



Solent Marine Sites (SEMS)

Annual Management Report 2021

**Prepared by the Solent Forum on behalf of
the SEMS Management Group**

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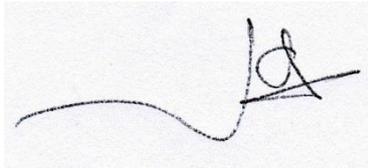
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Foreword

The relevance of this group has been re-affirmed by the results of collective effort to build empirical data on changing activity levels affecting our area of influence following the lifting of COVID restrictions. Thank you for your continued support and for a hundred percent strike rate on returns to our secretariat. This evidence has provided valuable capital upon which relevant agencies can build meaningful plans to protect our environment. The structuring of reports this year is similar but the eye is drawn to the trends advertised in the new and instructive Table 3. Some of the results will not be a surprise. Activity increases are evident in five areas: grazing and foraging, general beach recreation, land recreation (dog walking), land recreation – walking (other than dog walking) and recreation – non-motorised watercraft. What slips just below the radar and, but for one report, would otherwise merit an increased rating, is litter. How and whether these activities continue or become more prevalent will be interesting over the next 12 months.

Please feel free to contact me, Karen or Kate directly about the content or if you'd like to discuss anything. As ever, there is no monopoly on wisdom, and we welcome any ideas or input you may have. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Scott', written on a light-colored background.

Jason Scott
Chair, SEMS
River Hamble Harbour Master

1 Executive Summary

In 2021, seventeen non-licensable coastal and marine activities that take place in the Solent were surveyed for the Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Annual Management Scheme. Of the thirty one Relevant Authorities in the Solent invited to complete the survey, all responded. Respondents were asked how participation in these activities had changed since the previous year, and whether they believed they were having an impact on SEMS. The Survey results can be accessed at: solentems.org/publications/SEMS_2021_ASR_Final.pdf.

This Annual Management Report evaluates and discusses the survey responses, reviews the existing management measures and identifies actions. Natural England provide a statement on whether they believe these activities are impacting on SEMS.

Supplementary information and additional resources on each of the activities can be found on the SEMS website at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/.

Past years' data reflected a period of stability in the activities that take place within the Solent. However in 2020, there were significant increases reported in coastal walking (including dog walking), general beach recreation and non-motorised watersports. The latter reflecting the huge growth in the use of paddleboards. People foraging also increased and so did the use of motorised watercraft. Bird Aware monitoring data on visits to the coast showed a sharp increase during winter 2020/21. Next year's data will help to put this into context, so we can evaluate whether these increases are a one off due to Covid restrictions or this growth is maintained.

Activities highlighted by multiple respondents potentially impacting on SEMS sites included shore-based fishing (bait digging and hand gathering), coastal walking with and without dogs, and the use of paddlesports. The issue of bird disturbance from dog walking is ongoing in the Solent and it is being addressed by the Bird Aware Solent partnership. Litter is an issue that remains elevated, the Forum's Natural Environment Group have established a 'Clean Solent Shores and Seas' resource hub to help address this matter.

This year's Survey returns reflect an unprecedented time due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Full lockdown meant that activity became negligible in Spring 2020, but the releasing of restrictions during summer 2020 led to a huge increase in people accessing the coast and participating in coastal and marine activities. SEMS ran a snapshot survey to try and capture some of this change, the report can be accessed at: www.solentems.org/publications/Covid_Snapshot_Survey_summer2020_Report.pdf.

This Report also recognises the ongoing good work that is being undertaken by the Solent's Relevant Authorities, and the trade associations and user groups for recreational activities, to protect and conserve the Solent's designated sites. SEMS will continue to promote this work and share best practice across the Solent, working in partnership with all relevant coastal stakeholders.

2 Introduction

This Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Annual Management Report provides an overview of the SEMS Management Scheme, in which the [SEMS Management Group](#) act to comply with the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#) for non-licensable activities. It shows the content, structure and process of undertaking the Management Scheme. It summarises, evaluates and sets actions for each of the seventeen activities surveyed in the SEMS annual survey.

Actions to address the issues raised are debated at the annual SEMS Management Group meeting, which takes place each September. The Solent Forum's [Natural Environment Group \(NEG\)](#) takes forward and delivers strategic actions, more localised or specific actions are undertaken by the appropriate individual Relevant Authority (RA).

2.1 European Marine Sites

European Marine Sites (EMSs) are Marine Protected Areas below mean high water designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protected Areas (SPAs). The management of EMSs was established under Regulation 38 of the Habitats Regulations. This gives RAs the responsibility for monitoring activities across designated sites, and for addressing any damaging impacts.

Marine Conservation Zones are covered by separate legislation and are not formally included in the SEMS Management Scheme. However, since their designation we have included questions on these sites in the Annual Survey; we ask respondents if they are undertaking any monitoring and if they have any concerns about activities having an impact. Please see section 5 for more details.

2.2 Solent Marine Sites

The Solent is a complex site encompassing a major estuarine system. The Solent and its inlets are unique in Britain and Europe for the complexity of the marine and estuarine habitats present. Sediment habitats within the estuaries include extensive areas of intertidal mudflats, saltmarshes, eelgrass and natural shoreline transitions, such as drift line vegetation. The rich intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, shingle beaches and adjacent coastal habitats, including grazing marsh, support nationally and internationally important numbers of migratory and over-wintering waders and waterfowl, as well as important breeding gull and tern populations.

The Solent Marine Site (SEMS) Management Scheme applies to the Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water SPA, Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA. It also includes the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA for foraging terns that covers most of the offshore area.

Appendix 7.1 shows a map of the Solent Marine Sites.

2.3 SEMS Management Scheme

Within the Solent, a Management Scheme (MS) was first established in 2002 by the RAs working together; members of the scheme and the terms of reference can be accessed at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Meetings/. The Solent Forum provides the secretariat for the SEMS MS.

The overall MS components include an Annual Survey, an Annual Management Report, an annual meeting of RAs, consultation with strategic stakeholders and agreed actions. These outputs are supported by the SEMS website, this provides more detailed resources and guidance. Figure 2 shows the framework and timetable of the MS.

The context of the Management Scheme, in terms of the overall management of MPAs, is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

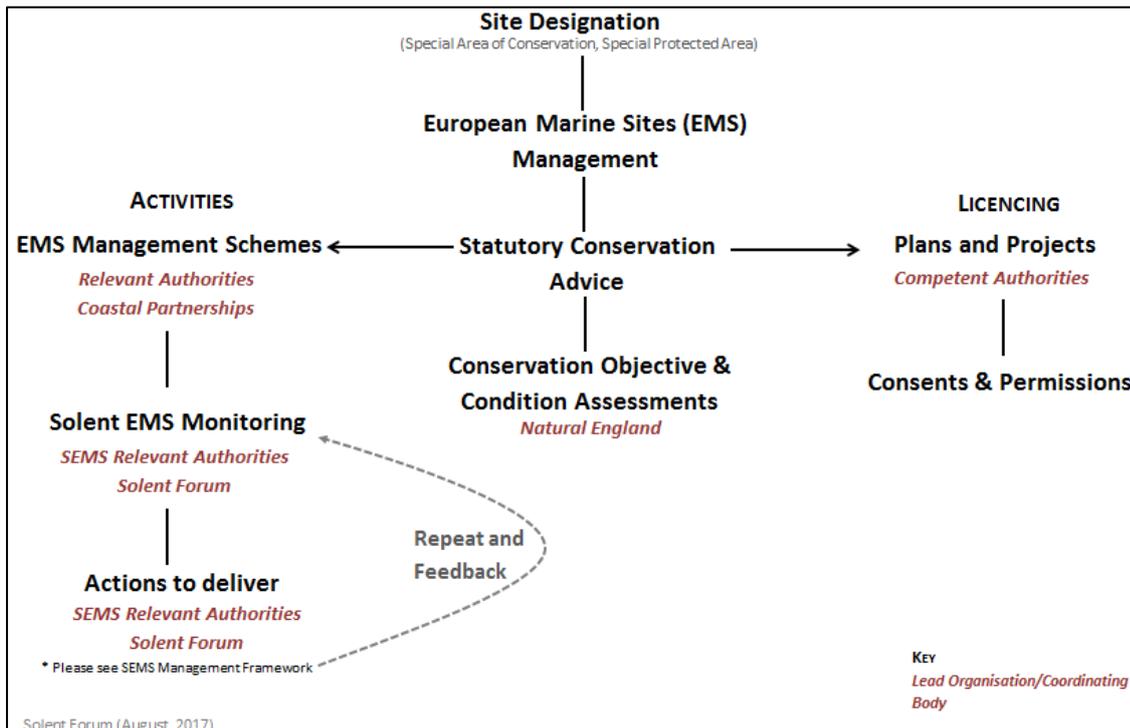
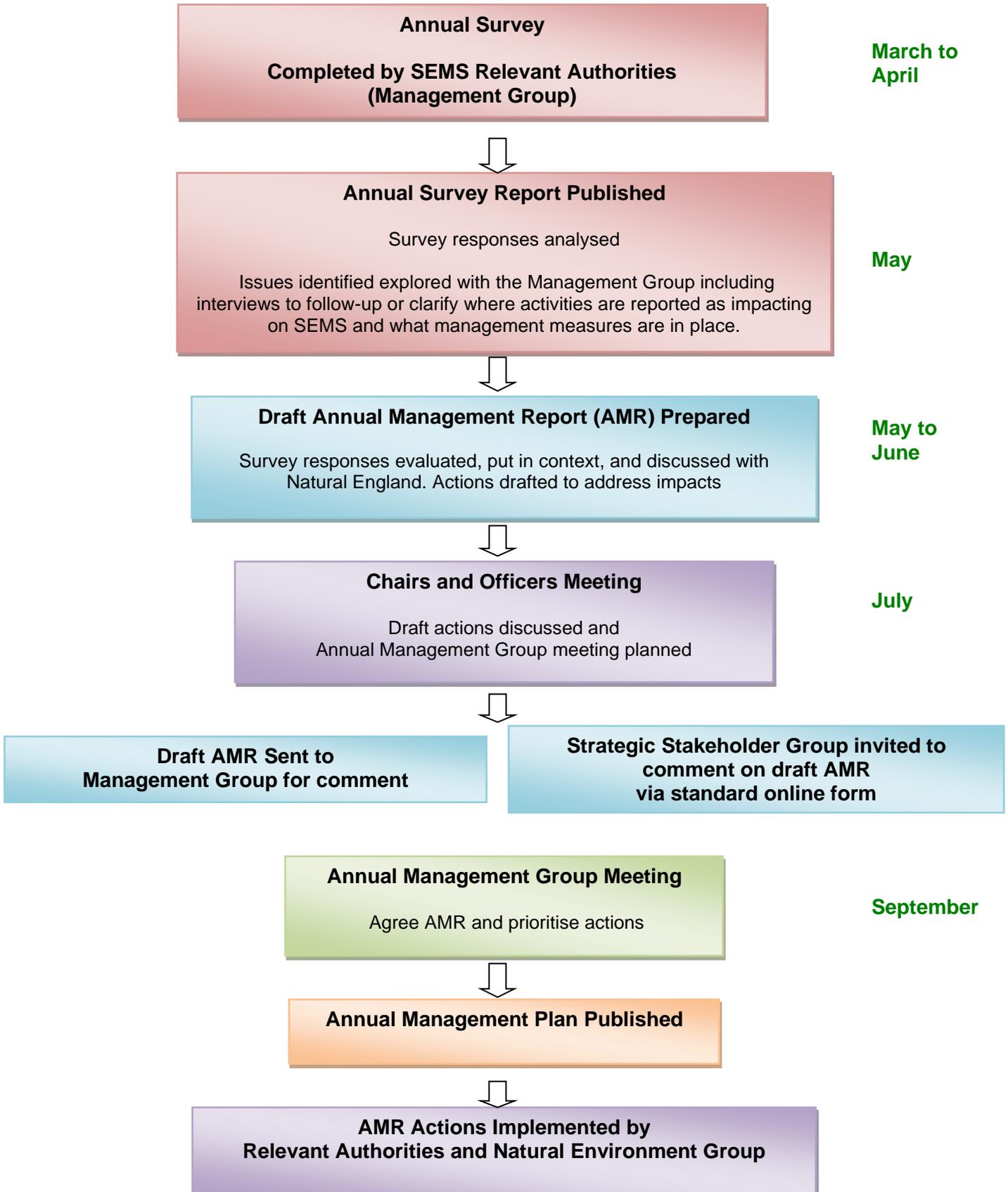


Figure 2. Framework and timetable for delivering the annual management scheme



2.3.1 Relevant Authority Duties and Responsibilities

The RAs individually report on SEMS activities within their area of duty and responsibility. They provide information on activity participation change and potential impacts by completing an online survey every spring (see table 1). This survey data forms the basis of this Annual Management Report. Additionally, RAs need to have regard to the Habitats Regulations and aspire to good practice through their normal work and roles. Please see guidance at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Actions_Guidance/.

2.3.2 Natural Environment Group

The [Natural Environment Group \(NEG\)](#) is open to all SEMS RAs who wish to be involved and other invited organisations with an interest in the natural environment. NEG assists the SEMS MG in the delivery of strategic actions. The Solent Forum provides the secretariat for NEG.

2.3.3 Strategic Stakeholder Group

The Strategic Stakeholder Group (SSG) exists to ensure that legitimate stakeholders are briefed and can comment on the content of the SEMS Annual Management Report. They are also asked to provide feedback to the management group on key strategic issues. Figure 2 shows how this group fits into the overall management scheme. A separate report with their comments is published on the SEMS website.

