



Valuing the Solent in Partnership

Solent Forum Business Plan 2020 – 2025



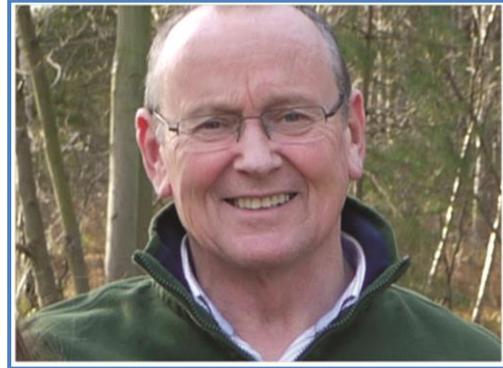
Photo courtesy of Wez Smith, RSPB

Table of Contents

1	Foreword.....	3
2	Executive Summary	4
3	Our Contribution.....	5
3.1	What We Do.....	5
3.2	Geographical Area.....	6
3.3	Our Membership.....	6
3.4	Services, Groups and Projects.....	7
3.4.1	Table 1. Solent Forum Annual Work Programme.....	7
4	Measuring Success and Planning for the Future	8
4.1	Overview	8
4.2	Review of Previous Business Plan (2015 to 2020)	8
4.2.1	Table 2. Solent Forum projects and events delivered in 2015 – 2020	9
4.3	Members’ Participation in the Business Plan	10
4.4	Horizon Scanning.....	10
4.5	Responding to Topics of Importance to Members	11
4.6	Membership Models.....	12
4.6.1	Table 3. Profile of Solent Forum Membership income in 2019/20	12
4.6.2	Table 4. Analysis of Membership models and benefits to Solent Forum	13
4.7	Membership Benefits.....	15
4.8	Membership Recruitment and Retention.....	15
4.9	Legal and Financial Basis to the Solent Forum.....	16
5	The Business Plan 2020 - 2025	17
5.1	Overview	17
5.2	Core Work Programme	17
5.2.1	Table 6. Prioritisation of Solent Forum Core Services	18
5.2.2	Table 7. Measuring Core Work Programme against Aims and Objectives.....	18
5.3	Solent Forum Groups	19
5.3.1	Table 8. Solent Forum Groups	19
5.4	Additional Solent Forum Events.....	20
5.4.1	Table 9. Additional Solent Forum Events.....	20
5.5	Solent Forum Projects.....	20
5.5.1	Table 10. Current Solent Forum projects	20
5.6	Proposed Improvements to Solent Forum Work.....	20
5.6.1	Table 11. Specific Plan Actions	20
6	Managing Our Resources.....	21
7	Appendices	23
7.1	Appendix A: Business Planning Methodology.....	23
7.2	Appendix B: Solent Forum Member Participants in the Business Planning Process 25	
7.3	Appendix C: Horizon Scanning 2019	27

1 Foreword

The success of the Solent Forum depends on the excellence of the team, our members, the people we work with and the fact that our work is planned and set out in a clear format for all to see. This is the second business plan that Karen and Kate have prepared since I have been Chair. Once again, I am impressed with how well it has been prepared. We have worked closely, with members and others, to ensure that not only have we got a plan which reflects the needs of people who live and work in the Solent area, but that there is clear understanding of how that work will be done and what it will achieve.



Peter Barham, Solent Forum Chairman

I urge you to read through the Plan and to keep in touch with the Forum through Solent News, members' meetings and the monthly e-newsletter. If you have any comments please talk to Karen, Kate or me, as we are always interested in your views and suggestions. We live in rapidly changing times for coastal and marine areas. The sea is certainly going to become a busier place, alongside the recognition that protection is not enough anymore; we must act towards delivering real recovery of damaged environments. This Plan, and your continuing ideas and actions, will all play their part in delivering thriving and sustainable communities and a better environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Barham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

2 Executive Summary

Since 1992, the Solent Forum has provided a platform to deliver Integrated Coastal Management in the Solent sub-region of the southeast. It operates at a strategic coastal management level, providing a network for closer working relationships, information dissemination and discussion of topical coastal issues.

The Forum operates a core service funded by membership subscriptions, runs self-funding subgroups and has some capacity to run small projects on topics of importance to its members. The Solent Forum Steering Group and its subgroups steer the Solent Forum officers' work and project development. Projects are chosen that best meet the Forum's aims and objectives and its members priorities, as identified through its business planning process and annual horizon scanning exercise. The Forum have added a new objective to this Business Plan which is to raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of Climate Change. The theme for this plan period is "Valuing the Solent in Partnership".

This Business Plan was built using the views of Forum's members, obtained via a postal survey and holding a business planning workshop.

Solent Forum members expressed the view that they highly value the Solent Forum's core service and they wish to retain the two existing subgroups (Solent European Marine Sites Scheme of Management and Natural Environment Group). Members want the Business Plan's emphasis to be on improving member services, rather than on delivering new projects. Members are very satisfied with the Solent Forum's current organisation-based model, including the locations, frequency and content of meetings.

This Business Plan shows how the work programme meets the Forum's objectives and support its core service. It also details which groups and projects it might run and future improvements. Appropriate actions are built into the Plan.

The following points summarise the direction that this Business Plan will follow over the next five years.

- The general steer for this Business Plan is to maintain and improve current core services.
- To be adaptive, using the annual Horizon Scanning exercise to build on topical opportunities.
- To reference the importance of valuing the Solent's natural capital and addressing climate change resilience.
- To focus on the retention of members and bringing in new organisations.
- To emphasise working with our members as partners.
- To continue to improve links which tap into the student network in the Solent.
- To explore how the Solent Forum can be "Business Ready", to effectively bring in income from projects and events.

3 Our Contribution

3.1 What We Do

Solent Forum members are keen on a theme for the new plan period. The last theme was “Working in Partnership for the Future”. For this plan period a theme has emerged which is **“Valuing the Solent in Partnership”** with members and students. This theme has been selected to reflect the current importance of valuing the natural capital of the Solent coast and marine area, as well as developing a metrics for environmental net gain.

The aims and objectives of the Forum were originally set out at its inaugural meeting in December 1992. These aims have changed over the years, although they remain largely the same in spirit. Objective six is new and has been included as part of the feedback from Forum members during the business planning process.

Solent Forum Aims

- To promote, facilitate and support integrated planning and sustainable management of the Solent
- To provide a broad-based consultative forum

Solent Forum Objectives

1. To raise awareness and understanding of the members’ roles and aspirations
2. To improve sharing of the information base
3. To facilitate better communication, consultation and liaison
4. To raise awareness and understanding of the human and natural changes likely to materially affect the Solent area and its interests
5. To promote the national and regional importance of the Solent in policy, development and plan making
6. To raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of Climate Change on the Solent and appropriate mitigation, resilience and adaptation measures.

