



Electronic Monitoring System Annual Report 2023

A report commenting on EMS activity and trends in the
2023 calendar year

**THE CROWN
ESTATE**

 **Royal
HaskoningDHV**
Enhancing Society Together

1. Introduction

The Crown Estate issues Production Agreements to allow the extraction of marine sand and gravel resources from the seabed around England and Wales. These are an important source of quality aggregate for construction and civil engineering projects, particularly in the South East of England and South Wales. Marine sand and gravel are also used in beach replenishment schemes and to act as infill for land reclamation projects.

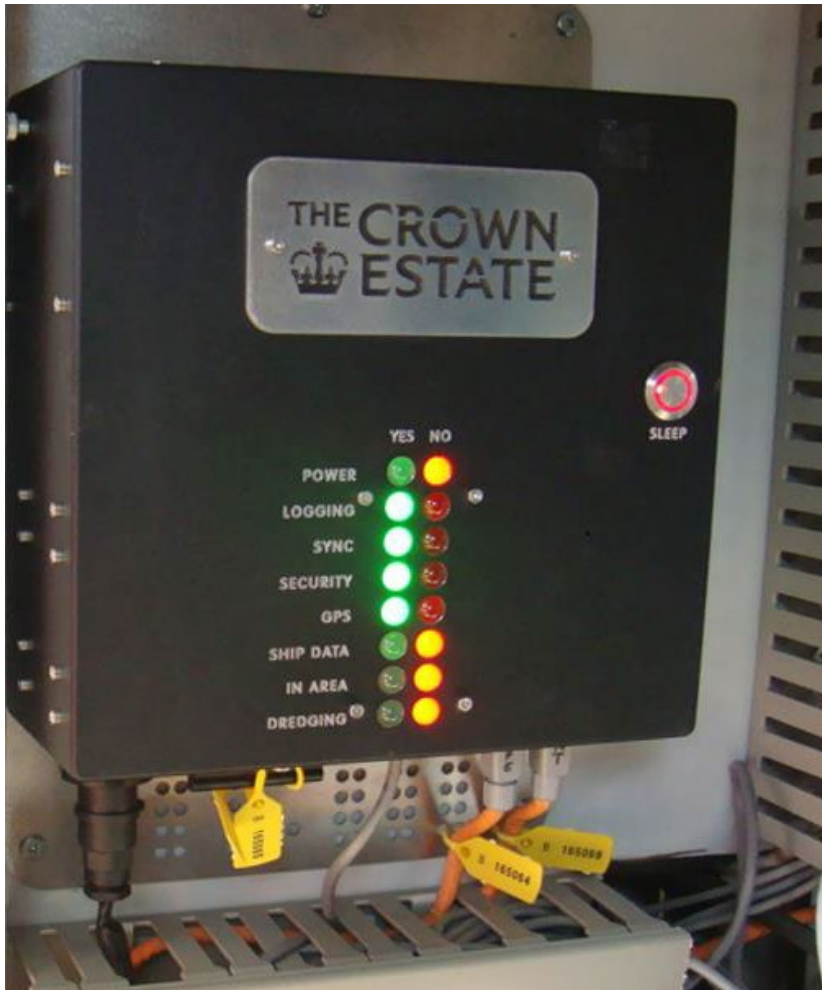
Since 1993 The Crown Estate has required all vessels dredging on Production Agreement areas to be fitted with an Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) which automatically records the date, time, and location of all dredging activities.

EMS data files are analysed and processed by The Crown Estate as the owner of the seabed and shared with the Regulators (the Marine Management Organisation and Natural Resources Wales). It is the responsibility of the Regulators to undertake any compliance enforcement action under legislation in the event of any infringements.



Production Agreement areas, October 2024

2. EMS Description



EMS black box unit

The Crown Estate entered into a commercial agreement with Foreshore Technology Ltd in 2017 to supply EMS dredging vessel hardware, software and IT infrastructure. Foreshore Technology also provide a help desk service and team of technicians to maintain the system. Prior to this all EMS infrastructure had been provided by individual dredging companies. A variety of sensors and hardware were also used. The new approach with Foreshore Technology has enabled a more uniform approach across the fleet.

The Crown Estate initially purchased all EMS equipment and makes it available to dredging vessels operating for and on behalf of Production Agreement holders. The costs are recouped via a pence per tonne fee payable by all Production Agreement holders twice a year. This approach required the development of a legal framework via consultation with industry and the formation of a steering group to oversee the operation of the system and demonstrate financial transparency.

