

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	River Hamble Harbour Board
Date:	25 September 2020
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 March and mid-August 2020.

Recommendation

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

Updates

Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area (SPA):

3. The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA has now been classified and it includes the Hamble Estuary. It aims to protect the internationally important populations of terns (common tern, sandwich tern & little tern) that feed around the South Coast. It applies during the months April to September and covers the area that the terns use for foraging, which is by 'plunge diving' into the water. The existing Solent SPA designated sites cover where the terns breed and also cover where other bird species breed and forage on the intertidal areas. The landward boundary of this new SPA is at mean low water where it abuts the Solent and Southampton Water SPA site (i.e. within the Hamble this is Bunny Meadows, Lincegrove & Hacketts Marsh, Upper Hamble). Elsewhere, the landward boundary is mean high water. This adds to the high level of environmental protection afforded to bird populations in the Hamble Estuary.

Harbour Office - sea wall repair:

4. The sea wall around the harbour office, constructed in 1900, requires repair. RHHA Environment & Development Manager is working with Hampshire County

Council colleagues and WSP consultants on an appropriate design, on applications for consents and on preparing tender documents for construction. The work will be conducted in two phases. Hampshire County Council central funding has now been made available for phase 1 of the works. The estimated pre-tender budget is likely to be in the order of £60k for this first phase. Subject to consents, phase 1 repair (from the slipway seaward to the harbour office steps) should take place in Spring 2021. Phase 2 (office steps to Lobster Quay) is aimed to take place in 2 or 3 year's time subject to budget. The planned repair will be a new concrete facing and coping. The small encroachment onto foreshore will require environmental mitigation. This is proposed to be in the form of an 'eco-textured' concrete surface with ecological enhancement 'features' (ledges and water-retaining holes) in some tidal sections of the wall to increase biodiversity value. Bournemouth University has expertise in this field and is assisting with design work, and wishes monitor results to further our collective understanding of how biodiversity can be improved on harbour walls and structures. As a maintenance project, this will not be formally put before the Management Committee and Harbour Board for determination. Formal applications will, however, be submitted to the Marine Management Organisation, Fareham Borough Council and the Environment Agency.

Sea Wall research project:

5. Further to item 6(ii) in the Environment Update report of January 2020, Bournemouth University will be using a section of the harbour office sea wall to attach artificial rockpools, 'Vertipools', as part of a European Interreg fully funded project taking place around the English Channel researching how biodiversity can be improved on harbour walls and structures. These will be installed in Autumn 2020 on the section of sea wall running from the pontoon access bridge north, and has agreement from Warsash Sailing Club to include its Lobster Quay wall also. The pools will be in place for at least 2 years, and it is proposed that they are reinstated after phase 2 of the harbour office wall repair to increase the wall's biodiversity value. With the UK planning legislation set to change, whereby future planning applications will require developers to produce a 'net gain' in biodiversity, along with increasing pressure to create enhancements within maintenance projects as well, this is a good opportunity for RHHa to support research into improving the biodiversity value of coastal assets.

Bird-friendly pile cap success:

6. To prevent the loss of a known nest site for oyster catchers on top of a mid-stream mooring pile, a bespoke pile cap was designed and fitted in March 2020 when the timber pile was replaced with a steel pile. This was funded by The Crown Estate. Instead of installing a standard conical cap, the pile cap was designed to a dish shape then filled with beach gravel. Within weeks, oyster catchers nested here. Improved future drainage design is under discussion with the manufacturers, but the intention is to use more of these to add biodiversity value to harbour structures. There has been much interest from regulatory authorities, other harbours and the boating community.



Maintenance Work:

7. Pile replacement of end-of-life piles at Port Hamble Marina has been approved, programmed to take place October to December 2020.

Solent Oyster Restoration Project:

8. RHHA continues to support the work of the Blue Marine Foundation. Its project team is preparing licence submissions for the next phase, which will include the laying of cultch (a layer of shells and local gravels) on a subtidal area of sea bed, followed by seeding this with oysters from its own Portsmouth hatchery, ideally this winter.

Saltmarsh Restoration Research:

9. RHHA is working with the Environment Agency and Portsmouth University to support a new PhD project to take place on the Hamble. It will involve the placement and monitoring of temporary biodegradable structures (potato starch grids) within the intertidal and subtidal edges of some of the Hamble's saltmarshes. The research will monitor the ability of these grids to trap sediment, create new marsh habitat that may prevent saltmarsh erosion, promote saltmarsh regrowth, and provide a surface for native oysters and other species to settle on. The project is currently going through licencing, with an aim to commence from autumn 2020 till 2023.

Fisheries & shellfisheries:

10. RHHA has been undertaking frequent liaison with the Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority, marine police, commercial fishermen, recreational anglers and Southampton Port Health Authority regarding the legalities of various reported fishing practices within the river. In addition, a large-scale cockle picking operation, uncovered just outside the Hamble in June, is under investigation by The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

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.