



## Nature Conservation Group Meeting Agenda

Chichester Harbour Conservancy  
Eames Farm, Thorney Island

28<sup>th</sup> September 2011

### Welcome

The chairman welcomed the group and thanked Ed Rowsell for hosting.

### Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising (2nd March 2011)

None to carry over

### Nature Conservation group finances – Paper 1 (supplied with agenda)

KM presented the forecast accounts for 2010/11. The paper has been included in Appendix A. KM has forecast a small surplus of over £400 this year adding to the reserve to take it to over £8500. The forecast is better than previously expected as member subscriptions have been maintained rather than reduced. KM indicated that up to £4000 could be released to new projects of this reserve.

### Current Nature Conservation Group Project Updates

#### Update on Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project

The SD&M Project seeks to assess the current impacts of visitor numbers and activities on the survival rates of internationally designated wintering waterbirds throughout the Solent coast and to establish the likely additional impact from the residents of the development proposed in the area. Full project details and outputs can be found on website.

Phase 1 of the SD&M Project, a **literature review**, has been completed. Phase 2, **Primary Research**, is underway and has 4 parts:

- Bird Surveys assessing disturbance to overwintering birds – 1st Year Report 2009 (Jonathan Cox) and 2<sup>nd</sup> year report Dec 2010 (Footprint Ecology)
- Visitor Survey 2010 by Footprint Ecology. Report published on website.
- Household Surveys and Visitor Model work by Footprint Ecology. Survey complete and draft results presented April 2011. Final report submitted September 2011.

Modelling the impact of disturbance to birds, awarded to Richard Stillman. Work started July 2010 and to be complete by September 2011. Initial results were presented at Project Group meeting 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011

### Alien Species Project

KC was unable to attend. KM will continue to remind him to provide a project update and update the website. <http://www.noc.soton.ac.uk/solentbio/>

**Action: KC to complete project and update the website, and KM to remind him**

### HWT Seagrass project (phase 2) (Amy Dale, HWT)

AD updated the group on the work they are continuing to do mapping the extent of seagrass around the Solent – see Appendix B for an update.

### **Updates on Other Key Projects**

#### Balanced Seas – Justine Jury, Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)

JJ informed the group that the final recommendations for draft Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ's) had been submitted and public consultation is due to take place next summer with the view to making some designations by the end of 2012. The Balanced Sea Project team are in the process of handing over to the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCB's).

The IFCAS have the following concerns:

- Fishermen may not have kept up with the process
- Local fishermen especially on Isle of Wight may have their fishing grounds squeezed
- There may be a redistribution of fishing effort elsewhere
- Lack of compliance a possibility and limited resources for enforcement
- That the vulnerability assessments may not be based on robust data
- A possible overestimation of the affects of an activity has led to a conservation objective of “recover” which will curb activity

JJ hoped that in the cases where the data is patchy and “recover” has been set, that this data will be looked at again. She felt that it would be better to be effective in a smaller area than ineffective over a large area, and that the sites around Hampshire and Isle of Wight were much larger than they needed to be to meet the minimum requirement.

CP stated that he was concerned that some of the Isle of Wight species data may have been anecdotal, and that any network needed to be flexible and able to protect species and habitats in the places most relevant.

Project progress can be tracked on. <http://www.balancedseas.org/>

#### Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS) Management Scheme Review

KM updated the group on the SEMS Review.

The Solent Forum's summary and way forward, based on the ABPmer review has been accepted. KM is now working on setting-up the new monitoring system which will be resumed in 2012. The role of the Solent Forum Nature Conservation Group was highlighted in taking forward any of the actions that the SEMS Management Group had concerns about. The Annual SEMS meeting will be held in September and any items of concern will be discussed at the October NCG meeting which will be held around 3 weeks after. A summary of the process can be found on Appendix C.

KM wishes to explore how the new MCZ's in the Solent once designated will be managed and whether it will have a similar management scheme to SEMS. DT advised that KM write to NE's Marine Director. James Marsden.

**Action: KM write to James Marsden to ask what management scheme may be appropriate for Solent MCZ's**

#### NE 2011/12 Site Condition Monitoring

NE are currently analysing the results of the *sub tidal sediments* survey of the Solent conducted in April and May. The condition assessment of these habitats is expected in Spring 2012.

By Spring 2012 NE will have conducted an *intertidal sediment* survey across the Solent EMS. Fieldwork will include the use of hovercraft where access on foot is not possible.

A *cord grass* survey will also take place in the Solent and fed into a national cord grass survey being undertaken by NE. Similar timetable to above, although there may be a delay.

