



## Horizon Scanning Report

2023

### Background

The Solent Forum operates within a [5-year Business Plan](#), currently we are working within the 2020 to 2025 Plan. The Plan recognises that each year the Solent Forum needs to respond to emerging issues of importance to its members. To do this, a horizon scanning process takes place annually. Horizon scanning helps identify a range of key coastal and marine issues, events, consultations and plans, to help members stay informed and solve challenges; it also seeks to understand any organisational changes that Solent Forum members may need to consider in response to new challenges.

The Solent Forum also conducts an [Annual Members Survey](#). A short evaluation of this report is shown at the end of this document. This survey helps inform us of Members' knowledge of coastal and marine issues, consultations and plans to feed into our horizon scanning.

### Horizon Scanning

This horizon scanning paper is put together by taking responses from the Members' Survey and the knowledge of the Solent Forum team at the time of writing over a range of sectors. It summarises key policy development and events taking place over the year; it does not review every project or initiative in the Solent.

The following policy areas are covered:

- Government Direction and Policy
- Coastal and Marine Management
- Harbours and Shipping
- Cultural and Heritage
- Water Quality and Catchment Management
- Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Habitats and Species
- Marine Industry
- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
- Recreation

### Government Direction and Policy

The [Government's 25 Year Environment Plan](#) continues to shape national, coastal and marine policy, revisions have been made as part of the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#). Progress has been made on:

- *Improving Nature* - following COP15 outcomes to adopt the Global Biodiversity Framework, the creation of further Landscape Recovery projects, implement Environment Act 2021 including Biodiversity Net Gain

- *Improving environmental quality* – improve air quality by cutting overall air pollution and reducing ammonia emissions, improve water quality through reduction of nutrient pollution and Landscape Recovery projects, manage exposure to chemicals and pesticides
- *Improving our use of resources* – create better habits to achieve circular and sustainable economy
- *Improving our mitigation of climate change* – update and implement current climate actions plans, invest in improving coastal and flood defences
- *Improving our biosecurity* – deliver 5-year plan of 2023 Plant Biosecurity Strategy for GB
- *Improving the beauty of nature* - commitment to create opportunities for everyone to live closer to nature, continue delivering England Coast Path and Coast to Coast National Trail

The government launched a new [maritime security strategy](#) in August 2022, aiming to enhance maritime technology, security and innovation while reducing environmental damage. The 5-year strategy is set out to address modern issues such as polluting practices and illegal fishing by addressing environmental damage as a maritime security concern. The strategy includes seabed mapping which underpins all maritime sectors.

The government recommended to make [sustainable urban drainage systems](#) (SuDS) mandatory for new developments in England. The new approach to drainage will ensure sustainable drainage systems are designed to reduce the impact of rainfall on new developments by using features such as soakaways, grassed areas, permeable surfaces and wetlands. This reduces the overall amount of water that ends up in the sewers and storm overflow discharges. Implementation of this new approach will be expected during 2024.

Government has announced a [new legal duty on water companies](#) in England to upgrade wastewater treatment works by 2030 in 'nutrient neutrality' areas to the highest achievable technological levels. A new [Nutrient Mitigation Scheme](#) was established by Natural England, which allows Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) to grant planning permission for new developments in areas with nutrient pollution issues.

## Coastal and Marine Management

Natural England highlighted priorities 2022-2023 relevant to marine and coast:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-england-action-plan-2022-to-2023/natural-england-action-plan-2022-to-2023--2>

1. Expand the Nature Recovery Network and develop up to 50 Local Nature Recovery Strategies
2. Improve conditions of marine protected areas through working in local and national partnerships, strengthen Marine Protected Area network and pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas
3. Complete the England Sea Bird Strategy with a technical report and recommendations to Defra
4. Expand knowledge of 'ReMEDIES' project internally and externally on seagrass restoration, carbon storage and improving existing habitats
5. Help deliver the new Fisheries Management Plans and an ecosystem approach to fisheries
6. Provide environmental advice to inform fisheries bylaws for Marine Protected Areas

In May 2023, the MMO started reviewing marine plan areas for their three year-progress reports. This includes a review of the South Inshore and South Offshore Marine Plan. They published their [2030 Strategic Plan](#) in November 2022.

