

Solent Forum Business Planning 2020 – 2025

Members Survey Report

July 2019

Background

The Solent Forum surveyed its members to inform its new 5 year business plan in the July of 2019. This report provides an analysis of members' views of the Forum and helps set the Forum's direction for the future. A total of 10 of 52 members responded to a postal questionnaire: this represents 19% of Solent Forum members. A list of respondents can be found in Appendix A. 36% of members responded to the previous business planning members' survey (2015-2020).

Section 1 – Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the Forum are set out below.

Solent Forum Aims

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

Solent Forum Objectives

- To raise awareness and understanding of the members' roles and aspirations
- To improve sharing of the information base
- To facilitate better communication, consultation and liaison;
- To raise awareness and understanding of the human and natural changes likely to materially affect the Solent area and its interests;
- To promote the national and regional importance of the Solent in policy, development and plan making

Almost all (80%) of respondents believe *the aims and objectives of the forum* remain valid.

There were however some suggestions for changes as follows:

- To add an objective “To actively work with Solent Forum partners to develop the environmental, economic and social benefits of the Solent”. The Forum should be more ambitious in supporting sustainable development in the Solent (as is Dorset Coastal Forum)

- The Forum to offer project development and delivery work (if funds allow). Funding may be forthcoming via Defra WFD budgets to deliver coastal/estuarine catchment partnership work to improve environmental outcomes
- To add an objective “To responsive to members”. Something that the Forum do anyway
- To make an explicit reference to climate change in the objectives. Also to consider: to promote research and intelligence gathering; To provide a strategic approach to flood and coastal erosion risk management; and to work with community based groups to achieve local objectives

Respondents were asked to list the three most important issues coastal managers are currently facing in the Solent. The following responses were made.

Issue	No. of comments
Water Quality (including eutrophication, litter, faecal contamination and temperature in both fresh and sea water)	7
Developmental Pressures (including population growth, economic growth and demand on ESS from conservation authorities, commercial and recreational users)	6
Climate Change (including coastal flooding and erosion, costal squeeze and saltmarsh loss)	5
Changing regulatory landscape (including the requirement for habitat compensation, net gain and facilitating dynamic coasts)	4
Lack of Resources	3
Coastal Change (including access)	2
Environmental Sustainability	1
Partnership Delivery	1
Communication with the public to encourage behavioural change that benefits the Solent	1

Section 2 – Operational Structure of the Solent Forum

Since its inception, Forum membership has grown from a handful of organisations to over 100 individuals representing 52 organisations, a full list of members is attached in Appendix A. There are 9 Steering Group partners and 2 Associate Steering Group members (covering the University and Coastal Recreation sectors), an independent chair, vice-chair and two staff. The Solent Forum Chair was recruited in 2014.

Hampshire County Council has hosted the post of Solent Forum Officer since 1996. The Solent Forum currently meets twice a year to discuss topical Solent issues and the Steering Group (SG) meet twice a year at separate meetings as well as at mini meetings after the Solent Forum members meeting

The Forum operates a service based model. Partnership funding provides:

- Core Services – maintains all core meetings and publications. Guided by the Steering Group. This includes an extensive website and the Solent Information Database (SID)
- Topic Groups – current groups include Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS) Management Scheme secretariat, and Natural Environment Group (NEG) which sits under it. It also manages the Solent Water Quality Awards. Groups initially agreed by main SG and then steered by separate SG. All groups self-funded and independently chaired.
- Project Work – as agreed by Core Steering Group and Groups. Funded independently.
- Prof Mike Clark Bursary Award

Over half of respondents felt that the *membership reflects all interests of the Solent*. Two members commented that the Solent does generally represent the main interest that want to be engaged and work in partnership. The main suggestions were to attract more industry/business representation (particularly small/medium sized; science, technology and innovation).

Specific suggestions of organisation were:

- MMO
- All Local Authorities
- Solent LEP
- Premier Marina's
- BMF
- Marine Conservation bodies

All respondents were happy with the *frequency and content of the Forum meetings*. Two respondents commented that the meetings aren't always accessible depending where you are travelling from. Six respondents commented that they liked the range of

stakeholders and topics, and the networking opportunities available at the meetings. Two respondents commented that the Forum staff are knowledgeable, passionate and experienced.

