

# Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Workshop: Coast and Marine Workshop – 16 January 2024. Stakeholder comments and conclusions.

## Key Headlines from Workshop Findings

1. Partnership working is essential to share knowledge, data, expertise and make the most of funding. There is lots of experience and ambition in the Solent for nature recovery, but it needs an organisation to coordinate and communicate work. In the Solent, the Solent Forum could take on this role.
2. We need to take a seascale approach to nature recovery, sites don't stand in isolation, they are connected across the terrestrial/coast/marine interface and the wider water environment. In the Solent, Blue Marine's Solent Seascape Project is taking this approach to nature recovery over the next five years.
3. Nature recovery has multiple benefits and this need to be set out clearly to the people that work and live in the Solent to get political and public support. The Isle of Wight Council has passed a ['Motion for the Ocean'](#) and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have been undertaking public engagement work through their Secrets of the Solent project and now the Solent Seascape project. The Solent Forum has been running the Solent Marine Sites Management scheme for over 20 years to address pressure from non-licensable activities.
4. In the Solent, nature recovery is already happening and many people that work there are comfortable with and used to working in partnership - sharing knowledge, expertise and resources. This is positive start in an area that is heavily used for commerce and recreation where habitats are under pressure.

## Introduction

As part of the engagement for the Local Nature Recovery Strategies, this workshop was organised by the Solent Forum on behalf of the Isle of Wight Council and Hampshire County Council who are the responsible authorities, along with West Sussex County Council, for the Solent coastline. It included key stakeholders, landowners, and community groups. It was held on 16 January 2024 at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton. It was coordinated and delivered by the Solent Forum in association with the Responsible Authorities, Natural England, Environment Agency and the Solent Seascape project. Please see appendix 2 for more detailed information on LNRS delivery.

This in person workshop was fully booked at a capacity of 60, attendees came from all around the Solent including industry, government agencies, Ministry of Defence, local and harbour authorities, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, charities, and non-government organisations (please see appendix 1). A series of short presentations was held and delegates were asked five questions to discuss in groups.

### Q1. What are the key issues facing the Solent in achieving successful nature recovery and how might they be overcome?

Delegates raised the issue of the importance of wider environmental conditions and the need to address these for recovery to be successful such as water quality, sedimentation, non-native species spread and recreational disturbance. The Solent is a heavily populated and well used area and there are many local demands on it and global and regional terrestrial drivers that influence it, such as nutrient import and climate change.

In the Solent there is a lack of available coastal land and land values are high. Much of the Solent shoreline is privately owned, identifying landowners and land and asset managers to source restoration sites can be complex. Identifying potential mitigation sites for developers in a strategy is helpful. Development is difficult to do if land for mitigation cannot be sourced including environmentally beneficial projects such as decarbonisation work which is essential to tackling climate change.

Restoration and recovery are long term challenges and we need to account for factors such as climate change and sea level rise when planning work to ensure it has longevity. It also means change to practices and behaviour and people have to be onboard with that. Organisations can have fragmented expertise and rapid staff turnover so partnership working is crucial for success.

Licenses and consents are still prohibitively expensive with no 'restoration' discounts. Monitoring costs can also be prohibitive, monitoring can be mediated by partnership working with further education using the student resource. Regulators could help with trials and pilots by waiving fees. Resourcing of government organisations is a key challenge. Processes need to be simplified so that things can happen quicker using the huge amount of local passion and expertise.

Restoration needs someone to lead across an area to actually make things happen, in the Solent this could be the Solent Seascape Project. It also needs to be undertaken over the larger scale i.e. landscape or seascape intervention rather than site specific.

We need people to report and record projects that are finished and successful. This helps to convince the public and politicians they are worthwhile. The Solent Seascape Project has produced two excellent videos on their work.

Communication is important to get the public and politicians onboard as is managing expectations. People can help with passive restoration by changing their behaviour. People also need to be encouraged to think long term. Volunteers are a great resource but need to be managed which is time consuming and satisfying the risk assessments for fieldwork can be difficult. Volunteers could prove a useful resource for monitoring of sites which is often lacking due to budget constraints.

**Q2. Is there any other mapping we need to produce a habitat map of the Solent for inclusion in the LNRS and what data is required behind this to represent habitats that support particular key species?**

Hampshire County Council will be producing an interactive online map for their habitat mapping, which will include coast. Defra are trialling a [LNRS Data Viewer](#).

