

5. The harbours are part of Hampshire's heavily designated south-east coast. Chichester Harbour is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Langstone Harbour shares with Chichester Harbour protection as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The harbours also have an important role in supporting tourism, commercial shipping and fishing, recreation and the local economy.
6. In recent years there has been increasing concern about the declining condition of the natural environment in both harbours particularly the level of nitrates entering the harbours from agricultural run-off via the Test and Itchen rivers and from wastewater treatment works operated by Southern Water. Climate change and other human pressures are leading to a loss of biodiversity and, without timely action, the impacts will only accelerate. As well as the obvious benefits to biodiversity, it has also become increasingly clear that coastal habitats have an important role to play in mitigating the impacts of climate change.
7. Faced with these concerns, steps have been taken by Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Langstone Harbour Board working with partners including Hampshire County Council to engage with the Environment Agency, Southern Water and others to improve the situation regarding discharges to the harbours and reversing their declining condition.
8. As part of an overall programme of action and investment, Southern Water hosted a summit on 21 May 2021 with the aim of developing a plan to improve the water quality and important natural habitats of Chichester and Langstone Harbours. The summit was attended by representatives from 16 national and local organisations including Hampshire County Council.
9. The summit confirmed that a coordinated and integrated programme of action underpinned by collaboration and partnership was required to tackle the urgent threat to the natural capital of the harbours, and the increasing pressure of climate change and population growth. A natural capital plan for the catchments and the harbours was identified as the best way to provide an integrated approach going forward.
10. Southern Water has committed to funding the delivery of the natural capital baseline, and a follow up meeting to consider and agree next steps building on and strengthening existing partnerships and projects. Given its unique role and interests in the planning and management of the coast, it is proposed that Hampshire County Council continues to work collaboratively with Southern Water and other partners on the development of a natural capital plan for Chichester and Langstone Harbours that protects the natural environment, supports tourism, recreation and the local economy, and meets the challenges of climate change.

Background

11. Chichester Harbour and Langstone Harbour are part of three linked harbours, the other being Portsmouth, on Hampshire's heavily designated south-east coast.

12. Chichester Harbour was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1964 in recognition of its high quality land and seascape. Totalling 74km², it is the smallest AONB in the South East, with 41% of its area comprising water at high tide. About 17% of the AONB is in Hampshire, the remainder in West Sussex. The Hampshire part is entirely within Havant Borough. In addition to its AONB status, the harbour is of international importance for its bird populations, marine and coastal habitats and species.
13. The Chichester Harbour Conservancy is the statutory Harbour Authority and is responsible for the safety of navigation, the regulation of moorings, works and dredging, enforcement of harbour byelaws and the collection of dues and charges. The Conservancy also acts as the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for the Chichester Harbour AONB. The Conservancy manages the AONB on behalf of the four constituent local authorities (Hampshire County Council, West Sussex County Council, Havant Borough Council and Chichester District Council) thereby exercising the powers of Hampshire County Council under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.
14. Hampshire County Council appoints four of its elected Members to the Chichester Harbour Conservancy and, under the terms of the Chichester Harbour Conservancy Act, is required to pay 50% (the balance is payable by West Sussex County Council) of an annual precept. In 2020/21 that amounted to £201,000.
15. Langstone Harbour is designated as a Special Protection Area for wildlife but is also important for commercial shipping, fishing and recreation. The statutory Harbour Authority for Langstone Harbour is the Langstone Harbour Board. The Board is in charge of safety and navigation and, under local acts and various environmental legislation, has a duty to manage environmental features in the Harbour, have due regard to nature conservation as well as pollution control and response, and to liaise with relevant authorities for conservation, flood defence, erosion risk and coastal management locally.
16. The Board has 15 members including one appointed by the Hampshire County Council from its elected Members. The Board has the power to precept the two constituent Councils (Portsmouth City Council and Havant Borough Council) annually to meet the shortfall of income over expenditure.

Environmental Concerns

17. In recent years there has been increasing concern about the declining condition of the natural environment in both harbours. Climate change and other pressures are leading to a loss of biodiversity and, without timely action, the impacts will only accelerate with rising sea levels and increased storminess, declining water quality in some areas, erosion of foreshores leaving cliffs and coastal defences increasingly exposed, 'coastal squeeze' as sea-levels rise, increased pressure from recreational activities, commercial

fisheries and aggregate extraction. As well as the obvious benefits to biodiversity, it has also become increasingly clear that coastal habitats have an important role to play in mitigating the impacts of climate change including through carbon storage and tackling excess nitrates and phosphorus.

18. There has been recent growing concern about the level of nitrates entering the harbours from agricultural run-off via the Test and Itchen rivers and from wastewater treatment works operated by Southern Water. The incidence of stormwater discharge during wet winters has attracted particular concern, with Langstone Harbour Board receiving reports of fishermen unable to pursue a living because of the effect of pollution on shellfish areas. Excessive nitrates lead to the growth of macroalgal weed which can prevent birds from feeding, exclude oxygen from the mud leading to a reduction in invertebrates, and smothering saltmarsh. Saltmarsh is an effective sequester of carbon and reduces erosion. However, it is in decline and Chichester Harbour alone has lost more than half of its saltmarsh since the mid-20th century.

