



Horizon Scanning Report

2022

Background

The Solent Forum operates within a five-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 conduct an Annual Members Survey and produce a report. [The Members' Survey Report 2022](#). 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 events taking place over the year; it does not review every project or initiative in the Solent.

The following sectors are covered this year:

- Government Policy and Direction
- Coastal Management
- Habitats and Species
- Marine Industry
- Cultural and Heritage
- Coastal Settlements and Transport
- Fishing and Aquaculture
- Water Quality and Catchment Management
- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
- Military and Defence
- Harbours and Shipping

Government Direction and Policy

The **Environment Act** was passed into law November 2021 and has undergone a recent consultation period between March and June this year for its environmental targets. The consultation aimed to set out proposals for biodiversity on the land and in the sea, water and air quality and resource efficiency and waste reduction. Proposals for these new long-term environmental targets aim to:

- Improve riverine health by reducing nutrient pollution and contamination from heavy metal sources as well as improving water use efficiency
- Clean the air by reducing exposure to the most harmful air pollutant to human health, PM2.5, by over a third compared to 2018 levels
- Stop the decline in wildlife populations through legally binding target for species abundance by 2030 with a requirement to increase species by 10% by 2042

The Environment Act also puts a key focus on driving towards nature's recovery and new proposals are currently being set out in a **Nature Recovery Green Paper**, which underwent consultation during March-May this year. Initial policy proposals within this paper set out targets to protect 30% of the land and sea and stop species decline, both by 2030. The following link shows Defra's plans. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/delivering-on-the-environment-act-new-targets-announced-and-ambitious-plans-for-nature-recovery>

The government's plan to 'build back greener' after the COVID-19 outbreak comes under the **Net Zero Strategy** to decarbonise all sectors of the UK economy in order to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This was also a widely discussed climate goal at COP26 last autumn. Encompassed within this is the Clean Maritime Plan which sets out an environment route map of Maritime 2050, including tackling pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Since its' publish in July 2019 the Clean Maritime Plan has so far seen no major updates.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan continues to shape national coastal and marine policy, progress has been made on:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1084360/25-year-environment-plan-2022-update.pdf

- *Plans to Pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)* - the first HPMAs were set to be designated within the first half of 2022, however this goal has not been reached. Current consultations on five candidate sites are ongoing until September 2022. Inshore sites include: Allonby Bay (Irish Sea) and Lindisfarne (northern North Sea). Offshore sites include Dolphin Head (Eastern Channel), Inner Silver Pit South (southern North Sea) and north-east of Farnes Deep (northern North Sea). Ministers are set to decide and designate pilot HPMAs by July 2023. HPMAs will protect all species, habitats and associated ecosystem processes within the site boundary, allowing nature to fully recover to a more natural state.
- *Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)* - Since 2020 the Government and Natural England have developed the concept of a Nature Recovery Strategy (NRS) and to form a Nature Recovery Network (NRN). Currently no new areas have been mandated for local nature recovery yet. Natural England have established key areas to improve LNRSs, including better collaboration across a more diverse stakeholder participation and a better understanding of how LNRSs connect with other plans and spatial strategies.
- *Marine Net Gain* – proposals for a net gain regime in the marine environment are under consultation until August 2022 lead by DEFRA and Natural England. Biodiversity Metric 3.0 was published July 2021 and will be used to calculate whether a project has achieved its biodiversity net gain requirements. It is yet to be reported which metrics will be used for Marine Net Gain, which will only apply below the low water mark.

Coastal Management

Final evaluation and reporting have now been concluded for the **Championing Coastal Coordination** (3Cs) project. This was an Environment Agency funded project with additional support from Natural England, the MMO and IFCA groups. One of the regional projects for the south region was formed of a collaboration between the Solent Forum, Dorset Coast Forum and the Isle of Wight estuaries. The

project aimed to summarise and evaluate the work of regional partnerships in the south within a national context and recommend how this can be strengthened.

The 3Cs project illustrated how coastal partnerships can bring together a range of stakeholders to support consensus building, particularly important for integrated environmental management approaches and streamlining consents. As well as this the report highlighted the need for future government funding over the next five years to improve services to coastal partnerships and support their work. The project was successful in facilitating the integration of coastal and marine management at a regional level, sharing multi-sector information and improving access to evidence. This initiative is likely to be extended for a further three years and is awaiting bid details. See [Solent Forum - Championing Coastal Coordination](#) for more details.

Habitats and Species

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-capital-and-ecosystem-assessment-programme/natural-capital-and-ecosystem-assessment-programme#marine-projects>

The **Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment** (NCEA) policy paper by Natural England, funded by DEFRA, has been published March 2022. It is a science innovation and transformation programme, which spans across land and water environments. It has been set up to collect data on the extent, condition and change over time of England's ecosystems and natural capital, and the benefits to society. Within this programme are a variety of marine objectives which aim to compile information about marine nature recovery across England to help people understand the national picture, particularly in terms of best practice, barriers, and opportunities.

Marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment projects hope to provide:

- a joined-up approach across Defra marine-linked policy areas
- a marine natural capital evidence baselines to guide investment and management decisions and the development of policies
- natural capital best practice guidance and a suite of analytical tools to support more effective policy making for marine decision makers at all scales
- a comprehensive monitoring programme in the open water and seabed environments of English inshore and offshore waters
- development of models and place-based tools that can integrate ecological, social and economic data sets together to test different scenarios for nature's recovery
- innovation in evidence collection by testing the potential for earth observation, autonomous vehicles, new modelling techniques and collaboration with non-governmental organisations
- an evaluation system for the shared marine space, providing value for marine planning
- a user-friendly database for natural capital evidence
- advice in the management of UK marine environments
- new ways to combine resources, including match funding, for projects both nationally and locally

Natural England highlighted priorities 2021-2022 relevant to marine and coast:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-england-action-plan-2021-to-2022/natural-england-action-plan-2021-to-2022>

1. To visibly drive the Nature Recovery Network within the 25 Year Environment Plan
2. Strengthen our investment in protected sites to deliver better outcomes

3. Drive good management of the Marine Protected Area network by publishing high quality conservation advice, maintaining an evidence base to inform management, and conducting condition assessments to underpin and measure progress.
4. Continue to support Defra in expanding the means of enhancing marine recovery, including the development of Highly Protected Marine Areas and by leading on the England Seabird Strategy.
5. The focus of the resilient landscapes and seas programme is to create thriving, resilient, functioning landscapes, and seas rich in plants, wildlife and character that provide wide ranging benefits for Nature, climate and people.
6. Provide evidence and policy advice to help deliver an ecosystem approach to fisheries, and environmental advice to inform fisheries by-laws for Marine Protected Areas.
7. Deploy effective community engagement in the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the Nature Recovery Network through new community engagement standards, such as submission of proposals for the England Coast Path.

Notable initiatives on a local level:

- *Solent Seascapes Project* – awaiting bid confirmation to secure Endangered Landscapes Programme (ELP) funds.
- *The Rapid Reduction of Nutrient in Transitional Waters (RaNTrans)* - This is an Interreg funded project in partnership with Natural England and Portsmouth University which will develop and test new cost-effective methods to reduce algal mat coverage and nutrient levels in mudflats. [RaNTrans: Rapid Reduction of Nutrients in Transitional Waters - Developing algal mat removal and nutrient reduction techniques in France and the UK \(rantransproject.com\)](https://rantransproject.com)
- *Secrets of the Solent* – As part of this National Heritage funded project to celebrate and safeguard the future of the marine environment, six marine murals have now been completed on behalf of the Hants and Wight Wildlife Trust and are to be placed around the Solent. [Secrets of the Solent | Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust \(hiwwt.org.uk\)](https://hiwwt.org.uk)
- *Restoring Estuarine & Coastal Habitats (REACH) in the Solent* - The Environment Agency and Natural England have joined up to deliver restoration aims of restoring a minimum of 15% of the current extent and condition of priority habitats before the end of the DEFRA 25-year Environment Plan period in 2043. [Solent Forum - REACH \(Restoring Estuarine and Coastal Habitats\)](#)

Marine Industry

The Solent Summit took place on the 8th of June to launch the [Solent Freeport](#) and present the vision and ambitions of the **Solent 2050 Strategy**. This Freeport is one of eight announced by the government at the March 2021 Budget. A Freeport is an area that has special conditions and exemptions applied to it which create additional economic activity. The Solent Freeport objectives include establishing the area as a hub for global trade and investment, as well as promoting productivity and regeneration of the area. It also aims to create centres of innovation and skills, pioneer approaches to climate change adaption and decarbonisation, and accelerate the transition to a net zero economy. The benefits of the Solent Freeport are being closely aligned to the Solent LEP's long term economic strategy called [Solent 2050](#).

Operation Zero was launched by the Department for Transport at COP26, it is an industry coalition working together to accelerate the decarbonisation of the operations and maintenance vessels in the North Sea offshore wind sector. By demonstrating that achieving these commitments is possible,

the coalition aims to encourage other regions and shipping segments to follow suit and act to transform their own fleets. It aims to have zero emission operational and maintenance vessels deployed in the region by 2025. The offshore wind sector relies heavily on these vessels for maintenance of infrastructure therefore zero emission vessels are needed to maintain the sectors commercial viability. In the future there is also the possibility for the offshore wind industry to play a role in the decarbonisation of the shipping industry, which accounted for around 2.89% of global CO2 emissions in 2018. For more information see [COP26 declaration: Shipping and Offshore Wind – Operation Zero](#).