2.3.4 Bird Aware Solent

[Bird Aware Solent](#) is an initiative to raise awareness of the birds that spend the winter on the Solent, so that people can enjoy the coast and its wildlife without disturbing the birds. It is the brand name of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership. Fifteen of the Solent's RAs are members of this Partnership and use it to help fulfil their duties to mitigate bird disturbance from recreational activity.

It is made up of fifteen local councils, Natural England, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and Chichester Harbour Conservancy. It implements measures to mitigate the impact of additional recreational activity resulting from planned housing development on the three Special Protection Areas in the Solent. It succeeds the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project which commissioned the initial research into the impact.

Bird Aware data showed that this season they observed significantly more visitors on the coast compared to last winter. During the 2019/2020 winter season, they saw an average of 36.8 visitors per site visit, while this winter they observed an average of 67.4 visitors per site visit. This is an increase of 83 percent despite their rangers spending slightly less time per visit this winter (2.3 hours versus 2.6 hours on average per site visit this winter versus last winter).

2.3.5 Covid-19 Restrictions

The Covid-19 pandemic was an unprecedented event that initially led to many coastal activities being suspended. Anecdotal evidence showed that wildlife flourished when it was left undisturbed, however there is little empirical evidence due to limited monitoring.

Conversely, the prohibition of many aspects of life and the good weather meant that some sites were inundated once travel restrictions were lifted. Overcrowding and littering were reported at hotspots, exacerbated by the continued closure of visitor infrastructure.

In Spring 2021, SEMS undertook a snapshot survey of the impacts on designated sites from recreational activities during summer 2020. The Report is available at:

www.solentems.org.uk/publications/Covid_Snapshot_Survey_summer2020_Report.pdf.

It is difficult to evaluate whether changes in activity reported in this year's survey are long term trends or a one off direct impact of Covid restrictions; the next few year's data will be needed to make this assessment. Before 2020 activity levels in the Solent were static, however both the Covid snapshot survey and the annual SEMS Survey reported significant increases in certain activities during 2020.

2.3.6 Weather

The levels of many activities are weather dependent, particularly for more informal recreation like general beach recreation. Relevant authorities regularly report the close link between the weather and activity levels in their Annual Survey returns. It obviously follows that with better weather more people will access the coast and there will be more pressure on habitats and species. The predicted long term trend of hotter temperatures could see both an increase in visitors and additional events at the coast like beach festivals. It is recommended to continue to pre-plan and test additional measures that may need to be taken if good weather leads to an influx of coastal visitors at sensitive sites.

2.3.7 BREXIT

The legislation transposing the EU Habitats Directive and the Wild Birds Directive was changed to continue to operate effectively from 1 January 2021. This includes the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales, and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The changes were made by the [Conservation of Habitats and Species \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#). The changes ensure the protections afforded to sites, habitats and species, including wild birds continue. Most of these changes involved transferring functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales. All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant.

2.4 Annual Monitoring Survey, 2021

In 2021, thirty one RAs were invited to answer the survey, and all responded (see table 1 below). Full details of the online survey results are given in the SEMS Annual Survey report 2021, which can be viewed at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/Annual_Monitoring/.

Table 1. Organisations who completed the Survey, 2021

Associated British Ports (ABP)	Natural England (NE)
Beaulieu River Management (BRM)	New Forest District Council (NFDC)
Chichester District Council (CDC)	New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)
Chichester Harbour Conservancy (ChHC)	Portsmouth City Council (PCC)
Cowes Harbour Commissioners (CoHC)	Portsmouth International Port (PIP)
Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC)	Queen's Harbour Master (Portsmouth) (QHM)
Environment Agency (EA)	River Hamble Harbour Authority (RHHA)
Fareham Borough Council (FBC)	Southampton City Council (SCC)
Gosport Borough Council (GBC)	Southern IFCA (SoIFCA)
Hampshire County Council	Southern Water (SW)
Havant Borough Council (HBC)	Sussex IFCA (SxIFCA)
Isle of Wight Council (IoWC)	Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC)
Langstone Harbour Board (LHB)	West Sussex County Council (WSCC)
Lymington Harbour Commissioners (LHC)	Wightlink Ferries (WL)
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	Winchester City Council (WCC)
	Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners (YHC)

3 Activity Summary

Sections 3 and 4 review the seventeen activities that are included in the SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021.

There are three sections under each activity:

1. Summary of the survey response from 2021.
2. Discussion and evaluation. This includes sections written by Natural England on any potential impacts of the activity and whether it is currently impacting on sites. There is a final section detailing existing management measures.
3. Actions.

In the action section, actions are dated as to when they were first proposed, or are ongoing, the lead and partners and the progress made. NEG takes on strategic issues that affect the Solent widely and delivers these actions via its biannual meetings.

3.1 Summary Tables of all Activities

Tables 2, 3 and 4 summarise the 2021 survey results, they show how activity participation levels have changed and whether relevant authorities believe that the activity is having an impact on the SEMS site. In the tables the mode value has been highlighted in green.

Table 2. Recorded changes in activity participation levels 2020 to 2021.

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions	1	0	15	2	18
Boat Repair and Maintenance	0	2	12	2	16
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	0	3	8	7	18
Fishing (shore-based activities)	4	1	4	10	19
General Beach Recreation	7	0	4	5	16
Grazing and Foraging	3	0	1	1	5
Land Recreation - Dog Walking	12	0	3	4	19
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	12	0	2	5	19
Littering and removal of litter	8	1	9	5	23
Mooring and Anchoring	2	3	8	2	15
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	5	0	8	5	18
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	0	1	13	3	17

Recreation - light aircraft	1	1	4	2	8
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	13	1	1	6	21
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	5	3	4	5	17
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	1	0	15	1	17
Wildfowling	0	0	5	2	7
Source: SEMS Annual Survey 2021					

Table 3. Trend data for activity level change

At the SEMS Management Group meeting, 2019 a request was made to try and obtain trend data for changes in activity levels. Table 3 shows the mode response for activity change for a time series; currently we have data for three years.

Activity	2021	2020	2019
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions	NC	NC	NC
Boat repair and maintenance	NC	NC	NC
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	NC	NC	D/NC
Fishing (shore-based activities)	DK	NC	NC
Grazing and foraging	I	NC	N/a
General beach recreation	I	NC	NC
Land recreation - Dog walking	I	NC	NC
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	I	NC	NC
Littering and removal of litter	NC	NC	NC
Mooring and anchoring	NC	NC	NC
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	NC	NC	NC
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	NC	NC	NC
Recreation - light aircraft	NC	I	NC
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	I	NC	I/NC

Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	I/DK	NC	NC
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	NC	NC	NC
Wildfowling	NC	NC	NC
Key: I = increase, D = decrease, NC = No change, DK = Don't Know			
Source: SEMS Annual Surveys, 2021, 2020 and 2019			

Table 4. Records if RAs believe activities are impacting on SEMS sites.

Please see table 1 for organisation abbreviations in the final column. The mode value has been highlighted in green.

Activity	Yes	No	Total Responses	Org Names (where 'Yes' to impact)
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions	3	15	18	ChHC, PIP, HCC
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	15	16	ChHC
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	6	12	18	ChHC, EA, EBC, PIP, ABP, HCC
Fishing (shore-based activities)	6	13	19	ChHC, LHB, SxIFCA, EBC, HCC, SCC
General Beach Recreation	6	10	16	ChHC, LHB, EBC, NE, MMO, HCC
Grazing and Foraging	2	3	5	ChHC, MMO
Land Recreation - Dog Walking	13	6	19	ChHC, LHB, BRM, EBC, WSCC, NE, CDC, MMO, IOWC, GBC, FBC, HCC, WCC
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	11	8	19	ChHC, LHB, EBC, NE, CDC, MMO, IOWC, GBC, FBC, HCC, WCC
Littering and removal of litter	11	12	23	ChHC, LHC, LHB, EA, EBC, MMO, IOWC, SW, ABP, WCC, SCC
Mooring and Anchoring	2	13	15	ChHC, NE
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	4	14	18	ChHC, EA, EBC, MMO
Operation of ports and harbours	2	15	17	ChHC, PIP
Recreation - light aircraft	1	7	8	EBC
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	11	10	21	ChHC, LHB, BRM, EBC, NE, MMO, QHM, NFDC, RHHA, HCC, WCC
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	6	11	17	ChHC, LHB, EBC, MMO, PIP, QHM
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	17	17	
Wildfowling	2	5	7	ChHC, LHB

Source: Solent Marine Sites Annual Survey, 2021

3.2 Understanding the Condition of SEMS

3.2.1 Natural England's Conservation Advice

Natural England's (NE) conservation advice (CA) packages provide statutory advice which informs the SEMS MS. Most designated MPAs within SEMS now have a formal conservation advice package, these are available on Natural England's Designated Sites System at:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>.

The CA package includes Advice on Operations (AoO) which identifies pressures associated with the most commonly occurring marine activities, and an assessment of the feature/sub-feature or supporting habitat sensitivity to these pressures. This advice also helps users understand which features could be impacted by a plan or project and help screen it as part of the initial phases of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

For an activity, the risk of harm will be determined by its extent, magnitude and duration, together with the sensitivity of the feature/sub-feature or supporting habitat. Where available, site condition data is also used to inform this assessment. The aim of this process is to help the initial screening (i.e. tLSE) to identify whether the risks posed by an activity are likely to have a significant effect on the designated sites. The CAs are used as the basis to evaluate the potential impact of each activity within this SEMS Annual Management Report. Please note detailed advice can be provided by Natural England upon request.

Natural England produced a draft conservation advice package for Solent and Dorset Coast SPA in March 2021. Following the invitation to comment period, formal advice for this site will be produced in September 2021. With the completion of this site, Natural England have now produced formal conservation advice for all marine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within SEMS.

Natural England will now start the process of producing conservation advice for the Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) with formal advice for The Needles MCZ produced on September 2021 and draft advice for Bembridge MCZ expected to be produced in March 2022.

3.2.2 Site Condition Assessments

During 2015-16, Natural England reviewed, refined and tested their SAC condition assessment methodology to provide more robust results. They employed this methodology to carry out a rolling programme of marine feature condition assessments starting in 2016-17.

Understanding SEMS site condition is important in supporting management decisions. Annual monitoring of activities by the SEMS MG aims to identify threats to site condition or, anecdotal signs of any deterioration, so that timely management action can be taken to avoid damage or further evidence can be collected.

The condition of EMSs are assessed by feature and reported on by NE every six years. The most recent site condition can be found on Natural England's Magic Map website at: [\(https://magic.defra.gov.uk/\)](https://magic.defra.gov.uk/).

Condition assessments for SEMS interest features indicate if they are in favourable condition; identifying threats which have the potential to impact their condition and therefore require further

monitoring or management. In this report, site condition is referenced where further action is needed.

Condition assessments have been completed for the Solent Maritime SAC, which shows all marine features and sub features, apart from coastal lagoons to be in unfavourable condition. This unfavourable status is largely due to a few key factors:

- Elevated nutrient levels
- Elevated aqueous contaminants
- Low infaunal quality index (IQI)
- Anthropogenic pressures including trampling and anchoring

Condition assessments have also been completed for the South Wight Maritime SAC, which is in favourable condition, and for the Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC which is in broadly favourable condition. Links to these condition assessments are available at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/Condition_assessments/.

A new methodology is being produced for SPA condition assessments, with the process anticipated to commence in 2021-22. Once the SPA condition assessments have been completed, they will also be available on NE's designated Sites System.

Recently, Natural England have begun to include terrestrial drivers into its advice on adverse condition/condition threat that reflect how land based activity can impact on coastal designated sites. In the Solent Maritime SAC, drivers now include forestry, freshwater inputs and agriculture.

3.2.3 Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)

Natural England's MENE survey provides trend data for how people experience the natural environment in England. The main focus of the survey is capturing how time is spent in the natural environment. It also seeks to capture other ways of people engaging with the natural environment, and pro-environmental behaviours. See: [Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment \(MENE\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

3.2.4 Other Plans

Other plans also impact on the management and condition of SEMS, for example Catchment Management Plans and the South Marine Plans. The former embed collaborative working at a river catchment scale to deliver cross-cutting improvements to water environments. The Habitat Regulations Assessment for the South Marine Plan details a wide range of pathways and impacts of activities. See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725894/04_HRA_Appropriate_Assessment.pdf.

4 Individual Activities

Section 4 reviews each of the seventeen activities covered by the SEMS Management Scheme in greater detail, evaluating their impact and providing details of any management measures and any actions required.

4.1 Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up

4.1.1 Survey Response Summary

The predominant response from the survey respondents was that the occurrence of this activity has not changed since last year and that it is unlikely to be having an impact on the SEMS sites. This activity was not reported as causing concern in previous surveys. The respondent that recorded a concern was due to the impact on water quality from minor spills.

Respondents noted that it is not possible to prevent all accidental discharges, such as small leaks, but that measures are in place to investigate and address them if they do happen. Respondents also added that there are good plans and procedures in place to deal with oil spills. There is a move towards using electric and alternative fuels for marine vessels, such as LPG, this will help to minimise oil and diesel discharges.

Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up				
<i>Activity includes accidental discharges and/or emissions from all types of vessels, including exhaust fumes, waste water, sewerage, oils, lubricants and chemicals, including oil spill and clean-up.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
1	0	15	2	18
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
3		15		18
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.1.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Materials such as oil are of concern in the marine environment due to their buoyancy and easy transport from one location to another on currents, and the damage it can cause to fish and seabird populations. PAH contamination can also lead to the lowering, temporarily or more permanently, of oxygen levels in the water.

