has been identified as a Strategic Area for Round 2 of the Offshore Windfarm Development Programme.

The following projects have been identified as potentially ongoing during the timescale of the placement operations (end 2006):

- Kentish Flats Windfarm: construction commencing 2004;
- London Gateway Development: outcome of the HEO Public Inquiry and FEPA licence applications awaited;
- Two marine cables: timescale not known, EIA underway;
- Round 2 windfarms: at scoping and survey stage.

15.2 Kentish Flats Windfarm

The Kentish Flats windfarm is located some 14km from the North Edinburgh Channel and no interference is anticipated between the two projects.

15.3 Round 2 Windfarms

The Round 2 windfarms are in early stages, but the information that is available suggests that should not be any interference between the projects. The developers have been made aware of the North Edinburgh Channel and will need to take account of it in their EIAs. A copy of this report will be provided to the developers to assist them in informing the relevant parts of their studies.

15.4 Subsea Cables

Based on the available knowledge it does not appear that the routes of the two proposed subsea cables pass through or near the North Edinburgh Channel.

15.5 London Gateway

The London Gateway Development comprises a reclamation and a channel dredge. Part of the proposed dredged area lies in the Black Deep to the north east of the proposed placement site. The Environmental Statement for London Gateway indicates that the

dredging is to be carried out using a single TSHD and that all material is to be placed into the reclamation site. There is a commitment to maintain the cross sectional area of the inner estuary thus requiring the initial period of dredging to be undertaken in the channel adjacent to London Gateway. The timescale for a decision is not known but in the event that consent is given, dredging is unlikely to commence before mid-2005. As the dredging is planned to take place over five years and given the requirement to dredge the inner estuary in line with the reclamation, it is considered very unlikely that the Black Deep area will be dredged before the end of 2006. The possibility of sediment from the placement site accumulating in the area to be dredged by P&O has been considered but given the presence of a sandbank between the two and the direction of the tidal current there is no obvious mechanism by which sediment could be transported to the Black Deep. Bathymetric monitoring will confirm the lack of any effects. There is, therefore, unlikely to be any interference between the two projects.

15.6 Summary of Potential Interference

No interference is predicted between the proposed placement site and the other projects that may or may not occur in the Thames Estuary.