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Water Framework Directive Assessments

Introduction

The EU Water Framework Directive aims to improve the quality of surface waters; rivers, streams and estuaries to reach what is called “good status”. Assessment of the environmental impact of any activity on a water body must be undertaken for all stages including construction, operation and decommissioning.

The Environment Agency has published guidance for this assessment within estuarine and coastal waters entitled “*Clearing the Waters for All*”. All applications for consent from the PLA, including River Works Licences and Dredging Licences, should be accompanied by an assessment of impact. This process also applies to the PLA’s own works.

The most recent court ruling on this states that a decision maker (eg the PLA) must “*refuse authorisation for... a project where it may cause deterioration of... status... or jeopardise the attainment of good... status.*”

Water Framework Directive Assessment Process

A WFD Assessment can comprise up to three stages and the assessment should be undertaken sequentially. The stages are as follows:

Stage 1 - Screening

Activities will be screened out if they are defined as “low risk”. After reference to the EA website, this stage can be completed on the new River Works Licence application forms. If the activity is screened out at this stage, evidence should be submitted. Most temporary activities will be screened out at this stage.

Stage 2 - Scoping

The EA [scoping template](#) should be completed to identify receptors that may be at risk from the proposed activities. These require impact assessment (Stage 3). Use magic.gov.uk to help identify relevant receptors (see screen shot →). Provide the completed scoping template with your application if no further assessment is required. Many assessments will be complete at this stage.



Stage 3 - Impact Assessment

If Scoping indicates there are receptors at risk from the proposed activities, an assessment must be prepared that addresses (i) the potential impacts of the activities; (ii) ways to mitigate the identified impacts; and (iii) shows whether the activities may cause deterioration of the water body status or jeopardise the water body achieving good status.

Where do I find further information?

EA website gov.uk/guidance/water-framework-directive-assessment-estuarine-and-coastal-waters

PLA website pla.co.uk/About-Us/Applying-for-a-River-Works-Licence

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Port of London Authority
London River House, Royal Pier Road,
Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BG

JAMES TRIMMER
DIRECTOR OF
PLANNING &
ENVIRONMENT



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