Solent Marine Sites (SEMS)

Annual Management Report, 2026

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

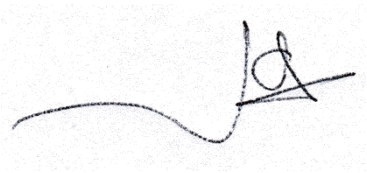
September 2026

Contents

1 Foreword

As financial pressures continue, the benefit of this report to those who contribute to it is self-evident. It is a repository of evidence unlike any other and captures vital information in a format that is rigorous and compelling. Not only does the information in it ensure members' compliance with responsibilities under the Habitats Regulations, but we are seeing the data captured being used as supporting evidence within marine licence applications. It is great to see that we have again received so many responses this year; all but one member organisation submitted a return.

I am very grateful for your continued contribution to this important group.



Jason Scott
Chair, Solent Marine Sites
River Hamble Harbour Master

2 Executive Summary

In spring 2026, the Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Management Group surveyed sixteen non-licensable coastal and marine activities taking place across the Solent as part of the annual SEMS Management Scheme process. Of the 31 Relevant Authorities invited to participate, all but one submitted a response. Respondents were asked to report on changes in activity levels during 2025 and to identify whether activities were considered to be having an impact on SEMS. The full survey results are available in the Annual Survey Report.

This Annual Management Report evaluates the survey responses, summarises existing management measures, and identifies actions for the SEMS Management Group and individual Relevant Authorities. It also reflects Natural England's advice on where activities are considered to be affecting, or have the potential to affect, the condition of SEMS sites. The report is intended to support evidence-based management, inform policy and operational decisions, and assist Relevant Authorities in meeting their responsibilities under the Habitats Regulations.

Supplementary information and additional resources for each activity are available on the SEMS website.

Overall, annual trend data continues to show that the most common reported change in activity levels across the Solent is "no change". However, this should be interpreted in the context of already high baseline levels of coastal and marine recreation. Activities such as coastal walking, including dog walking, general beach recreation, paddle sports and wind sports remain widespread and, in some locations, continue to place pressure on designated sites.

Obtaining robust participation data for recreational activity remains challenging. To support interpretation of the SEMS survey findings, this report draws on additional evidence sources, including the Sport England Active Lives Survey and Strava's Global Heatmap, to provide wider spatial and trend information for the Solent. The SEMS Annual Survey Report also identifies monitoring currently being undertaken by Relevant Authorities across the area.

Activities highlighted this year as having impacts on SEMS sites include coastal walking, particularly with dogs; littering and the removal of litter; coastal squeeze associated with flood and coastal erosion risk assets; and non-motorised watercraft use, including paddle sports. These findings are summarised in Table 5b and considered in more detail in the individual activity sections.

The report highlights existing management measures and examples of best practice being delivered by Relevant Authorities, trade associations, partnerships and user groups to protect and conserve designated sites. For the first time, it also considers how the SEMS Management Scheme can support delivery of coastal measures identified in recently published Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Section 6 sets out generic actions for Management Group members to incorporate into business-as-usual activity, while Section 7 identifies actions relating to specific activities.

The SEMS Management Scheme continues to provide a shared framework for monitoring, evidence gathering, best practice exchange and coordinated management across the Solent.

3 Introduction

This Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Annual Management Report sets out how the Relevant Authorities within the SEMS Management Group work collectively to support compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in relation to non-licensable activities. It summarises and evaluates the findings of the SEMS annual survey and identifies actions for each of the sixteen non-licensable activities covered by the Management Scheme.

Actions arising from the survey findings are considered at the annual SEMS Management Group meeting, held each September. Strategic actions are taken forward through the Solent Forum's Natural Environment Group (NEG), while localised or activity-specific actions are progressed by the relevant individual Relevant Authority (RA).

3.1 Solent Marine Sites

The Solent is a complex site encompassing a major estuarine system; it is 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 covers the designated coast and marine space for the Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA), Portsmouth Harbour SPA, Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA that covers much of the marine area. Please see section 9.0 for a map of the sites.

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 SEMS Management Scheme

In the Solent, a Management Scheme (MS) was first established in 2002 by the Relevant Authorities (RAs) opting to work together, see the terms of reference. The Solent Forum provides the secretariat for the Management Scheme. This is a statutory scheme under the Habitats Regulations, 2017, Regulation 38.

The main components of the Management Scheme include an annual survey, management report, meeting of RAs, consultation with strategic stakeholders and agreed actions. These outputs are supported by the SEMS website, which provides more detailed resources and guidance.

Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme Timetable
Annual Survey Undertaken by SEMS Management Group ***Feb/March***
Annual Survey Published ***May/June***
Annual Management Report (AMR) Prepared and Consulted ***June to August***
SEMS Annual Management Meeting: Agree the AMR and Actions ***September***
AMR Strategic Actions delivered to the Natural Environment Group (NEG) ***October***

3.2.1 Relevant Authority Duties and Responsibilities

The RAs individually report on SEMS activities within their area of duty and responsibility. They provide information on non-licensable activity changes 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.

Since 1 January 2023, all public authorities have been under an enhanced statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

3.2.2 Natural Environment Group

SEMS RAs are automatically members of the Solent Forum's Natural Environment Group (NEG); other invited organisations with an interest in the natural environment can also join. NEG assists the SEMS MG in the delivery of strategic actions. The Solent Forum provides the secretariat for NEG.

3.2.3 Strategic Stakeholder Group

The Strategic Stakeholder Group 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 the content and actions.

3.3 Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

The MMO is responsible for assessing and managing marine non-licensable activities below MLWM 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 liaises with the relevant harbour authority. The MMO does not have jurisdiction over activities which take place on the foreshore. These fall within the remit of other parties such as local authorities.

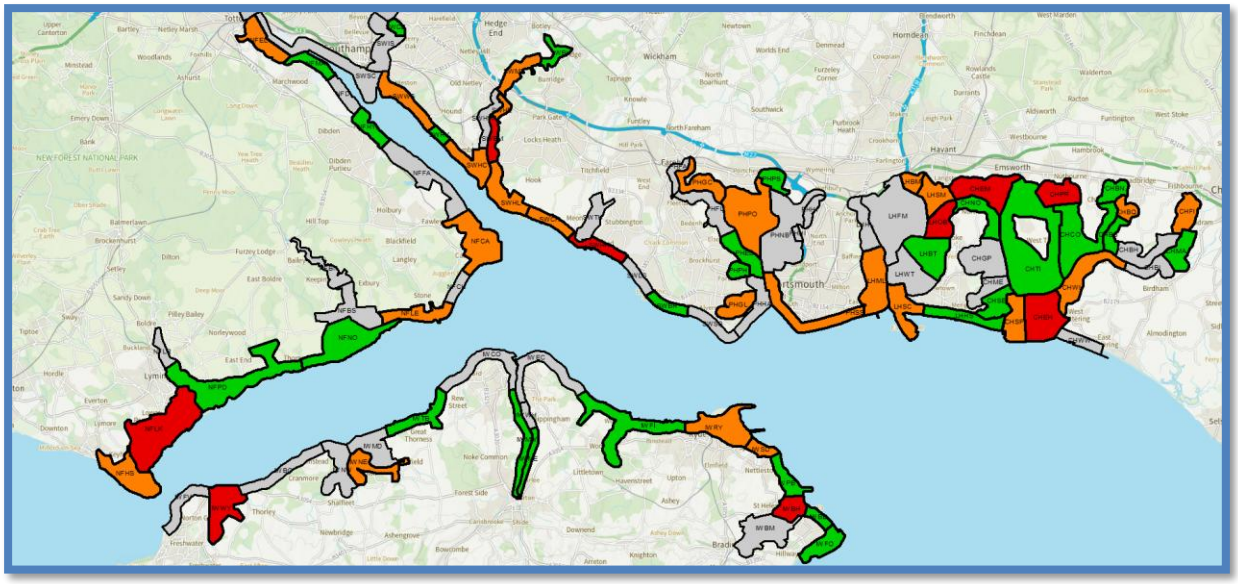
3.4 Bird Aware Solent

Bird Aware Solent is a strategic mitigation Partnership operating across the Solent, to reduce the recreational impacts on protected birds from 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 the additional recreational activity created by new housing. Partners also include Natural England, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and Chichester Harbour Conservancy.

In September 2024, Bird Aware published its revised strategy. It updates and enhances the original approach by drawing on the recommendations of an independent five year Review undertaken in 2023. In response to new evidence that came forward during the initial Strategy period, these proposals have, for the first time, taken on board the needs of the breeding SPA birds and now provide mitigation for the entire year (previously 6 months).

Funding is collected through developer payments and used for ranger services, education, visitor management, awareness campaigns, monitoring, and projects that reduce disturbance to coastal birds. The partnership also sets aside funds for specific projects that raise awareness of birds, improve visitor management, and enhance greenspaces.

The Bird Aware Solent Annual Report gives an overview of the current work of the Partnership.



Bird Aware Solent Priority Map to address disturbance 2025/26. © Bird Aware Solent

3.5 LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES

The EU Life Recreation ReMEDIES (ReMEDIES) project ran from October 2019 to October 2024. As part of this project, recreational activity surveys were conducted at five locations within the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to provide semi-quantitative evidence to inform the current understanding and create a baseline of patterns of recreational activity taking place adjacent to, or directly over protected seagrass meadows. These surveys were conducted through the months of August and September from 2021 to 2024 using volunteer surveyors and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) staff. The occurrence and frequency of a number of recreational activities such as boat movements, anchoring and mooring, and activities like bait digging and dog walking were recorded. Outputs for the first three years of recreational activity surveys are available at: Home - Save Our Seabed. Natural England are in the process of publishing the final summary report, which includes the final year of survey data. This should be publicly available by April 2027.

Building upon the work of the ReMEDIES project, Natural England and ABC Subsea published an Advanced Mooring Systems Toolkit for Harbour Authorities, Sailing Clubs and Private Mooring Owners in the Solent.

3.6 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Monitoring

Following LIFE ReMEDIES, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has continued surveying at Osborne Bay as part of the Solent Seascape Project.

The Trust will conduct recreational activity surveys on the Isle of Wight during August and September 2026. The surveys help gather valuable information about how coastal areas are used, providing data that contributes to the protection and management of seagrass habitats. Surveys will take place every weekend and on one weekday throughout these months.

3.7 Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Local Nature Recovery Strategies set priorities and measures for nature recovery. At the coast, they cover the intertidal area to the mean low water mark. The Solent is covered by three strategies: Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex. The table below shows their coastal measures mapped against Solent Marine Sites activities, indicating where the Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme can help with delivery.

LNRS	Coastal Measure	Relevant SEMS Activities
Hampshire	Ensure existing coastal sand dunes and vegetated shingle sites are well managed. Consider use of anti-predator fencing, nest trays, education and dog control measures to protect nesting seabirds on shingle.	Walking and general beach recreation, non-motorised watersports.
	Management and restoration of coastal saltmarsh.	Non-motorised watersports, grazing and foraging.
	Manage and restore coastal floodplain grazing marsh as a priority habitat and for use by overwintering and breeding waders/brent geese.	Grazing and foraging.
	Manage access by the public and control dogs to reduce impact on waders, ground nesting birds and high tide roosts on coastal habitats.	Walking, general beach recreation, shore-based fisheries, litter.
	Measures to restore seagrass beds by using established techniques with a focus on existing mapped areas and their expansion.	Anchoring and mooring.
Isle of Wight	Control and mitigate the impacts of recreational disturbance, including watersports, tourism, dog walking and commercial activities.	All recreational activities.
	Protect, enhance and manage beach roosting and nesting sites.	All recreation activities, litter and littering.
	Protect and conserve significant intertidal beds of Seagrass, Egg Wrack and Kelp species. Seek to expand and extend these zones for their intertidal nursery habitats for fish and marine invertebrates.	Vessel discharge, shore-based fisheries, mooring and anchoring, non-motorised watersports.
	Incorporate constructed habitats for marine and coastal species in all coastal defence repairs and renewals, new marine infrastructure, and development.	Ports and harbour and FCERM operation.
	Use the built environment of harbours to add designed habitats for wildlife, reduce pressures from boating and recreation, and enhance public experience of wildlife. Ports, harbours and marinas, and their operating organisations, should improve the provision of safe roost spaces within their ownership or control, including hard infrastructure, breakwaters, pontoons, jetties, yards and car parks, greens and verges.	Ports and harbour operation, all recreation, mooring and anchoring.

	Conserve, enhance, and extend saltmarsh and intertidal mudflats and their transitions; make room for them to migrate and adapt to changing climatic conditions.	Grazing and foraging, non-motorised watersports, mooring and anchoring.
	Medina Estuary ecological rescue: improving the environmental and ecological health of the estuary's intertidal habitat.	Grazing and foraging, non-motorised watersports, mooring and anchoring, littering.
	Secure existing, and create new safe high tide roost, nesting and feeding areas for priority wader and wildfowl species.	All recreation, wildfowling.
	Improve the management of lagoon, dune and shingle bank habitat and extend with useful supplementary features where appropriate.	General beach recreation, littering.
	Make space for new supplementary and transitional zones as well as designed and constructed replacement sites for niches and assemblages threatened by habitat shrinkage and local extinction.	Grazing and foraging, non-motorised watersports, mooring and anchoring.
West Sussex		
	Visitor management approaches are reducing the impacts of visitors on coastal habitats, as well as breeding birds and other species, and may have resulted in the creation of alternative sites or visitor opportunities to take pressure off the most sensitive and important areas.	Walking and general beach recreation, non-motorised watersports, shore-based fisheries.
	Dune stabilisation; removal and control of INNS; reduction of disturbance, trampling and erosion via visitor management etc.	Walking and general beach recreation, non-motorised watersports.
	Reduce impacts on coastal wildlife caused by coastal leisure and recreational activities on land and water as a key component of species recovery efforts.	Walking and general beach recreation, shore-based fisheries, non-motorised watersports.
	Control of invasive non-native species; reduction of disturbance from shingle excavation or recreational pressure (e.g. fencing/visitor management, education and interpretation); non-intervention management; retention of tide swept debris; prevention of scrub encroachment; enhancement of adjacent supporting habitats etc.	Non-motorised watersports, walking and general beach recreation.
	Removal of invasive non-native species (INNS), management of bait digging and hand gathering, boat management practices for intertidal seagrass.	Anchoring and mooring, shore-based fisheries, grazing and foraging.
	Protect from disturbance and predators through education, fencing etc. Protection of foraging areas to intertidal and shallow coastal waters.	Walking, general beach recreation, shore-based fisheries, grazing and foraging.

	Educate to minimise disturbance from trampling and recreational pressures from shingle and sand dune assemblages.	Walking, general beach recreation, shore-based fisheries.
Notes: Walking includes walking with dogs		

3.8 Operation Seabird

Operation Seabird (#OpSeabird) is a police-led operation with forces and joint partners working together, across England, Scotland and Wales. This network brings together knowledge and expertise from a variety of agencies and organisations to tackle coastal wildlife crime, marine wildlife disturbance and anti-social behaviour. Associates of the programme engage and educate the public and local stakeholders about how to enjoy our coastal habitats while minimising negative impacts on our marine wildlife.

If you see anyone acting in a way that could put wildlife at risk, this should be reported to the police by calling 101 or using the report tool. The Country Watch Team at Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary leads on this work.

3.9 National Watersports Participation Survey

This is the main UK annual survey used to monitor participation in boating, watersports and coastal recreation activities. It is commissioned by a consortium of marine and watersport organisations and has been running for over 20 years.

Key findings in the 2025 Survey include:

- 77% of UK adults surveyed participated in at least one watersport or coastal activity in 2025.
- Paddlesports participation increased to 24%, up from 18% in 2023, making it one of the fastest-growing areas of participation.
- Outdoor swimming reached its highest recorded participation levels.
- Sailing participation rose to 13%.
- Manual watersports increased to 27%.
- 82% of 16 to 34-year-olds participated in watersports or coastal activities, the highest of any age group.
- Four in five adults said they would like to participate in watersports more often.

3.10 Weather

Activity participation is weather dependent, particularly for watersports and more informal recreation, such as general beach recreation. Relevant Authorities regularly report the close link between weather and activity levels in their annual survey returns. It follows that, with better weather, more people will access the coast and there will be more pressure on designated sites. The predicted long-term trend of hotter temperatures, evidenced by heatwaves in May, June and July, could see both an increase in visitors and additional events at the coast, such as beach festivals.

Marine heatwaves could also lead to more people accessing the marine space to swim and take part in watersports due to warmer sea temperatures.

3.11 Activity Infrastructure

Development of infrastructure is subject to licences and conditions such as planning permission and/or marine licensing which require a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The HRA assesses both construction and operational impacts. The increased use or expansion of existing infrastructure could increase impacts on SEMS sites, for example the completion of the King Charles III Coast Path. SEMS does not cover the development aspects of infrastructure, but it does look at the impacts of activities arising from its use. The Isle of Wight LNRS contains measures on the eco enhancement of coastal infrastructure.

3.12 Natural England's Advice and Position

3.12.1 Natural England's Conservation Advice

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

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) or Marine Conservation Zone Assessment.

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.

3.12.2 SSSI Consents

Natural England has guidance on Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land and getting consent for activities. This provides information on when consent is or is not required for an activity in an SSSI. For example, recreational or other activities likely to damage vegetation or fauna can be on the list, as can bait digging and the introduction of new coastal fisheries or changes in coastal fishing practice or fisheries management and seafood or marine life collection. Please use Natural England's Designated Sites System for specific consent information on each SSSI.

3.12.3 Site Condition Assessments

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

The condition of EMSs is assessed by feature and reported on by Natural England every six years.

Condition assessments for SEMS interest features indicate their current condition, and if unfavourable, what the reasons are for this. In addition, threats which have the potential to impact their condition and therefore require further monitoring or management are identified. 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 (water pollutants)
- Low infaunal quality index (benthic invertebrate communities)
- Anthropogenic pressures including trampling and anchoring

Please note that Natural England is in the process of updating the condition assessment for Solent Maritime SAC, which will be available by April 2027.

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.

In 2024, Natural England published the first condition assessment for a SPA in the Solent at Portsmouth Harbour. This shows one feature to be in unfavourable - recovering condition, one feature to be in unfavourable - no change condition and two features to be in unfavourable - declining condition. Disturbance caused by human activity, including recreation, is cited as being one of the adverse condition reasons for all species designated as part of the SPA.

Subsequently, the condition assessment for Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA was published in 2025, with five features considered to be in favourable condition, two features to be in unfavourable-recovering condition, four features to be in unfavourable – no change condition and eight features to be in unfavourable – declining condition. Again, disturbance caused by human activity, including recreation, is cited as one of the adverse condition reasons for those species in unfavourable condition.

In 2026, Natural England published the condition assessment for Solent and Southampton Water SPA, with one feature considered to be in favourable condition, two features to be in unfavourable-recovering condition, two features to be in unfavourable – no change condition and five features to be in unfavourable – declining condition. As with the other SPA condition assessments, disturbance caused by human activity, including recreation, is cited as one of the adverse condition reasons for those species in unfavourable condition.

Natural England includes terrestrial drivers in its advice on adverse condition and condition threats, reflecting how land-based activity can impact coastal designated sites. Drivers now include forestry, freshwater input and agriculture.

As part of the Environmental Improvement Plan, government has committed to ensuring that 48% of marine protected area (MPA) features are in favourable condition by 2028, and 70% by 2042, with the remaining in recovering condition.

3.12.4 Natural England's Summary of Activity Impacts

Of the sixteen activities considered in this SEMS Annual Management Report, five have been identified through the formal condition assessment process undertaken by Natural England as having evidence to demonstrate that they are impacting at least some features of SEMS sites. These include:

- General beach recreation, land recreation (including dog walking) and recreation (non-motorised watercraft), which all have the potential to cause disturbance to birds and other wildlife and may also result in trampling or abrasion of sensitive habitats.
- Operation of some Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management schemes (excluding those that are considered through the Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme), which are contributing to the loss of designated habitats, including saltmarsh.
- Mooring and anchoring which is contributing to loss and abrasion of sensitive habitats such as seagrass.

