

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Report

<b>Committee:</b>	River Hamble Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	20 December 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Environmental Update
<b>Report From:</b>	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 September and mid-November 2024.

### Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the River Hamble Management Committee notes and supports the contents of this report.

### Updates

#### 3. Maintenance Work Consents

Maintenance consent applications have been granted by the Harbour Authority for the following works this coming winter:

Hamble Point Marina - Replacements pontoons A/B and X, and replacement of the north and central access bridges.

Mercury Yacht Harbour - Maintenance dredging of Bay A/B, a single pile replacement on C Hammerhead, and the cutting and removal of approximately 50m sheet piled wall section at bed level.

#### 4. Bait Digging & Shore Gathering

RHHA has provided a consultation response to the Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority's (SIFCA) on its proposed Shore Gathering Byelaw. RHHA supports the principle of the introduction of management measures to mitigate against potential impacts from shore gathering, particularly bait digging, on relevant marine protected areas. RHHA highlighted points in relation to interaction with RHHA's own byelaws and jurisdiction, and made suggestions regarding activity levels, locations, and seasonal impacts of proposed measures.

## 5. Solent Marine Sites Management

As a Relevant Authority (RA) under the Habitats Regulations, RHHA has continued its input throughout 2024 to the Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme <https://www.solentems.org.uk/> . Under the scheme, all RAs provide information on the levels of certain pre-listed activities and the potential impacts on designated nature conservation sites within the RAs' areas of duty and responsibility. This data forms the basis of the Annual Management Report, from which actions are then taken forward by those RAs on the Natural Environment Group (NEG) to research, protect and conserve the Solent's designated sites. Additionally, RAs such as RHHA need to have regard to the Habitats Regulations and aspire to good practice through their normal work and roles. Since 1 January 2023, all public authorities have been under an enhanced statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty> .

At the autumn NEG meeting, updates were received on (a) microplastics in estuarine sediment, (b) background noise levels and disturbance to birds, (c) the conclusion of the 5-year "ReMEDIES Project" on reducing and mitigating erosion and disturbance impacts affecting the seabed habitats, including successes of advanced moorings systems in seagrass [https://www.solentems.org.uk/natural\\_environment\\_group/](https://www.solentems.org.uk/natural_environment_group/)

## 6. Hook Lake Coastal Management Study

Coastal Partners' feasibility study for intertidal habitat creation at the 40 hectare site is now complete. Hampshire County Council is a key stakeholder as land owner, site manager and highways authority (represented by other HCC Services) but RHHA has also held a separate, minor advisory role on the Steering Group since 2020.

Whilst the study established that a technically feasible intertidal habitat creation scheme was possible, it also identified some key challenges that could significantly impact the financial viability of a scheme at Hook Lake.

The main embankment at the site was damaged by significant high tides earlier this year. The Environment Agency and Hampshire County Council are now working together to set out next steps for the site in the absence of a managed habitat creation scheme.

A position statement has been prepared by Coastal Partners which sets out the findings of the Study, the current roles and responsibilities of key partners in relation to the site, current management, potential future scenarios for the management of the site, alongside the residual risks and next steps. It is available here: <https://issuu.com/coastalpartners/docs/hook-lake-position-statement-final?fr=sMTM4ZTYyOTU0NzI> The project webpage has now been updated with the latest information. <https://coastalpartners.org.uk/project/hook-lake-coastal-management-study/>

## 7. Sound archive project of the Hamble peninsula

RHHA gave assistance during 2024 to the "Hamble Peninsula Sounds" project by hosting underwater sound recording equipment both at Warsash and at the oyster reef, and the Harbour Master (HM) and Environment & Development Manager

(EDM) gave interviews for the archive. Hamble Peninsula Sounds is an Eastleigh Borough Council commissioned project, funded by Developer's Contributions for Public Art. Six audio works explore the area's past, present and future. This includes seasonal wildlife, conversations with locals, historic folk songs from the area and underwater explorations. Wild Museum are a team of artists and sound recordists who work all over the world, and regularly broadcast on BBC radio & television. For more information about the project visit <https://eastleigh.gov.uk/hp-sounds> . To hear the underwater sounds of the oyster reef alongside the interview with the EDM (and with other local workers and residents) visit item number 1 "Hooi" <https://eastleigh.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-culture/arts-and-culture/public-art/hamble-peninsula-sounds/hooi-by-tim-shaw-and-john-coburn>

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

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

## **Climate Change Impact Assessment**

**1.** Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

**2. Climate Change Adaptation.** A full assessment of climate change vulnerability was not completed as no decision is required in respect of this report.

**3. Carbon Mitigation.** A full assessment of carbon mitigation vulnerability was not completed as no decision is required in respect of this report.

## **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:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- b) 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;
- c) 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.