



Solent Marine Sites (SEMS)

Annual Management Report, 2023

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

Sept 2023



Contents

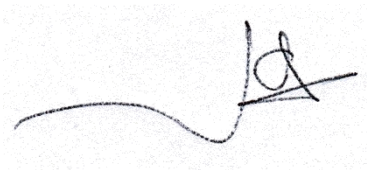
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1 Foreword

The content of this report is more relevant than ever. Our responding groups cross many boundaries. Members of The Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Management Group provide the best possible (in fact often the only) evidence of the impact of activities likely to damage our marine sites. As these activities change and we evolve the way we report, we put ourselves in a stronger position to look across the breadth of how people use the sites. In doing so, we help ourselves identify trends and adopt the best practices we can to minimise human impact, whilst ensuring that leisure activities, important to people, are sustainable.

It is always a challenge to make time to fill in surveys. Each responding organisation will have its statutory and day-to-day responsibilities to fulfil. I am therefore hugely grateful for the effort made by respondents to our Annual Survey. I am also grateful to the team producing this report, and to the Solent Forum's Natural Environment Group (NEG) for the detailed work it does on the strategic actions.

I believe the SEMS process is evolving in a way that strives to meet the needs of its constituents. By this, I mean that there will always be scope to address changes in habits. At our Annual SEMS Steering Group meeting in July, we identified, for example, a developing and worrying trend for unconsented private developments on designated sites. While enforcement action is taken where necessary, I hope that we may gather more evidence on this in our next survey to help those who wish to conduct works to understand in advance what is allowable and help to prevent damage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Scott', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Jason Scott
Chair, Solent Marine Sites
River Hamble Harbour Master

2 Executive Summary

In 2023, 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, twenty-eight 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 from the [SEMS website](#).

This Annual Management Report evaluates and discusses the survey responses, reviews existing management measures, and identifies actions. Natural England evaluate whether they believe each activity is impacting the condition of SEMS sites.

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/.

The past years' data shows that participation of activities in the Solent shows no change. However activities such as coastal walking (including dog walking) and general beach recreation have been at elevated levels for some time as people increasingly value the physical and mental health benefits of visiting the coast and using the marine space. There are concerns that high levels of baseline activity are having negative impacts, particularly at sensitive sites, and there is a case to look at reducing or managing activity levels in the future in some locations. Those organisations holding powers and responsibilities where specific activities are a concern in their location, will find this report useful as evidence for guiding policy and effort in addressing and managing activities.

Activities highlighted this year by multiple respondents potentially impacting on SEMS sites include coastal walking with and without dogs, paddlesport participation and the use of motorised shallow draft craft like personal watercraft. The [Bird Aware Partnership](#) works to mitigate against additional recreational pressure, from new housebuilding, on the overwintering birds, but it also requires its partners to actively work at lowering the pre-existing disturbance level.

This Report also recognises the ongoing good work that is being undertaken by the Solent's Relevant Authorities, the trade associations, partnerships 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.

3 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).

3.1 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 EMS' was established under [Regulation 38 of the Habitats Regulations](#). This gives Relevant Authorities (RAs) the responsibility for monitoring activities across designated sites, and for addressing any damaging impacts.

[Marine Conservation Zones](#) are designated via separate legislation and are not formally included in the SEMS Management Scheme. However, since their designation in the Solent 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 8 for more details.

3.2 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 much of the marine area.

Section 9 shows a map of the Solent's Marine Protected Areas.

3.3 SEMS Management Scheme

In the Solent, a Management Scheme (MS) was first established in 2002 by the RAs opting to work 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 1 shows the annual timetable.

Figure 1. Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme Framework



3.3.1 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 on designated sites by completing an [online survey](#) every spring. 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/.

3.3.2 Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Role

The MMO is responsible for assessing and managing marine non-licensable activities below the MLWM (if necessary) within marine protected areas (MPA) to further the conservation objectives of the site. This applies regardless of whether the MPA is within harbour authority jurisdiction. Where the MPA is within harbour authority jurisdiction, MMO would liaise with the relevant harbour authority with regards to management. MMO recognise that existing measures may be in place by harbour authorities and would want to avoid regulatory duplication.

The MMO does not have jurisdiction over activities which take place on the foreshore. These fall within the remit of other regulators such as local authorities.

3.3.3 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.

3.3.4 Strategic Stakeholder Group

The Strategic Stakeholder Group (SSG) exists to ensure that stakeholders are briefed and can comment on the content of the draft SEMS Annual Management Report. They are also asked to provide feedback to the management group on key strategic issues.

3.3.5 Bird Aware Solent

[Bird Aware Solent](#) is a strategic mitigation Partnership operating across the Solent, to reduce potential recreational impacts on protected birds from increased local housing development. It is the public facing brand name of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership. Fifteen of the Solent's local authorities are members of this Partnership and use it to help fulfil their duties to mitigate bird disturbance from recreational activity. Partners include Natural England, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and Chichester Harbour Conservancy.

In 2023 Bird Aware published its [Bird Aware Solent Strategy Review 2023](#). The data shows that a range of activities have increased over the review period, notably kitesurfing, kayaking, paddleboarding, walking (without a dog) and dog walking. While the number of dog walkers (and dogs) have increased, the proportion of dogs now kept on a lead has also increased.

3.3.6 Weather

Activity participation is 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.

3.3.7 Activity Infrastructure Plans and Projects

There is a distinction between how impacts are assessed from the development of facilities required for non-licensable activities, and the impacts arising from participation. Development of facilities in SEMS is subject to licences and conditions such as planning permission and/or marine licensing which require a [Habitats Regulation Assessment \(HRA\)](#). The HRA will assess both the construction and usage impacts. The increased use or expansion of existing facilities could also have the potential to increase impacts on SEMS sites, for example the extension of a coastal path. SEMS does not cover the development aspects of non-licensable activities, but we do ask about plans and projects that may change activity levels as part of the Annual Survey.

3.4 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 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 used to inform this assessment. The aim of this process is to help the initial screening 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. Detailed advice can be provided by Natural England upon request.

Natural England have produced formal conservation advice for all marine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within SEMS. They are also producing conservation advice for [Marine Conservation Zones \(MCZs\)](#).

3.4.1 Site Condition Assessments

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 EMS' are assessed by feature and reported on by Natural England 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/.

New methodologies have been produced for SPA and MCZ condition assessments, and it is anticipated that the first SPA condition assessments will be produced in 2022/23 for SPAs and 2023/24 for MCZs. Once the SPA and MCZ 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 input and agriculture.

3.4.2 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 focus of the survey is capturing how time is spent. 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment).

3.4.3 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 embeds 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.

3.5 SEMS Annual Survey Respondents

Out of the 31 Relevant Authorities (RAs) who were invited to complete the 2023 SEMS survey 28 responded. Table 1 shows the list of respondents. Table 2 identifies the types of RAs which responded.

Table 1. Relevant Authorities who completed the 2023 survey	
Beaulieu River Management (BRM)	Natural England (NE)
Chichester District Council (CDC)	New Forest District Council (NFDC)
Chichester Harbour Conservancy (ChHC)	New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)
Cowes Harbour Commissioners (CoHC)	Portsmouth International Port (PIP)
Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC)	King's Harbour Master (Portsmouth) (KHM)
Environment Agency (EA)	River Hamble Harbour Authority (RHHA)
Fareham Borough Council (FBC)	Southern IFCA (SoIFCA)
Gosport Borough Council (GBC)	Southern Water (SW)
Hampshire County Council (HCC)	Sussex IFCA (SxIFCA)
Havant Borough Council (HBC)	Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC)
Isle of Wight Council (IoWC)	West Sussex County Council (WSCC)
Langstone Harbour Board (LHB)	Wightlink Ferries (WL)
Lymington Harbour Commissioners (LHC)	Winchester City Council (WCC)
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners (YHC)
Organisations who did not respond: Associated British Ports (ABP), Portsmouth City Council (PCC), Southampton City Council (SCC)	

Table 2. The type of Relevant Authority who responded to the Survey.	
Authority Type	Count
Government Authority	4
Harbour Authority	9
IFCA	2
Local Authority	11
Other	1
Private Company	1

4 Activity Summary

Section 4 summarises the annual survey findings of the seventeen activities covered by SEMS. Detailed observations and actions for each individual activity are set out in section 5.