As an independent long established and recognised coastal partnership with a politically neutral status, the Solent Forum is well placed to provide a platform for cross-sectoral communication and partnership working. Our stakeholder database contains more than 800 people from a wide variety of organisations with an interest in the Solent.

Solent Forum Capabilities:

- Promote and share information to a wide range of stakeholders.
- Raise awareness of coastal issues.
- Provide a co-ordination mechanism for research needs.
- Play a role in conflict resolution among stakeholders.

- Provide a unique focal point for information exchange across sectors.
- Bring together data, information and research to aid policy making and management decisions.
- Pilot demonstration projects.
- Raise local and regional needs with national policy makers.
- Influence the development of legislation, policy and plans in the local area.
- Attract project/research funding as an independent body.

In addition, the Forum can provide direct services for the benefit of the Solent area through topical projects and events.

3.2 Geographical Area

The area covered by the Forum is the whole of the Solent (Figure 1), including Southampton Water and the three main harbours - Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester. The western limit is the Dorset and Hampshire county boundary and the Needles. The eastern limit is a line between the eastern tip of the Isle of Wight and Selsey Bill. No inland boundary is defined, because it will vary according to the nature and importance of the issue under consideration; some matters will have more far reaching inland effects than others.



Figure 1. Geographical area covered by the Solent Forum

3.3 Our Membership

Forum members are drawn from a range of organisations such as local government, harbour authorities, industry, user groups, trade associations and non-governmental organisations. The Forum is not open to individuals, local residents' associations or issue specific lobby groups.

Since its inception, Forum membership has grown from a handful of organisations to over 100 individuals representing 52 organisations; the full list of members can be seen in Appendix A. There are nine Steering Group partners and two Associate Steering Group members (covering the university and coastal recreation sectors) an independent Chair, vice-chair and two staff. The current Chair was recruited in 2014.

The Solent Forum runs a service-based membership model that has the following characteristics:

- Membership consists of professional organisations, rather than individuals or community groups.
- Membership base covers environment, social and economic interests in the Solent coastal and marine area.
- Politically neutral.
- A subscription based model funds the Solent Forum core service and subgroups.
- Project work is dependent on project funding to bring in appropriate additional staff.

3.4 Services, Groups and Projects

The Forum operates a core service funded by membership subscriptions, has the capacity to run self-funding subgroups, and has some capacity to run small projects of importance to its members. The Solent Forum Steering Group and the subgroups steer the Solent Forum officers' work and project development. Projects are chosen that best meet the Forum's aims and objectives, and members priorities as identified through the business planning process.

The Forum takes on a student placement every summer, this helps sustain links with the Solent's academic institutions.

Table 1. shows the services and projects that the Solent Forum delivers annually.

3.4.1 Table 1. Solent Forum Annual Work Programme

CORE SERVICE
Steering Group Meetings (biannual)
Solent Forum Meetings (biannual)
Websites
Solent News (biannual hard copy/monthly digital)
Solent Information Database
Professor Mike Clark Bursary Award
Membership services (retain and recruit members)
Solent Water Quality Awards
Business Planning
OPERATIONS AND PROCESSES
Work programme

Financial Reporting
Management of Forum and Staff
Project Management Procedure
Marketing the Solent Forum
GROUPS
Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS)
Natural Environment Group (NEG)
CONSULTATION SERVICES
Involvement and reporting on: Marine Planning, MCZs, Estuary Management Plans, Catchment Management, Southern Coastal Group, Secrets of the Solent and other Solent initiatives and projects.
PROJECT WORK (Examples)
Beneficial use of Dredgings in the Solent (BUDS)
MMO Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement (MMO ESE)
Clean Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS)
Coastal Consents Guide
EVENTS
Workshops on topical issues, e.g. coastal funding streams and Natural England's Conservation Advice .

4 Measuring Success and Planning for the Future

4.1 Overview

The Solent Forum has built a Business Plan that reflects the issues that are important to its members. In order to do this, the views of members were sought, not only to review the previous business plan, but to assess the current services and guide what services members would like offered over the coming five years. Details of the business planning process, which shows how and which members were consulted, can be found in Appendices A and B, and reports at: www.solentforum.org/forum/business_plan/.

4.2 Review of Previous Business Plan (2015 to 2020)

The review of the previous business plan revealed that the Forum has fully achieved its core services and almost fully achieved its planned projects (with the exception of setting up a Solent Fishers' Project¹), as well as undertaking a large range of projects and events.

¹ As the Blue Marine Foundation set up their initiative the Forum worked with them to understand the need of Fishers'.

Key successes in the last business plan period include: holding a range of events to celebrate the Solent Forum's 25th Anniversary culminating in a highly successful conference entitled "Solent Matters; Shaping up for another 25 years"; the Beneficial Use of Dredgings Project; and new marketing products including a [brochure](#) and a new website.

Projects and events that were delivered in the previous plan period are shown in table 2.

4.2.1 Table 2. Solent Forum projects and events delivered in 2015 – 2020

PROJECTS	
Building Biodiversity in the Solent (BBS) 2018 to current	Ecological hub to identify opportunities to enhance the built coastal environment. Under this hub two projects completed for the Environment Agency: 1. Ecological Enhancements of Coastal Defences – signposting project. 2. Opportunity Mapping in Southampton Water . Group being set up to continue the work of the BBS hub.
Clean Solent Seas and Shores 2017 to current	Project set up by Natural Environment Group to address impacts from littering and other forms of water pollution in the Solent. Project pages are being developed to provide umbrella sign posting.
MMO Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement Project 2017 – 2020.	The Solent Forum & other coastal partnerships worked with the MMO on a project to enhance stakeholder engagement in marine planning. This has involved commenting on the MMO communication strategy and a variety of engagement work with hard to reach stakeholders.
Beneficial Use of Dredgings in the Solent 2016 - current	Multi-phase project to bring about a large or a number of beneficial use of dredging projects in the Solent. Phase 1– Project Scoping and successfully bidding for Phase 2 – Detailed Feasibility study. Phase 3 is the dissemination of Phase 2 and working up project proposals for implementation at Lymington.
Coastal Consents Guide Review 2018	This on-line guide summarises and reviews the licenses and consents that are needed to undertake works and development around the Solent. Last version was funded by SCOPAC.
Miscellaneous	Natural Environment Group: Paddlesports Guidelines to Avoid Bird Disturbance in Solent European Marine Sites , published in 2016.
EVENTS	
25 th Anniversary Events	Conference held – 'Solent Matters, Shaping up for another 25 years'; signposting events around the Solent; celebratory meal on HMS Warrior.
Coastal Communities Fund Networking	A Solent Forum workshop was held in 2018 with Local Authorities and Harbour Authorities to explore opportunities to access coastal funding.
Conservation Advice Workshop in partnership with Natural England, 2017	The workshop advised coastal/marine decision makers on how to use Natural England's new Conservation Advice packages for the Solent European Marine Site (SEMS).