Other key survey work to come:

**Bait-digging** – the work that Gordon Watson from UoP will be conducting on behalf of NE and Crown Estate next year in Fareham Creek, Dell Quay and Pagham Harbour

Surveys to come of: **Salicornia, Rocky Shore** on South coast of island, and **shallow water reefs**.

Discussion ensued about the South East Coastal Monitoring Programme and free data that it has available including 2008 Habitat Survey to BAP level, and some cases Annex 1.

#### Chichester Harbour Oyster Partner Initiative – CHOPI (Ed Rowsell)

This project led by Sussex IFCA, Fishing Sector, NE, NOC and CHC, has a remit to:

Support commercial fishing and maintain the population of the UK BAP specied. Native Oysters in Chichester Harbour have declined severely over the last decade and the level has become so low that breeding cannot continue. There are many potential causes of this including disease (Benarmia), water quality and overfishing.

The project seeks to restock oysters and control fishing so that populations are sustainable. An area has been re-stocked and monitored by Sussex IFCA and National Oceanography Centre (NOC). Samples suggest that females are breeding and the sex ratio is more equal than before; they also suggest that Benarmia is present. Previous research by Dr Jenson suggested a ratio of 8 males to one. CEFAS (Hutchinson) have recently conducted a survey in the western Solent which indicates possible water quality issues although it is not conclusive and more survey work is required.

The group agreed that there was a need to understand more about water quality issues affecting oysters in the Solent, especially exploring agricultural run-off and hormones in the water, SS from Emu is keen to be involved in issues about hormone levels. It would be important to involve the Solent Oyster Working Group (Simon Bray)

**Action: Potential project to be put on project tracking list by KM**

### GI Implementation of Coastal Projects (Karen McHugh)

KM provided some feedback on the PUSH GI Strategy which as recently been submitted in draft. It includes a Business Case for 4 coastal projects including:

1. Marine and Coastal Access (Nigel Bird HCC)
2. Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (Karen McHugh)
3. Portsmouth Seafront (David Hayward PCC)
4. Pooks Green Gravel Pits (Phil Lomax, was PUSH)

### State of the Solent Indicators (Karen McHugh)

These Solent Forum indicators were reviewed in 2011 and are now available on the Solent Forum website. They provide a time series of indicators over a range of sectors including Nature Conservation and , Environmental Quality. All of the indicators can be downloaded from

[http://www.solentforum.org/publications/state\\_solent/State\\_of\\_the\\_Solent\\_Edition\\_3/](http://www.solentforum.org/publications/state_solent/State_of_the_Solent_Edition_3/)

A few queries were raise on the Nature Conservation dataset: 1/ Dunlin listed twice on two tables, colours of unfavourable sites too similar to each other to distinguish, mentions 2008 habitat survey (SC has more information on this)

**Action: KM to try and address these issues, with a possible re-issue**

### Saltmarsh restoration and the use of dredgings – analysing the decision and policy framework Phd (Natalie Foster University of Soton)

NF is at the early stages of this Phd and is at the scoping stage. She hopes to give a fuller presentation at the next NCG meeting in March. This will be a desk-based study which will:

#### technical

Show the value and importance of mudflat and saltmarsh, as well as distribution and extent

Gather patterns and trend in their health

Look to understand erosion rates and causes

Reponses to loss - restoration

#### policy

Need for a decision – support system, to enable ways to protect saltmarsh mudflat

Use Solent as case study

Solent Forum NCG to validate work

**Action: KM arrange with NF to present at next NCG meeting**

### **Nature Conservation Group Project Tracking**

The latest project tracking document (last update 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011)

A number of corrections/changes were indicated, which KM will make. DT asked for an further changes to be sent to KM within 3 weeks of minutes being sent out. It was agreed that the section of potential projects would be used to generate ideas for new projects which the NCG could run/fund.

**Action: KM to make changes to document, and give the group an opportunity to make further changes with the minutes within 3 weeks**

### **Future Projects to Sponsor**

The group agreed to fund the University of Portsmouth SAC project proposal, to study history of the Solent and effectiveness of designations. GW was asked to send proposals to KM so she can arrange funding.