Although there is insufficient evidence on the impacts of features within SEMS, it is known that wading birds can be directly impacted by contamination with hydrocarbon, and the accumulation of hydrocarbons caused by feeding on contaminated fauna can cause changes in migratory and breeding behaviour. Most effects are probably linked to chronic exposure to relatively low levels of pollutants.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England do not consider this activity to be having an impact on the SEMS sites when considered alone. However, elevated contaminant levels are one of the reasons identified as causing Solent Maritime SAC to be in unfavourable condition. Therefore, Natural England support continued review as highlighted in the management measures section of this report.

Management Measures

The SEMS MG members, who have jurisdiction under this activity, already have policies and procedures in place to address accidental discharges. Regular emergency spill exercises help to keep equipment and skills up to date. Information on procedures is available on the relevant authorities' websites and other publications such as harbour guides.

For more resources and information please see: [Solentems - Accidental vessel discharges/emissions incl. oil spill and clean-up](#).

4.1.3 Actions

No current action required by SEMS MG.

4.2 Boat repair and maintenance

4.2.1 Survey Summary Response

Respondents noted that this activity was static or decreased due to Covid-19 restrictions. Comments also included the importance of this activity for fuel efficiency and that newer boats are lower maintenance and need less repair. Any commercial hull cleaning at the Port of Southampton is closely controlled. Washdown and filtration systems have been installed in some of the harbours and the Harbour Authorities do provide guidance to their customers on best practice surrounding this topic, e.g. [Environment \(lymingtonharbour.co.uk\)](#).

Boat repair and maintenance				
<i>Activity includes vessel maintenance and repair on land or afloat, including hull cleaning. Please also consider the vessels, machinery and vehicles associated with this activity.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
0	2	12	2	16
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
1		15		16
Relevant Authority Comments:				
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.2.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Natural England's draft Advice on Operations identifies a range of pressures arising from boat repair/maintenance that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations of SPAs. These include above water noise, visual disturbance, contaminants and the introduction or spread of invasive non-native species. A number of designated bird species within the SEMS are considered to be sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement and/or mortality. Similarly, the construction of boat repair/maintenance facilities may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features via pressures such as physical change or loss of habitat, smothering and siltation.

Boat repair/maintenance has the potential to introduce invasive non-native species (INNS) into the marine environment and it needs careful management. Recreational craft have been identified as one of several vectors by which INNS can be introduced to new areas. There is currently no legislation that requires businesses to take steps to deal with INNS, although the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 requires the prevention of spreading of INNS from a site where they are known to be present.

There is a distinction between construction of boat repair /maintenance facilities, and their operation. Construction of boat/repair maintenance facilities in SEMS is subject to planning permission/marine licensing and is therefore subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). The HRA assesses both the construction and operational impacts. However, increased use or expansion of existing facilities could have potential environmental impacts such as pollution or the spread of INNS.

Impacts on SEMS

Whilst Natural England do not consider this activity to currently be impacting on SEMS it does have the potential to increase the presence and spread of Invasive Non-Native Species which has been listed as a condition threat for Solent Maritime SAC. Natural England advises that harbours and marinas should promote best practice.

The release of TBT into the marine environment from antifouling has long been of concern in the Solent. Changes in antifouling practice means that this has now become a legacy issue, however, levels of TBT are still reported above Threshold Levels, particularly in Southampton Water, suggesting that historical TBT is still present in sediments and slowly leaching into the wider environment. Environment Agency monitoring indicates that there is a declining trend of TBT with contamination limited to hotspots.

In addition, elevated contaminants levels are one of the reasons for unfavourable status of SEMS, this includes copper and other derivatives which have replaced TBT, and therefore, further evidence is required to identify the sources of these contaminants. The Environment Agency report that copper has never caused failures of WFD water bodies within SEMS, and it is not currently undertaking any investigations into copper sources. However, previous work showed that copper concentrations are elevated in the Hamble estuary compared to elsewhere in the SEMS, probably linked to the high density of boats in the Hamble. More recent evidence indicates that copper in the Hamble has declined, suggesting that measures to reduce contamination are working and should be continued.

For more information please see the Open data, Water Quality archive at: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/water-quality/view/landing> and the Open data, Biosys archive at: <https://data.gov.uk/data/search?q=biosys>

Management Measures

The GreenBlue initiative produces detailed guidance and undertakes education programmes on how to minimise the environmental impacts from boat maintenance and repair. It includes guides on:

- Antifouling
- Cleaning on board
- Sewage
- Oil and fuel

See: [Water Pollution Prevention – The Green Blue](#).

The Port of Southampton only allows ECOSubsea to operate at port berths - [Home - ECOSubsea](#).

The Check, Clean, Dry campaign is a national campaign run by the GB non-native species secretariat, designed to help stop the spread of invasive plants and animals in our waters. It has lots of resources and guidance for best practice and the impacts from INNS. See:

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/>.

For more resources and information please see:

http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Boat_repair/.

4.2.3 Actions

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Continue to promote and share best practice in addressing the potential environmental impacts of boat repair/maintenance, including preventing INNS. For resources see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Boat_repair/.
Lead/Partners: Harbour authorities and all others who have this activity in their area of responsibility.
- 2. Action (ongoing):** Natural England to send an update on their monitoring work on INNS to the SEMS office for distribution once all survey work is completed. Harbour authorities can request specific data for their area from Natural England.
Lead/Partners: Natural England
Action progress: Final Report will be shared with SEMS and circulated once published.

4.3 Fishing (including shellfisheries)

4.3.1 Survey Summary Response

Due to Covid-19 restrictions three respondents noted a decrease in fishing activity due to a lack of markets and selling opportunities. SoIFCA reported that fishing activities over the features of the site, including the dredge fisheries in Southampton Water, Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours were observed to be reduced this year. Many vessels typically targeting these fisheries instead focused on a small-scale scallop fishery to the north-east of the Isle of Wight, within the Solent but not within the bounds of the Solent EMS.

The Temporary Closure of Shellfish beds byelaw was once again implemented due to the determination of the Southern IFCA committee that the shellfish beds in the Solent (Excluding Chichester managed by Sussex IFCA) were severely depleted. As a result, no fishing for native oysters was permitted during the typical season (November to February inclusive).

The Environment Agency noted on-going concerns in relation to migratory salmonids and netting (though this links strongly to the freshwater designations, the activity occurs within these areas). The only fishery which the EA regulate in this area is the Beaulieu Seine net - now regulated under byelaw rather than net limitation order. The other relevant activity is the fyke net fishery for European Eel which operates within designated sites.

EBC noted netting around the entrance to the Hamble, however they are not sure how this affects the direct take of stock without sufficient baseline information to determine sustainability or any knock on effects on other SEMS features.

Fishing (including shellfisheries)				
<i>Activity includes anchored nets or lines, electrofishing, traps, pelagic fishing (or fishing activities that do not interact with sea bed), hydraulic dredges, dredges, demersal trawl, demersal seines, diving and sea angling.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
0	3	8	7	18
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
6		12		18
Relevant Authority Comments:				
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.3.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies a range of pressures arising from shellfish dredging that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations within SPAs. These include

above water noise and visual disturbance. A number of designated bird species within SEMS are considered to be sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement and/or mortality. Similarly, shellfish dredging may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features via pressures such as abrasion/disturbance of the seabed and penetration/disturbance of the substratum below the seabed.

There are concerns over the impacts of discards on marine ecosystems, including changes in population abundance and demographics of affected species, altered species assemblages and food web structures. However, discards also provide important food resources for some scavenging species, including seabirds. Pelagic/mid water trawls, drift nets, pelagic seines and long lines can result in the entanglement and bycatch of a range of fauna.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England is content that the impacts of fishing (including shellfisheries) in SEMS have been correctly assessed by Southern IFCA and Sussex IFCA, and the current management measures continue to prevent adverse effects on site features/supporting habitats.

Management Measures

SolIFCA report that commercial fishing activity is subject to Habitats Regulation Assessment. Those determined to potentially have an adverse effect, requiring a detailed assessment included trawling and shellfish dredging. Details of those assessments can be found here: <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/solent-dredge-permit>. These assessments, particularly focused on bottom towed fishing gear helped developed relevant management regimes within the Solent in the form of the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016 and the Solent Dredge Fishing Byelaw 2016. These ensure that bottom towed fishing gear activities are compatible with the features of the site by creating a management regime including permanent protection for those features highly sensitive to the activity and a closed season and curfew for dredge fishing over other features ensuring adequate recovery time. Details on these byelaws can be found here: <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/bottom-towed-gears-regulations>.

In November 2021, The Solent Dredge Fishing Byelaw 2016 will be revoked and replaced by the Solent Dredge Permitting Byelaw, further improving the IFCA's ability to provide a cohesive management regime for dredge fisheries, whilst still ensuring the habitat protections afforded by the Solent Dredge Fishing Byelaw 2016 are met. Southern IFCA is undertaking a spatial management review of fishing activities which will consider bottom towed fishing activities against the sensitive features of the marine protected areas in the Southern IFCA district. This is primarily focused on newly designated tranche 3 MCZs, but an assessment of the current protection afforded EMS will be undertaken as well.

Marine recreational fishing also needs to be considered in this activity category. The Sea Angling Diary Project aims to provide accurate estimates of recreational catches to improve the management of stocks, helping to achieve conservation goals and eventually improve the availability of fish to sea anglers. It is run collaboratively by Cefas and Substance. The project is funded by Defra and it is also supported by the national sea angling associations. See: <https://www.seaangling.org/>.

For further information and resources please see:

http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/commercial_fishing/.

4.3.3 Actions

1. **Action:** Continue to report to the IFCA any illegal fishing activity around closed beds or illegal fish trapping. Be aware of new IFCA byelaws.
Lead/Partners: SEMS MG Members
Action Progress: Ongoing

2. **Action:** Publicise and encourage recreational anglers to take part in the Sea Angling Diary project. See: <https://www.seaangling.org/>. Cefas have published findings of this study at: <https://www.cefas.co.uk/news/sea-angling-contributes-over-1-5bn-to-uk-economy/>.
Lead/Partners: SEMS MG Members
Action Progress: Ongoing.

4.4 Fishing (shore-based activities)

4.4.1 Survey Summary Response

There was an equal balance of respondents that felt that this activity had increased or decreased but the most common answer was 'don't know'. Six respondents believed that this activity was impacting on SEMS sites. Respondents did note this activity had increased during Covid lockdowns as recreational fishing was one of the first activities permitted. Potential impacts noted are bird disturbance, sediment disturbance, impacts on target species and on food availability for protected bird species.

LHB are concerned about bait digging at Southmoor, an ongoing problem that is damaging the mudflats and their supporting species. Southern IFCA reported that, from the start of the period, hand gathering in key areas was observed to increase. This was particularly targeted around areas such as the Hamble, Hill Head and parts of Portsmouth and Langstone Harbours. Individuals or groups were observed to be collecting manila clams, cockles and pacific oysters. These activities were typically focused on the larger tides and periods of good weather in the late spring and summer. Weston Shore in Southampton was identified as a long term hotspot where damage is being caused.

Sussex IFCA reported that this activity is largely focused around Nutbourne and Prinstead Channels which feed into Thorney channel; Emsworth channel; Thorney Island; Pilsey island which is accessed either by sea or by land; Chichester Marina and Chidham, these all accessible from several locations by land or boat. Other known hand gathering locations are Dell quay, Northney marina, Copperas Point, Westlands, Birdham pool, and Longmere point. This happens year round, especially over spring tides, but has been reported on a daily basis over summer months.

The EA noted potential low level of impacts from rod and line fishing, including the removal of species, accidentally discarded fishing gear, and disturbance from anglers visiting coastal locations.

Harbour Authority staff report perceived illegal activity to the relevant IFCA and the police.

Fishing (shore based activities)				
<i>Activity includes crab tiling, bait digging, shellfish collection (including seed mussel) e.g. by hand (with or without digging apparatus), rake or through the use of 'tiles'. Also includes rod and line angling, the setting of pots and nets from the shore and the use of vehicles or vessels to access the shoreline.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
4	1	4	10	19
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
6		13		19
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.4.2 Evaluation and Discussion

The public have a right to dig bait as an ancillary part of the public right of fishery; this does not imply a right of access across private land or the collection of bait for commercial purposes. Ragworm, lugworm, crab, shellfish and other marine organisms are dug or foraged, mainly within the intertidal zone between high and low water.

SoIFCA note that it is difficult to put a specific reason on the increase reported in hand gathering. It could be a combination of people having more time as a result of COVID restrictions and spending more time outdoors, this could lead to both an increase in activity but also an increase in reports. It could also be due to an increase in the availability of particular species, particularly those such as the invasive pacific oyster, which are becoming more prolific in the South. Hand gatherers do collect a variety of species, often dependent on where they are and what is available. In terms of differentiating between commercial and recreational collection this remains difficult, as they may well be both occurring at various points.

The Angling Trust reported that with fishing being one of the first sports to resume following easing of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, many people took up angling for the first time. As a result, stores across the country sold out of fishing starter kits and rod licence sales increased. Anecdotal evidence country wide was this increase led to greater demand for bait, with more bait digging taking place to meet the needs of anglers, exacerbated by limited accessibility to bait shops.

SoIFCA noted that shore based angling activities were observed to increase and decrease throughout the year; typically focused in key spots. This was related to the state of lockdown restrictions and relevant guidance related to recreational activity. Consideration is required as to the impact this is having on SEMS including habitat types, level and intensity. More investigation, through the Natural Environment Group's mudflat disturbance working group may be appropriate.

