Solent News

The newsletter of the Solent Forum

Issue 56: Summer 2024

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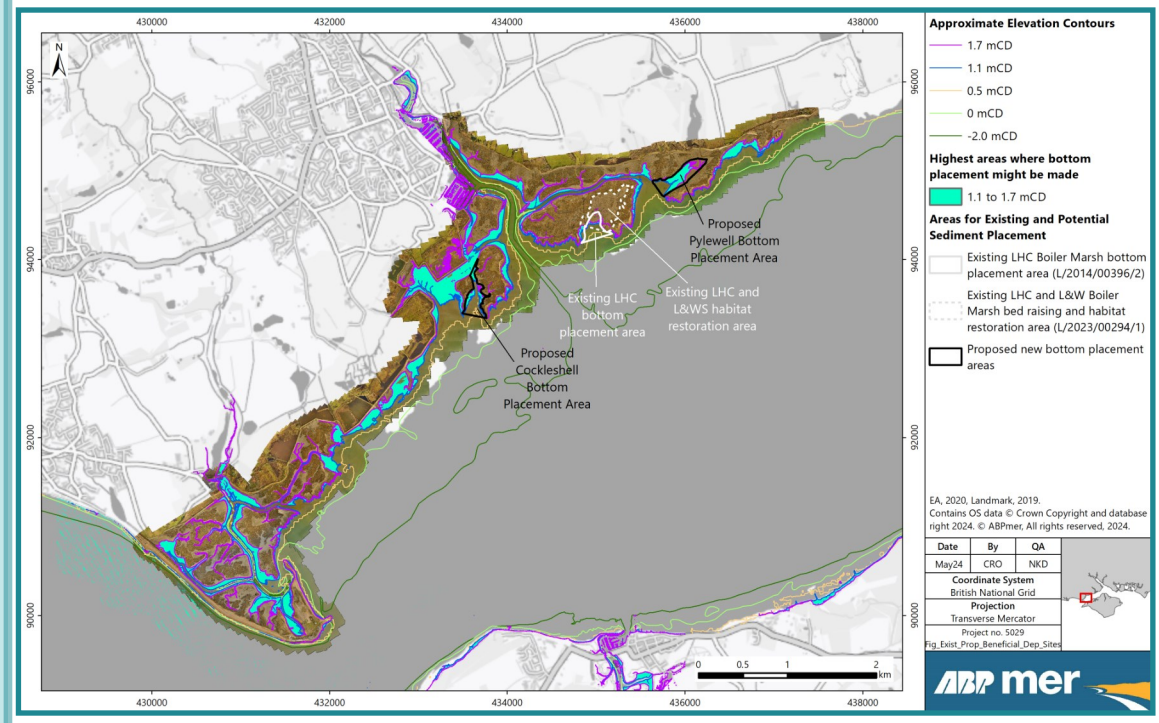
BUDs Solent Phase 3: Marine Licence Application Submitted



Location of existing and proposed placement sites for BUDs Solent 3. Image © ABPmer

A marine licence application to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will seek permission for the beneficial placement of dredge sediment at two sites close to the Lymington saltmarshes in the western Solent. It is intended that these two sites will become officially licensed disposal locations, that can be used as and when suitable dredge materials become available from a range of appropriate local sources.

This marine licence application is an outcome of Phase 3 of the Solent Forum partnership's 'Beneficial Use of Dredge Sediment in the Solent' (BUDs Solent) project. This is being undertaken to find ways of beneficially using some of the large amounts of sediment that are dredged from harbours and navigation channels in the Solent each year.

Placement of dredge sediment at these two locations will help to slow or stall the ongoing decline of intertidal habitats in the outer Lymington Estuary. It will also ensure that a greater proportion of the dredge resource in the Solent is retained within the nearshore sedimentary system and is not lost through placement at existing offshore disposal sites.

It is acknowledged that achieving this goal requires some major changes to established practices and the use of more collaborative and strategic ways of thinking and operating. The BUDs Solent project is seeking to show how this can be done to manage and make the best use of dredge sediment resources.

A disposal site characterisation assessment, that supports the marine licence application, is now available to view on the Solent Forum website along with background information on the project. The Forum will report on the results of the application when known, convene the project group, publish a final report summarising phase 3 and outline next steps.

Find out more about BUDs Solent at: Solent Forum - Beneficial Use of Dredging in the Solent Project.

News from the Forum

Chairman's Column

Peter Barham

At the time of writing this column, we are still in the depths of the run up to the General Election. This reminded me that some months ago I went to a meeting organised by Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL) to hear what the three main parties had to say about the next Parliament. All three spoke briefly and made reference to their concerns about the environment, but all left before any questions could be asked. While this was disappointing, apart from various references to water companies and sewage discharges, there was very little in any of the statements made by them regarding the environment generally.

This theme seems to have continued through the current hustings. All the main parties recognise the importance of meeting net zero by 2050, and this target must remain a serious and achievable ambition, but what seems to be forgotten, or at least not mentioned, is that the target is also accompanied by a biodiversity crisis and the two must go hand in hand if we are truly to do justice to the marine environment. What is really important is that combining actions to address both these crises is recognised across the whole range of people and organisations concerned about the future of the sea. While conservation bodies have rightly made this point very strongly, I have been incredibly impressed by the way in which all marine industries have also publicly stated their commitment to nature recovery as part of any developments they undertake at the coast or in the sea.

It seems to me, therefore, that the new government (whatever its political stance) has a massive opportunity to take actions which make real and significant contributions to providing clean energy, but which also address the conservation failures of the past. What will help this immensely, is if the new government realises that all this will be best done by helping people to work together in partnership to deliver agreed targets for restoration as well as renewable energy, and that they do not impose unnecessary and expensive bureaucracy in the process. What we need more than anything is a planned approach to meeting all the needs of the marine environment, while addressing energy needs. We all need to be involved in this and Solent Forum will do its best to make sure that all of us who are interested in the well-being of the Solent have a voice in setting agreed and challenging targets.

Business Planning 2025 to 2030

Over the course of 2024 and into early 2025, we will be preparing the Forum's next five year business plan. This will set the framework for what the Forum does and how we will do it. Our business plan is supplemented by our Annual Reports that highlight our achievements each year and set out the work programme for the following year.

We would like to have input from all our members as we develop this document. We will be sending out a survey and please do take the time to respond to this and give us your views. The findings from this will be presented to members at our next Solent Forum meeting on 16 October in Portsmouth.