4.1 Jurisdiction of Activities in the Solent

Table 3 illustrates how many relevant authorities (RA) recorded that a particular activity takes place within their jurisdiction.

Table 3. Activities that fall within the jurisdiction of SEMS Management Group members		
Activity	Percentage of SEMS MG Relevant Authorities with jurisdiction for each activity	Response
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	57%	16
Boat Repair and Maintenance	54%	15
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	50%	14
Fishing (shore-based activities)	71%	20
General Beach Recreation	50%	14
Grazing and Foraging	25%	7
Land Recreation - Dog Walking	61%	17
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	61%	17
Littering and removal of litter	68%	19
Mooring and Anchoring	61%	17
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	57%	16
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	57%	16
Recreation - light aircraft	36%	10
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	68%	19
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	61%	17
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	54%	15
Wildfowling	29%	8

4.2 Summary of Changes Recorded in Activity Levels

Respondents were asked whether, since the last survey in spring 2022, each activity had increased, decreased, had no change since the previous year or they had no data. Table 4 summarises the data. The mode value of the responses has been highlighted in green,

Table 4. Summary of reported changes in activity levels from spring 2022 to spring 2023					
Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	1	0	14	1	16
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	0	11	3	15
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	0	0	12	2	14
Fishing (shore-based activities)	2	0	13	5	20
General Beach Recreation	0	1	8	5	14
Grazing and Foraging	0	1	3	4	8
Land Recreation - Dog Walking	1	0	9	7	17
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	0	0	12	6	18
Littering and removal of litter	1	1	12	5	19
Mooring and Anchoring	1	1	12	3	17
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	3	0	10	3	16
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	2	0	14	0	16
Recreation - light aircraft	0	0	7	3	10
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	3	1	10	5	19
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	1	2	11	3	17
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	0	14	1	15
Wildfowling	0	0	8	0	8

4.3 Activity Impacts on Designated Sites

Respondents were asked whether they thought that the activities surveyed were having an impact on the features of the Solent Marine Sites. Table 5 summarises the data. The mode value of the responses has been highlighted in green, where the results are close these have been highlighted in a paler green.

Table 5. Activities Impacting on Designated Sites				
Activity	Yes	No	Total Responses	Org Names (where Yes)
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	2	14	16	NFDC, ChHC
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	14	15	ChHC
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	5	9	14	GBC, SxIFCA, EA, MMO, ChHC
Fishing (shore-based activities)	5	15	20	EBC, SxIFCA, MMO, ChHC, FBC
General Beach Recreation	5	9	14	EBC, NE, HCC, ChHC, FBC
Grazing and Foraging	1	5	6	ChHC
Land Recreation - Dog Walking	14	3	17	EBC, LHB, CDC, IOWC, GBC, WCC, WSCC, NE, NFNPA, HCC, BRM, MMO, ChHC, FBC
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	12	6	18	EBC, LHB, CDC, IOWC, GBC, WCC, NE, NFNPA, HCC, BRM, ChHC, FBC
Littering and removal of litter	11	8	19	LHC, EBC, LHB, IOWC, GBC, WCC, EA, HCC, BRM, ChHC, FBC
Mooring and Anchoring	5	12	17	NE, BRM, MMO, ChHC, FBC
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	7	9	16	LHC, EBC, GBC, EA, NE, MMO, ChHC
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	0	16	16	
Recreation - light aircraft	0	10	10	
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	8	11	19	LHC, EBC, LHB, GBC, NE, BRM, ChHC, FBC
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	8	9	17	EBC, LHB, GBC, NE, MMO, ChHC, PIP, FBC
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	15	15	
Wildfowling	1	7	8	ChHC

4.4 Annual Trend Data

Table 6 shows the mode response for activity change for a time series; currently we have data for five years.

Table 6. Trend data for activity change					
Activity	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Boat repair and maintenance	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	NC	NC	NC	NC	D/NC
Fishing (shore-based activities)	NC	NC	DK	NC	NC
Grazing and foraging	NC	DK	I	NC	N/a
General beach recreation	NC	NC	I	NC	NC
Land recreation - Dog walking	NC	NC	I	NC	NC
Land recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)	NC	NC	I	NC	NC
Littering and removal of litter	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Mooring and anchoring	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Operation of FCERM	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Recreation - light aircraft	NC	NC	NC	I	NC
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	NC	I	I	NC	I/NC
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	NC	NC	I/DK	NC	NC
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Wildfowling	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC

Key: I = increase, D = decrease, NC = No change, DK = Don't Know
 Source: SEMS Annual Surveys: 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019

5 Individual Activity Responses

Section 4 reviews and evaluates each of the seventeen different activities covered in the report. There are three sections under each activity:

1. Summary of the survey response from 2023.
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. The final section details 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. The Natural Environment Group (NEG) takes on strategic issues that affect the Solent widely and reports on these via its biannual meetings.

5.1 Accidental Vessel Discharges/Emissions including Oil Spill and Clean-up

Activity includes accidental discharges and/or emissions from all types of vessels, including exhaust fumes, wastewater, sewerage, oils, lubricants, and chemicals, including oil spill and clean-up.

5.1.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	1	0	14	1	16
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	2		14		16

The predominant response 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.

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 and record oil spills but did raise the issue of the cumulative impact of numerous small 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.

Concerns were raised about CSO spills into rivers and directly into the sea causing impacts. There are increasing numbers of pump out facilities in the Solent to address boating blackwater discharge.

5.1.2 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.

A concern was raised this year about the impact of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) on the features of the Solent's designated sites. CSO discharges are a regulated activity and there is a major investigation underway into these discharges.

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](#).

5.1.3 Action

1. Action (ongoing): All to continue to promote and share best practice in addressing the potential environmental impacts of vessel discharges/emissions.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG.

5.2 Boat Repair and Maintenance

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.

5.2.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	0	11	3	15
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	1		14		15

Respondents noted that this activity is not closely monitored, so it is difficult to evaluate change. One trend is increasing demand for the shoreside winter storage of boats. ChHC noted that boat maintenance is widespread in Chichester harbour, and they have found microplastics and glass fibre particles throughout the harbour. Brighton University are studying this issue.

Some respondents noted that they encourage the use of The Green Blue environmental campaign and resources, and that the Solent Forum is developing guidance on marine invasive species and biosecurity measures.

Washdown and filtration systems have been installed in some harbours and the Harbour Authorities do provide guidance to their customers on best practice surrounding this topic.

5.2.2 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 direct 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. People need 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.

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 an adverse condition reason for the 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 historically 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 the upper parts of 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. 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 were 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 Green Blue](#) 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

The Solent Forum in partnership with Natural England is preparing Biosecurity Actions plans for the Solent. This includes the Check, Clean, Dry campaign run by the GB non-native species secretariat, designed to help stop the spread of invasive plants and animals in our waters. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Biosecurity Planning](#) and <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/>.

For more resources and information please see:

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

5.2.3 Action

1. Action (ongoing): All to continue to promote and share best practice in addressing the potential environmental impacts of boat repair/maintenance, including preventing marine invasive spread.

For resources see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Boat_repair/ and [Solent Forum - Solent Biosecurity Planning](#).

Partners/lead: Harbour authorities and all others who have this activity in their area of responsibility.

5.3 Fishing (including shellfisheries)

Activity includes anchored nets or lines, electrofishing, traps, pelagic fishing (or fishing activities that do not interact with seabed), hydraulic dredges, dredges, demersal trawl, demersal seines, diving, and sea angling.

5.3.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	0	0	12	2	14
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	5		9		14

Sussex IFCA reported that as the oyster beds remained closed to dredging in the past year, there has been no oyster dredging activity taking place within Chichester Harbour. There has also been no increase in sea angling, netting or potting intensities within Chichester Harbour or the surrounding area and any impact is very low due to low intensities. They continue to monitor fishing activity on routine patrols in the Sussex IFCA district. Trawling activity remains prohibited within Chichester Harbour under the Sussex IFCA Nearshore Trawling Byelaw.