ABP and Solent Gateway are promoting restoration and movement towards net zero in the Solent, by investing in environmental mitigation, decarbonising operations and building more sustainable supply chains. ABP Southampton have successfully commissioned the use of its shore power facility so cruise ships can now plug in and have zero emissions at berth. A dedicated **Solent Freeport Green Growth Institute** will provide a centre of excellence in green skills and jobs so local communities can also benefit from environmental innovation.

Further Marine Industry Examples:

- Sennebogen Material Handler
 - Portico, the international cargo terminal based at Portsmouth International Port, have taken delivery of a Sennebogen material handler, which will allow them to handle an even wider range of cargoes.
- Columbine Building in East Cowes
 - After a major investment from the Isle of Wight Council supported by the government's levelling up fund contractors have started preparing the iconic Columbine Building for renovation and refurbishment.
 - The whole south elevation of the structure is to be restored and weatherproofed as part of the council's plans to create more working space and jobs in and around the East Cowes Marine Hub.

Cultural and Heritage

- Hythe Pier Awarded Grade II Listed Status
 - The pier which opened in 1881 has been listed at Grade II for the good survival of the late-C19 substructure including the pairs of slender cast-iron columns and the cross bracing and for the late-C19 and early-C20 pierhead buildings

Coastal Settlements and Transport

Recreational Pressure

The Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Scheme of Management continues to report on activities which may be affecting designated sites in the Solent. Notably the [Solent Bird Sensitivity mapping project](#) has been given another to push to map bird sensitive areas in relation to non-licensable recreational activities. This project also aligns with aims of the Solent Seascapes project which is hoped to bring further investment into the project.

An [Outdoor Recreation Valuation tool](#) (ORVal) has been developed by the University of Exeter with

funding support from DEFRA and has three key functions which allow users to:

1. Explore usage and welfare values generated by greenspaces;
2. Estimate how usage and welfare values would change if characteristics of recreational ground were altered;
3. Draw new recreation sites on the map and define their characteristics to estimate the usage and welfare values that could be generated.

A consultation seeking views on proposed legislation to bring recreational and personal watercraft (PWCs) within scope of the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act (MSA) 1995 was held during September-November 2021, the results are yet to be released.

Harbours and Shipping

Portsmouth Port launched its [Masterplan](#) in February 2022 which provides a focus for how the port will successfully adapt to support the future of UK trade and travel. This follows four key themes: environment and sustainability, society and economy, resilience and security and innovation and technology. Portsmouth Port aims to continue developing its green credentials as a priority and aims to reach carbon net-zero by 2030 and become to UK's first a zero-emission port by 2050.

FastCat Terminal Upgrade work started this January 2022, following the £1.5 million investment by Wightlink aiming to improve the FastCat foot passenger route between Portsmouth Harbour and Ryde Pier Head.

Water Quality and Catchment Management

The [Solent Plastics Pollution](#) (SPP) Hub continues to grow and aims to further develop the involvement of the Solent's coastal and river catchment communities. The hub continues to develop its social media engagement with groups coordinating and running litter collecting events.

A water quality monitor is set to be installed at Hayling Island in a UK first. Havant Borough Council and Southern Water said their pilot scheme would provide residents with live updates. The monitor will be fixed to a buoy around 400 metres offshore, west of Beachlands, and will automatically record water samples and upload results to a website which residents will be able to check after the buoys calibration period.

A team of specialists have been commissioned to design and operate a pilot nutrient market for the Solent, called the [Solent Nutrient Market Pilot](#). The 'Solent Nutrient Market Consortium' will work closely with Defra, Natural England, Environment Agency, local planning authorities and other stakeholders to develop a market that helps landowners get paid a fair price for nature-based projects and ensures developers can access environmental credits. The pilot is currently testing an online nutrient trading platform to:

- Support landowners to make long-term land use changes in the Test and Itchen catchment to reduce nitrogen pollution and to;
- Enable new developments to meet the requirement to deliver Nutrient Neutrality on protected sites.

The Environment Agency launched public consultations on draft River Basin Management Plans (**dRBMPs**) and draft Flood Risk Management Plans (**dFRMPs**) for each river basin district on 22nd October 2021. The Solent Forum took part in the consultations to represent Transitional and Coastal Waters of the Solent. The main themes raised in this consultation included partnership engagement, nature-based solutions, catchment-base approaches, funding, alignment, climate change adaptability and land management. The results of the consultations are now under further analysis to produce to implement any changes to FRMPs and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment. Final FRMPs and supplementary materials will be published autumn 2022.