Solent Plastics Pollution Hub

Our Solent Plastics Pollution (SPP) hub is now into its second year and we have prepared our second annual review.

This hub collates and shares information on plastics and litter throughout the Solent with a focus on the beach clean work that is done by local community groups.

Our second year data shows:

- There are 21 litter picking groups around the Solent
- During 2023/4 we recorded 62 Solent litter picking events
- We posted 155 times on our Facebook page to share information
- We had 13,000 visits to our website resource pages

If you undertake beach clean events around the Solent we would love to hear from you and link to your work. Please email us at: solentforum@hants.gov.uk.

News from the Forum

Professor Mike Clark Bursary Awards

One of the aims of the Solent Forum is to further the research knowledge and evidence base of the Solent. To assist this aim, the Forum has a bursary Scheme where funding of up to £300 per project is available to help support dissertations undertaken by both undergraduate and graduate students. The award is named in honour of Professor Mike Clark, the second chairman of the Forum. As part of the award, the winners also have an opportunity to give a short presentation at a Solent Forum meeting and have their research publicised to the Solent's coastal community.

For 2024, we have made three awards:

- Madeleine Maidment, University of Portsmouth. A critical evaluation of the most effective distribution of site visits for mitigating recreational disturbance: A case study of the Bird Aware Solent strategy.
- Mia Tappin, University of Portsmouth. Enhancing natural biodiversity on the eastern sea defence through translocation of algae.
- Katherine Archer, University of Portsmouth. Analysis of oyster larvae (Ostrea edulis) on a restored reef within the Solent.

The next round of awards will be advertised in May 2025. Our 2023 bursary award winner will present at our Autumn 2024 Forum meeting.

Solent Marine Sites and the Natural Environment Group

The Solent Forum provides the secretariat for the Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) and Natural Environment Group (NEG). In spring 2024, the relevant authorities around the Solent were surveyed on how they think non-licensable activities are changing and whether they are impacting on designated sites. The table shows those activities that people are most concerned about.

At its April 2024 meeting, NEG evaluated project submissions and confirmed that it will fund two projects in 2024/5.

- Project 'Portunus' will explore and record the underwater habitats of Langstone and Chichester Harbours via diver surveys conducted by Southsea Sub-Aqua Club.
- A University of Portsmouth project will look at European starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) and will assess their impact on the intertidal mudflats of Langstone Harbour and how they may impact on wading species.

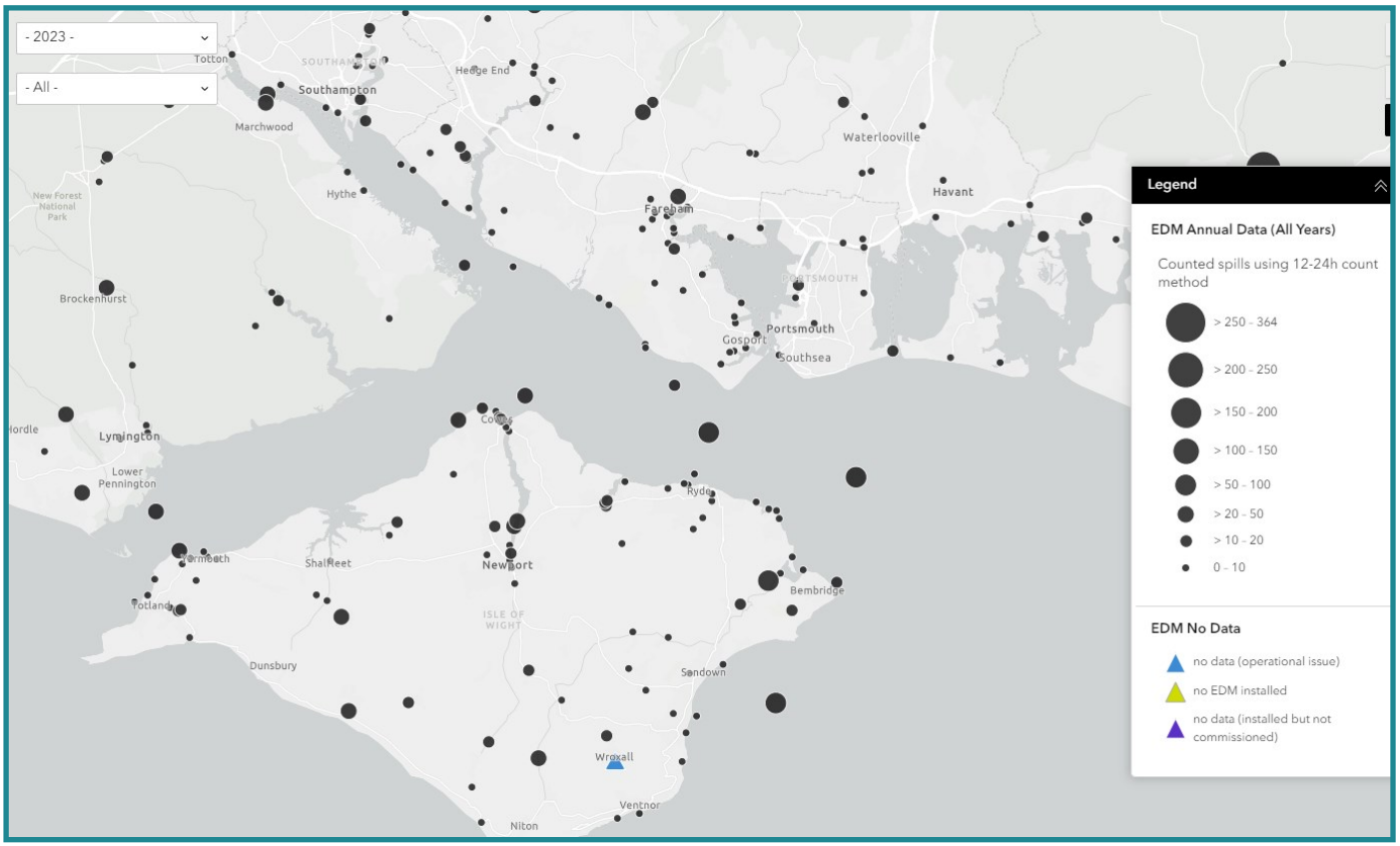
Solent Marine Sites publications are available on the SEMS website and further information on the Natural Environment Group is available via the NEG directory.

