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27 June 2024

Our ref: 754-MELEN215878ML_Sub_CSASS_L01

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Marinus Link supplementary impact assessment - timing of stage 2 - Contamination and acid sulfate soils

1. INTRODUCTION

Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) are proposing to amend the construction schedule for the interconnector cable running between Tasmania and Victoria and proposed changes to the timing via the addition of a Stage 2, which comprises the installation of the second cable.

From the briefing document (Attachment 1), and Marinus Link information update #1 – Timing of stage 2 (May 20, 2024) issued by MLPL (EIS/EES updates Marinus Link), we understand that the change to the construction program will comprise:

Stage 1: Earthworks and site preparation of the converter station site to address requirements for:

- Both converter stations, the transition station, access tracks and construction laydown areas,
- All HDD drilling for the shore crossings, road and river crossings for both Stages, and
- Trenching works to install conduits and joint pits within the linear easements that will accommodate cables for both Stages.

Stage 1 also includes laying the cables for the Stage 1 cable circuit (including across Bass Strait) and construction of the Stage 1 converter station at each of Hazelwood and Heybridge (and transition station, if required). Rehabilitation works would be implemented following Stage 1 works.

Stage 2: Would commence approximately 1 year following completion of the Stage 1 works and will include:

- Installing the cables for the Stage 2 cable circuit (including across Bass Strait) ,and
- Construction of the Stage 2 converter stations at each of Hazelwood and Heybridge.

Final reinstatement would occur following completion of Stage 2 activities.

We have undertaken a review of the proposed staging, the potential for environmental impacts to occur as a result of the staging, and reviewed the proposed environmental performance requirements (EPRs) to assess whether there are any additional elements to be included to manage potential impacts. This letter must be read in conjunction with *Technical Appendix N Contaminated land and acid suflate soils* prepared for and exhibited with the Marinus Link EIS/EES (May 2024).

2. CONTAMINATION

We note that the majority of the ground disturbance activities that may result in the disturbance of contaminated soils would occur during Stage 1. Where any potential impacts are identified and managed as a part of Stage 1, they would likely not be present during Stage 2 should soil disturbance be required (such as accessing the jointing pits).

This assessment is made on the basis that the EPRs CL01 and CL02 require that any areas of contamination that cannot be avoided must be managed. In the context of the *Environment Protection Act (2017)* (Vic), Environment Protection Regulations (2021) and other EPA Victoria guidelines, these soils would be classified as a waste which would necessitate disposal from the project area to a premises permissioned to accept the waste. Any resulting soil voids would be reinstated with clean soils that would be unlikely to result in future impacts if disturbed.

3. ACID SULFATE SOILS

With regard to management of acid sulfate soils, there is a potential that if acid sulfate soils are identified at the Waratah Bay transition station, this would require management to mitigate potential environmental impacts. We note the impact assessment assumed that acid sulfate soils were present in this area based on the mapped high likelihood of acid sulfate soils being present. Given that the majority of potential soil disturbances would occur in Stage 1, there is a very limited potential for disturbance of acid sulfate soils during stage 2, and the same management and mitigation measures to be developed under EPR-CL03 should be replicated for the Stage 2 construction activities in this area and manage any potential impacts.

The proposed staging is unlikely to have any additional impacts to the environment from potential acid sulfate soils across the rest of the project areas.

4. SURPLUS SOILS

It is estimated the project will generate approximately 250,000 m^3 of surplus soil associated with haul roads and access roads during the construction of Stage 1. We understand that the removal of these materials and rehabilitation of the land-cable corridor will also occur during Stage 1. It may also be necessary to construct new access roads to jointing pits, depending on the access requirements for cable drum deployment machinery, and there is the potential that additional surplus soils may be generated. It is recommended that the timing of the removal of access roads for jointing pits is programmed to reduce the generation of additional surplus soils required to construct and rehabilitate such access roads. This potential impact (waste generation) is to be managed in accordance with EPR CL02, and no additional requirements are suggested for this EPR to manage the potential impacts in the event that the additional surplus soils from access road construction for Stage 2 is generated.

5. SUMMARY

Based on the summary provided above, the contamination and acid sulfate soil EPRs for the EIS/EES prepared to date would be sufficient to manage the potential impacts of separating the two stages and it would be unlikely to result in any additional impacts.

Regards,

Bryden Tiddy
Principal Environmental Scientist

Attachment 1 – Request for Marinus Link supplementary impact assessment – revised timing of stage 2

Marinus Link supplementary impact assessment - revised timing of stage 2

1. BACKGROUND

Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) have proposed a change to the timing of the two stages of the Marinus Link project (the project) that is different to what has been assessed in the EIS/EES. Each stage would deliver one complete 750 MW HVDC circuit between Tasmania and Victoria.

The EIS/EES assumed the stage 2 cable would be installed immediately after the stage 1 cable was completed, and this would occur between 2025 and 2030. [redacted] The EIS/EES and technical reports note that the timing of stage 2 will be subject to market demand.