Almost all (80%) were happy with the groups run by the Solent Forum. Further suggestions were:

- To follow the funding – replacement for EMFF may mean more funding for community led local development initiatives. The CCF may also be superseded (SF workshop on this in 2019 valued). To have a standing agenda item in Steering Group to understand resources/finance/grant availability
- SEMS has shown an appetite to focus on impacts on designated sites, in particular on water quality and nutrient enrichment. How can the Forum take this forward
- Consider task and finish groups rather than new groups, so as to be adaptable to changing events
- Continue to map (see Horizon Planning) key issues impacting on the Solent, matching this to relevant stakeholders, influencers / ‘brokers’, and spotting where there are gaps in coverage i.e. potential space and need for new groups.

Section 3- Business Planning

The Forum operates within a five year business planning cycle. The previous Business Plan structured the Forum's work as follows:

- Core Services
- Serviced Sub-Groups
- Projects and additional events
- Improvements to operations

The Forum is currently able to operate the core service with its current staffing levels, and can run modest projects on behalf of members if required. Should there be the demand to run larger projects, new staff and the corresponding funds would need to be brought in to enable this.

Respondents were asked to rank the usefulness of Solent Forum core services, groups and projects on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very useful. The table below provides the mean scores and ranks the importance of the work. It is notable that all the mean scores are above 3 (3 represents neither useful or not useful) and gives useful pointers to the most valued work.

On-going work	Average (mean) Score 1-5 (1-Very Useful)	Members' Comment
Core Work		
Bi Annual Members Meetings	1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful to understand the variety of projects and initiatives within the Solent being undertaken by other members (5 respondents) • Great for networking (2 respondents)
Bi Annual Steering Group meetings (and bi-annual mini meetings after members meeting)	1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good opportunity to reflect on the matters raised in the members meeting • Useful to discuss direction for the upcoming session and Forum (2 respondents) • For non-members, it would be useful to have a note from the steering group about their activity • Essential business management
Monthly e-news	1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very valuable to keep members up to date (including any changes, upcoming consultations and projects of interest, and local and national items) (3 respondents) • Concise and good format
Forum website	1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to navigate (2 respondents) • Needs to be kept updated (2 respondents) • Useful links to social media, promotions, publications and meeting papers and details (2 respondents) • Could be expanded to communicate interests
Solent News	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great publication for seeing current projects in more detail (4 respondents) • More useful for those (non- members) who do not receive the monthly e-news or attend meetings (2 respondents) • For those who attend the members meetings it doesn't always add significantly to knowledge
Professor Mike Clark Bursary	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very useful award to assist studies (3 respondents) • Not useful to individual/ haven't seen the outcome yet but is supported (2

Award		respondents)
Solent Information Database (SID)	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very useful repository of information (2 respondents) • Not used but reassuring to know it is there (2 respondents) • Easy to navigate • Needs to be kept updated
Calendar of events	2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some confusions by respondents over what this is referring to (2 respondents) • Not something used but appreciate it is a useful tool (2 respondents)
Groups		
Management of SEMS	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well facilitated, updated and managed by the Forum (3 respondents) • Training could perhaps be usefully provided to members on the role of the group. • Good to have the national link through the EMS officers group. • It would be good to clarify which group/s are best placed to the issues impacting N2K sites (such as water quality) forward. • The Scheme itself is limited in its aspiration and very tied to statutory issues.
Management of the Natural Environment Group	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good integration with direction from members for the delivery of projects (2 respondents). • Can sometimes be a bit long winded • How do priorities get decided – should they go further than the management measures identified in the annual SEMS monitoring report? And align/influence Catchment Partnership groups (tend to be freshwater focused)?
Management of the Solent Water Quality Group	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good to have them as the Council has stepped back from the Seaside Awards due to cost. • I'd be keen to hear what the Award holder views are on these. Could SF help Green Blue/BMF develop/lead/support the Gold Anchor marine sustainability awards? • Not something we have that much experience or involvement in
Project work and additional events		
Building Biodiversity in the Solent Hub	1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuable in bringing the community together, and using the SF website as a platform to share info.
Running conferences and events on key topics	1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irreplaceable and invaluable service provided by SF – brings the community together, which wouldn't happen as often or as well (2 respondents) • These are a lot of work so only worth it if there is substantial funding or a really relevant and important project
Beneficial Use of Dredgings (BUDS) – Phases 1 and 2 complete	1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is working towards a practical outcome • Need to factor in adequate project management costs if providing this type of 'service'.
Marine Consents Guide - last review in 2017	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely useful and often referenced (4 respondents) • Needs to be kept updated (3 respondents) • Haven't personally used the Guide but it seems like a useful tool • Would be good to see some 'users' feedback
Clean Solent Shores and Seas – Website to signpost initiatives on improving water quality and littering	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very topical • Solent Forum website provides a great platform to share all the initiatives happening in the Solent. • The PID may need revisiting to break down the scope and pursue future opportunities to deliver elements of this. • A dedicated Campaign Officer would be really valuable.