Non-Licensable Activities Impacting on Designated Sites

Activity	Yes	No	Total Responses	Percent 'yes'	Percent 'no'
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	12	5	17	71%	29%
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	10	5	15	67%	33%
Littering and removal of litter	13	9	22	59%	41%
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	8	10	18	44%	56%
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	7	10	17	41%	59%
General Beach Recreation	6	10	16	38%	63%
Mooring and Anchoring	6	11	17	35%	65%
Grazing and Foraging	2	5	7	29%	71%
Fishing (shore-based activities)	5	14	19	26%	74%
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	4	13	17	24%	76%
Recreation - light aircraft	2	9	11	18%	82%
Accidental vessel discharges/ emissions including oil spill and clean-up	3	15	18	17%	83%
Wildfowling	1	7	8	13%	88%
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	2	15	17	12%	88%
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	12	13	8%	92%
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	1	14	15	7%	93%

Water Quality

Storm Overflow Event Duration Monitoring for 2023



The Environment Agency has published its Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data for 2023 showing the frequency and duration of spills from storm overflows in England. In 2023, water companies completed the installation of spill monitors at every storm overflow in England. The data for 2023 shows a fifty four percent increase in the number of sewage spills compared to 2022, and a thirteen percent increase compared to 2020. The increase in spills compared to 2022 is partly because 2023 was named by the Met Office as the sixth wettest year since its records began in 1836. Heavy rainfall does not affect water companies' responsibility to manage storm overflows in line with legal requirements.

Detecting Norovirus in Oysters

Primerdesign, an Eastleigh-based supplier of real-time PCR kits and reagents, has launched the 'genesig Easy_oys Detection Kit' for norovirus in oysters.

The kit enables 'rapid and reliable' onsite detection of norovirus pathogens in oyster tissue.

It can be used to identify contamination points across the production line, helping to reduce public health risk and minimise shellfish farm closures.

Norovirus is a major cause of viral gastroenteritis, with data from the Food Standards Agency showing that foodborne transmission is responsible for an estimated sixteen per cent of cases in the UK.

Human sewage discharge around oyster beds results in bio-accumulation of the virus in their digestive glands, with more than 500 genome copies per gram of norovirus GI / GII presenting a major risk of infection when consumed by humans. Its testing kit, developed in collaboration with oyster farmers and the Shellfish Association of Great Britain, delivers results within four hours.

Water Quality

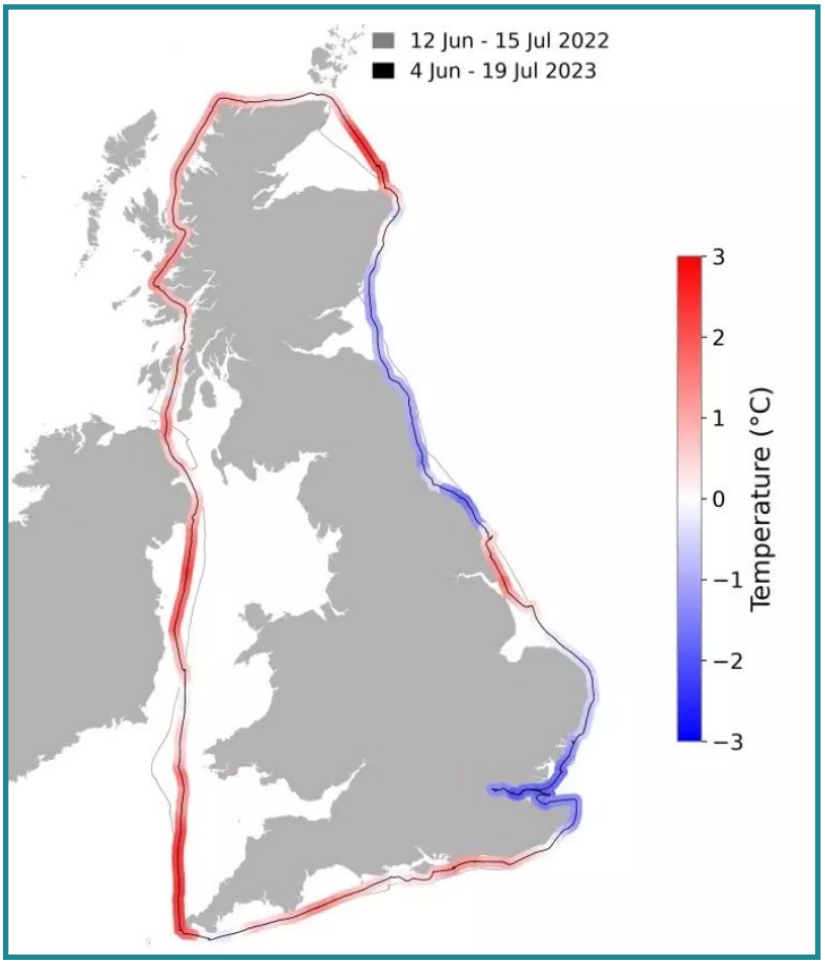
GB Row Challenge Collecting Environmental Data

Sea surface temperature data collected by an all-female crew of rowers as they raced around Great Britain last summer has found that UK coastal seas were on average 0.39 degrees Celsius warmer in 2023, compared to 2022.

Some areas experienced even more substantial warming, with local increases exceeding two degrees Celsius in the Celtic and Irish Seas, and the northern North Sea.

GB Row Challenge is a 2,000-mile rowing challenge around coastline, where teams collect ocean data, which is analysed by scientists at the University of Portsmouth. The University are also currently analysing data on microplastics, biodiversity, noise pollution and salinity from the 2023 race, to produce an ocean pollution and biodiversity map of Great Britain's coastline.

Seawater temperature is usually monitored in UK coastal waters via a network of oceanography buoys carrying sensors, or are estimated from satellite data. The GB Row rudder sensor physically analysed seawater temperature every few minutes, building a ground truthed dataset spanning the entire UK coastline. See the temperature report and the biodiversity report.



Anti-fouling Shipping Regulations

Ecological protections at sea are being strengthened by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) through updated regulations governing anti-fouling systems on ships. The new UK legislation implements an international convention prohibiting the use of cybutryne in marine paints, which has been proven harmful to marine flora and fauna, working its way into the food chain.