MLPL recently published on their website an information update regarding the timing of delivery of stage 1 and stage 2. A copy of this information update, titled *Marinus Link Information Update #1 – timing of Stage 2*, is available here: EIS/EES updates Marinus Link. This information is summarised below, but all specialists are requested to read the information provided on the MLPL website.

MLPL is now seeking supplementary impact assessments from technical specialists to consider whether the change in staging timing presents any changes to the impact assessment/s completed to support the EIS/EES.

The purpose of this document is to:

- provide further description of the activities and timeframe associated with the revised timing of stage 2.
- outline the scope of the supplementary assessment required of potential impacts associated with the revised timing.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following section provides a summary of the *Information Update #1* provided on the MLPL website, with some further description of the works proposed to be completed in stage 1 and stage 2, and the timing of stage 2.

2.1 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

The type of equipment used, and the nature of the works would be same as those outlined in the Project Description which has informed your technical assessment for the EIS/EES.

2.1.1 Stage 1

Stage 1 will include the works as assessed in the EIS/EES:

- Earthworks and site preparation for:
  - the converter station site to address requirements for both converter stations for stage 1 and stage 2.
  - access tracks and construction laydown areas.
  - all HDD drilling for the shore crossings, road, rail, third party asset, vegetation and river crossings for both stages.
  - trenching works to install conduits and joint pits within the linear easements that will accommodate cables for both stages.
  - sea floor pre-lay grapnel run.
- Laying the cable for stage 1 across Bass Strait and along the land cable route.
- Construction of the stage 1 converter station at Hazelwood, communications building (and transition station, if required).
- Establishing major construction laydown areas and access tracks, which will remain in place through the interim period between stage 1 and stage 2.

Fences will be removed along the construction area after completion of temporary reinstatement following completion of stage 1 and land use would be able to resume. It is anticipated that the haul road along the construction corridor will also be removed at the completion of stage 1 [redacted].

Stage 1 works on each property will include temporary reinstatement works. This will include including temporary infrastructure necessary to comply with Property Management Plans and to facilitate efficient use of the land in the interim period prior to stage 2 works.

Stage 1 will be completed when temporary reinstatement works are completed on each property. Rehabilitation works will be done following completion of stage 1 works.

2.1.2 Stage 2

Stage 2 works will include:

- Accessing and opening joint pits (requires removing soil and storing topsoil to reinstate) to enable cable pulling between joint pits. It is assumed there will be no ground disturbance along the cable route between joint pits.
- Accessing and establishing construction areas either side of conduits (that were constructed by trenchless construction methods in stage 1) under road, rail, third party assets, vegetation, river crossings and the shore crossing.
- Delivering cable drums that will be stored at major laydown areas in stage 2, in the same manner as stage 1, then transporting drums to joint pits for installation.
- Preparing the seafloor for stage 2 with a pre-lay grapnel run, then laying the subsea cables in the same manner as stage 1.
- Laying the cable for stage 2 across Bass Strait and along the land cable route.
- Delivering the transformer to the converter station site.
- Installing (including below-ground foundations) and commissioning the second converter station.
- Final reinstatement work following completion of stage 2.

2.2 TIMING

Stage 1 will take place between 2025 and 2030. Consistent with the EIS/EES, properties along the cable alignment will host main construction works for a period of time within that overall 5 year period. The stage 1 circuit will be commissioned by 2030.

Stage 1 works will be completed in 2030 and stage 2 works will commence in 2031.

Stage 2 circuit will be laid and commissioned by 2033.

[redacted]

3. SCOPE OF SUPPLEMENTARY ASSESSMENT

Based on the above, Tetra Tech Coffey (on behalf of MLPL) is now seeking an assessment, supplementary to your technical impact assessment prepared to support the EIS/EES, to consider the changes in project staging.

Your assessment should address the following key questions:

1. Identify whether a change to the timing for delivery of the works for stage 1 and stage 2 in accordance with the MLPL *Information Update #1* and project description information in this document would have any material implications for the assessment or conclusions of your technical assessment report (report) published with the EIS/EES and result in:
    a. any additional impacts to those identified in your report
    b. any changes to impacts identified in your report
    c. any changes to the conclusions set out in your report.
2. Identify whether, as a consequence of the changed timing for delivery of stage 2 and associated works there are:
    a. Any mitigation measures or Environmental Performance Requirements would be recommended in addition to those set out in your report
    b. Any changes to any mitigation measures and Environmental Performance Requirements set out in your Report would be recommended.

Your assessment must be documented in a short report/letter as a supplement to the report that you have already prepared and is published with the EIS/EES. The supplementary report/letter must be concise, document your assumptions and draw on the methods and information already documented in your report for the EIS/EES. If you make any additional assumptions to inform your supplementary report/letter these must be documented in the report/letter.

It is expected that the reports/letters will be quite short. The supplementary report/letter will be published as an information update to the EIS/EES and made available to the public on the Marinus Link website here: EIS/EES updates Marinus Link.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]