

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****Report**

<b>Committee</b>	River Hamble Harbour Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	12 December 2014
<b>Title:</b>	Environmental Update
<b>Reference:</b>	6295
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1. This report summarises activities relating to the River Hamble Harbour Authority's (RHHA) environmental management of the Hamble Estuary during September, October and November 2014.

## 2. Updates

- 2.1. The Maritime & Coastguard Agency conducted an audit of RHHA's oil spill response training, exercises, equipment and Plan on 4 November. RHHA was found to be fully compliant with all requirements. A small update will be made to the Oil Spill Contingency Plan to include details of the new fuel berth facility at Swanwick Marina.
- 2.2. Associated British Ports has given formal notice to RHHA of completion of its capital dredging activities in the area of Southampton Water to which the River Hamble Safeguarding Agreement applies. Dredging ceased on 3 November. Data analysis is underway, and post-dredge monitoring within the Hamble will continue for a further 6 months. The channel widening element of the consented project, which may have similar potential siltation implications for the River Hamble, did not take place and is unlikely to occur for a number of years, at which time the Agreement will be re-started.
- 2.3. Maintenance consents have been granted under the Harbour Master's delegated powers for routine maintenance dredging at Mercury Marina and Hamble Point Marina scheduled for early 2015, and also for the like-for-like replacement of the bridge structure on Manor Farm Country Park jetty which is now complete.
- 2.4. At their meeting held on 23 September 2014, the Harbour Board agreed to progress research into the potential for a project involving the beneficial re-use of dredged material in the harbour. A briefing note was then submitted to the Harbour Board at their meeting on 21 November 2014, produced by the Environment & Development Manager in consultation with Natural

England's Senior Environmental Specialist for Ports & Estuaries (who is also a member of the River Hamble Harbour Board). The Harbour Board accepted the report and agreed that a meeting of experts should be convened. The briefing note is at Appendix 1 for the Management Committee's interest and information.

- 2.5. The EDM attended the bi-annual meeting of the Solent Forum's Natural Environment Group (NEG) and annual meeting of the Solent European Marine Sites Management Group. Attendance at these meetings ensures that RHHA remains up to date on emerging issues, and that the RHHA's environmental legal obligations continue to be met. The NEG meeting was followed by a site visit to the Medmerry managed realignment scheme which, at 500 hectares, is the largest realignment of the open coast ever undertaken in Britain. In addition to protecting over 300 homes and major infrastructure from flooding, the scheme also creates vital new wildlife habitats which compensate for habitat loss elsewhere in the Solent. It has won many awards including the 2014 Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award. The visit provided an opportunity to discuss challenges and good practice associated with habitat creation and improvement projects which was of value given RHHA's current investigation into potential for reuse of dredged material.
- 2.6. The Animal Health & Veterinary Laboratories Agency (an executive agency of Defra) undertook an annual inspection of the Harbour Authority's compliance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 regarding International Catering Waste from vessels. RHHA's facilities were found to be fully compliant with requirements.
- 2.7. The EDM and officers from harbour authorities and water companies across the Solent area met with the Environment Agency (EA) as part of the 'Love Where You Sail' project. The project's objective is to reduce the risk which recreational boating poses to designated Bathing and Shellfish Water compliance in the Solent. Several success criteria have been proposed including "There will be a 100% increase in pump out use within the project area by 2021 from a 2014 baseline". This highlights the need to incorporate a replacement pump-out facility within any designs for improvements to the Harbour Master's Jetty at Warsash.
- 2.8. The EDM assisted Environment Agency (EA) officers with a fish survey of the Hamble Estuary near Manor Farm Jetty, conducted in line with Water Framework Directive requirements. Two pulls of the seine net caught around 400 fish which were measured and identified before being returned to the river. Fish were predominantly goby, bass, mullet and flounder but also included an unusual deep snouted pipefish. Significant numbers of sea trout have also been recorded migrating up the estuary this autumn, supporting reasons behind the timing conditions RHHA and the EA place on harbour works consents for certain activities.

### **3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that this report be noted.**

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:  
Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

<b>Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents</b>	
<p><b>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</b></p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

**Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

A full Equalities Impact Assessment for the River Hamble Harbour Authority's compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (including environmental responsibilities) has been carried out and this report does not raise any issues not previously covered by that Assessment.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1. This report does not deal with any issues relating to crime and disorder.

### **3. Climate Change:**

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? The contents of this report have no impact on carbon footprint or energy consumption

3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? Not applicable to this report.

***Briefing note for the River Hamble Harbour Board:***  
**Viability of beneficial reuse of dredged material within Hamble Estuary**

**CURRENT STATUS:**

Maintenance dredging operations have been ongoing in many of the Hamble Estuary's marinas since their construction. Dredging is licensed by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and River Hamble Harbour Authority (RHHA) in consultation with other authorities including the Environment Agency (EA) & Natural England (NE). Both marina operators and regulatory authorities have a responsibility to ensure that this activity does not have a detrimental impact on the interest features of the Solent European Marine Sites, the Sites of Special Scientific Interest or on the Water Framework Directive objectives. This is assessed via licensing and through the production of a baseline document.

Routine maintenance dredging in the Hamble occurs annually at three marinas, and once or twice in every ten years at another four sites, with potential for another two sites to be included in the future following recent/current capital dredge programmes. Spoil is taken by barge to the disposal ground at sea (Nab or Hurst Spit). RHHA itself undertakes no maintenance dredging of any channels for navigation purposes.

