



## Horizon Scanning

July 2020

### Background

The Solent Forum operates within a 5 year Business Plan, currently we are working within the 2020 to 2025 Plan, this recognises that each year the Solent Forum needs to respond to emerging issues of importance to its members. In order to do this, a Horizon Scanning process takes place annually. Horizon Scanning helps identify a range of key coastal and marine issues, events, consultations and plans, to help members stay informed and solve challenges; it also seeks to understand any organisational changes that Solent Forum members may need to consider in response to new challenges.

Horizon Scanning is preceded by an Annual Members Survey and report. The report has been published [http://www.solentforum.org/about/business\\_plan/Members\\_Survey\\_2020.pdf](http://www.solentforum.org/about/business_plan/Members_Survey_2020.pdf). and this document provides an evaluation of the report.

The value of horizon scanning is that in theory it allows as many people involved in the process is to try and anticipate what will be the most important things to look at in the future and then we can focus that information to carry out business planning. So, while we have successfully carried out horizon scanning for a number of years, no-one could have predicted what 2020 would bring and the enormous consequences that the Covid virus would have on us all. Throughout lockdown Solent Forum officers have carried on working from home and have been extremely busy, you will have seen this work reflected in the monthly updates and Solent News.

Pulling ideas together with the wealth of understanding from people and organisations across the Solent and the issues it faces is the sort of work which Solent Forum excels in; we will be pleased to play our part in facilitating this.

Clearly, we live in uncertain times, but in a way that makes it even more important that we plan as much as possible and that we use all your ideas and thoughts to make sure that we get things right.

### Government Direction and Policy

The government are now progressing the new **Environment Bill**. This sets out policy direction; representing opportunities to improve the marine environment.

It includes details on:

- creating a new governance framework for the environment
- a new direction for resources and waste management
- improving air quality
- securing our water services
- enhancing our green spaces
- updating laws on chemicals (REACH)

The bill is planned to go through its many stages in this parliamentary session (it has been delayed due to Covid 19) and must become law by the end of 2020.

**The Government 25 year plan** continues to shape the national coastal and marine sectors. Defra has published an update to the UK Marine Strategy (part 1) that sets out indicators to measure if coastal and marine environments are meeting 'good environmental status'. Part 2 is expected by the end of the year and will set out how progress will be monitored.

In the 25 YEP, the government showed it was committed to **Natural Capital** embedding the principle of 'net environmental gain' for development. Defra's Natural Capital Committee (NCC) paper in May 2019 set the scene for the extent of the UK marine interest and its natural capital. Progress includes formally consult on mandating a biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirement in the planning system, which is now being taken forward through the Environment Bill. The approach to BNG includes strict adherence to a mitigation hierarchy and use of an updated biodiversity metric. The government believes that further work and engagement with industry and conservation bodies is required before establishing approaches to BNG for both marine and nationally significant infrastructure projects, which can have fundamentally different characteristics to other development types. Government will continue to work on exploring potential net gain approaches for these types of development.

A report by Stephen Watson et al from University of Southampton was published in Jly 2020. The report entitled "Assessing the natural capital value of water quality and climate regulation in temperate marine systems using a EUNIS biotope classification approach" aims to assess the Natural Capital of habitats and species providing water quality and climate regulation ecosystem services in the Solent. It provides information to support the development of measures to improve water quality under WFD; and more specifically, consider the changes in ecosystem service provision that could result from changes in the extent and quality of benthic habitats.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969720342108>

The 25 YEP also committed the Government to expand **net gain** approaches to include wider natural capital benefits. Defra state they remain committed to delivering a wider environmental net gain (ENG) policy for development, building on the BNG requirements and drawing on NCC's helpful response to our commission to provide further ENG advice. They agree with the NCC's recommendations that offsite remediation for development impacts should be funded by developers and prioritised close to development sites. Work on potential ENG metrics is also progressing. The emerging Eco-metric tool will enable comparison of the impacts of different development options on the supply of ecosystem services. This represents a first step towards enabling better consideration of the losses and gains in ecosystem services from development, to help deliver wider benefits for people and nature. The Government states it is too soon to legislate for ENG, it is important to recognise that mandatory BNG will often deliver wider environmental benefits (e.g. recreation opportunities, flood risk reduction, improved water and air quality) by contributing to the creation and enhancement natural capital assets.