Southern IFCA note that overall fishing activity remains consistent throughout the Solent. Scallop fishery activity has settled since the last annual survey with the introduction of Category A Permits under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw. Activity in the Solent clam fishery remains lower due to limited access to areas as a result of shellfish bed classifications, and a preference for engaging in the scallop fishery for those with the appropriate vessels/gear. The scallop fishery still continues to occur primarily outside SEMS.

The MMO have reports by fishermen that crab and lobster have decreased over the past year.

The Environment Agency (EA) have 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, this is 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. All other aspects of fishing are regulated by Southern IFCA. There has been an increase in intertidal seagrass in Portsmouth Harbour, probably linked to the byelaw stopping shellfish dredging.

Langstone Harbour Board noted a small and short-lived increase in traffic when the shellfish beds were reclassified, but this was not substantial.

Eastleigh BC commented that inshore netting within the Hamble Estuary, the Estuary mouth and Southampton water are all likely to be having negative impacts on SEMS sites and the interest features of SACs (i.e. salmonids in the Itchen).

5.3.2 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 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

SIFCA are currently in a period of Formal Consultation on a proposed new Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (BTFG) Byelaw as a result of updates to the Marine Protected Area Network, the introduction of new MCZs, and the provision of an updated evidence base from Natural England which became the best available evidence used to inform the review and provided updates on MPA feature condition and extent. Natural England will continue to support this process and will continue to work with local IFCA as new fisheries develop.

Management Measures

Southern IFCA's [Bottom Towed Fishing Gear \(BTFG\) Byelaw 2016](#) prohibits areas for bottom towed fishing gear across the District. Currently the IFCA is in an ongoing review of the new [BTFG Byelaw 2023](#). The BTFG Byelaw 2023 will only come into force following ratification by the Secretary of State. Currently the BTFG Byelaw 2016 is in force to manage BTFG in the Southern IFCA District.

The BTFG Byelaw 2023 is a result of a review of BTFG management in the Southern IFCA District. This was driven by updates to the Marine Protected Area Network from the introduction of new MCZs, additional features to existing MCZs, and by the provision of an updated evidence base from Natural England which became the best available evidence used to inform the review and provided updates on MPA feature condition and extent.

The BTFG Byelaw 2023 represents Phase 1 of the BTFG Review and considers feature-based management interventions for MPAs: sites designated under the National Site Network (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Marine Conservation Zones).

[The Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw](#) came into force on the 1 November 2021. It introduces a single coherent management tool for the purposes of managing the sustainable harvesting of bivalve populations in the Solent, prohibiting the use of a dredge by means of a vessel within the Solent unless authorised by a permit. The byelaw [permit conditions](#) set out various mechanisms for managing the fishery including closed seasons, curfews and gear restrictions. A full list of fisheries byelaws can be found in the [Southern IFCA byelaw booklet](#).

Sussex IFCA have [byelaws](#) for nearshore trawling, scallops and oysters. A byelaw for Chichester Harbour prohibits the use of towed fishing gears, digging, collection and hand gathering of marine

fisheries resources in specified areas of the Harbour to protect Seagrass (*Zostera* spp) and prevent damage or deterioration to the Solent European Marine Site.

The [Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw](#) creates Net Prohibition areas, Net Restriction Areas and Net Permit Areas within the Southern IFCA District. Net fishing is prohibited in Net Prohibition Areas. Net fishing within Net Restriction Areas is subject to seasonal and/or gear restrictions and net fishing within Net Permit Areas is managed by a permitting system. The Byelaw requires all nets used in the District be marked, provides a definition for different net types and use and introduces provisions related to using a net within a bass nursery area'. Sussex IFCA has [byelaws](#) controlling nets in its district.

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 improve the availability of fish to sea anglers. The project is funded by Defra and supported by the national sea angling associations. See: <https://www.seaangling.org/>. The latest [participation report](#) covers data from 2018 to 2019.

Southern IFCA has [byelaws and codes of practice](#) that apply to commercial, recreational and charter fishers, who fish in the Southern IFCA district using rods and lines. This includes rod and lining, longlining, recreational angling and charter recreational angling.

[Catchwise](#) is a ground-truthing survey of recreational sea angling taking place across England and Wales in 2023 and 2024. Substance, the Angling Trust and Cefas have partnered to deliver it. The project has been co-developed with the recreational sea angling community and aims to improve recognition of sea angling's value to coastal communities and inform relevant sea fisheries management decisions accurately.

For further information and resources please see: [Solentems - Fishing \(incl. shellfisheries\)](#).

5.3.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): Continue to report to the IFCA's or MMO any illegal fishing activity.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG Members.

2. Action (ongoing): Publicise and encourage recreational anglers to take part in the Sea Angling Diary project. See: <https://www.seaangling.org/>.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG Members.

3. Action (2023): NEG to monitor the [Catchwise project](#) outcomes and report back to SEMS once data becomes available.

Partners/lead: NEG.

5.4 Fishing (shore-based activities)

Activity includes crab tiling, bait digging, shellfish collection (including seed mussel) e.g. by hand (with or without digging apparatus), rake or using '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.

5.4.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Fishing (shore-based activities)	2	0	13	5	20
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	5		15		20

Respondents noted that this activity is difficult to patrol and police to ensure best practice, and to monitor the minimum landing sizes and catch species being collected. The impacts can be difficult to quantify but discarded fishing litter was raised as an issue plus direct disturbance to species from anglers and bait diggers. There are concerns about illegal commercial shellfish gathering and associated environmental health issues.

EBC noted that the coast from Hamble to Netley is popular with shore anglers. Litter can be a problem plus some (low) potential for direct disturbance from anglers. Bait digging, especially for ragworm, may also be a problem along the Hamble estuary in places.

LHB reported that activity has decreased substantially over the past 2 or 3 years. Bait digging is still witnessed, mostly during the summer, but this tends to be individuals or small groups of across all intertidal areas, rather than focussed on one point. Hand gathering of Pacific oysters is witnessed every day during the summer, this is not a concern for LHB as these oysters are a marine invasive species.

Sussex IFCA report that impacts include bird disturbance, sediment disturbance, potential impacts on target species and impacts on food availability for protected bird species. 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 (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 is a year-round activity, over spring tides especially but has been reported to them daily over the summer months. Sussex IFCA has now sent it's Hand gathering Byelaw to Defra for approval. Intensities of shore-based activities have not increased over the past 12 months. They continue to monitor fishing activity on routine patrols in the Sussex IFCA district.

The EA report that of these activities only rod and line angling falls within their jurisdiction, and this is only partially with EA responsibility for salmonids, sea angling for marine species falls within Southern IFCAs jurisdiction. It is unlikely that rod and line angling has a significant impact on the SEMS sites, though there are potential concerns of a low level of impact, in relation to removal of species, accidentally discarded fishing gear in terms of plastic pollution, and disturbance from anglers visiting coastal locations.

RHHA noted that hand collection of Pacific oysters by commercial fishermen was observed and reported at Hamble Spit and Hook Spit during summer 2022. They liaised with SolFCA, Southampton Port Health and NE. Bait digging remains elevated on the Hamble and RHHA continues its provision of information and liaison with SIFCA and police.

NE reported that activity levels have increased across the Solent, including reports of hand gathering (particularly for Pacific oysters) in Southampton Water. Increased activity was also observed along the coast of Isle of Wight including hand gathering of bivalves. Further work is required to determine if this is impacting SEMS.

ChHC commented that hand-gathering and bait-digging removes large volumes of shellfish annually and disturbs mudflat sediment.

FBC noted evidence of small scale (individual) shellfish collection and bait digging occurring along the Fareham coastline. It is unclear what level of impact this has on the SEMS.

5.4.2 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.

Hand gatherers 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 IFCA's note that there has been no increase in bait digging or angling (sea or shoreline activity) throughout the Solent EMS.

