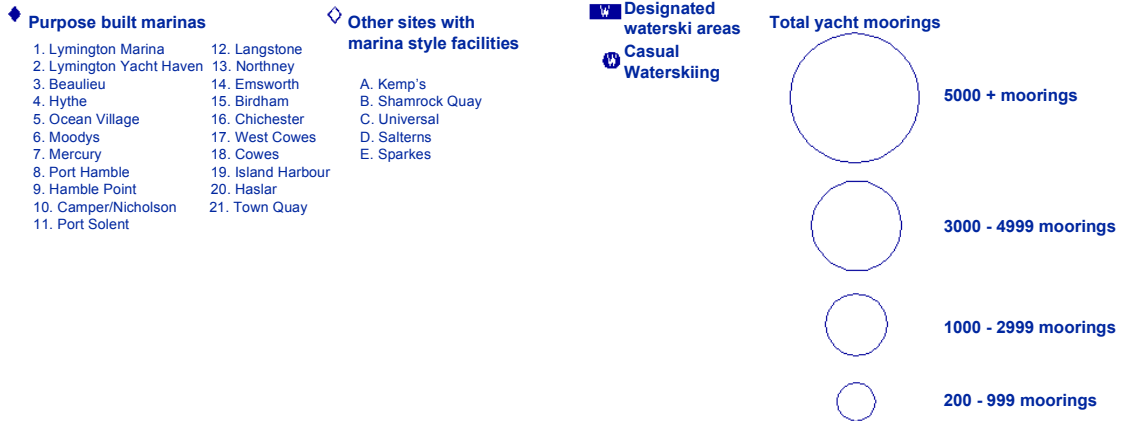
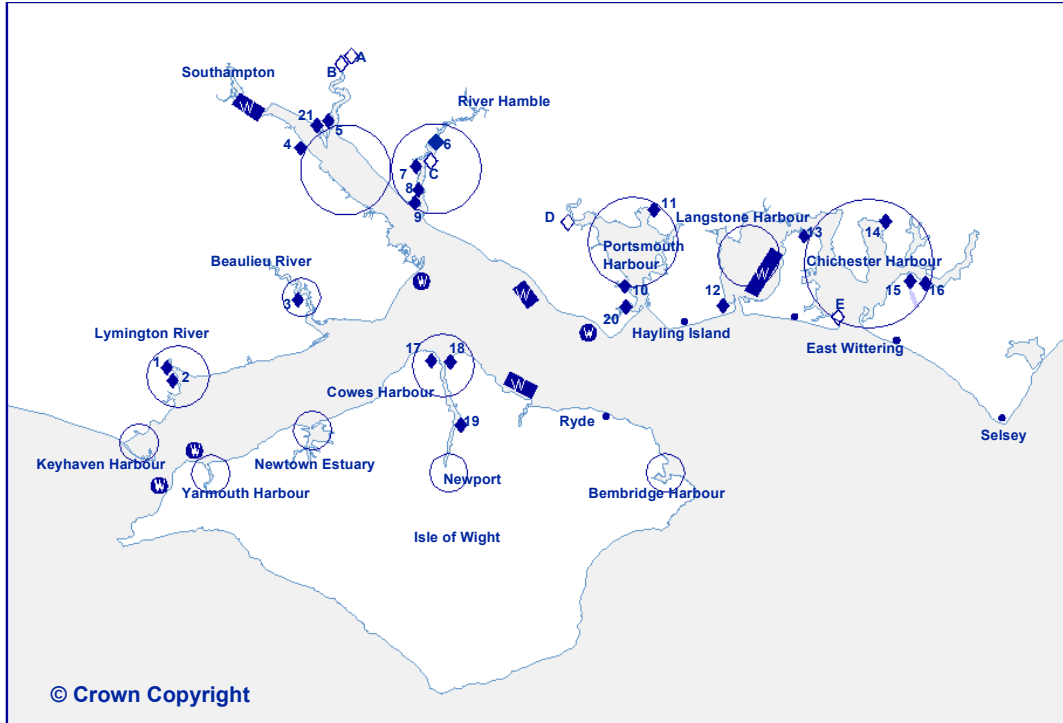


RECREATION AND TOURISM

Long-term aim: 'to support recreation and tourism activities within the Solent, and extend opportunities where possible'.