SoIFCA officers work regularly in hotspot areas educating gatherers regarding relevant legislation particularly in relation to the Southern IFCA 'Fishing for Cockles' byelaw and the 'Prohibition of gathering (sea fisheries resources) in seagrass beds' byelaw. These can be found at: <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/diving-handgathering-regulations>. Officers also work closely with partner agencies, particularly local authorities in relation food hygiene concerns as well as working

the GLAA (Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority) where concerns were aligned with their remit. Southern IFCA, as part of its review of spatial management, will be reviewing the 'Prohibition of gathering (sea fisheries resources) in seagrass beds' byelaw to ensure it is providing adequate protection to the most sensitive features of the site.

Nationally, Natural England continue to work with the IFCAs on the bait digging issue, outputs will be reported once published.

Fishermen can report lost fishing gear in a new online reporting form: [Fishing Community Lost Fishing Gear Reporting - GhostFishing UK](#).

Potential Impacts

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies a range of pressures arising from shore-based fishing activities that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations of SPAs. These include above water noise, visual disturbance and the removal of target and non-target species. A number of designated bird species within the SEMS are considered to be sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement and/or mortality. Similarly, shore-based fishing activities may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features via pressures such as abrasion/disturbance of the seabed and penetration/disturbance of the substratum below the seabed.

A great deal of evidence exists on the impacts of bait digging, for example, the literature reports that during the process of bait collection, by hand, mechanical digging or boulder turning, many animals and plants other than those being sought in the intertidal mudflat habitat will be damaged and their population levels reduced. Natural England consider that the collection of approximately 3lb of worms represents an amount permitted for personal use.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England state that due to the extent and complexity of bait digging in the Solent a pilot is suggested, initially in one area of SEMS, using the Poole Harbour model (i.e. establishing a working group to develop a bait digging Memorandum of Agreement). NE remains committed to exploring the idea of piloting the Poole Harbour model with Southern IFCA and other stakeholders in part through the Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group.

Management Measures

Crown Estate's position is, that for the foreshore under their jurisdiction, they do not have any powers to manage bait collection that is exercised as a public right; leases that they grant to local authorities and other regulatory bodies for local management of Crown Estate foreshore are always subject to the public right of fishing, which includes bait collection. Any management would, therefore, need to be by way of the relevant authority exercising its statutory powers rather than by the landowner or one in whom the landowner may vest its rights. Regarding commercial collection, they have not been approached to date for their consent. If they were approached, they would consult with the relevant authorities before considering granting any permissions.

SEMS has produced a [Code of Conduct for Bait Collection](#). To evaluate and supplement this code, in 2020, a Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group was established by the Solent Forum's Natural Environment Group. This will explore in more detail the location and nature of intertidal disturbance and what additional measures could be introduced. Contact the Forum office for more details at info@solentforum.org.

Sussex IFCA are looking to introduce management in the autumn of 2021, pending consultations and further evidence collection. Following the completion of an HRA on the activity, they are in the process of collecting and collating information on all bait collection and hand gathering activity district-wide, including Chichester Harbour. Patrol effort in the area has increased in attempt to identify regular visitors to the harbour that are suspected to be working on a commercial scale. A decision will be made later in the year with regards to the management of bait collection and hand gathering, whether it be district-wide, or site specific. Options are currently being drafted and when there are any decisions being made that will impact the site, the relevant bodies will be notified and given the opportunity to provide comment.

SoIFCA has byelaws in place to protect the most sensitive features of the European Marine Site from shore gathering in both the SPAs and SACs, details of these byelaws can be found at: [Shore Gathering : Southern IFCA \(southern-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/shore-gathering).

Relevant authorities also cautioned the need to take a Solent wide approach to prevent this activity being displaced to other locations if management measures are introduced. See http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Shore_based_fisheries/ for a resource list on this topic.

4.4.3 Actions

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Continue to report and liaise with the local IFCA, and if necessary the Marine police, where it is considered that bait collection or foreshore hand gathering is commercial or having a detrimental impact. Use the [Guidance for Solent Relevant Authorities for monitoring shore-based fishing](#) to record this activity.
Lead/Partners: SEMS MG
Action progress: Ongoing
- 2. Action (2020/ongoing): Progress the Solent Mudflat Strategy**
Lead/Partners: NEG
Action progress: In 2020, NEG established a working group which is developing a strategy to address the impacts on mudflats from recreational activities in designated sites. Please see: [Solentems - Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group](#).

4.5 General Beach Recreation

4.5.1 Survey Summary Response

Seven respondents reported an increase in this activity. They noted a widespread increase due to both locals and visitors coming to the coast due to Covid-19 restrictions. They commented that the levels and spread of this activity is dependent on infrastructure such as car parks and toilets, access, public holidays and the weather.

Six respondents thought this activity was having a detrimental impact on designated sites. Noted impacts include increased pressure on fragile habitats such as saltmarsh from trampling, increased disturbance to designated bird species and increased littering. The use of disposable BBQs was highlighted as a key concern due to fire risk. Health and safety concerns were also raised such as swimming in inappropriate locations.

General beach recreation				
<i>Activity includes other coastal land recreation and leisure activities such as educational or scientific studies, horse riding on the beach, fireworks displays, swimming, rock pooling, surfing and non-motorised land craft (e.g. sand yachting, kite bugging).</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
7	0	4	5	16
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
6		10		16
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.5.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Unlike other marine recreational activities, general beach recreation is not covered by a national governing body or representative organisation. Good practice messaging regarding minimising impacts on the marine and coastal environment, including wildlife, tends to come from relevant authorities (e.g. Local Authorities) and environmental NGOs. Examples include interpretation boards, signage (e.g. to prevent trampling on vegetated shingle or directions to less sensitive sites), leaflets promoting codes of conduct and wardens (often volunteers) encouraging adherence to codes of conduct.

Increases in population from new housing development around the Solent, has the potential to increase the impacts from this activity. Bird Aware Solent was set up to address this issue.

Natural England's ongoing 'Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)' studies show how many people are visiting the natural environment and how they interact with it. The publication on visits to the coast gives detailed information on peoples' needs and experiences, it can be accessed at: [Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment - The national survey on people and the natural environment - Visits to coastal England - NECR226 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://www.naturalengland.org.uk/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-visits-to-coastal-england).

Potential Impacts

Natural England have published an evidence guidance note on general beach life at: (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5458695407796224>). This identifies two main pressures from this activity; abrasion/disturbance of the substrate surface, e.g. through general footfall (trampling) or digging holes and noise and visual disturbance, of hauled out seals and birds, from the presence and movement of people on the shore.

Impacts on SEMS

Recreational pressures, including trampling, are one of the reasons for the unfavourable status of seagrass beds within Solent Maritime SAC and therefore Natural England considers this activity is currently having an impact on some features within SEMS. Natural England is leading a LIFE funded project, partly looking at trampling pressures. See Mooring and Anchoring (section 4.10) for further details.

Management Measures

Natural England relaunched the Countryside Code in 2021 which also covers the coast. This gives nationally consistent best practice messaging. It can be accessed at: [The Countryside Code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

Many organisations have begun to use the hashtag [#ProtectRespectEnjoy](https://twitter.com/ProtectRespectEnjoy) to promote best practice across social media platforms.

The Natural England evidence guidance note on general beach life provides lots of examples of issues and management measures (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5458695407796224>). There are also guidance notes on surfing, coasteering, diving and snorkelling, and wildlife watching. These also include details of potential impacts and management measures, they can be accessed at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5615944092614656>.

Please see http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/ for further resources, codes of conduct and information.

4.5.3 Actions

1. **Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members to be aware of the Natural England recreational evidence note on general beach life and use this guidance to identify issues and management measures ([Marine recreation evidence briefing: general beach life - EIN034 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5458695407796224)).
Lead/Partners: SEMS MG members
Action progress: Ongoing
2. **Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members to consider including information on potential impacts on designated sites when updating local codes of conduct or signage. Resources to assist this are available at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/General_Beach_Recreation/.
Lead/Partners: SEMS MG members
Action progress: Ongoing

4.6 Grazing and Foraging

4.6.1 Survey Summary Response

From 2020, this activity category was expanded to include foraging. It now includes grazing on saltmarsh or intertidal areas and the foraging of wild food such as plants, seaweeds, shellfish and crustaceans.

Coastal grazing marsh is a man-made habitat created by drainage and flood defence, as it occupies former intertidal zones. It is not a specific habitat but a landscape type which supports a variety of habitats; the defining features being hydrological and topographical rather than botanical. Grazing marsh is defined as periodically inundated pasture or meadow, typically with ditches or rills containing standing brackish or fresh water. They support bird species of high conservation value, and ditches can be especially rich in plants and invertebrates.

ChHC receives regular reports of people hand-gathering shellfish in various parts of the harbour, including foraging oysters around Pilsey island. The large scale (commercial gathering) of clams and cockles continues to occur on Fishbourne channel, Nutbourne channel and Bosham channel, and on Pilsey sands. These activities are frequently reported to Chichester DC and Sussex IFCA.

NE raised a concern on the increase in wild foraging for samphire on saltmarsh. This has the potential to cause problems due to trampling but more evidence is likely needed.

PCC made the point that foraging for personal use on public land doesn't require permission and is therefore not monitored.

Grazing and Foraging				
<i>Activity includes grazing on saltmarsh or intertidal areas.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
3	0	1	1	5
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
2		3		5
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.6.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Grazing marshes are particularly important for the number of breeding waders they support and internationally important populations of wintering wildfowl. They are at risk if they become too dry or are subject to intensive grazing or early cutting. Such management techniques are often incompatible with what is to support populations of breeding waders. Some areas of grazing marsh are also at risk of change following restoration of naturalised floodplains and as sea-defences are realigned.

Foraging for wild food can lead to disturbance of intertidal habitats via trampling, people can also disturb feeding birds and reduce their food sources, it can also negatively impact on invertebrate populations.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England do not consider these activities to be currently impacting on SEMS.

Management Measures

Coastal floodplain and grazing marsh information is available from Natural England at: [Coastal Grazing Marsh.pdf \(solentems.org.uk\)](#).

Information on the management of coastal saltmarsh is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/management-of-coastal-saltmarsh-ct3>.

Natural England have produced a seaweed harvesting code of conduct. See: [Algae-harvesting-NE-Seaweed-Harvesting-Advice-2014.pdf \(solentems.org.uk\)](#).

The Crown Estate licenses sustainable, commercial harvesting of seaweed from areas of foreshore and seabed within its ownership. Seaweed collection for personal use, in small quantities does not require a licence. The Crown Estate does not licence harvesting of natural seaweeds in designated conservation areas. See: [Seaweed harvesting | The Crown Estate](#).

For more information and resources please see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Grazing/.

4.6.3 Actions

Action (ongoing): SEMS MG members to report any concerns regarding the foraging for wild plants or shellfish in designated sites to the SEMS office direct or via the annual survey.

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG members

Action progress: Ongoing

4.7 Land recreation - Dog walking

4.7.1 Survey Summary Response

Out of all the activities surveyed this year, respondents said that dog walking was the one which could have the greatest impact on SEMS sites. Twelve reported an increase in this activity, many noted the growth in dog ownership as a result of Covid-19 lockdowns. They reported more dogs out at the coast due to this increase in ownership and dog walkers visiting the coast more frequently.

Land recreation – Dog walking				
<i>Activity includes recreational participation with dogs, including the use of dogs in wildfowling.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
12	0	3	4	19
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
13		6		19
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.7.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Respondents are concerned about dogs disturbing feeding and roosting waders and wildfowl, particularly free roaming dogs at tide roosts and breeding sites. Respondents also noted that dog fouling causes amenity and water quality issues. There is a general feeling that dog walkers still lack education about the impacts they cause, particularly new owners.

Social distancing measures due to Covid-19 meant that at certain popular sites walkers did not follow formal paths which has led to additional trampling.

Fifteen of the local authorities in the Solent are Bird Aware partners, and they use this Partnership to help mitigate the impact of this activity in their area of jurisdiction.

Potential Impact

Natural England's draft Advice on Operations identifies pressures arising from dog walking that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations of SPAs. These include above water noise, visual disturbance, litter and the removal of species. A number of designated bird species within the SEMS are sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement and/or mortality.

The research underpinning the Bird Aware Solent strategy, reports that human disturbance of the birds can have several impacts. Birds may be more alert, resulting in a reduction in the amount of food eaten, or they may move away from the disturbance. A bird which moves away forgoes valuable feeding time whilst in the air and uses energy in flying, a double impact on the bird's energy reserves. If the disturbance is substantial, then food-rich areas may be little used by the birds or avoided altogether, leading to other areas hosting a higher density of birds and intensifying the competition for the available food.

Impacts on SEMS

While it is important to continue monitoring land recreation impacts via dog walking (and walking), Bird Aware has the potential to mitigate future impacts (through its rangers, awareness raising etc). On this basis Natural England advise that we should not seek to evaluate the impacts of dog walking (and walking) until the next round of SRMP monitoring has been completed in 2022.

Management Measures

Bird Aware Solent is a tool being used successfully across the Solent to reduce potential recreational impacts from increased local housing development. The main measure is a team of rangers to help coastal visitors and communities understand the importance of the different bird species and the impact of disturbance. See: [Birdaware Solent - Home](#).