4.3 Members' Participation in the Business Plan

Methodology

This Business Plan has been built upon the views of the Forum's members. In July 2019, a postal survey of members was conducted and 11 of 52 members responded. The results of the survey can be found in a report entitled "[Business Planning 2020 – 2025 – Members' Survey Report](#)".

In September 2019, the Forum held a Business Planning workshop using the results of the members' survey to shape the Business Plan. The meeting was well attended with 11 members represented.

In total 18 of 52 (35 %) members participated in the Business Planning process. Appendix A shows which members participated in the Members' Survey and in the Members' Workshop.

Both the Members' Survey report and the Business Planning Report can be downloaded from the Solent Forum website at: www.solentforum.org/forum/business_plan/.

Summary of Member's Views

Solent Forum members expressed the view that they highly value the Solent Forum's core service, and that they wish the Business Plan's emphasis to be on improving these services, rather than on delivering new projects.

In summary, the Solent Forum Steering Group and business planning workshop shared the following views:

- The general steer for this Business Plan is to maintain and improve current core services.
- To be adaptive, annually following the Horizon Scanning exercise to build on topical opportunities.
- To reference the importance of valuing the Solent's natural capital and addressing climate change resilience.
- To focus on the retention of members and bringing in new organisations.
- To emphasise working with our members as partners.
- To continue and improve links which tap into the student network in the Solent.
- To explore how the Solent Forum can be "Business Ready", to be able to effectively bring in income from projects and events.

4.4 Horizon Scanning

Detailed Horizon Scanning is undertaken each summer by Solent Forum staff. The 2019 Horizon Scanning document can be found in Appendix C and on the Business Planning webpages at: http://www.solentforum.org/about/business_plan/.

Some of the key issues identified in the June 2019 Horizon Scanning and since includes:

- The importance of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan, seeking to deliver and identify natural capital, biodiversity and environmental net gain, climate resilience and nature recovery networks.
- Exploring how to tackle biodiversity loss and climate change.
- The importance of working with coastal communities, especially those that have become increasingly marginalised and impoverished.
- Extending the Catchment Based Approach to transitional and coastal waters.
- Emerging funding streams and initiatives; investment on "Blue" socio economic schemes developed through marine pioneers in the shape of the Blue Impact Fund.

Horizon Planning is valued by Solent Forum members. There is a desire to take it further by polling members annually to understand their priority topics and areas of interest. This is discussed more fully in the next section.

4.5 Responding to Topics of Importance to Members

The business planning process revealed that members highly value the Solent Forum's ability to be a neutral and honest broker.

The most important issues to members, revealed in the business planning consultation, (in order of importance) are as follows.

1. Water quality (including eutrophication, litter, faecal contamination, temperature change in both fresh and sea water).
2. Developmental Pressures (including population growth, economic growth, and demand on the environment from commercial and recreational users).
3. Climate change and coastal change (including coastal resilience, coastal flooding and erosion, coastal squeeze and saltmarsh loss).
4. The changing regulatory landscape (including the importance of community inclusion (explored within Marine Parks), the requirement for habitat compensation, net gain and facilitating dynamic coasts).

Members are keen that the Solent Forum regularly signpost a range of key coastal and marine issues, events, consultations and plans, to help them stay informed and solve challenges.

The Solent Forum Horizon Scanning is appreciated by members, although it was suggested that further work is done to refine the document to understand priority issues to members (using a poll) and what gaps exist for Solent partners to fill.

The poll results would become a project list for partners and a topic list for Solent Forum meetings and events. Members are particularly keen on workshop style meetings. This

project and topic list will reveal gaps and prioritisation of works needed at a Solent level. Examples of the work required by Solent partners (revealed in the Business Planning consultation) includes the following:

- Solent Strategic Access Group - engagement on the England Coast Path and link to coastal tourism businesses. Could also include City Marine Park idea.
- Solent Habitat Creation Partnership - this needs to be owned locally and worked on by local partners.
- Solent Net Gain Working Group - the government has mandated net gain, but Local Authorities may not have skills to take this on. Cross working opportunities.
- Solent Catchment Based Partnership - Defra may potentially fund Solent estuarine catchment to work with the other river catchment partnerships in the Solent, to ensure real improvements in the Solent's Transitional and Coastal Waters.
- The Natural Capital concept is shaping national and local environmental policy; we need to understand the value of the Solent coast and marine area and the metrics for environmental net gain. This needs to be set in the backdrop of Climate Change and the necessity for resilient, sustainable coastal and marine management.

4.6 Membership Models

Analysis of Coastal Partnership Membership Models

The Solent Forum operates an organisation service model. Table 3 below shows the profile of the Forum's members, there is a heavy reliance on local government and harbour authority membership. There is an opportunity for the Solent Forum to attract more business members.

4.6.1 Table 3. Profile of Solent Forum Membership income in 2019/20

	%
Local Government	52
Government Agency/IFCA	13
Harbour Authorities	15
Consultancies/Business	8
Protecting environment not for profit	7
Universities	5

The Forum have a membership that comprises organisations rather than individuals and it is subscription based. This means that the potential member base number is comparatively small (approximately 50 – 100).

An analysis of the different models for coastal partnerships was conducted, as the Solent Forum wishes to understand if it is in the best shape to prosper on behalf of its members and be fit for the challenges of the future. The different models are shown in Table 4, the

Forum currently operates a service based model. Should the Forum wish to place more emphasis on offering a project/facilitation based service, it would need to invest in bringing in new staff; this would require funding.

4.6.2 Table 4. Analysis of Membership models and benefits to Solent Forum

Model	Numbers of members	Annual Income	Offering	Benefits to Forum current membership and compatibility with current objectives
Organisation Service Model (current)	50 - 100	£60k to £80k	Similar to current service.	High Fully compatible
Additional Project based consultancy	n/a	£5k to 100K	Project consultancy. Require further £30k per annum to win large projects and bring in staff. Small projects can be delivered. This can be offered by the Forum for small projects	Medium (if focused) Compatible (if projects are relevant)
Facilitation Services for Members	50	£5- £10k	This can currently be offered by staff.	Medium (if focused) Compatible if subjects are relevant)
Community based model	500 - 1000	£20,000	Part-time staff to run events and devise service offering for community groups. Would need to set-up business arm to receive money (see section on Legal basis of Solent Forum).	Low Not compatible (would need a new objective)
Student Membership	100's (market) Would need a limit of 5 per meeting	Negligible	Students to be able to benefit from Solent Forum meetings. This will help educate students for the future.	Low Compatible

The many different Coastal Partnerships across the country operate different models to reflect their local circumstances. Dorset Coast Forum and Medway Swale Estuary Partnership are more project income focussed, rather than on membership income, and derive significant income from large externally funded projects. Devon Maritime Forum and others have many hundreds of individual members who pay a low amount and fees for their events. Thames Estuary Partnership has tiers of community members and organisation members.