The Response

19. Faced with these concerns, steps have been taken by Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Langstone Harbour Board working with Portsmouth City, Havant Borough, Chichester District, and West Sussex County Councils to engage with the Environment Agency and Southern Water in improving the situation regarding discharges to the harbours and reversing their declining condition. The County Council has supported this work and separately met with and lobbied Southern Water about discharges from its treatment plants.
20. In addition, Chichester Harbour Conservancy has formed a steering group including the Environment Agency, Natural England, and Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) to deliver 'net gain' for nature over the next 10 – 25 years. The initiative known as Chichester Harbour Protection and Recovery of Nature (CHaPRoN) will focus on priority habitats such as saltmarsh, seagrass, and oysters with an ambition of creating wildlife recovery areas from Langstone Harbour to Pagham Harbour and linked to the South Downs National Park.
21. In April this year, Southern Water announced a commitment of action and investment to improve Chichester and Langstone Harbours. As part of a £1.7billion programme across the south-east to improve the capacity and efficiency of the waste water network and reduce the number of releases from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), the water company has committed to providing a new £5million environmental improvement fund to deliver nature-based solutions and environment net-gain for both harbours. Southern Water also proposed to host a summit through the Chichester Harbour Protection & Recovery of Nature group (CHaPRoN) with the aim of developing a plan to improve the water quality and important natural habitats of Chichester and Langstone Harbours. The summit was held on 21 May 2021 with representatives from 16 national and local organisations including Hampshire County Council.

22. Independently chaired by Professor Sir Dieter Helm, former independent chair of the Natural Capital Committee (NCC), which provided advice to government on the sustainable use of natural capital, the summit confirmed that a coordinated and integrated programme of action underpinned by collaboration and partnership was required to tackle the urgent threat to the natural capital of the harbours, and the increasing pressure of climate change and population growth. A natural capital plan for the catchments and the harbours was identified as the best way to provide an integrated approach going forward. Natural Capital was defined by the NCC as 'those elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people'. The concept of natural capital is at the heart of Government's 25-year Environment Plan.

23. The steps identified following the summit, were:

- to conduct a natural capital baseline, and to re-run it at regular intervals to show empirically how the assets are being enhanced;
- to identify from all parties the enhancement opportunities and options;
- to define the vision for 2030 and 2050; and
- to analyse the various revenue streams and create a revenue model to sit alongside the baseline and enhancements.

24. Southern Water has committed to funding the delivery of the natural capital baseline and will be working with partners to ensure the scope of works will provide the data to enable an accurate baseline to measure actions against. The water company will also support the delivery of a follow up meeting to consider and agree next steps building on and strengthening existing partnerships and projects including Sussex Nature Partnership, catchment partnerships and the Solent Forum, and CHaPRoN. The appropriate governance arrangements will be agreed as part of that process.

Finance

25. The actions associated with the preparation of the natural capital baseline, including further meetings with partners to consider and agree next steps, will be funded by Southern Water. Hampshire County Council's input will be through its existing membership of Chichester Harbour Conservancy, Langstone Harbour Board, the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, and Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, with additional support from officers to help shape the plan being met within existing resources.

Consultation and Equalities

26. The decision in this report is seeking approval for Hampshire County Council's support for a collaborative approach with Southern Water and other partners to ensure that there is a long-term sustainable plan for Chichester and Langstone Harbours that protects the natural environment, supports tourism, recreation and the local economy, and meets the challenges of climate

change. It is expected that the development of the Natural Capital Plan will be informed by consultation and will undertake specific consideration of equalities issues. The decision in this report therefore has a neutral impact on groups with protected characteristics.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

27. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience 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.
28. The tools to assess specific impacts on climate change adaptation and mitigation were found not to be applicable on the grounds that the decision relates to an early-stage strategic commitment to working with partners on the preparation of a natural capital plan. Meeting the challenges of climate change is a key driver for the development of a long term plan. It is therefore recognised that work on the plan will be guided by climate change considerations and, in due course, specific elements / interventions of it will be assessed using the decision making tools or equivalents agreed as part of the governance arrangements.
29. Hampshire County Council's involvement in this initiative contributes to the Strategic Plan priorities, the Climate Change Strategy actions, and supports the recommendations of the Hampshire 2050 Commission of Inquiry.

Conclusions

30. The steps taken by Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Langstone Harbour Board working with Portsmouth City, Havant Borough, Chichester District, and West Sussex County Councils, and supported by Hampshire County Council, to engage with the Environment Agency and Southern Water in improving the situation regarding discharges to the harbours and reversing their declining condition, has made significant progress.
31. Southern Water has responded to the many concerns by committing to a programme of action and investment to improve Chichester and Langstone Harbours.
32. The summit held on 21 May 2021 has led to the promotion of a natural capital plan approach and the water company has undertaken to fund the delivery of the natural capital baseline. Southern Water will work with partners to ensure the scope of works will provide the data to enable an accurate baseline to measure actions against. The water company will also support the delivery of a follow up meeting to consider and agree next steps building on and strengthening existing partnerships and projects.

33. Hampshire County Council welcomes the significant progress that has been made and the response provided by Southern Water. Given its unique role and interests in the planning and management of the coast, it is proposed that the County Council continues to work collaboratively with Southern Water and other partners on the development of a natural capital plan for Chichester and Langstone Harbours that protects the natural environment, supports tourism, recreation and the local economy, and meets the challenges of climate change.

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 characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic 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 which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 2.1 The decision in this report is seeking approval for Hampshire County Council's support for a collaborative approach with Southern Water and other partners to ensure that there is a long-term sustainable plan for Chichester and Langstone Harbours that protects the natural environment, supports tourism, recreation and the local economy, and meets the challenges of climate change. It is expected that the development of the Natural Capital Plan will be informed by consultation and will undertake specific consideration of equalities issues. The decision in this report therefore has a neutral impact on groups with protected characteristics.