Work is also taking place to encourage dog walkers to visit other areas and less sensitive parts of the coast. The Bird Aware Solent team have secured £1.3 million of Local Growth Deal funding, which will be spent on creating or enhancing alternative local greenspaces for people who would otherwise have visited the coast. Gosport Borough Council used improvements at the Alver Valley Country Park to act as a Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) to deflect pressure from dog walking away from the coast. See: [Alver Valley SANG study report.pdf \(birdaware.org\)](#). HCC is investigating the use of dog fields across Hampshire with the aim of reducing pressure on the coast and SEMS sites.

Some public areas in England and Wales are covered by Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) previously called Dog Control Orders (DCOs). Local Authorities can and do use such orders to direct people to put dogs on leads and issue fixed penalty notices to those that are causing a nuisance. See: <https://www.gov.uk/control-dog-public/public-spaces-protection-orders>.

Beaulieu River Management undertook signage and more education on its website plus it roped off certain sensitive areas.

The New Forest NPA engages with the New Forest Dog Owners Group and operate a project officer, on behalf of NFDC, that seeks to work with dog owners to provide advice on best practice dog ownership and walking that respects wildlife sensitivities on terrestrial habitats.

4.7.3 Actions

- 1. Action (ongoing):** In 2022, when the 5 year monitoring of the effectiveness of the SRMP is complete, an assessment should be made as to how successful the Bird Aware mitigation strategy has been in reducing the impact of new housing development in the Solent, and whether baseline disturbance from existing housing has sufficiently reduced harm to birds through the promotion of the Bird Aware messaging. Due to COVID-19, the Bird Aware monitoring for winter season 2020/21 will be different from normal, so this data set will not form part of the overall initial monitoring period. Therefore the 'complete' data set is now not expected to be available until 2022.

Lead and partners: NEG

Action Progress: NEG will keep track of Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP) monitoring and continue with their liaising and support.

Future Action: Post 2021, evaluate whether the SRMS has achieved its objectives and assess whether it has mitigated bird disturbance impacts arising prior to 2010.

2. **Action (ongoing):** RAs to identify and communicate with their own rangers and coastal staff details of how they can support Bird Aware Solent in the delivery of their educational messages and liaise regarding disturbance issues.
Lead and partners: SEMS MG
Action Progress: Please feed details into the SEMS Annual survey if this action is undertaken.
3. **Action (ongoing):** Local authorities to continue to consider the use of Public Spaces Protection Orders and SANGS as measures to mitigate dogs disturbing birds.
Lead and partners: Local authorities
Action Progress: Please feed details into the SEMS Annual survey if this action is undertaken.

4.8 Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)

4.8.1 Survey Summary Response

Twelve of the respondents saw an increase in this activity this year, a combination of good weather, Covid restrictions and people on furlough meant many coastal sites across the UK saw a large number of visitors. Social distancing measures meant that people strayed from footpaths, creating new 'desire paths' which spread the impacts of footfall more widely.

Hot spot areas are centred around car parks, toilets and places where people can park to access the coast. NE also raised the issue of increased levels of mountain biking in the North Solent NNR. The closure of car parks by some authorities led to people accessing alternative places that were not previously well used.

Eleven respondents are concerned that this activity is impacting on sites. Respondents' concerns highlighted the trampling of vegetation, increased litter and disturbance to wildlife particularly birds (high tide roosts, feeding areas and breeding birds).

As with dog walking, fifteen of the local authorities in the Solent are Bird Aware partners, and they use this Partnership to help mitigate the impact of this activity in their area of jurisdiction.

Land recreation – Walking (other than dog walking)				
<i>Activity includes walking on upper shore or intertidal zone (other than dog walking).</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
12	0	2	5	19
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
11		8		19
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.8.2 Evaluation and Discussion

The year 2020 was an outlier due to the Covid restrictions, furloughing of people and school closures. Government policy encouraged outdoor recreation for its mental health benefits. The surge in both locals and visitors accessing the coast raised many challenges for those who manage and protect designated sites. It is likely that coastal visits will remain high into the future as people recognise the benefits for their wellbeing of the natural environment.

Natural England have been developing the England Coast Path, a new National Trail around all of England's coast. It gives people the right of access around all our open coast both along the England Coast Path, and usually, over the associated 'coastal margin'. In this margin, people usually have new rights to enjoy areas like beaches. Some areas will not have such rights because they're excepted land, or not suitable for public access, such as a saltmarsh or mudflat. It will incorporate all the existing coastal paths around the Solent. Details of the Solent's stretches are available at: [England Coast Path in the south of England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/england-coast-path-in-the-south-of-england).

Potential Impacts

Coastal walking can, if not carefully managed, add to environmental pressures such as the presence of people causing disturbance to wildlife and birds or new paths leading to the removal and fragmentation of habitat. Once published, Natural England's coast path assessments will give a comprehensive overview of the potential impacts from this activity on SEMS.

Impact on SEMS

While it is important to continue monitoring land recreation impacts via walking (and dog walking), Bird Aware has the potential to mitigate future impacts (through its rangers, awareness raising etc). On this basis Natural England advise that we should not seek to evaluate the impacts of walking (and dog walking) until the next round of SRMP monitoring has been completed in 2022.

Management Measures

Natural England have been assessing the impacts from opening access to the coast as part of their work to deliver England's Coast Path. These assessments provide useful and detailed guidance on both the potential impacts from people visiting the coast to participate in coastal walking and the management measures that can be implemented to mitigate impacts. Once published the assessments are linked to the SEMS website at: [http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS Activities/Land Recreation/](http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/).

Bird Aware Solent continues to mitigate the impacts from all coastal walking, please refer to the land recreation – dog walking (section in 4.7) for details.

The England Coast Path (ECP) Team at Natural England are looking to work with Bird Aware Solent and other local partners to develop new ECP interpretation panels across the Solent. They hope this will lead to joined up messaging regarding the sensitivities and behaviours that we want to see, clear branding and logos. The ECP team are hoping to initiate the design stage very soon.

The revised Countryside Code was published in 2021 to give generic national good practice to people visiting the countryside and coast. See: [The Countryside Code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-countryside-code).

Please see: [http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS Activities/Land Recreation/](http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/) for guidance and best practice relating to this activity.

4.8.3 Actions

Please also refer to actions on dog walking in 4.7.

- 1. Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG to read and be aware of the issues raised in the nature conservation assessments relating to the stretches of coastal path in their jurisdiction. To view please see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/. Look to include relevant information in any revised signage, publications or education material.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

Action progress: Ongoing.

4.9 Littering and removal of litter

4.9.1 Survey Summary Response

The presence of litter and its impact on designated sites is an elevated and ongoing issue reported by the SEMS Relevant Authorities. Almost half of the respondents believe that this issue is having detrimental impacts. Although half of respondents didn't report an increase, many are still concerned about the levels of litter at the coast, the amount may not have increased over previous years, but it is still at elevated levels.

Respondents also noted this is a national issue with lots of national awareness raising and campaigning. They thought it required a variety of actions, including legal action, to secure better standards of waste management by local businesses and residents.

Comments also reflected that increased visitor numbers to the coast unfortunately leads to more litter and a need for authorities to improve and increase education and the available 'binrastructure'.

The EA are concerned about nurdle pollution (microplastic pollution) which been at a significant scale at Chessel Bay, Itchen Estuary Year in the past, with nurdle hunts are showing more than 1000 nurdles in this area. The Itchen Nurdle Clean-up project this year will trial innovative technology and monitor its effectiveness.

Harbour authorities remove larger pieces of marine debris that could cause navigational hazards.

Littering and removal of litter				
<i>This activity includes discharges from land, water or air, from all types of vessels, of particulate or solid wastes e.g. plastics, microplastics and other flotsam and jetsam (accidental vessel discharges are a separate category). The toxicity and damage caused by littering materials should be considered as should the cleanup of toxic debris. Please includes information on any strandline clearance and beach clean up.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
8	1	9	5	23
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
11		12		23
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.9.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Marine litter is any manufactured or processed solid material from anthropogenic activities that are discarded, disposed of or abandoned once entering the marine and coastal environment including: plastics, metals, timber, rope, fishing gear etc. and their degraded components, e.g. microplastic particles. Ecological effects can be physical (smothering), biological (ingestion, including uptake of microplastics; entangling; physical damage; accumulation of chemicals) and/or chemical (leaching, contamination).

Secondary effects of poor waste disposal can include the blocking of sewers and drains leading to raw sewage and blackwater overflows.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England hasn't yet assimilated impacts from inert waste and litter on features, subfeatures and supporting features into its conservation advice, due to the variety of waste occurring and a lack of data on implications. However, it agrees that litter and waste present in SEMS will, in all likelihood, be impacting species and habitats to a currently unknown degree and therefore further study is required.

Management Measures

There are numerous litter campaigns, initiatives and clean-ups taking place around the Solent, both national and local. The Solent Forum is collating information on these as part of its Clean Solent Shores and Seas Campaign (CSSS) to help people to coordinate work and access information. See: http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/css/. Information is also available on the SEMS website at http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Littering/.

The Great British Beach Clean, provides data and information on the amount and type of litter found at the coast. This was scaled back in 2020 due to Covid restrictions, see: [The Great British Beach Clean | Marine Conservation Society \(mcsuk.org\)](#).

Most harbours and marinas now have comprehensive waste facilities, that include recycling options, and encourage their users to make use of these facilities. The Green Blue have numerous resources on best practice for boating, see: [Waste & Recycling – The Green Blue](#).

NFDC have been giving rubbish bags at beaches identified as summer littering hotspots, with a clear message to visitors to take their rubbish home. They also have an educational campaign in place revolving around a crab called 'crabby'.

Seabins are beginning to be rolled out across the Solent which help to both remove litter and educate people about it in the water, see: <https://seabinproject.com/>.

The Solent Forum has been involved with the Environment Agency led Preventing Plastics Pollution Project and will be working with the Agency on legacy outputs, see: [Home - Preventing Plastic Pollution](#).

4.9.3 Actions

- 1. Action (Ongoing):** NEG to continue to develop the Cleans Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS) resource hub. SEMS MG members to use the hub to find information to support or coordinate any appropriate existing campaigns, policy making, communications, events etc. See: http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/css/.
Lead/partners: NEG (development) and SEMS MG (to use)
Action progress: Ongoing.
- 2. Action (2021-2023):** The Solent Forum, working in partnership with the Environment Agency, will deliver a Solent Plastics Pollution Hub as a legacy output of the Agency's Preventing Plastic Pollution Interegg funded project. This hub will link closely with the Forum's work on CSSS. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#).
Lead/partners: Solent Forum
Action progress: Launched July 2021.

4.10 Mooring and anchoring

4.10.1 Survey Summary Response

Two respondents were concerned that this activity was impacting on SEMS sites. These include concerns about the impacts of erosion and scouring of mudflats and seabed at various locations. Anchoring during the summer months can be a particular problem at sensitive sites. However most respondents said there was no change to this activity last year and they didn't think this activity was impacting on sites.

Mooring and anchoring				
<i>Activity includes the operational use of berths, moorings and anchorages including the presence of these structures and the vessels using them. Includes consideration of impacts from vessels when berthing/berthed, mooring/moored, anchoring/anchored. Also includes impacts from anchors and impacts of boat when at anchor or mooring. There is a particular risk of damage from anchoring in seagrass beds.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
2	3	8	2	15
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
2		13		15
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.10.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Respondents noted that mooring activity has reduced overall in 2020 due to the effect of the pandemic restrictions, meaning that there were significantly fewer visiting boats, apart from mid-July to mid-September 2020.

Through Habitat Regulations Assessment, any proposals within the footprint of a designation needs Appropriate Assessment and use of evidence to support it. This means that there can be certainty that new proposals for structures, replacement or extensions to existing ones will not be having a significant impact on the marine sites.

Potential Impact

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies pressures arising from mooring and/or anchoring that may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features. These include abrasion/disturbance of the seabed, penetration/disturbance of the substratum below the seabed and the introduction or spread of invasive non-native species. A number of designated features within the SEMS are considered to be sensitive to these pressures.

In 2017, Defra published 'Recreational and commercial anchoring and mooring impacts in marine protected areas in Wales and England (ME6003)'. See: <http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=19777>.

Impacts on SEMS

Anchoring and mooring pressures are one of the reasons for the unfavourable status of seagrass beds within Solent Maritime SAC; therefore, Natural England consider this activity is having an impact on some features within SEMS.

Management Measures

Advanced Mooring Systems, or eco moorings, are mooring systems designed to have less impact on the seabed than conventional swing moorings. They aim to minimise interaction with the seabed to prevent abrasion and therefore the potential to damage sensitive habitats. The term Advanced Mooring System has been adopted to emphasise the improved measurability of mooring load potential offered by these systems. The RYA's website contains further information on these systems, see: [advanced-mooring-systems \(rya.org.uk\)](http://advanced-mooring-systems(rya.org.uk)).

LIFE ReMEDIES is working to protect existing seagrass habitat by reducing pressures from recreational activities such as boating. Through its partners the Royal Yachting Association and their environmental programme with British Marine, The Green Blue, the project team are working with recreational boaters to highlight the importance of sensitive seabed habitats and advise how their boating methods, particularly anchoring and mooring, can play a role in protecting them. See: [Recreational boating - Save Our Seabed](#).

Two types of environmentally friendly moorings known as Advanced Mooring Systems have been installed near Yarmouth Harbour and are being monitored for their effectiveness. The Solent Forum has begun to collate this information under its habitat restoration pages - [Solent Forum - Solent Seagrass Restoration](#).