The Solent Forum model mostly comprises the Organisation Service Model, as well as offering project management for small projects and facilitation services for members.

The Solent Forum has no current membership basis for community groups or individuals. These groups could include: agricultural businesses, home owners, recreational users, clubs, town councils, residents' associations etc. Offering community based membership would deviate from the current membership model. Unless specific projects dictate such an approach (CCATCH The Solent project resulted in community outreach) it would be important to understand what the Solent Forum could offer community groups and how it would benefit the Forum. Widening the membership base in this way would mean that the Forum would need to offer different core services and amend its current aims and objectives. Furthermore, modifying the membership scheme could lead to increased levels of administration and potential time and cost issues.

The Thames Estuary Partnership has a dedicated Communications, Events and Office Manager. If the Forum was to potentially charge for community membership or derive income from community events, there could be issues with collecting membership fees, as the Forum's finances are managed by Hampshire County Council and income is derived by an invoicing system.

There is potential to set-up a student level of membership (benefits could include one member's meeting per year, biannual copies of Solent News, monthly e-news alerts, Solent Forum student summer work placement priority notification and e-alerts regarding bursary award and project ideas list). As discussed above there would be issues about charging for this, it may need to be offered for free; care would then need to be taken that the numbers do not subsume current meetings.

Members' Views

Members are very satisfied with the Solent Forum's current model, including the locations, frequency and content of meetings. Solent Forum members fully endorsed our current organisation based model and did not believe that the Forum should offer a wider community based model. Member's particularly value workshop style meetings to explore topical issues.

The current model includes running core Forum services, funded by member subscriptions, with self-funding specialist topic groups. This model allows the Forum to be flexible, groups can also develop self-funding projects which are topical and useful. Solent Forum groups only run when they are compatible with the core values of the Forum, they are reviewed periodically to ensure that they are still required.

Members are also satisfied with the role and reputation of the Solent Forum as a neutral broker, networking among a diverse range of sectors. Most members felt that the membership base of the Solent Forum represented the interests of the Solent, people suggested including more marine business interests, such as small and medium sized and science and technology organisations. The Forum needs to work hard to retain membership and identify new members, especially within the commercial sector.

Most members are satisfied with the Forum's topic specific groups.

There was a strong interest from Members' in exploring new projects and topics; these topics need to be incorporated into the Forum's current core service. Many important topics are already explored within the annual bi-annual members' meetings and news service. There may be a case to set-up individual workshop events to cover specific topics. There is also an opportunity for the Forum to deliver small funded projects on behalf of members.

Members are satisfied with the current staff resource and they made a strong indication that they would remain committed to the Solent Forum, and felt that the Forum offered good value for money.

4.7 Membership Benefits

The benefits of membership are discussed in section 3, Our Contribution.

The Forum's website provides information on the benefits of the Forum and a specific brochure is available to show these benefits.

Members' can access these benefits via Solent Forum events, its website and publications. It is however possible that non-members can benefit from direct access to the website and thus to Solent Forum material.

Key stakeholders are part of the Solent Forum Steering Group, and this approach is mirrored by many other coastal partnerships.

Further membership benefits that might be considered include:

- A dedicated membership area of the website
- Site visits around the Solent
- Reduced fees at special chargeable conferences
- Exclusive access to reports and information

4.8 Membership Recruitment and Retention

This section details a recruitment strategy for the Solent Forum. This strategy covers the need to both recruit and retain members.

Retention

In order to retain members, there is a need to keep abreast of the issues of importance to members' and ensure that the core service, especially the news service and events run by the Forum, continue to provide the right level of information and the ability to network. The Members' Survey showed high overall satisfaction with the Forum and this business plan continues to prioritise actions in response to the issues of importance raised by members.

As Business Planning only takes place every five years, the views of members' need to be sought more frequently. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- Solent Forum Officers to regularly contact members in person to derive feedback
- Annual Horizon Scanning poll, providing Members' with a mechanism to feedback views
- Core regular events, based upon Horizon Scanning topics of interest

Recruitment

Solent Forum officers to actively promote the Forum as part of its on-going Marketing Strategy and contact new potential members. This would include specific actions to recruit new members, including the use of Social Media and identifying under represented sectors.

Potential members include:

- More business members such as science and technology companies and small to medium enterprises.
- Solent based marine businesses.
- Solent Marina groups.
- Business associations.
- Marine Conservation bodies.
- Portsmouth Water.
- National Oceanography Centre.
- Hampshire Associations of Local Councils.

4.9 Legal and Financial Basis to the Solent Forum

The Solent Forum was set-up by Hampshire County Council in 1996. It is an ***Unincorporated Association (UA)***. This means that it is:

- A membership association
- It has a constitution
- It has a member voting system within its Steering Group

The Solent Forum Steering Group sets the work programme and budget and appoints the chairman. The Solent Forum members,' with the help of Steering Group, set the Solent Forum aims and objectives and prepare the business plan. The Solent Forum host, Hampshire County Council (HCC), is responsible for proper financial control including auditing.

The Solent Forum has no legal basis and is outside of the scope of Value Added Tax (VAT) its income is derived from membership contributions under the annual threshold for VAT purposes. The legal model that the Solent Forum follows both advantages and disadvantages.

The Solent Forum Officers have been tasked to look at different organisation models available and assess the suitability of each. This will take place early in the business plan period.

There are many different types of organisation model that the Solent Forum may consider, but broadly there is a decision on whether the Solent Forum can take on an Incorporated status. An **incorporated** organisation has “legal personality” which means it can enter into contracts, buy or lease property, and employ people in its own right. Any debts or obligations belong to the organisation, rather than to the individuals running it. This gives the trustees, directors or committee members some protection, although they still have liability for debts caused by negligence or poor financial management.

In addition, The Forum needs to understand if there is any benefit of becoming a charity.

The Forum needs to select the best organisation type to ensure that it is in good shape for the next five years and is “Business Ready” (considering whether it can bid for external projects; have the ability to sell tickets for events without using HCC’s invoice procedure; have a system that is cost effective for the size of the Forum, and a system that brings the best benefits in terms of VAT).