It came into force on 10 May 2024, and the regulations apply to all UK flagged ships, wherever they sail, and ships flagged to other countries while in UK or controlled waters. It also maintains an existing ban on other organotin compounds.

The obligation is being formally adopted into the Merchant Shipping (Anti-Fouling Systems) Regulations 2024 by the MCA.

Review of WFD Regulations and RBMPs

As part of its role to monitor how environmental laws are working in practice, the OEP has carried out a review of the key legislation on water quality (the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations for England). It looked at how it is being implemented by Defra and the Environment Agency through River Basin Management Planning (RBMP).

A report assessed whether the government's plans to improve England's rivers, lakes and coastal waters are likely to be effective enough to achieve the target to have seventy seven percent in Good Ecological Status or Potential by 2027, the environmental objectives set in the regulations.

The report found that the government and the Environment Agency are currently not on track to meet the environmental objectives. The OEP's worst case assessment would see just twenty one percent of surface waters in a Good Ecological state by 2027, representing only a five percent improvement on the current situation.

Fisheries & Aquaculture

Harbour Board Improves Vessel Maintenance Services

A recent £311,000 investment by Langstone Harbour Board and Defra is poised to make waves in the local fishing industry. After a successful application to the UK Seafood Fund: Seafood Scheme, the investment aims to bolster the local seafood sector by increasing port capabilities and helping to improve resilience for small scale fishing fleets.

Work being undertaken includes:

- Seven new commercial grade moorings have been obtained and are already providing secure docking for fishing vessels.
- The Eastney pontoon has undergone significant improvements, ensuring better facilities for fishers as they land their catch.
- A state-of-the-art slipway trailer and telehandler are ready for use. These tools will streamline vessel maintenance, allowing essential repairs and upkeep for vessels weighing up to 47 tonnes.

The Harbour Board anticipate that the facility will be fully operational by early July. Fishers can now focus on their vital work, knowing Langstone Harbour is equipped to support their efforts.

For further enquiries, contact the Harbour Office at admin@langtoneharbour.org.uk or call 02392 463419.

Competitive Angling as a Scientific Tool

Photo © University of Portsmouth

University researchers have teamed up with recreational anglers to investigate how the fishing industry can be more sustainable and productive.

Competitive Angling as a Scientific Tool (CAST) is a citizen science project that aims to provide a "unique insight" into the fisheries in the Solent.

The University of Portsmouth project has been funded by a £560,000 grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

It is using the annual Sea Angling Classic competition, which runs from 20-23 June from Port Solent, to collect the data.

As part of the project, new AI software is also being developed to help identify the different species.

Angling Spirit and the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority are also both assisting with the research.

Marine Business

Anti-Fouling Royal Navy Ships

UK scientists are seeking to ensure Royal Navy ships can operate more sustainably and limit their impact on marine biodiversity. Heavily-fouled hulls spread marine organisms beyond their natural ranges, with the potential for negative environmental impacts.

Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the procurement arm for the UK Armed Forces, has been working with QinetiQ and PML Applications to design and manufacture a specialist raft which can test anti-fouling coatings on five different classes of Royal Navy ships; the RFA Tide Class, Type 23 Frigate, Type 45 Destroyer, Landing Platform Dock and Sandown Mine Sweeper.

In the past, patch tests were applied to one ship which sailed for around one or two years, and the paint that performed the best would be used across the whole fleet.

Image courtesy of DE&S

DE&S has invested £350,000 in the work, which includes the cost of the raft, equipment, laboratory costs and the scientists working on the project. By looking at where the ship is sailing, how fast it will be travelling and how many days it will be docked for, scientists can determine the most efficient anti-fouling paint for that ship to prevent the build-up of biofouling.

With fuel typically accounting for a significant percentage of marine transport costs, this work, while is still in the early stages, has the potential for delivery efficiencies for the Royal Navy, as well as reducing adverse environmental effects such as carbon emissions and the spread of marine invasives.

Ocean Village Marine Upgrades

Work is now complete following a £2.2 million investment from MDL Marinas at Ocean Village Marina in Southampton. There has been a complete replacement of all pontoons along the south side of the marina, as teams worked from last October to remove, dredge and reinstate the piles before installing new pontoons.

The marina's five superyacht berths, which can accommodate boats from 25m to 50m, have been upgraded with new concrete pontoons, decking and smart meters supplying three-phase electricity.

The concrete pontoon sections were transported by land from Ireland to MDL's Saxon Wharf and then towed to Ocean Village, while the old pontoons and floats were taken away for reuse or recycling.

MDL has also invested in wave attenuation at the entrance to the marina, helping to dissipate waves and give visitors a more comfortable stay.

Marine Sport Textile Recycling

The Green Blue are collaborating with the World Sailing Trust and Sustainable Sailing Ltd, to launch the first Marine Sport Textile Recycling survey. This aims to understand the use and recycling of marine sports equipment and clothing in the UK.

For sports-related textiles, their technical materials mean most end their lives in landfill, releasing microplastics which have been detected across the globe, including in Antarctica. The situation is even worse for composite materials, such as glass fibre, which are used to build watersports equipment. There are over 1.5 million composite yachts and 1 million composite dinghies globally, with about one to two percent reaching end-of-life (EoL) annually. Recently the fibres and resins that fragment from these EoL boats have been shown to be eaten by shellfish and cause ecosystem damage.

Take part in the Survey at: End of Life Technical textiles within the adventure sports industries- B2C Survey.

Coastal Communities

Maritime Transport Careers Programme (MTCP)

The Maritime Transport Careers Programme (MTCP) has engaged with more than 5,000 individuals across the south and participated in more than 50 events since it launched seven months ago.

Set up by Solent Careers Hub and members of Business South's Maritime Transport Action Group, the programme reaches out to all manner of people from school pupils to professionals looking to change careers.

The aim is to help address the ongoing skills gap in the region's maritime and transport industries.

Schools across Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight have taken part in immersive days out with Meachers Global Logistics and Portsmouth International Port.

The MTCP has attended careers fairs and hosted interactive primary school assemblies with the likes of DP World. Its members have also got involved in Maritime Mondays, which provides on-site visits to Carnival and ABP Ports to help careers advisers and teachers showcase the maritime career opportunities available across the Solent to their students.