In addition, there are two activities which have been identified as having the potential to impact on SEMS but where either the condition assessment process has not yet fully assimilated impacts from this activity or more specific information may be required, these include littering and removal of litter, and recreation (powerboating or sailing with an engine). Natural England would recommend pressures from these activities are carefully considered alongside the five activities highlighted above.

It is important to note that this is based on the condition assessment, which uses a defined set of attributes; therefore, there may be pressures from other activities that are not picked up through this process. It is important to continue to report activities where there is evidence that these are impacting SEMS features, for example fisheries activities being undertaken in byelaw areas.

Please see the full text on impacts of SEMS for each activity for detailed information.

3.13 Marine Plans

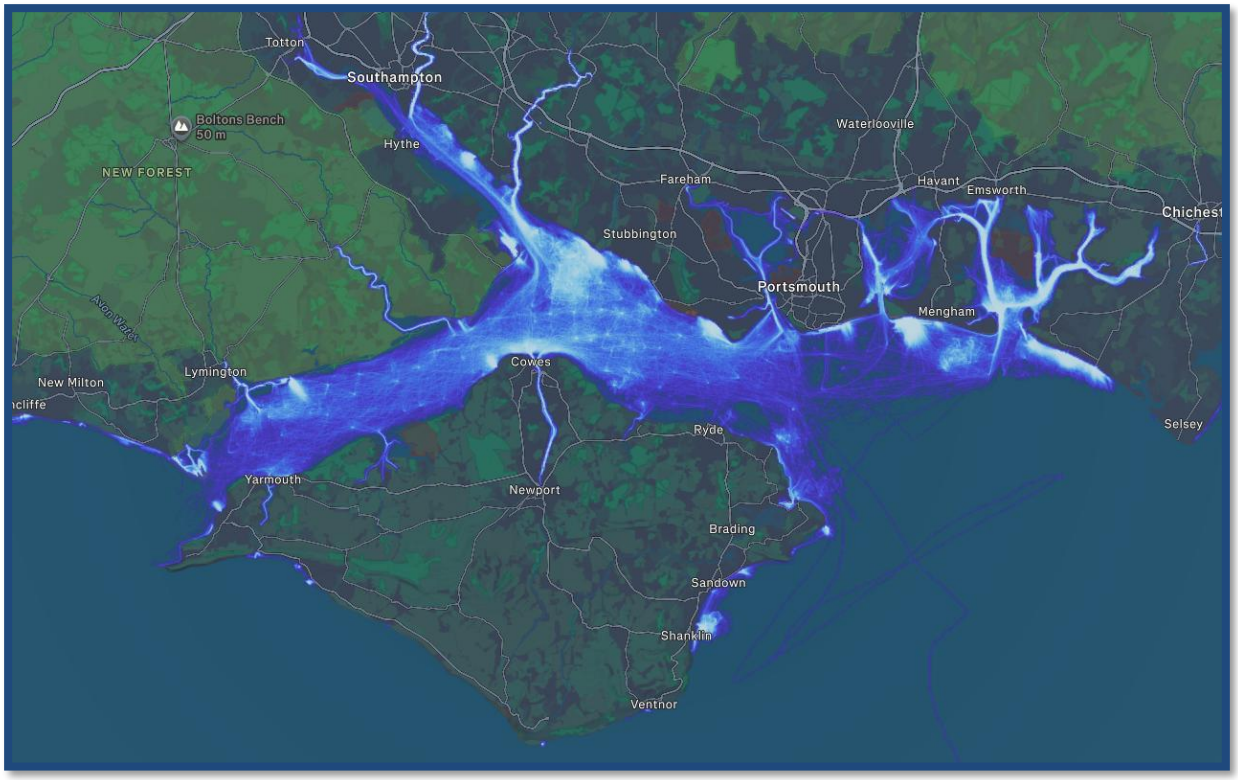
The Habitat Regulations Assessment for the South Marine Plan details a wide range of pathways and impacts of activities.

3.14 Marine Licence Applications

This Report is referenced by Relevant Authorities in Habitats Regulations Assessments for Marine Licence Applications, as a source of information to address and monitor impacts from non-licensable activities arising as a result of development.

3.15 Strava Global Heatmap

We have used data from Strava's Global Heatmap to give a spatial overview of where activities are taking place in the Solent. These maps are a visual representation of activities, uploaded by Strava users, and show where people are most active, based on their public GPS data. Brighter lines indicate more frequent participation. It displays public aggregated activities from the past 12 months.



Participation in all watersports in the Solent. Source: Strava Global Heatmap, 2026.

3.16 Sport England Active Lives Survey

Sport England's Active Lives Survey was established in November 2015 and gathers data on how adults aged 16 and over in England engage with sport and physical activity. It is carried out by Ipsos MORI and produced by Sport England in collaboration with Arts Council England, Public Health England and the Department for Transport.

The survey is sent out to a randomly selected sample of households across England. Two adults (aged 16+) are invited to take part. The overall sample size is around 175,000 people for each survey. Data is published annually in April (mid-November to mid-November results). The data in this Report is from November 2024 to November 2025.

Data can be split down into areas, and for this Report we have used the Active Partnership (AP) area, for Hampshire and the Unitary Authorities of Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight.

3.17 Marine Conservation Society Beachwatch Data

In the litter activity section (5.8) we have used data from the MCS Beachwatch dashboard to look at trends in litter around the Solent's beaches from data collected in their beach cleans.

3.18 SEMS Annual Survey Respondents

Of the 31 Relevant Authorities (RAs) who were invited to complete the 2026 survey, all but one responded. Table 1 shows the list of respondents. Table 2 identifies the types of RAs that responded.

Table 1. SEMS Survey Respondents	
Associated British Ports (ABP)	[1]Natural England (NE)
Beaulieu Enterprises (BRM)	New Forest District Council (NFDC)
Chichester District Council (CDC)	New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)
Chichester Harbour Conservancy (ChHC)	Portsmouth City Council (PCC)
Cowes Harbour Commissioners (CoHC)	Portsmouth International Port (PiP)
Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC)	River Hamble Harbour Authority (RHHA)
Fareham Borough Council (FBC)	Southampton City Council (SCC)
Gosport Borough Council (GBC)	Southern IFCA (SoIFCA)
Hampshire County Council (HCC)	Southern Water (SW)
Havant Borough Council (HBC)	Sussex IFCA (SxIFCA)
Isle of Wight Council (IoWC)	Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC)
KHM Portsmouth (KHM)	West Sussex County Council (WSCC)
Langstone Harbour Board (LHB)	Wightlink (WL)
Lymington Harbour Commissioners (LHC)	Winchester City Council (WCC)
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners (YHC)
Did not respond, Environment Agency	
[1]Natural England respond to the survey as the manager of the North Solent NNR	

Table 2. Types of Relevant Authority that responded to the Survey	
Government bodies	2
Harbour Authority	8
IFCA	2
Local Authority	13
Other	2
Private Company	2

4 Activity Summary

Section 4 summarises the annual survey findings of the sixteen 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. Percentage of Relevant Authorities with an Activity in their Jurisdiction

Activity	Percentage	Count
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	48%	14
Boat Repair and Maintenance	41%	12
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	41%	12
Fishing (shore-based activities)	66%	19
General Beach Recreation	59%	17
Grazing and Foraging	28%	8
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	59%	17
Littering and removal of litter	66%	19
Mooring and Anchoring	52%	15
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	55%	16
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	52%	15
Recreation - light aircraft	31%	9
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	69%	20
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	62%	18
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	48%	14
Wildfowling	21%	6

4.2 Summary of Changes Recorded in Activity Levels

Respondents were asked whether, since the last survey in spring 2025, each activity had increased, decreased, remained unchanged since the previous year, or whether they did not know due to a lack of data. Table 4a summarises the data. The mode value of the responses has been highlighted in green. Table 4b shows the percentage of responses that were 'don't know'. This illustrates where more evidence needs to be gathered.

Table 4a. Summary of reported changes in activity levels from spring 2025 to spring 2026

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

Table 4b. Percentage of respondents that reported 'don't know' to activity changes			
Activity	**Don't know**	**Total Responses**	**% Don't know**
Recreation - light aircraft	5	9	56
Fishing (shore-based activities)	9	19	47
General Beach Recreation	7	17	41
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	8	20	40
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	6	17	35
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	4	12	33
Wildfowling	2	6	33
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	5	18	28
Littering and removal of litter	5	19	26
Boat Repair and Maintenance	3	12	25
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	4	16	25
Grazing and Foraging	2	9	22
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	3	14	21
Mooring and Anchoring	3	15	20
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	2	14	14
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	2	15	13

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. Tables 5a and 5b summarise the data. The mode value in Table 5a has been shaded green.

Table 5a. Activities Impacting on Designated Sites by Total Responses

Activity	Yes	No	Total Responses	Org Names (where Yes)
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	2	12	14	ABP, ChHC
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	11	12	ChHC
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	3	9	12	ABP, GBC, ChHC
Fishing (shore-based activities)	6	13	19	ABP, EBC, IOWC, FBC, ChHC
General Beach Recreation	8	9	17	HCC, EBC, PCC, WCC, NE, IOWC, FBC, ChHC
Grazing and Foraging	2	6	8	IOWC, ChHC
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	14	3	17	HCC, EBC, LHB, PCC, CDC, WCC, GBC, NE, WSCC, IOWC, FBC, NFNPA, ChHC, SCC
Littering and removal of litter	11	8	19	ABP, EBC, LHC, LHB, PCC, NE, CoHC, IOWC, FBC, ChHC, SCC
Mooring and Anchoring	5	10	15	LHB, FBC, ChHC, MMO, SCC
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	8	8	16	LHC, LHB, PCC, CDC, NE, CoHC, IOWC, ChHC
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	2	13	15	YHC, ChHC
Recreation - light aircraft	1	8	9	ChHC
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	11	9	20	HCC, ABP, EBC, LHB, WCC, GBC, NE, IOWC, FBC, ChHC, MMO
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	9	9	18	ABP, EBC, LHB, WCC, GBC, IOWC, FBC, ChHC, MMO
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	14	14	
Wildfowling	2	4	6	HCC, ChHC

Table 5b. Activities Impacting on Designated Sites by Percentage stating 'yes'				
Activity	**Yes**	**No**	**Total Responses**	**Percentage yes**
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	14	3	17	82%
Littering and removal of litter	11	8	19	58%
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	11	9	20	55%
Operation of FCERM	8	8	16	50%
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	9	9	18	50%
General Beach Recreation	8	9	17	47%
Mooring and Anchoring	5	10	15	33%
Wildfowling	2	4	6	33%
Fishing (shore-based activities)	5	14	19	26%
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	3	9	12	25%
Grazing and Foraging	2	6	8	25%
Accidental vessel discharges	2	12	14	14%
Operation of ports and harbours	2	13	15	13%
Recreation - light aircraft	1	8	9	11%
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	11	12	8%
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	14	14	0%

4.4 Annual Trend Data

Since 2019, we have collated trend data on the levels of activity change from data obtained via the SEMS survey. The mode response has been no change across this time period for all activities. We will continue to collate this data to look for future changes. Please note this does not mean that these activities are not widespread and/or elevated, as we know that the Solent is heavily used for recreation and can exceed carrying capacity at peak times.

5 Individual Activity Responses

Section 5 reviews and evaluates each of the sixteen different activities covered in the Management Scheme. There are four sections under each activity:

1. Summary of the survey response from 2026.
2. Evaluation and discussion. This includes sections written by Natural England on their view of impacts on sites.
3. Existing management measures.
4. Actions.

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

Discharges and emissions	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	0	10	3	14
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	2	12			14

5.1.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Respondents noted that port and harbour authorities have Oil Spill and Waste Management Plans. They raised that large spills could be catastrophic and need to be dealt with promptly and diligently. There is a move towards using electric and alternative fuels for marine vessels, such as LPG, this will help to minimise craft oil and diesel discharges.

In the harbours emissions are typically small scale in nature, involving minor releases of fuel residues, lubricants, bilge water, or other operational fluids from recreational craft. These events are short-lived and patchy, rapid tidal exchange helps to disperse pollutants.

Respondents have ongoing concerns about the impacts of Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO); however these are a licensed activity so are not covered by the SEMS scheme. There is also increasing concern about the impacts of urban highways run off that feeds into the Solent.

Potential Impacts

Materials such as oil are of concern in the marine environment due to their buoyancy and easy transport from one location to another on currents, and the damage it can cause to fish and seabird

populations. PAH contamination can also lead to the lowering, temporarily or more permanently, of oxygen levels in the water.

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

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

Natural England do not consider this activity to be having an impact on the SEMS sites when considered alone. However, elevated contaminant levels in both the sediment and water column have been identified as one of the reasons 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.

5.1.3 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.

The RYA Green Blue has resources on oil and fuel spills for boating including best practice guidance and awareness raising posters. Guidance includes the RYA Green Blue's Water Pollution Prevention guidance for boaters and Pollution Control guidance for clubs/centres. These webpages include the use of cleaning products, black water disposal and antifouling.

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

5.1.4 Action

(1) NEG to support and share research on how highways run-off could affect the Solent's designated sites.

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

Boat repair and maintenance	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	0	8	3	12
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	1	11			12

5.2.2 Evaluation and Discussion

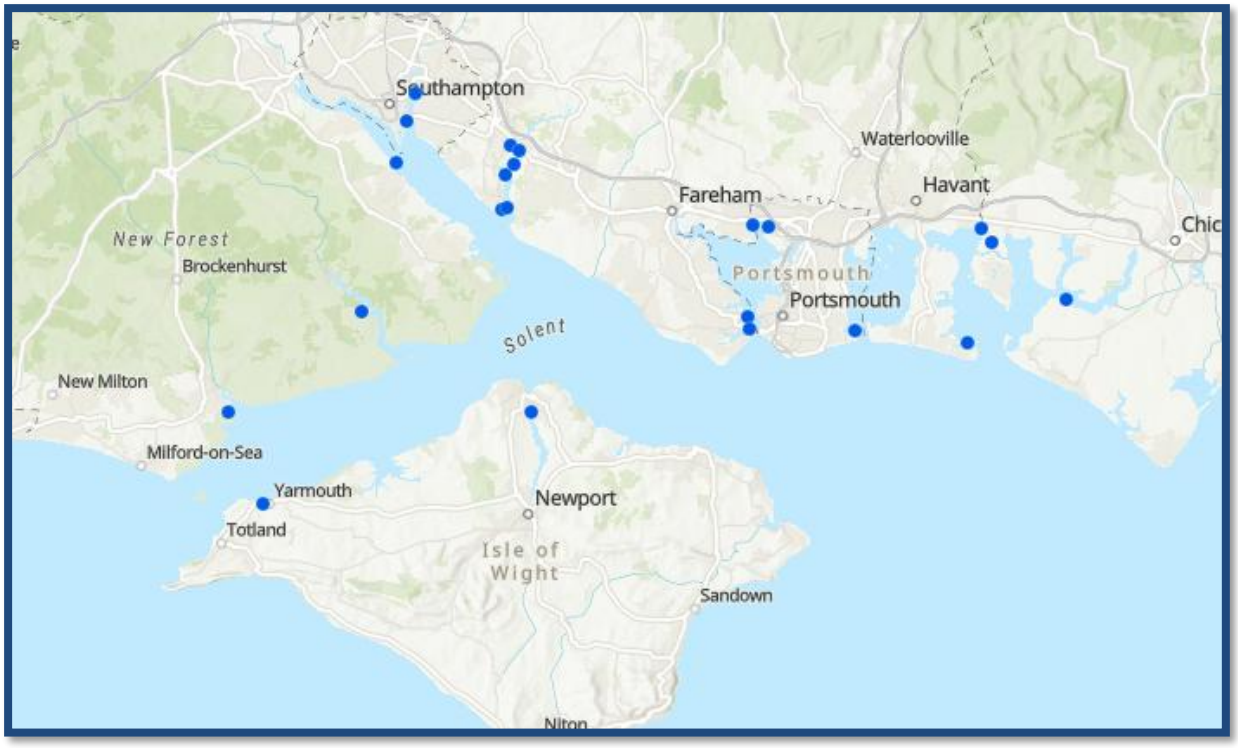
Survey respondents noted that typical activities include minor hull cleaning, routine servicing, and small repairs carried out afloat or during short periods ashore for launching and recovery.

The Harbour Authorities encourage owners to take their vessels to a boatyard or marina with specialist services for repairs. Langstone Harbour Board has begun to improve shoreside facilities for vessel owners to conduct maintenance. This is a process of continued improvements to improve facilities and reduce potential impact on designated sites, including a bunded washdown facility to minimise water quality impacts.

Harbour Patrol Officers maintain a presence in the main boating season and routinely advise users on best practice for maintenance, including avoiding scraping or cleaning hulls in the water or on intertidal areas. Any pollution concerns are dealt with in line with the Harbour's existing spill response procedures.

Commercial vessels are taken to specialist shipyard repair facilities outside of the Solent.

There are concerns regarding end-of-life vessels being a significant point source of glass reinforced plastic (GRP) and fibreglass pollution. In Chichester Harbour, microfibres from GRP maintenance have been detected in marine organisms, indicating environmental uptake and potential ecological risk.



Oily waste disposal sites in the Solent. Source: The Green Blue Marine Environmental Facilities Map.

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.

Given the low level of activity, environmental impacts are suspected to be minimal. Occasional risks include the release of antifouling residues, paint flakes, or small quantities of oils and lubricants, but these incidents are generally confined to individual vessels.

Boat repair/maintenance has the potential to introduce invasive non-native species (INNS) into the marine environment. Maintenance work on recreational craft is a vector by which INNS can be introduced to new areas if they are moored outside the Solent.

Tributyltin (TBT) use was banned in the late 1980s for smaller vessels and has been prohibited on all vessels and offshore installations since 2008, or ships must bear at least a barrier coating. OSPAR data shows that following the total ban on tributyltin in marine applications, mean concentrations in sediment have measurably reduced (with a trend of approx. -10% per year) in the southern North Sea. However, TBT concentration levels are still at levels where effects on the marine environment cannot be excluded.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

Whilst Natural England do not consider this activity to currently be impacting on SEMS when considered alone, 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. In addition,

abandoned vessels have the potential to create permanent loss or abrasion of designated habitat and lead to the release of microplastics and other debris.

The release of Tributyltin (TBT) into the marine environment from antifouling has historically been of concern in the Solent. Changes in antifouling practice means that this has now largely become a legacy issue from this source, however, levels of TBT are still reported above Threshold Levels, particularly in the upper parts of Southampton Water, suggesting that either historical TBT is still present in sediments and slowly leaching into the wider environment, some boat owners continue to use TBT or it is entering the site via other routes. 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.

