



Natural Environment Group

24 April 2024: Meeting Notes

Please note all presentations and chat links can be accessed at: Solentems - Natural Environment Group Meetings. These meeting notes just record the business aspects of this meeting.

Actions Arising from the Last Meeting (01/11/23)

Kate Ansell discussed the collation of research relating to recreational sea fishing and angling. Instead of preparing a separate paper, it was decided to integrate this information into the [SEMS activity fisheries page](#).

Update on NEG actions from SEMS

There were three specific actions allocated to NEG from the SEMS Annual Management Report, 2023:

1. The first action was regarding the Catchwise project which will report on recreational sea angling. Data from this project will be available in 2025 and it will be added to the [SEMS activity fisheries page](#).
2. There have been no concerns raised about the impacts of drones or other aerial recreation activities on birds by Bird Aware Solent or others. This action will be reinstated if data from the SEMS Annual Survey raises it as an issue.
3. Chichester Harbour Conservancy has no current additional evidence on the potential impacts of paddle sports on designated sites. Bird Aware Solent have been undertaking a '[Watersports with Wildlife](#)' campaign that seeks to educate paddle/wind sport participants on how to avoid disturbing birds. Natalie Hands from Bird Aware Solent provided an update on the availability of materials for participants, including downloadable leaflets and an interactive map covering the New Forest to Southampton Water, with Langstone and Chichester Harbours nearly ready for launch. The project is also focussing on business outreach with local clubs and she requested assistance in identifying receptive clubs for engagement.
4. There was a generic action for NEG to continue to support the Solent Seascape Project's delivery of a data portal and a State of Nature Report.

Louise MacCallum from the Blue Marine Foundation gave a quick update on the progress of this project. The portal will consolidate the data available from various partners and stakeholders in the project as well as wider work in the Solent. It is intended for public access and will feature technical GIS information, and a Story Map, which is an executive summary style pop up section for broader understanding. It aims to address the challenge of accessing and comparing data in the Solent. The portal's iterative development approach will inform subsequent phases, culminating in the release of a State of Nature report and the portal itself in September 2024. These resources will support stakeholder engagement for creating a Seascape Recovery Plan based on scientific evidence.

Finance update, incl. money available for projects – 2023/4

Karen McHugh provided an overview of the financial status for the year, detailing income, expenditure, and reserves. She noted typical income and expenditure patterns, highlighting the SEMS annual survey hosting expenses and administrative fees. Further discussions would take place on available project income once the reserve reaches its designated threshold. Overall, she reassured the group that the financial accounts are in line with expectations.

NEG Project funding allocation 2024/5

Kate Ansell noted that four project submissions had been received for 2024/5. These were 'Project Portunus', 'Multispectral Drone', 'Solent Seascape Project – restoration trial: Can restoration of fragmented saltmarsh creeks be fast-tracked through active intervention?' And 'When is a Wading Bird not a Wading Bird'? She noted that voting forms for the submissions had been sent out and twelve votes were received from NEG members. Each project's requested funding amount and submitting organisation were presented, along with an overview of the voting outcomes and which projects could proceed with or without NEG funding.

Kate Ansell recommended to fund two projects based on the available budget. To allocate £1.5K for Project Portunus, a citizen science project involving subtidal habitat surveys by a sub aqua club in Langstone and Chichester Harbours. This project will engage recreational participants in improving the evidence base in the Solent. A further £2.5K is proposed for the Wading Bird project, which involves deploying cameras to study bird assemblages across mud flats, with a focus on starlings but also including other species. The funding will cover the cost of the cameras, with volunteers trained to process the data.

The Group approved the recommendation.

Presentations:

- [Intertidal Seagrass Restoration in the Solent - Fathom Ecology](#)
- [Osborne Bay Voluntary No Anchor Zone - Natural England](#)
- [Mapping of Seafloor Debris in Intertidal of Solent Maritime SAC – APEM Ltd](#)
- [Blue Marine Foundation Seagrass Policy Report - Blue Marine Foundation](#)

12.00 pm. AOB and Close

Kate Ansell reminded relevant authorities (RA's) about the deadline for submitting their Solent Marine Sites annual survey returns, stressing the importance of this data for the annual management report. Jess Taylor emphasised the importance for RA's to submit their returns as it underpins the work that NEG and the Solent Forum does.

Tim Ferrero asked for volunteers to assist with recreational surveys at Osborne Bay during August and September, highlighting the importance of obtaining a full dataset to observe any behaviour changes. Other sites are available for volunteering if Osborne Bay is inconvenient.

Jess Taylor concluded by encouraging members to share any relevant work or topics for future discussions.

The group will next meet on 20 Nov 2024 via MS Teams.

Attendees

David Newton	APEM Ltd
Steven Holroyd	APEM Ltd
Natalie Hands	Bird Aware Solent
Rosalie Wright	Blue Marine Foundation
Louise MacCallum	Blue Marine Foundation
Aisling McGarrigle	Blue Marine Foundation
Tom Day	Chichester DC
Lucy Sheffield	Coastal Partners
Paul Howe	Eastleigh BC
Rayner Piper	Fathom Ecology
Tim Ferrero	Hants and Wight Wildlife Trust
Tristan Norton	Havant BC
Zara McKie	Isle of Wight Council
Sue Hawley	Isle of Wight Estuaries Project
Megan Roberts	Langstone HB
Kate Heath	MMO
Zia Fikardos	MMO
Jess Taylor (Chair)	Natural England
Caitlin Napleton	Natural England
Ian Barker	New Forest NPA
Alison Fowler	River Hamble Harbour Authority
Caitlin Mason	Royal Haskoning
Kate Ansell (secretariat)	Solent Forum
Karen McHugh	Solent Forum
Lindsay McCulloch	Southampton CC
Hester Churchouse	Southern IFCA
Fay Pisani	Three Harbours
Zoe Keeble	Winchester CC
Daisy Durden	WWF

Apologies

Gavin Holder	Coastal Partners
Ricardo Zanre	WWF
Jackie Mellan	Environment Agency
Karen Eastley	Test Valley BC
Anna Parry	Bird Aware Solent
Adam Cave	Environment Agency
Gill Glover	Havant BC