Photo courtesy of Portico

The MTCP is funded by partners including Red Funnel, ABP, Meachers Global Logistics, Southampton Airport, Portsmouth International Port, Carnival and Williams Shipping.

MTCP members have also been working with a number of partners to create a resource for schools across the UK, to be made available in the autumn. It comprises four short courses covering logistics, supply chain management, freight forwarding and green skills in logistics.

Ventnor Eastern Esplanade Works

The major sea defence works at Ventnor Eastern Esplanade have scooped a top award at the Constructing Excellence SECBE Awards. The project won the 'Integration and Collaborative Working' category.

The safety barriers, which have secured the site since November 2022, were taken down on 24th May, restoring this walking and cycling route between Ventnor and Bonchurch.

Photo courtesy of Isle of Wight Council

It marked the end of a successful 12 month project which has seen £4.8 million invested in new sea defences.

The works involved piling more than 150 'king posts' into the foreshore, which were then backfilled and capped with concrete to encapsulate the rusting sheet piles.

Watch a video of the construction.

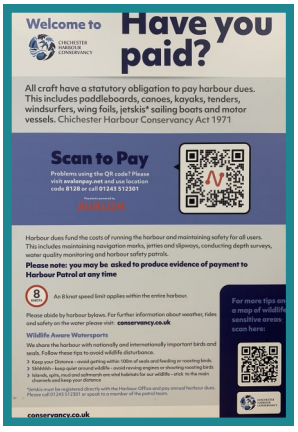
Recreation

Paddle UK

British Canoeing has launched a new 'Paddle UK' name and brand identity. Over the last five years, the rapid growth in recreational paddling by a broader and more diverse audience has resulted in a change in the interests of its members. It captures more fully the breadth of paddling activity that falls under its responsibility, including kayaking, canoeing, and stand up paddleboarding. Its membership has grown from c.40,000 to c.90,000 members, with over 50,000 registering an interest in stand up paddleboarding. For more information see: The Home of Paddle UK | The NGB for paddling and paddlesport.

Scan and Pay comes to Chichester Harbour

New signage at launch points around Chichester harbour make it easy to scan and pay harbour dues before launching a vessel. You can now simply scan the QR code from your phone to check harbour dues fees and to pay online. Payments can be made for casual dues for all vessels and for annual dues for paddleboards.



There is also a QR code on the signs giving information and advice on how to avoid disturbing wildlife whilst on the water.

Chichester Harbour is one of the most important sites for wildlife in the UK. It is internationally important as a home for over-wintering birds, as well as breeding seabirds. A population of seals use the harbour at low tides to rest on the mudflats.

Studland Bay Voluntary No Anchor Zone: 2023 Review

A voluntary no anchor zone (VNAZ) was introduced by the MMO in December 2021, to ensure that anchoring over seagrass beds in Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone did not undermine the conservation objectives of the site. This management measure followed an evidence-based assessment, and several rounds of consultation with stakeholders.

Photo courtesy of Studland Bay Marine Partnership

A new report sets out the findings of the effectiveness of this VNAZ during its second year. It shows that boaters have been using the eco moorings and with more set to be installed for the 2024 season this should increase.

Boaters are also seeking to anchor outside of the VNAZ when there are no moorings available. The marking of the VNAZ this season should help boaters to better understand the location of the protected habitats and avoid dropping anchor in that area. The levels of adherence are not yet sufficient to ensure the recovery of the seagrass, however monitoring does indicate that levels of anchoring have reduced from year one. The MMO have concluded that a VNAZ currently remains the most effective way to protect the site. They do not plan to introduce a statutory measure (for example, an MMO byelaw) at this stage.

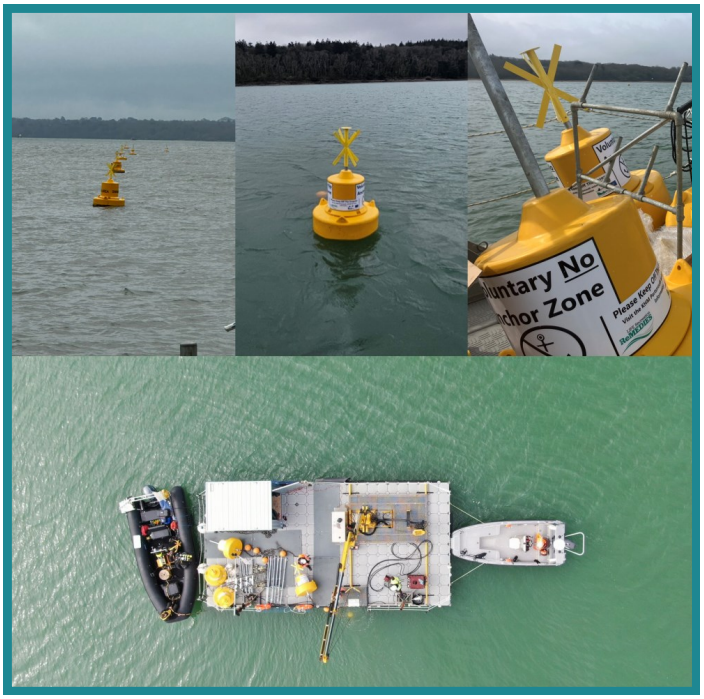
Conservation

Osborne Bay Voluntary No Anchor Zone Installed

Osborne Bay, on the northeast coast of the Isle of Wight, is home to an expansive seagrass bed extending from the intertidal zone to around 400m offshore, protected as part of the Solent Maritime SAC. This sheltered bay is also a popular destination for people, with both locals and tourists venturing via boat.

Seagrass as a habitat is vitally important to improving biodiversity however it is also very vulnerable to damage from anthropogenic pressures such as beach activity, water sports and anchoring.

Recreational activity surveys, through the LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project, have been conducted in the summer at seagrass beds across the Solent Maritime SAC. These identified Osborne Bay as an area of above average boating pressure with 5.3, 8.5 and 9 boats on average anchoring inside the seagrass zone per survey (1-hour periods) in 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively (draft data collected on surveys coordinated by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust).



Photos from the installation of the VNAZ marker buoys in Osborne Bay by ABC Subsea Consortium

After discussions with the landowner, English Heritage and the boating community, a plan for the VNAZ was established: eight marker buoys to delineate the area of seagrass, using Advanced Mooring Systems (AMS) to prevent any further scour on the seabed. The AMS set up to be used was a helical screw and chain riser with

Monitoring and engagement will continue to determine the impact of the VNAZ. This will be done through the 2024 recreational activity surveys, providing a direct comparison with anchoring data before the VNAZ was in place.