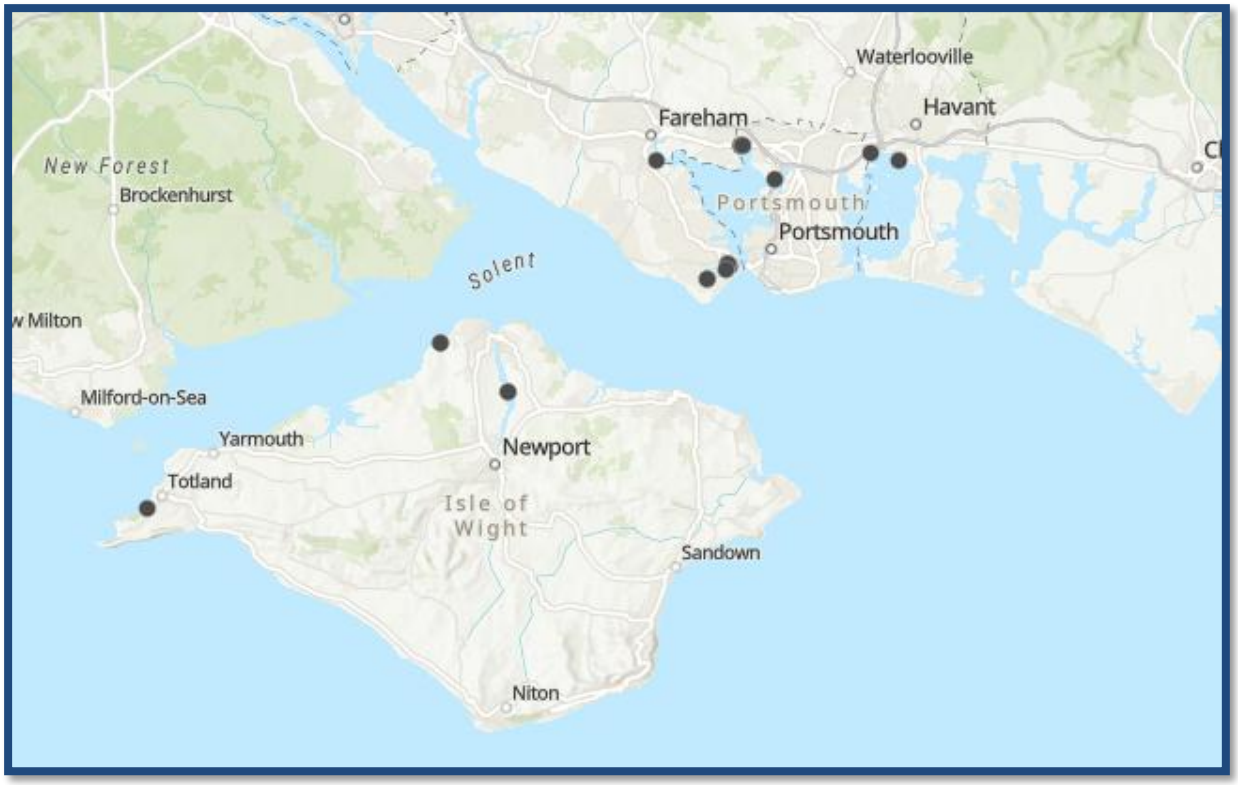
For more information, please see Defra's water quality map explorer.

5.2.3 Management Measures

The Solent Forum has developed guidance on marine invasive species and biosecurity measures which includes the maintenance of recreational craft.

Some harbour authorities and marinas have invested in filtration or containment systems, but coverage is not universal across the Solent. These are highlighted on the Green Blue's Environmental Facilities map.

Relevant organisations in the Solent encourage the use of the RYA Green Blue environmental guidance, campaigns and resources. This includes the Environmental Facilities Map and reporting form for end-of-life abandoned boats.



Abandoned boats reported in the Solent. Source: The Green Blue End of Life Boats Map.

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

5.2.4 Actions

(1) SEMS Management Group members continue to promote and share best practice in preventing marine invasive spread by using the Solent Forum's biosecurity plans and record end of life boats on the RYA Green Blue's register. Harbour Authorities to continue to promote best practice to users when repairing and maintaining boats using The Green Blue resources.

(2) NEG to encourage research on and share information on impacts to designated sites from end-of-life abandoned GRP boats.

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: Fishing	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	0	2	6	4	12
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	3	9			12

5.3.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Southern IFCA report that overall fishing activity remains consistent throughout the Solent, with moderate levels of activity in the scallop fishery and a slight increase in activity targeting the manila clam fishery due to the apparent high productivity.

Sussex IFCA completed a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for Chichester Harbour in 2025 to assess the effects of fishing activity on designated features. The assessment was reviewed and agreed by Natural England in December 2025. The HRA concluded that fishing activity within the harbour is low intensity and, in combination with existing management measures, does not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the site. As such, no additional management measures are currently required to protect designated habitats and species.

Langstone Harbour Board reported that fishing within Langstone remains low-intensity and is generally compatible with the site's conservation objectives. Continued monitoring is important to ensure that static gear does not expand into more sensitive areas, particularly upper intertidal zones supporting SPA foraging. Lost gear remains an occasional issue, and collaborative initiatives with local fishers e.g. gear retrieval via 'Fishing for Litter' can help reduce risks. There is the odd occasion of small groups indiscriminately catching and retaining undersized fish, these instances are reported to Southern IFCA for follow up. One of these instances resulted in a successful prosecution.

Eastleigh BC commented that permitted inshore netting at the mouth of the River Hamble is likely to have a negative impact on estuarine fish species (e.g. mullet sp.). Levels of Illegal setting of nets in the Hamble is unknown but probably does occur. However, no netting is permitted in the Hamble estuary without River Hamble Harbour Authority approval, and the few netting permissions (for mullet) granted to established local commercial fishermen are done so in consultation with Southern IFCA in order to dovetail with their Permit.

Catchwise is a Survey of Marine Recreational Fishing Activity in England and Wales. The survey estimated angling effort, defined as the number of anglers per site and time spent fishing, catch rates based on the number of fish caught per unit effort, and biomass estimates of retained and released fish weights. Data collection was conducted through onsite surveys of shore and private boat angler

counts and interviews, charter boat logbook surveys based on weekly activity reports from participating skippers, and follow-up surveys to validate recall bias and refine catch estimates.

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**.**

Bottom-towed gear can scrape, plough, or penetrate seabed sediments, causing abrasion and disturbance of both surface and subsurface layers. The depth and severity of impact depend on gear type, sediment characteristics, and towing conditions

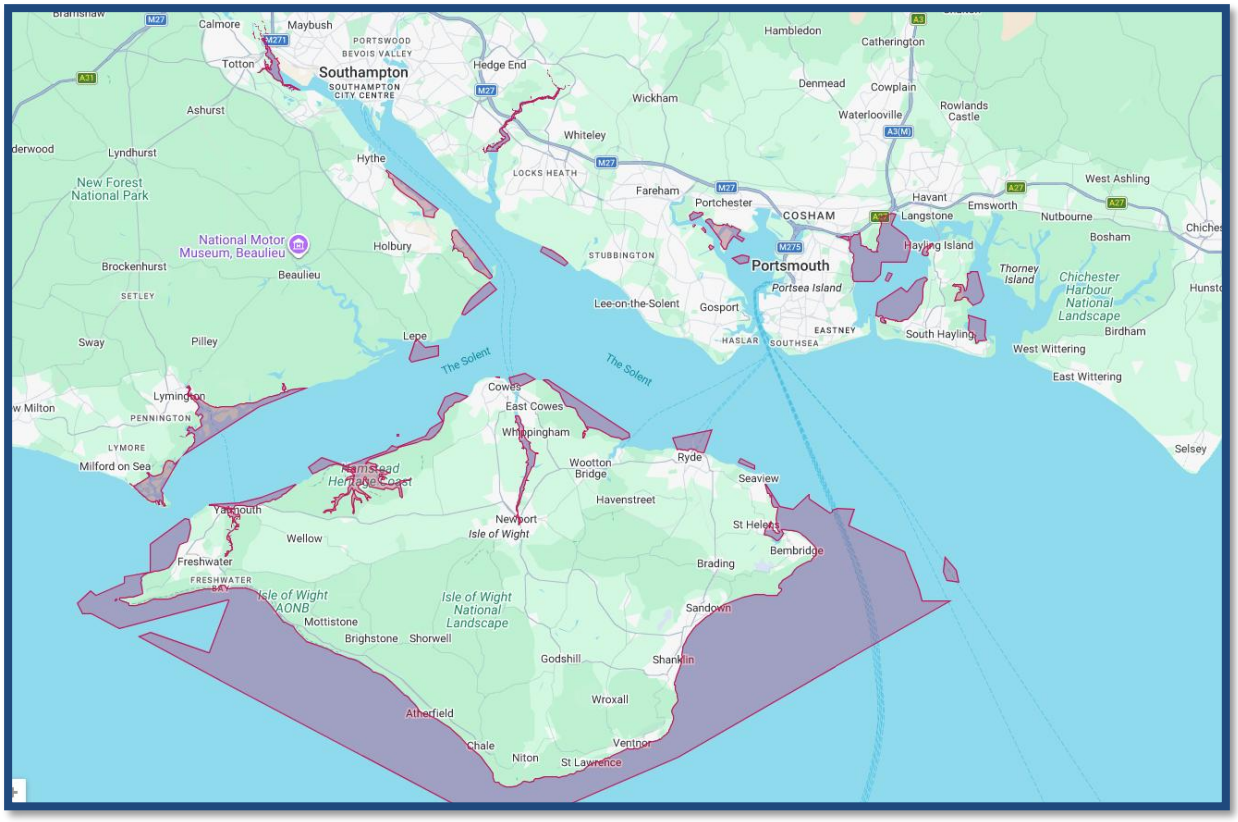
Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

Natural England remains aware of reports of BTFG and other activities occurring within prohibited areas, which may be damaging designated features. Natural England recommends any observations of fisheries activity occurring within prohibited areas, are reported to Southern IFCA or Sussex IFCA (depending on location) so that they can be investigated. Natural England will continue to work with the local IFCAs on this.

Natural England are in the process of publishing a report commissioned to map lost and abandoned fishing gear, primarily around the coasts of Isle of Wight. It is hoped that this will be published by April 2027.

5.3.3 Management Measures

On 7th July 2025 the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 was ratified by the Secretary of State (SoS). This byelaw replaced the Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2016 and includes extensions to already prohibited areas, the establishment of new prohibited areas, and the continuation for the requirement of BTFG to be inboard and above the sea whilst a vessel carrying BTFG is transiting through a prohibited area. The introduction of the expanded byelaw should further reduce impacts from bottom towed fishing gear on SEMS.



Southern IFCA Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023

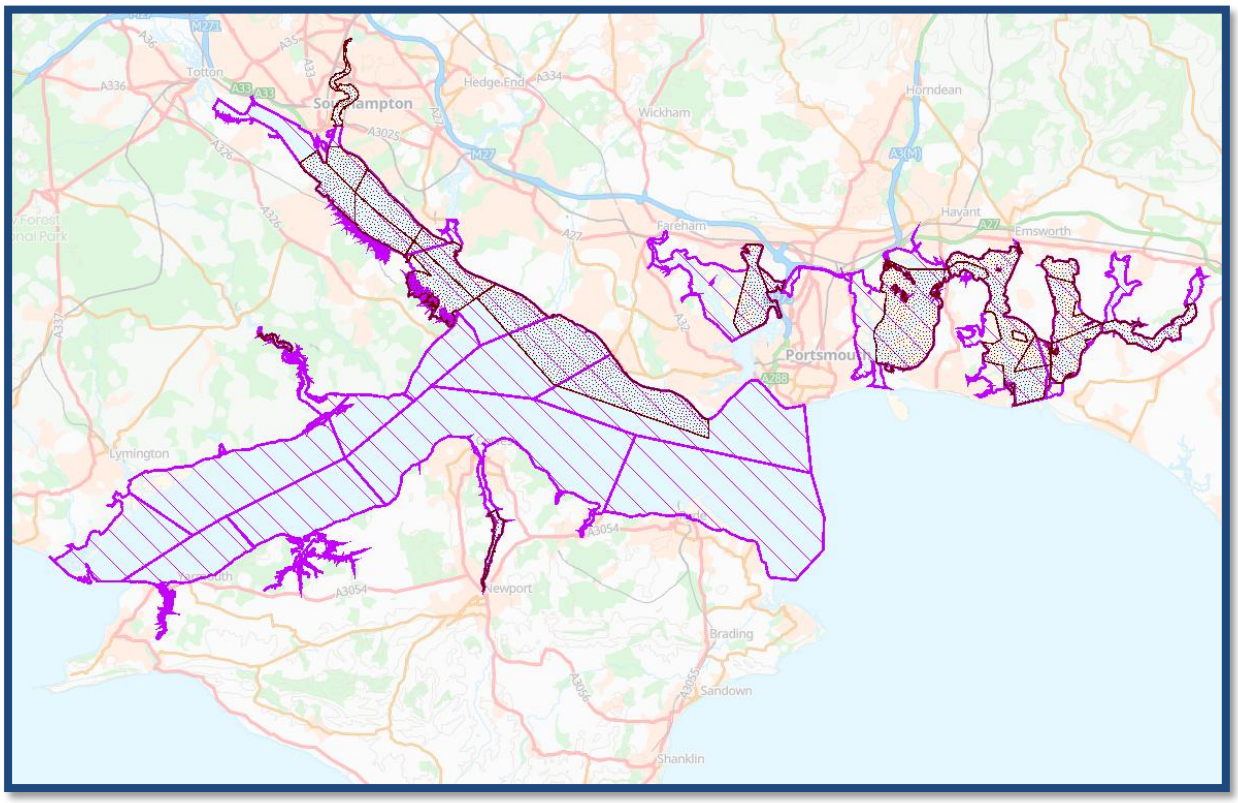
The Net fishing byelaw, introduced in 2023, details Net Prohibition Areas (where net fishing is prohibited at all times of year and under any conditions), Net Restriction Areas (where net fishing is subject to seasonal and/or gear restrictions), and Net Permit Areas (where net fishing is managed by permitting named individuals and specific vessels under flexible permit conditions). Further information can be found on the IFCA website relating to the management (Net Fishing) or permitting (Net Fishing Permit) of the net fishery.

Within the Solent, there are two Net Restriction Areas (Langstone Harbour and Portsmouth Harbour), two Net Permit Areas (Southampton Water & River Hamble), and 18 Net Prohibition Areas across the Harbours, Southampton Water, the Solent, and the Isle of Wight.

Maps and coordinates for these areas can be found within the Net Fishing Byelaw on Southern IFCA's website.

The bivalve fisheries within the Solent are managed by conditions for a Category A permit under the Solent Dredge Permit Byelaw.

Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw. Red is Net Prohibition Area, blue is Net Restriction Area and yellow is Net Permit Area.



Shellfish Waters (striped areas) and Classified Bivalve Mollusc Harvesting Areas (dotted areas). Source: MAGIC Map.

The links below provide further information on the surveys which Southern IFCA run in the Solent:

- The Bivalve Survey, which occurs biannually and looks at Catch Per Unit Effort for Common Cockle, American Hardshell clams, and Manila clams.
- The King Scallop survey, which looks at Catch Per Unit Effort across the Solent tri-annually (Solent Dredge Permit).
- The Native Oyster survey, monitors the native oyster population within the Solent and the Harbours every two years (Solent Dredge Permit).
- The Small Fish Survey, gathers data on juvenile fish populations biannually in Yarmouth, the River Hamble, and Christchurch (Net Fisheries).
- The Whelk Survey, gathers information on the population of whelks within the Solent in the Spring of each year (Pot & Trap Fisheries).

One of the key tools supporting flexible fisheries management has been the introduction of flexible permit byelaws. Unlike more traditional fixed management measures, permit schemes allow IFCAs to adapt management quicker using permit conditions, responding to new local evidence or data, emerging fisheries or changing environmental conditions.

Bottom-towed fishing gear, including trawling and dredging (for both oysters and scallops), is prohibited throughout Chichester Harbour under existing Sussex IFCA byelaws.

The Fixed Engines Byelaw restricts the use of fixed nets (excluding fyke nets) between 1 May and 30 September across the harbour entrance (East Head to Sandy Point), providing seasonal protection during key periods. Overall, management measures currently in place (including gear prohibitions, seasonal restrictions and permit controls) act to limit spatial overlap and intensity of fishing activity, thereby reducing potential impacts on designated habitats and species within the site.

From 2025, the MMO enforced a license condition requiring Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS) for any English licensed under-12m vessel undertaking any trip to sea. This management measure should provide valuable GIS data as to fishing vessels operating in prohibited areas and highlight any areas of intense fishing activity within SEMS.

The Sea Angling Diary enables participants to record their fishing activities and contribute to sustainable marine stock management. This information is used to inform better decision making about sea angling's future. The project is delivered by Substance, and Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) on behalf of the English and Welsh governments.

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

5.3.4 Action

(1) SEMS MG members to continue to report to the Southern and Sussex IFCAs or the MMO (helpline 0300 123 1032) any suspected illegal fishing activity seen and raise awareness of the byelaws in place.
(2) SEMS MG members to encourage the Solent's sea angling community to contribute to the Sea Angling Diary.

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

Shore based fishing	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	1	8	9	19
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	6	13			19

5.4.2 Evaluation and Discussion

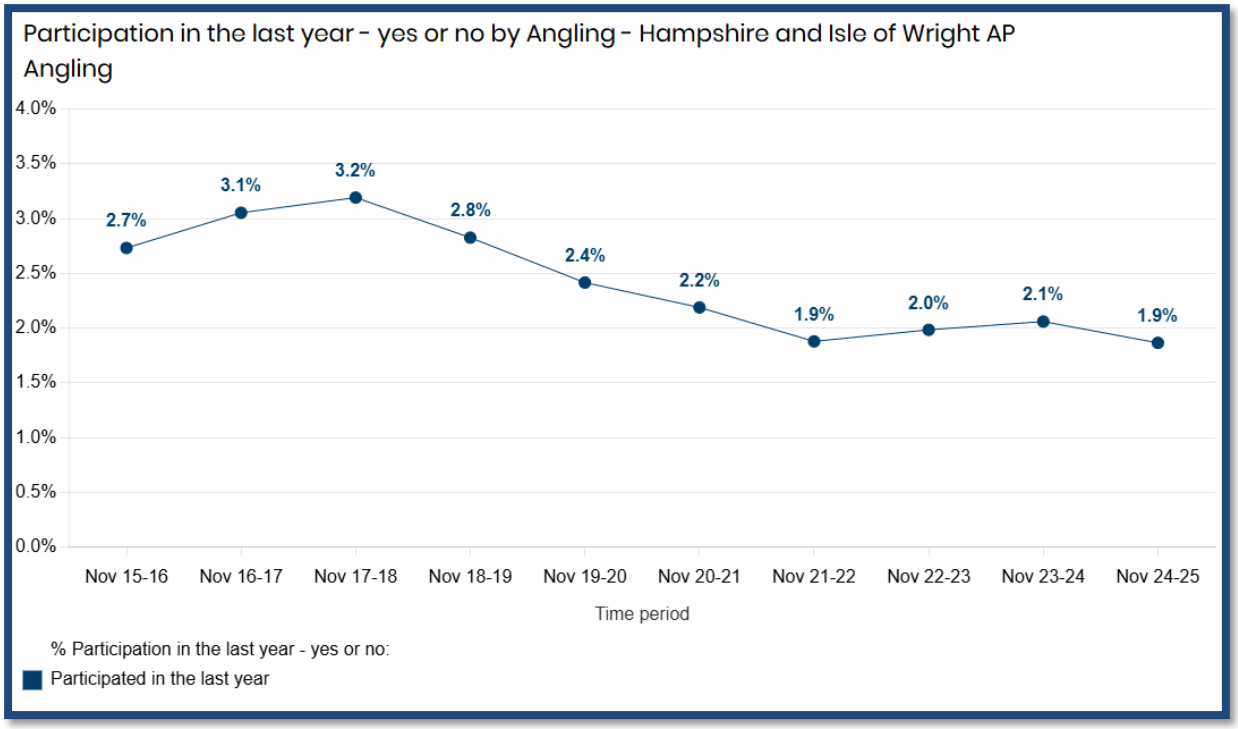
Southern IFCA report that shore-based fishing activity in the Solent covers a range of activities including rod and line angling and the collection of bivalve species such as Pacific oysters (Crassostrea gigas). Levels of activity for these fishing methods remain consistent within the Solent, as do the areas where the activities are occurring (Langstone Harbour, Hayling Island, Hill Head). Southern IFCA manages shore-based fishing activities through a suite of byelaws.

