

Draft Terms of Reference for CEDA Working Group on Beneficial Use

Rev. 1.0, May 2026

Introduction

The management of dredged material is undergoing a significant transition, driven by increasing policy emphasis on sustainability, circular use of resources, climate adaptation, and nature-based solutions. Traditionally viewed primarily as a waste stream requiring disposal, dredged material is now increasingly recognised as a valuable resource that, if managed appropriately, can deliver environmental, social and economic benefits. This shift is reflected in international and regional frameworks, including OSPAR, PIANC guidance, and emerging national policies that promote the beneficial use of sediments wherever technically, environmentally and socially feasible.

Beneficial use of dredged material encompasses a wide range of applications, including habitat creation and restoration, coastal resilience and flood protection, sediment system management, land reclamation, and construction uses. While many technically successful projects have been delivered worldwide, beneficial use is not yet a routine outcome of dredging programmes. Uptake is often constrained by regulatory complexity, inconsistent interpretation across jurisdictions, limited early-stage integration into project planning, risk perception, and misalignment between dredging timelines and end-use opportunities.

At the same time, increasing pressure on dredging activities is emerging from broader sustainability drivers. Climate change, biodiversity loss, sediment deficits in coastal and estuarine systems, and the need to reduce reliance on primary construction materials are all sharpening the focus on how dredged material is managed. These drivers create both challenges and opportunities: challenges in terms of compliance and risk management, and opportunities to unlock innovative, commercially viable and environmentally positive reuse pathways.

Against this backdrop, CEDA recognises the need for a technically credible, industry-led forum to advance the beneficial use of dredged material. The purpose of this Working Group is to provide a collaborative platform that brings together expertise from across the dredging, engineering, environmental and policy communities to explore, promote and enable the sustainable reuse of dredged material. Particular emphasis will be placed on nature-based solutions, system-scale thinking and early integration of beneficial use into dredging and infrastructure projects.

The Working Group will examine barriers to implementation, including regulatory, technical, commercial and societal factors, and will seek to identify practical mechanisms to overcome them. By sharing best practice, lessons learned and emerging research, the Group aims to support innovation, improve policy alignment and stimulate commercial opportunity, while maintaining high environmental and technical standards. This Terms of Reference establishes the scope and intent of the Working Group and provides the framework within which it will operate.

Objective

- **Technical Exploration:** Investigate viable reuse options for dredged material across sectors (e.g. construction, habitat creation, flood resilience).
- **Sustainability Integration:** Promote circular economy principles and nature-based approaches in sediment reuse.
- **Industry Voice:** Represent the practical and commercial perspectives of industry stakeholders in policy and regulatory discussions.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate exchange of data, case studies, and technical expertise.
- **Opportunity Development:** Identify and support pathways to scalable, economically viable reuse projects.

Scope

- Focus on dredged material from marine, estuarine, and inland sources.
- Consider technical, environmental, regulatory, and economic dimensions.
- Engage with relevant sectors including ports, infrastructure, environmental engineering, and land restoration.
- Align with national and international sustainability frameworks and nature-based solution strategies.

Deliverables

- Technical Guidance: On reuse methods, material characterisation, and risk management
- Industry Position Statements: On regulatory barriers and enablers
- Opportunity Mapping: Identification of priority sites, sectors, and applications
- Collaborative Projects: Support for pilot schemes and demonstration initiatives

Length of the documents

4 to 8 pages

Timetable

2026- Q3 Establishment

- Establish Working Group and agree Terms of Reference.
- Confirm strategic focus areas: land/sea/freshwater regulation, regulatory reform at the land–sea interface, funding and opportunity enablement, and alternative disposal and strategic placement.
- Agree initial engagement priorities with regulators and stakeholders.

2026- Q4 – 2027 Q2 Knowledge Sharing and Evidence Gathering

- Commence Working Group activities, with approximately quarterly thematic meetings.
- Ongoing knowledge sharing across members on regulatory approaches, project experience, funding mechanisms, and innovative reuse practices.
- Targeted engagement with regulators (including the Environment Agency and Defra) to understand barriers, overlaps and opportunities across marine, freshwater and terrestrial regimes.
- Begin mapping of:
 - Regulatory frameworks and assessment requirements at the land/sea/freshwater interface.
 - Regulatory pinch points affecting beneficial use and alternative disposal.
 - Funding streams and commercial opportunities relevant to sediment reuse.

2027- Q3

- Draft position paper setting out lessons learned, key regulatory misalignments and practical barriers, options to improve pathways.
- Draft guidance note on alternative and strategic sediment placement
- Produce a funding and opportunity map to support CEDA members in identifying and accessing relevant programmes

2027- Q4 Finalise and publish core Working Group outputs

2028- Q1- Prepare briefing material for regulators and policymakers summarising findings and recommended enablers.

Ongoing

- Continue as an active knowledge-sharing forum, responding to emerging policy, regulatory and technical developments.

- Contribute to consultations, policy reviews and industry discussions as needed.
- Identify additional deliverables or thematic workstreams as new challenges and opportunities arise.

Membership

- Open to representatives from industry (e.g. dredging contractors, consultants, asset owners), academia, and relevant public bodies
- Members should have technical expertise or strategic interest in sediment reuse
- A Chair and Secretariat will be appointed to coordinate meetings and outputs

References

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Governance

- Operates under agreed Terms of Reference
- Decisions made by consensus or majority vote
- Annual review of progress and objectives