Bird Nesting Areas at Calshot

As part of the Life on the Edge project, RSPB staff and local volunteers have erected the seasonal Ringed Plover nesting fence at Calshot in the Solent. This year (year 2 at this site) a small but important part of the beach was closed to allow Ringed Plovers to nest.

Last year a small, fifty by thirty metre area of beach, was fenced off allowing a Ringed Plover family to successfully nest. This year, the team are hoping the enclosure will allow a few Ringed Plover and maybe Oystercatchers to raise their families.

LIFE on the Edge is a 4-year LIFE Nature project led by the RSPB with the National Trust with the aim to improve the condition of the target coastal sites while also building their long-term resilience and informing future work elsewhere.

Image courtesy of Life on the Edge

Conservation & Heritage

Portsmouth Celebrates D-Day

The year 2024 marked the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings, more commonly known as D-Day. The operation on 6 June 1944 saw tens of thousands of soldiers cross the channel (many departing from Portsmouth) for a daring and dangerous operation to liberate occupied France.

Now, some 80 years on, the United Kingdom and its WW2 allies came together to remember the operation and all those who took part.

A host of commemorative events took place on both sides of the channel. In Portsmouth there was a large-scale event on Southsea Common which was broadcast live to the world on the BBC.

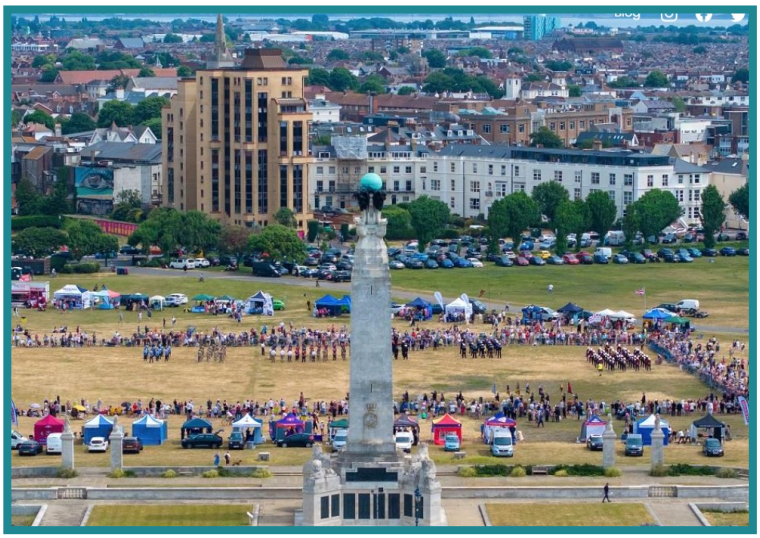


Photo courtesy of Visit Portsmouth

The event featured military musicians, a Royal Air Force flypast and moving tributes from special guests. The Red Arrows performed and there was a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

Project Seagrass: Solent Seagrass Update

On the Isle of Wight, Project Seagrass have been making great progress on their WWF-funded Seagrass Ocean Rescue (SOR) restoration planting trials. They have been monitoring their 2023 planted plots at both Priory Bay and Thorness on the Isle of Wight, investigating how different planting methods have worked over the last year. This year, they also begun work on the Solent Seascape Project aiming to plant seagrass across three hectares. The active restoration locations are at Priory Bay and Thorness, building on previous planting trials.

Undertaking baseline monitoring in May this year © Project Seagrass

They continue to be grateful for the support from the Solent community, with individuals and local organisations joining with planting, monitoring and fragment walks. This summer, seed-picking events will take place with opportunities to get involved. Please contact volunteers@projectseagrass.org if you are interested.

Maritime Archaeology Trust Discovery Bus

The Maritime Archaeology Trust's Discovery Bus was out in early June all across the New Forest for several D-Day 80 events. They welcomed the public and school groups aboard to share videos and presentations of the New Forest at war, hear stories of relatives who fought courageously, and engage younger attendees with interactive code-breaking games and dress up activities.

Harbours & Business

New MCA app Launched

A new app for seafarers, launched by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), is a chance for those working at sea to have safety advice, checklists and important resources at their fingertips.

The Official MCA Guidance app will provide seafarers useful, practical information on how to be safe at sea, as well as how to prepare for important parts of the job like vessel surveys and inspections.

The app also includes resources designed to support and maintain seafarers' physical and mental health.

The MCA Guidance app can be downloaded for free through the Google Play or Apple iOS stores.

Seachange Project

In 2023, Portsmouth International Port and its partners were awarded a £19.8 million grant (£18.5 million specific to the port) from the Zero Emissions Vessels and Infrastructure competition (ZEVI), funded by UK Government, and delivered in partnership with Innovate UK. The grant has allowed it to embark on a large scale decarbonisation project with Brittany Ferries, alongside the University of Portsmouth, MSE International, B4T, IOTICS and Swanbarton.

The Seachange project will design, build, and operate a 'shore power' system across the three busiest berths at the port. This will allow visiting ferry or cruise ships to turn off their engines when in the port, as they will be able to 'plug-in' and use green electricity to run their onboard systems. The overall cost of the project is over £26 million and is part funded by Portsmouth City Council.

The project will support two new LNG electric hybrid ships from Brittany Ferries, which will begin sailing from Portsmouth starting in spring 2025 and will be shore-power ready. This is the single largest project in the port's history and reaffirms the port's commitment to reach net carbon neutral by 2030.

New Solent Rail Terminal Opens

In March, the Minister for Rail and HS2, Huw Merriman, officially opened the new Solent Rail Terminal marking the completion of the £17.5 million partnership investment between Associated British Ports (ABP) and Solent Stevedores.

This multi-million-pound rail upgrade project took 18 months to complete. This significant milestone was marked with a plaque unveiling at an event for rail freight and maritime leaders and customers at the Solent Stevedores' operated Solent Rail Terminal in the western docks.

Photo courtesy of ABP

It has created an 18-acre facility, expanding the intermodal rail transport site to broaden the service offer with laden and empty container handling, storage, maintenance, and repair within a single-site boundary.