The Green Blue have an 'Anchoring with Care' campaign that advises boat users how to minimise their impacts on sensitive habitats, see: <https://thegreenblue.org.uk/you-your-boat/info-advice/wildlife-habitats/anchoring-with-care/>.

4.10.3 Actions

1. **Action (ongoing):** Promote and share information, best practice and research on Advanced Mooring Systems and any potential effects from mooring and anchoring.
Lead and partners: SEMS Management Group
Action Progress: Material has been/will be uploaded to http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/mooring/.
2. **Action (ongoing):** All to support, promote and share information from the four year LIFE ReMEDIES project. See: [Recreational boating - Save Our Seabed](#).
Lead and partners: SEMS Management Group and NEG
Action Progress: Ongoing.

4.11 Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes

4.11.1 Survey Summary Response

A number of respondents noted that Coastal Partners delivers management of this activity on their behalf. This is an alliance, formed in 2012, to deliver a combined coastal management service across the coastlines of Fareham Borough Council, Gosport Borough Council, Havant Borough Council and Portsmouth City Council. The initiative was driven forward by a need for coastal management that

recognises coastal flooding and erosion risk impacts are not exclusive to Local Authority boundaries. Their work includes environmental projects, see: [Home — Coastal Partners](#).

Coastal Partners are constructing a number of schemes across the Solent, these include major schemes at Portsea Island and Southsea.

NE reported that there has been an increase in schemes coming forward, however these generally include measures to mitigate for impacts. Wider consideration will need to be given to how our coasts are allowed to adapt to rising sea levels and whether current SMP policy is appropriate. The MMO also reported an increase in license applications for this activity.

Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes				
<i>Activity includes the operational effects of coastal defence schemes, for example, accretion of sediment, erosion of intertidal habitats, on-going sediment recycling schemes, coastal squeeze, operation of sluices etc. Includes consideration of vessels/machinery/vehicles associated with maintenance activity.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
5	0	8	5	18
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
4		14		18
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.11.2 Evaluation and Discussion

The EA, through the Regional Habitat Compensation Programme, is reviewing further sites to compensate for coastal squeeze. The de-commissioning of its Assets Programme may identify sites to change the asset management. Adaptation to future challenges e.g. sea level rise and climate change, carbon off-setting, and net gain are the key focus of all schemes going forward.

Respondents also noted that the impacts from the operation of these schemes is accounted for in the environmental assessments needed to obtain the consents and licences.

Potential Impact

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies a range of pressures arising from coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations of SPAs. These include above water noise, visual disturbance and barriers to species movement. Designated bird species within the SEMS are sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement. Similarly, flood and erosion risk management schemes may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features via pressures such as abrasion, penetration and physical change or loss of habitat.

Impacts on SEMS

Based on current understanding of the extent/magnitude of this activity, and the existing regulatory framework, Natural England suggests that this activity is not having an adverse effect on SEMS.

However, loss of intertidal habitat from rising sea levels and coastal squeeze was flagged as a condition threat in the condition assessment for Solent Maritime SAC. Natural England are in the process of reviewing whether or not this should be changed to show a current impact on coastal sites and therefore this position may change. Natural England will provide an update once this decision has been made.

Management Measures

The Environment Agency publish details of the current Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Schemes (FCERM) for the Solent and the South Downs, see:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies#solent-and-south-downs-\(map-area-14\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies#solent-and-south-downs-(map-area-14)).

In accordance with the Habitats Regulations, all competent authorities must undertake a formal assessment of the implications of any new plans or projects that may be capable of affecting the designated interest features of European Sites before deciding whether to undertake, permit or authorise such a plan or project. The impacts from the operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes will therefore be assessed at their time of construction or modification.

Each Shoreline Management Plan policy has a high-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), followed by an HRA for each specific defence works. Access SMP information at:

<https://southerncoastalgroup.org.uk/smps/>.

The Regional Habitat Compensation Programme (RHCP) is a strategic programme run by the Environment Agency. It is the Government's agreed mechanism for delivering strategic habitat compensation for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) to ensure compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The compensatory requirement passed on to the RHCP from Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) is the amount of habitat required to address the adverse impacts on European sites from the SMP policies due to coastal squeeze and saline inundation impacts. Please see: <https://southerncoastalgroup.org.uk/regional-habitat-creation-programme/> for more details.

4.11.3 Actions

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Promote and share information on best practice on this activity including new methodologies and innovation. See: [Solentems - Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes, barrages and sluices](#).

Lead/partners: SEMS Management Group

Action progress: Ongoing.

4.12 Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)

4.12.1 Survey Summary Response

Most respondents noted that there had been no change in this activity and just two raised any concerns about the impact on designated sites. Natural England flagged a concern that this activity could lead to an increased risk of the spread of invasive non-native species for example from hull fouling and ballast water.

Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)				
<i>Activity includes maintenance and operation of all port/harbour infrastructure including quay walls, jetties, slipways, navigation markers, coastal defence structures etc. Includes consideration of vessels/machinery/vehicles associated with activity. Also include the day-to-day operational use of these structures, lights, buoys, posts, towers, transit marks, supply of fuel/bunkering operations onshore /offshore, etc.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2020 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
0	1	13	3	17
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
2		15		17
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.12.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Port and Harbour Authorities in the Solent are very aware of their environmental responsibilities and much has been achieved over recent years to help designated sites in the Solent. For example, many of the harbours now provide pump out facilities to prevent boating black water discharges. The Environment Agency and Natural England have hosted boating and water quality workshops that were very well attended with a receptive, supportive audience. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Water Quality and Boating](#).

Harbours are also beginning to look at ways to ecologically enhance their coastal infrastructure. This work will continue and grow over the coming years and the Solent Forum has a Building Biodiversity in the Solent hub (BBS hub) to promote and share best practice. See: http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/Building_Bioversity_hub/.

Potential Impacts

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies a range of pressures arising from the maintenance and operation of ports and harbours that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations of SPAs. These include above water noise and visual disturbance. A number of designated bird species within the SEMS are sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement and/or mortality. Similarly, the maintenance and operation of ports and harbours may impact SPA supporting habitats

and designated SAC features via pressures such as abrasion/disturbance of the seabed, penetration/disturbance of the substratum below the seabed, smothering and siltation.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England do not consider these activities to currently be having an adverse impact on SEMS.

Management Measures

The UK Marine SAC project produced guidance on this topic including good management practice, see:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/shippingports/ports/environment/advice/practiceguidelinesukmari4926.pdf>.

4.12.3 Actions

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Promote and share information on best practice on this activity including work on the ecological enhancement of port and harbour infrastructure.
Lead and partners: SEMS Management Group and Solent Forum (http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/Building_Bioversity_hub/).
Action Progress: Ongoing.

4.13 Recreation - light aircraft

4.13.1 Survey Summary Response

One respondent noted an increase in this activity, and only one respondent was concerned that this activity could impact on the SEMS sites. This concern was on noise and visual disturbance to birds. Authorities occasionally receive third party requests for commercial drone flights in relation to flights over land owned and lease holding on some foreshore areas, or in relation to navigational safety. SolFCA now use drones for fisheries monitoring work.

Recreation – light aircraft				
<i>Activity includes all types of craft used for recreation in the air e.g. small planes and helicopters, microlights, paramotors, hang gliding, parascending (on beach), parasailing (by boat), drones and model aircraft.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
1	1	4	2	8
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
1		7		8
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.13.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Natural England's '[Marine recreation evidence briefing: drones \(EIN035\)](#)' reports that the pressure arising from participants (operating drones) walking across the shore has been considered to be negligible, compared to the larger numbers of people undertaking general beach leisure activities. The disturbance response of birds to drones is dependent on a range of factors, particularly flying altitude, the type (model) of drone and level of habituation to existing disturbance pressure. Existing research has not distinguished between disturbance from noise and visual cues. Repetitive disturbance events can result in possible long-term effects such as loss of weight, condition and a reduction in reproductive success, leading to population impacts.

An ongoing action is for Bird Aware to pass on information that its Rangers gather on winter drone sightings. In 2019/20 the data shows low numbers of drone sightings and no sightings of drones causing disturbance. In 2020/21 the data was affected by Covid restrictions as fewer surveys were undertaken; however, it showed a similar picture of low sightings.

Impacts on SEMS

Based on current levels of reported activity, it is unlikely that drone use is having an adverse effect upon SEMS. However, study is required to determine whether or not this is accurate, and this activity should continue to be monitored as usage has increased as drones become more affordable.

Management Measures

In 2018, Natural England produced a document for SEMS that explains the regulations surrounding the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and when local authorities might like to contact it for advice. Please contact the Solent Forum office to access a copy.

Natural England's '[Marine recreation evidence briefing: drones \(EIN035\)](#)' contains guidance on management options; including site management access, education and communication techniques and legal enforcement. See:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5340291749380096>.

Government agencies and local authorities have the power to ban the flying of drones and other light aircraft activities via byelaws. Hampshire County Council asks that unmanned aircraft are not operated from its land holdings. People wishing to film have to make a formal request, see:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/business/filmhampshire/code-of-practice>.

The Crown Estate grants permission for UAV flights over Crown Estate foreshore (defined as the land between mean high water and mean low water). It seeks to encourage responsible use of the foreshore and estuaries that it owns. It has published guidelines at: [Metal detecting and drone flying | The Crown Estate](#).

The Civil Aviation Authority provides detailed information about drone use, regulations and best practice see: <https://www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Unmanned-aircraft-and-drones/>. It also supports [Dronesafe.uk](#), a web resource designed to help ensure that drone users in the UK can easily access the information they need about how to fly their drones safely and legally, without endangering others. The CAA recommends that drone users seek advice from Natural England if flying over a SSSI.

Please see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreational_light_aircraft/ for further guidance and resources.

4.13.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): NEG to request data annually from Bird Aware Solent on winter drone use and monitor trends. The use of drones in summer months will be revisited if flagged by Relevant Authorities in the SEMS Annual Survey or concerns are raised by NE. The Bird Aware data is summarised in the evaluation and discussion section above (4.13.2).

Partners/lead: NEG.

2. Action (2021) NEG to evaluate whether summer drone disturbance of birds is an issue and ask for RSPB input on recording summer disturbance.

Partners/lead: NEG.

4.14 Recreation - non-motorised watercraft

4.14.1 Survey Summary Response

There was a notable increase in this activity, thirteen respondents reported an increase and eleven thought that this activity was impacting on the SEMS sites. Authorities reported a large increase in the use of paddlesports, including first time users, due to Covid restrictions and the costs of such craft coming down. Peak times are in the summer months, particularly school holidays and weekends when the weather is good. Participants having picnics and BBQs at sensitive locations exacerbate the problem, as can the taking of dogs on paddle boards and canoes and fishing from canoes.

Respondents noted that the shallow draughts of these vessels, combined with the ability to launch from almost anywhere with no training, means they allow access to very sensitive sites (such as seabird breeding colonies and seal haul outs) causing great disturbance. Participants can also trample over fragile habitats such as saltmarsh and seagrass during launch and recovery.

Recreation – non-motorised watercraft				
<i>Activity includes windsurfing, kite surfing, kayaks, canoes, row boats, punts, paddle boards, dinghies and sailing boats. Includes all related participation such as launching and recovery (shore access and trailers) and any land based practice. Please include information on events and competitions.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
13	1	1	6	21
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
11		10		21
Relevant Authority Comments				
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.14.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Non-motorised watercraft is a generic term which includes both small sailing boats (without a motor) and paddlesports. Small sailing boats include dinghies, day boats or other small keelboats which are usually taken out of water at end of use. Paddlesports is a term for a range of watersports which involve the use of a paddle for propulsion. This includes sea kayaking, surf kayaking, sit-on-top kayaking, Canadian canoeing and stand up paddle boarding (SUP).

Most activity occurs in relatively sheltered areas. Vessels are launched from slipways or sheltered beaches using a trailer or trollies. Activity is centred around sailing clubs, activity centres, harbours and marinas. Paddlesports are generally undertaken close inshore (typically within 1-2 km of the coast). Watercraft that are used for paddling activities have a shallow draught. This allows access to shallow areas of the coast (which are often inaccessible to larger vessels or humans on foot).

A watersports participation survey is conducted annually by a consortium of leading marine bodies including British Marine, Royal Yachting Association (RYA), Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), British Canoeing (BC) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas). Data from 2018 showed that canoeing was the most popular of all boating activities; the long term growth trend of canoeing remains at a four percent year on year increase with 2.1m people going paddling at least once a year, in canoes, kayaks or stand up paddleboards. See: [participation \(rya.org.uk\)](http://participation.rya.org.uk).

Potential Impacts

Natural England's 'Marine recreation evidence briefing: Non-motorised watercraft including paddlesports (EIN028)' (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6087131801321472>) reports that the main impacts of this activity are through abrasion from trampling during launch/recovery of non-motorised watercraft, visual disturbance of birds, marine mammals and fish related to the presence of both people and watercraft. Also above water noise disturbance of hauled out seals and birds related to people noise during launch or activity.

Impacts on SEMS

An increase in this activity, particularly paddle sports, has been noted across SEMS. Further study is therefore required to determine whether the use of non-motorised watercraft is having an adverse effect upon SEMS. Therefore, this activity and the impacts from both disturbance and trampling should be monitored as usage has increased and is anticipated to continue to do so.

Management Measures

In 2016, guidelines for paddlesports were produced by the Solent Forum's Natural Environment Group's working group on recreation. See: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreation_Non_Motorised/Paddlesports_Guidelines_Avoid_Bird_Disturbance.pdf.

