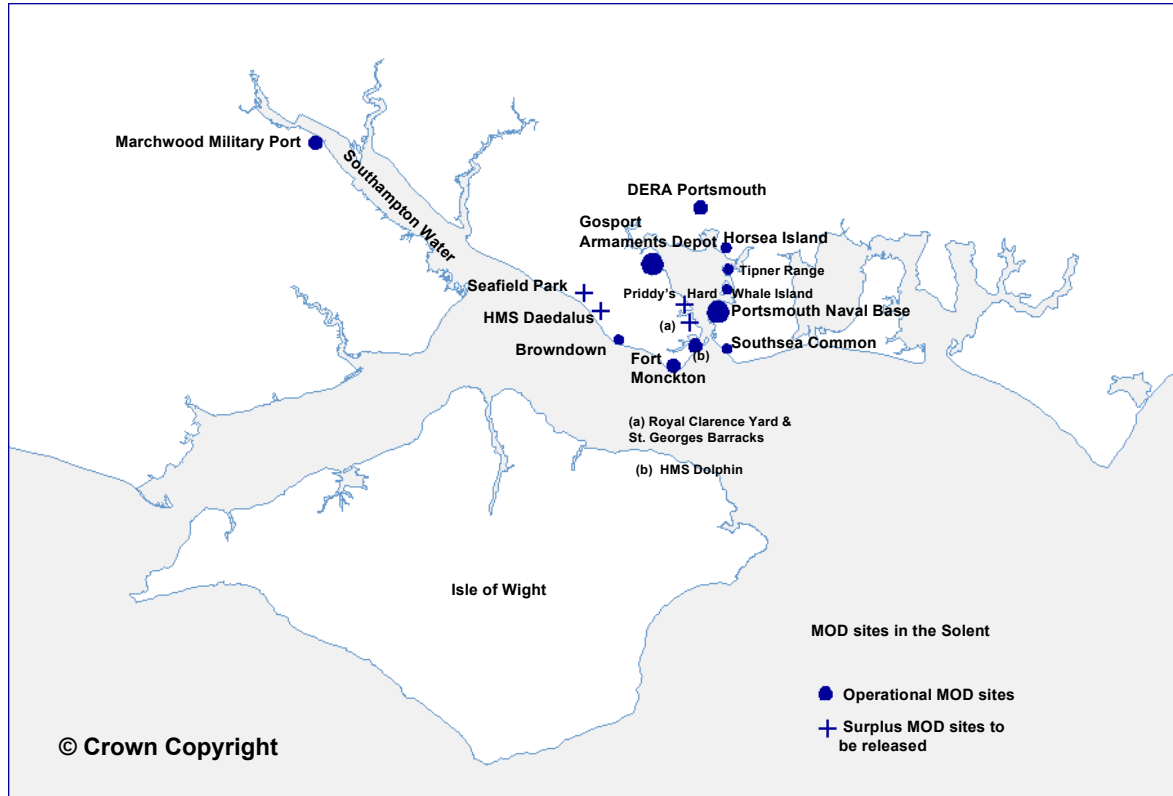


NAVAL BASE AND DEFENCE INTERESTS

Long-term aim: 'to recognise the substantial interests of the Ministry of Defence and Naval Base, and promote co-operative working between the Ministry and other sectors where appropriate'.



KEY FACTS:

- The Ministry of Defence employs more than 5,500 military people in the Solent region.
- There are more than 1,000 military shipping movements each year.

The Position

Military use of the Solent is of substantial economic importance to the region and centres primarily on Portsmouth Harbour and Marchwood Military Port.

Portsmouth Harbour is the traditional home of the Royal Navy and is the base port for the majority of the Navy's surface warships. The Naval Base houses the headquarters of Naval Home Command and is the major naval stores distribution centre in the UK. Military activity is well established around the harbour and includes; the maintenance of ships in the Naval Base, helicopter maintenance at Fleetlands, fuelling operations at Clarence Yard, ordnance storage and distribution at the Gosport Armament Depot, tri-service military school and waterfront facilities at HMS Dolphin, diving and firefighting school at Horsea, a firing range at Tipner and a training establishment on Whale Island which also accommodates the Headquarters of the Royal Marines.