2. EMS Description



EMS antenna and GPS

Key EMS features

- The EMS is a robust, secure black box-based system, which utilises a simple, stable operating system
- Independent GPS, not connected to vessel systems
- Independent acoustic sensor
- Optional screen to allow bridge crew to monitor EMS status against actual activity
- Vessel operators generally fit all cabling themselves
- A data recording frequency of 10 seconds – previous versions of EMS recorded every 30 seconds
- A web data portal allows authorised users to download data on demand, without long time delays
- A dedicated helpdesk and system repair facility

Security features

- EMS units do not have an off switch and can only be powered down using a time-limited PIN code
- Independent GPS and modem, which are not connected to main vessel navigation systems
- Security seals on all connections.
- The EMS software running in each unit will note in a log file any change in its hardware configuration,
- Data packages are scanned for time gaps and investigated

3. EMSc Description



EMSc hardware – black box unit (top), sensor (bottom)

A version of the EMS (the Contractor EMS, or ‘EMSc’) is available for temporary installations, such as when vessels are undertaking short term projects.

Key features of the EMSc

- Main equipment is housed in a single, portable case
- A smaller case is deployed near the dredge pipe, with a short cable connecting it to an acoustic sensor
- Sensor information is passed to the bridge unit via radio connection
- The system does not have a screen (access via local web browser)
- The simpler configuration makes it suitable for remote installation by vessel crew

A ‘Short Term Hire Agreement’ was developed to act as a funding mechanism for the EMSc, which is separate to the funding model for the regular EMS.

4. Annual summary

14,913 hours

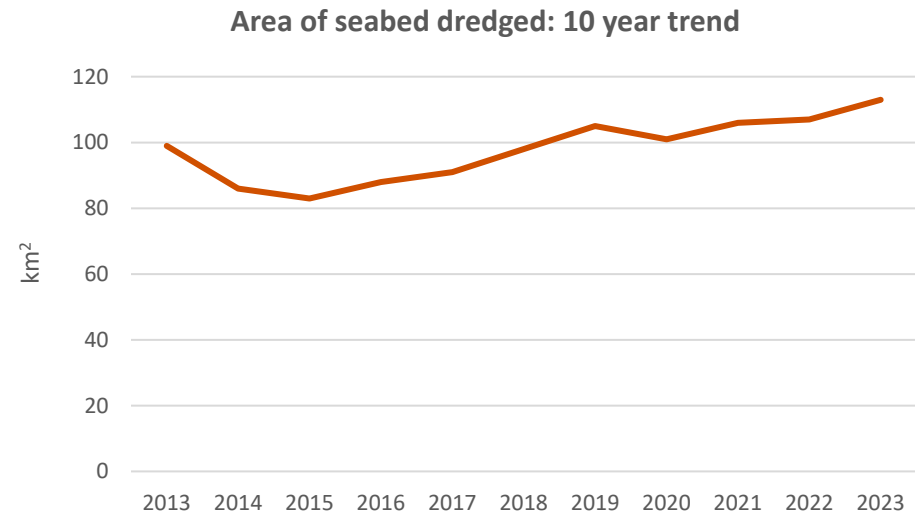
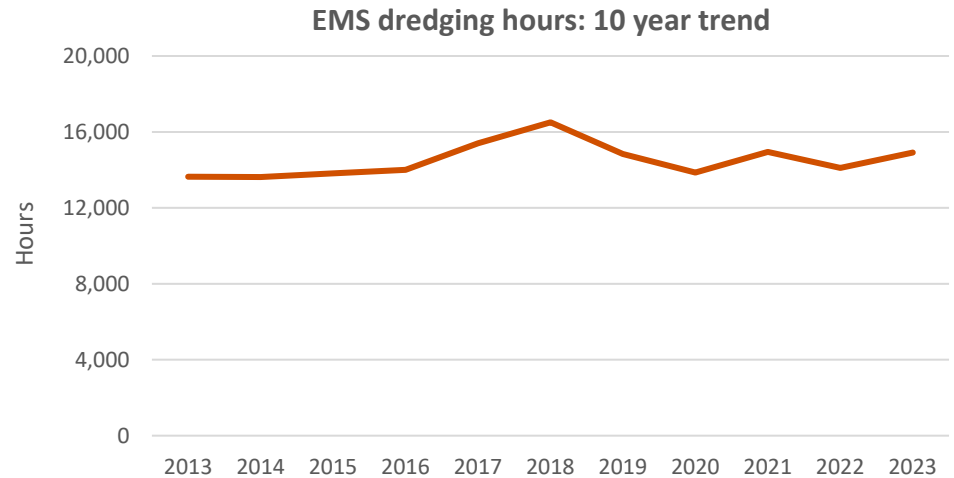
Recorded dredging activity