An Independent review backs introduction of **Highly Protected Marine Areas**. The Review, published in June 2020, recommends introduction of Highly Protected Marine Areas as essential for marine protection and recovery. - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-review-backs-introduction-of-highly-protected-marine-areas>. The independent panel (Peter Barham, Solent Forum Chairman was part of the panel) which looked at HPMAs did not make any recommendations about sites, but it has set out the ecological principles which should help identify possible sites. The full report is available on the Defra website:- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly->

protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review-2019/benyon-review-into-highly-protected-marine-areas-final-report-executive-summary.

Once there is a formal Government response, it will be known if there is the potential for HPMAs in the Solent. If this is the case, Solent Forum can play a major role in facilitating how these sites could be identified and managed as, although there will need to be enforcement in HPMAs, the panel was insistent that many aspects of management could be done through management groups and through voluntary approaches.

**Nitrate pollution** in the Solent continues to be a very big and sensitive issue. DEFRA wrote to Push for South Hampshire (PFSH) in December 2019, after a request for support for implementation measures that offset the impact of housing development growth on the levels of nitrate discharge. Defra stated that they are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The EA and NE to support the individual local authorities and members within PFSH to develop short and medium to long term solutions to this issue. As part of this work NE and EA have recently adopted a joint position statement on the subject.

**Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs)** continues to be a source of pollution and a health hazard in the Solent. These overflows of raw sewage and litter waste happens regularly in rainfall especially affecting the harbours. Havant Borough Council (HBC) has met with Southern Water to demand that seawater is safer, stating that there had been 146 releases within the year. HBC intends to form a partnership with other concerned authorities to lobby for further water quality testing and monitoring. Considerable investment is required in water companies' infrastructure to ensure that CSOs can cope; this needs to be managed within the next Asset Management Plan 7 for the years 2020 to 2025.

Legislation within the **Fisheries Bill** is going through parliament. This will create the powers for the UK to operate as an independent coastal state and manage its fish stocks sustainably outside the EU introduced into Parliament 29th January 2020. The introduction of the Fisheries Bill delivers a legal guarantee the UK will leave the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) at the end of the Transition Period, in December 2020 - allowing the UK to control who may fish in our waters, and on what terms, for the first time since 1973.

The Environment Agency are currently consulting on the **current river basin management**, the consultation will finish in September so that draft plans can be published by the end of 2020. The current river basin management plans were published in February 2016, and must be reviewed and updated every 6 years. This second consultation asks for views on:

- the challenges that limit the benefits society gets from the water environment in river basin districts in England (the challenges)
- the best way to address these issues (the choices)

There is an Environment Agency paper about **Coastal Based Approach (CoBA)** with DEFRA for discussion. This may result in coastal/estuary partners getting host money next year to help deliver outcomes in the marine environment and join up with Catchment Partners.

**Natural England (NE)** is now in its first year of a new five year strategy through which it will deliver its refreshed mission of building partnerships for nature's recovery and a vision of thriving nature for people and planet. It is beginning to publish Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) definitions. It has published a Climate change adaptation manual:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5679197848862720>.

It has also published its Nature Networks Evidence Handbook (NERR081): <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6105140258144256>.

In July, Defra launched their **Flood and coastal erosion risk management: policy statement**. This provides a long term plan for investment between 2021 -2027. It sets out five key commitments, supported by over 40 clear actions, which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country for the coming years:

1. Upgrading and expanding flood defences and infrastructure across the country;
2. Managing the flow of water to both reduce flood risk and manage drought;
3. Harnessing the power of nature to not only reduce flood risk, but deliver benefits for the environment, nature, and communities;
4. Better preparing communities for when flooding and erosion does occur; and
5. Ensuring every area of England has a comprehensive local plan for dealing with flooding and coastal erosion.