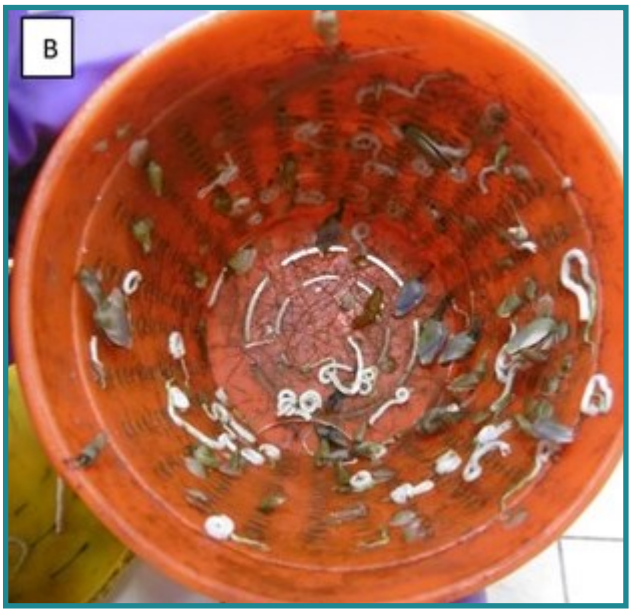
Features of the new site include a newly designed track layout facilitating simultaneous train arrival and departures increasing the terminal's efficiency and extending the rail loading pad by 130m. The larger intermodal site including container storage with full maintenance and repair facilities will be able to handle a seventy one percent increase in daily services with a one hundred and twenty five percent increase in number of containers handled.

More News

Non-native Species Hitchhiking on Plastic Waste

There is an increasing awareness that marine debris, particularly plastic can transport species, including non-native species, large distances. Plastic has a lower buoyancy than seawater so will float, and when pushed by wind and waves it can travel hundreds and even thousands of miles before being washed up. If animals or plants that normally settle on rocks attach to the plastic and survive the transport they can be washed up with the litter in areas where they didn't previously occur. Biogeographic barriers such as distance, depth, salinity and temperature usually prevent the long-distance movement of species, but increasingly, human activity is providing species a way around these barriers.

With millions of tonnes of plastic entering the sea every year, this is becoming an urgent problem. Cefas is expanding the monitoring of marine debris for non-native species (some of which will become invasive species) to better understand this modern phenomenon.



The contents of one of the pots when the lid was removed. Keel worms (white) and goose barnacles (grey) are visible among the community inside (Credit: Cefas).

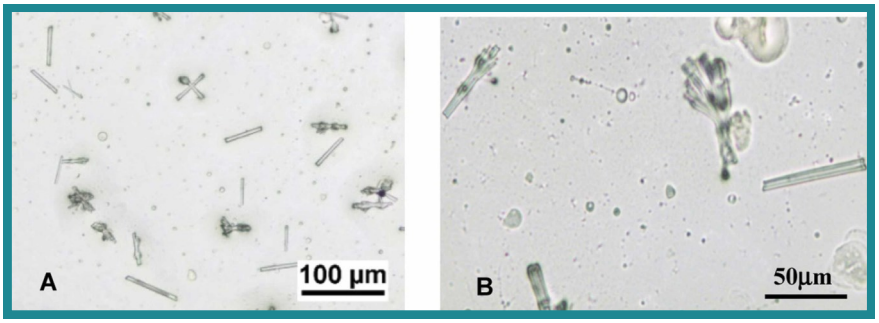
Last October, the Weymouth and Portland Marine Litter Project alerted Cefas to a find on Chesil Beach (Dorset). Two plastic bait pots had washed up on the strandline with other plastic waste. Among the contents were uncommon species, seemingly transported across the Atlantic after finding an unlikely refuge inside the fishing waste. Cefas could tell that some of the pot's inhabitants had made it all the way across the Atlantic since they identified coastal species from the Caribbean.

Fibreglass found in Oysters and Mussels

A new study has revealed worrying levels of fibreglass in oysters and mussels. This marks the first-time fibreglass or glass reinforced plastic (GRP) particles have been found entering the 'food chain'. The study, a collaborative effort from the Universities of Brighton and Portsmouth, showed that GRP, which is used extensively in boat manufacturing, is breaking down and contaminating coastal waters.

The GRP particles were detected in the soft tissues of oysters and mussels collected near an active boatyard in Chichester Harbour. Using micro Raman spectroscopy, researchers found up to 11,220 fibreglass particles per kilogram in oysters and 2,740 particles per kilogram in mussels.

Fibreglass, widely used since the 1960s in boat manufacturing, is useful for its durability. However, it is difficult to dispose of properly, with boats often ending up abandoned or improperly discarded. This results in tiny glass particles entering the water, especially during peak boat maintenance seasons. These particles then accumulate in bivalves such as oysters and mussels, which are crucial to marine ecosystems due to their filter-feeding habits.



Glass fibre fragments in soft bivalve tissue. Image courtesy of University of Brighton and partners.

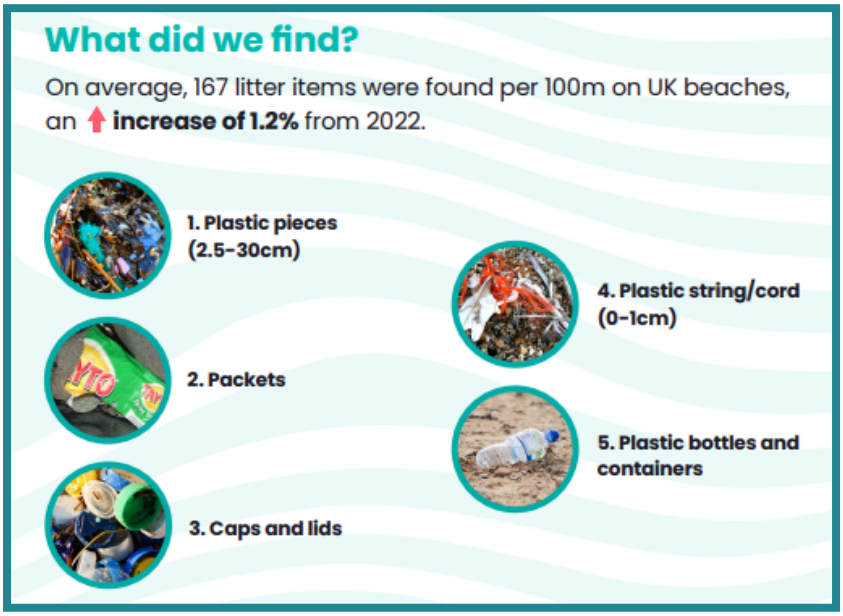
More News

State of Beaches: Beachwatch Report 2023

During 2023, 14,271 volunteers removed litter from their local beaches and submitted over 1,000 litter surveys to the Marine Conservation Society. They cleared 17,208 kgs of litter providing vital information on the state of our beaches.