**Action: GW to send proposal on SAC project to KMc so she can arrange letter contract and funding**

**Action: KM to send letter contact to Ken Collins about Solent Aliens project retrospectively**

Further project ideas have been put in purple under project tracking, and the group needs to vote on which to promote: In summary:

- Water Quality in the Solent and in particular effect on oysters - **KMc**
- Further money for Olivia Chaffe Phd on effectiveness of MPAs in current climate change projections – **GW**
- Tracking birds to obtain evidence of decline (particularly Sanderling + Ring Plover) – involves colour ringing as done at Farlington – NEOS involved - **ER**
- Saltmarsh dieback – from weed on leading edge, other reasons. How reestablish Spartina – RHHA, IWC, Sam Cope, Natalie Foster (Phd – could encompass collation of evidence), CHC – ER checking on some NE work on this - **tbc**

**Action: Vote with project group as to which projects can be funded by the group**

### **Possible Solent Forum Event**

KMc raised the idea of having a NCG event in the next few years. It was felt that there should be a real need for such an event as it would involve a lot of work and could be quite costly. Tim Sykes raised the idea in an e-mail recently suggesting that SF team up with Debbie at HWT and HCC to cover research opportunities.

The group agreed that it may be worth having an event based around the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation project once it had finished.

**Action: When SDMP complete, consider an event**

### **Isle of Wight Green Infrastructure Strategy (Lisa Scovell, IWC)**

LS from IWC presented their progress on a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Isle of Wight.

Presentation to be put on Solent Forum website.

### **Sensitivity of the Solent to Baitdigging**

This topic was discussed as it is one of the activities highlighted as high risk by SEMS and therefore there is a need for the NCG to remain actively interested.

SB from Southern IFCA is actively engaged with this topic at present. She has a good idea where baitdigging occurs and different sensitivities. The next action is to produce a map for the group to comment on. There is a need for research to gather evidence of where it occurs, and overlay biotope information. SC commented that this could be obtained from CCO aerial photos, and then supplemented with visits and photos from the ground. Potentially a MSc student with GIS capabilities could do this. SC will ask around

– perhaps Malcolm Hudson from SSU.

**Action: SB is the lead for this. Continue to follow up on this work in project tracking.**

**Action: GW to present his project on behalf of NE and Crown Estate on Evaluating Strategies for bait digging at next March 12 meeting**

**Southern Inland Fisheries and Conservation Authority (presentation by Justine Jury)**

Presentation can be found on the SF website.

The following Southern IFCA contacts are worth noting:

Rob Ayling (W Solent)

Peter Hill (E Solent)

Justine Jury (IOW)

**Future frequency of NCG meetings**

The NCG agreed that these meetings will be held bi-annually in March and September

**Future frequency of NCG meetings**

The NCG agreed that these meetings will be held bi-annually in March and September

**Next Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at University of Portsmouth**

**Suggested agenda**

- 2 presentations only - UOP Baitdigging project
- Project tracking to be done by e-mail
- General project updates to be sought
- Item to discuss and vote for new projects

**Distribution List Name:** SF Nature Conservation Group

Members:

	Attended meeting
CBC Lindsay Bates	
CCO Sam Cope	y
CHC Edward Rowsell	y
EA Tim Sykes	
EBC Rachel Hardy	
EMU Kate Buckle	y
EMU Sam Stanton	y
FBC Mike Maude-Roxby	
HCC Bragg, Susan	
HCC Rachael Gallagher	
HWT Dave Rumble	
HWT Debbie King	
HWT Jamie Marsh	
HWT Jolyon Chesworth	
HWT Amy Dale	y
IWC Colin Pope	y
IWC Estuaries Sue Hawley	
Langstone Louise MacCallum	y
NE Dylan Todd	y
NE Richard Lemon	
NFDC Andy Colenutt	
NFNPA Ian Barker	
NFNPA Paula Freeland	
NOC Jenny Mallinson jxm@noc.soton.ac.uk	a
NOC Ken Collins	a
NT Pema Marriott	
PCC Peter Burrard-Lucas	a
RHHA Horton, Graham	y
RSPB Carrie Temple	a
RSPB Chris Cockburn	
SCC Lindsay McCulloch	y
Solent Forum McHugh, Karen	y
Soton Uni Malcolm Hudson	
Soton Uni Simon Bray	a
Southern IFCA –Justine Jury	y
Southern IFCA –Sarah Birchenough	y
UoP Gordon Watson	y
West Sussex Rob Carver	y
Guests	
IWC – Lisa Scovell	y
SSU - Natalie Foster	y
UoP - Jasmine	y
PUSH GI Coord. Phil Lomax	y
Balanced Seas – Kate Mills	y

Appendix A  
**Nature Conservation Group Finances**

**Nature Conservation Group and SEMS Accounts - 2011/12 Forecast**

<b>Reserve B/F</b>	<b>8,209.94</b>		
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
Solent Forum admin, website hosting and admin	19,700.00	Nature Conservation Group	14,035.40
Meeting and publications costs	200.00	SEMS	6,302.40
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>19,900.00</b>	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>20,337.80</b>
<b>Profit/loss</b>	<b>437.80</b>		
<b>Reserve to C/F</b>	<b>8,647.74</b>		
<b>Projects not agreed/wishlist</b>			
SAC Project (Gordon Watson)	1000		

(1) 5% less than last year.

