



Solent Coastal Environment 2050

Paper submission to Hampshire County Council's Commission of Inquiry – Vision for Hampshire

Background

Hampshire 2050 is the name given to The Commission of Inquiry that is considering evidence and key issues to inform a Vision for Hampshire 2050.

The commission will guide and contribute to the future prosperity, quality of life, and protection and enhancement of the character and environment of Hampshire. It will also provide the framework for which future plans, strategies and ways of working will be packaged.

The Commission is looking at six key themes:

- Demographic and societal changes: including changing population and living patterns, and the impact in terms of health and social care, housing and employment
- Economy: the future of the Hampshire economy in the context of Brexit, increasing globalisation and potential digital and automation revolutions
- Work, Skills and Lifestyle: future learning and working patterns, and the skills needed in a post digital future as well as the wider quality of life within Hampshire such as arts, leisure and culture
- Environment and Quality of Place: Hampshire's main economic asset – the impact of a changing climate, different patterns of living and working, and competing demands on countryside and farmland on environmental quality, character and quality of life in Hampshire
- Mobile, Connectivity and Energy: the transport impact of electric powered and autonomous vehicles, smart technology in homes and workplaces, communications technology, and future energy issues
- Rural Hampshire: how economic, social, technological and environmental changes are likely to affect rural communities and the potential for a rural renaissance

Hampshire County Council is calling for expert evidence to be presented to a panel of Commissioners who represent a wide cross section of the population of different ages and backgrounds. The

evidence and consultation with the wider community will lead to the development of a vision for Hampshire for future generations.”

Hampshire 2050 will link to national plans, such as the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and its focus on housing and infrastructure to inform potential economic deals for Hampshire.

Hampshire residents are invited to complete an online questionnaire on each of the six key themes about what may happen in the future, what the impact of this will be, and how the County Council and partner organisations need to respond to this.

These views will be used to inform the evidence presented. Residents should have their say by the following dates:

- Demographic and societal challenges – 29 June 2018
- Economy – 13 July 2018
- Work, skills and lifestyle – 24 August 2018
- Environment and quality of place – 12 October 2018
- Mobility, Connectivity and Energy – 23 November 2018
- Rural Hampshire – 21 December 2018

Once the hearings have been completed, a full report on the findings of the Commission will be presented to the County Council in the summer of 2019 and made publicly available.

Solent Forum submission of Information

Background

The Solent Forum is a strategic coastal partnership, operating within the whole Solent coastal and marine area. This paper provides a submission of information to the Environment and Quality of Place theme of the Hampshire Commission of enquiry; the deadline is 12th October.

Information on the Solent Forum

The Solent Forum is an independent coastal partnership, established in 1992 to develop a greater understanding among the many local and harbour authorities, user groups, marine businesses and agencies involved in planning and management of the Solent. It assists and advises them in carrying out their functions. The Forum now has over 50 members organisations representing a wide range of sectors. Download the Solent Forum brochure. These members include Local Authorities adjoining the Solent area within Hampshire, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

The Solent Forum manages the secretariat for the Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS) Scheme of Management, and undertakes annual monitoring of activities that may be affecting site condition. <http://www.solentems.org.uk/>

The Solent Forum produced State of the Solent reports up until 2011. http://www.solentforum.org/publications/key_publications/state_solent/

The Solent Forum have a business plan in place and this provides information about the Solent region. http://www.solentforum.org/about/business_plan/Business%20Plan%202015-20%20Word%20Report.pdf

Each year the Solent Forum conducts Horizon Planning. http://www.solentforum.org/publications/key_publications/Horizon_Scanning/

Solent European Marine Sites Annual monitoring

The SEMS Annual monitoring in 2017 showed that, out of the seventeen activities that were monitored, there were ten activities where an increase in activity level, or levels of activity that remained elevated, were reported. There were many cases where changes were 'unknown'. It is important to note that in all cases, apart from Land Recreation – Dog Walking, by far the majority of relevant authorities reported no concerns. Dog walking continues to be a problem, in affecting bird disturbance. The Brid Aware mitigation project should be addressing these concerns.

The 2011 State of the Solent report

Climate change will impact the physical environment of the Solent. Climate change is typically characterised for the southeast of England as trending towards hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter, winters, with increased storminess. This will have an effect on the natural environment including increase in some plant or bird species and decline in others, leading in turn to adjustments in behaviour of fauna, including migrations. There may also be a significant effect on the coast due to storminess and associated wave and surge actions, with rivers also seeking to discharge higher flows into the sea. This may in turn, affect flooding on the low coast and in river estuaries, as well as erosion of coastal and inter-tidal features such as shingle banks and mudflats.