KEY FACTS:

- There are an estimated 25,000 yachts moored within the Solent.
- The number of marina yacht berths in the Solent has doubled in the last 25 years.
- Over 20 different types of recreation take place in the Solent.
- 20% of employment on the Isle of Wight is in tourism.

The Position

Recreation is vital to the Solent - and the quality of the Solent is vital for recreation. In terms of the numbers of people involved and its extent, recreation can be counted as the Solent's most significant activity. It is certainly the most diverse, with at least twenty different activities taking place, each with its own characteristic distribution and pattern of use.

Land-based informal recreation and walking have by far the greatest number of participants. They are provided for by country parks, public open spaces, beaches, the rights of way network and a range of visitor attractions and facilities. However it is watersports which have the highest profile, and the Solent has an international reputation for sailing. A number of other watersports are also significant, and a statement on the range of activities is provided in the box below.

Tourism is particularly significant for the Isle of Wight, counting for 20% of employment, and income to the island of over £200 million per year. Whilst only a proportion of this activity is reliant on the Island's Solent coast, the ferry services to the Island across the Solent are used by almost all visitors. Yachting accounts for a significant proportion of the Island's tourism activity, estimated at 5 -10% of visitor spend. On the Hampshire coast, long-stay tourism is not such a major economic factor, but it is still significant on Hayling Island and in Southsea. Day visiting is, however, significant and is mainly associated with major events, formal and informal recreation and visitor attractions. The highest profile visitor attractions of the Hampshire coast are within Portsmouth, principally the Historic Dockyard.

There is a division of responsibilities for the policies regulating recreational activities. The principal organisations are the district councils, who have the lead role in regulating land-based activities, and the harbour authorities with a lead role for ensuring navigational safety on the water. Responsibilities overlap with regard to nearshore water activities, where the lead lies primarily with the district councils. The harbour authorities have a role to assist in implementation of elements which are subject to their bye-laws on water. The extensive coverage of harbour authority powers means that the Solent's waters are more closely regulated than most coastal waters in the UK. The Department of the Environment Transport and Regions (DETR) has recently published a review of coastal bye-laws, which proposes that the existing powers should be consolidated, and a number of improvements made to both coverage, administration and enforcement.

A large amount of information has been gathered on recreation within the Solent, although many activities are difficult to study. The greatest efforts have been expended on researching yachting activity and, in particular, establishing trends in the growth of moorings. The Sports Council's Coastal Recreation Strategy, published in 1991, provides the most up-to-date comprehensive study of activity. A range of more up-to-date information for part of the Solent is currently being assembled within a joint sports strategy for Southampton and Eastleigh.

The main long-term trend within recreation has been a growth in activity, which has been a pattern throughout most of the 20th century, and in particular since the end of World War II. The primary driving force behind this has been the growth in population living within the coastal belt, together with general increases in leisure time and disposable income. During the early 1990s, the national economic recession has checked this growth, however it is still possible to identify a number of needs within the recreation sector for new or extended facilities.

Although this general upward trend applies to most activities, the only well-quantified growth is in yachting. This is most obviously seen in the rapid growth in mooring numbers which have increased by 27% within the last 25 years, with a doubling in the number of marina berths during that time. This growth has led to a number of concerns about whether the system is at or near capacity in terms of its environmental interests, conflicts between recreational users, or conflicts with commercial shipping. The restrictive nature of planning has concentrated the most recent proposals for development of yachting facilities on the built-up coast, and this trend is expected to continue in the future. At the present time, there are no significant unimplemented planning permissions for additional moorings or marina development.

There has been a noticeable trend towards the increased use of powered craft, with a growing range of products on the market, such as personal water craft. The growth of new activities can lead to conflicts with established user groups, local residents and the environment, which can prove difficult to manage. There are currently no means of identifying new activities before problems arise, or of taking their potential needs into account in advance.