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 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, animals and plants other than those being sought in the intertidal mudflat habitat will be damaged and their population levels reduced.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

An increase in shore gathering activities, including the hand gathering of Pacific oysters, has been noted across SEMS. SIFCA have an intention to review shore gathering activities within MPAs (SACs, SPAs and MCZs) this year (Phase 1) and Natural England will support this process. Following completion of Phase 1, SIFCA have an intention to review shore gathering activities both within (e.g. SSSIs) and outside of designated sites across the entire SIFCA district. On this basis Natural England advise that we should not seek to evaluate the impacts of shore gathering activities until this review has happened.

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, if they were approached, they would consult with the relevant authorities before considering granting any permissions.

Fishery Officers have the legal powers to inspect anyone involved in angling from the shore or a marine installation and any persons involved in harvesting marine organisms such as bait digging.

SxIFCA has a [Bait and Hand Gathering Voluntary Code of Conduct](#).

SoIFCA have a range of [resources on their website](#) that details the regulations that apply to hand gathering activities within the Southern IFCA District, this includes hand gathering clams, cockle, oysters, mussels and periwinkles.

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 more resources on this topic. SEMS has produced a [Code of Conduct for Bait Collection](#) that can be used as a guide.

If people have concerns about netting (esp. illegal) they should call the Environment Agency incident 24/7 hotline on 0800 807060. They take a leading role on migratory species such as Salmonids and Eels.

5.4.3 Action

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.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

5.5 General Beach Recreation

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).

5.5.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
General Beach Recreation	0	1	8	5	14
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	5		9		14

Respondents commented that, due to the diversity and spread of this activity, their evidence is anecdotal rather than empirical.

SW have launched a conservation grant scheme which includes funding to manage access and recreation to protect site features.

GBC officers from Streetscene advise they do not consider this activity to be impacting SEMS sites generally, but there may be some impact in certain sensitive locations such as on the Portsmouth Harbour coast.

NE noted that activity levels are similar to last year, but still high possibly as a result of an increased number of staycations post covid pandemic particularly around the Isle of Wight and New Forest coasts which may result in disturbance, damage for trampling and increased plastic pollution/littering.

HCC reported an increased footfall on the beach at Lepe during the peak summer season, with the expected increase in litter and disruption to wildlife controlled by on site litter picking and limited access to car parking. They have installed signage to raise awareness around consideration for native wildlife.

5.5.2 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.

Bird Aware Solent was established to mitigate against the increased recreational disturbance to overwintering birds from new house building.

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.

Potential Impacts

Natural England have published an evidence guidance note on general beach life at: (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5458695407796224>). This identifies the 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 features, including 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 5.10) for further details.

Whilst no formal condition assessment has yet been completed for any Special Protection Areas within SEMS, a reduce target has been set for all features for the attribute 'disturbance' caused by human activity with a target to reduce the frequency, duration and/or intensity of disturbance affecting roosting, foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds so that they are not significantly disturbed.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk). Defra also launched a new [Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code](#) in 2023 and a series of animations using [Shaun the Sheep](#) to help convey messaging.

Many organisations now use the hashtag [#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, coastering, 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.

5.5.3 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 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)).

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

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/.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

5.6 Grazing and Foraging

Activity includes grazing on saltmarsh or intertidal areas.

5.6.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Grazing and Foraging	0	1	3	4	8
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	1		5		6

SoIFCA note the only aspect which may fall within Southern IFCA jurisdiction is seaweed harvesting. A review of seaweed harvesting will form part of the Southern IFCA Shore Gathering Review which is currently underway. This is an activity with the ability to be managed by multiple authorities which will be considered as part of the review.

ChHC noted relative small-scale impacts from gathering of plants from saltmarsh habitats.

5.6.2 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. 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. However, it has seen an increase in requests for advice in terms of seaweed foraging and so this activity does appear to be increasing and so should be monitored.

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](#). Natural Resources Wales have published a [Seaweed harvesting guidance note](#).

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/.

5.6.3 Actions

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 via the annual survey and to the local IFCA. Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

5.7 Land Recreation - Dog Walking

Activity includes recreational participation with dogs, including the use of dogs in wildfowling.

5.7.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Land Recreation - Dog Walking	1	0	9	7	17
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	14		3		17

This activity is consistently reported in the annual survey as the one most likely to impact on the Solent's Marine Sites, fourteen respondents flagged concerns this year.

EBC reported direct disturbance to birds/other fauna, erosion from dog walkers and fouling. The most sensitive sites are along the Solent foreshore through Hamble Common. There are other areas further up the Hamble where this could still be an issue but probably less so.

LHB note that areas of West Hayling are highly susceptible to disturbance to overwintering bird species roosting on intertidal mudflats by dogs not kept under control.

CDC raised that there are continuing impacts from historical levels of development and hence visitor and dog numbers and disturbance. Bird Aware Solent is not designed to address this, just to prevent newer development making the situation worse.

IOWC noted that evidence through the SRMP work showed that recreational pressure on the SPA is causing disturbance to birds. The Council, in collaboration with Bird Aware Solent, is working to mitigate increased pressure through new housing development. This does not address existing pressures. Results from recent monitoring work carried out by Bird Aware shows limited success and therefore review of strategy implementation is ongoing.

GBC commented that while they have no direct evidence of impact, dog walking is at a very high level around the Borough's coastline as it a popular dog walking destination for people in the Borough and from further afield. The impact is most likely to be more acute on the western and southern coastline of the Borough given the proximity of footpaths to the sea. The Council continues to plan investment into the Alver Valley Country Park which acts as a SANG to deflect pressure from the coast; it has purchased additional formerly private land within the Alver Valley to improve the Country Park as a destination.

WCC noted a general increase in activity and related disturbance due to increasing numbers of residents accessing the countryside for recreational purposes.

WSCC commented on dogs off leads disturbing feeding and roosting waders and wildfowl. Intensity is not known and impacts likely to depend on other factors such as weather conditions, Chichester Harbour generally but notably so at West Wittering and Fishbourne Creek.

NE reported an increased number of walkers observed around the IOW, possibly from increased number of staycations post covid pandemic with indications that this has increased disturbance levels on certain bird features in the area e.g. sanderling populations in decline at Ryde Sand. The New Forest coast also remains popular with walkers with the potential for impacts to key wild bird nesting/foraging areas through trampling and disturbance.

NFNPA has had complaints from the public in respect of disturbance events at places such as Keyhaven and Lymington marshes which would suggest the levels of activity, disregard for guidance and signage and poor control of dogs by some owners is continuing. Liaison with Bird Aware Rangers and NPA rangers occurs, there is less coverage of the coast by their own Rangers due to resource constraints. As with walking, the Authority has no regulatory powers and no relevant land ownership, thus 'jurisdiction' limited to second purpose and voluntary access management mechanisms.

HCC has seen an increased number of dogs, and this will have an impact on the local wildlife. This is mitigated by access guidance and advertising of [best countryside practice](#) and tips on considerate dog walking.

BRM reported that it is in the bird nesting season, where they see the most impact and damage. They are witnessing more dogs off leads even though they have signage, regular email communications and educational leaflets.

5.7.2 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, and this has been exacerbated by the growth in dog ownership.

Fifteen of the local authorities in the Solent are [Bird Aware](#) partners, and they use both this Partnership, and other workstreams, to help mitigate the impact of this activity in their area of jurisdiction (see management section below) under the [Coast and Country Canines brand](#). Bird Aware research shows that around forty percent of bird disturbance occurs from interactions with dogs.

Since 2011, on an annual basis, the PAW Report has collected nationally representative data to accurately determine the proportion of people in the UK who own a pet. The data shows that 27 percent of the UK adult ownership own a dog and there are 10.2 million dogs in the UK.

Potential Impact

Natural England's 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 current and future impacts (through its rangers, awareness raising etc). On this basis Natural England advise that we should seek to evaluate the impacts of dog walking (and walking) now the SRMP five year review was completed in 2023.

Please note whilst no formal condition assessment has yet been completed for any Special Protection Areas within SEMS, a reduce target has been set for all features for the attribute disturbance caused by human activity with a target to reduce the frequency, duration and/or intensity of disturbance affecting roosting, foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds so that they are not significantly disturbed.