The [Coastal Landfill Working Group](#) published a report on coastal landfill in November 2022 based on a local authority survey. Overall, 195 coastal landfill sites have been identified across 24 local authorities, which are either at risk of tidal flooding, erosion or both. 67% of coastal landfill sites have been at risk from tidal flooding or erosion in the past, and a third of all coastal landfill sites having no defence measures to protect them from the sea. Furthermore, 75% of the coastal landfills are adjacent to at least one environmentally designated feature.

The Isle of Wight Council passed the [Motion for the Ocean](#) declaration in July 2023. The Motion for the Ocean declaration helps local authorities to realise their part in creating clean, healthy and productive oceans including ways on how they can make a difference. Through the declaration the Isle of Wight Council pledges to:

- ensure the Climate and Environment Board receives regular updates as part of its ongoing work on actions and projects that will assist ocean recovery around the Island;
- embed ocean recovery in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets and approaches to decisions by the council, particularly in planning, regeneration, skills and economic policy;
- promote close working between the council and all relevant partners with interests and responsibilities relating to the waters around us;
- ensure the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy strives to support ocean recovery;
- through local schools and colleges, seek to grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship.

## Harbours and Shipping

Associated British Ports (ABP) launched their [Ready for Tomorrow](#) Sustainability Strategy in February 2023. The strategy is the starting point for ABP to decarbonise their operations and commercial infrastructure projects. ABP is planning on investing £2bn to become a more sustainable business and achieve net-zero by 2040.

ABP have published an update of their Air Quality Strategy [Cleaner Air for Southampton](#) at the end of 2022. The update outlines the progress ABP and companies operating within the port as well as an action plan to improve air quality even further in the future.

Estudio Cactus, in cooperation with Portsmouth International Port, has been awarded £100,000 to trial its health, safety, security and environment software to provide operators with real-time information to improve resource management. This is one of nine projects that have been awarded a total of £1.2 million by the UK government through [Connected Places Catapult's first accelerator programme as part of the Freight Innovation Fund](#).

Portsmouth Port has installed 2660 solar panels as part of their ambition to become the first net carbon neutral UK port by 2030 and the first zero emission port by 2050. A third of the panels were switched on in October 2022 with the rest commissioned in January 2023. The solar panels are estimated to provide 35% of the electricity of the port. A further 1.5-megawatt hour battery was installed. Both the solar panels and battery are estimated to provide 98% of the port's electricity in peak conditions. The port also welcomed a new environmental and sustainability officer at the end of 2022.

## Cultural and Heritage

Two new wrecks were found on the Isle of Wight Shingles Bank and designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act. These wrecks include a 17<sup>th</sup> century armed ship (NW 68) and a 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century merchant vessel (NW 96).

More than eight thousand artefacts from the 18<sup>th</sup> century HMS Invincible wreck in the Solent have been gifted to the National Museum of the Royal Navy, to be preserved, curated and displayed. The artefacts give a unique insight into the Royal Navy just before Nelson joined.

The year 2023 is the [Year of the Coast](#). This initiative is for everyone living, working and involved with the coast to raise awareness of our coastline and inspire new audiences to love, visit and protect our coastline. There are various events taking place around the Solent which can be found in the [Events Calendar](#).

## Water Quality and Catchment Management

Water companies who pollute the environment face [new civil penalties](#) by 1,000-fold, from £250,000 to up to £250 million.

In August 2022, Defra published their [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) to set targets for water companies to reduce and improve their overflow discharges by 2050. Defra was consulting until 24 July 2023 to potentially expand the areas covered by the plan and to develop an ecological standard for coastal and estuarine waters.

Southern Water published its first [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan](#) (DWMP) in June 2023. The DWMP is a long-term plan (minimum 25 years) which informs the investments needed to update wastewater and drainage systems. The plan aims to reduce storm overflows, flooding and pollution to protect and improve the water environment for current and future generations.

Southern Water started working on a new underground storm shaft that will hold more storm water in Woolston Wastewater Treatment Works in January 2023. This is part of their plans to protect the environment and [improve water quality in Southampton](#), having invested £13m. The underground storm shaft will contain five million litres of water, which will be treated before going back into Southampton water. The construction works are aiming to finish in autumn 2024. Further plans by Southern Water include a [£8m investment in Ashlett Creek Fawley Wastewater Treatment Works](#). This includes building a new storm tank and increasing the existing storm storage capacity to improve water quality, reduce storm overflows and plan for future growth.