The general growth in recreational activity has led to concern about the resulting disturbance to the Solent's wildlife. All activities are potentially of concern, and agreements have been reached on locational and seasonal restrictions of some activities (principally water-skiing) to limit problems. Elsewhere programmes of education and signage have been undertaken, or may be considered necessary, and the presence of on-the-ground managers is important in reducing conflict. Specific concerns are normally localised, and the overall impacts of recreational disturbance are unclear and subject to debate.

There has been a gradual but progressive increase in the extent of bye-law regulations within the Solent. Most harbour authority areas are subject to some speed limit restrictions, and a number of areas carry additional restrictions on specific activities. The most recent additions have been for the 'moving prohibited zone' in the central Solent (which prescribes minimum distance to be maintained between small craft and large ships navigating the Brambles Turn into Southampton Water), and the addition of a speed limit in the Boldre Foreshore Local Nature Reserve to prevent fast craft close inshore. The existing bye-law regulations are generally felt to be adequate, and consultation mechanisms have developed to ensure that new proposals are subject to debate. However, bringing forward new bye-laws is very time consuming. The main issue which remains to some extent unresolved is personal water craft provision, and there are some local conflicts. The enforcement of bye-laws is resource intensive and can be problematic, causing predominantly practical difficulties in terms of policing and enforcing legal action, with motorised recreational craft being a particular focus for concern.

The number of incidents involving recreational craft is gradually increasing. Figures are maintained by the Coastguard, and show a growth in numbers in all sectors - which is particularly evident in small motorised craft. The reasons for the trends have not yet been analysed, although the Coastguard plan to do this.

Trends in tourism are not well quantified. On a long term basis the volume of activity has declined, with the impact particularly noticeable within the seaside resorts, but less so in the self-catering sector. Growth in demand is evident within niche markets, short breaks, and special interest and activity holidays. In Solent terms, visiting yachts are a particularly notable market with growing potential.

What do we need to do?

1. Promote a positive approach to sport, recreation and tourism development, and support activities which are suited to the Solent's natural and economic resources

Sport and recreation are central to the identity of the Solent, vital to its enjoyment and fundamentally important to its economy. There is a wealth of recreational opportunities, and the Solent is of international importance for sailing, windsurfing and angling. Policies for the Solent need to be positive towards sustaining and developing recreational activity, whilst recognising the need to address impacts on the other interests. In practice such a positive approach should take a number of forms:-

- identifying important recreation facilities, and shortfalls in provision - and meeting them in appropriate locations. This role primarily requires a process involving the Sports Council, governing bodies of sport, sports clubs and users, local authority leisure and sports development officers, local authority planners and the private sector. The co-ordination of sports-specific strategies would also provide a useful framework. Such strategies already exist for water-skiing and windsurfing. There is a particularly notable shortfall in the provision and access to inland waters for sport and recreation activity. This poses particular problems in identifying safe training areas for beginners and juniors, and for the pursuit of rowing and water-skiing.

LEAD ROLE: Sports Council and local authority leisure officers.

- promoting existing and new opportunities for sport and recreation activity within the Solent, in particular to young people. Young people are the lifeblood of continued sporting activity and excellence within the Solent, and a continued effort to promote opportunities is required. There is a particular need to develop better links between school activity and the club sector, and to ensure that watersports maintain and develop their place within school sport in the Region. The Hampshire Outdoor Centres, the Medina Valley Centre and Wight Watersports represent a

particularly important resource for promotion of safe opportunities for junior watersports. Sports-specific strategies would again be a useful framework for drawing together and prioritising action and identifying opportunities. However, there should be a particular emphasis on providing multi-watersports activities for young people and beginners, and greater co-ordination between different sports and their governing bodies is desirable. There is an opportunity to apply for Lottery Sports Funding to improve access for recreational craft.

LEAD ROLE: Local authority leisure and education departments, outdoor centre operators and governing bodies of sport.

- improving public access to the coastline, within an overall strategy for access, environmental improvements and landscape. There is scope for a range of improvements to the extent of access, the range of uses provided for and the co-ordination of promotion. Proposals need to recognise variations in capacity of different parts of the coast, and avoid damage or significant disturbance to important conservation interests.

LEAD ROLE: Local authorities.