Respondents note that individual anglers can access sites that they shouldn't which can lead to litter, bird disturbance and trampling. Moving people on can be challenging. The coast from Hamble to Netley is popular with shore anglers. Litter can be a problem with some (low) potential for direct disturbance. Bait digging, especially for ragworm, can also be a problem along the Hamble estuary in places.

Langstone Harbour Board reported that shore-based activity in Langstone Harbour includes small-scale bait digging, hand gathering of shellfish, and rod and line angling. Activity is typically concentrated in easily accessible areas and increases during warmer months, but overall levels remain low and dispersed.

Sussex IFCA reported that hand gathering and bait digging are known to occur within intertidal areas of Chichester Harbour. These activities take place year-round, with increased intensity during spring tides and in the summer months when access conditions are most favourable. Potential impacts include disturbance to intertidal habitats (e.g. sediment abrasion and trampling), removal of target and non-target species, and disturbance to overwintering and feeding bird species. The Chichester Harbour Habitat Regulations Assessment found that, under the Hand Gathering Byelaw 2021, shore-based activities are compatible with the conservation objectives of the site.

The graph below shows trend data for all angling across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight from Sport England's Active Lives Survey.



Source: Sport England Active Lives Survey

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, the literature shows 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)

Southern IFCA have carried out a review of shore gathering activities across the District to review and, where necessary, develop updated regulations for shore gathering activities in Marine Protected Areas within the National Site Network (SACs, SPAs and MCZs). The outcome of the review was the development of the Shore Gathering Byelaw and an amendment to the Fishing for Cockles Byelaw. The Shore Gathering Byelaw provides spatial management, in the form of prohibition (year-round) or seasonal closure areas, for sensitive habitats and species within MCZs and within or adjacent to SACs and SPAs to mitigate potential impacts from shore gathering activities. The Southern IFCA Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct was also developed to support the Shore Gathering Byelaw. The Shore Gathering Byelaw is currently in the process of quality assurance with the MMO prior to consideration by the Secretary of State.

On this basis Natural England advise that we should not seek to evaluate the impacts of shore gathering activities until this process is completed.

In addition, Natural England are in the process of publishing a report commissioned to map lost and abandoned fishing gear, primarily around the coasts of Isle of Wight. It is hoped that this will be published by April 2027.

5.4.3 Management Measures

Southern IFCA manages shore-based fishing activities through a suite of byelaws that can be viewed on its website (Shore Gathering). They include minimum size requirements, approved shore-gathering practices, and a prohibition on gathering sea fisheries resources in seagrass beds. It also provides guidance and codes of practice for hand gathering of shellfish and bait digging within its district.

In December 2024, Southern IFCA submitted the Shore Gathering Byelaw and the Fishing for Cockles (Amendment) Byelaw to the MMO/Defra for their QA process. The Shore Gathering Byelaw proposes the introduction of defined year-round prohibited areas, summer closure areas (closed 1st March to 31st August), and winter closure areas (closed 1st November to 31st March), within which shore gathering activities will be prohibited. The shore gathering activities covered by the Byelaw include shellfish hand gathering, mechanical harvesting of shellfish, bait digging, crab tiling, shrimp push-netting, and seaweed harvesting. The Fishing for Cockles Byelaw has been amended to remove provisions relating to prescribed methods of harvesting, equipment specifications for hand picking of cockles and the construction/operation of a dredge in relation to fishing for cockles. The Byelaw maintains existing provisions relating to Minimum Conservation Reference Size for cockles and a closed season, applicable to all harvesting methods except use of a dredge in Poole Harbour.

During the review undertaken for these byelaws, a Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct was also written, which will come into effect when the Shore Gathering Byelaw is ratified. Further information is available on the Southern IFCA website under Ongoing Reviews.

Sussex IFCA has implemented management measures through the Hand Gathering (Restrictions and Permitting) Byelaw 2021, which introduces spatial restrictions, bag limits and permitting requirements to manage effort and reduce impacts.

Activity is monitored through routine patrols across the district, supported by the use of drone surveys to better understand the spatial extent and intensity of bait digging activity.

Shore-based activities were assessed as part of the Chichester Harbour Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) completed by Sussex IFCA in 2025. The assessment concluded that, given the recent introduction of spatial restrictions and monitoring through a permit system in the Hand Gathering (Restrictions and Permitting) Byelaw 2021, these activities do not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the site.

Sussex IFCA intend to continue monitoring bait gathering activities using catch returns and drone surveys and review the results to identify if there are additional unforeseen impacts.

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.

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.

Relevant authorities see 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.

5.4.4 Action

(1) SEMS MG members 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 help record this activity.

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 buggying).

5.5.1 Survey Response

General Beach Recreation	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	0	9	7	17
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	8	9			17

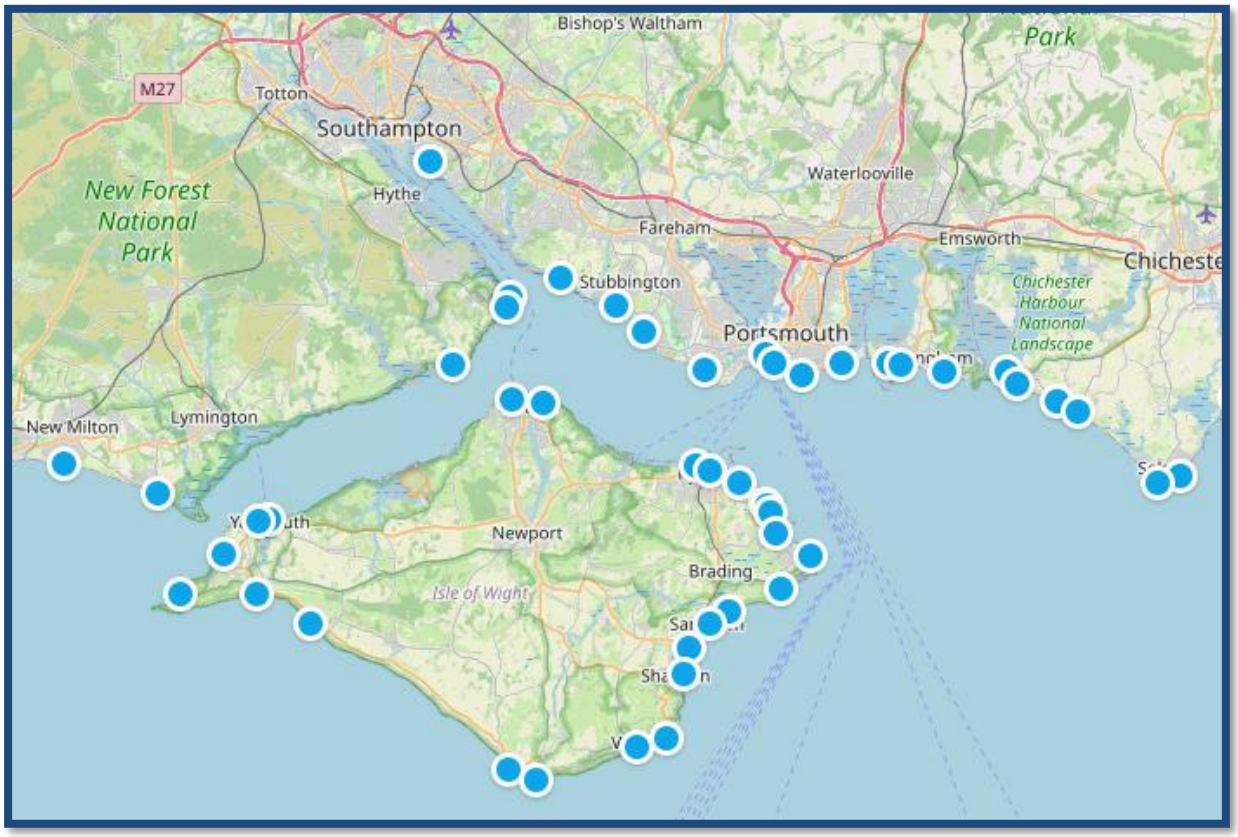
5.5.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Respondents noted that this there is a significant baseline level of beach activity all year round but this peaks in times of good weather. The sites people favour are determined by their accessibility and the provision of facilities like car parks and toilets. At peak periods people can be pushed into accessing more remote sensitive areas due to a lack of space.

Some of the busiest beaches are on the Isle of Wight, the Island population can increase in the summer months by hundreds of thousands, but beaches are busy all year round.

On the Hampshire coast concerns have been raised at Hurst Spit and the North Solent Nature Reserve for disturbance to ground nesting birds.

Activities like horse riding, fireworks and motorised landcraft have not been raised as activities of concern in the Solent.



The location of popular beaches around the Solent

Potential Impacts

Potential impacts noted by respondents include wildlife disturbance, damage from trampling and increased plastic pollution/littering. Ground nesting birds are particularly vulnerable to disturbance in the summer months from visitor footfall.

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 (Natural England)

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. The LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project, led by Natural England, partly looked at trampling pressures. See Mooring and Anchoring (section 5.9) for further details.

The condition assessments for Portsmouth Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Solent and Southampton Water SPA have been completed; disturbance caused by human activity is one of the main drivers for the unfavourable status of all designated

features within Portsmouth Harbour SPA, fourteen out of nineteen features of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and ten out of eleven features of Solent and Southampton Water SPA.

A reduce target has been set in the conservation advice packages for all SPA 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.

5.5.3 Management Measures

Unlike many other recreational activities, general beach recreation is not covered by a national governing body or a representative organisation. Good practice messaging regarding minimising impacts on the marine and coastal environment, including wildlife, comes from relevant authorities (e.g. Local and Harbour 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.

A new project centred on Hurst Spit is being led by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust aiming to reduce impacts of disturbance by installing fencing and interpretation on the spit.

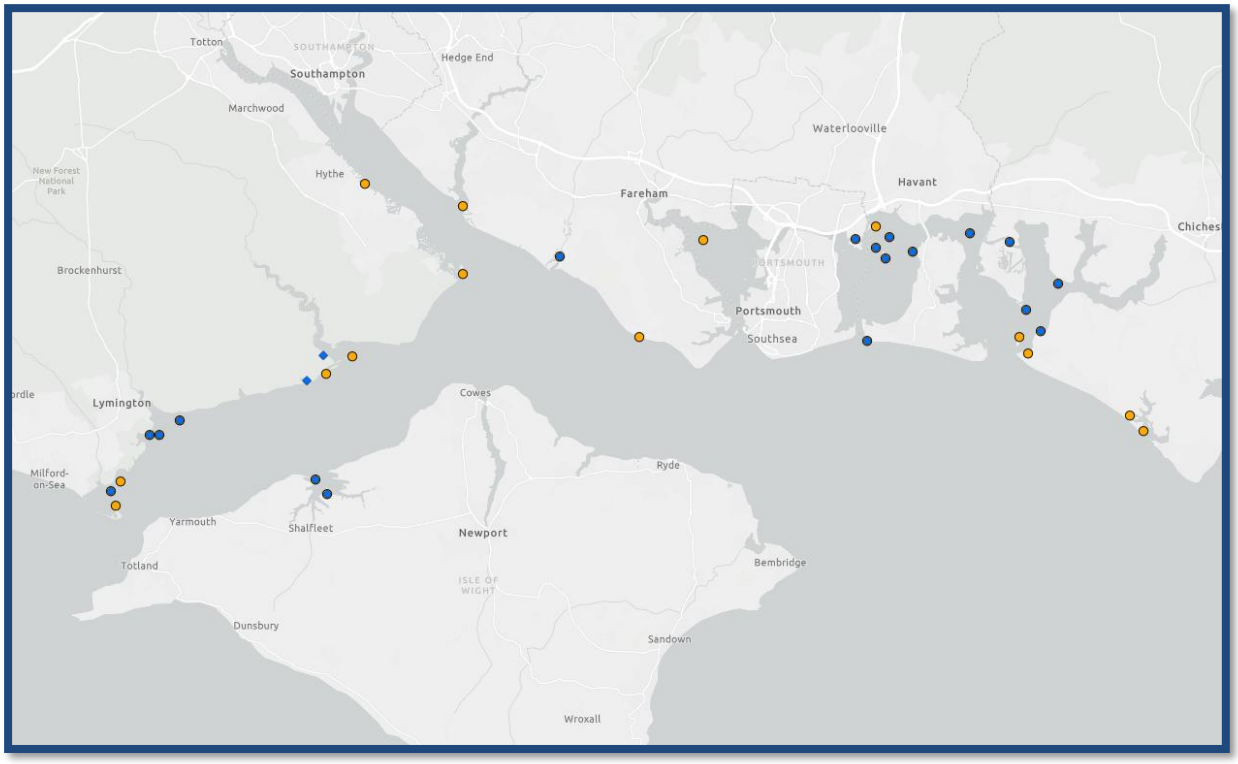
Natural England have volunteer wardens at the North Solent NNR who monitor disturbance to overwintering and breeding birds and managers increase their presence on the reserve to monitor for disturbances caused by the influx of visitors. This involves regular patrols by staff or volunteers to observe visitor behaviour, enforce regulations, and assess any impacts.

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.

The Countryside Code gives nationally consistent best practice messaging. It can be accessed at: The Countryside Code - GOV.UK . Defra have a Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code. The MMO have produced a guide on Seagrass and Seahorse diving..

Many organisations use the hashtag #ProtectRespectEnjoy to promote best practice across social media platforms.

At sensitive locations, relevant authorities and partners have been fencing off areas to protect nesting birds, using increased staff presence to manage visitors at peak times and controlling access via car parking restrictions. Information boards with QR codes are also being used to educate the public. The dog educational work of Bird Aware Solent is covered in section 5.7 on walking but equally applies to general beach recreation.



Location of bird breeding sites in the Solent. Source: Solent Seascape - Data Explorer

The Sanderling Recovery Project, a joint effort between Isle of Wight Council, Ryde Town Council, Bird Aware Solent, Natural England, Common Space and Ryde Marina, has been undertaken to protect the Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI. The project is reducing recreational disturbance and improving habitat conditions for Sanderlings, Ringed Plovers and other shorebirds that rely on the specific stretch of coast found around the hovercraft in Ryde as a refuge. It includes a targeted communication plan, including signage.

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

Please see General Beach Recreation page on the Solent Marine Sites website for further resources, codes of conduct and information.

5.5.4 Action

(1) SEMS MG members to include information on impacts on designated sites when updating local beach information and/or signs. Look to work with partners to avoid sensitive sites like bird nesting sites in areas owned or managed. Sites are mapped on the Solent Seascape Data Explorer (baseline species layer).

5.6 Grazing and Foraging

Activity includes grazing on saltmarsh or intertidal areas.

5.6.1 Survey Response

Grazing and foraging	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	0	0	7	2	9
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	2	7			9

5.6.2 Evaluation and Discussion

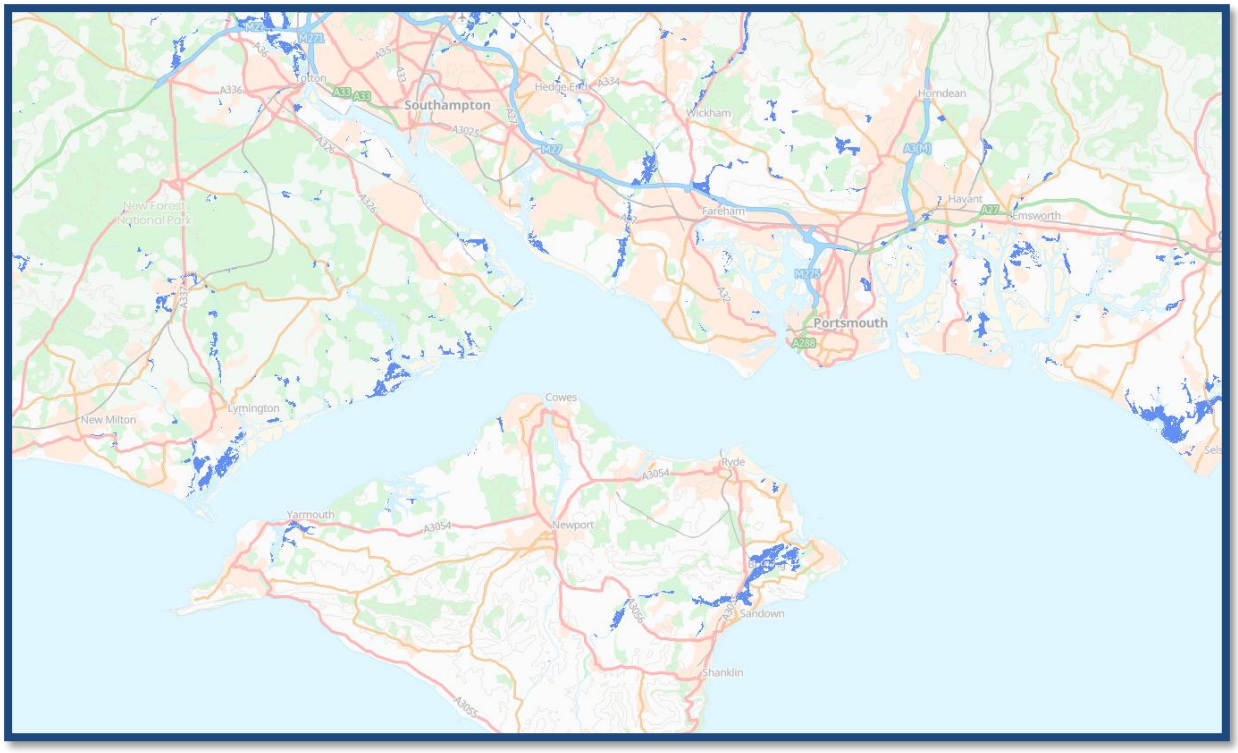
Coastal foraging includes the collecting of seaweed, shellfish, crabs, plants and other natural resources from the shoreline. Chichester Harbour Conservancy reported the foraging of saltmarsh plants in the Harbour.

Coastal grazing by cattle or sheep takes place in limited locations and is used as a habitat management tool. Survey respondents noted that grazing maintains the short, varied grassland structure that many of the site's wetland and wading birds rely on.

There is generally considered to be a shortage of high-quality coastal grazing marsh in the Solent, particularly relative to the needs of overwintering and breeding birds in the context of ongoing habitat loss and coastal squeeze.

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.



Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. Source: MAGIC Map

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)

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, particularly on the Isle of Wight, and therefore this may indicate that this activity is increasing and so it should be monitored.

5.6.3 Management Measures

The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy is a conservation partnership project, to conserve the internationally important brent goose and wading bird populations within and around the Special Protection Areas and Ramsar wetlands of the Solent coast. It maps where birds graze and roost and this evidence is used in Local Plans.

The Solent Waders & Brent Goose Network

Managing wet grassland for wintering waders and wildfowl is part of Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) and funding is available. The guidance advises avoiding recreational activities between October and February when birds are feeding.

Following a review of seaweed harvesting as part of the Southern IFCA Shore Gathering Review finalised in 2024, a Seaweed Harvesting Code of Conduct was written which will come into effect at the point that the proposed Shore Gathering Byelaw is ratified by the Secretary of State. This is an activity which has the ability to be managed by multiple authorities which was considered as part of the review.

Natural England has produced a seaweed harvesting code of conduct.

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 qualities 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/.

5.6.4 Action

(1) SEMS MG members to report any concerns regarding the foraging for wild plants or shellfish in designated sites to the local IFCA and help to promote local IFCA byelaws and codes of conduct.

5.7 Land Recreation (including dog walking)

Activity includes walking on upper shore or intertidal zone (including with dogs).

