

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	River Hamble Harbour Management Committee
Date:	6 December 2019
Title:	Environmental Update
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business 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 June and November 2019.

Recommendation

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

Updates

Oil Spill Preparedness & Response

3. On the 1 October 2019, all RHHA staff and our oil spill response contractor, Adler & Allan, undertook the 3-yearly oil spill response and boom deployment exercise, required by the Regulator. This comprised a table top exercise in the harbour office and practical boom deployment on the river at Lower Swanwick. This was a new location not practiced before which may present a realistic option for on-water capture of a spill that has occurred or travelled further upstream. The exercise objectives were to:
 - Validate the RHHA Oil Spill Contingency Plan (OSCP).
 - Exercise and develop skills required of key individuals for a Tier 2 oil spill
 - Set up the joint Operation Management Team in situ.
 - Test the operational interface between RHHA, Adler and Allan and other external agencies.
 - Test the capability, response time, and deployment of physical resources and personnel.

- Use the most appropriate available resources to make the response effective.
- Exercise and refresh the deployment skills of Tier 1 responders.
- Consider arrangements for disposal of recovered oil and oily waste.
- Confirm the OSCP fully considers the environment and habitat regulations in controlling and cleaning up pollution in the area.
- Log all documents, information and actions to assist / prevent claims and costs.
- To test the operation of the Incident Command Centre (ICC).

The exercise was observed by the Regulator (Maritime & Coastguard Agency). Remote role play was undertaken with the Environment Agency, Natural England, Premier Marinas Ltd, HCC Emergency Planning & Resilience Team, and the exercise was observed by our Assistant Director and colleagues from British Marine and Cowes Harbour Commission. The exercise report concluded *“a positive ability to respond to a pollution incident and awareness of some of the wider issues surrounding them. The scenario proved a successful way for the response and management teams to learn more about each other’s roles, responsibilities, and probable course of action under such circumstances”*. The addition of another tested booming location will provide a useful update for the OSCP.

M27 bridge drainage & pollution risk

4. Further to the meeting earlier in the year between the EDM, Harbour Master (HM) and representatives from Kier Highways Services, bmJV and Highways England, the EDM has received confirmation that the work to divert the bridge deck drainage outlets will be delivered as part of the M27 ‘Smart Motorway Works’ by March 2021. Highways England stated it will then be looking to bid for funding for work to implement further improvements to the other drainage arrangements (i.e. the penstocks to control spills) when funding bids open again from April 2020.

Water Quality

5. In June, the Environment Agency and Natural England hosted a ‘Solent boating and water quality workshop’, attended by the EDM and Chaired by RHHA’s HM. The aim is to reduce the risk of pollution from discharges of ‘black water’ from vessel toilets by looking at ways to improve disposal facilities and to change recreational boating behaviour. It is important to work with all sectors to tackle the various sources of bacterial contamination into the marine environment which may present a hazard to human health, effect local communities and the economy, and may impact the Solent's 22 bathing beaches or 18 shellfish harvesting areas. In October, a sub-group including marina group representatives, Environment Agency, Southern Water and RHHA met to discuss improvements that might be made to facilities in the Hamble including pump-out provision and promotional/educational material.

Biodiversity & Enhancement Projects

6. The Environment & Development Manager (EDM) has been working to promote the Hamble Estuary to authorities and research institutions as a prime location for them to undertake pending trials investigating a variety of methods to enhance biodiversity within the coastal environment. These include:
 - (i) Work on saltmarsh restoration underway as part of the Beneficial Reuse of Dredging Projects (BUDS).
 - (ii) Research by Bournemouth University to increase biodiversity on sea walls, as part of the EU Interreg funded Marineff Project which “aims to produce solutions for habitat and biodiversity loss in the coastal zone, which will be proven to be ecologically viable while appealing to the coastal infrastructure industry as feasible, affordable and easy to incorporate”.
 - (iii) A PhD project, starting November 2019, to test the efficacy of different settlement structures (e.g. bivalve shells, potato starch grids) at different tidal/subtidal heights on increasing bivalve settlement, and increasing wider biodiversity and on reducing saltmarsh erosion. The EDM hosted officers from Portsmouth University, the Environment Agency and Natural England and to discuss details with reference to using the Hamble.

7. The EDM has joined the project working group of the Solent Forum’s new information hub “Building Biodiversity in the Solent”. The aim is to bring together information to help meet future net gain requirements in the marine environment. See more at http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/Building_Bioversity_hub/

8. Samples taken in October by the EDM of HCC’s saltmarshes on the Hamble are forming part of a dataset to inform a national research project investigating carbon storage in intertidal environments. In addition to the many valuable services that saltmarshes provide to biodiversity and flood defence, they also act as an important carbon sink. Although much smaller in size than the planet's forests, saltmarshes sequester carbon at a much faster rate and can continue to do so for longer. <https://www.c-side.org/>

Solent European Marine Sites Management

9. The EDM represented RHHA at the Solent European Marine Sites Management Group (SEMS MG) meeting in September, and the associated Natural Environment Group in October. This annual process ensures that relevant authorities such as RHHA are fulfilling duties with regards to monitoring and managing the impacts that activities (as opposed to plans or developments) have on the protected SEMS. A particular focus was given to the disturbance of habitats and species, and to water quality. The SEMS MG is now chaired by the RHHA HM.
Minutes and presentations for each can be found at <http://www.solentems.org.uk/> & http://www.solentems.org.uk/natural_environment_group/NEG_Meetings/

Partnership Working

10. Managers from HCC's ETE department and from the Countryside Service attended the Harbour Office in August to receive an update on local coastal issues relevant to other HCC teams. Information was also shared with the HM and EMD on HCC's wider involvement with work related to coastal flooding and erosion risk management at both strategic and operational levels.
11. A meeting of the Hamble Estuary Partnership was held on 10 July 2019. Presentations and discussions on the following topics took place:
 - The design, use, disposal and pollution potential of polystyrene filled pontoon floats.
 - The Environment Agency's source-to-sea approach of managing environmental issues of concerns within the wider Hamble catchment.
 - Local authority determinations of planning applications in relation to Natural England's concerns over the impacts of nitrates (and nitrogen dioxide) on sites designated for nature conservation.Each HEP member gave an update on their organisation's work that is relevant to the Hamble Estuary. Members are encouraged to view the minutes and presentations at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/riverhamble/hambleestuarypartnership>
12. As Officer of the Hamble Estuary Partnership, the EDM attended the National Coastal Partnerships conference in Southampton in October to share examples of integrated coastal management within the Hamble with national colleagues, and to receive updates on related work taking place across UK.

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, Mercury Yacht Harbour and Swanwick Marina.

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.