It would be important to consider whether it is necessary to change the whole of the Forum’s constitution or set up a trading arm. The advantage of setting up a trading arm is that the benefits of the current Solent Forum Membership could be retained, with a trading arm formed which has suitable legal status and VAT registration. When considering options, the Forum needs to understand the advantages and disadvantages of becoming incorporated, especially considering the full resource and financial cost of becoming incorporated. Prior to making any decision, it would be important to evaluate what models other Coastal Partnerships follow and the advantages and disadvantages perceived. This is currently being carried out by the Coastal Partnership Network.

5 The Business Plan 2020 - 2025

5.1 Overview

This Business Plan for 2020 to 2025 sets both the core work programme for the Forum, as well as the groups and events it will run and service. It also sets out specific actions to bring about the improvements that Members require. Within this section, the views of Members’ established from the Members Survey has also been shown, as it provides weight to the planned programme.

Each year, the Solent Forum Officers measure the success of the organisation against its Business Plan actions and reports to the Steering Group. This plan recommends that feedback from the wider membership is also obtained.

An annual report is published each April to summarise the Forum’s work over the previous year and to detail work planned for the coming year.

5.2 Core Work Programme

The Solent Forum’s news service and Members Meetings are the most valued services that the Forum delivers. Table 6 lists the Solent Forum’s core services and shows how Members ranked their importance.

5.2.1 Table 6. Prioritisation of Solent Forum Core Services

(1 = highest priority and rated as extremely useful and 7 = lowest priority and rated as useful to some extent). No service was rated as not being useful.

Solent Forum Core Services	Ranking of Importance to Members
Groups such as Solent European Marine Sites scheme of management and the Natural Environment Group	1
Members Meetings	2
Steering Group meetings	2
Running workshops and events	3
E News	4
Forum website and database	5
Biannual issues of Solent News	6
Professor Mike Clark Awards	6
Solent Information Database	7
Solent Water Quality Awards	unranked
Membership Services	unranked
Business Planning	unranked

Table 7 shows how these core activities are linked to the Solent Forum's objectives and work programme.

5.2.2 Table 7. Measuring Core Work Programme against Aims and Objectives

Category	How to measure
Overarching The Solent Forum needs to remain fit for purpose and to ensure that its business develops to ensure its long-term viability.	
Monitor and Review Work Programme, Business Plan, Finances and Terms of Reference.	Bi-annual Steering Group Meetings. Horizon Scanning and Annual survey to obtain feedback from members.
Review and update membership databases to ensure all details are correct.	Databases kept up to date.
Provide for professional development and training of staff.	Professional training and development provided.
Objective 1 - Raise awareness and understanding of the members' roles and aspirations	
Hold regular SF meeting to bring to members' attention coastal issues.	Two Steering Group meetings and two members meetings per annum. Views of members sought and followed.
Organise seminars, conferences and other events to bring interested parties up to date on factors influencing the Solent.	Organise conferences as and when appropriate.
Publish biannual Solent News and maintain the news service.	Solent News published twice per annum, monthly e-mail newsletter.
Maintain and develop the Solent Forum website.	Web-site maintenance work.
Consultancy services.	Consultation events.

Objective 2 - Improve sharing of the information base	
Maintain databases of information as directed by members.	Web-site maintenance work. Solent Information Database (SID)
Publish and share information/reports from our members	News Service Solent Forum Website
Objective 3 - To facilitate better communication, consultation and liaison amongst members	
Continue to offer and provide a mechanism for networking, communicating to and consulting with Solent Forum members.	Two Steering Group meetings and two members meetings per annum. Views sought and followed on. Solent News service
Objective 4 - To raise awareness and understanding of the human and natural changes likely to materially affect the Solent area and its interests	
Bring to members' attention the potential changes that may affect the Solent.	Raised at Steering Group meetings. Members Meeting presentations and hot topics. Consultancy services.
Objective 5 - To promote the national and regional importance of the Solent	
Continue to provide a structure for discussion and coordinated action ensure sustainable development and integrated coastal management in the Solent.	Solent Forum meetings, presentations and projects as directed by the Steering group. Provide responses to relevant consultations e.g. national Plans etc.
Solent Forum officers to maintain relationships with Solent and relevant regional and national organisations to foster understanding of coastal management issues.	Officers to continue networking with local, national and regional organisations. To offer consultancy services. Membership of the CPN and the EMS Officers Working Group.
Objective 6 - To raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of Climate Change on the Solent and appropriate mitigation, resilience and adaptation measures	
Bring to members' attention the potential changes that may affect the Solent.	Raised at Steering Group meetings. Members Meeting presentations and hot topics. Consultancy services.

5.3 Solent Forum Groups

The Solent Forum Groups recommended for this Business Plan period are shown in Table 8; each of these groups has been successfully run throughout the last business plan period and have their own Steering Group and Terms of Reference.

5.3.1 Table 8. Solent Forum Groups

Groups	Objective	Priority
Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS)	The Solent relevant authorities sign up to a management scheme for the Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS), this includes an annual survey and Management Report. The management scheme guides the way in which relevant authorities exercise their functions so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. The Solent Forum is the facilitating authority for SEMS.	2
Natural Environment Group (NEG)	NEG is a subgroup of SEMS and works primarily to improve the information base and recommend improved management measures to enable the European Marine sites to achieve favourable condition. It provides a cost-effective mechanism to direct, coordinate, and facilitate the delivery of cross cutting actions.	1

5.4 Additional Solent Forum Events

Members highly value Solent Forum events and the Forum plans to run at least one workshop style event annually. The topic selected will be in response to the issues prioritised by members after the annual summer Horizon Scanning.

5.4.1 Table 9. Additional Solent Forum Events

Projects	Description
Annual workshop event on key topic	Members' will prioritise the issues of importance following Horizon Scanning

5.5 Solent Forum Projects

The Forum will annually list key areas of interest following Horizon Scanning and prioritisation. These areas will provide the basis for future projects to be undertaken by Solent Forum members. Existing Forum staff can deliver some small projects, which would generally be self-financing unless an exception is agreed.

The Forum is currently involved with three projects and plans to review its [Coastal Consents Guide](#) in 2020. These projects can be seen in Table 10.

5.5.1 Table 10. Current Solent Forum projects

Solent Forum projects	Ranking of Importance to Members
Building Biodiversity in the Solent Hub	1
Beneficial Use of Dredgings (BUDS) – Phases 1 and 2 complete	2
Coastal Consents Guide Review 2020	3
Clean Solent Shores and Seas	4

5.6 Proposed Improvements to Solent Forum Work

In addition to the Solent Forum's work programme, the following actions in Table 11 are required throughout the Business Plan period, reflecting members' views on how the Solent Forum could improve what it is currently doing.

