

Solent Scoping Study – Workshop 2 Outputs Summary

Compiled Notes on Outcomes and Actions

Action Theme

Enabling Actions

1) Funding

Establish a joint mechanism for funding habitat change in the Solent, linked to the “Vision”. There is a wide range of actions that need to be coordinated to deliver this including:

- Explore cross boundary issues, we already know there are institutional barrier with Section 106 funding;
- Build upon the funding experience that exists within the stakeholders (and also outside). Stakeholder with significant experience include the RSPB, National Trust, Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and the County Council funding teams. This will assist in the identification of additional funding sources, additional to those already identified e.g. Funding consider Heritage lottery fund, LIFE project , High Level Stewardship;
- Investigate the opportunities for charitable status which may provide advantages in maximising funding opportunities (tax efficiency);
- Investigate the opportunities that may be provided by Biodiversity offsetting (see below). This may assist in delivering the “Vision”. This may also provide opportunities outside the coastal defence; and
- Determine the effectiveness of funding. This will need to be monitored (i.e. how many sites do we have within the Solent, at any one time under High Level Stewardship schemes) and enable efforts to be focussed into areas that are most effective and may provide opportunities to modify arrangements to provide better outcomes.

Achieving a coordinated funding approach, can be effectively delivered through the creation of a small team/group within the stakeholder group. A cross boundary organisation such as the Havant Portsmouth and Gosport Coastal Partnership may be well placed to lead on this.

2) Biodiversity offsetting

Biodiversity offsetting has been defined as – “Biodiversity offsets are conservation activities designed to deliver biodiversity benefits in compensation for losses, in a measurable way. We think that biodiversity offsetting has the potential to deliver planning policy requirements for compensation for biodiversity loss in a more effective way.”¹

Offsets can involve habitat expansion (creation) or restoration:

¹ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/uk/offsetting/>

- expansion (creation): establish priority habitat³ on land where it is not present and where no significant relicts of the habitat currently exist; and
- Restoration: improve the condition of the existing habitat resource.

The Natural Environment White Paper² announced that biodiversity offsetting is being piloted in England for 2 years, from April 2012, none of the pilot areas lie within the Solent. Additional information can be obtained through Defra at: bio-offsetting@defra.gsi.gov.uk and also through the Natural England biodiversity offsetting adviser in the area, who is tasked with providing support to the local authorities, and assessing the offsetting projects put forward.

3) Data collection and storage of bird counts and movement

Explore the opportunities to establish a central location for data recording and analysis. Currently data is held by a diverse range of organisations and individuals, collating this at a central repository will assist in the analysis and coordination of future data capture. Several possibilities were identified during the workshop including:

- Hampshire Biological Information Centre;
- Channel Coast Observatory;
- Wildlife Trusts;
- RSPB;
- British Trust for Ornithology; and
- Local Nature Partnerships.

It is recognised that there may be a reticence by some voluntary organisations to release data to commercial or governmental organisations and an approach should be agreed which leads to the maximum availability of data. There will be a need to establish funding arrangements to allow this centralised collection to be managed on an ongoing basis.

4) Engagement

Develop a Solent wide engagement strategy that reflects the “Vision” including:

- Build upon wider partnerships, including the established groups and bodies involved within the scoping study workshops to identify local organisations with good working relationships with local landowners;
- As many of the issues need to be addressed across local authority boundaries it will be important to involve the Elected Members. Consideration should be given to using a similar approach to that adopted with the North Solent SMP where an Elected Members Group was established to participate in the development of the plan.

² <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

- Develop clear and concise message which can be consistently promoted;
- Identify who are the “Champions” (keen to promote) and who are the “Blockers” (most averse to changes) in the engagement plan and plan ways to manage this. There should be a long term aim of building on existing relationships and working to change negative perceptions of change;
- Ongoing education will form a key element of this, the use of demonstration sites and projects that could be used as examples for positive change - e.g. Darkwater, Medmerry may help to raise awareness. This will be particularly useful where these deliver multiple benefits (flood defence, habitat creation and additional amenity value);
- Encourage the involvement of additional stakeholders. Both existing and new participants will have useful information about the engagement process and have ideas on who else to engage and how to best engage with others; and
- The engagement process will need to be managed and coordinated; the establishment of a web site may help with providing both a source of information, consistent message and education opportunities. There is a financial cost to maintaining good engagement and this will need to be addressed during the funding considerations

Action Theme

Institutional arrangements and Sectoral aspects

1) **Openly discuss the limitations of the Habitat Regulations** and agree a way forward that represents the needs of the Solent.

- The Expert panel and Natural England to meet and discuss the need to consider the broader Environmental Management of the Solent and the limitations of the current Hab Regs. (Intertidal and terrestrial links should be made much stronger).
- NE and LPAs to lobby for changes to Habs Regs, with a review of current designations to meet long term vision.
- Written agreement with NE should be developed around the principle that: Medmerry can compensate intertidal coastal squeeze across the Solent and a similar strategic based compensation for High Level Roosting sites can be adopted either Solent side or with each Network.

2) **Ensure that Shoreline Management Plans are fully embedded in Local Planning Policy** across the networks and Solent.