SOLENT FORUM ACTION: Flagship Project 2, the Solent Access and Environment Initiative provides a framework to consider the needs within a balanced overall strategy.

- delivering co-ordinated, sustainable promotion of the Solent as a destination for recreation sport and tourism. The resources of the Solent need careful marketing to promote visiting at levels which the system can sustain. There is a need to maintain current levels overall, and scope to develop new markets including mid-week visiting yachting, increased visits from overseas yachts and visits from cruise ships. The marketing of the Solent should convey the importance of the Solent as an environmental resource, and ensure that increased activity at peak times can be provided for without damage to the quality of experience of visitors, or the environment.

LEAD ROLE: Various possibilities, including South Coast Metropole, Solent Maritime and the Southern Tourist Board

- continued promotion of major recreational events. Major events such as Cowes Week, the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race and Southampton Boat Show are of the highest importance to the enjoyment, character and economy of the Solent, and central to maintaining its prestige and international importance for recreation and the marine industry. There is a need to ensure that the Solent continues to attract and manage an annual portfolio of major events, and to maintain and develop the facilities for them.

LEAD ROLE: Various event organisers, local authorities, harbour and port authorities, private sector.

2. Manage development and activities within the capacity of the system

The ability for change or further expansion of the pattern of recreational activity of the Solent is limited by possible conflicts between different uses, between recreation and shipping and by the constraints imposed by the need to protect the environment. It is, therefore, critical that new recreation development and activity is achieved within the capacity of the Solent to accommodate it. Such a concept is easy to articulate, but difficult to put into practice. The planning system, the local and harbour authorities management input, and the many established and effective liaison and communication arrangements are all critical to maintaining recreation in balance with the other uses. Key points include the following:

- there is a need to seek agreement on the capacity of the system, and its ability to accommodate further recreational use. The land available for recreational development is limited, and appropriate sites are likely to be mostly on the built-up coastline. In terms of activity, there is a strong argument for focussing promotion on weekday, rather than weekend activity - particularly in the most intensively used areas.

LEAD ROLE: Local authorities and harbour authorities

- the growth of moorings in the Solent has been rapid, and there is a reasonable level of consensus that the scope for further moorings is now limited, despite the likelihood of continued demand. The sites which may be suitable are largely restricted to the urban areas of Southampton, Portsmouth and Cowes, and to limited expansion of some existing marinas. Further proposals require detailed

scrutiny, and will need to demonstrate that they do not have significant navigational or environmental impacts. In addition, any further moorings will need to take account of the policies agreed in the relevant harbour or estuary management plan. There is a case for re-examining the current configuration of moorings in some of the harbours, and where possible, to consolidate them in order to increase the available area of open water.

LEAD ROLE: Harbour authorities.

- cruising and racing yachting have distinct needs for waterspace use and facilities, and there is a need to ensure a balanced provision of facilities. Facilities for visiting cruising yachts should be maintained and improved, including visitor moorings, shoreside facilities and the attractions within the destination ports and harbours.

LEAD ROLE: Solent Cruising and Racing Association and harbour authorities.

- the predicted growth in the use of powered craft in the Solent raises some possible management concerns which require continued monitoring. They include safety concerns through increased speed of craft, mechanical failure, marginalisation of non-motorised activities, (particularly dinghies and canoes) and increased environmental pollution from fuel, noise and emissions. The maintenance of a framework of speed limits - particularly within the harbours and nearshore, the safeguarding of quiet areas for non-motorised craft, and the continued promotion of high standards of training, maintenance and good practice are required.

LEAD ROLE: Harbour authorities and HM Coastguard.

- recreation patterns in the Solent have changed rapidly and unpredictably over the last twenty years. Whilst the future may be more stable, it is still difficult to anticipate likely changes, and this can cause difficulties in evaluating future planning and management requirements. The surveying and monitoring of recreation can be time-consuming and inconclusive, so efforts must be carefully focussed. The most effective action may be based around improving and increasing the level of input from the marine industry sector into forward planning and management, and by using existing recreation fora to ensure that the views of users are regularly sought on new issues and pressures.

LEAD ROLE: British Marine Industries Federation, harbour authorities and planning authorities.