Southern Water have a Clean River and Sea Taskforce [Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force](#) ([southernwater.co.uk](https://southernwater.co.uk)) and this includes a number of Pathfinder Projects including one at Sandown on the Isle of Wight. They acknowledge that they need to reduce storm overflow releases, and they are looking at innovative solutions to deliver infrastructure that's more resilient and adaptable. The Sandown catchment has had many storm overflows and is made up of eight sub-catchments and covers more than 90% of the population of the Isle of Wight. Different solutions are being trialled including enhanced wastewater pumping station control, surface water removal and storage solutions (uniquely using water butts installed in residential properties).

The Marine Conservation Society's [Great British Beach Clean report 2022](#) revealed a decrease of litter found on UK beaches by 11%. Plastic and polystyrene continue to account for the largest proportion of litter at 81.5%. The next Great British Beach Clean will take place between 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023. More information can be found on the MCS [website](#).

The Environment Agency published their updated [River Basin Management Plans](#) (RBMP). The Solent is part of the [South East River Basin District](#) (RBD). As per Water Environment Regulations, the RBMPs need to be updated every 6 years, the most recently updated RBMPs having been published in December 2022. With the updated RBMPs a set of Measures have been published, which identified the focus areas for delivery by 2027. Within the Estuaries and Coasts sector one management measures is:

- A legal target that all waterbodies should be in Good Ecological and Chemical Status by 2027

Other potential measures which can be considered in the Estuaries and Coasts sector, can be split into themes including:

- Water quality
- Restoration
- Naturalness and Nature-based Solutions
- Sediment Management
- Ecosystem Services
- Funding
- Fisheries
- Citizen Science and Education
- Strategic Co-ordination

The RBMPs will also help achieve the [Government's 25 Year Environment Plan](#).

Hayling Islands Beachlands, Sandown and West Wittering beaches were all awarded the Blue Flag and Seaside Award for 2023. The [Blue Flag](#) is one of the world's most recognised voluntary awards for beaches, marinas and sustainable tourism boats which meet environmental, educational, safety and accessibility criteria. The Seaside Award is presented to the best beaches in England and celebrates the quality and diversity of our coastline.

The Solent Forum [Clean Solent Shores and Seas](#) (CSSS) Hub continues to capture significant issues regarding water quality initiatives in the Solent. This covers initiatives including preventing plastics pollution in the Itchen Estuary; Southern Water's Pathfinder Project

The Solent Plastics Pollution Hub published their first [Annual Report 2022/23](#). The report recorded 21 active litter picking groups around the Solent, with 64 litter picking events throughout the year. Over 1500 people have used the [online resources](#) provided.

## Fisheries and Aquaculture

In August 2022, the government published its [bycatch mitigation initiative](#) to outline their approach in minimising and potentially eliminating bycatch of sensitive marine species.

[Catchwise](#) is a new survey being introduced across England and Wales in 2023 and 2024. The survey will collect data from sea anglers and charter boats to understand and improve the recognition of sea angling's value to coastal communities and inform fisheries management decisions accurately.

The [UK Gear Forum](#) was launched to create engagement between stakeholders by advancing gear innovations and drive sustainability in fishing.

Southern IFCA is consulting on a [Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023](#), banning the use of bottom towed fishing gear in prohibited areas.

Defra is developing new [Fisheries Management Plans](#) (FMP) under The Fisheries Act 2020. The current proposed FMPs include king scallop, whelk, crab/lobster, southern North Sea and Eastern Channel flatfish, bass and Channel demersal non-quota species. Public consultations are running until 1/10/2023 to allow stakeholders the opportunity to offer their views and opinion on the proposed measures and policies within each FMP.

[Angling for Sustainability](#) is a partnership focused on environmental sustainability of the recreational angling sector and creates a bigger voice for the sector in fisheries management plans. The partnership

aims to collect data in Dorset and the Solent. The data collection in the Solent will focus on studying the habitat use, migration patterns, and site fidelity of elasmobranch species like tope, starry smooth-hound, and undulate ray in the Solent area. The project started in January 2023 in Dorset and will begin collecting data in the Solent Area in autumn 2023.

## Habitats and Species

From November 2023, 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will be required from developers across England for new housing, industrial or commercial developments, this applies to intertidal development. Small sites will require 10% BNG from April 2024.