- Coastal Change Management Areas should be identified at the earliest opportunity by all LPAs, these areas must cover all sectoral interests that impact the management of High Level Roost sites. (To include High Level Roosting by birds and Recreation, which are in conflict in many cases)

3) Develop an **agreed understanding with Natural England of when compensation and mitigation are required.**

- A written position on the spatial (Network or Solent wide) and temporal requirement for compensation and mitigation should be agreed at a meeting between The EA, NE and the Coastal Groups. Link to Action 1.

4) **Work with NE to develop Solent-specific advice to planners and coastal managers.**

- Obtain written agreement on the level of sign-off required; national or local both within Networks and/or Solent wide.

Action Theme

Develop an environmental vision for Solent (Temporal and Spatial).

Actions

1) Explore with the Environment Agency and other members of the Expert Panel (established through this Scoping Study), the **opportunities to learn from and /or adapt the current scope of the Regional Habitat Change Programme (RHCP)** to include environmental sites above mean high water; *Specific Sub-actions to include:*

- Undertake a review of the early phases of work undertaken for RHCP. Review opportunities for different habitats identified through use of the GIS tool.
- Within the RHCP, determine if regional habitat loss and gain accounts are held and how they are updated.
- Develop understanding of inputs from SMP2s, CDS's, maintenance or overall loss and gain account, programme for delivery of habitats.

2) Identify a list **of sites, within each Network, that have potential to provide compensation and mitigation** for High Level Roost sites, this should include sites that are not optimal at this time; *Specific Sub-actions to include:*

- Evaluate the list of sites based on criteria identified by the Scoping Study (workshop 1) summarised in section x.xx to create a prioritised list of sites.
- Link the site list with Local Development Plans across the Solent to omit land already allocated or with conflicting uses.
- Create a GIS database of sites, building on the data from this Scoping Study, which can be updated as sites are developed or become available. This should be linked back to strategic studies already undertaken for the Solent – W&BGS, SD&MS.

3) Establish an **agreed position**, within each network (or Solent wide if it can be achieved) **of the socio-economic contribution of recreation, amenity and agricultural** sites where there is potential for coastal change. (The scope of this action may need to consider other sectoral uses).

- Experience at a number of sites across the Solent has shown that the socio-economic value of recreation and amenity is important in helping to justifying management arrangements on High Level Roost sites. A rank or scoring of sites based on amenity/recreational interest should be undertaken to help inform the outputs of Action 2.
- Sites considered critical or high-priority for other sectoral uses should be identified and linked to the outputs of Action2 and joint funding plans.

4) **A shared Vision on Environmental Sites should be developed with all District, the Environment Agency and Natural England.**

- Closer links between all LAs across the Solent to be made to reinforce the importance of Coastal Change Management Areas and unlock the broader environmental needs of the Solent.

General Notes – compiled from observations and notes following Workshop 2.

1. Confirmation of Network Understanding

- There was general consensus that these actions were about right and needed keeping up-to-date.
- To review the data should be a short-term, one-off project, led by an organisation that can also consider what information we will need in the future to improve our understanding of the network of sites (specifically movement between sites).
- A system should be established to keep our understanding up-to-date longer term, as these actions are ongoing and should be well planned.
- It was noted that significant amounts of data is already available, and the appropriate organisation to hold / collate this data could be Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, RSPB or Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC – who are potentially best placed to hold and collate information - however funding would be required, as this is beyond the capacity of current resources – Lucy Sheffield is the contact for information here.)
- It was also noted that a key piece of knowledge we need, is sites that are used by birds during extreme weather. Therefore we may need to think about getting counters out to sites during extreme weather conditions / during very high tides. These sites, though not key at all times, may be essential to maintaining the network during certain conditions.
- To obtain a better understanding of ‘networks of sites’ it was recommended that the WeBS counters could be invited to a workshop to abstract information that is not reflected by the core counts raw data. Natural England advised that they would accept such anecdotal information gathering, however firmer evidence would be needed to validate anecdotal information when making key decisions.
- It was noted that a lot of data is held within the planning system, where planning permission has been sought at individual sites – could HBIC hold relevant data from these. Noted that it would be a massive task to trawl through historic planning apps to gather information, however, should be considered for future planning apps – lots of potential for extra data here.

Links:

- Between Action 1 and Outcome 1: Confirming our understanding of a site network to date, and to recommend future studies to enhance this understanding is an ideal 3-year PhD study. Failing this, the Solent Forum may be able to coordinate stakeholders to deliver this link. HBIC / RSPB / H&IWT could collate / coordinate data. It would be good to develop an independent / respected body.
- Between Action 1 and Outcome 2: For this link we need to bring together experts, perhaps via the Solent Forum to obtain ‘buy in’ to our understanding. This would likely require the input of specialist consultants.

2. Improve understanding of use of networks by bird populations.

- Although the table agreed with the actions, they highlighted that habitats and other species were as important as birds, and should not be forgotten when improving our network understanding.

Links:

- Between Action 2 and Outcome 1: Need to understand those sites that are suitable high tide roost sites during extreme tides etc, and those which will become more suitable in the future. Channel Coast Observatory may be best placed to lead here.