- a balanced precautionary approach to recreation development and provision is needed. This should be applied where recreation development or activity could have a significant effect on the environment or other uses. The precautionary principle cannot be used as a licence to invent hypothetical consequences, and any concerns must be demonstrated to be well founded. Where this is the case, it will be necessary to demonstrate that an adverse impact from activity is not probable, and the burden of proof will be greater for irreversible proposals (such as development) than reversible (e.g. establishing a recreation area), and will depend on the scale of development proposed.

LEAD ROLE: Local authorities and English Nature.

3. Ensure that policies and management for recreation are co-ordinated and make the best use of resources

- co-ordination in policy, regulation and management for recreational activity is required in order to ensure that the best use is being made of the Solent's facilities and natural resources. This will also help to ensure that the needs of recreational participants are being accommodated and managed properly, and will assist in the discussion and resolving of conflicts between uses. There are a large number of organisations involved, and many co-ordination mechanisms already exist and are working well - including the Solent Area Sailing Advisory Committee, Southampton Water Recreation Users Group, Portsmouth Harbour Information Exchange Group and the advisory committees for Langstone and Chichester Harbours (the latter three have a wider role than recreation). An overview of Solent recreation issues was achieved through the 1991 Sports Council's Coastal Recreation Strategy, and subsequent appointment of a Coastal Recreation Officer, and it would be desirable for this role to be maintained in the future.

LEAD ROLE: Local authorities, harbour authorities and sports governing bodies.

- there is a particular need for co-operation in managing recreational activity between the district councils, unitary councils and the harbour authorities.

LEAD ROLE: For harbour management issues the lead role lies with the harbour authorities. For management of nearshore and beach activities, including the interaction of watercraft with swimmers, the lead should come from the local authorities, with the harbour authorities providing appropriate support and assistance.

- a measured approach to the possible zonation of recreational activity is required. Virtually the whole of the Solent is a recreational zone. The balance of recreational and other uses varies with, for example, proportionately greater sailing activity in the western Solent than elsewhere. Prescriptive zonation is only suitable for some nearshore and beach-based recreational activities, to reduce conflict between different motorised sports, windsurfing and swimming, and to reduce noise nuisance. A system of such zones is already in place where currently required, and the need for further provision does not appear to be pressing, but should be kept under review. Where further zones are proposed they should be carefully justified, agreed with users, and be enforceable.

LEAD ROLE: District and unitary local authorities.

- an effective staffing and resource commitment to recreation management within the Solent is required, and needs to be given due weight by the local and harbour authorities in particular. The costs of recreation management can be significant and new resources may be difficult to find. Where management needs arise from an identifiable group of users, or they benefit directly from management effort, then the possibility of their contributing towards the costs of management should be explored. Alternatively, voluntary arrangements for management through clubs or private sector operators may be useful in some circumstances. Where workable voluntary arrangements cannot be achieved, further regulation may need to be considered as a last resort.
- **LEAD ROLE:** Local and harbour authorities
- future recreation management would be improved by earlier intelligence about new activities, and trends in participation. It is desirable for the marine industries and the governing bodies of sport to work in partnership with the managing authorities, and to make further efforts to ensure that such information is delivered to them.

LEAD ROLE: British Marine Industries Federation and Governing Bodies of Sport

- the urban areas, including the existing tourist resorts of the Solent, are likely to play an increasingly important role in providing recreational opportunities to the urban populations of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and reduce the need to travel. Recreational development should, therefore, be retained and supported within these areas, particularly where it adds to the ability of the resorts to attract tourism business and develop new visitor markets.

LEAD ROLE: District and unitary local authorities.

4. Improve the information provided for recreational users

Effective delivery of promotional, safety and environmental information to recreational users of the Solent is central to effective management. There is a wide range of different literature and publications, and co-ordination of all activity is impractical. However, there are a number of specific elements which should be focussed on, including:

- provision of effective signage at public launch points, to an agreed standard. This should be related to 'Coastal Recreation Signs: a guide to good practice' produced by Hampshire County Council in conjunction with the Sports Council, English Nature and HM Coastguard;
- revision of 'Enjoy the Solent', to include recreational safety and environmental information;
- establishment of a Solent recreational information site on the Internet;
- provision of effective mechanisms for disseminating recreational publications throughout the Solent's recreational community.