The Queen's Harbour Master (QHM) has a particularly major role as the harbour authority for the Eastern Solent. The naval base is of significant heritage interest, both in terms of the historic dockyard and buildings. A number of operational sites are of importance for wildlife, whilst others have a large impact on the landscape. The Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) operates several sites within the Solent area, where research and development on defence technology is undertaken. The QHM is a leading promoter of the Portsmouth Harbour Plan, which is currently under review, with the expectation that the plan will be completed by the end of 1997.

The QHM makes a significant contribution to the management of the Solent, as the harbour authority for Portsmouth Harbour and the Eastern Solent, and as a co-sponsor of the Solfire/Solspill Plan for marine emergencies. Wootton Creek lies within the QHM area but is not of defence significance, and its management is overseen by the Wootton Creek Fairways Association.

Marchwood Military Port, on the western shore of Southampton Water, is the sole military port in the UK and provides the training ground for Army port and maritime personnel. It is the home port for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Landing Ship Logistic and army vessels run by the Royal Logistic Corps. In addition, HQ Solent Station and 17 Port and Maritime Regt Wksp REME are based there. The MoD have recently invested heavily in the site, typically the port will handle 100,000 tonnes of military material a year. Approximately 150 civilian and 600 military personnel are employed at the port.

The recent national trend within the defence sector has been a progressive series of budget reductions, although the concentration of effort towards front-line forces has led to the consolidation of the position of Portsmouth Naval Base. The long-term assessment is that naval activity within Portsmouth Harbour will remain stable at around the present level.

Despite this long-term prediction, there are some sites around the harbour which are now surplus to MoD requirements and are due for release. The future use of these sites is in the process of being determined, and each has its own set of issues to be considered. Cumulatively, the land being released is significant given its scale and urban location, so agreeing and implementing the best possible developments is of great importance to the future of Portsmouth, Gosport and Fareham. The local plan system, together with the production of development briefs, and other supplementary planning guidance has the key role in shaping future land use, although an overview of the body of sites is also required.

Security requirements impose limits on the integration of the MoD's activities on their operational land with other interests. There is interest from local authorities in working with the MoD on nature, landscape and heritage conservation and, where possible, public use.

The past MoD exemption from environmental regulation has now been removed by a ministerial direction that all Crown sites should be subject to requirements for discharges to be consented and monitored. The MoD has agreed consents with the Environment Agency and all MoD sites within the Solent have met the consents deadline to the satisfaction of the Agency. The MoD are committed to an environmental policy which was launched by the Secretary of State for Defence in 1996 (see box, page 52).

What do we need to do?

The strategic position of the Naval Base and other MoD activities within the Solent is a matter for national decision, but the relationship of the MoD with other interests is very important. Relatively few issues arise as a result of operational MoD activity within the Solent. The majority should be aired through the Portsmouth Harbour Plan, and the current review of the plan appears to indicate that there are few areas of contention within the harbour as a result of naval activities, and none requiring immediate resolution. The two principal needs are as follows:

1. Recognise the fact of continuing significant naval and defence activity, and ensure that this continues to be to the benefit of the system as a whole

Military activity will continue to impact on other users and interests. This impact should remain the minimum consistent with the over-riding defence obligations in the interest of the Nation. The Portsmouth Harbour Plan and the various liaison arrangements within Portsmouth Harbour provide the appropriate vehicles for continued consultation and these should be maintained and implemented.
LEAD ROLE: MoD (QHM, Portsmouth), designated SPA/SAC 'Relevant Authorities'.

The Ministry of Defence, and in particular the Queen's Harbour Master as the Harbour Authority for Portsmouth and the Eastern Solent will need to play a full part in the development of schemes of management for the system associated with European conservation legislation.

LEAD ROLE: MoD (QHM, Portsmouth), designated SPA/SAC 'Relevant Authorities'.

The MoD environmental policy provides a commitment that the military will meet the same environmental standards as civilian operations. Continued liaison with the Environment Agency, English Nature and other environmental regulators will aim to maintain the necessary standards.