Management Measures

[Bird Aware Solent](#) is a strategic mitigation Partnership operating across the Solent to reduce potential recreational impacts on protected birds 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 from coastal activities including dog walking. It has published a [guide](#) on how to enjoy the beach with your dog responsibly.

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 spent £1 million of Local Growth Deal funding 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. HCC has produced a '[Taking the Lead](#)' leaflet on dog walking and its management.

In 2023 Bird Aware published its [Bird Aware Solent Strategy Review 2023](#). The data shows that a range of activities have increased over the review period, notably kitesurfing, kayaking, paddleboarding, walking (without a dog) and dog walking. While the number of dog walkers (and dogs) have increased, the proportion of dogs now kept on a lead has also increased.

Public areas in England and Wales can use [Public Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#) to help address nuisance issues. Local Authorities can and do use such orders to exclude dogs from beaches in the summer. Fareham BC have one such [order](#) in place that applies to the coast; an additional restriction on dogs within a designated seasonal exclusion zone at Hill Head, between 1 October and 31 March, has also been proposed to protect overwintering birds.

The New Forest National Park Authority 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.

HCC have a [Countryside Canines campaign](#). This highlights that access rights that normally apply to open country and registered common land (known as 'Open Access' land) require dogs to be kept on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July, to help protect ground nesting birds.

5.7.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): RAs to identify and communicate with their own rangers, coastal staff, and comms teams details of how they can support Bird Aware Solent in the delivery of their educational messages and liaise on recreational disturbance issues.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG.

2. Action (ongoing): Local authorities to continue to consider the use of Public Space Protection Orders and SANGS as measures to mitigate dogs disturbing birds, particularly disturbance to overwintering birds.

Partners/lead: Local authorities.

5.8 Land recreation - Walking (not with dogs)

Activity includes walking on upper shore or intertidal zone (other than dog walking).

5.8.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Land Recreation (other than dog Walking)	0	0	12	6	18
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	12		6		18

Respondents noted that the urbanised nature of much of the Solent's coastline means that there is a large resident population wishing to access the coast in addition to visitors. The push for 'blue health' and the physical and mental health benefits of walking mean that the coast experiences ever increased demand. Demand peaks during summer weekends and bank holidays and at times of good weather.

Levels of access and car parking do control demand but at busy times people can leave main paths and create their own 'desire paths'.

Impacts noted were disturbance to wildlife including overwintering birds and nesting birds, trampling and degradation of habitat (saltmarsh, mudflats, reed beds, shingle beaches, etc), littering and erosion.

Please also see comments in section 5.7 that equally apply.

5.8.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Government policy encourages outdoor recreation for its physical and mental health benefits. This raises 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 King Charles III [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 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. The Calshot to Gosport and Gosport to Portsmouth sections are currently open.

Potential Impacts

Coastal walking can, if not carefully managed, add to environmental pressures such as disturbance to wildlife and birds or new desire paths leading to the removal and fragmentation of habitat. Natural England's coast path Habitats Regulations (HRA) assessments for each stretch give a comprehensive overview of the potential impacts from this activity on designated sites, see example of [Calshot to Gosport](#). An HRA is required for European sites, nature conservation assessments cover all other designations (SSSIs, MCZs etc).

Impact on SEMS

While it is important to continue monitoring land recreation impacts via dog walking (and walking), Bird Aware has the potential to mitigate current and future impacts (through its rangers, awareness raising etc). On this basis Natural England advise that we should seek to evaluate the impacts of dog walking (and walking) now that the SRMP five-year review has been completed in 2023.

Please note whilst no formal condition assessment has yet been completed for any Special Protection Areas within SEMS a reduce target has been set for all features for the attribute Disturbance caused by human activity with a target to reduce the frequency, duration and / or intensity of disturbance affecting roosting, foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds so that they are not significantly disturbed.

Management Measures

Natural England assess the impacts from opening access to the coast as part of their work to deliver stretches of 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. The Solent stretches of the coast path and the respective assessment documents are linked to the SEMS website at: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/.

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. Defra also launched a new [Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code](#) in 2023.

Please see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Land_Recreation/ for guidance and best practice relating to this activity.

5.8.3 Actions

Please also refer to actions on dog walking in 5.7.3.

1. Action (ongoing): SEMS MG to read and be aware of the issues and measures raised in the 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/.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG.

2. Action (ongoing): SEMS MG to help publicise the [Countryside Code](#) and [Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code](#) through existing communications.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG.

5.9 Littering and Removal of Litter

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 cleanup.

5.9.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Littering and removal of litter	1	1	12	5	19
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	11		8		19

The presence of litter and its impact on designated sites is an elevated and ongoing issue reported by the SEMS Relevant Authorities. Over half of the respondents believe that this issue is having detrimental impacts. Although the mode value is still no change, many are still concerned about high levels of litter at the coast. Sources include watercourses, waterside businesses (incl. WWTW), spread by wind, poor waste management and direct littering by individuals.

Respondents noted that large pieces of litter that causes a navigation issue will be removed by the relevant port or harbour authority.

SW have reported this year to the EA on their use of biobeads as part of their wastewater treatment process. Water companies collaborate on a national level on the WINEP Chemical Investigations Programme; this has carried out research on microplastics in the wastewater system. Key findings so far are that the vast majority of microplastics are removed in sludge. This however leads to a need to understand what happens to microplastics in sludge when, for example, it is spread on land. Investigations will continue in AMP8 2025-2030 (including research to look at potential sludge treatment processes to remove microplastics). Southern Water's Bluewave Innovation team are working with University of Portsmouth to baseline their understanding of microplastics in their wastewater systems.

GBC Streetscene officers advise that measures are taken to mitigate litter impact through regular cleaning. Short term issues do occur when there is limited staffing capacity or GBC contractors are unable to cleanse beaches. However the Borough Council seeks to mitigate the longer-term impact through beach cleaning.

Local partners have concerns about Chessel Bay SSSI. The Environment Agency is leading on the Feasibility Study and Stakeholder engagement work for the Preventing Plastic Pollution project on the River Itchen. The clean up work at Chessel Bay is starting to show a slight improvement to plant species. The Environment Agency have some evidence about micro plastics and associated toxins in

the water column and sediment in the Itchen, however more evidence is needed. Two of the objectives of the Preventing Plastic Pollution on the Itchen Estuary are:

- ‘Reducing and removing the legacy of plastic pollution’ through innovation, regulation, change in management and behaviours; and
- ‘Understanding plastic pollution from source to sea’ through monitoring. Once we are able to fund this project, we will look at this area of work in more detail so that we can agree and coordinate our approach/actions to monitoring and research.

Respondents noted that there are active groups litter picking in the Solent and the sites where they work are much cleaner. The Solent Forum shares details of this work on its [Solent Plastics Pollution hub](#). Groups across Southsea, Emsworth, the New Forest, Isle of Wight and Stokes Bay are particularly active.

5.9.2 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.

SEMS survey respondents have highlighted the potential impacts from the abandonment and decomposition of old boats. There is already published evidence on the environmental impacts of this activity, but what is less certain is how these impacts affect designated sites. Research by Brighton University found 7,000 microscopic bits of boat fibreglass in just a single oyster at Chichester Harbour. SEMS will monitor this activity and link any relevant reports and research to the [litter activity page](#) on the [CSSS information hub](#).

ABPmer was commissioned by Defra’s Marine Biodiversity Impact Evidence Group to assess the [current evidence of potential impacts of plastic on marine protected species and habitats in England and Wales](#). It concluded that marine plastic pollution at current levels is unlikely to pose a high risk to protected features in England and Wales at concentrations of plastic that can be considered currently environmentally relevant levels, although it is expected that these levels could rise.

Defra has commissioned work to progress the UK’s commitment to lead action B.2.1 of the new [OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter](#). This action focuses on tackling marine litter by managing end-of-life recreational boats.

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 collates information on these as part of its [Clean Solent Shores and Seas \(CSSS\)](#) work to help people to coordinate work and access information. Information on [littering](#) is also available on the SEMS website.

The Solent Forum runs the [Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#) and a [Facebook page](#) to help collate and share information about litter and plastics across the Solent's community groups.