Previous Solent Forum business plans have listed actions under each of the 5 objectives (see Appendix B). All respondents *felt that similar actions should be set in a similar way for this Business Plan* with 4 commenting they liked the way it was laid out. One commented that if the objectives change, then this may need further actions e.g provision of 'services'. They also questioned whether 'events', 'marketing' and 'social media' need to be added as an action.

The majority of respondents said yes when it was *suggested that the Solent Forum pursue further projects*. The suggestions for further projects and funding include the following.

- A co-ordinated research and approach to tackle water quality in new developments (similar to the situation leading to Bird Aware)
- Review of opportunities to increase environmental, economic and social benefits in the Solent. This could be a relatively inexpensive project (£20k) to draw together stakeholder priorities. Various further projects would come out of this which might be funded through Lottery, Coastal communities Fund etc (assuming European money no longer available)
- Useful work could be done on natural capital, strategic net gain, strategic compensation/mitigation, oyster restoration, economic development opportunities (tourism, heritage)
- Changes in the funding framework, and the replacement for the EMFF, means that the forum may be well placed to develop community led local development initiatives e.g. the replacement for the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) funding stream. Positioning the Solent forum for such a role would usefully commence in the short term, so when the funds are operational the Forum might be well placed to engage.
- Would like to do some joint work on small scale habitat recreation (saltmarsh etc) but would need to find external funding.
- Coastal and estuarine restoration and net gain – FCRM Revenue funding
- Solent wide net gain – opportunity mapping – linking in with terrestrial planning and LNP/LEP. WFD revenue funding?
- Plastics and littering campaign – misc funding pots and business sponsorship
- Solent Natural Capital Plan - – linking in with terrestrial planning and LNP/LEP. LEP and WFD revenue funding?
- Pollution prevention campaigns – work with different community groups and industry sectors to improve water quality e.g. boats and discharges, property misconnections. WFD Revenue funding?
- Continue to monitor grant opportunities such as Coastal Communities and promote to members to take forward (i.e. catalyst role, appreciate Forum cannot operate themselves and it's up to others to run with concepts). National Parks have statutory Management Plans. The one for the New forest is about to be reviewed and revised. We could consider whether the Forum should be featured and whether there is a particular action e.g. facilitation of BuDS that could become a target action?

Section 4 - Resources

The Forum currently employs two staff, Karen McHugh the Solent Forum Manager for approximately 3 days per week (spread over 5); and Kate Ansell for approximately 3 to 5 days per week. Forum also have a placement student each summer. The posts are line managed by Hampshire County Council (Simon Cramp). The Forum currently has around 50 members (see Appendix A) including 11 members of a Steering group. The Forum's annual budget is approximately £60,000.

Income is derived from the following:

	Approx. Percentage of Income
Core subscriptions	62
Nature SEMS and Natural Environment Group	28
Total	100%

This *expenditure* is made up of the following:

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

Wages are a significant part of Solent Forum costs and therefore 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 in terms of the provision of free rooms and refreshments for Forum meetings. Members also tend to give their publications free of charge to the Forum and provide information at no cost.

All of respondents felt *that the Forum offered value for money*. One respondent commented that the Forum could and should be doing a lot more. One respondent commented that pressure on budgets is such that we should seek to identify ways of providing value for money going forward.

All of respondents stated *that they hope remain financially committed* to the Solent Forum, however four respondents commented that continued membership would depend on their budgets.

Respondents were *finally asked to make any further comments*. The following comments were made.

- Climate change research and implications at a Solent and local level.