5.7.1 Survey Response

Land recreation	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	0	0	11	6	17
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	14	3			17

5.7.2 Evaluation and Discussion

This activity is consistently reported in the annual survey as the one most likely to impact on the Solent's Marine Sites, fourteen respondents reported concerns about impacts this year. High and sustained levels of land-based recreation are an ongoing concern for many of the Relevant Authorities. Seasonal peaks occur in summer, but the base level of activity remains high year-round, especially in urbanised coastal areas. Sport England's Active Lives Survey shows that 80% of the population of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight go walking which equates to 1.4 million adults. The Isle of Wight receives well over one million visitors annually, with coastal recreation being the principal attraction.

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.

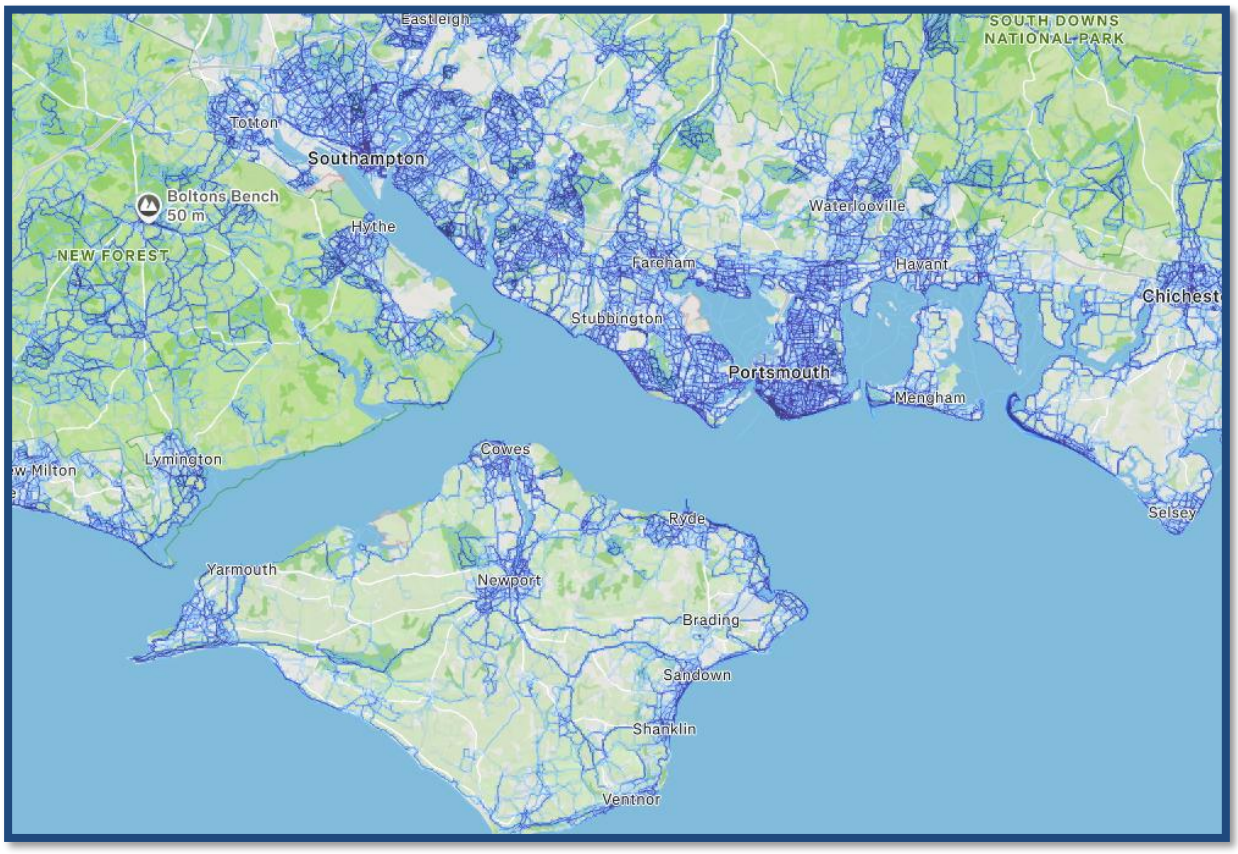
There are hotspots of activity at accessible locations i.e. car parks, refreshment facilities, toilets etc. The opening of the King Charles III Coastal Path has increased accessibility to the coast. Open stretches are currently Southampton to Selsey Bill, Calshot to Hythe and three sections on the Isle of Wight.

As a ballpark figure, surveys around the UK show that around half of coastal walkers are likely to be walking with a dog. Bird Aware Solent states that around 40% of their recorded bird disturbance incidents are linked to dogs.

Many people walk at the coast in country parks. The table shows estimated visitor numbers for Hampshire's coastal country parks:

Country Park	Approximate annual visitors
Lepe Country Park	~500,000–700,000 visits per year
River Hamble Country Park	~300,000–500,000 visits per year
Royal Victoria Country Park	~600,000–900,000 visits per year

Coastal car parks around the Solent. Source: [Solent Seascape Data Explorer](#).



Coastal walking levels in the Solent. Source: [Strava Global Heatmap](#), 2026

Potential Impact

The main impacts are disturbance to wildlife, especially to overwintering birds and summer ground nesting birds, trampling leading to degradation of habitat (saltmarsh. mudflats, reed beds, shingle beaches, etc), littering and erosion.

In 2024, Natural England published the condition assessment for Portsmouth Harbour SPA, and in 2025 published the condition assessment for Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA. All features of Portsmouth Harbour SPA and fourteen out of nineteen features of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA are in unfavourable condition. Visual disturbance and recreation are two of the adverse conditions that have led to this unfavourable status.

Respondents are concerned about dogs disturbing feeding, breeding and roosting waders and wildfowl, particularly free roaming dogs at tide roosts and breeding sites. 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.

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. 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 (Natural England)

The condition assessments for Portsmouth Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Solent and Southampton Water SPA Special Protection Areas have been completed. Disturbance caused by human activity is one of the main drivers for the unfavourable status of all designated features within Portsmouth Harbour SPA, fourteen out of nineteen features of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and ten out of eleven features of Solent and Southampton Water SPA.

Evidence gathered by Bird Aware Solent Rangers and others, found an increase of 26% from 2016-2022 of people visiting the coast in the Solent, as well as site visits with disturbance events increasing by 33% from 2017/18 to 2021/22 across Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA, with the largest number of disturbance effects being dog walkers (please visit this link for more information).

A reduce target has also been set in the conservation advice packages for all SPA 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.

5.7.3 Management Measures

Bird Aware Solent is the scheme that the Solent's local authorities use to help mitigate recreational bird disturbance across their sites. Please see section 3.4 for more information. It has an annual Site Specific Project application scheme for projects which operates on a rolling basis. For example,

funding was awarded to the Langstone Loop project, to install interpretive plaques about SPA bird species around Langstone Harbour.

Natural England assess the impacts from opening access to the coast as part of their work to deliver stretches of King Charles III Coast Path. These assessments provide 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/.

Restricting access and car parking can control demand, but at busy times people can then park inappropriately, leave main paths and create their own 'desire paths' and seek out quieter areas which can lead to them accessing sensitive sites. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 includes provisions to restrict access for the purpose of conserving wildlife, including ground-nesting and cliff-nesting birds.

Gosport Borough Council continues to invest in the Alver Valley Country Park which acts as a SANG to deflect pressure from the coast and it has purchased additional formerly private land within the Alver Valley to improve the Country Park as a destination. Work is ongoing with funds from Bird Aware to create a dog walking park on this land to increase the attractiveness of the Country Park for dog walkers. The Council is aiming to deliver the new dog walking park within the 2026/27 financial year.

The Sanderling Recovery Project is a joint effort between Isle of Wight Council, Ryde Town Council, Bird Aware Solent, Natural England, Common Space and Ryde Marina to protect the Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI, a crucial coastal refuge for wintering birds. The project is reducing recreational disturbance and improving habitat conditions for Sanderlings, Ringed Plovers and other shorebirds that rely on the specific stretch of coast found around the hovercraft in Ryde. This is being done with a targeted communication plan, including signage.

The Hurst Spit Recreation Disturbance Project, being coordinated by the Wildlife Trust (mainly breeding birds), is part funded through Bird Aware Solent. Milford on Sea community group (WINGS) have highlighted various disturbance events including on-foot recreation and are continuing to advocate for a more formally recognised sanctuary area on Hurst Spit.

Hampshire County Council report that there are high numbers of dog walkers on Lymington to Keyhaven reserve and at Hurst, with possibly some reduction in disturbance incidents due to signage and visible presence of Bird Aware Solent staff but still persistent offenders. Fencing has been installed across Oxey Marsh to stop people and dogs from entering certain areas.

Langstone Harbour Board suggest looking at further strategic interventions to manage cumulative pressures in the long term, for example, rerouting or formalising footpaths to increase separation from SPA features, creation of viewing platforms or defined 'destination points' to concentrate activity away from sensitive shorelines, car park planning to limit or relocate parking close to hotspots, and seasonal dog on lead zones near breeding and/or roosting sites.

The Countryside Code gives generic national good practice to people visiting the countryside and coast.

5.7.4 Dog Specific Measures

Coast and Country Canines encourages dog owners to walk their dogs in a safer, more enjoyable, and wildlife-aware way. The project offers practical advice, training resources, and promoted walking routes which aim to divert visitors from wildlife sensitive areas/sites.

It includes a series of dog walks away from bird sensitive areas and a map on where to walk. Work is also taking place to encourage dog walkers to visit other areas and less sensitive parts of the coast.

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 Borough Council 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 implemented to protect overwintering bids.

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.

At Lepe, Hampshire County Council have implemented areas of no dog access as well as guidance around site for responsible behaviour in the park. They have a Countryside Canines campaign that highlights that access rights that normally apply to open country and registered common land require dogs to be kept on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July, to help protect ground nesting birds.

The Paws for Thought report collates evidence and appraises the impacts of dog walking on biodiversity in the UK. It identifies and highlights the gaps in knowledge and understanding, and brings together learnings from best practice across the conservation, access and canine sectors towards managing coexistence issues.

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

5.7.5 Actions

(1) SEMS Management Group members to communicate with their own rangers, coastal staff, and communications teams on how they can work with Bird Aware Solent and other partnership projects in the delivery of their work on recreational disturbance issues.

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

(3) SEMS Management Group members to help publicise the Countryside Code and Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code through existing communications.

5.8 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.

5.8.1 Survey Response

Litter	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	2	1	11	5	19
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	11	8			19

5.8.2 Evaluation and Discussion

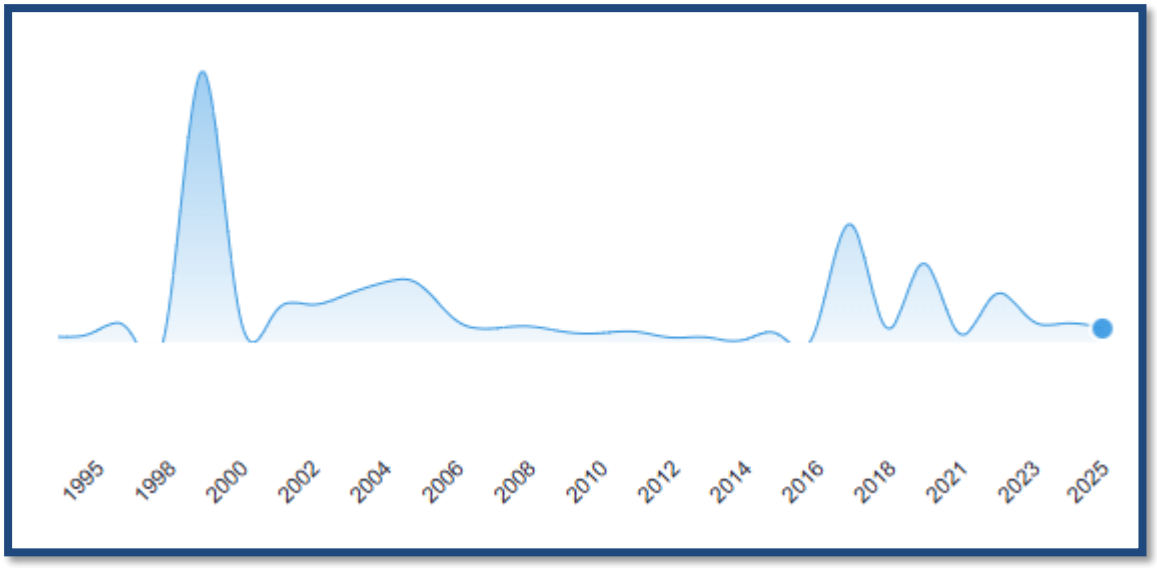
The presence of litter and its impact on designated sites is an elevated and ongoing issue reported by the SEMS Relevant Authorities. Most respondents believe that this issue is having detrimental impacts. The limited data available means the mode value is 'don't know', the primary source of data is from public beach cleans. Sources include watercourses, waterside businesses (incl. WWTW), spread by wind, poor waste management and direct littering by individuals.

Lost and abandoned fishing gear (LAFG), often referred to as "ghost gear", is a recognised source of marine pollution that can persist in the environment for decades. Constructed from durable synthetic polymers, lost gear can continue to entangle wildlife, damage seabed habitats and fragment into microplastics. Despite increasing recognition of the impacts of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, there is limited evidence describing its distribution and impacts within inshore and intertidal environments such as the Solent. Therefore a research project was commissioned by Natural England to develop an initial evidence base for the Isle of Wight and Solent coastline. This will be published in 2027.

Beach Clean Data (from Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean) shows that common items found include plastic fragments, wet wipes, fishing gear, and food packaging. Microplastics and sanitary waste remain persistent problems. Litter levels increase during warmer months due to higher visitor numbers to coastal areas. Plastic and polystyrene are the two main types of litter found across the whole Solent.

Work by campaigning groups has raised the profile of both litter and microplastics and there is a much greater public awareness now of these issues.

Over the past 31 years, MCS volunteers have been collecting data on the types and amounts of litter found on the UK coastline. Results are available via their interactive dashboard. The figure below shows trend data for the Isle of Wight, table 6 compares average number of litter items across four regions of the Solent with the two city regions highest.



Overview of average number of litter items per 100 metres of beach surveyed each year on Isle of Wight. Gaps indicate years with no survey data. Data for 2025 was 84.1 pieces per 100m. Source: MCS interactive dashboard.

Table 6. Average number of litter items per 100 metres of beach surveyed for 2025	
Isle of Wight	84.1
Hampshire	164.8
Portsmouth	510
Southampton	211
UK average	151
Source: MCS interactive dashboard, 2025	

Plastic fragments, microplastics and nurdles used in plastic manufacturing are of national concern in all our water environments. Table 7. shows the findings across four areas of the Solent with Southampton having the greatest concentration, attributed to waterside manufacturing industries that use plastic pellets. The Itchen Plastic Partnership was established to look at the causes of plastic pollution on the River Itchen.

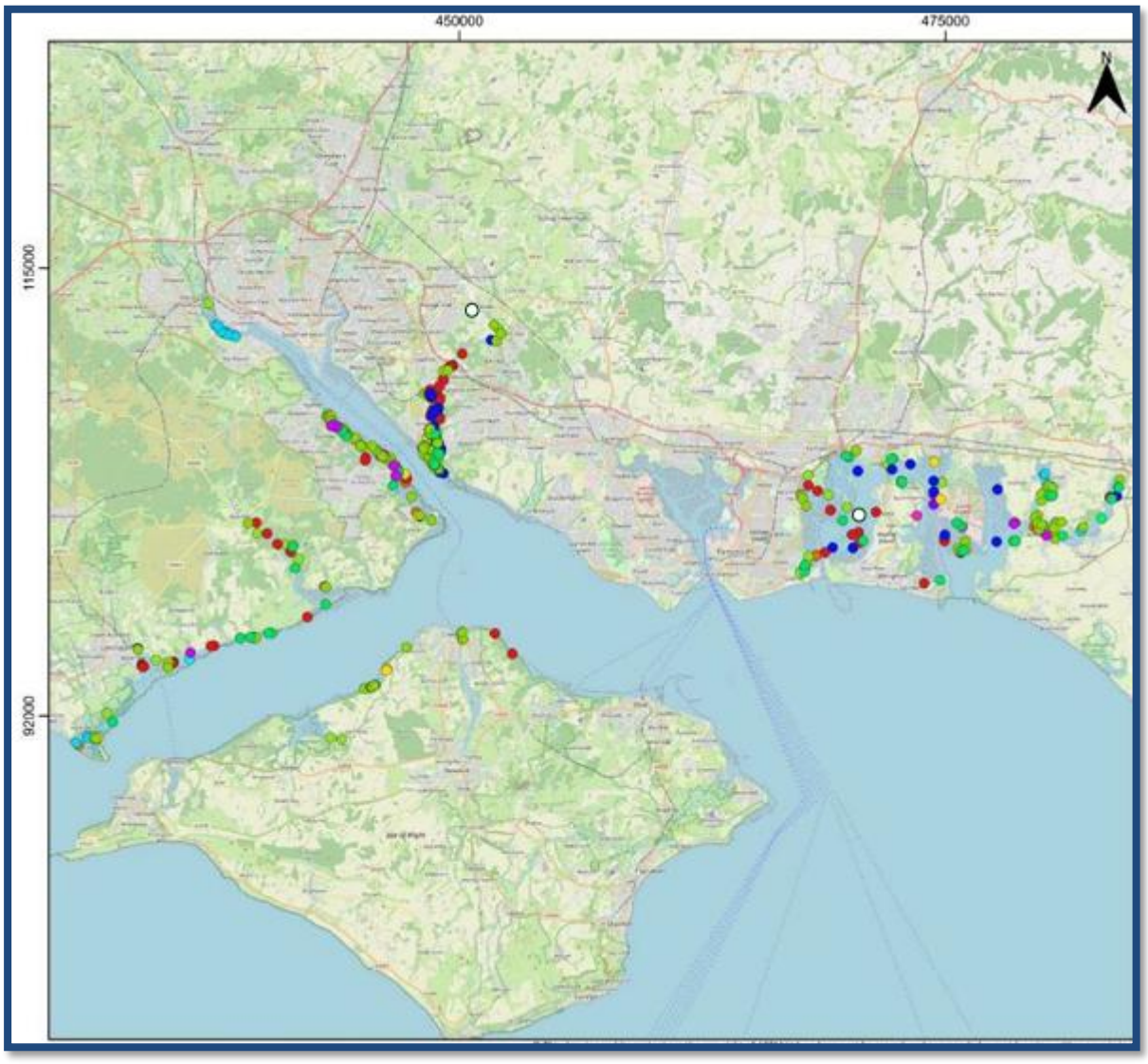
Table 7. Plastic Pieces 0 to 2.5mm found per 100m of beach surveyed for 2025		
Location	**% of surveys found in**	**No pieces per 100m**
Hampshire	86	16
Isle of Wight	54	1.5
Portsmouth	90	32.5
Southampton	100	72.2
UK Average	84	17
Source: MCS interactive dashboard, 2025		

End of life/abandoned vessels can pose a serious marine litter risk, Langstone Harbour have been running a programme of periodic removal over the last four years, resulting in the disposal of approximately 80 vessels. There are now only a handful left. In 2023, Defra published a report on end-of-life recreational vessels.

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). Litter can also act as an invasive species vector.

A report, commissioned as part of the LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project, to map debris in the intertidal areas of the Solent Maritime SAC found a cumulative 242,953 m^2 of the intertidal habitats of Solent Maritime SAC affected by debris.