The [Great British Beach Clean](#), provides data and information on the amount and type of litter found at the coast. Its 2022 survey found an average of 309 litter items per 100m stretch of beach, a twenty percent decrease from 2021. Sixty seven percent of all litter items found were plastic or polystyrene in origin.

Most harbours and marinas now have comprehensive waste facilities, which 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](#).

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/>.

5.9.3 Actions

1. Action (2021-2026): The Solent Forum will continue to maintain the 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 Clean Solent Shores and Seas. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#).

Partners/lead: Solent Forum

Action progress: July 2021 to 2026.

5.10 Mooring and Anchoring

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.

5.10.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Mooring and anchoring	1	1	12	3	17
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	5		12		17

Different harbour authority areas have different permissions with regards to mooring and anchoring, some do not permit anchoring, others have designated anchoring spots to discourage the use of

anchoring in sensitive areas and there is a mix of swing, pile, fixed buoy and permanent moorings in use across the Solent. Most harbour authorities provide resident and visitor moorings.

Responders noted that while moorings are licensed within the harbours, it is difficult to monitor if people are anchoring in the correct zones. There are also historic moorings within harbour areas which pre-date designations which can create an unnecessary pressure on the seabed habitats in the form of scouring from sinkers. Where there are insufficient moorings due to peak demand, people do resort to anchoring

The Local Authorities note that through Habitat Regulations Assessment, any proposals within the footprint of a designation needs an Appropriate Assessment and use of evidence to support it. This means that there can be further certainty that new proposals for structures, replacement or extensions to existing ones will not be having a significant impact on the marine sites. Some schemes are required to include interpretation panels raising awareness to users of the qualities of the marine environment.

NE reported that annual summer recreational activity surveys are conducted by HIWWT at five locations across the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and reported as part of the ReMEDIES project. These reports indicate anchoring pressure at Osborne Bay and elsewhere along the north coast of the Isle of Wight. The LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project is seeking to address this problem through behaviour change and installation of advanced mooring systems and are in the process of having community conversations to discuss the potential to introduce Voluntary No Anchor Zones to reduce the pressure within seagrass.

5.10.2 Evaluation and Discussion

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 \(ME6003\)'](#).

Impacts on SEMS

Anchoring and mooring pressures are one of the reasons for the unfavourable status of features including 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 were installed near Yarmouth Harbour and are being monitored for their effectiveness; further AMS were installed by Cowes Harbour Commissioners in the River Medina in 2022. The Solent Forum has begun to collate this information under its [habitat restoration hub](#).

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/>.

5.10.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): Promote and share information, best practice and research on Advanced Mooring Systems and any potential effects from mooring and anchoring.

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group.

2. Action: All to support, promote and share information from the four-year LIFE ReMEDIES project.

See: [Recreational boating - Save Our Seabed](#).

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group

Action Progress: Ongoing. ReMEDIES concludes Autumn 2023.

5.11 Operation of Coastal Flood and Erosion Risk Management Schemes (FCERM)

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.

5.11.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Operation of FCERM	3	0	10	3	16
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	7		9		16

Although the number of FCERM schemes in the Solent remain high, these generally include measures to mitigate for impacts. In the future, 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 due to loss of intertidal habitat through coastal squeeze.

Beneficial reuse of dredged sediment is taking place at Boiler Marsh in Lymington and is increasing the availability of intertidal habitat due to it being higher in the tidal frame. It is also providing protection to the saltmarsh behind against erosion caused by wind waves/tides.

Coastal Partners continue with major coastal defence work in the Eastern Solent and are currently undertaking the Portsea Island FCERM project. In the western Solent, NFDC have undertaken maintenance works at Milford on Sea with beach recharge and timber groyne maintenance as well as recycling at Hurst Spit. In Chichester Harbour recycling occurred at East Head and there was a recharge of Stakes Island.

Southern Water has undertaken a resilience review of its assets which includes risks from sea level rise and coastal erosion. This is informing its PR24 business planning however no sites/schemes are included for the wider Solent area.

At Stokes Bay in Gosport two storms washed away beach defences in the past. Approximately 400 tonnes of shingle have been used to mitigate erosion and as it was taken from the beach, it is assumed there is no adverse impact.

The Regional Habitat Compensation Programme is reviewing further sites to compensate for coastal squeeze. Adaptation to future challenges e.g. Sea Level Rise, climate change, carbon off setting, and net gain are the key focus of all schemes going forward.

Chichester Harbour Conservancy has undertaken its [first BUDs trial](#) and there are signs of pioneer species such as Marsh Samphire. They are likely to encourage further BUDs.

5.11.2 Evaluation and Discussion

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 as a whole. 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 and in certain areas, including Chichester Harbour, is having an impact. 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

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-scopac.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.

5.11.3 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](#).

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group.

5.12 Operation of Ports and Harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)

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.

5.12.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Operation of Ports and Harbours	2	0	14	0	16
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	0		16		16

Harbour authorities have a statutory duty to maintain navigational aids, pontoons, and public slipways in their harbour. As such, maintenance is ongoing throughout the year.

Recent re-concreting of RHHA's sea wall involved inclusion of textured concrete plus pools and ledges to encourage biodiversity. There was replacement of pointed pile caps with flat top caps to allow birds to roost.

Work is underway to map the increasing numbers of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) present across the Solent. Such species can colonise port and harbour infrastructure.

5.12.2 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.

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

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 an adverse condition reason for Solent Maritime SAC. Natural England advises that ports and harbours should promote best practice and support the biosecurity planning work being coordinated by the Solent Forum.

Management Measures

The [UK Marine SAC project](#) produced guidance on this topic including good management practice.

Recently the issue of marine invasive species has become more of a concern for their environmental, economic and social impact. Waterside infrastructure can be a pathway for such species and Natural England the Solent Forum have been working together to develop biosecurity actions for the Solent

5.12.3 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.

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group and [Solent Forum](#) (via Bournemouth University led working group).

2. Action (2023/ongoing): Utilise the resources and implement relevant actions in the [Solent Biosecurity action plans](#) to address the impacts from marine invasive species.

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group and Solent Forum.

5.13 Aerial Recreation (light aircraft, paramotors, drones)

Activity includes all types of craft used for recreation in the air e.g. small planes and helicopters, microlights, paramotors, hang gliding, parasailing (on beach), parasailing (by boat), drones and model aircraft.

5.13.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Aerial recreation	0	0	7	3	10
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	0		10		10

Authorities report that they have no powers to control the air space. However if drone flights are requested, they will only consent for the operator to fly the drone subject to appropriate qualifications, risk assessment (including environmental risk) and compliance with CAA regulations. Some issue drone pilots with advice on avoiding disturbance to bird species and liaise with Natural England on a case-by-case basis if they have concerns

Natural England report that there is a perceived gradual increase in use of drones to undertake surveys, monitor projects and for comms purposes. It is difficult to ascertain the in-combination effects of drone use as frequency increases. There appear to be some evidence that adoption of best practice measures should minimise disturbance impacts to SPA birds. However, quantifying and tracking the spatial distribution of drone use is difficult at present.

5.13.2 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. NEG evaluated whether summer drone use was an issue impacting on designated sites in the Solent and concluded that this isn't currently the case.

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.

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. The CAA recommends that drone users seek advice from Natural England if flying over a SSSI.

[Altitude Angel](#) are the biggest provider of drone mapping and integration in Europe and they have now included all SSSI layers on their [map](#). These are classified as a 'ground hazard' on this map.

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

5.13.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): NEG to request annually from Bird Aware Solent any data held on winter drone use and bird disturbance.

Partners/lead: NEG.

5.14 Recreation (non-motorised watercraft)

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.

5.14.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Recreation (non-motorised craft)	3	1	10	5	19
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	8		11		19

Three Relevant authorities reported an increase in paddlesports this year, most reported no change, although levels are still thought to be significant, and increases were reported in the previous two years. Craft are readily available to buy, and users can be inexperienced in how to safely participate on the water. Concerns were raised about disturbance pressures due to craft being able to access

shallow water particularly at sensitive sites and trampling from launch and recovery. The season is also getting longer with better clothing and equipment and participants are seen from spring to autumn with a summer peak.

