

Marine Planning - Information Sheet

Throughout tidal waters in the UK - if you are planning work on a waterside property, installing steps or a pontoon, repairing a harbour wall or erecting scaffolding - you will in most cases be required to first obtain consent through the relevant marine licensing authority. In many cases, this consent will be in addition to planning permission, landowner consent, permits from the Environment Agency and advice from statutory nature conservation bodies such as Natural England.

In England the marine licensing authority is the [Marine Management Organisation \(MMO\)](#), who have licensing powers under the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#).

What do I need a marine licence for?

The MMO says “you are likely to need a marine licence if you are depositing or removing any substance or object either in the sea, on or under the sea bed from a vehicle, vessel, aircraft, marine or land-based structure or floating container. Any form of marine dredging is also licensable.”

A marine licence is only required for activities involving a deposit or removal in the UK marine area which broadly-speaking is the area **below the mean high water springs mark and in any tidal river to the extent of the tidal influence**.

Some activities are considered non-licensable and some have been made [exempt](#) from the licensing process. All others which meet the definition above will require a marine licence. Some lower-risk activities are eligible for a [self-service licence](#), and all others require a full standard marine licence. Standard marine licences are cost banded. For more information see the [MMO fees information](#).

Applications are made through the MMOs [Marine Case Management System](#). Their [interactive tool](#) can be used to determine if you may be eligible for a self-service licence, and their [GIS tool](#) allows you to search spatial information in and around your proposed activity location.

If your works are solely above mean high water springs then you will not be required to apply for a marine licence but you may need planning permission. Between mean high and mean low water springs you will need both planning permission from your local authority and a marine licence. In most cases for works solely below mean low water, you will not be required to obtain planning permission, but it is worth checking with your Local Authority as in some areas their jurisdiction extends further - such as where two or more Local Authorities share responsibility for an estuary or river.

Regardless of where your works are in the marine environment, you are likely to require land owner consent (such as from The Crown Estate), you may need permission if you are within a harbour authority's jurisdiction, and you could need a permit from the Environment Agency or agreement with Natural England. There are many overlapping controls on works in the marine environment, and in many cases, you will need more than one licence or permit to undertake works.