3. Develop an environmental vision for Solent (Temporal and Spatial).

- It was suggested that this set of actions should come at the top of the list of actions (although a debate followed, that we need to understand the network before establishing a vision).
- It was suggested that this set of actions could form a potential pathway to funding. It gives 'ownership' allowing other actions to happen.

Links:

- Between Action 3 and Outcome 12: Stakeholders all need to 'buy in' to vision. The expert panel may be best placed to establish the vision. This would need to be consulted with wider stakeholders (with a clear process recorded of how we identified stakeholders).

4. Institutional arrangements and sectoral aspects.

- We need to work with Natural England to see what needs to be / could be changed (e.g Ramsar). There needs to be a written agreement (i.e. to expand on the principle that Medmerry can compensate coastal squeeze across the Solent).
- Any vision should first attempt to fit within the Habs Regs (which can be interpreted in many ways) but if a change is absolutely necessary to form a clear vision, Natural England will need consulting.
- Natural England are keen to help interpret the Habs Regs and advise on whether any strategy vision fits within them.
- At present, if a development is proposed in Portsmouth Harbour, you would only need to consider 'in combination' effects within Portsmouth Harbour, however if we widen our view to the Solent, we will need to assess 'in combination' effects of whatever we are doing Solent wide.

4.2 Ensure SMPs are fully linked to Local Planning Policy across the networks and Solent.

- It was noted that this action should already be happening – and if not, we need to investigate why.

4.3 Use of Coastal Change Management Areas to link sectoral interests together and enable SMP delivery.

4.4 Work with Natural England to develop understanding of the information requirements for decision-making. (Where compensation and mitigation are required).

4.5 Work with NE to develop Solent-specific advice to planners and coastal managers. Determine level of sign-off of advice – national or local.

- A very legitimate request for Natural England to lead on 4.4 and 4.5 above, but it falls to all others to sign up to (e.g. local planning authority).
- There is a need for LA's to work consistently and much wider than designated sites. Natural England are not the only key authority for these actions.
- It was noted that all stakeholders generally need a better understanding of the Habitat Regulations (i.e. if we have policy that states we intend to hold the line, but we don't, what are the costs and implications of losing habitat behind – as this is likely to require compensating if it's designated).
- We have an opportunity (but only for 12 months) to influence the National Planning Policy Framework here – and should therefore jump on this opportunity before it's too late – therefore a priority action).

Links:

- Between Action 4 (specifically 4.2 & 4.3) and Outcome 10: It should be explored whether each local authority is incorporating SMP Policy into its development control decisions. We have a real but limited opportunity to influence the new National Planning Policy Framework (the next 12 months)

5. Coordinated funding, resources and engagement.

- Wider partnerships – identify local organisations with good working relationships with local landowners. Long term aim of building on existing relationships and working to change negative perceptions of change.
- Education – identify demonstration sites that could be used as examples for positive change – e.g. Darkwater, Medmerry
- Utilise the HPGCP – as a lever to facilitate funding and resourcing change.

New sub-action: Identify vehicle to monitor ongoing process (i.e. how many sites do we have within the Solent, at any one time under High Level Stewardship schemes)?

New sub-action: Agreements into perpetuity (i.e. if Portsmouth provides compensation High Bird Roost sites for Havant, Portsmouth wouldn't be able to compensate for its own needs on the same site in the future!

Links:

- Between Action 5 and new outcome 13: Need to improve the understanding across local authorities and if possible, influence the development of core strategies. Core strategies may need to be multi-pronged looking beyond district boundaries and forming links. The local authorities then maintain the understanding at officer and member (political) level. This is linked to the vision

Outcomes:

1. The geographical networks of locations and interconnectivity
 2. Understand how the networks function
 3. Establish a funded MTP / LTP for the network (s)
 4. Establish mgt arrangements for implementation of MTP/LTP
- The above 4 outcomes were noted as being the most important
5. Identify the sites that can provide compensation
 6. Identify when compensation is required
 7. Institutional frameworks to unlock the problem (local to international)
- It was suggested that key representatives would meet to decide the future for the Solent, and we should aim for a signed memorandum of agreement.
8. Identify the sites of major importance for recreation (now and the future)
- **Need for New Action?** – more specific to recreation. Lots of information exists. Green open spaces is another GIS layer that could be useful.
9. identify when mitigation is required and what it looks like
- Before necessarily looking for compensation sites, could better day to day management of existing sites be a suitable alternative? Needs to be sustainable – i.e. the sites assets for which it has compensated to be maintained (not lost).
10. Coastal change management areas are established (man made change)
- Consider changing 'established' to 'identify' – as the project itself will not establish CCMA's.
 - Establishment of CCMA's would benefit from a coordinated approach Solent wide.

11. Consider the impacts of climate change within the network(s) (natural change)

12. Community / stakeholder groups understand the need for change.

- Outcome 12 is likely to be more important on a site specific basis – with concentrated engagement etc.

New Outcome 13: Receive Political buy-in (need to think outside of LA boundaries, especially for compensatory habitats)