In Langstone windsurfing has been observed having a detrimental impact on SPA/Ramsar bird species, large flocks have been observed flushing from roosting locations when windsurfers are nearby.

A new observation at Newtown Harbour is for people to paddle board off the back of overnight moored motorboats potentially resulting in a new early morning disturbance impact on birds in this location. It is unknown if this is happening elsewhere in the Solent. Another new observation is kite surfing activities within/in close proximity to Sanderling nesting areas that may be contributing to disturbance and a decline in numbers at Ryde Sands.

5.14.2 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).

Potential Impacts

Natural England's '[Marine recreation evidence briefing: Non-motorised watercraft including paddlesports \(EIN028\)](#)' 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 paddlesports, 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.

Please note whilst no formal condition assessment has yet been completed for any Special Protection Areas within SEMS a reduce target has been set for all features for the attribute Disturbance caused by human activity with a target to reduce the frequency, duration and / or intensity of disturbance affecting roosting, foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds so that they are not significantly disturbed.

There are numerous anecdotal reports about the level of disturbance from kite surfing at the base of Hurst Spit. This activity is already or has the potential to exclude SPA birds from their roosting areas in fall/winter and from their breeding sites in spring/summer.

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 include charging a harbour due or permit, 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. KHM has information on its website: [Using the port for recreation | Royal Navy \(mod.uk\)](#).

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](#).

British Canoeing has been formally recognised as a National Governing Body for Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) after receiving confirmation from Sport England.

Bird Aware Solent have produced a [watersports with wildlife](#) map and guides to help paddle and wind sports enthusiasts coexist with nature. The [interactive map](#) is designed to help people reduce any disturbance to protected birds and habitats.

The Solent Forum are preparing [biosecurity action plans](#) to help prevent the spread of marine invasive species in the Solent, paddlesports can be a vector for their spread.

5.14.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): SEMS MG members to use the paddlesports guidelines (published 2016) and the other resources available on the [SEMS website](#), to help manage impacts.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG.

2. Action (ongoing): NEG to monitor the evidence base for potential impacts on designated sites from paddlesports via pilot work by Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Solent Seascapes pressure mapping of sensitive sites.

Partners/lead: NEG.

5.15 Recreation (powerboating or sailing with an engine)

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.

5.15.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Recreation (motorised craft)	1	2	11	3	17
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	8		9		17

Respondents noted that 2021 was an exceptional year for boat activity as Covid restrictions in the UK were eased but travel abroad was still restricted resulting in more staycations. In 2022, despite the very good summer weather, activity levels fell to something closer to pre-pandemic levels, but the baseline is still high in the Solent, particularly at weekends. Seasonal patrols spend considerable time mitigating irresponsible PWC users. Harbours will prosecute if byelaws are infringed.

LHB issued less PWC permits than the previous year previously. The Harbour Board introduced a requirement for PWC users to hold a marine qualification and have an insurance policy before issuing a permit.

On the River Hamble the Harbour Authority is employing its use of its Special Directions to PWCs who find themselves in inappropriate locations of the estuary, which also reduces their frequency in sensitive areas.

NE have observed at Newtown Harbour people paddle boarding off the back of overnight moored motorboats, potentially resulting in a new early morning disturbance impact on birds in this location.

5.15.2 Evaluation and Discussion

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

The [Watersports Participation Survey, 2022](#), showed that participation levels remained fairly stable against 2021's figures.

The use of electric outboard motors to replace petrol motors is starting to become more common, although this is still in its infancy.

Potential Impacts

Natural England's publication '[Motorised watercraft \(powerboating and sailing with an engine\) \(EIN027\)](#)' 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

An increase in this activity has been noted across SEMS, however, further study is required to determine whether the use of motorised watercraft is having an adverse effect upon SEMS. Therefore, this activity should be monitored as usage has increased and is anticipated to continue to do so.

Please note whilst no formal condition assessment has yet been completed for any Special Protection Areas within SEMS a reduce target has been set for all features for the attribute Disturbance caused by human activity with a target to reduce the frequency, duration and / or intensity of disturbance affecting roosting, foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds so that they are not significantly disturbed.

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 produce a 'Wash and Slow' leaflet that shows Solent speed limits, see: [Wash and Slow leaflet update 2021 web \(mod.uk\)](#).

After a significant surge in reports of anti-social behaviour on the water, Hampshire Police Marine Support Unit 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](#).

In 2023, [new legislation](#) came into force which puts the responsibility on users, operators and owners of powered watercraft to make sure they protect not just themselves but other water users from harm. Although primarily designed for safety of navigation, the new legislation's curb on irresponsible behaviour will also benefit wildlife.

5.15.3 Actions

1. Action (ongoing): Promote and share environmental studies, reports and good practice. Information is collated on the [SEMS website activity page on motorised craft](#). Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

5.16 Slipway and Jetty Cleaning and Maintenance

Activity includes the ongoing maintenance, such as washing down, clearing of mud or sediment, algal growth or similar of a slipway or jetty.

5.16.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	0	14	1	15
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	0		15		15

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. None of the respondents were concerned that this activity was impacting on designated sites.

5.16.2 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.

The [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) is the authority responsible for the approval of chemicals if they are biocidal products containing active substances with the intention of destroying the algae.

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 an adverse condition reason for Solent Maritime SAC. Natural England have commissioned Solent Forum to prepare biosecurity action plans for the Solent to help address this issue.

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/>.

The River Hamble Harbour Authority have replaced some of their hammerhead decking with a high friction polymer grid decking system which negates the need to use any cleaner.

5.16.3 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/.
Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

5.17 Wildfowling

Activity includes the use of firearms to shoot wild fowl. This category does not consider the use of dogs during these activities, please use 'Land recreation - dog walking' for any dog related activity.

5.17.1 Survey Response

Activity	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Wildfowling	0	0	8	0	8
Do you think the activity is impacting on SEMS Sites?					
	Yes		No		Total Responses
	1		7		8

No additional comments were given.

5.17.2 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.

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/>.

5.17.3 Actions

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

6 Generic Actions

1. SEMS MG members should use this Report and the [activity pages](#) on the SEMS website as a reference resource to help shape relevant plans and policies or management measures for activities in designated sites. This information can also be used to help inform Habitats Regulations Assessments on the potential impact of activities from new development. SEMS MG members are also encouraged to share these resources more widely and encourage the adoption of best practice by private landowners.
2. SEMS MG members to feed information on activities to the SEMS office throughout the year (sems@hants.gov.uk) to enable the promotion and sharing of good practice throughout the Solent.
3. SEMS MG members to use the [duty and responsibility table](#) to guide what activity sections they need to complete in the SEMS Annual Survey. To also be aware that Relevant Authorities have a responsibility to manage activities under their jurisdiction in the exercising of general duties.
4. Trend data for activity change is showing that activities in the Solent are elevated but stable. For those activities where Relevant Authorities, particularly Natural England, are concerned about impacts on designated sites, we need to evaluate if and how we can reduce or better manage those activities; focusing on sites that are especially sensitive.
5. NEG to assist the Blue Marine led Solent Seascapes Project in identifying how anthropogenic activity pressure can be reduced and managed to help habitat and species restoration and the delivery of a voluntary restoration plan.
6. NEG to continue to collate and share information via the [Clean Solent Shores and Seas webpages](#) on water quality issues in the Solent's designated sites such as CSOs, nutrients and microplastics. Also to look at how new evidence and research can be applied to the Solent.

7 Summary of Actions

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

1. Action (ongoing): All to continue to promote and share best practice in addressing the potential environmental impacts of vessel discharges/emissions.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG.

Boat Repair and Maintenance

1. Action (ongoing): All to continue to promote and share best practice in addressing the potential environmental impacts of boat repair/maintenance, including preventing marine invasive spread.

For resources see: http://www.solentems.org.uk/sems/SEMS_Activities/Boat_repair/ and [Solent Forum - Solent Biosecurity Planning](#).

Partners/lead: Harbour authorities and all others who have this activity in their area of responsibility.