Following the mandatory requirement for BNG, a consultation was launched by Defra in 2022, to explore Marine Net Gain (MNG). A [Summary of responses](#) have been published.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) will be locally developed spatial plans which identify priorities and opportunities for enhancing the natural environment down to the MLWM. Three strategies are relevant to the Solent; Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and West Sussex.

The [Solent Seascape Project](#) (SSP) launched in December 2022, aiming to restore and protect at least 30% of the Solent's seascape. The project is the first of its kind in the UK and will run over a 5-year period, working with stakeholders, communities, regulators and the government. The aim is to restore 8ha of saltmarsh, 7ha of seagrass, 4ha of oysters, and 10 breeding seabird nesting sites. The SSP in partnership with stakeholders will also produce a Solent Recovery Plan which will look at removing passive pressures affecting the condition of the Solent and on the Solent Marine Sites (SEMS). The Solent Forum are chairing the working group that guides this and this will be a key project which will map pressures, in particular of activities, on the Solent and agree management measures to remove those pressures.

The Blue Marine Foundation built the first oyster restoration reef in June 2022 in Langstone Harbour with 36,000 oysters using 100 volunteers. On 31 March 2023 the foundation was laid for the largest oyster restoration reef in the Solent covering a seabed area of 2,500 square meters in the River Hamble for 30,000 oysters. Thousands of oysters are also to be reintroduced at Cowes with common oysters hung in baskets beneath pontoons. The baskets and initial oyster stock were funded by Cowes Harbour Commissioners.

Chichester Harbour Protection and Recovery of Nature (CHaPRoN) has published its first [Annual Review](#). The CHaPRoN project aims to protect and restore nature within Chichester Harbour with the annual report giving an update of the 8 Focus Areas set out by the partnership. The review also gives an overview of the priority areas going forward.

The Three Harbours Project is a jointly funded project by Southern Water and the RSPB, working across the internationally important habitats of Chichester, Langstone and Pagham harbour. The project aims to develop a landscape scale recovery strategy to strengthen restoration work. Southern Water are investing £72 million into the Three Harbours area to treat more wastewater, reduce storm overflows and further reduce nutrients from the wastewater treatment works entering the harbours.

In April 2023, the [Solent to Sussex Bay Restoration Inventory](#) was published, being the first map to bring all restoration projects in the area together. The inventory is composed of:

1. planned, in progress and completed applied restoration and research projects across the Solent to Sussex Bay region to help interested stakeholders understand how their work aligns with other projects in the area

2. a directory of organisations and individuals actively involved in seascape restoration in Solent to Sussex Bay including a brief outline of their research and/or practical focus. This will help interested stakeholders to identify potential project partners for future collaboration

The Solent Forum has been working in partnership with APEM Ltd, Natural England and other stakeholders to create [Solent Biosecurity Planning](#). Biosecurity workshops were held in March and June 2023 with relevant stakeholders to create Biosecurity Pathways and Action Plans to minimise the spread of marine invasive species. The finalised plans will be launched at the Solent Forum meeting on 11 October 2023.

The [SEMS Annual Survey Report 2023](#) has been published.

## Marine Industry

The [30MV Project](#) from Perpetuus Tidal Energy Centre (PTEC) of the Isle of Wight has entered its 20-year seabed lease from the Crown Estate in December 2022. This renewable energy project, based on tidal energy, has reached the final stages of development before construction can commence.

The [Solent Cluster](#) is a local cross-sector collaboration of international organisations. It includes different stakeholders with expertise in carbon capture and storage and hydrogen technology. Decarbonisation sits at the heart Solent LEP's economic strategy for the Solent and the creation of The Cluster will sit alongside other ambitions to pioneer approaches to climate change adaptation and decarbonization.

## Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management

The Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnerships (MCCIP) has published a paper on [Climate change impacts on coastal flooding relevant to the UK and Ireland](#). It highlights more frequent extreme water levels through sea-level rise, with a decline in marine ecosystems affected by sea-level rise and coastal squeeze. Future predictions see an increase in both extreme water levels and loss of marine ecosystems.

The Environment Agency's [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#) (FCERM) sets out what needs to be done by risk management authorities involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management for the benefit of people and places. Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) are used for coastal adaptation and provide a sustainable management approach for each stretch of the coastline. The Solent sits within the [North Solent SMP](#) and the [IoW SMP](#), both of which were [updated in 2022](#).

