Information has recently come to hand regarding fresh emergency sea defence work being required on the sea wall at Blockhouse. Investigation found that a Marine Management Organisation [MMO] licence had been submitted by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation [DIO] in August, for work in two areas previously noted as at risk.

From a cursory read of the application [MLA/2023/00348], nothing obvious emerges which differentiates between this emergency repair, purely a temporary measure, and any future major repair work, thought to be the subject of the “Jacobs” study, understood to be due imminently, with a reputed cost tag thought to exceed £100 million.

The licence application notes:

**Project background**

The existing revetment at Fort Blockhouse is currently being undermined by the sea, affecting overall stability of the current sea defences. The proposed development comprises two sections that require repairs to be undertaken: Section 1 is 75 m in length and approximately 825 m² in footprint area, Section 2 is 210 m in length and approximately 2,310 m² in footprint area. The proposed works are to be undertaken in the intertidal zone between Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) and Mean High Water Springs (MHWS).

The areas involved are:

Section 1 is the extension of the 2020 moat wall emergency repair, noted at the time as, ‘itself risking further damage if left in place for too long’ - mainly by increasing the probability of new erosion along the stretch now being addressed.

Section 2 probably covers two aspects. First, the 2020 emergency repairs, to the NE of the plan, which left part of the already badly eroded sea wall unprotected and, as previously noted, ‘undermining here is well advanced and a breach ... is entirely possible’. From the diagram, it is unclear whether the new proposal forms a seamless join with the 2020 repair.

The second aspect regards an area a little further down the wall, just to the NE of the radar mast where erosion over Hamilton Bank has been exposing this area to deepening water with a consequent increased risk of erosion and undermining.

The intention was to start the emergency repairs in October and complete in January 2024, but the licence has yet to be granted and is noted as on hold [last checked 3 Nov]. Post storm Ciernan, Blockhouse has been closed due, it is understood, to further sea wall damage in the vicinity of the radar mast which has itself been put out of service [KHM NAVWARN No. 63/23 dated 2 Nov]. Questions will inevitably be asked regarding reaction time to repair such damage but, without access, it is not possible to be more precise, or comment further.

CHD 3 Nov 2023