SOLENT FORUM ACTION: Solent Outreach (Flagship Project 4) could deliver a number of the recreational information needs within the Solent through partnership working with local and harbour authorities.

5. Support voluntary organisations which assist in organising and managing recreation

Voluntary self-regulation of recreation is a principle that is well established, and should be the primary means of achieving improvements to recreation management in the future. The delivery of self-regulation requires effective structures within the recreation sector to ensure that they can be implemented successfully. Strong recreational organisations are also important in maintaining high standards of sporting performance. The future of governing bodies of sport, sporting associations and sport and recreation clubs needs to be assured, and the planning and managing organisations should work with them to maintain and develop their role.

LEAD ROLE: Sports Council.

6. Strengthen the links between recreation and environmental interests

The quality of the Solent's environment is a major strength for recreational and tourism activity. There are substantial shared areas of concern between recreation and environmental interests in the Solent. Both uses support the maintenance of an unpolluted environment, which is attractive and where historic and natural features are conserved. Whilst there remain perceived and actual conflicts between recreational activity and conservation, many of these are likely to be resolvable through better understanding and mutual agreement. There is, therefore, a strong justification for promoting greater contact between recreation and environmental interests within the Solent. This is already achieved in parts of the Solent through some consultative bodies and these could be strengthened through the undertaking of the following action points:

- greater emphasis by coastal conservation site managers on contacting local recreation clubs, and providing them with information on local conservation sites;
- possible joint membership promotion between governing bodies of sport and conservation organisations;
- an annual meeting between the key conservation and recreation organisations to provide a conflict identification and resolution forum, similar to the role which the Solent Area Sailing Advisory Committee performs with regard to recreational safety.

LEAD ROLE: Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, RSPB, Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust or the Royal Yachting Association might consider taking a particular lead role, although a range of other governing bodies should also be involved.

The debate about the balance between recreation and conservation within the Solent would be well served by clearer information about the interaction of recreation with wildlife. There are many possible concerns, but little well-disseminated information to distinguish perceived concerns from real issues, or to prioritise. A clearer mutual understanding of where issues lie would be helpful, leading to a programme of research aimed at clarifying environmental impacts, and identifying workable responses. It is important that such research involves all interests, is constructive and is seen to be equitable.

LEAD ROLE: English Nature and the Sports Council.

The interaction between recreation and environmental quality is important, and it is a source of concern that water quality standards for most watersports do not exist. It is, therefore, important that the views and concerns of these recreational users are sought and understood, in order to identify local problems with water quality, and to seek possible solutions. The Solent Water Quality Conference has sought such views, and further periodic meetings with the recreational interests, backed by implementation of appropriate action should be maintained.

LEAD ROLE: Solent Water Quality Conference, Southern Water Services and the Environment Agency.

KEY ORGANISATIONS: RECREATION & TOURISM

Lead organisations

Sports Council
Hampshire County Council
Southampton City Council
Portsmouth City Council
Isle of Wight Council
West Sussex County Council

Chichester District Council
New Forest District Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Fareham Borough Council
Gosport Borough Council
Havant Borough Council
Lymington Harbour Commissioners
Beaulieu River Management
Associated British Ports
Queen's Harbour Master

Langstone Harbour Board
Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners
Cowes Harbour Commissioners
Bembridge Harbour
Royal Yachting Association
Southern Tourist Board

Other key organisations

Countryside Commission
English Tourist Board

Solent Cruising and Racing Association
British Canoe Union
British Sub-Aqua Club
British Water Ski Federation
National Federation of Sea Anglers
Ramblers' Association
Solent Yacht Clubs
Sports Clubs
British Marine Industries Federation
Solent Protection Society
Private Sector Businesses