5.6.1 Table 11. Specific Plan Actions

What	Detail	When
Membership and recruitment strategy	Seek new membership and work at retaining membership.	On-going. Keep a documented track.

Annual survey of priority work areas	This poll will develop a list of potential partnership work areas.	This will follow Horizon Scanning each June.
Annually publish the opportunities for partnership work	The list generated above, will be published for the benefit of members. The Forum will pursue whichever projects they can or disseminate via its core service.	Late summer annually.
Membership Benefits Project	This project will look at how to offer Solent Forum members exclusive benefits.	2020
Ensuring Solent Forum is Business Ready	Analysis of legal models and understanding of all the considerations.	2020/21
Explore opportunities of using the student network	To work with University of Portsmouth to maximise the benefits of working with the student network to meet research gaps.	2020 onwards

6 Managing Our Resources

The Forum currently employs two part-time staff this represents 1.2 full-time equivalents. The Solent Forum is hosted by Hampshire County Council, who in turn manage the staff.

The Forum currently has 52 members (see Appendix A) including 11 members on its Steering group. The Forum's annual budget is approximately £60,000.

Income is derived from the following:

	Approx. Percentage of Income
Core subscriptions	62
Groups	38
Total	100%

Expenditure is made up of the following:

	Approx. Percentage of Expenditure
Staff costs	88
Gen. expenditure on travel, meetings etc	8
Website	2
Solent News and other publications	2
Total	100%

Wages are a significant part of Solent Forum costs, subscriptions need to follow wage increases and are thus pegged to the Retail Price Index.

The Forum receives significant in-kind support from some of its members, particularly Hampshire County Council who have hosted the Solent Forum since 1992. Many members provide free rooms and refreshments for Forum meetings. Members also give their expertise and publications free of charge to the Forum and provide information at no cost.

Projected income for the Solent Forum for 2019/20 and for subsequent years is expected to balance expenditure. This means that the Forum is sustainable for the next five years. Should staff costs increase to cover project costs, care should be taken to ensure the long term viability of the Forum.

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Business Planning Methodology

The Solent Forum has a five-year Business Planning cycle, and this plan follows on from the previous 2015 – 2020 plan. It sets both the work programme for the Forum and any specific direction or emphasis required.

Each year the Solent Forum Officers measure the success of the organisation against its Business Plan actions and report to the Steering Group. An annual report is published each April to summarise the Forum’s work over the previous year and to detail work planned for the coming year.

Towards the end of the five-year period for the last Business Plan, in May 2019, a five year Business Plan review was conducted. In summary the review found that the Forum had achieved its core services fully, as well as carrying out a large range of projects.

This Business Plan has been built upon the views of the Forum’s members. In July 2019, a postal survey of members was conducted and 11 of 52 members responded. The results of the survey can be found in a report entitled “Business Planning 2020 – 2025 – Members’ Survey Report”.

In September 2019, the Forum held a Business Planning workshop using the results of the members’ survey to shape the Business Plan. The meeting was well attended with 11 members represented. In total 18 of 52 (35 %) members participated in the Business Planning process. Appendix B shows which members participated in the Members’ Survey and the Members’ Workshop.

Both the Members’ Survey report and the Business Planning Report can be downloaded from the Solent Forum website at www.solentforum.org/forum/business_plan/.

Methodology

Scope Business Plan (BP) 2020 -2025	Agree methodology and scope at Steering Group meeting.	February 2019
Advertise Business Plan	Members Meeting	March 2019
Business Plan Review of 2010-2015 BP	Review achievement of previous business plan	June 2019
Members questionnaire	To include project prioritisation questions. What they value, and their priorities.	To send out July 2019
Survey analysis of members’ questionnaire	Evaluate responses and prepare report.	August 2019
Presentations of results from members’ survey	Solent Forum Members Meeting	October 2019

Business Planning Meeting	For all Solent Forum members	Autumn 19
Agree early draft of Business Plan	Present and discuss at Solent Forum Steering group meeting.	Winter 2019
Draft Business Plan for consultation		January 2020
Advertise in Solent News	Advertise and ask for comment on the draft business plan from the wider coastal community.	January 2020
Final Business Plan	Send to all members and advertise	February 2020
Present Business Plan	Members meeting	March 2020

7.2 Appendix B: Solent Forum Member Participants in the Business Planning Process

STEERING GROUP - 11	Postal Questionnaire	Business Planning Meeting
Associated British Ports	y	
Environment Agency	y	Y
Hampshire County Council	y	Y
HM Naval Base		y
Isle of Wight Council	y	Y
Natural England	y	
New Forest National Park Authority	y	Y
Portsmouth City Council		Y
Solent Protection Society		Y
University of Portsmouth (Associate)		Y
RYA (Associate)		
Non-STEERING GROUP - 39		
ABPmer	y	Y
Angling Trust		
Artecology		
Beaulieu Enterprises Ltd		
Bembridge Harbour Improvements Co. Ltd		
BP Oil U.K. Ltd	y	
Boskalis Westminster		
Beckett Rankine		
Chichester District Council		
Chichester Harbour Conservancy		
Carcinus Ltd		
Cowes Harbour Commissioners		
Eastleigh Borough Council		
Fareham Borough Council		Y
Gosport Borough Council		
HIWWT		
Havant Borough Council		
Isle of Wight Estuaries	y	
Langstone Harbour Board		
Lymington Harbour Commissioners		
Marina Projects Ltd		
Mineral Products Association		
New Forest District Council		
Portsmouth Commercial Port		
Ramboll		
River Hamble Harbour Authority	y	

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds		
Royal Haskoning DHV		
Southern IFCA	Y	
Sussex IFCA		
Southern Water		
Southampton Solent University		
Solent Cruising and Racing		
University of Southampton		
Vectis Boating and Fishing Club		
West Sussex County Council		
Wightlink		Y
Winchester City Council		
Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners		

Page Break

7.3 Appendix C: Horizon Scanning 2019

Background

Horizon Scanning looks ahead; it is a resource for Solent Forum members to help them keep abreast of emerging issues. It is undertaken each summer by Solent Forum staff to supplement the business planning process. The next five year Business Plan, 2020 to 2025, is currently being prepared and this document will feed into it.

Summary of events

Over the years we have seen a considerable rise in environmental protection and this has meant that we have done much to protect biodiversity when carrying out development at the coast or in the sea, but there has been little focus on recovery or restoring nature and there has been little said which actually requires or leads to recovery. The launch of the 25 Year Environment Plan, however, was a key event in setting policies for the future and the Plan is clear in its intentions that we must see restoration and recovery of biodiversity alongside continued protection. It is no surprise therefore that the topic of net gain is being increasingly discussed and reflects Defra's policies to leave the environment in a better place. During the summer the Government also announced the final tranche of the Marine Conservation Zones and this includes the Bembridge to Cowes MCZ in the Solent.