As the environment of the Solent is at the heart of the area itself it is important that the coastal habitats are managed to ensure long term sustainability. The coast is a dynamic environment and as such is always changing in response to pressures like climate change and sea level rise. However, as much of the Solent coast is defended, the habitats cannot respond in their natural way to these changes and so we are seeing a loss in intertidal habitats due to 'coastal squeeze'. Other pressures on the Solent's habitats and species are from the number of people who live, work and play on the Solent's coast. These need to be managed hand in hand as it is the impressive coastal environment which attracts people to the Solent, and this in turn strengthens the economy of the area.

Throughout history progressive coastal defence to protect significant human settlements, particularly in the eastern Solent, against flood risk and erosion has led to considerable modification to natural

systems. In some areas there is now a movement away from the use of hard defences and where possible aspirations to return the coastline to a more natural state. This is brought about by better understanding of the importance of a dynamic functioning coastline and the need to protect low lying designated habitats from coastal squeeze.

Marine Industry in the Solent is made up of three major activities: Ports and Shipping, Naval and Defence and Marine Leisure (SEEDA, 2007). Each has its own needs and can be looked at individually but as a whole they are a very important part of the Solent's economy. The marine industry sector contains a wide diversity of businesses ranging in scale from the large scale commercial operations at Southampton and Portsmouth ports down to small boatyards. In addition to the commercial ports, there are industrial processing sites requiring waterside locations for bulk shipping transport and/or the ready supply of seawater for use within processes, for example Esso Oil Refinery. Of increasing importance is cruising, with Southampton widely recognised as the capital of the country's cruise industry. There is a substantial and heavily trafficked road network serving the region, rail links between most urban areas and vital ferry links to the Isle of Wight. The Solent itself is a major transport corridor for bulk freight shipping, and for international ferry links to France and Spain. Finally there is a regional airport at Southampton.

The trend in environmental quality over the last century has been a long term decline due to urbanisation and a lack of adequate investment in waste management. More recently there have been significant improvements in environmental quality due to the implementation of environmental legislation. The future trend will be for a continued decrease in the amount of pollution discharged to the marine environment, particularly through the implementation of the EC Urban Waste Water Directive (UWWDD), which is driving the investment programme in sewage treatment and disposal. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is another substantial piece of EC water legislation. It requires all inland and coastal waters to reach 'good ecological status' by 2015. It does this by establishing river basin districts within which demanding environmental objectives will be set, including ecological targets for surface waters. The Solent lies in the southeast river basin district.

Recreation can be counted as the Solent's most significant activity in terms of the number of people which take part and it is certainly the most diverse. At least twenty different activities take place, each with its own characteristic distribution and pattern of use. Tourism is also significant, particularly for the Isle of Wight. On the Hampshire coast there are fewer long stay visitors, but the number of day and short stay visitors is significant. For tourism and recreation to be sustainable in the Solent there has to be a balance between the pressures on the environment and social and economic benefits.

Solent Forum Business Plan and Horizon Planning

Issues most important to members:

- Sea level rise and coastal management on a low lying coastline
- Recreational pressure on sensitive areas, especially for birds
- Water quality and pollution control in particular plastics and nutrient loading of harbours – highlighted by recent condition assessments of designated sites
- Working with the Environment Agency on the Catchment Based Approach to improve the Solent environment and water quality

- Pressure of development and consequent environmental sustainability; and the implementation of the South Marine Plan to enable sustainable coastal development
- Understanding natural capital and the need for net gain
- Tackling the spread of non native species
- The decline of shellfisheries and work to re-seed populations
- Growth in using ecological enhancements on blue infrastructure
- Linking with key plans and initiatives such as Defra 25 year plan; the South Marine Plan; Natural England's condition assessments; and the Secrets of the Solent Project.

The Solent Forum projects that are current to deal with issues include: Clean Solent Seas and Shores to tackle water quality issues and pollution; Beneficial Use of Dredgings large scale feasibility study for the western Solent; Enhancing stakeholder engagement in the marine planning process; working with the Environment Agency to map opportunities in the Southampton Water to improve the environment by adapting structures along the coastline.

8th October 2018