

## **SOLENT FORUM NATURE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**

### **COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE: DRAFT PROJECT PROPOSALS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Solent is an important area for coastal habitats with much of the coast being covered by national and international designations. Communication of the value of this nature conservation resource and the threats to it are an important part in its conservation.

The project stems from the Solent Forum's Nature Conservation Initiative. The aim of which is to provide a cost-effective mechanism to communicate the value of nature conservation and co-ordinate the implementation of cross-cutting actions that will assist statutory authorities in carrying out their duties and functions in respect to biodiversity, the habitats regulations and other statutory, and non-statutory documents, as identified.

At the first meeting of the Nature Conservation Subgroup, which steers the Nature Conservation Initiative, there was a facilitated session to agree nature conservation priorities for the Solent Forum to take forward. The outcomes of this have led to project ideas under three themes, communication, information and data gaps and plans policies and guidance.

The communication theme had a number of ideas for action.

- Raising awareness, this included: communicating and raising awareness of coastal biodiversity and associated issues to a variety of audiences; to raise the profile of the nature conservation value of the Solent by media, events and publications.
- Developing good practice, this included: disseminate project findings and good practice to the group; develop Solent-wide projects to engage the public in biodiversity conservation; to update the nature conservation group and Solent Forum members on changing environmental policies.
- Education, this included: the development of generic educational material and information on biodiversity, including habitat and species action plans as a central resource; co-ordinated educative material, which is site and Solent specific.

Communication of nature conservation and biodiversity value and the threats to it was also one of the three major themes to come from the Solent Coastal BAP workshop. The main idea that emerged from the groups looking at this theme was the need to inform a wide audience, including planners and policy makers, coastal engineers, farmers and landowners, the general public, community groups and schools, about biodiversity issues. Communication of the value of the Solent's nature conservation importance is also part of other Solent-wide nature conservation initiatives including the Solent Forum's Strategic Guidance revised Nature Conservation Chapter and it may form a part of the SEMS implementation.

#### **AIM**

To raise awareness and increase understanding of coastal biodiversity and associated issues to safeguard the continued biodiversity value of the Solent.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- To promote the value of the Solent's biodiversity and the threats faced to a range of audiences
- To disseminate best practice and management information to the NC group and other Solent Forum members
- To develop educational material on nature conservation and biodiversity and the use of the Solent as a living classroom

## SCOPE

The initiative will cover the Solent Forum study area. It will not cover issues which are being taken forward by other organisations and will aim to work in partnership with others to minimise overlap.

## APPROACH

A preliminary list of identified project activities is shown below. The project can be carried out in three discrete sections.

### Raising awareness

1. Identify which interest groups and stakeholders guidance material should be produced for.
2. Determine the information to be included and the best format.
3. Prioritise the order for the production and publication of the documents.
4. Look for opportunities for joint working.
5. Organise an event or link to events already established for the launch of the documents.

### Dissemination of best practice

1. Set up a suite of web pages on the Solent Forum's website focusing on nature conservation information.
2. NC Group to suggest areas and topics to be explored re good practice.
3. Organise speakers to come to either the NC Group meeting, the SF meeting or have a ½ day seminar.
4. Following the seminar the information will be added to the web and will include links and contacts for further information.
4. Associated research and projects will be added to DISC, the Solent Forum's metadatabase.

### Education

1. Determine key information to be developed.
2. Develop generic educational material for nature conservation and biodiversity linking to the national curriculum.
3. Co-ordinate with those areas in the Solent where nature conservation education currently takes place.

## DELIVERABLES

- A suite of information documents on the Solent's biodiversity and nature conservation with each publication specific to the group it is aimed at.
- A number of events tied to the publication of the information documents, including seminars, low tide day, International Festival of the Sea etc.
- ½ day events relating to sharing practice both nationally and locally.
- Dedicated web pages to disseminate best practice and nature conservation information.
- Production of generic educational material on nature conservation and biodiversity in association with the Solent Forum's Coastal Learning Educational Resource project.
- A guide showing the areas in the Solent where schools can go for practical nature conservation lessons.

## RESOURCES

Much of this work can be undertaken by the Solent Forum officers, however, it is likely that the development of national curriculum material will need to be outsourced.

## TIMESCALE

The timescale of the initiative is dependent on the priorities of the group, each of the objectives could be carried out independently.