The debate that is taking place at present is whether this is enough and whether we need to see real moves towards recovery and restoration; some argue, for example, that the objectives for the MCZs are not strong enough and more should aim for restoration rather than maintenance. The Government is also reviewing whether there should be even more protected areas which are being referred to as Highly Protected Marine Areas, HPMAs.

At the same time the concept of net gain accompanying development is growing and there is increasing discussion about what it means and how it could be applied. In short, net gain means that in addition to protecting environmental features when undertaking development, there should also be a requirement to see an improvement in nature. This is already becoming more established for terrestrial development, such as house building, and is recognised as a requirement down to mean low water (i.e. the intertidal zone), but as yet there is no clear policy or requirement for net gain in the marine environment.

What does all this mean - it means that industry and conservation will need to work together better to ensure that conservation is both maintained and improved and that targets for gain are identified and delivered.

Government direction and legal matters regarding coastal and marine matters

Following the release of the Defra 25 Year Environment Plan, there has been a number of environmental policy documents on the marine environment. In addition, the government are now planning for the new Environment Bill, which is expected in Summer 2020. This sets out policy direction; representing huge opportunities to improve the marine environment.

Defra's Natural Capital Committee published a paper in May 2019, which set the scene for the extent of the ***UK marine interest and its natural capital***. It looks within the broad context of the 25 year Environment Plan and recommends how the government can protect

and grow marine natural capital for public benefit and the mechanisms for doing so. The recommendations include:

- Reviewing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and looking to re-orientate their protection towards natural capital – looking in detail at fishing impacts and dumping of dredgings at sea
- Develop enabling mechanisms to achieve natural capital decision making through marine pioneers, the Environment Bill and the MCAA 2009
- A marine stewardship system and Net Gain
- Extending the Catchment Based Approach to transitional and coastal waters
- Enhancing public engagement with the marine environment (considering national marine parks)
- Developing the science of natural capital understanding and implement sound green accounting
- Provide international leadership on natural capital
- Build an underlying metrics system that works for the challenging marine system.

The paper follows a consultation by **Defra on Net Gain in December 2018**. This paper set out a proposed system of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as a core mechanism to be introduced to the planning process, measured by metrics to ensure developers pay for improvements to wildlife habitats. In addition, the paper consulted on an aspiration for a wider Environmental Net Gain (ENG) system to bring benefits to different sectors such as the marine environment, recreation, water quality, flood water etc. Currently there is no proposed mechanism for net gain below Mean Low Water (MLW). As pointed out in a **white paper by ABPmer** in March 2019, there is a strong argument to make any marine environmental net gain system statutory, so that public money can be directed to the marine environment following a strategic approach.

Defra published a statement paper in July 19 on the Environment Bill. With Brexit potentially imminent this bill is required, and it is expected in Spring 2020. The forthcoming Environment Bill seeks to establish a comprehensive legal framework for environmental improvement. It will also create a new Office for Environmental Protection. It remains to be seen what powers this new office will have. Through the Bill, Defra will introduce a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain. This will require developers to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced, with a 10% increase in habitat value for wildlife compared with the pre-development baseline. Exemptions for certain types of development will be made in a targeted way, and it will continue to work to establish potential approaches to achieving biodiversity net gains for nationally significant infrastructure projects. Marine development remains out of the scope of biodiversity net gain in the Bill. To help guide key policies like net gain, planning and the future Environmental Land Management system, Defra will introduce a new statutory requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These strategies will help to map out important habitats and opportunities for the local environment to be improved, linking communities' knowledge and priorities with national environmental objectives. Hampshire County Council are beginning a partnership piece of work to understand the implications of BNG for Hampshire.

In June 2019, the Government announced a review to examine whether and how the strongest protections for areas of sea, known as **Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)**, could be introduced. The review will be led by Richard Benyon MP. It will run from June 2019 and complete by the end of 2019.

Water quality (particularly nitrate pollution) and littering remain high on the national political agenda. Natural England are currently considering advice about nitrate pollution following two rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Union. The current advice from Natural England is that Planning Authorities determining permissions may now need to account for areas where there is a deterioration of water quality due to nitrate pollution. This is because nitrates and other pollutants can be released from domestic and industrial wastewater into water sources. This has resulted in some planning permissions being put on hold, as discussions are taking place as to whether strategies need to be put in place for any pollution (should there be evidence of it) to be appropriately addressed in order for new developments to be compliant. This may affect the Solent area if evidence shows that there is nitrate pollution in the harbours; discussions are on-going with Local Planning Authorities some of which may contest this evidence and that taking the precautionary approach is unfair.

Addressing the issue will involve accepted mitigation strategy for any affected areas that will ensure 'nitrate neutrality'. Mitigation may be direct (stripping nitrate using technology to strip at waste treatments works (very expensive) or by reed beds etc. at sites) or indirect (buying high nitrate producing agricultural land and converting to Strategic Areas of Natural Green space (SANGS)). Some Local Planning Authorities, such as Poole Borough Council, have adopted a Supplementary Planning Document detailing how they will ensure that new development is nitrate neutral.

A further important water quality issue, is the breakdown of trust with some water companies in their reporting of combined sewer outfall (CSO) releases of sewage overflow to rivers and coast. This has led to water quality deterioration not being reported and a risk to public health for those that bathe in polluted waters without realising the risks.

The Environment Agency consulted on their National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy in July 2019. The approach centers around building resilience and meeting ever more challenging climate change risks, including higher sea level rise forecasts.

A replacement will be required for the current **Marine aggregate system** - new regional approach to compliance monitoring and also growing pressure on aggregate wharves from development.

South Hampshire Local Planning Authorities have worked together for many years to solve key environmental issues which may be an impediment to planning. Partnership for South Hampshire (PFSH) have released their **South Hampshire Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy 2017 (Updated 2018)** and the South Hampshire GI Implementation Plan 2019 (adopted by PFSH Joint Committee in June). Both are available the PFSH website Green Infrastructure webpage.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the importance of **restoring estuarine and coastal habitats**, due to the increasing threat of climate change and coastal squeeze. The recent Restoring Estuarine and Coastal Habitats in NE Atlantic (REACH) conference brought together Ministers, Defra, EA, NE, CEFAS, MMO, JNCC and others. A hard-hitting message was made that climate change and biodiversity loss are the greatest threats. The Challenge is to preserve and/or maintain, often degraded, habitat in a way to make it resilient to future changes and future proofing, which may result in changes in the balance between terrestrial and marine habitats. There is a focus on saltmarsh, seagrass and oyster reefs and the use of

‘valuation’, and industry led restoration projects as a way of generating funding for initiatives.

