

FOREWORD

Strategic Guidance for the Solent has been prepared on behalf of the Solent Forum. It aims to establish the general direction for the whole of the Solent in terms of strategic planning and management; to raise awareness and understanding of the main issues; and to set out the ground rules for consultation. The Strategic Guidance is not in any sense intended as a 'grand plan' for the Solent, rather it seeks to provide the framework within which the wide range of activities are planned and managed together, and the national importance of the Solent can be further strengthened in the future. The Guidance is a voluntary initiative, and will make its contribution if the themes are agreed and recognised by all of the statutory interests and the representatives of the various user groups.

The Solent is an internationally important economic, recreational and environmental asset. We already have achieved a careful balance of the different interests, and will need to maintain that balance in the future. Effective planning and management arrangements are well established, and have been for many years. There is a growing culture of 'working together' between different sectors, and I hope that the Solent Forum will play a strong role in supporting this in the future, and backing it up with the proposed Flagship Projects. Significant challenges face us in some areas; we will need to respond to predicted climate change and sea level rise, we need to work hard to maintain the Solent's premier position for recreation and the marine economy, and we need to look harder for opportunities to protect and improve the environment. The main message of the Guidance is that the Solent is a well managed estuary system, and is a place to be proud of. With continued commitment, clear priorities and developing partnerships there is every reason to be optimistic about its long term future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to all those who have assisted with the production of the Strategic Guidance. The input from members of the Solent Forum and beyond has been substantial, constructive and given without complaint. Particular mention should be made of: Associated British Ports, English Nature, Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, New Forest District Council, Portsmouth City Council, Queen's Harbour Master - Portsmouth, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Solent Protection Society, Southampton City Council and the Sports Council who have funded the project so far, and have formed an effective and committed steering group for the work. Hampshire County Council, through the Planning Department, continue to play a particularly important role in hosting the project, ably managed by Peter Bell and Alan Inder. A special tribute should be paid to Tim Badman, the first Solent Project Officer, who worked hard and with care to ensure that the Strategic Guidance is a valuable way forward and easy to understand. Finally, I would like to thank Kate Sisman, the current Solent Project Officer, for dealing with the responses to the draft Strategic Guidance so ably and for producing the revised version.

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Chairman, Solent Forum

December 1997