The Solent Seascape Project will be producing a mapping portal that will include both coastal and marine habitats, this will be useful in the long term especially for marine data but there needs to be consideration of its long term legacy. It would be helpful if the MMO marine plan explorer could include local data in addition to national data sets.

Mapping needs to be accessible to all and data produced in standard formats so that it can be uploaded to different systems. Where mapping is not available, we need to use the best data that we have and also have a bank of local experts to ask.

There is a need to map habitat condition and condition assessment findings in addition to habitat location. Non-native species need to be mapped to monitor their extent and spread. We also need to record byelaws and management measures as data layers.

Designations were thought to be more useful for planning than to help manage public behaviour which is just as important an issue as controlling development. Suggestion to produce a data layer that shows where public use is impacting on areas.

Non designated sites are also important as they serve the designated sites, and it is useful to map SANGS, wildlife corridors, more informal sites and country parks maps for example. Broad scale designations fail to show key sites of importance for wildlife. There was a discussion regarding the designation terminology and how this can be confusing for the public. The term 'nature reserve' seems to be better understood by the public than SSSI for example, even though SSSI is in theory more protected. How can public understanding better match the designation requirements?

Many species are mobile and mapping them should concentrate on their breeding and feeding sites and migratory routes.

### Q3. What are the existing projects/initiatives in the Solent that can contribute to nature recovery?

One important aspect for delegates was having a [list of projects](#) that is held online for example by the Solent Forum. People undertake projects for a variety of reasons, but it is important that they can access and build on existing work, learn from each other and look to form partnerships.

Nature recovery should also be embedded into business as usual work in addition to specific restoration projects. This will help with recovery in the long term. Recovery works should also highlight the benefits to people in its outputs in addition to the intrinsic benefits for wildlife.

There is a need to take a wholescale approach to water management and connect coast and marine with the rivers and wetlands. Solent Forum staff sit on the relevant catchment partnerships for the Solent to bridge this gap.

### Q4. How do we identify future priorities and opportunities for nature recovery (habitats and species) in the Solent?

Delegates believe that we need to find our baseline for what we think is realistic for recovery in the Solent. What is acceptable for the environment in the light of existing recreational and commercial use? Portsmouth University's 'Sea the Value' project should be able to provide insight into what people value. How do we measure recovery, there may need to be different success indicators depending on the audience.

Delegates were shown a list of the key habitats and species in the Solent but felt that it wasn't helpful to pick out individual ones as people have different priorities and areas of interests depending on their role and remit. Some species are more visible and charismatic and they can be used to engage the public in the wider recovery debate. Keystone species are also important as they can be indicators for wider recovery.

Preserving what we already have should be our first priority. Next should be those habitats that are both in poor condition and under threat.

We need to better understand habitat connectivity across the terrestrial/intertidal/subtidal interface. With such a shortage of land in the Solent it may be better to identify sites that are available for restoration and look to enhance them rather than focus on individual habitats and species and searching for sites for them with the right environmental conditions. For any restoration on the coast

we need to build in how this connects to both the terrestrial and marine habitats. Passive restoration should be a key focus across the wider Solent, removing habitat pressures.

Delegates suggested a project hub, which has an overview over existing and future projects and funding opportunities.

#### Q5. What are the challenges to achieving these priorities?

Delegates queried how and if we can use net gain funding for passive restoration such as recreational disturbance management or to address wider environmental conditions.

As designations are feature based people felt we need to work wider than designation boundaries for habitat connectivity and to address wider environmental issues.

Delegates raised complexities and expense in the regulatory regime, sourcing and obtaining the consent of landowners and continuity of work due to political change. It was also noted that much of the legislation is about maintaining and improving the status quo but external factors like climate change will have a strong influence on what we can achieve. Nature needs time to recover once conditions are met so recovery work must be long term.

Some delegates noted the imbalance of nature recovery work across the Solent. For a variety of reasons, they felt there has been a focus on Langstone and Chichester Harbours and that there should also be a focus on the potential of the Western Solent, Portsmouth Harbour and the Isle of Wight. They also stated the need to work across the whole water environment to account for terrestrial drivers which impact the environmental conditions in the Solent.