In total 480,343 litter items were removed from beaches, and on average there were 167 litter items found per 100m of beach. Glass bottles, plastic bottles and metal drinks cans continue to be a problem. Three out of the top five litter items were single-use plastics (17% of litter collected).

Over 29,500 sewage-related items were recorded. These included wet wipes, cotton bud sticks and sanitary products. Seventy two percent of beaches had sewage related items.



New Partnership for the Itchen

A newly established stakeholder partnership called the Preventing Plastic Pollution Partnership for the Itchen (IPP) is to focus on the reduction and prevention of plastic pollution in the Itchen catchment. It will increase understanding of the value of the impact of plastic pollution on the Itchen's natural capital and ecosystem services.

The project covers the geographical extent of the River Itchen catchment in Hampshire, including estuarine waters, a hydrological catchment that covers an area of 415 km^2. Tackling plastic pollution in the Itchen requires a comprehensive set of solutions across the plastic value chain and waste management hierarchy, involving all key stakeholders.

Marine Non-Licensable Activities

The MMO, in collaboration with other governmental bodies, is responsible for managing marine non-licensable activities (mNLA) to further the conservation objectives of England's inshore marine protected areas within 0-12 nautical miles.

The mNLA activities encompass a range of recreational pursuits, from sailing and motorboating to diving and snorkelling. It excludes fishing activity, which is managed by other agencies in inshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The MMO has selected six priority MPAs for mNLA site assessment, one of which is the Solent Maritime SAC. This is home to several major estuary habitats, sand banks, seagrass beds and Atlantic salt meadows.

Next steps will include early engagement with coastal communities, taking a natural capital approach, followed by an assessment in collaboration with partners to ascertain the impacts of mNLA within each selected MPA.

Once this is completed future management measures will be considered, ranging from voluntary measures to potential byelaws. These will be developed in partnership with local stakeholders and residents.

News & Snippets

Solent Seascape Project Receives International Recognition from United Nations

The Solent Seascape Project is working to restore, protect and connect nature in the Solent. In July 2024, the project was endorsed as an official United Nations Decade Action as it is an initiative that contributes towards international goals for the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity.

Spanning 66 countries, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) includes ten Ocean Decade Challenges that aim to use science for the benefit of the ocean. The Solent Seascape Project actively addresses three of these challenges:

- protect and restore ecosystems
- unlock ocean-based solutions to climate change
- promote positive behaviour change, improving humanity's relationship with the ocean

Seagrass seed being collected at Seaview, Isle of Wight. © Luke Helmer, Blue Marine Foundation

As part of the Ocean Decade, the UN is aiming to create a clean, healthy and resilient ocean, that is productive, predicted, safe, accessible, inspiring and engaging.

The Project is the first seascape scale marine restoration project in the UK and seeks to bridge gaps in important areas of ocean science and connect people to the ocean in a sustainable way. Its uniqueness lies in its recognition of the critical role of connectivity across the key habitats of saltmarshes, seagrass beds, oyster reefs and seabird sites and the collective benefits they provide for people and nature.

Snippets

- Defra recently issued some further steer regarding potential voluntary marine components of LNRS. It confirmed that Responsible Authorities must not extend their LNRS mapping or priorities beyond the local authority boundary (usually mean low water mark), any such proposals are not underpinned by legislation and would not formally be part of the LNRS. Obligations, such as the requirement on public authorities to "have regard" to LNRSs, would not apply to proposals outside of the LNRS boundaries.
- The Modal Shift Programme at Southampton, which is being extended until the end of next year, encourages freight owners to move their containers import-laden containers via rail to a railhead within 140 miles of the logistics hub instead of using trucks. The share of rail freight at Southampton has reached thirty percent since the programme's launch in September 2023, up from twenty one percent. Its success has led to the launch of four new daily rail services at the Southampton terminal, taking the total number of weekly scheduled trains at Southampton to 172.
- Researchers at the University of Southampton have conducted the most detailed spatial analysis to date of storm surges along the coast of the UK and Ireland. The oceanographers found coastlines in the north of the Irish Sea experience the longest and largest surges, while those occurring around the southwest coast of England have the smallest geographical footprint and last the shortest amount of time.
- A zero-emission, electric, high-speed ferry will be transporting passengers across the Solent from next year. Red Funnel said the vessel would serve the route between Southampton and West Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, from late 2025.

Solent News

Inaugural Coastal Futures Award for Solent Forum Chair

Solent Forum Chair Peter Barham, MBE, was very proud and honoured to be presented with the Bob Earll award at this year's Ocean and Coastal Futures conference held at the Royal Society in January.

The award was given for 'outstanding achievements' in the marine environment and this was the first time it has been given.

In thanking the organisers and delegates for the award, Peter stressed that whatever he may have achieved, he had only done so through creating constructive partnerships where everyone was aligned in working towards a better marine environment, and that everyone has a voice and an opportunity to be involved.

The Solent Forum

Since 1992, the Solent Forum has provided a platform to deliver Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Solent sub-region of the southeast. It operates at a strategic coastal management level, providing a network for closer working relationships, information dissemination and discussion of topical coastal issues. The Solent Forum members meet twice a year and will next meet on 16 October 2024 in Portsmouth.

Solent News is prepared and edited by the Solent Forum Officers. It is a biannual publication and issue 57 will be produced in winter 2024/5. To find out more about the publication, how to submit articles or be included on the mailing list, please visit http://www.solentforum.org/publications/solent_news/.

Contact Information

Solent Forum
c/o Hampshire County Council
Universal Services
E11 Court North, The Castle,
Winchester, SO23 8UE
Email: solentforum@hants.gov.uk
X @solent_forum

The following organisations steer the work of the Solent Forum.

KHM · Hampshire County Council · In partnership with Portsmouth City Council · Natural England · RYA · University of Portsmouth · Environment Agency · Isle of Wight Council · ABP Southampton · Supported by New Forest National Park