The EIN028 report noted above gives examples of management options, the three broad options are on-site access management, education and communication with the public and site users, and legal enforcement. The user groups for the activities in this category also provide advice to their members on how to minimise their environmental impact, for example, The Green Blue has the 'Green Wildlife Guide for Boaters'. A list of these resources and guidance is available at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreation_Non_Motorised/.

Relevant authority management measures includes charging a harbour due, implementing car parking charges, slipway booking systems, erecting information signs at sensitive areas and conducting more water and roaming warden patrols. Harbour authorities put environmental educational material in harbour guides.

Guidance on best practice for paddlesports users is available from the British Canoe Union at: <https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/access-and-environment/environment-good-practice>. There is also comprehensive information for paddlesports users on the Go Paddling website, see: [Go Paddling | Go Canoeing, Go Kayaking, SUP | PaddlePoints | Tips](#).

From summer 2020, Bird Aware Solent will be looking to work with recreational watercraft users to address any impacts from their activities on the Solent's birds.

4.14.3 Actions

1. **Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members are reminded to use the paddlesports guidelines (2016) and be aware of the other resources available on the SEMS website, see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreation_Non_Motorised/
Lead/partners: SEMS MG
Action progress: Ongoing
2. **Action (2020/ongoing):** NEG to ask Bird Aware Solent to report back on their work on educating recreational watercraft users once information is available.
Lead and partners: NEG and Bird Aware Solent.
Action progress: Ongoing.
3. **Action (2020/ongoing):** NEG to research the evidence base for potential impacts on designated sites from the increased use of paddlesports.
Lead and partners: NEG.
Action progress: This is a priority action for NEG in 2021/22; an [Impacts and Management of Paddlesports in the Solent \(IMP Solent\)](#) project was established after the NEG meeting in November 2020. Chichester Harbour will provide the pilot. Please visit [Solentems - Paddlesports in the Solent \(IMP Solent\)](#) for details.

4.15 Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine

4.15.1 Survey Summary Response

There was a mixed response to changes in this activity, five respondents noted an increase, three a decrease and nine thought there had been no change or didn't know. During lockdown it was commented that there was limited activity, but post lockdown this activity intensified leading to no net overall change. Six respondents were concerned about the impacts from this activity on SEMS sites, notably the effects of wash from speeding vessels.

LHB sold almost double the number of jet ski permits in 2020 compared with the previous year. They noted that jet skis are noisy, and have shallow draughts allowing easy access to and disturbance of sensitive sites and species. They have tightened permit conditions for jet skis for this season (permits are now not issued without sight of insurance documentation). Before next season, all jet skiers will be required to obtain a recognised qualification before a permit will be issued.

Natural England commented that concerns have been raised by other stakeholders regarding an increase in this activity, specifically jet skis, at various sites across the Solent.

Recreation – powerboating or sailing with an engine				
<i>Activity includes any motorised boat activity, such as Personal Watercraft (PWC), hovercraft, powerboating and water-skiing. Includes launching and recovery of craft e.g. slipway or beach/shore launching and participation i.e. when activity is underway or making way. Please consider other novel uses of power boats such as flyboarding. The impacts of different craft will vary and should be considered on a case by case basis e.g. sailing boats with low power engines moving at slow speeds are less likely to have an impact.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
5	3	4	5	17
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
6		11		17
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.15.2 Evaluation and Discussion

The main concern reported for this activity category is disturbance caused by the use of jetskis. These can disturb both wildlife and the amenity value of sites.

The Watersports Participation Survey 2018 (Arkenford, 2018) shows that over the last ten years, the use of motorised craft has remained static and there has been a slight decrease in the use of personal watercraft. See:

<https://www.rya.org.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/sportsdevelopment/2018-watersports-study-exec-summary-final.pdf>.

The use of electric outboard motors to replace petrol motors is starting to become more common, although this is still in its infancy. These are quieter and produce no emissions. Bio diesel is another fuel source option.

Potential Impacts

Natural England's publication 'Motorised watercraft (powerboating and sailing with an engine) (EIN027)' (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6327458038546432>) reports that the main impacts are through abrasion/disturbance of the surface and sub-surface sediment, underwater noise disturbance of marine mammals and birds, related to engine operation during the activity, above water noise and visual disturbance, of hauled out seals and visual disturbance of marine mammals and birds.

Impacts on SEMS

Based on current levels of reported activity, it is unlikely that use of motorised watercraft is having an adverse effect upon SEMS. However, this activity should be monitored as usage has increased and is anticipated to continue to do so, which has the potential to increase levels of bird disturbance.

Management Measures

Solent Relevant Authorities noted in their Survey returns that Harbour General Directions, including speed restrictions, effectively manage this activity. For activities like waterskiing and jetskiing, these commonly require permits and participants are encouraged to stay away from sensitive sites. The Royal Navy have produced a 'Wash and Slow' leaflet that shows Solent speed limits, see: [Wash and Slow leaflet update 2021 web \(mod.uk\)](#). QHM have undertaken more waterborne patrols where possible and note that local councils are being proactive, there is an intention to increase buoyage as necessary.

The MMO can't license these recreational activities, it can only be reported to and regulated by the local Harbour Authority, disturbance can be reported to the MCA.

After a significant surge in reports of anti-social behaviour on the water, Hampshire Marine Support Unit have launched Operation Wavebreaker to address the issues and to start to look for some long-term solutions. They are working closely with local harbour masters, maritime rescue agencies and community groups to quantify the issue and look at effective ways of modifying the current behaviours to ensure everyone can use the water in a safe and enjoyable environment. The Police ask that issues or concerns about anti-social behaviour in the marine environment, be reported to the local Harbour Authority or to them via 101 or through the Hampshire Constabulary website.

The user groups for the activities in this category provide advice to their members on how to minimise their environmental impact, for example, The Green Blue has advice on boating around wildlife, see: <https://thegreenblue.org.uk/you-your-boat/info-advice/wildlife-habitats/boating-around-wildlife/>. It also provides guidance on how to run sustainable events, see: <https://thegreenblue.org.uk/clubs-centres-associations/running-a-sustainable-event/>.

The RSPB have published a guidance notes on jetskis and birds, see: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/positions/marine/jet-skis-and-birds---the-rspb-position.pdf>.

The EA and NE have been focussing on black water discharge from recreational vessels. Actions are underway for partners (e.g. harbour authorities, Southern Water, marina groups, RYA, EA) to seek improvements to pump out facilities and ways to encourage behavioural change of recreational sailors. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Water Quality and Boating](#).

4.15.3 Actions

1. **Action (ongoing):** Promote and share environmental studies, reports and good practice. Please visit http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreation_Motorised/.
Lead and partners: SEMS MG members.
Action progress: Ongoing.

4.16 Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance

4.16.1 Survey Summary Response

One respondent reported an increase in this activity in the 2021 Survey, no respondents were concerned that this activity could impact on the SEMS sites.

The harbours noted that they normally use water to undertake their cleaning; algal mats need to be removed to maintain access to slipways. They do try to keep this activity to a minimum.

Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance				
<i>Activity includes the ongoing maintenance, such as washing down, clearing of mud or sediment, algal growth or similar of a slipway or jetty.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
1	0	15	1	17
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
0		17		17
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.16.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Potential Impacts

Maintenance wastes can enter harbours from the cleaning of jetties and slipways. Debris and wastes produced could contain a mixture of contaminants including oils, oil emulsifiers, paints, solvents, detergents, bleach and antifouling paint scrapings. The dilution of wastes in the harbour waters means that in most cases any possible adverse effects will be only localised and temporary. See: http://www.ukmarinesac.org.uk/activities/ports/ph4_3.htm for detailed information.

Impacts on SEMS

Whilst Natural England do not consider this activity to currently be impacting on SEMS it does have the potential to increase the presence and spread of invasive non-native species which has been listed as a condition threat for Solent Maritime SAC. In addition, poor water quality is considered one of the reasons for the current unfavourable status of Solent Maritime SAC. Therefore, Natural England advises that harbours/marinas should promote best practice.

Management Measures

Solent harbours reported that they try to avoid using harmful chemicals and use plain seawater or environmentally sound cleaning materials when undertaking cleaning operations. The Green Blue recommended not using chemicals to remove weed and algae from slipways but use a stiff brush or a high pressure hose instead.

The RYA provide guidance on cleaning of slipways at: <https://www.rya.org.uk/knowledge-advice/environmental-advice/Pages/cleaning-slipways.aspx>.

Guidance from the MMO is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cleaning-of-slipways-and-harbour-infrastructure>.

The Green Blue provide guidance on best practice in cleaning of both boats and infrastructure, see: <https://thegreenblue.org.uk/clubs-centres-associations/facilities-operations/pollution-control/cleaning-maintenance/>.

4.16.3 Actions

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Continue to follow best practice guidance when undertaking slipway and jetty cleaning. See: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Slipways/.
Lead and partners: SEMS MG members.
Action progress: Ongoing.

4.17 Wildfowling

4.17.1 Survey Summary Response

Of the seven responses received that this activity takes place within a relevant authority's jurisdiction, five reported no change and two didn't know. Two authorities were concerned that this activity was impacting on SEMS sites.

These concerns were about disturbance to feeding and roosting birds and the trampling of flora on shoots.

Wildfowling				
<i>Activity includes the use of firearms to shoot wild fowl. This category does not take into account the use of dogs during these activities, please use 'Land recreation - dog walking' for any dog related activity.</i>				
Change in Activity Level reported in 2021 Survey				
Increase	Decrease	No Change	Don't Know	Total Responses
0	0	5	2	7
Do you think the Activity is having an impact on the SEMS Site?				
Yes		No		Total Responses
2		5		7
Source: SEMS Annual Survey Report, 2021				

4.17.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Wildfowling is a largely solitary activity which involves the hunting of specific species of ducks, geese and waders with a smooth bore shotgun. It is undertaken primarily on estuaries and coastal marshes. In England, the season runs from 1st September until 31st January above the high-water mark and extends until February 20th below the high-water mark. The majority of wildfowling is organised through a club structure, but it can also be undertaken independently, usually by landowners.

Potential Impacts

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies pressures arising from wildfowling that may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features. These include above water noise,

removal of target species and visual disturbance. A number of designated features within the SEMS are considered to be sensitive to these pressures.

Impacts on SEMS

Natural England do not consider wildfowling to be currently impacting on SEMS, however, in the long-term Natural England will seek to review all consents in place to ensure that these are fit for purpose.

Management Measures

The relevant authorities that responded that wildfowling took place in their survey return all stated that licences and consents were in place to manage this activity. Landowners/occupiers, such as wildfowling clubs, need to apply to Natural England for consent to undertake wildfowling, this provision does not exist for third parties undertaking activities on these sites.

The summary of responses to Natural England's consultation on the review of its guidance for assessing wildfowling consents on protected sites, can be viewed at:

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england/wildfowling-guidance-review/results/summaryofresponsestonaturalengland_final_namesupdated.pdf (March 2018).

For all wildfowling activity which takes place under a Crown Estate lease, annual returns are made, detailing the numbers of visits undertaken and number of birds shot. The Crown Estate provides guidance at: <https://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/en-gb/what-we-do/on-the-seabed/coastal/wildfowling/>. The Joint Group for Wildfowling on Tidal Land was set up to advise The Crown Estate on issues relating to wildfowling on designated inter-tidal land, see: https://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/media/1206/wildfowling_wildfowl-joint-tidal-group-procedure.pdf.

Information from the British Association for Shooting and Conservation is available at: <https://basc.org.uk/wildfowling/>.

4.17.3 Actions

No action required by SEMS Management Group. For more information see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Wildfowling/.

4.18 Generic Actions

1. SEMS MG members should use this AMR and the activity pages on the SEMS website as a reference resource to help shape relevant plans and policies or management measures in designated sites. See: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/.
2. SEMS MG members to feed information to the SEMS office throughout the year (sems@hants.gov.uk) to enable the promotion and sharing of good practice throughout the Solent.
3. Please view Section 5 of the Annual Survey Report for information on how plans and projects relate to activities and designated sites. See: [Solentems - Solent Marine Sites Publications](#).
4. SEMS MG members to use the duty and responsibility table to guide what activity sections they need to complete in the SEMS Annual Survey.
5. SEMS MG to be aware that the spread of invasive non-native species can occur from any watercraft movement; this may be exacerbated as climate change allows species to extend beyond their current range. Please report any concerns in your SEMS Survey return.
6. NEG is exploring the use of mapping to identify bird sensitive hotspot areas at risk from recreational activities.

5 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ)

In 2020, the SEMS Annual Survey was adapted to include questions on the three MCZs that are designated in the Solent:

- The Needles
- Yarmouth to Cowes
- Bembridge

Relevant Authorities were asked whether they had an MCZ within their jurisdiction and whether they had any concerns about activities taking place within these sites. In 2021, several observations were made as illustrated below.

The MMO's marine non-licensable activity (NLA) management approach is being developed. Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone is the first site to be assessed by the MMO for NLA impacts. To support development of the approach, the MMO have an evidence project underway which is collating data on a number of MPAs. This will be published on the MMO website when complete. There is not currently a confirmed timeline of NLA site assessments going forward. SEMS will be contacted if the MMO commence assessment on any sites in the Solent. See: [Managing marine non-licensable activities in marine protected areas - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-marine-non-licensable-activities-in-marine-protected-areas).

Southern IFCA is in the process of completing its assessments of fishing activities within Yarmouth to Cowes and Bembridge MCZs. The aim of these assessments is to ensure the conservation objectives of the features are compatible with ongoing fishing activity. Initial assessments of bottom towed fishing gear and hand gathering will feed into the Southern IFCA spatial management review and may lead to further protections afforded to the most sensitive features.