Solent wide strategic direction and funding

Solent Natural Capital

There is interest to create a focus for the maritime Solent, linking with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Nature Partnership and Solent LEP. This follows work conducted by the Solent LEP producing the Solent Local Industrial Strategy.

Solent Coastal and Marine Catchments

There are opportunities to tap into Environment Agency Water Framework Directive revenue funding/FCRM funding; to develop a case for funding the Coastal Partnerships, such as the Solent Forum, to partner with the catchment partnerships of New Forest, Isle of Wight, Test and Itchen and East Hampshire to deliver transitional and coastal estuarine restoration and net gain.

Restoring Solent Estuarine and Coastal Habitats

The work of REACH nationally can be applied to the Solent. Identification is required of which habitats need to be preserved/maintained and made resilient to future changes. We also need to understand the financial drivers. In particular an understanding of projects and potential links for strategic compensation and mitigation projects for damage to MPAs including: nitrate neutrality and the development of Strategic Areas of Natural Green space (SANGS), Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (Bird Aware and development of alternative areas of green space for recreation). Solent Regional Habitat Creation plans are being taken forward by the East Hampshire Coastal Partnership (managed realignment and habitat creation opportunities).

A coordinated approach to tackle water quality is required in the Solent to address nitrate pollution. As mentioned above Natural England’s recent advice on the matter has resulted in planning permissions in the Solent being put on hold (5 Local Authorities have been affected in the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) area), whilst an affective mitigation strategy is agreed. A recent report to Portsmouth City Council’s cabinet summarises the issue, stating that high levels of nitrates from housing and agricultural sources have caused eutrophication (the excessive growth of green algae) in protected waters in the Solent area, which is having a detrimental impact on protected habitats and birds. PfSH is actively looking at developing a mitigation strategy. Havant Borough Council have an adopted policy on this matter.

Solent wide environmental net gain

There is a need for Solent wide net gain opportunity mapping, understanding Solent Nature Recovery Areas, working with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Nature Partnership (LNP). There is a real need to bring together opportunities in the Solent coastal and marine environment. Many issues could be explored including further oyster restoration opportunities, reducing nitrates and algal mats. We need to explore green financing and whether there are opportunities for the Solent Forum to partner with the LNP (Devon Coastal Partnership are running the marine section of their local LNP).

Solent economic development opportunities (tourism, heritage)

Work with the Solent LEP as money is filtered through this body. LEPs are developing Strategic Economic Plans (Solent LEP has just published the Solent Industrial Strategy). EA

(FCRM) is influencing LEPs, on environmental challenges/opportunities and projects, looking at investment scale, benefits to economy, other benefits and partnership working.

Solent Fisheries and shellfish

Brexit is potentially imminent. Once it occurs the European Marine Fisheries Fund (EMFF) will no longer be open to the UK.

Solent Community Initiatives

The rise of community participation is enshrined in Defra thinking and marine parks are an expression of this; the Solent Forum have been looking at this, and there is interest in developing Portsmouth into a City Marine Park (led by UoP). Blue Marine and Plymouth City Council have been leading the concept. The emergence of possible new funding mechanisms for community initiatives needs to be explored. In 2018, the Solent Forum ran a workshop on opportunities for the Coastal Communities Fund (it is now unknown if this fund will be continued). More information is expected in the next spending review. The new proposed Strategic Prosperity Fund may provide opportunities to access coastal funding. There is much to be done to understand which grants and funds may come available, so that organisations such as the Solent Forum can promote and share bid details and engage with partners. This could involve pollution campaigns.

Secrets of Solent is an important initiative managed by Hampshire Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, bringing community participation to understanding to value of the Solent marine environment. It is currently establishing a network of marine champions, promoting Seabins and supporting citizen science.

Solent Water Quality related to sewage outfalls

There has been a breakdown in trust between the public and water companies. Havant Borough Council are challenging Southern Water on their CSO releases of polluted water to the harbours following heavy rainfall (146 releases of untreated sewage this year). The council now plans to form a partnership with other concerned authorities to lobby for further water quality testing and monitoring.

Building Biodiversity in the Solent

The Solent Forum has set-up a Building Biodiversity in the Solent Hub (BBS Hub). This hub, which is currently being populated, will provide an important information base and case study archive of projects on net gain and enhancing coastal defences.

What issues are Solent Forum members facing?

The Solent Forum Members' Survey report 2019 stated the following to be the most important issues (in order of importance).

- Water quality: eutrophication, litter, faecal contamination, temperature in both fresh and sea water.
- Developmental pressures (including population growth, economic growth and demand on the environment from conservation authorities, commercial and recreational users)
- Climate change and coastal change (including coastal flooding and erosion, coastal squeeze and saltmarsh loss)
- Changing regulatory landscape (including the requirement for habitat compensation, net gain and facilitating dynamic coasts)

What could the Solent Forum deliver?

The forthcoming Solent Forum Business Plan 2020 to 2025 will determine the long-term work programme for the Solent Forum. The Forum currently has a small staff resource, and therefore there is a need to be selective as to what projects can be pursued and bid for. The current Solent Forum initiatives are worth mentioning as a springboard to projects and events:

Solent Forum Members' meetings and Special Events

The Forum runs two conference style meetings per year, and these can be used to provide presentations on topical issues.

Workshop events can be put on to explore specific work areas/opportunities. A workshop on specific opportunities may be held.

Solent Forum News Service

The bi-annual newsletter and the monthly alert may be used to disseminate information on topical issues.

Building Biodiversity in the Solent Hub (BBS Hub)

This hub can signpost all resources related to enhancing the built coastal environment including net gain. A joint MARINEFF/Solent Forum conference is planned for 2020. The EU funded MARINEFF Project has the objective to enhance coastal infrastructure.

Beneficial Use of Dredgings in the Solent (BUDS)

The second phase of BUDS is now complete with a feasibility study on offering a BUDS site at Lymington. This will now be implemented.

Clean Solent Shores and Seas

This webpage resource will be developed into a sign posting hub for all Solent initiatives linked with Water Quality. There is scope to develop projects from this hub.

Solent Forum Natural Environment Group

The Solent Forum Natural Environment group is running projects addressing the environmental impacts of activities that occur in the Solent area that may impact on MPAs.

Solent Forum, c/o Hampshire County Council,
Economy, Transport and Environment Department,
Elizabeth II Court West, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UD
Tel: 01962 846027, E-mail: info@solentforum.org
Website: www.solentforum.org

Chairman: Peter Barham, Director; Vice-chairman: QHM, Portsmouth