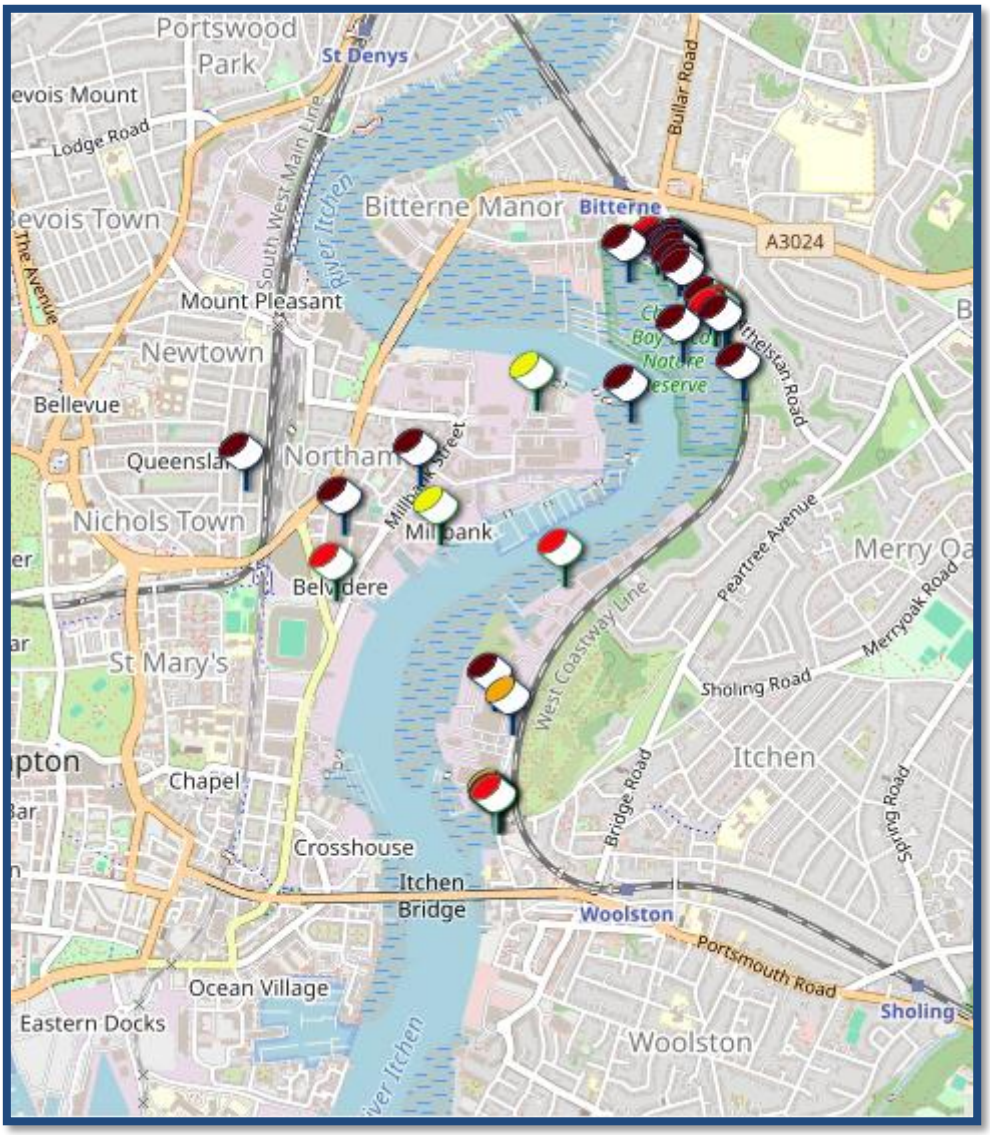


Distribution and type of seafloor debris identified in The Solent Maritime SAC. Source: Mapping of Seafloor Debris in Intertidal Seagrass, Solent Maritime SAC, 2024.

SEMS survey respondents have highlighted the potential impacts from the abandonment and decomposition of old boats. Pollution concerns include glassfibre causing 'asbestos-like' damage to organisms such as oysters and mussels, microplastics, diesel oil and paint leaching into the sea. The

RYA have a reporting tool for abandoned boats. The Solent Forum links any relevant reports and research to the litter activity page on the Clean Solent Shores and Seas information hub.

A University of Southampton study found that the implication of the trapping of microplastics by salt marshes could be significant. It found that while salt marshes have typically low biodiversity, they support considerable biomass, and estuaries are very productive environments. The presence and trapping of microplastics in a variety of environments within the upper intertidal zone exposes a greater number of species, with a variety of feeding modes, to microplastics ingestion. Conversely, trapping and subsequent burial of microplastics in accumulating marsh sediments may effectively sequester microplastics and remove them from the water column and estuarine transport pathways.



Reported nurdles on the Itchen Estuary, source: Great Nurdle Hunt

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

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 be impacting species and habitats to a currently unknown degree through pressures such as smothering and abrasion as well as to the prey of SPA features.

Litter is also known to facilitate the presence, colonisation and onward spread of Invasive Non-Native Species which have been shown to be contributing to the unfavourable condition of Solent Maritime SAC. This has been evidenced in a University of Plymouth Masters project mentored by Natural England in 2024, which found that marine debris had a much higher proportion of INNS to elsewhere on the shore.

Finally, the removal of litter may also contribute to disturbance of birds if done at particularly sensitive sites.

As part of the LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES project, Natural England commissioned a report to understand the extent of debris within intertidal seagrass beds in Solent Maritime SAC. This report is available from: NECR571 Edition 1 LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES Mapping of Seafloor Debris in Intertidal Seagrass Solent Maritime SAC - NECR571. In addition, Natural England are in the process of publishing a report commissioned to map lost and abandoned fishing gear, primarily around the coast of the Isle of Wight. It is hoped that this will be published by April 2027.

5.8.3 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 Solent Plastics Pollution hub and Clean Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS) work to help people coordinate and access information. Beach cleans can only take part in accessible locations, so there is likely to be hotspot areas across the Solent that have more litter due to their lack of accessibility and for which we have no data. Corporate beach clean events are increasing in popularity in addition to ongoing groups.

Large pieces of litter such as pontoon fragments that cause a navigation issue are removed by the relevant port or harbour authority within their Statutory Harbour Authority area.

Harbours and marinas have comprehensive waste facilities, which include recycling options, and encourage their users to make use of these facilities. The RYA Green Blue have numerous resources on best practice for boating, see: Waste & Recycling – The RYA Green Blue. Its environmental facilities map also records disposal locations for items such as flares and hazardous waste.

The ports have Port Waste Management Plans for commercial vessels providing waste facilities. ABP Southampton undertook a project to remove wrecks from the River Itchen, with over 100 vessels removed.

Local authorities are responsible for waste disposal at the coast and will increase resources during the summer months or at times of events to manage bin availability and minimise littering. They also undertake beach litter picks, for example the Isle of Wight Council undertakes seasonal beach cleaning at 15 key beaches. Its Volunteer Beach Cleans Policy allows community groups to remove man-made litter from Council-owned beaches while protecting natural materials that wildlife depends on. In 2025, 410kg was collected and disposed of by Council through this collection policy.

The fishing for litter initiative encourages fishing vessels to actively removing the litter they come across whilst fishing.

Bird Aware Solent has guidance on Wildlife-aware beach cleans to prevent bird disturbance.

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. Findings are expected in April 2027.

SEMS will monitor this activity and link any relevant reports and research to the litter activity page on the SEMS website and the Solent Forum's Clean Solent Shores and Seas information hub.

5.8.4 Action

(1) The Solent Forum will continue to maintain the Solent Plastics Pollution Hub as a legacy output of the Environment Agency's Preventing Plastic Pollution project and the Forum's work on Clean Solent Shores and Seas which includes a page on litter. We will also continue to share evidence and reports on this topic.

(2) NEG to support and facilitate research on the impacts of litter and plastics on the Solent's designated sites.

5.9 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.

5.9.1 Survey Response

Mooring and Anchoring	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	0	1	11	3	15
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	5	10			15

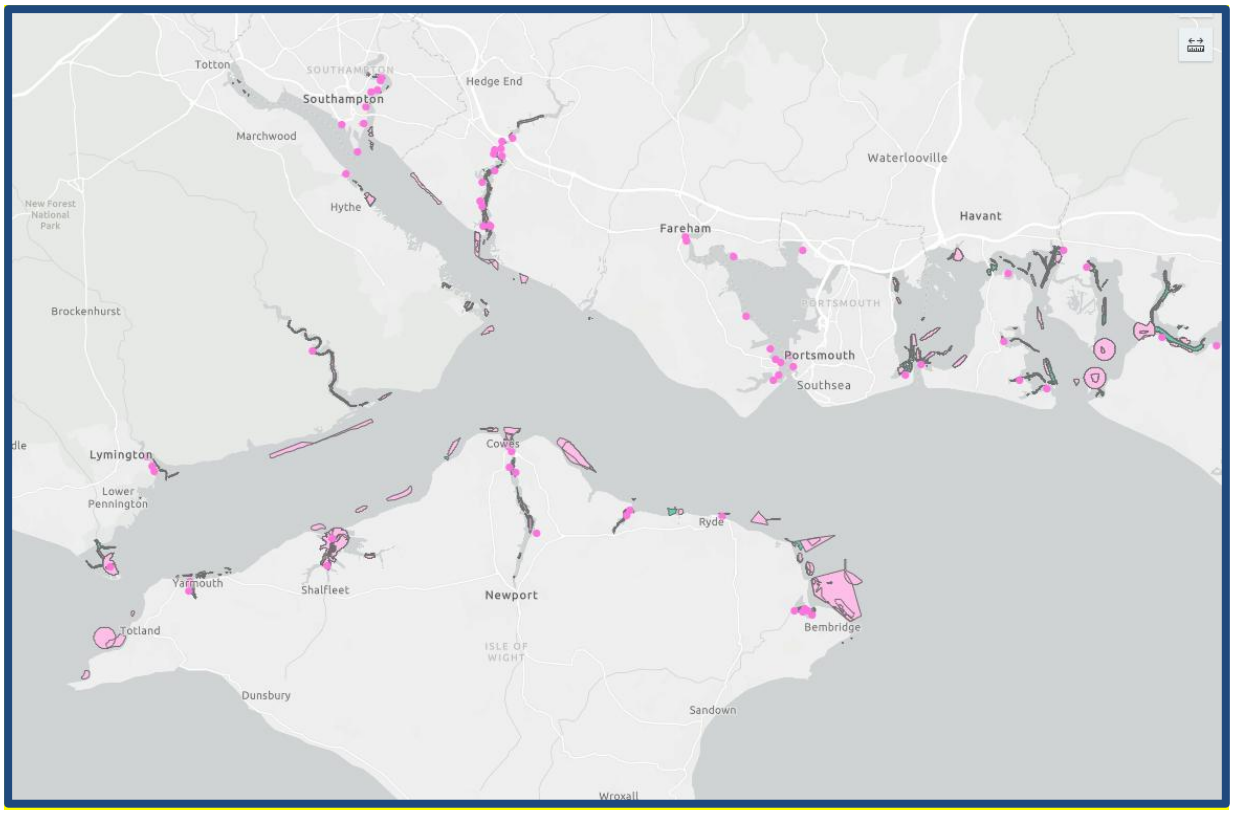
5.9.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Harbour Authorities have different powers 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.

The general picture reported across the Solent's harbours is that there is a drop in demand for moorings, particularly deep water, due to a decrease in boat ownership and the preference for marina berths. The Harbours are mindful of licensing new moorings that could lead to the abandonment of vessels which are costly to remove and detrimental to subtidal habitats.

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, creating an unnecessary pressure on the seabed habitats in the form of scouring from sinkers. Where there are insufficient moorings due to peak demand, people resort to anchoring and the harbour authorities steer them to less sensitive areas.

The LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES recreational activity surveys monitored anchoring and mooring at Yarmouth West, Bouldnor, Osborne Bay, Kings Quay and West Hayling Island between July-September annually from 2021 to 2024. This included the establishment of a Voluntary No Anchor Zone at Osborne Bay on Isle of Wight.



Moorings (green polygons), anchoring areas (pink polygons) and marinas (pink dots) in the Solent. © MMO, sourced from Solent Seascape Data Explorer.

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.

The LIFE ReMEDIES project commissioned a report that mapped areas impacted by anchoring and mooring pressure, which revealed a cumulative 242,953m^2 of the intertidal habitats of Solent Maritime SAC affected.

In 2017, Defra published 'Recreational and commercial anchoring and mooring impacts in marine protected areas in Wales and England (ME6003)'.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

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, including seagrass beds, within SEMS.

In 2026, Natural England and ABC Subsea published an Advanced Mooring Systems Toolkit for Harbour Authorities, Sailing Clubs and Private Mooring Owners in the Solent. In addition, Natural England commissioned The Common Space to map all moorings within the Solent and where these overlap with sensitive seabed habitats to inform the potential for Advanced Mooring Systems or other measures. This report will be published by April 2027.

5.9.3 Management Measures

Advanced Mooring Systems (AMS), 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 which damages sensitive habitats. Current locations of AMS' around the Solent include Osborne Bay, Cowes and Yarmouth. Langstone Harbour Board installed 20 AMS systems in Eastney Lake, designed to provide a fore/aft mooring solution for customers who wish to retain a tidal mooring. The fore/aft arrangement prevents swing scour and reduces the damage footprint to that of the surface area of the vessel's hull.

An AMS toolkit has been written to aid harbour authorities, sailing and boating clubs and private mooring owners, to provide bespoke information on the options available for specific mooring locations and environmental conditions in the Solent.

The RYA Green Blue has 'Anchoring & Mooring with Care' guidance for boat users on how to minimise their impacts on sensitive habitats.

Through LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES, recreational activity surveys monitored anchoring and mooring at Yarmouth West, Bouldnor, Osborne Bay, Kings Quay and West Hayling Island between July to September annually from 2021 to 2024. Interpretation Panels have been installed as part of the project to inform people of the presence and location of seagrass beds and their importance. These are located at Norton Spit, Hayling Island ferry terminal, Lepe Country Park and Cowes. The activity surveys have highlighted Osborne Bay as an area with elevated levels of anchoring in seagrass. This has led to the installation of a Voluntary No Anchor Zone to reduce this pressure, which has resulted in a decrease in the number of boats anchoring inside the seagrass zone at this site, as evidenced by the recreational activity surveys.

Further information and resources are available at: Solentems - Mooring and Anchoring.

5.9.4 Action

(1) SEMS Management Group to use and share the available information and best practice on Advanced Mooring Systems, the RYA Green Blue's anchoring and mooring with care guidance, and support the outputs of the LIFE ReMEDIES project.

5.10 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.

5.10.1 Survey Response

Operation of FCERM	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	0	11	4	16
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	8	8			16

5.10.2 Evaluation and Discussion

There are concerns that FCERM schemes will influence long term sediment movement, intertidal habitat distribution, and potentially local hydrodynamics. Construction and operational phases of schemes could also influence sediment pathways and contribute to changes in accretion and erosion patterns. As more defences are built, this could have a cumulative effect on sediment movement across the Solent. Langstone Harbour have flagged the North Portsea scheme impacting the Ports Creek area.

In Chichester Harbour coastal squeeze and loss of saltmarsh and other intertidal habitats is ongoing due to existing private defences. A Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan will plan for future adaptation and managed re-alignment measures.

In Lymington Harbour there has been a positive year-round impact from the beneficial use of dredged sediment at Boiler Marsh, which is increasing the availability of intertidal habitat due to it being higher in the tidal frame. It is also providing protection to the salt marsh behind against erosion caused by waves and tides. A trial undertaken at the end of 2024, to raise the sediment previously placed by barge to a position higher in the tidal frame, has resulted in new colonisation of saltmarsh plants in 2025.

On the Isle of Wight natural erosion remains high and is more extreme on the west and southern coast in areas such as Totland, Colwell, Fort Victoria and South Wight. The Council has undertaken remedial work to replace groynes within Colwell, Gurnard and Totland. The Gurnard restoration project has included the installation of vertipools as enhancement. The Isle of Wight Estuaries Project, hosted by Isle of Wight Council and a partner in the Solent Seascape Project, is undertaking a current long-term project to support existing saltmarsh habitat and restore eroded habitat through

the use of sediment replenishment from dredged material. The Council has also been involved in moving sand build up in Ryde Sands SSSI around Ryde Harbour and Ryde Pier.

Shoreline Management Plan policies. © Environment Agency, sourced from Solent Seascape Data Explorer.

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 (Natural England)

Whilst more recent FCERM schemes include provision of compensatory habitat for losses associated with their operation through the Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme (HCRP) the operation of legacy schemes and private defences are currently contributing to loss of designated habitats through rising sea levels and coastal squeeze impacts without compensatory habitat being identified. For example, the condition assessment of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA found that there was a 45.16% decline in the extent of saltmarsh from site designation (1987) to 2016 and attributed coastal squeeze as an adverse condition driver for the majority of supporting habitats.

Therefore, based on current understanding of the extent and magnitude of this activity it is Natural England's view that this activity as a whole is having an impact on some features e.g. saltmarsh of SEMS sites, although it is noted that several schemes will be compensating for these losses either within or outside of SEMS sites.

5.10.3 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.

The Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme (HCRP) is a strategic initiative led by the Environment Agency, to provide an 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.

SMP Habitat Group	Cumulative Habitat Balance (Ha)		
	Epoch 1 (2005 - 2025)	Epoch 2 (2026 - 2055)	Epoch 3 (2056 - 2105)
Intertidal Mudflats	43	76	-32
Saltmarsh	-20	-208	-392
Coastal Grazing Marsh	61	61	61
Freshwater Habitats	17	17	17
Saline Lagoons	0	0	0

Live Habitat Balance Sheet for the Solent and South Downs HCRP as of Aug 2024

The Isle of Wight Council is working with the Environment Agency and Artecology to explore how eco-engineered coastal features can contribute to both biodiversity and coastal resilience. Recent research has shown that artificial rockpool habitats installed on seawalls can reduce wave overtopping compared to bare surfaces, with some configurations achieving significant reductions when positioned towards the top of the wall.

The Solent Forum is working with partners to obtain a licence for a new disposal site for dredgings at Cockleshell Bay in Lymington, to restore saltmarsh and help to provide natural flood management.

5.10.4 Action

No specific activity action required.

5.11 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.

5.11.1 Survey Response

Operation of ports and harbours	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	0	12	2	15
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	2	13			15

5.11.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Harbour authorities have a statutory duty to maintain navigational aids, pontoons, and public slipways in their harbour. Activities include the routine upkeep of navigation markers, buoys, posts, beacons, slipways, jetties, quay walls, pontoons, and harbour buildings. Maintenance is ongoing but peaks in the Autumn and Winter when vessel movements are lower. Respondents noted that more extreme weather conditions make the maintenance of infrastructure more important/expensive and can lead to assets having to change to cope with these conditions. Climate change adaptation work may be required to protect existing assets.

The ports have been investing in decarbonization projects including installing shore power and using electric vehicles to improve local air quality and installing solar panels to power port facilities.

In Yarmouth Harbour piles have been removed due to new moorings which will improve the quality of the seabed.

Langstone Harbour noted that for larger scale maintenance works, which are scheduled in advance, additional mitigation is put in place and best practice is promoted in terms of biosecurity.

Chichester District Council noted three incidents where loosening of container restraints prior to entering ports, to save time in port, led to loss of the containers from ships. This resulted in foam insulation, metal debris and organic material being washed up and beach clearance undertaken. The materials washed ashore outside of Chichester Harbour and although Medmerry compensatory habitat and Pagham Harbour were impacted, these sites are not within SEMS. However similar incidents could easily impact the SEMS sites in future and this practice needs to be stopped.

