

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	River Hamble Harbour Board
Date:	7 January 2022
Title:	Environmental Update
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

Contact name: Alison Fowler

Tel: 01489 576387

Email: Alison.fowler@hants.gov.uk

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 May and mid-November 2021.

Recommendation(s)

2. It is recommended that the River Hamble Harbour Board notes and supports this report.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to highlight key issues and updates regarding RHHA's compliance with its environmental duties and its involvement in project work.

Contextual information

Solent Marine Sites Management & Recreational Habitat Disturbance:

4. RHHA attended the Solent Marine Sites Management Group (SEMS MG) meeting in September. The annual process ensures that relevant authorities such as RHHA are fulfilling duties with regards to monitoring and managing the impacts that non-regulated activities within their jurisdictions may be having on the protected sites. The annual monitoring survey results were used to produce the Annual Management Report (AMR), and then actions to be taken forward were agreed. The SEMS MG is currently chaired by the Harbour Master of RHHA. Seventeen activities are currently monitored. Of most relevance to RHHA this past year (April 2020-March 2021) has been the increased use of paddlecraft.

5. RHHA is supporting Bird Aware Solent and Natural England in the design and installation of attractive signage along the Hamble estuary to inform those undertaking paddle sports of the value of mud and marsh habitats. Users are encouraged to launch at recognised locations only, and to not haul out onto sensitive habitats that risk disturbing the protected species that feed and nest there.

Nitrates and Water Quality:

6. RHHA is awaiting delivery and installation of its new sewage pump out station for the disposal of black water from vessels into the main foul sewer.
7. RHHA has collected together various reports received over the summer of excess algae causing concern locally regarding negative impacts on habitats, on restoration projects and on commercial fishing. These have been sent to the Environment Agency, Natural England, Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority and the Solent Forum to assist with the evidence base in the work to address nitrate levels. RHHA is also supporting Portsmouth University in its work on the Rapid reduction of Nutrients in Transitional waters (RaNTrans) Project (via 8c below). The wider project will also develop algal mat removal and nutrient reduction techniques specific for intertidal mudflats elsewhere in the Solent, see <https://rantransproject.com/>.
8. Farmland bordering the estuary near Botley has recently been purchased by Eastleigh Borough Council and will be taken out of active farming as part of the nitrate neutrality work. EBC hopes to buffer this with additional tree planting and re-establishing hedgerows. This land is adjacent to that owned by Hampshire County Council (River Hamble Country Park) and is directly opposite The National Trust's Curbridge Nature Reserve, both also bordering the estuary.

Habitat/Species Research and Restoration:

9. RHHA has facilitated the use of the Hamble Estuary for several innovative projects led by universities researching the practical delivery of environmental improvements in the South's estuaries. Projects now deployed and underway (in addition to the Solent Oyster Restoration work) include:
 - a. Vertipools on the harbour office sea wall;
 - b. Subtidal tiles comparing bio-receptivity of three different concrete mixes;
 - c. Intertidal 'ortacs' researching the ability of oysters to take up nutrients from the water column;
 - d. Biodegradable grids made from potato starch being used to trap sediment, reduce erosive flows and promote saltmarsh growth;
 - e. Biodegradable grids as a potential substrate for oyster settlement;
 - f. Coir rolls as a means to protect saltmarsh edges from erosion and to encourage growth.

10. The Solent Oyster Restoration project, being led by the Blue Marine Foundation, has been granted its Marine Licence by the Marine Management Organisation to undertake the next phase of the project in the Hamble, Langstone and Newtown Creek. The licenced activities will be phased over five years and two elements are proposed in each annual phase. A shallow layer of shells and gravels ('cultch') to be accurately deposited on specified subtidal areas of the riverbed in order to recover the condition of surface sediments and create preferable oyster habitat. Juvenile native oysters and/or spat-on-shell to then be laid on top of the cultch.

11. The Environment & Development Manager (EDM) attended a national 'Estuary Edges' virtual workshop co-ordinated by the Thames Estuary, Environment Agency, Port of London Authority, Tideway, Jacobs and the Institute of Fisheries Management. The project seeks to provide a 'how to' guide on incorporating ecological design into brick, concrete and steel tidal sea walls to create a variety of habitats to ensure a significant positive ecological impact on plants, invertebrates, fish and birds. The inclusion of biodiversity features within recent work to repair the sea wall at the River Hamble Harbour Master's Office compliments this approach and will be subject to independent PhD research in order to continue to inform design and implementation in this field of work.

Harbour Office Sea Wall Repair:

12. Phase 1 of the work to repair the sea wall has been completed, including the creation of novel features to encourage biodiversity. The sea wall has been re-concreted with the use of an eco-form liner to create a textured surface, and small water-retaining ledges, crevices and pools have also been cast within the intertidal zone of the wall. These will be monitored by Bournemouth University as part of a wider PhD. An adjacent length of the wall will be repaired in the next 1 to 3 years subject to Hampshire County Council budget availability, and the aim is to create the same features, and to reinstate the Vertipools currently in situ on that section.



Maintenance Dredging

13. Routine approved maintenance dredging is due to take place over the coming winter within sections of Hamble Point Marina, Port Hamble Marina and Mercury Yacht Harbour. A Notices to River Users will be issued in advance.

Harbour Office Mural – ‘Secrets of the Solent’ Project

14. As previously reported, the RHHA Harbour Office has been selected by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIOWWT) as one of several prominent locations across the Solent to host a small mural to raise the profile of local native biodiversity. Murals have already been completed at Langstone Harbour Office, Hythe Pier and Newport Library. The Warsash mural has been delayed to Spring 2022 due to artist availability. The species currently in the lead on the public vote is the lobster.

Hamble Estuary Partnership

15. A meeting of the Hamble Estuary Partnership was held on 6 October 2021. Over 20 member organisations gave updates on their work relevant to the estuary. The following presentations were given by:
 - (i) Coastal Partners on the Hook Lake Coastal Management Study which is looking at the potential to create intertidal habitat and to integrate wider opportunities for place and community.
 - (ii) The Royal Yachting Association on a potential partnership project to demonstrate the Hamble Estuary as a case study for using boating technologies and partnerships to deliver a more sustainable future and

to help deliver on the UN Global Goals and the UK's Zero Carbon targets.

Members are encouraged to view the minutes, updates and presentations at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/riverhamble/hambleestuarypartnership>.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

16. 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.
17. Climate Change Adaptation: A full assessment of climate change vulnerability was not completed as no decision is required in respect of this report.
18. Carbon Mitigation: A full assessment of carbon mitigation vulnerability was not completed as no decision is required in respect of this report.

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.