Coastal Partners have published their [Partnership Report](#), giving an overview of the work happening in the Solent, including the various Coastal Defence Schemes. Progress has been made across the various FCERM in studying and improving coastal defences. A new approach in understanding coastal processes using tracer pebbles has been deployed, delivering a greater understanding of sediment movements along the coast. In the coming year Coastal Partners hope to start working on a 'Chichester Harbour Environmental, Adaptation and Investment Strategy; update the Solent Dynamic Coast Project Data for the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) region (in line with latest sea level rise); develop a scope for a Solent Wide Coastal Grazing Marsh Study; consult with strategy bodies on the Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy.

The [Hurst Spit to Lymington](#) strategy explores a sustainable future for the region in terms of flooding and coastal erosion risk management. The aim is to finish the strategy by the end of 2024 to protect the region over the next 100 years until 2124.

## Recreation

The [2022 Review of Studland Bay's Voluntary No Anchor Zone](#) has been published by the MMO. The voluntary no anchor zone was introduced in 2021 applying management measures to ensure that anchoring over seagrass beds in Studland Bay MCZ did not undermine its conservation objectives. The voluntary no anchor zone is a new management technique for marine non-licensable activities.

[The Merchant Shipping \(Watercraft\) Order](#) came into force on 31 March 2023 which enables relevant agencies more powers to prosecute people for the dangerous misuse of watercraft. The Hampshire Marine Unit will work alongside partner agencies including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Harbourmasters to educate, enforce and prosecute those operating powered watercraft and vessels in a reckless, dangerous or inappropriate manner.

Bird Aware Solent published their [2023 Strategy Review](#) in March of this year showing the housing, bird and bird incident numbers as well as the effectiveness and lessons learnt over the first 5 years of the project. The review revealed a 4.3% increase in the housing along the Solent compared to 2016 and a 26% visitor increase in relation to housing.

The delivery of the England Coastal Path has made advances. The nearly 52-mile walking route from [Calshot to Portsmouth](#) opened in August 2022.

Buckler's Hard Yacht Harbour has won Marina of the Year in the British Yachting Awards 2022, with the Beaulieu River marina voted as the best place for sailors to call home.

Following the growth in paddle sports, British Canoeing has produced the [Paddlers' Code](#) to share guidance on how to enjoy our coasts and waterways responsibly. The Code has been developed with Natural England and reflects their work with the [Countryside Code](#).

The [Green Blue Boating Pledge](#) is a new way for all boat users to show their commitment to protecting and respecting the environment. Launched at the Southampton International Boat Show in September 2022, it has been created for boat users to actively declare their commitment to following sustainable boating practices. The Green Blue hope the Pledge will help raise awareness of important environmental issues, such as water pollution, and will inspire boat users to learn more about what they can do to lower their impact whilst on water.

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) have released their '[Together on Water](#)' five year strategic plan set against a longer term vision. The strategy has a protecting the environment section.



## Annual Members Survey and Solent Forum Work Programme

The 2023 survey shows members' key areas of work were recorded as follows, in rank order:

1. Joint water quality and catchment management, habitat and species
2. Joint cultural and heritage, coastal settlements and transport, ports, harbours and shipping
3. Flood and coastal erosion risk management
4. Fisheries and aquaculture
5. Marine industry

Members were specifically asked if there were any areas of your work where they would like to develop partnership working with others in the Solent. This list will be included on the Solent Forum website for [Partnership Working Opportunities 2023](#). Check Kate has put this up.

They include:

- Closer relationships with academic bodies to help undertake environmental research.
- Landowners and farmers - support sustainable coastal management and habitat restoration
- Assessing the risk of restoration success
- Local authorities/Lead Local Flood Authorities becoming SuDS Approval Bodies, mechanisms, costs and implications.
- The Solent Seascape Project (SSP) aims to extend our "umbrella" to include MANY more Solent based organisations and businesses in our work.
- Recreational disturbance guidance
- There are a significant number of new and developing partnerships, so care needs to be taken to avoid duplication of efforts, etc.
- Working with the Channel Coastal Observatory <https://coastalmonitoring.org/>
- Diversify and improve data and information access
- Ocean literacy – from schools to the general public
- Upskilling for marine science, engineering and technology careers
- Decarbonisation of the marine sector
- Water quality sensing technologies
- Developing a regional narrative around the foundational importance of marine science to the maritime industry