Fishing (including shellfisheries)

1. Action (ongoing): Continue to report to the IFCA or MMO any illegal fishing activity.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG Members

2. Action (ongoing): Publicise and encourage recreational anglers to take part in the Sea Angling Diary project. See: <https://www.seaangling.org/>.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG Members

3. Action (2023): NEG to monitor the [Catchwise project](#) outcomes and report back to SEMS once data becomes available.

Partners/lead: NEG

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.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

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 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)).

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members

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/.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members

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 via the annual survey and to the local IFCA.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members

Land Recreation - Dog Walking

1. 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.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

2. Action (ongoing): Local authorities to continue to consider the use of Public Space Protection Orders and SANGS as measures to mitigate dogs disturbing birds, particularly disturbance to overwintering birds.

Partners/lead: Local authorities

Land Recreation - Walking (other than dog walking)

1. Action (ongoing): SEMS MG to read and be aware of the issues and measures raised in the 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/.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

2. Action (ongoing): SEMS MG to help publicise the [Countryside Code](#) and [Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code](#) through existing communications.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

Littering and Removal of Litter

1. Action (2021-2026): The Solent Forum will continue to maintain the 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 Clean Solent Shores and Seas. See: [Solent Forum - Solent Plastics Pollution Hub](#).

Partners/lead: Solent Forum

Action progress: July 2021 to 2026.

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.

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group

2. Action: All to support, promote and share information from the four-year LIFE ReMEDIES project.

See: [Recreational boating - Save Our Seabed](#).

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group

Action Progress: Ongoing. ReMEDIES concludes Autumn 2023.

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](#).

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group

Operation of Ports and Harbours

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

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group and [Solent Forum](#) (via Bournemouth University led working group).

2. Action (2023/ongoing): Utilise the resources and implement relevant actions in the [Solent Biosecurity action plans](#) to address the impacts from marine invasive species.

Partners/lead: SEMS Management Group and Solent Forum

Aerial Recreation (light aircraft, drones)

1. Action (ongoing): NEG to request annually from Bird Aware Solent any data held on winter drone use and bird disturbance.

Partners/lead: NEG

Recreation - Non-motorised Watercraft

1. Action (ongoing): SEMS MG members to use the paddlesports guidelines (published 2016) and the other resources available on the [SEMS website](#), to help manage impacts.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG

2. Action (ongoing): NEG to monitor the evidence base for potential impacts on designated sites from paddlesports via pilot work by Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Solent Seascapes pressure mapping of sensitive sites.

Partners/lead: NEG.

Recreation - Powerboating or Sailing with an Engine

1. Action (ongoing): Promote and share environmental studies, reports and good practice.

Information is collated on the [SEMS website activity page on motorised craft](#).

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

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/.

Partners/lead: SEMS MG members.

Wildfowling

No action required by SEMS Management Group. For more information see:

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

Generic cross cutting actions - Please see [section 6.0](#).

8 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 2023, observations were made as follows.

Sussex IFCA continue to monitor fishing activities throughout the Sussex IFCA district, including all MCZs.

For the Yarmouth to Cowes and Bembridge MCZs the Southern IFCA have undertaken MCZ assessments of fishing activities. The assessments found that Bottom Towed Gears pose a risk to some features in the sites. A review of bottom towed fishing gear for District wide MPAs was commenced in 2020 and is currently ongoing; a draft byelaw package was presented to the Authority in spring 2023 under Phase 1 of this review which focuses on feature-based management within MPAs.

Natural England have concerns regarding anchoring and mooring activities, some locations are covered by the ReMEDIES project which undertakes summer recreational activity surveys in five locations - Kings Quay, Yarmouth, Osborne Bay, Langstone Harbour and Bouldnor.

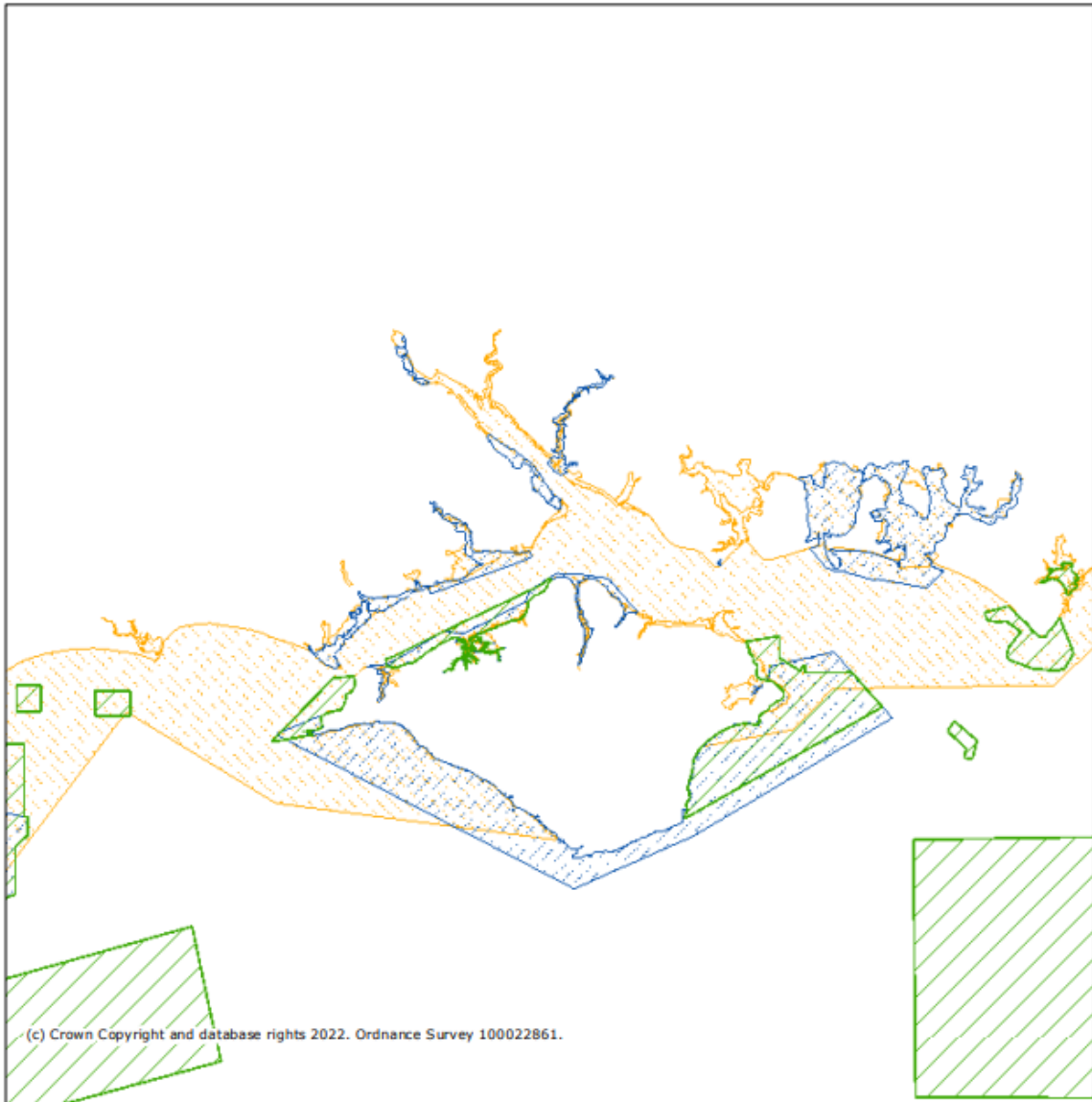
The MMO raised the issue of the numbers of powerboats transiting through The Needles MCZ during the summer.

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>.

9 Map of Solent Marine Protected Areas

MAGiC Solent Marine Protected Areas



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Legend		
Marine Conservation Zones (England)		Potential
Designated		
Special Areas of Conservation (Marine Components GB)		
Candidate		
Designated		
Possible		
Special Protection Areas (Marine Components GB)		
Classified		

0 10 20
km

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 362900
 ymin = 47150
 xmax = 533100
 ymax = 149500

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