

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	River Hamble Harbour Board
Date:	7 July 2023
Title:	Environmental Update
Report From:	Director of Universal Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to summarise activities relating to the River Hamble Harbour Authority's (RHHA) environmental management of the Hamble Estuary between mid-February and May 2023.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the River Hamble Harbour Board:
 - (i) notes and supports the remainder of this report.

Updates

3. **M27 Bridge Drainage**

Following the receipt of Baroness Vere of Norbiton's response to the Chairman of the River Hamble Harbour Board last year, RHHA officers met with National Highways (NH) to discuss the feasibility study and costing that would be undertaken by Jacobs in relation to the following scope of work that is required to the M27 bridge: Deck waterproofing, Strengthening in relation to abnormal loads, Drainage (transfer of drainage from the downpipes to the side of the bridge, with installation of interceptors for outfalls), Painting, Potentially the replacement of the barriers (to be confirmed after corrosion investigation work). The timeline set out at the meeting was (1) 2022/2023 financial year – Jacobs instructed to undertake the feasibility study and costings for the above elements, (2) 2023/24 financial year – Design, (3) 2024/2025 – Construction.

On requesting an update, NH responded that due to the parapet strike on the bridge it has had to divert resources to undertake assessments of the structure which has established some issues which will also require localised

strengthening. NH's current programme (funded) shows completion of the feasibility stage by September 2023. The matter was discussed at length at the last Management Committee and we have agreed to wait until the outcome of the feasibility study is known before deciding on further action.

4. Harbour Office Sea Wall repairs

Phase 2 (final stage) of the sea wall has been completed successfully. The concrete refacing has included a textured finish and ecological enhancements, in addition of the reinstatement of the "Vertipools", all designed to enhance biodiversity. Colonisation will continue to be monitored voluntarily by the research team from Bournemouth University. A ladder and fendering has also been added for ease and safety of operational requirements. RHHA has sought to reduce waste and has offered the eco-form liner for reuse, the first to do so as part of a new 'library' scheme for eco-form liner to encourage more construction projects to adopt similar approaches.

RHHA was encouraged to submit the project for the CIRIA BIG Biodiversity Awards 2023 <https://www.bigchallenge.info/> The project has been entered by RHHA on behalf of Hampshire Country Council (HCC) into 2 categories – 'Innovation', and 'Small habitat <0.5ha' . Results will be announced in Autumn 2023.

5. Unpermitted development activity

Several cases of unpermitted works by 3rd parties have been observed, and these are currently under investigation by RHHA and other regulatory authorities.

6. Hook Lake Coastal Management Study

As briefed previously, RHHA is a member of the Project Steering Group and is one of several different departmental representatives of Hampshire Country Council's various interests in the site at Hook with Warsash Nature Reserve. RHHA has reviewed and responded to Coastal Partners' shortlist of options for a scheme to create intertidal habitats to compensate for those that are being/have been lost due to the management of coastal defences. RHHA's primary interest is the potential for alteration of hydrographic flows and sediment dynamics and implications for navigation. Coastal Partners will need to create an Outline Business Case in order for it to proceed to the next phase, which initially needs to include further survey and monitoring work.

In addition, RHHA has submitted information (relevant to RHHA's role and functions) to inform a wider HCC Briefing note for HCC Members. HCC is represented on the Project Board through the Countryside Service as landowner.

More at <https://coastalpartners.org.uk/project/hook-lake-coastal-management-study/> and a recent presentation of the current position at http://www.solentforum.org/networking/meeting/Hook_Lake_March2023.pdf

7. Solent European Marine Sites Management (SEMS) Responsibilities

The Environment & Development Manager (EDM) represented RHHA at the Solent Forum meeting in March, and the Natural Environment Group (NEG) in April. This engagement ensures that relevant authorities, such as RHHA, continue to fulfil their duties and remain aware pending changes relevant to environmental legislation, policies, regional plans and local projects.

<http://www.solentforum.org/networking/meeting/>

http://www.solentems.org.uk/natural_environment_group/NEG_Meetings

8. Solent Oyster Restoration project

During April, RHHA supported the Blue Marine Foundation in the placement of a licenced reef comprising a thin layer of shells and gravels on a specified subtidal area of 2,500 sq m of the riverbed, followed by the later deployment of 15,000 oysters on top. The creation of this new native oyster reef was featured on local and National BBC news programmes and well as in written news and magazine articles. The Blue Marine Foundation also made their own separate film of the project, which will be released later in the year and features interviews with RHHA officers. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-65404393>

This work has added another phase to the important work to restore the native oyster population in the Solent. Existing aspects also include the oyster aquaculture systems called ORTAC's at the Swanwick Bend (researching nutrient uptake) as well as oyster brood stock cages at two marinas (supplying juveniles into the estuarine system), and various monitoring devices.

9. Water Sports with wildlife - interactive map

RHHA has supported Bird Aware Solent with its creation of the Hamble-specific elements of its "water sports with wildlife" map and guides. The interactive map is designed to help people reduce their disturbance to protected birds and habitats, particularly with the increasing uptake of pursuits like paddleboarding. The map also pinpoints more suitable exit and entry points as well where to find local amenities. <https://birdaware.org/solent/the-solent/watersports-with-wildlife/>

10. Environmental Responsibilities of RHHA

At the RHHA Management Committee meeting of 16 June 2023, a briefing was given (for the benefit of new members and as a refresher for existing members) as to the environmental responsibilities of RHHA and the reasons for these. The slides presented are at appendix A of this report, for information.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

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.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

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 by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

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

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

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An EIA is not required as no negative impacts are anticipated.