The challenge of monitoring nature recovery work was discussed. This was both in terms of monitoring any nature recovery work happening and monitoring existing sites to check things were not worsening. With a lack of monitoring, often linked to lack of budget, behaviour in designated areas can be less than desirable as people believe they will not be challenged.

## Appendix 1: Summary Statistics and Workshop Attendees

60 people attended the workshop and could be broadly divided into: local authority (18), conservation organisation (6), central government/agency (e.g. Natural England, Environment Agency, MMO) (9), charities and NGO's (11) and private individuals/ landowners/ consultancies (6), Harbours (5), Academia (5). A full list of participants can be found below.

Sue Simmonite	ABP Southampton
Ian Boyd	Artecology
Cally Barnes	BCP Council
Matthew Phillips	Beaulieu Estate
Natalie Hands	Bird Aware Solent
Jenny Murray	Blue Marine Foundation
Juliette Scott	Blue Marine Foundation
Rick Stafford	Bournemouth University
Rachel Wylde	Carter Jonas - Managing Agent for The Crown Estate
Charlie Thompson	Channel Coastal Observatory
Jessica Vagg	Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Lucy Sheffield	Coastal Partners
Helen Butt	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry of Defence)
Rosie Horner	Defence Infrastructure Organisation / MOD
Paul Howe	Eastleigh Borough Council
Charlotte Lines	Environment Agency
Jackie Mellan	Environment Agency
Rhian Edwards	Environment Agency
Simon Kennedy	Fareham Borough Council
Mike Short	Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Jamie Marsh	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Timothy Ferrero	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Chris Lycett	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Thomas Marceau	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy)
Pete Durnell	Hampshire County Council
Jim Hobson	Hampshire County Council
Nicky Court	Hampshire County Council
Laura Luff	Hampshire County Council
Phil Fernandes	Hampshire County Council
Wolfgang Ritter	Hampshire County Council
Melissa Newton	Hampshire County Council
Laura McCulloch	Hampshire County Council
Jemima Phipps	Hampshire County Council
Tristan Norton	Havant Borough Council
Carolyn Herbert	Isle of Wight Council
James Brewer	Isle of Wight Council

Sue Hawley	Isle of Wight Estuaries Partnership
Meg Roberts	Langstone Harbour Board
Ryan Willegers	Lymington Harbour Commissioners
Kate Heath	Marine Management Organisation
James McClelland	Natural England
Jess Taylor	Natural England
Kenneth Johnstone	Natural England
Stephanie Evans	Natural England
Ian Barker	New Forest National Park Authority
Christine Sams	NOC
Rebekah Noakes	Project Seagrass
Alison Fowler	River Hamble Harbour Authority
Adam Taylor	RSPB
Wez Smith	RSPB
Fay Pisani	RSPB/Three Harbours
Kate Ansell	Solent Forum
Peter Barham	Solent Forum
Lindsay McCulloch	Southampton City Council
Hester Churchouse	Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Gordon Watson	University of Portsmouth
Prof Jasmin Godbold	University of Southampton
Keith Metcalf	WINGS Wildlife Heritage (WWH)

## Appendix 2 – Background to LNRS’ and the Preparation of the Hampshire LNRS

Underpinned by the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) and the Environment Act (2021), Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new system of plans for nature recovery covering the whole of England. They are a key mechanism for planning and delivering the National Nature Recovery Network. The outputs to Defra will consist of a habitat map and a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. This includes prioritisation based on spatial factors and wider public benefits.

Hampshire County Council (as the Responsible Authority) convened a series of stakeholder engagement events, both online and in-person, from January to March 2024. These workshops were either aligned to the National Character Areas – e.g. North Hampshire, New Forest, Central Chalk, or followed more generic or cross cutting themes – e.g. Woodlands, Rivers & Wetlands, Access to Nature & Health/Wellbeing, and Species Recovery.

**Objectives** of the LNRS stakeholder workshops were to:

- To build mutual understanding of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, how the Hampshire LNRS is being developed and where these workshops fit in.
- To share views and data on opportunities, challenges and priorities for nature recovery, and potential mechanisms for delivery.
- To share the proposed next steps in development of the Hampshire LNRS and further opportunities to be involved.

Details of the Isle of Wight LNRS development can be found on their [Island Nature site](#).