Following designation, Natural England started a baseline monitoring programme across all Marine Protected Areas. The inshore benthic marine survey of The Needles MCZ can be accessed at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5147687566704640>.

6 Summary of Actions

Section 6 collates the actions from section 4 on activities, completed actions from past years are available to view on the SEMS website at:

http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/AMR/Action_archive/.

1. Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up

No current action required by SEMS MG.

2. Boat repair and maintenance

1. **Action (ongoing):** Continue to promote and share best practice in addressing the potential environmental impacts of boat repair/maintenance, including preventing INNS. For resources see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Boat_repair/.

Lead/Partners: Harbour authorities and all others who have this activity in their jurisdiction.

2. **Action (ongoing):** Natural England to send an update on their monitoring work on INNS to the SEMS office for distribution once all survey work is completed. Harbour authorities can request specific data for their area from Natural England.

Lead/Partners: Natural England

Action progress: Final Report will be shared with SEMS and circulated once published.

3. Fishing (including shellfisheries)

1. **Action:** Continue to report to the IFCA any illegal fishing activity around closed beds or illegal fish trapping. Be aware of new IFCA byelaws.

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG Members

Action Progress: Ongoing

2. **Action:** Publicise and encourage recreational anglers to take part in the Sea Angling Diary project. See: <https://www.seaangling.org/>. Cefas have published findings of this study at: <https://www.cefas.co.uk/news/sea-angling-contributes-over-1-5bn-to-uk-economy/>.

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG Members

Action Progress: Ongoing.

4. Fishing (shore-based activities)

1. **Action (ongoing):** Continue to report and liaise with the local IFCA, and if necessary the Marine police, where it is considered that bait collection or foreshore hand gathering is commercial or having a detrimental impact. Use the [Guidance for Solent Relevant Authorities for monitoring shore-based fishing](#) to record this activity.

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG

Action progress: Ongoing

2. **Action (2020/ongoing): Progress the Solent Mudflat Strategy**

Lead/Partners: NEG

Action progress: In 2020, NEG established a working group which is developing a strategy to address the impacts on mudflats from recreational activities in designated sites. Please

see the information page on the SEMS website for the latest information: [Solentems - Solent Mudflat Disturbance Group](#).

5. General Beach Recreation

- 1. Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members to be aware of the Natural England recreational evidence note on general beach life and use this guidance to identify issues and management measures ([Marine recreation evidence briefing: general beach life - EIN034 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)).

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG members

Action progress: Ongoing

- 2. Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members to consider including information on potential impacts on designated sites when updating local codes of conduct or signage. Resources to assist this are available at:

http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/General_Beach_Recreation/.

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG members

Action progress: Ongoing

6. Grazing and Foraging

- 1. Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members to report any concerns regarding the foraging for wild plants or shellfish in designated sites to the SEMS office direct or via the annual survey.

Lead/Partners: SEMS MG members

Action progress: Ongoing

7. Land recreation - Dog walking

- 1. Action (ongoing):** In 2021, when the 5 year monitoring of the effectiveness of the SRMP is complete, an assessment should be made as to how successful the mitigation strategy has been in reducing the impact of new housing development in the Solent, and whether baseline disturbance from existing housing has sufficiently reduced harm to birds through the promotion of the Bird Aware messaging by third parties (SRMP monitoring 2021). Due to COVID-19, the Bird Aware monitoring for winter season 2020/21 will be different from normal, so this data set will not form part of the overall initial monitoring period. Therefore the 'complete' data set is now not expected to be available until 2022.

Lead and partners: NEG

Action Progress: NEG will keep track of Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP) monitoring and continue with their liaising and support.

Future Action: Post 2022, evaluate whether the SRMS has achieved its objectives and assess whether it has mitigated bird disturbance impacts arising prior to 2010.

- 2. Action (ongoing):** RAs to identify and communicate with their own rangers and coastal staff details of how they can support Bird Aware Solent in the delivery of their educational messages. Also, for coastal staff to report bird disturbance issues to Bird Aware Solent.

Lead and partners: SEMS MG

Action Progress: Please feed details into the SEMS Annual survey if this action is undertaken.

- 3. Action (ongoing):** Local authorities to consider the use of Public Spaces Protection Orders as a measure to control dogs disturbing birds at sensitive sites.
Lead and partners: Local authorities
Action Progress: Please feed details into the SEMS Annual survey if this action is undertaken.

8. Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)

Please also see actions in dog walking above as these equally apply.

- 1. Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG to read and be aware of the issues raised in the nature conservation assessments relating to the stretches of coastal path in their jurisdiction. To view please see:
http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/. Look to include relevant information in any revised signage, publications or education material.
Partners/lead: SEMS MG
Action progress: Ongoing.

9. Littering and removal of litter

- 1. Action (Ongoing):** NEG to continue to develop the Cleans Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS) resource hub. SEMS MG members to use the hub to find information to support or coordinate any appropriate existing campaigns, policy making, communications, events etc. See: http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/css/.
Lead/partners: NEG (development) and SEMS MG (to use)
Action progress: Ongoing.
- 2. Action (2021-2023):** The Solent Forum, working in partnership with the Environment Agency, will deliver a Solent Plastics Pollution Hub as a legacy output of the Agency's Preventing Plastic Pollution Interegg funded project. This hub will link closely with the Forum's work on CSSS. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#).
Lead/partners: Solent Forum
Action progress: Launched July 2021.

10. Mooring and anchoring

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Promote and share information, best practice and research on Advanced Mooring Systems and any potential effects from mooring and anchoring.
Lead and partners: SEMS Management Group
Action Progress: Material has been/will be uploaded to http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/mooring/.
- 2. Action (ongoing):** All to support, promote and share information from the four year LIFE ReMEDIES project. See: [Recreational boating - Save Our Seabed](#).
Lead and partners: SEMS Management Group and NEG
Action Progress: Ongoing.

11. Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes

- 1. Action (ongoing):** Promote and share information on best practice on this activity including new methodologies and innovation. See: [Solentems - Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes, barrages and sluices](#).

Lead/partners: SEMS Management Group

Action progress: Ongoing.

12. Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)

1. **Action (ongoing):** Promote and share information on best practice on this activity including work on the ecological enhancement of port and harbour infrastructure.

Lead and partners: SEMS Management Group and Solent Forum

(http://www.solentforum.org/services/Member_Services/Building_Bioversity_hub/).

Action Progress: Ongoing.

13. Recreation - light aircraft

1. **Action (ongoing):** NEG to request data annually from Bird Aware Solent on winter drone use and monitor trends. The use of drones in summer months will be revisited if flagged by Relevant Authorities in the SEMS Annual Survey or concerns are raised by NE. The Bird Aware data is summarised in the evaluation and discussion section above (4.13.2).
2. **Action (2021)** NEG to evaluate whether summer drone disturbance of birds is an issue and ask for RSPB input on recording summer disturbance.

Partners/lead: NEG.

Partners/lead: NEG.

14. Recreation - non-motorised watercraft

1. **Action (ongoing):** SEMS MG members are reminded to use the paddlesports guidelines (2016) and be aware of the other resources available on the SEMS website, see:

http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreation_Non_Motorised/

Lead/partners: SEMS MG

Action progress: Ongoing

2. **Action (2020/ongoing):** NEG to ask Bird Aware Solent to report back on their work on educating recreational watercraft users once information is available.

Lead and partners: NEG and Bird Aware Solent.

Action progress: Ongoing.

3. **Action (2020/ongoing):** NEG to research the evidence base for potential impacts on designated sites from the increased use of paddleboarding.

Lead and partners: NEG.

Action progress: This is a priority action for NEG in 2021/22; an [Impacts and Management of Paddleboards in the Solent \(IMP Solent\)](#) project was established after the

NEG meeting in November 2020. Chichester Harbour will provide the pilot. Please visit [Solentems - Paddleboards in the Solent \(IMP Solent\)](#) for details.

15. Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine

1. **Action (ongoing):** Promote and share environmental studies, reports and good practice. Please visit http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Recreation_Motorised/.

Lead and partners: SEMS MG members.

Action progress: Ongoing.

16. Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance

1. **Action (ongoing):** Continue to follow best practice guidance when undertaking slipway and jetty cleaning. See: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Slipways/.
Lead and partners: SEMS MG members.
Action progress: Ongoing.

17. Wildfowling

No action required by SEMS Management Group. But for more information see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Wildfowling/.

Generic Actions

In the 2021 Survey, the data and comments identified the following generic actions.

1. SEMS MG members should use this AMR and the activity pages on the SEMS website as a reference resource to help shape relevant plans and policies or management measures. See: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/.
2. SEMS MG members to feed information to the SEMS office throughout the year (sems@hants.gov.uk) to enable the promotion and sharing of good practice throughout the Solent.
3. Please view Section 5 of the Annual Survey Report for information on how plans and projects relate to activities and designated sites. See: [Solentems - Solent Marine Sites Publications](#).
4. SEMS MG members to use the duty and responsibility table to guide what activity sections they need to complete in the SEMS Annual Survey.
5. SEMS MG to be aware that the spread of invasive non-native species can occur from any watercraft movement; this may be exacerbated as climate change allows species to extend beyond their current range. Please report any concerns in your SEMS Survey return.
6. NEG is exploring the use of mapping to identify bird sensitive hotspot areas at risk from recreational activities.

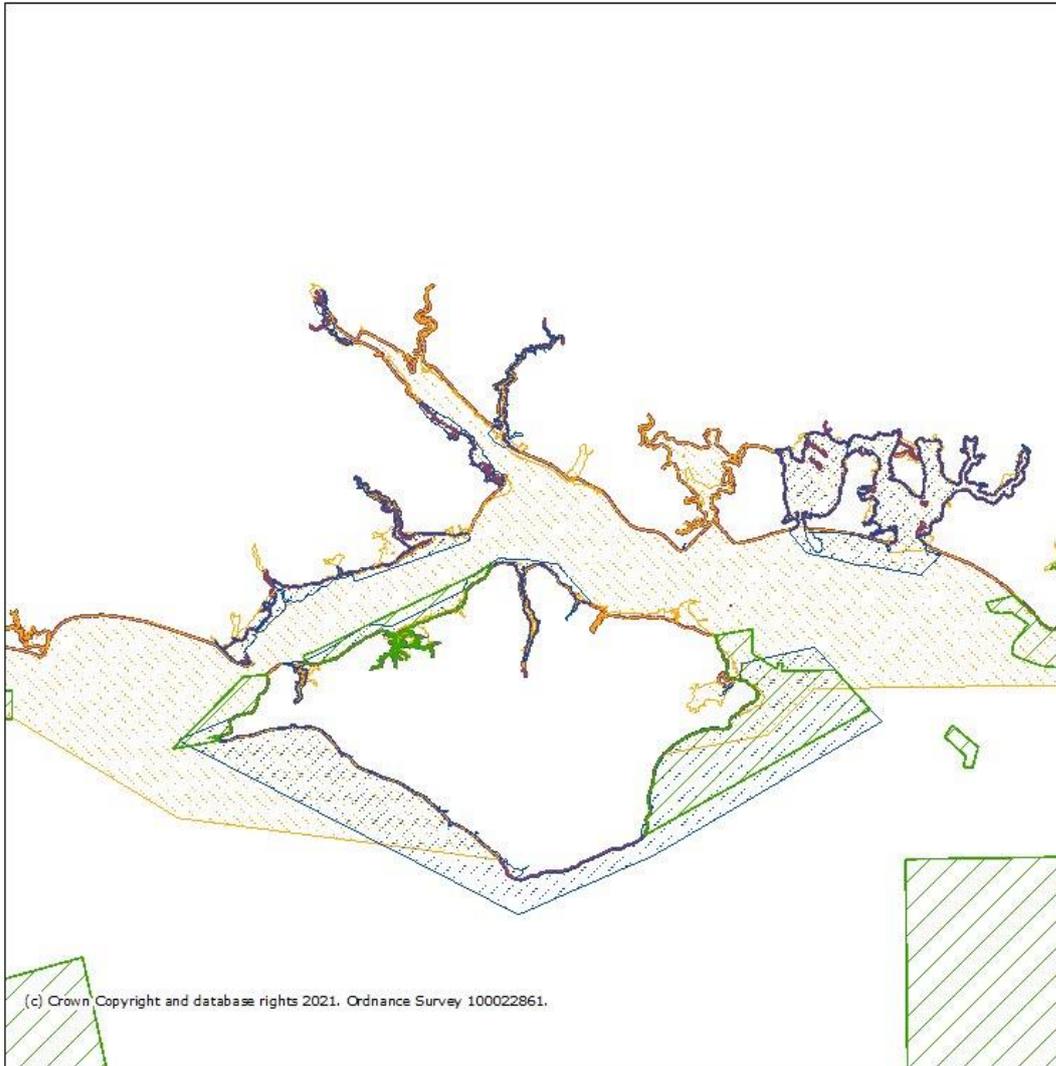
7 Appendices

7.1 Map of Solent Marine Sites

Please visit <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> to view the sites at a more local scale.

MAGiC

Solent Marine Sites



Legend

Marine Conservation Zones (England)

Designated

Special Areas of Conservation (Marine Components GB)

Candidate

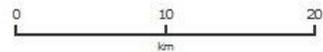
Designated

Possible

Special Protection Areas (Marine Components GB)

Classified

Potential



Projection = OSGB36

xmin = 378200

ymin = 54750

xmax = 523600

ymax = 142200

Map produced by MAGiC on 15 July, 2021.

Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGiC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

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