Potential Impacts

Natural England's Advice on Operations identifies a range of pressures arising from the maintenance and operation of ports and harbours that may impact breeding and non-breeding bird populations of

SPAs. These include above water noise and visual disturbance. A number of designated bird species within the SEMS are sensitive to these pressures, which can result in displacement and/or mortality. Similarly, the maintenance and operation of ports and harbours may impact SPA supporting habitats and designated SAC features via pressures such as abrasion/disturbance of the seabed, penetration/disturbance of the substratum below the seabed, smothering and siltation.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

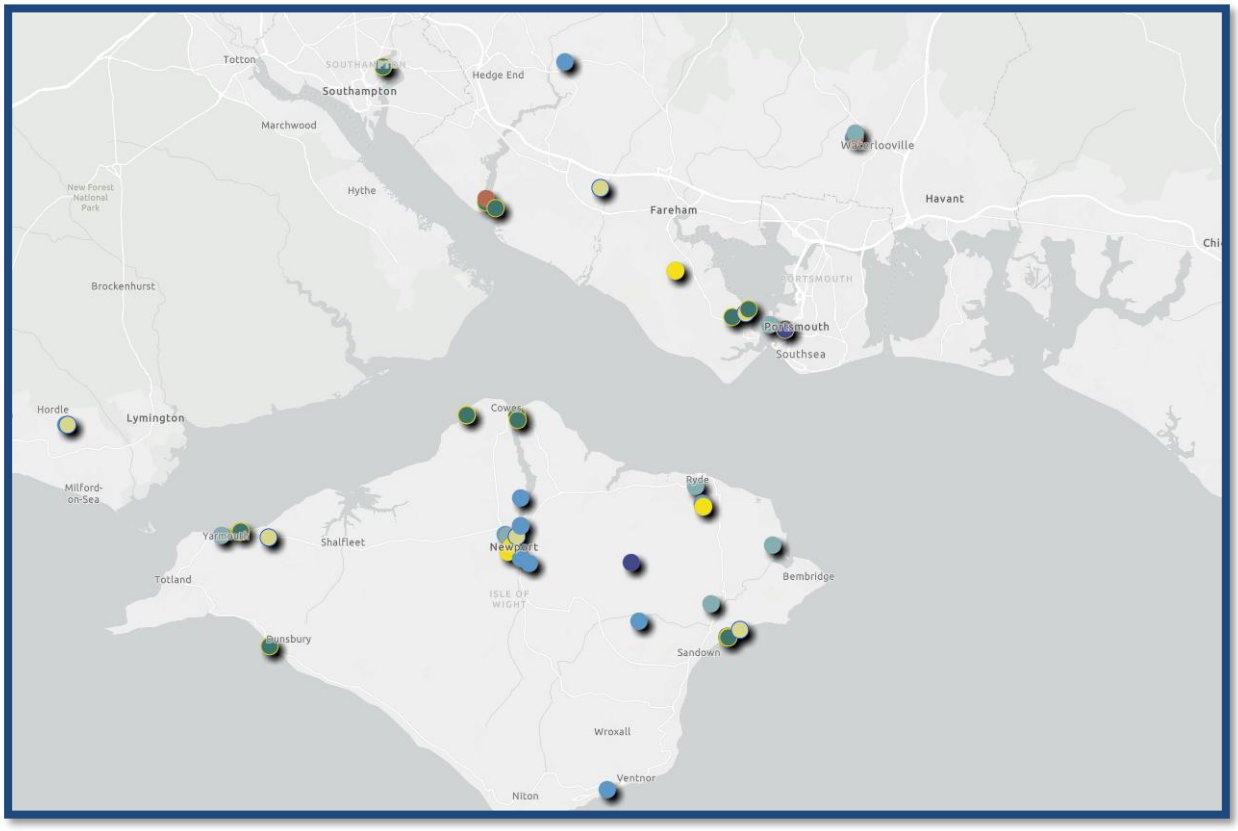
Whilst Natural England do not consider this activity to currently be impacting on SEMS, it does have the potential to increase the presence and spread of Invasive Non-Native Species which has been listed as an adverse condition reason for Solent Maritime SAC. Natural England advises that ports and harbours should promote best practice and support the biosecurity planning work being coordinated by the Solent Forum.

5.11.3 Management Measures

The UK Marine SAC project produced guidance on this topic including good management practice.

The spread 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 worked together to develop biosecurity plans for the Solent.

Ports and harbours are looking at ways to ecologically enhance their coastal infrastructure. This work will continue to grow over the coming years both to improve biodiversity and help with climate change adaptation. Changes to assets requiring planning permission will be subject to Biodiversity Net Gain.



The location of ecologically enhanced infrastructure across the Solent. Source: Artecology interactive map

The Solent Forum sit on the national Marine Eco-Engineering Working Group to monitor and share new innovations.

Marine Plans require that port and harbour activities avoid or mitigate harm to designated sites, align with conservation objectives and consider cumulative impacts.

Further information on this topic is available on the SEMS website.

5.11.4 Action

(1) SEMS Management Group members to utilise the resources and implement relevant actions in the Solent Biosecurity action plans to address the impacts from marine invasive species when maintaining infrastructure.

(2) Ports and harbours to consider adding ecological enhancement to infrastructure when maintaining assets.

5.12 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, parascending (on beach), parasailing (by boat), drones and model aircraft.

5.12.1 Survey Response

Light aircraft	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	0	1	3	5	9
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	1	8			9

5.12.2 Evaluation and Discussion

For the purposes of this management scheme the main focus is on Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAVs) or drones. Some authorities do have powers to control the air space, for instance at commercial sites. If permission is sought, Relevant Authorities can consent for drones to be flown if the operator has appropriate qualifications, a risk assessment (including environmental risk) and complies with CAA regulations. Flights are not allowed over private commercial land or commercial airspace. 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.

There has been an increase in the use of drones for survey and monitoring work, but this is undertaken by licensed operators and is thought to cause less disturbance than traditional field surveys.

Although participation surveys for recreational drone use are not available, Civil Aviation Authority registration data indicate that drone ownership and operation are now widespread in the UK, with over 600,000 active Flyer IDs and approximately 330,000 registered drone operators recorded in 2026. These figures suggest that drone use has become a more mainstream activity and may continue to increase as technology becomes more affordable and accessible.

Bird Aware Solent data shows that drones disturbing birds are not currently an issue in the Solent.

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.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

Based on current levels of reported activity, it is unlikely that drone use is having an adverse effect upon SEMS. However, this activity should continue to be monitored as usage has increased as drones become more affordable.

5.12.3 Management Measures

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.

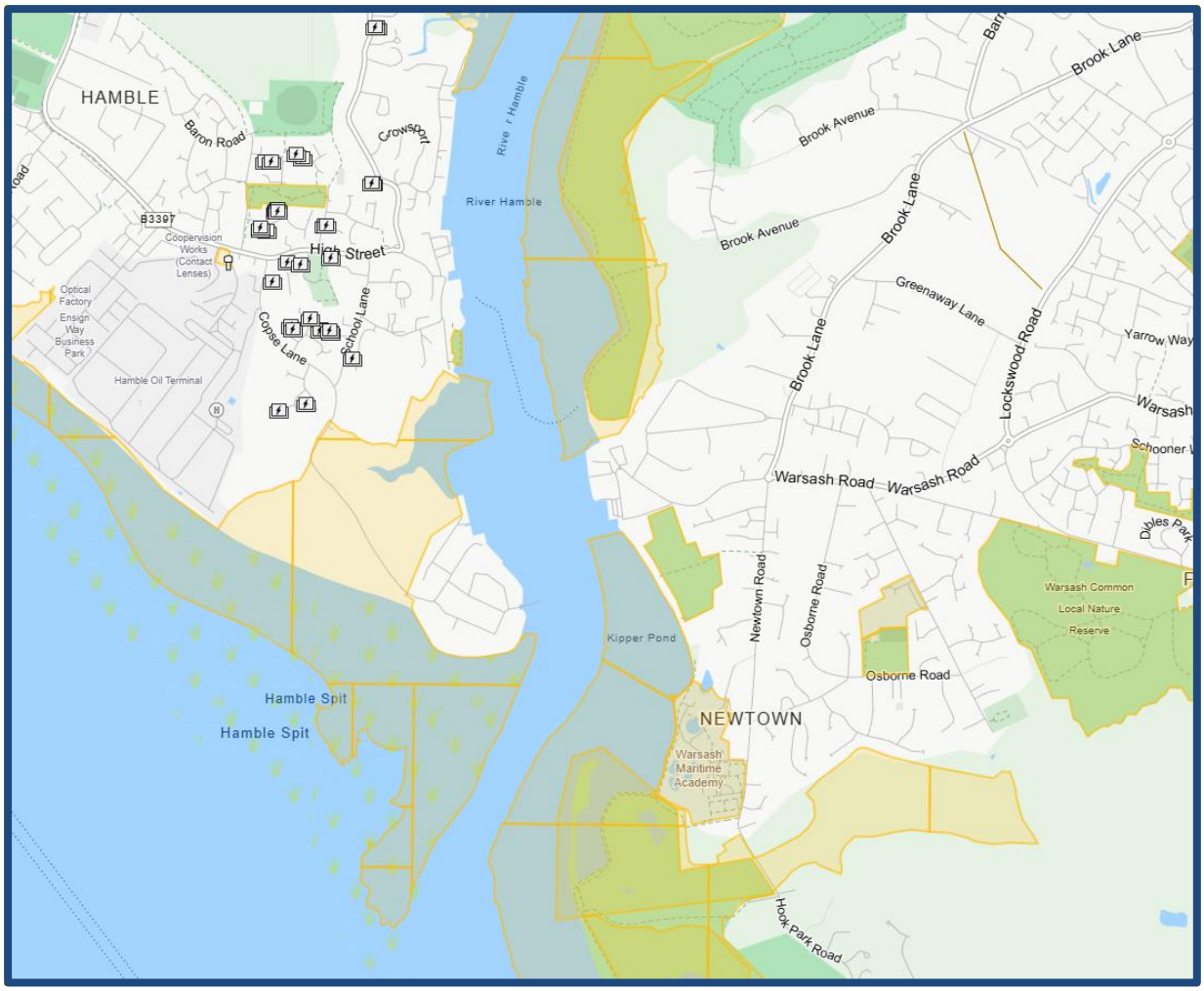
Bird Aware Solent rangers record if drones disturb birds when out on duty, but sightings are rare.

Hampshire Constabulary provide information on the legal aspects of flying drones.

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. It recommends that drone users seek advice from Natural England if flying over a SSSI. It tracks drone registration and pilot competency for commercial use.

Altitude Angel provide drone mapping and they have included all SSSI layers on their Done Safety map. These are classified as a 'ground hazard'.



Example of SSSIs mapped on the River Hamble (yellow polygons) on the Drone Safety Map.

Please see the SEMS website for further guidance and resources.

5.12.4 Action

No specific action required.

5.13 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.

5.13.1 Survey Response

Non-motorised watercraft	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	2	2	8	8	20
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	11	9			20

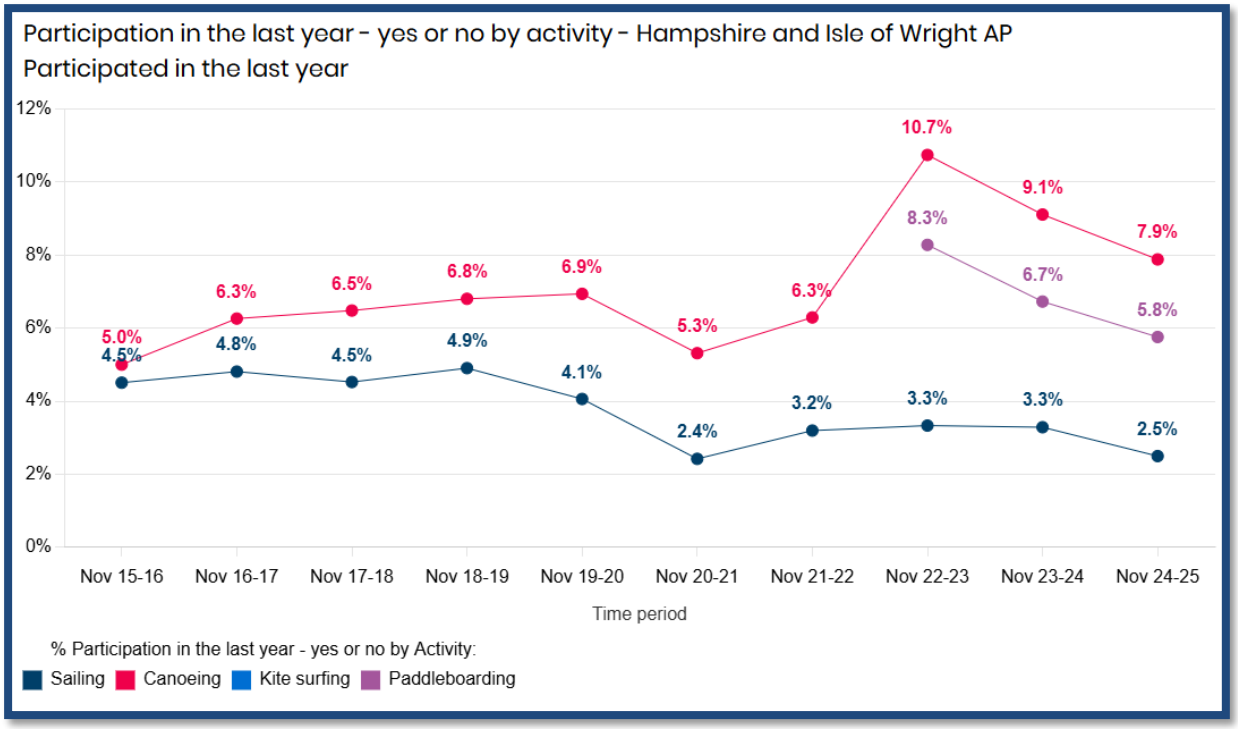
5.13.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Although most Relevant authorities reported no change, many believe that levels of this activity continue to impact on birds in sensitive areas. Wind and kite surfing have been observed flushing roosting and feeding birds, with Hurst Spit, Tanners Lane, Mount Lake and West Hayling LNR noted.

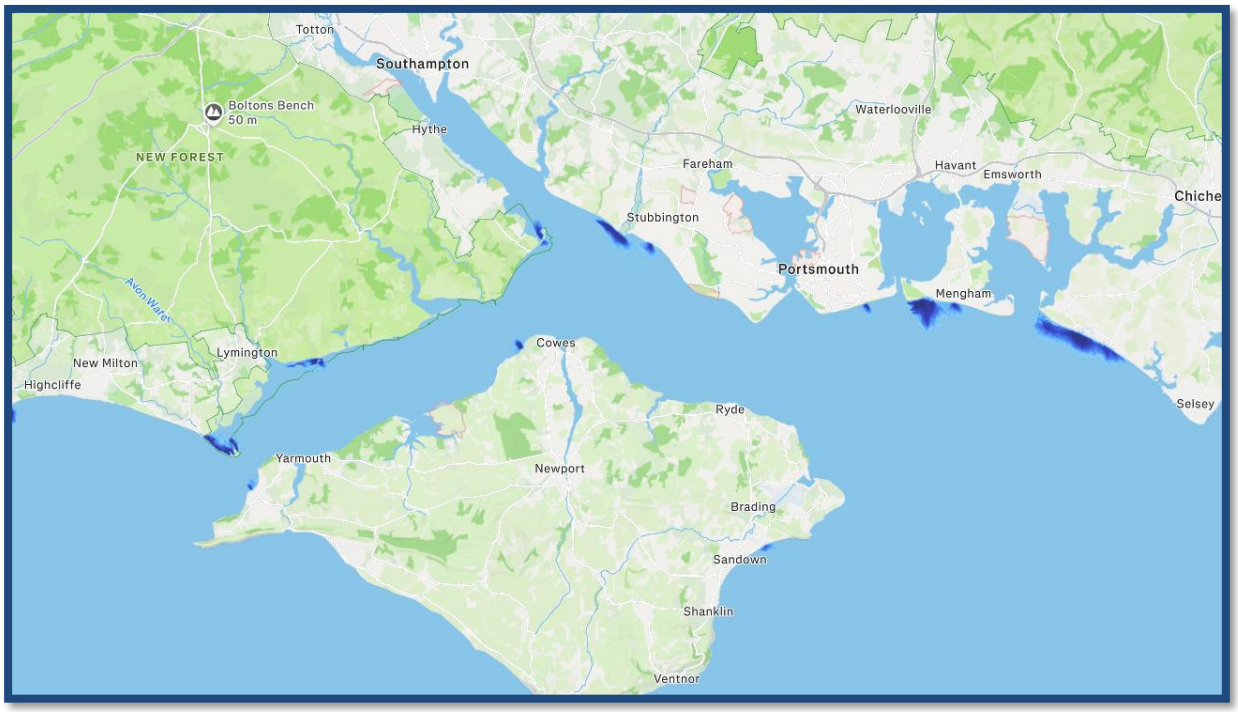
Paddlesport craft are readily available to buy, and users can be inexperienced in how to use them and avoid sensitive wildlife sites. People also seek out quiet areas that can bring them into locations that were not historically visited. Activity increases during the spring-autumn period, particularly during warmer weather, school holidays, and weekends.

Concerns were raised about disturbance pressures due to paddle and wind sport craft being able to access shallow water, particularly at sensitive sites like offshore saltmarsh islands, and trampling from launch and recovery. The season is getting longer with better clothing and equipment and participants are seen from spring to autumn with a summer peak.

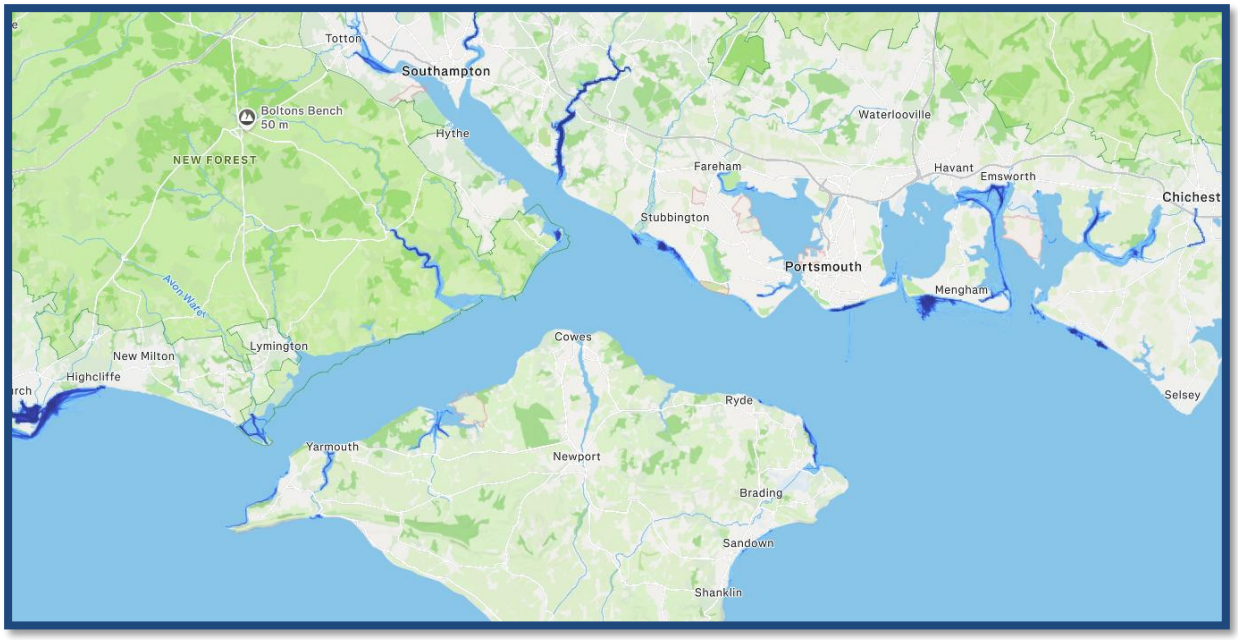
The harbour authorities note they have no jurisdiction to control activity outside of their statutory harbour authority area, managing marine recreational activity in these locations is the responsibility of the MMO. Where permits are required, this gives an opportunity for harbour staff to give educational messaging.



