

Whether you work in the field of coastal management or conservation or are a member of the public there are a number of ways in which you can help to conserve and protect the Solent's coastal habitats. Many of the suggestions set out below are already taking place and this work provides an excellent starting point from which to progress.

This sheet looks at how professionals, interested parties, stakeholders and individuals can all play an active role in enhancing and maintaining coastal habitats for future generations to enjoy.

GENERAL PUBLIC

- Follow codes of conduct which have been developed for activities, e.g. bait digging and kite surfing. These codes are written to maximise enjoyment for all and conserve the environment.
- Plan walks in advance and use a guidebook, visitor leaflet or map to identify footpaths and land open to the public. Follow codes of conduct written in visitor information material.
- Always read and follow signs and keep to footpaths. Leaving them could be dangerous and can lead to trampling of fragile habitats and disturbance of wildlife.
- Visit local nature reserves, such as Farlington Marshes, to find out more about habitats.
- Keep dogs under control.
- Take your litter home with you.
- Join your local wildlife trust, RSPB or other local group such as the Friends of Langstone Harbour. Become a conservation volunteer.

LAND MANAGERS AND FARMERS

- Investigate the use of both entry level and higher level agri-environmental schemes to help with land management including habitat maintenance, improvement and re-creation.
- Minimise the use of pesticides and fertilisers at locations where they could be blown onto or drain into adjacent habitats.
- Do not dump waste goods and materials on unused land or fill in ditches.
- Seek advice from Natural England, RSPB and the Wildlife Trust on how to maximise the biodiversity of the land.

FORWARD PLANNERS

- Consider how policies and plans will impact on habitats and how these impacts can be reduced. Consider both the indirect effects which can be reasonably foreseen, as well as the direct effects.
- Develop and promote planning policies that ensure no net loss of resource and no significant change in distribution pattern, quality or geomorphological function of habitats, as a result of human activities.
- Identify and plan for managed realignment schemes to negate the impacts of coastal squeeze. For example, by implementing coastal setback and other management strategies that enable the re-creation or natural development of habitats.
- Ensure that policies and actions regarding habitats from agreed documents (statutory and non-statutory) are included in future planning frameworks.

DEVELOPERS

- Seek advice from appropriate bodies such as Local Authorities (Ecologists), Natural England and the RSPB where there is any possibility that the development may impact upon a nationally designated site or protected species. Or with the local the local Wildlife Trust where BAP habitats or species may be affected.
- Read and take account of policies in coastal biodiversity action plans.

- Try to work with nature and identify areas for habitat creation and compensation in development schemes. For example, consider the beneficial use of materials arising from activities such as dredging for mudflat or beach recharge.
- Take account of the indirect impacts on habitats of development, such as changes to sediment budgets or land drainage.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLANNERS

- Consider how development proposals will impact on both the local and wider habitats and how these impacts can be reduced. Refer to the coastal biodiversity action plans.
- Take into account the cumulative impact of developments.
- Take sea level rise and coastal squeeze into consideration when assessing the impact of coastal development on habitats. In particular, avoid increasing the need for coastal defences where their construction or maintenance may impact upon designated sites.
- Make sure habitat GIS datasets are up to date and use them to find out what habitats will be affected by any new development.
- Encourage developers to liaise with your own ecologists, Natural England, Biodiversity Record Centres and the RSPB at an early stage where there is any possibility that the development may impact upon a nationally designated site or protected species. Or with the local Wildlife Trust where BAP habitats or species may be affected.
- Monitor the effectiveness of proposals against their stated aims and objectives, look at the validation of assumptions or models against the actual outcome and build in the need to undertake baseline monitoring to measure change in consents.

COASTAL MANAGERS

- Co-ordinate plan and policy documents to ensure conservation policies are comprehensive and non-contradictory.
- Promote research on the collation of accurate factual information on the location and nature of habitats. Identify and address gaps in current knowledge.
- Ensure accurate information is available on the location and nature of key sites. Much information is available on the Internet, for example, the Solent Forum 'sign post' site (www.solentforum.hants.org.uk).
- Encourage monitoring and the collation of baseline information.
- Co-ordinate and disseminate best practice.
- Help change the public image of habitats and encourage people to value, use and learn from them.
- Establish technical expert groups, where necessary, to collate and disseminate information relating to habitats and the threats and issues that they face. The Solent Forum's nature conservation working group is a good example of this in practice.
- Make use of existing coastal partnerships, such as the Solent Forum, in taking forward actions in plans that include habitats.
- Provide support for site managers of coastal reserves, country parks and other important sites, by maintaining a network to exchange ideas and good practice.

COASTAL ENGINEERS

- Promote the beneficial use of dredging material for habitat recharge.
- Encourage the use of managed coastal realignment in the face of predicted sea level rises; this will allow natural progression of habitats threatened by 'coastal squeeze'.
- Consider unmanaged realignment e.g. resulting from a natural breach or no/insufficient maintenance of defences. This requires careful evaluation as it could result in significant land use change.
- Investigate opportunities to incorporate into cost/benefit analyses for flood defence schemes the non-use value of habitats created as part of such schemes, e.g. their contribution to the local economy.
- Ensure that, as far as possible, coastal defence or other construction works avoid any disruption of coastal or other natural processes which might lead to the loss of habitats.
- Consider the development of coastal geomorphological modelling techniques which could assist in an understanding of the retention and development of habitats, and

consider supporting an associated programme for the monitoring of sediment supply and movement.

- Develop and promote coastal zone management policies which allow the maximum possible free movement of coastal sediment and pay full regard to the conservation of habitats.
- Ensure that the second round of shoreline management plans include targets, actions and objectives from the biodiversity actions plans for coastal habitat re-creation.
- Encourage the use of 'soft' defences as an alternative to 'hard' wherever possible.