The EMS logs dredging data every 10 seconds. In this way the approximate total recorded dredging hours for 2023 has been calculated using the number of dredging data points as a basis. This figure is comparable to the ten-year average of 14,601 hours.

113 km²

Area of seabed dredged

The area of seabed dredged is calculated by overlaying all EMS dredge positions on a 50m x 50m grid. This figure is a key metric for the dredging industry as a method of measuring the impact on the seabed. It is frequently compared to the area under licence. In 2023 the percentage of licenced seabed dredged was 10%. A more detailed breakdown is published annually in the 'Area of Seabed Dredged' report series.



4. Annual summary

32

Active EMS units

EMS units were in situ on a maximum of 32 dredging vessels who carried out regular dredging activities throughout 2023. One installation took place on a new vessel. No de-installations occurred due to vessels being scrapped. Removed EMS units are serviced and returned to the pool of spares which is maintained by Foreshore Technology.

7

EMS service and audit visits took place

All vessels which have had EMS units fitted for more than two years receive a servicing visit by a technician. An audit inspection is also made of all equipment to ensure it remains compliant with the initial specification. No significant issues were identified as a result of the audit visits during 2023.

2

Temporary EMSc installation

EMSc units were installed on 2 vessels during 2023. These were for vessels undertaking beach nourishment works in Lincolnshire and Lydd on the south coast.

16

EMS maintenance visited were required

Technicians will attend a vessel where remote assistance is not possible. Visits in 2023 were for a variety of reasons, with common issues being the need to reattach the EMS sensor after dry docking and issues connected to the discontinuation of the 3G signal in Europe.

4. Annual summary

11 minutes 30 seconds

Unauthorised dredging

Irregularity Notices are issued to Production Agreement holders if any indications of unauthorised dredging are present in EMS data.

6 Irregularity Notices were issued during 2023.

As a result of these investigations, it was concluded 1 minute 50 seconds of dredging occurred outside Marine Licence /Production Agreement boundaries. 9 minutes 40 seconds of dredging also took place inside exclusion zones (inside Marine Licence/Production Agreement boundaries). A total of 11 minutes 30 seconds of unauthorised dredging therefore occurred.

These findings were shared with the Marine Management Organisation who was the Regulator in these cases.

143 hours

Data time gaps

EMS time gaps are classed as any periods when vessels are at sea and capable of dredging but the EMS did not log data, usually due to system errors or breakdowns. It is established whether a vessel was at sea primarily using Automatic Identification System (AIS) data. AIS is a separate vessel tracking system required by law. Periods when vessels are alongside in port or in other countries are discounted.

In each case vessel movements and dredging locations were monitored using alternative records such as outputs from other vessel tracking systems, deck logs, legally binding Master's statements or AIS track. In the majority of cases no dredging was found to have taken place during time gaps.

No evidence of unauthorised dredging was found during time gaps in 2023.

5. Conclusions

The Electronic Monitoring System, provided by Foreshore Technology has continued to prove itself as a reliable tool for ensuring compliance with Production Agreement and Marine Licence conditions. The Crown Estate remains pleased with the performance of the EMS and feedback from the dredging industry via the EMS Management Group remains positive.

EMS recorded dredging hours in 2023 increased by 6% since the previous year to 14,913. This figure is also 2% higher than the 10-year average of 14,601.

1 minute 50 seconds of dredging occurred outside Marine Licence /Production Agreement boundaries in 2023. 9 minutes 40 seconds of dredging also took place inside exclusion zones (inside Marine Licence/Production Agreement boundaries. These incidents were thoroughly investigated and robust steps were taken to prevent a recurrence.

The amount of unauthorised dredging in 2023 represents 0.001% of total dredging time recorded in the year.

Since 1993 the EMS has recorded approximately:

2 million km
of dredging track

696,000
hours of dredging activity