## **Appendix B**

### **Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Solent Seagrass Project**

#### **Project Summary for Solent Forum Nature Conservation Group. October 2011.**

For further information or to request a copy of our seagrass inventory contact the Marine Officer Amy Dale on [AmyD@hwt.org.uk](mailto:AmyD@hwt.org.uk).

#### **Background:**

In 2006, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust initiated the Solent Seagrass Project, which aims to promote the conservation of seagrass in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight through a programme of field survey and awareness raising. The project has developed a range of survey and monitoring techniques that enable us to accurately map our beds, both on foot and in our small boat.

#### **Inventory:**

Each year we produce a seagrass inventory which consists of a report section and a data section. The report section summarises the biology and ecology of *Zostera*, current threats, conservation and management options, and survey and monitoring techniques, as well as outlining the need for continued work. The data section comprises of site based maps and inventory forms detailing the known information about the Solent's *Zostera* populations (i.e. it includes studies and surveys conducted both by us and other parties).

The principle aim of the inventory is to provide a baseline of knowledge on the current *Zostera* (eelgrass) populations along the coast of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Each year we update the inventory with data with newly collected or acquired information. The inventory is targeted towards conservation agencies and organisations, coastal and marine planners and anyone responsible for making decisions that could affect the coastal and nearshore environments. It is designed to raise awareness of the importance of *Zostera*, assist in future survey, research and monitoring of *Zostera* populations and to contribute to conservation plans and development proposals.

The inventory is probably the most comprehensive report of eelgrass distribution and extent in the UK and at this stage in the project it includes practically all the eelgrass habitats in these two counties. We continue to monitor eelgrass beds round the Hampshire and Isle of Wight coast every year (funding permitting). Our annual fieldwork involves both returning to previously

mapped eelgrass beds to establish bed boundaries and extent, and visiting sites of historic records to establish their current accuracy.

#### 2011 field season:

This financial year the Solent Seagrass Project has been funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the West Wight Landscape Partnership (WWLP), the River Hamble Harbour Authority, and underwritten by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. We've also received support from the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Southern IFCA) who provided a vessel and staff support for some of our surveys.

This season we carried out fewer foot-based surveys, opting instead to invest in a week of towed video camera surveys to try to gain more information on subtidal beds on the Isle of Wight. Using a Southern IFCA vessel, we commissioned Salacia Marine Ltd to do five days of surveys at beds located at Totland and Colwell Bays, Bouldner, Osbourne and Wooton on the Isle of Wight, and Beaulieu on the Hampshire coast.

We returned to Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours in Hampshire to repeat intertidal surveys of some of the beds in these areas. These surveys were carried out on foot on good low spring tides, using GPS and hand-held cameras to map extent and condition of the seagrass found. This data can then be used to make comparisons with previous years. Substantial clam dredger track damage was found along the eastern shore of Langstone Harbour (west shore of Hayling Island), both within the vulnerable seagrass beds and on the mud habitat immediately surrounding the seagrass.

We were also commissioned by the River Hamble Harbour Authority to carry out a comprehensive search for seagrass along the River Hamble over the course of six good low spring tides, and to map its extent if it was found. This work was prompted by a historic record for *Zostera* habitat in the River Hamble noted in the latest edition of the Inventory of eelgrass in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The data point was from surveys carried out in 1933. The River Hamble Harbour Authority was keen to ascertain if *Zostera* was present so it could be incorporated into the River's SSSI management if necessary.

Finally, we organised one Seasearch dive over Totland Bay seagrass in September. During this dive six Seasearch trained divers carried out Observer surveys of the seagrass habitat. In addition, two divers gathered some information on canopy density and height by recording ten replicate counts of shoot density and blade length.

The 2011 field season for the Solent Seagrass Project has now come to an end. Over the winter months, data collected will be incorporated into an updated version of the Inventory of eelgrass of

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Once complete this inventory will be made available on CD to anyone who requests it.

Appendix C

**SEMS Management Scheme 2012 and beyond**

**Flow Chart and Timetable for Annual Monitoring and Delivery Plan**