- It was reported in the April 2019 monthly newsletter that: "ABP mer, has been commissioned by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to develop a means to map the value of shipping. This new mapping will help underpin the development of port and shipping marine plan policies, and how such policies are considered alongside other users of the marine space." It may be of benefit to Solent Forum members if the Forum could undertake commissions for the MMO in the Solent area. We shall be pleased to see the survey when completed.
- Risk and opportunity analysis e.g. Financial sustainability. (Review other similar organisations and potential to learn from, or copy these models).
- Offering apprenticeships and other services.
- Non-native invasive species
- Coastal Communities; Plastics; Pollution; Interconnectedness of catchments, shoreline and coastal;

Appendix A

Solent Forum Members (Respondents in **bold**)

* Represents an officers view rather than the whole Authorities

STEERING GROUP 11	
Environment Agency	Portsmouth City Council
Hampshire County Council	Solent Protection Society
HM Naval Base	Associated British Ports
Isle of Wight Council	Coastal Recreation Sector (Associate)
Natural England	University sector (Associate)
New Forest National Park Authority *	
Non STEERING GROUP 41	
Angling Trust	New Forest District Council
ABPmer	Portsmouth Commercial Port
Artecology	Ramboll
Beaulieu Enterprises Ltd	River Hamble Harbour Authority
Bembridge Harbour Improvements Co. Ltd	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Beckett Rankine	Haskoning DHV
BP Oil U.K. Ltd	Royal Yachting Association
Boskalis Westminster Dredging Company	Southampton City Council
Carcinus	Southern IFCA
Chichester District Council	Sussex IFCA
Chichester Harbour Conservancy	Southern Water
Cowes Harbour Commissioners	Solent University
Eastleigh Borough Council	Solent Cruising and Racing Association
Fareham Borough Council	University of Portsmouth
Gosport Borough Council	University of Southampton
Hampshire Isle of Wight Wildlife trust	Vectis Boating and Fishing Club
Havant Borough Council	West Sussex County Council
Isle of Wight Estuaries	Wightlink
Langstone Harbour Office	Winchester CC
Lymington Harbour Commissioners	Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners
Mineral Producers Association	

Appendix B

Solent Forum Business Plan 2015-2020

Category	How to measure	Progress during plan period
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.	Steering Group Meeting February of each year. Annual survey to obtain feedback from members.	Achieved in each year
Review and update membership databases to ensure all details are correct.	Databases kept up to date.	Achieved in each year. Systems were made GDPR compliant in 2018
Provide for professional development and training of staff.	Professional training and development provided.	Achieved in each year
Objective 1 - Raise awareness and understanding of the members' roles and aspirations		
Hold regular SF meeting to bring to members' attention coastal management issues.	Three Steering Group meetings and two members meetings per annum. Views of members sought and followed.	Achieved in each year
Organise seminars, conferences and other events to bring interested parties up to date on factors influencing the Solent.	Organise conferences as and when appropriate.	Achieved in each year Events include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solent Matters: Shaping up for another 25 years • Coastal Communities Fund workshop • Marine Planning Events
Publish Solent News, a newsletter for the Forum and maintain the news service.	Solent News published twice per annum, monthly e-mail newsletter.	Achieved in each year
Maintain and develop the Solent Forum website.	Web-site maintenance work.	Achieved in each year
Consultancy services.	Consultation events.	Achieved in each year Topics varied – key ones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Planning evidence & consultation • Coastal Communities Fund • University of Portsmouth Collaboration event • Defra survey response on a number of topics • Working with CPN and

		its members
Objective 2 - Improve sharing of the information base		
Maintain databases and metadatabases of information as directed by members.	Web-site maintenance work. Databases maintained including DISC.	Achieved in each year. Solent Information Database re-named Solent Information Database (SID)
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.	Three Steering Group meetings and two members meetings per annum. Views sought and followed on.	Achieved in each year
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.	<p>Achieved in each year Topics varied – key ones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Planning evidence and consultation • MCZs • Defra 25 year plan • HCC Commission of Enquiry in Climate Change <p>Solent Forum Mike Clark Bursary Scheme instrumental in encouraging and disseminating important research</p>
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. Plans etc.	Achieved in each year Also engaging in all consultations on Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management
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.	Achieved in each year In particular attend SCOPAC/SCG; Coastal Partnership Network; European Marine Site (EMS) network; Hamble Estuary Management Plan (HEP); Catchment Partnerships in the Solent; Solent Universities Coastal Consortium; Marine Conservation Zones Tranche 3 consultations