Further Water Quality and Catchment Management strategies:

- [CHASM: Crustaceans, Habitat and Sediment Movement](#)
 - Fishing grounds near Selsey Bill, West Sussex, have traditionally been well managed and productive, but have since changed
 - Recent environmental impacts include sediment increase, sewage discharge and contaminants in land runoff.
 - This project was set up to engage a partnership network of stakeholders where speakers can present the complex backdrop of change around Selsey Bill, in order to explore these issues further
- New Pump Out Facility for the Hamble
 - Southern Water provided investment to the River Hamble Harbour Authority to enable Hampshire boaters to keep the waters clean.

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management

The Environment Agency, in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council are working towards the **Isle of Wight Coastal Defence Scheme** which will reduce the risk of flooding and coastal erosion for infrastructure and 300 hectares of protected habitat. The scheme includes proposals for repair of sea defences at Embankment Road (Bembridge), sea wall refurbishment and defences at Yaverland and Shanklin and slope stabilisation at Ventnor.

The Environment Agency have released their [roadmap to 2026](#) for **Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy**. It has a long-term vision for “a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100”. The strategy has three long-term ambitions:

1. Increased climate resilience to flooding and coastal change
2. Today’s growth and infrastructure resilient in tomorrow’s climate – investing and planning decisions to secure sustainable growth and environmental improvements
3. Ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change by ensuring local people understand their risk to flooding and know how to take action.

Further Coastal Erosion Risk Management Updates:

- Coastal Partners, with friends and partners at Portsmouth City Council and Mackley, won the 'Coastal Management' award at the Environment Agency's Flood and Coast Awards for their North Portsea Island scheme.
 - The award was for the development of an innovation called an 'Ecoformliner', this is a textured sea wall that will reduce the risk of flooding and erosion whilst promoting habitat for marine animals and plants.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCAs) lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry. The Southern and Sussex IFCAs cover the Solent region.

- Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, Southern IFCA has a duty to further the conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) within in the district. For each MPA, Southern IFCA must carry out an assessment of fishing activities within the site, to determine if the activities will hinder the site's conservation objectives. If this document finds that the activity could impact the site, Southern IFCA must create appropriate management measures to mitigate the risks. Assessments of hand gathering fishing activities in Southern IFCA's MPAs Studland and Bembridge have taken place. As a result of these assessment Southern IFCA will now introduce further management for these activities within the MPAs. [Handgathering: Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk)

The Marine Management organisation is responsible for implementing new byelaws under the Fisheries Act which prohibit fishing activities such as dredging, trawls, demersal seines and semi pelagic trawls in offshore MPAs. Currently four MPAs are protected by these byelaws, these include Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation, Inner Dowsing Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation, South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone, and The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone.

Annual Members Survey and Solent Forum Work Programme

The 2022 survey shows members' key areas of work were recorded as follows, in rank order:

1. Water quality and catchment management
2. Habitats and species
3. Ports, harbours and shipping
4. Fisheries and aquaculture
5. Joint cultural and heritage, marine industry, flood and coastal erosion risk management

Natural England highlighted priorities from members survey 2022:

- Small scale habitat loss
- Coastal eutrophication and algal mats on the intertidal
- Nutrients
- Invasive non-native species (INNS)
- Access to updated evidence

The following table shows how the Solent Forum can work in partnership with members, acting on the areas they raised in the survey.

Table 1
How the Solent Forum can facilitate where members would like to work in partnership

Areas where members indicated they would like to work in partnership	Solent Forum Initiatives
<p>Education</p> <p>Academia and research, industry</p> <p>Increase links with universities</p> <p>Coastal education</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p>
<p>Water quality</p> <p>Nutrient reduction programmes</p> <p>Combined effort of all partnerships in the Solent to tackle water quality. PFSH Water Quality Working Group and SEPO Steering Group meet every 2 months.</p> <p>Water quality improvement</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p> <p>Linking with Catchment Partnerships</p>
<p>Habitat restoration</p> <p>Habitat restoration works</p> <p>Restoring and making safe habitats</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p>

<p>Recreation</p> <p>Coastal Recreation</p> <p>Shore gathering activities</p> <p>Managing wildlife and recreation sites along coast and also England's coastal path</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p> <p>Covered in SEMS and NEG work and with Projects 1/ Solent Bird Sensitivity and Activity Mapping Project 2/Impact of Paddlesports in the Solent</p>
<p>Solent area Safety Committee (SASAC)</p>	
<p>Data availability</p> <p>Fisheries data collection. Key areas include hand gathering and fishing activities over seagrass habitats.</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p>
<p>Pollution</p> <p>Reducing pollution</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p>
<p>Increased Engagement across the Solent</p> <p>Holistic Solent-wide approach to addressing issues</p> <p>Building closer links with landowner and potential funders of habitat creation initiatives.</p> <p>Solent Seascape will require working in partnership with all Solent stakeholders</p>	<p>Cover in News, Conferences and Website</p> <p>Working in partnership on Solent Seascapes Project</p>