Recreational activities in the Solent

Activity	Significance of the Solent	Comments
Angling	Regional	There are an estimated 40,000 active sea anglers in the region. The activity takes place in many places around the coast, throughout the year, with seasonal variations according to fish lifecycles. It is predominantly informal and shore-based, although there are significant numbers who use their own boats, or make use of organised trips. Some angling clubs maintain a boat pound, and sometimes clubhouses. Bait digging takes place in a number of intertidal areas, both by private individuals and professional diggers.
Birdwatching	Local/Regional	The ornithological interest of the Solent attracts birdwatchers from throughout the region. There is nature interest study throughout most of the year, although the greatest numbers of birds are present over winter. There are around thirty RSPB members' groups.
Canoeing	Regional/National	An estimated 10,000 canoeists live in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and many more visit. There are a number of popular sea-canoeing routes within the Solent, and around 15 active clubs. The Hampshire Outdoor Centres are important foci for the activity, and Calshot in particular has a national reputation for sea-canoeing.
Cycling and mountain biking	Local	There are limited opportunities for cycling at the coast, mainly due to lack of suitable access.
Dinghy Sailing	National/ International	There are some 60 dinghy sailing clubs within the Solent each with its own racing programme, and organising over 100 open events including national and international championships annually. An estimated 10,000 boats are based in parks around the Solent. Public and private sector outdoor centres, and sailing schools provide training and support for this activity.
Horseriding	Local	Limited access means that there are few opportunities for horseriding on the coast. The main facility is the Hayling Billy Coastal Path.
Personal Watercraft	Regional	There are a number of sites within the Solent which are a focus for personal watercraft, including Eastney, HMS Daedalus, Calshot and Colwell Bay. There are no inland water alternatives in the Region.
Power boating	National/ International	Recreational powerboating takes place throughout the Solent, and mainly within the Western and Eastern channels and in Southampton Water. Power boat racing also takes place as a specialist activity and the Solent hosts national and international level competitions.
Rowing	Regional	The River Itchen is a focus for rowing in the Solent, with five clubs - each with a club house and boat storage. There are also rowing clubs in Lymington, Southsea, Ryde, Shanklin and Newport. The clubs hold a regatta programme.
Sub-aqua	Local/Regional	The limited visibility in the Solent reduces its attraction to divers. Nevertheless there are over fifty active diving clubs in the Region. There are some sites which are preferred for beginners diving and the Solent forts and some wrecks are also used.
Activity	Significance of the Solent	Comments
Sunbathing, Sitting	Local	Passive activities are an important, though often undocumented part of Solent recreation. In good weather large numbers of people enjoy sitting outdoors on beaches and other sites, and people are happy to sit in cars all year round - and in all weathers.
Surfing	Local	There are few good surfing sites in the Solent due to the sheltered waters. The activity has been recorded at Hayling Island, and on the SW coast of the Isle of Wight.
Swimming	Local/Regional	This is a popular activity from the Region's bathing beaches during the summer.
Walking	Local	Surveys show that walking is the most regular and extensive recreational activity taking place around the Solent. Coastal sites are well used ranging from active rambling, through to dog walking and short strolls. Long distance footpaths - the

		Solent Way and the Isle of Wight Coast Path - exist on both sides of the Solent, running along the coastline for much of their length. Membership of the Ramblers Association is growing, and over half of the Hampshire members belong to coastal groups.
Water-skiing	Regional	Water-skiing is focused around a number of areas of water which have been designated for this activity. They include Redbridge, Wootton, Lee-on-the-Solent, Calshot, Thorness Bay and Langstone Harbour.
Wildfowling	Regional	Wildfowling takes place in the Region. Regulated wildfowling is carried out by five wildfowling clubs affiliated to the British Association for Shooting and Conservation.
Windsurfing	Regional/National	There are a number of important sites for Windsurfing, some of which are of national importance. There are few clubs, but high levels of informal use.
Yachting	National/ Intentional	Yachting is the Solent's premier activity, with well over 100 active clubs, and at least 100,000 participants. There are over 25,000 yachts berthed in harbour moorings and 24 marinas. An active race programme is co-ordinated by the clubs through the Solent Cruising and Racing Association. Cruising is very popular, in particular to harbours in the Western Solent. The Solent regularly hosts yachting events of international importance, such as Cowes Week, and the Whitbread Round the World Race. There are at least 500 event days per year, each with between 50 -1500 participating yachts.