LEAD ROLE: MoD

The MoD will continue to consider how the management of operational land contributes to the provision of strategic open land and to landscape, wildlife and heritage conservation. Public use of operational military land is not normally achievable, although carefully regulated use of particular recreational facilities may be possible, and is of particular benefit where such facilities are not available elsewhere. Continued liaison between the MoD and local authority planning and leisure functions is particularly important to this objective.

LEAD ROLE: MoD, local authorities.



SOLENT FORUM ACTION: MoD land has an important role to play in ensuring the quality of landscape within the Solent, and MoD input will be sought within the Solent Environment and Access Initiative (Flagship Project 2).

2. Ensure that the best possible use is made of released MoD land, taking into account all significant interests, within a strategic framework

A significant area of MoD land will be released from operational use during the next few years, particularly around Portsmouth Harbour. This land has a high value, and exceptional strategic significance within a pressured urban area. Some sites to be released contain features of heritage significance, whilst others are located close to important nature conservation interests or have potential for recreation, transport uses or aggregates dredging. The sites have the potential to provide for a range of different possible uses, and an effective strategic framework, delivered through the structure, unitary and local plans, with co-ordinated supplementary planning guidance will be essential if the best possible range and balance of uses is to be achieved.

LEAD ROLE: A co-ordinated approach to be maintained between Fareham Borough Council, Gosport Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Defence Estates Officer (Land).

1. The Ministry of Defence is committed to the protection of the natural environment, by avoiding harm and nuisance, whilst maintaining our operational effectiveness. We conduct our activities in accordance with the Government's overall environmental policy set out in the 1990 White Paper "This Common Inheritance" and its associated reports. The Department's Green Minister is responsible for developing environmental strategies appropriate to defence activities.

2. The environmental policy set out in this statement is to be observed throughout the Ministry of Defence and its Agencies and reflects our full support of the Government's overall environment policy. The management of the environment is increasingly regulated and legislation imposes on us an overall duty of care which we need to fulfil.

3. The Department:

- a) ensures compliance with the letter and spirit of the Environment Protection Act, 1990 (which applies to all personnel, service and civilian) and with all other existing environmental legislation;
- b) invokes Crown or Defence exemptions from legislation only where essential to maintain operational effectiveness;
- c) complies with international conventions to which the UK is a signatory;
- d) respects host nation legislation;
- e) protects and enhances the natural environment in line with the Government's environmental strategy, and
- f) the principles of Stewardship and Sustainability, within overriding operational and financial constraints;
- g) strives to be a good neighbour at home and abroad.

4. To meet the main policy objectives the Department will:

- a) assess environmental costs and benefits to ensure that these are considered in procurement and other decision making processes;
- b) adopt suitable methodologies to establish the condition of defence assets as a basis for appropriate action planning;
- c) give appropriate funding priority to environmental issues, particularly those activities involving compliance with legislation;
- d) promote environmental awareness and performance through effective education and training;
- e) implement and operate appropriate management systems to ensure compliance with relevant legislation (unless Crown or Defence exemption has exceptionally, been invoked) and demonstrate where practicable, further improvement in environmental performance;
- f) maintain expertise within the Department to manage and implement environmental protection measures;
- g) maintain an environmental manual, JSP418, as the first point of reference to ensure activities are conducted in compliance with the law and international conventions and to provide a broad overview of the MOD's policies on environmental issues;
- h) ensure unit, station and garrison commanders, Navy personnel afloat and line managers are aware of their personal responsibilities and accountability.

KEY ORGANISATIONS: NAVAL BASE AND DEFENCE INTERESTS

Lead organisation

Ministry of Defence
 Naval Base Commander, Portsmouth
 Queen's Harbour Master, Portsmouth

Officer Commanding, Marchwood Military Port
Defence Estates Officer (Land)
Officers, Civil Servants and Managers in
charge of individual establishments
Chief Executive Defence Evaluation &
Research Agency (DERA)

Other interested organisations

Countryside Commission
English Nature
English Heritage

Environment Agency
Sports Council
Hampshire County Council
Portsmouth City Council
Gosport Borough Council
New Forest District Council
Portsmouth Commercial Port
Associated British Ports
Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Portsmouth and Langstone Sailing Association
Portsmouth Harbour Conservation Group
Wootton Creek Fairways Association (QHM
Harbour Area)