

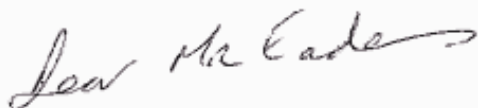
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PROPOSED VARIATION OF AN EXISTING FAVOURABLE GOVERNMENT VIEW FOR AREA 202 TO ENABLE MARINE MINERALS DREDGING TO CONTINUE FOR A FURTHER 5 YEARS

Thank you for your letter and enclosures of 10 May 2006, which I acknowledged on 31 May.

I think it would be helpful if I explained the factual background to this proposal to continue dredging in this area for a further 5 years. A favourable Government View (GV) on the extraction of marine sand and gravel for a 5 year period from Area 202 was issued by the Secretary of State in September 1999. A condition attached to that GV restricted extraction to a maximum of no more than 0.5 million tonnes per annum. A production licence to that affect was subsequently issued by the Crown Estate, the owners of the seabed. By the end of last year, only 0.9 million tonnes had been extracted from the Area. Hanson Aggregates Marine Limited (HAML) now wishes to extract over the next 5 years the balance of 1.5 million tonnes that remains un-dredged from that Area.


An updated Environmental Statement in relation to this residual tonnage was prepared and has been subject to consultation. Nearly 50 bodies based on a list of consultation bodies provided by this Department, were consulted on behalf of HAML by Marine Ecological Surveys Limited. These included the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, other government departments, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, the Marine Fishing Agency (formerly the Sea Fisheries Inspectorate), coastal local authorities, English Nature, the Environment Agency, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the fishing industry. Indeed, you also made representations to MES about the proposed variation.

In the light of all the information put before her the Secretary of State has, as required by the EC Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, 'screened' this proposed variation to an existing favourable GV and concluded that it is not likely to have significant

effects on the environment and, therefore, does not need to be subjected to the Environmental Impact Assessment procedures.

Additionally, following consultation with DEFRA and taking into account the views of those bodies consulted on the proposed variation, in particular the views expressed by the Government's statutory advisors on the environment, the Secretary of State has decided that the existing favourable GV for Area 202 should be further varied to allow the extraction of up to 1.5 million tonnes of aggregates over a 5 year period from 1 July 2006, subject to an annual maximum of 0.5 million tonnes.

I enclose a copy of the Secretary of State's decision letter which was issued today.

Yours sincerely


Nigel Bayliss