The 'River Hamble Maintenance Dredge Plan' is the baseline document which has been produced on behalf of RHHA in association with all participating marinas and boatyards who undertake, or foresee they may undertake, dredging. It is used to support all current licence applications to the MMO for maintenance dredging. The current maintenance dredging regime has been assessed as having a negligible impact on the main environmental features of the estuary and has been approved by the EA and NE. This document was last updated in 2011 and requires a periodic 6 year review.

The vast majority of dredged spoil is disposed of out at sea and is therefore 'lost' to the estuary system from which it originated. Disposal at sea can only be authorised if there is no alternative, however, disposal at sea is often the only practical option, albeit an expensive one for marina operators. Beneficial reuse of dredged material (e.g. in habitat creation or flood defence) is encouraged by the MMO but considerable work is required by applicants to identify and assess such proposals before approval can be gained.

Reductions in saltmarsh habitat across the Solent have been well researched and documented, and some projects are underway to reduce decline or recreate lost habitats to mitigate or compensate for certain capital projects (e.g. Wightlink ferries in Lympington; Medmerry scheme to offset loss from coastal defence projects). Local landowners on the Hamble (which include Hampshire County Council) have expressed concern at the reduction of habitat and a desire to protect their land asset.

These, sometimes conflicting, objectives provide an opportunity for relevant parties to come together to investigate the viability of using dredged material for saltmarsh or mudflat restoration and creation in the Hamble Estuary.

**SUGGESTED PROJECT PARTNERS:**

- River Hamble Harbour Authority
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Marine Management Organisation
- Marina Operators Representative(s)
- Landowners (private, HCC, The Crown Estate)

- Academic experts (e.g. Southampton University)
- Research specialist (e.g. Channel Coastal Observatory)
- Consultant (e.g. ABPmer, HR Wallingford, Lymington Technical Services)
- Local Interest Group (e.g. Solent Protection Society)

**PARTNER PRIORITIES:**

Competent Authorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Ensure compliance with legislation by ensuring activities they permit are not having a detrimental impact on the environment.</li> <li>· Seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity.</li> </ul>
Marina operators:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Maintain depths of berths.</li> <li>· Minimise disposal costs.</li> </ul>
Landowners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Management of land in line with SSSI/Habitat Regulations legislation and wider biodiversity interests.</li> <li>· Protection of land asset.</li> </ul>
Researchers/academics /consultants:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Further understanding.</li> <li>· Development of future policies and projects.</li> </ul>
Local Interest Grp/SPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Ensure the ecological and environmental well-being and wise management of the Solent area.</li> </ul>

**RELEVANT RESEARCH TO DATE:**

Much research and a considerable number of projects have been undertaken relating to this topic, both within the Solent and throughout the UK. Relevant work specific to the Hamble was undertaken in the production of the Hamble Maintenance Dredging Plan and in the Channel Coastal Observatory’s research for the Solent Dynamic Coast Project focusing on saltmarsh and mudflat habitats at risk from climate change and coastal management decisions. Southampton University has completed a scoping study analysing sites for potential beneficial reuse of dredge spoil for restoration and recharge of intertidal soft sediment habitats within the Solent. Three of the sites analysed are within the Hamble.

Most recently, the MMO published a report in September 2014 ‘Use of beneficial dredged materials in the South Inshore and South Offshore Marine Plan Areas’. The report includes mapped databases of dredge locations and considers opportunities for using dredge materials. It discusses valuable projects in the area, but recognises the relatively low number of projects which involve the use of silt, which is typical of Hamble dredge spoil. The report discusses ABPmer’s database on coastal habitat creation work which shows that only 17 such projects have been undertaken nationally, mainly in Essex and Suffolk. The report goes on to acknowledge that such projects must ‘*overcome a wide range of constraints, including timing of dredging and alternative use, compatibility of material, uncertainties relating to environmental impacts and issues associated with funding. In order for more beneficial use projects to occur in the future, there is a need for greater guidance and more strategic oversight. It could also be encouraged through creation of relevant communication mechanisms to facilitate linkages between those that are undertaking dredging work and those that need such materials for beneficial projects*’.

Whilst the South Marine Plan will aim to address many of the constraints and provide clear guidance and policies for the future, there are many issues specific to the Hamble, set out below, which will form the basis of an agenda at a meeting of project partners and experts to be held in the near future.

INITIAL QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:

- What measurements have been, or should be taken, of saltmarsh and intertidal retreat, and to what extent do these establish a need for restoration/replenishment?
- Will recent approvals for capital dredging and associated future maintenance dredging alter the conclusions of the Hamble Maintenance Dredge Plan?
- Where is the source of the sediment which deposits in the marinas (i.e. does maintenance dredging increase sediment taken from the marshes or reduce the supply of sediment to marshes/intertidal)?
- To what degree is any reduction in habitat linked to dredging or other anthropogenic effects?
- Are Hamble's maintenance dredging arisings suitable for reuse in any form?
- Are any Hamble sites suitable for disposal of maintenance dredge spoil (subtidal, intertidal or via dredger overflow)?
- What are the potential impacts of disposal of dredge spoil within the Hamble Estuary?
- Would the potential benefits of reusing dredging spoil outweigh the possible negative environmental effects and what are the risks?
- Would disposal at one site risk increased accretion at another location e.g. a dredged pocket?
- Who should contribute to the cost of this research and any subsequent programme of works?

NEXT STEPS:

- Convene a meeting of relevant partners and experts to identify the sources of information required to answer the questions above, and to;
- Agree a way forward with regard to future work (e.g. establish a Steering Group with a view to identifying a potential beneficial reuse project).

*RHHA Environment & Development Manager, October 2014*