It also sets out details of continuing and improving the Government/Insurance industry 'Flood Re Insurance scheme', to include flood resilience measures.

It is expected that the new **National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk strategy** will be laid in parliament before summer recess. The Environment Agency looks forward to being able to discuss the strategy with coastal groups and how we can work together on the delivery.

The technical phase of the **Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) refresh project** is nearing completion. The 20 SMP draft health checks will have been completed and are being reviewed by local SMP groups. The Southern Coastal Group is updating national guidance and are in discussion with Defra regarding publication alongside existing SMP guidance.

Other items on the horizon include:

- Interreg Reduce Pollution Project (RedPol) has been successful in obtaining funding. The project will help identify harmful chemicals with endocrine disrupting properties, which can impact human health and the environment. These have been strongly linked with the decline of the oyster populations in Chichester Harbour. Partners include Chichester Harbour Conservancy, and Brighton, Portsmouth, Caen and Le Havre universities.
- Hampshire County Council have launched their Climate Change Strategy and pledged to become Carbon Neutral by 2050
- The Defra family are still committed to deliver ReMeMoRes (Restoring Meadows, Marsh and Reefs). The EA/NE in the Solent (South Downs and Poole team) are developing a plan and delivery programme for this locally.
- The Year of the Coast campaign has evolved to become a three year programme supporting coastal communities beginning in 2021.
- England's Coastal Path – NE continues to work towards opening as much as the path as possible. It hopes to have all stretches approved with works underway by 2021.
- The Government aims to create up to 10 freeports in locations across the UK. These would have different customs rules than the rest of the country and would be innovation hubs to boost global trade
- Natural England's 'Recreation ReMEDIES' (LIFE) project was launched in January 2020 with

£2.5 million of funding. It will protect seagrass meadows threatened by anchoring, mooring and launching of recreational boats, as well as trampling from walkers and bait collectors. The project will develop environmentally friendly moorings, voluntary codes, targeted training and habitat restoration, in five areas across southern England.

## Annual Members Survey and what the Solent Forum can deliver

The Annual Members Survey is published separately. The 2020 survey found that our members' key areas of work were recorded as follows, in rank order:

1. Habitats and Species
2. Ports, Harbour and Shipping
3. Flood and Coastal erosion risk management
4. Water Quality and Catchment Management
5. Coastal settlements and transport

A large number of responses made were in relation to managing coastal regeneration and development and understanding the impacts on the environment; this includes the impacts of additional nitrate inputs into the Solent.

Respondents were asked to detail any areas of work where they would like to develop partnership working with others in the Solent. The responses are shown in the table below. The Forum will take these into account when building its work programme. Column 2 shows current Solent Forum initiatives that can progress this partnership working.

Partnership working gaps	Solent Forum Initiatives
Working in partnership to develop codes of conduct for recreational water users	SEMS and NEG
Small scale saltmarsh re-creation and beneficial use of dredgings	BUDS
Addressing the impacts of new development and discharge consents on water quality issues	Solent Forum News and Presentations
Partnership working to mitigate current nitrate issues	Solent Forum News and Presentations
Best practice on environmental enhancement of coastal infrastructure	Building Biodiversity Solent (BBS) Hub

The current Solent Forum Business Plan, 2020 to 2025, sets the context for 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.

### 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 enews disseminate information on topical issues.

#### Building Biodiversity in the Solent Hub (BBS Hub)

This hub will signpost resources related to enhancing the built coastal environment including net gain. Staff are working with the EU funded MARINEFF Project on their work to pilot the enhancement of 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.

#### 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's designated sites.

### **Solent Forum Operations**

The Solent Forum are reviewing the environmental impacts of its business. As a result, it is committed to reducing print and paper wastage. It will also continue to assess the viability of having some of its meetings on-line to minimise travel and increase accessibility. Solent News is now being produced digitally and this will reduce the Solent Forum's carbon footprint