Trend data for non-motorised watersports across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Source: [Sport England Active Lives Survey](#).



Kite surfing hotspots in the Solent. © [Strava Global Heatmap](#), 2026



Paddlesports hotspots in the Solent. © Strava Global Heatmap, 2026.

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 (Natural England)

An increase in this activity, particularly paddlesports, has been noted across SEMS. The condition assessments for Portsmouth Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Solent and Southampton Water SPA have been completed with disturbance caused by human activity being one of the main drivers for the unfavourable status of all designated features within Portsmouth Harbour SPA, fourteen out of nineteen features of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and ten out of eleven features of Solent and Southampton Water SPA.

A reduce target has also been set in the conservation advice packages for all SPA 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.

In addition, 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.

Finally, this activity can lead to trampling and abrasion of sensitive habitats such as seagrass and saltmarsh as users are able to access the water via inappropriate routes due to the size of the vessel.

Therefore, Natural England consider that this activity is impacting the features of SEMS.

5.13.3 Management Measures

Natural England's EIN028 report 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. Some user associations for the activities in this section also provide guidance to their members on how to minimise their environmental impact, for example, the RYA's Green Blue programme has the 'Green Wildlife Guide for Boaters'.

Guidance on best practice for paddlesports users is available from the British Canoe Union. There is also comprehensive information for paddlesports users on the Go Paddling website; British Canoeing is the national governing body for Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP). Kite surfing comes under the remit of the British Kite Sports Association.

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 water and roaming warden patrols. Harbour authorities put environmental educational material in harbour guides/websites.

Through LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES, recreational activity surveys monitored non-motorised watercraft at Yarmouth West, Bouldnor, Osborne Bay, Kings Quay Shore and West Hayling Island between July and September annually from 2021 to 2024. Interpretation panels have been installed as part of the project to inform people of the presence and location of seagrass beds and their importance. These are located at Norton Spit, Hayling Island ferry terminal, Lepe Country Park and Cowes.

Summer events normally follow established routes in shallower waters, but on high tides. Organisers are required to notify the Harbour Office and, if required, provide risk assessments and follow navigational and environmental guidance.

In the North Solent NNR staff work with local sailing clubs to encourage use of codes of conduct. Wardening and monitoring of Gull Island is undertaken on weekends and bank holidays of the breeding season.

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 and it maps wildlife sensitive sites. Educative signage has been installed at public launch/access points throughout some of the Solent's harbours. In 2026, Bird Aware Solent employed a watersports ranger to help spread their messaging to the Solent's watersports community.

The Solent Forum has developed biosecurity action plans to help prevent the spread of marine invasive species in the Solent, paddle and wind sports can be a vector for their spread.

A list of resources and information on this topic is available on the SEMS website.

5.13.4 Action

(1) SEMS Management Group members to support Bird Aware Solent's watersports with wildlife campaign, report disturbance from marine activities to the MMO via their Seasight reporting form (once officially launched) and use the Solent Biosecurity plan information to help prevent marine invasives spread from paddlesports.

5.14 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.

5.14.1 Survey Response

Recreation motorised craft	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	3	9	5	18
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	9	9			18

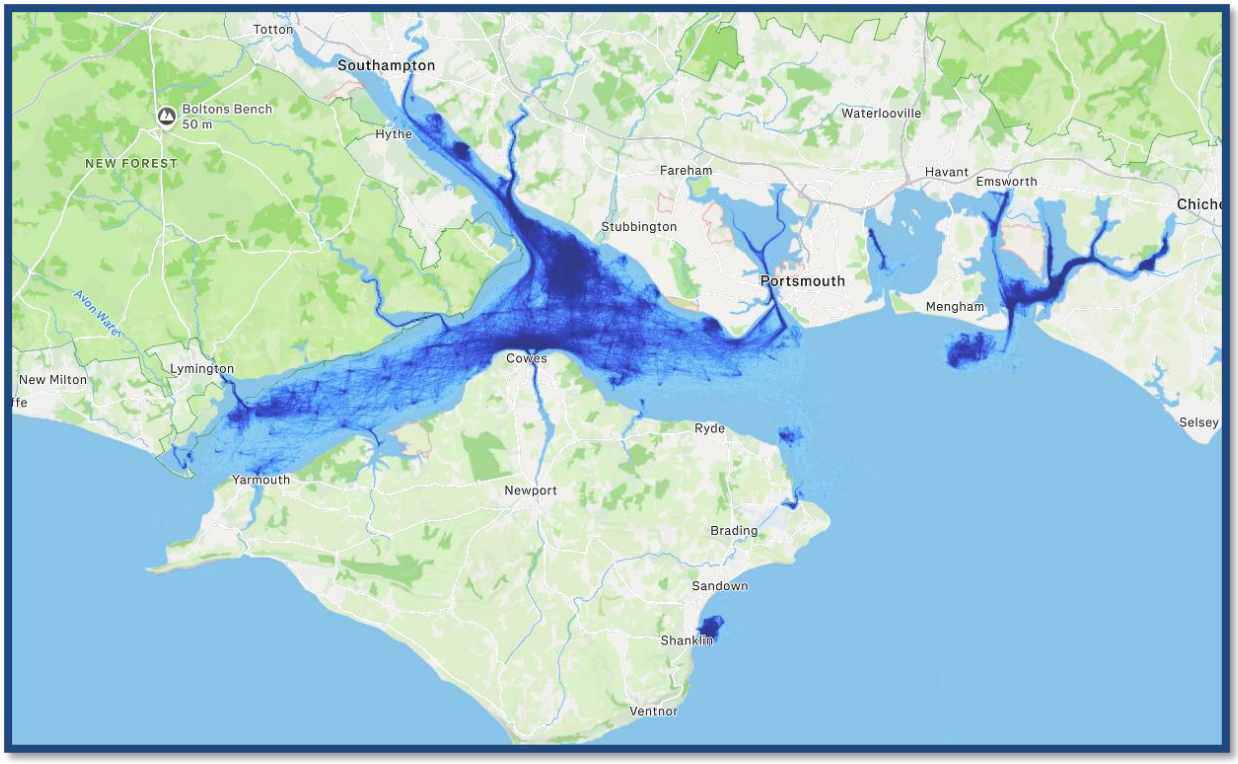
5.14.2 Evaluation and Discussion

The Solent is a popular area for all watersports and baseline activity levels of powerboating and sailing remain stable but high compared to the national picture. Competitions and events remain extremely popular in the Solent with a growing interest in spectator boating, with people chartering vessels to watch races from the water. The Solent also acts as a transit stop for larger vessels.

Respondents noted that impacts will be higher at busy access points such as slipways and marina entrances. Poorer summer weather and the state of people's disposable income also impact on activity levels.

The main concern reported for this activity category is disturbance caused by the use of Personal Watercraft (PWCs). Their noise and manoeuvrability mean that they can disturb both wildlife and the amenity value of sites and they can access shallow water.

Electric outboard motors are becoming more popular as a clean, quiet, and efficient alternative to traditional petrol outboard engines. They are particularly suitable for dinghies, tenders, and small boats. Their use will be expanded by the installation of electric charging stations. Their locations can be viewed on the RYA Green Blue's environmental facilities map. Such craft will help to mitigate noise disturbance from boat use. Electric PWCs are also becoming more popular and should drop in price as they become more mainstream.



Sailing heatmap of the Solent. © Strava Global Heatmap, 2026

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.

Natural England noted that the use of small personal watercraft or powerboats allow access close to sensitive habitats that may be otherwise unreachable. The wake of these vessels when closer to shore can be detrimental to habitats such as seagrass.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

Further study is required to determine whether the use of motorised watercraft is having an adverse effect upon SEMS as these vessels are less able to get close to shore and so may cause less disturbance to wildlife than smaller craft and are more likely to enter the water at defined access points, e.g. marinas.

However, the condition assessments for Portsmouth Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Solent and Southampton Water SPA have been completed with disturbance caused by human activity being one of the main drivers for the unfavourable status of all designated features within Portsmouth Harbour SPA, fourteen out of nineteen features of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and ten out of eleven features of Solent and Southampton Water SPA.

A reduce target has also been set in the conservation advice packages for all SPA 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.

Therefore, this activity should be monitored as usage has increased and will likely continue to do so. Please note, pressures associated specifically with anchoring and mooring are considered in section 5.9 and are therefore not included here.

5.14.3 Management Measures

Survey respondents noted the importance of coordinated management across the Solent to avoid displacement.

Harbour General Directions and byelaws, including speed restrictions, effectively manage this activity for navigational safety which also helps to reduce environmental impacts. For activities like waterskiing and PWC use, these commonly require permits and participants are educated to stay away from sensitive sites. Where a PWC permit is required, users must be able to evidence proof of a marine qualification, such as the RYA's Personal Watercraft Proficiency Course, that shows they are aware of their responsibilities as a mariner (part of this includes their responsibilities to the natural environment). A maritime partnership has produced a 'Wash and Slow' leaflet that shows Solent speed limits.

Events and competitions that require biosecurity measures are those that have participants arriving from outside the locality bringing in vessels or watercraft and external equipment. Guidance has been designed to help event organisers develop a simple biosecurity plan to explain what you may need to consider and simple actions that can be taken. The NNSS has guidance and resources for waterside events in a variety of different languages for paddling, angling and boating. The RYA Green Blue has produced a sustainable boating event checklist for event managers including information on biosecurity measures.

The LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES recreational activity surveys monitored motorised watercraft at Yarmouth West, Bouldnor, Osborne Bay, Kings Quay and West Hayling Island between July-September annually from 2021 to 2024. These indicated Osborne Bay and Yarmouth West to have the highest level of sailing of the sites surveyed. Interpretation panels have been installed as part of the ReMEDIES project to inform people of the presence and location of seagrass beds and their importance. These are located at Norton Spit, Hayling Island ferry terminal, Lepe Country Park and Cowes. Additional RYA Green Blue ReMEDIES Project interpretation boards aimed at boaters, are located at 20 different marinas across the Solent, from Lymington to Portsmouth and on the Isle of Wight.

Hampshire Police Marine Support Unit's Operation Wavebreaker addresses anti-social behaviour on the water. They work 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. The Police ask that issues or concerns about anti-social behaviour, be reported to the 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 RYA Green Blue has advice on boating around wildlife. It also provides guidance on how to run sustainable events.

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 should also benefit designated sites.

Local authorities can help to manage impacts through the control of access to the water, such as car park restrictions and restrictions on the use of public hards.

5.14.4 Action

(1) SEMS Management Group Members to report disturbance arising from this activity to the MMO, (via Seasight form once launched) and the relevant harbour authority, and disseminate best practice produced by the recreational user groups. Use the Solent Biosecurity plan information to help prevent marine invasives spread.

5.15 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.

5.15.1 Survey Response

Slipways and jettys	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	1	0	11	2	14
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	0	14			14

5.15.2 Evaluation and Discussion

The harbours use water to undertake slipway cleaning often using pressures washers; larger algal mats are removed by hand. They do try to keep this activity to a minimum, but it requires regular cycles for safety, typically monthly. The heaviest growth is normally on rough surfaces and areas that remain damp. Macroalgae that attaches to pontoons and jetties is removed by hand scrubbing. None of the survey respondents had any concerns that this activity was impacting on the designated sites.

Algae and biofilm typically grow faster on slipways during warm weather, especially when hot conditions coincide with plenty of sunlight and nutrients in the water. As the climate warms, this activity may need to become more frequent. A warming climate may also facilitate the introduction of invasive non-native species.

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 adverse effects will be localised and temporary.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

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. Solent Forum have prepared biosecurity action plans for the Solent to help address this issue. In addition, if inappropriate chemicals are used it could increase the levels of contaminants entering the Solent, noting elevated contaminants in both sediment and water column are reasons for the unfavourable status of Solent Maritime SAC.

5.15.3 Management Measures

Solent harbours avoid using harmful chemicals and use plain seawater or environmentally sound cleaning materials when undertaking cleaning operations. The RYA Green Blue recommend 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 and guidance is also published by the MMO.

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

5.15.4 Action

No specific action required.

5.16 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.

5.16.1 Survey Response

Wildfowling	Increased	Decreased	No change	Don't know	Total Responses
Change over 2025/26	0	0	4	2	6
Is the activity impacting on designated sites?					
	Yes	No			
	2	4			6

5.16.2 Evaluation and Discussion

Wildfowling is a recreational sporting activity that involves the pursuit and shooting of wild ducks, geese and waders which spend the winter period in the UK. The sport is typically carried out on wet grassland between 1 September and 31 January.

It often takes place early in the morning or in the evening, typically using shotguns to take birds; dogs retrieve downed birds from the water. Wildfowling occurs at Keyhaven and Lymington and in Langstone and Chichester Harbours.

Wildfowling is a largely solitary activity which involves the hunting of specific species of ducks, geese and waders with a smooth bore shotgun. 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.

In June 2026, Natural England published a rapid evidence review of the ecological impacts of the recreational hunting of coastal wildfowl ('wildfowling').

The Review concluded that, 'given that waterbird movement patterns - including daily and seasonal ranges - extend beyond the boundaries of coastal protected areas, it is unlikely that mortality from coastal wildfowling significantly impacts population sizes within those areas. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that such mortality would have a significant adverse effect on the ecological integrity of protected sites. Nonetheless, key knowledge gaps persist, including estimates of population sizes and harvest levels of UK waterbirds. As a result, it was recommended that regulatory consent processes focus less on mortality effects at the scale of individual protected areas or wildfowling sites. This is due to wildfowling's relatively low impact compared to other forms of waterbird hunting, which supports the continuation of low-impact recreational harvests'.

Impacts on SEMS (Natural England)

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.

5.16.3 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 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.

Defra guidance for sustainable wildfowling is to:

1. Have a good working understanding of local tidal patterns and bird habits so you can intercept birds whilst they naturally move between their daytime feeding and night-time roosting areas, rather than deliberately disturbing them from their resting or feeding places.
2. Plan and limit visits to avoid overharvesting and frequent disturbance.
3. Complete bag returns on the same day of shooting to ensure bag records and harvest level

data is accurate.

4. Create temporal and spatial refuges. Temporal refuges are regular times of the day or week when no shooting takes place. Spatial refuges are areas of the site, which are appropriately located and managed, where no shooting takes place.

A wildfowling strategy template is available to plan wildfowling activities at a site.

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

For more information, please see the SEMS website.

5.16.4 Action

No specific activity action required.

6 Generic Actions

1. SEMS Management Group 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. Management Group members are also encouraged to share these resources more widely and encourage the adoption of best practice by private landowners.

2. SEMS Management Group and NEG members to feed concerns on or new management measures that are introduced on non-licensable activities to the SEMS office throughout the year, (info@solentforum.org) to enable the promotion and sharing of good practice throughout the Solent.

3. Trend data for activity change is showing that activities in the Solent are elevated but stable, to ascertain whether this is the case or people do not have sufficient data to make a judgement year the SEMS Survey includes a 'don't know' option for respondents when asked about activity changes. Table 4b shows the outcome and this will help NEG to prioritise projects for funding. Funding will also be prioritised for those activities that Relevant Authorities state are impacting sites.

4. NEG to continue to support the development of the Solent Seascapes project's Seascape Recovery Plan. The Solent Forum sit on the working group that is helping to draft this plan and provide the NEG Secretariat.

5. Relevant Authorities who are members of Local Nature Partnerships to utilise the Solent Marine Sites Management scheme to help deliver appropriate Local Nature Recovery Strategy coastal measures.

6. All to use the Solent Forum's Biosecurity plans to help prevent the spread of marine invasives species from activities around the Solent.

7. Solent Marine Sites Management Group members and NEG to report wildlife disturbance from marine non-licensable activities via email to the MMO. The MMO are trialling a 'seasight' reporting form to capture disturbance from recreational activity, we will share this more widely once it has fully launched.

7 Summary of Activity Actions

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

(1) NEG to support and share research on how highways run-off could affect the Solent's designated sites.

2. Boat Repair and Maintenance

(1) SEMS Management group members continue to promote and share best practice in preventing marine invasive spread by using the Solent Forum's biosecurity plans and record end of life boats on the RYA Green Blue's register. Harbour Authorities to continue to promote best practice to boat owners when repairing and maintaining boats using The Green Blue resources.

(2) NEG to encourage research on and share information on impacts to designated sites from end-of-life abandoned GRP boats.

3. Fishing (including shellfisheries)

(1) SEMS MG members to continue to report to the Southern and Sussex IFCAs or the MMO (helpline 0300 123 1032) any suspected illegal fishing activity seen and raise awareness of the byelaws in place.

(2) SEMS MG members to encourage the Solent's sea angling community to contribute to the Sea Angling Diary.

4. Fishing (shore-based activities)

(1) SEMS MG members 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 help record this activity.

5. General Beach Recreation

(1) SEMS MG members to include information on impacts on designated sites when updating local beach information and/or signs. Look to work with partners to avoid sensitive sites like bird nesting sites in areas owned or managed. Sites are mapped on the Solent Seascape Data Explorer (baseline species layer).

6. Grazing and Foraging

(1) SEMS MG members to report any concerns regarding the foraging for wild plants or shellfish in designated sites to the local IFCA and help to promote local IFCA byelaws and codes of conduct.

---

7. Land Recreation - Walking (including dog walking)

(1) SEMS Management Group members to communicate with their own rangers, coastal staff, and communications teams on how they can support Bird Aware Solent and other partnership projects in the delivery of their work on recreational disturbance issues.

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

(3) SEMS Management Group members to help publicise the Countryside Code and Marine and Wildlife Coastal Code through existing communications.

---

8. Littering and Removal of Litter

(1) The Solent Forum will continue to maintain the Solent Plastics Pollution Hub as a legacy output of the Environment Agency's Preventing Plastic Pollution project and the Forum's work on Clean Solent Shores and Seas which includes a page on litter. We will also continue to share evidence and reports on this topic.

(2) NEG to support and facilitate research on the impacts of litter and plastics on the Solent's designated sites.

---

9. Mooring and Anchoring

(1) SEMS Management Group to use and share the available information and best practice on Advanced Mooring Systems, the RYA Green Blue's anchoring and mooring with care guidance, and support the outputs of the LIFE ReMEDIES project.

---

10. Operation of Coastal Flood and Erosion Risk Management Schemes

No specific activity action required.

---

11. Operation of Ports and Harbours

(1) SEMS Management Group members to utilise the resources and implement relevant actions in the Solent Biosecurity action plans to address the impacts from marine invasive species when maintaining infrastructure.

(2) Ports and harbours to consider adding ecological enhancement to infrastructure when maintaining assets.

---

12. Aerial Recreation (light aircraft, drones)

No specific activity action required.

13. Recreation - Non-motorised Watercraft

(1) SEMS Management Group members to support Bird Aware Solent's watersports with wildlife campaign, report disturbance from marine activities to the MMO via their Seasight reporting form (once officially launched) and use the Solent Biosecurity plan information to help prevent marine invasives spread from paddlesports.

14. Recreation - Powerboating or Sailing with an Engine

(1) SEMS Management Group Members to report disturbance arising from this activity to the MMO, (via Seasight form once launched) and the relevant harbour authority, and disseminate best practice produced by the recreational user groups. Use the Solent Biosecurity plan information to help prevent marine invasives spread.

15. Slipway and Jetty Cleaning and Maintenance

No specific activity action required.

16. Wildfowling

No specific activity action required.

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, eight respondents confirmed that they had a MCZ in their area of jurisdiction.

All fishing activities that take place inside an MPA are assessed by the IFCAs to identify potential risks to the conservation objectives of the site. Evidence is gathered to inform assessments and management options, and appropriate management measures are introduced if an activity is deemed to pose a risk to the conservation objectives of a site. Fishing activity is continuously monitored across all MPAs to ensure changes in level of effort or types of activity are recognised.

Sussex IFCA has no current concerns regarding fishing activity within Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in the district. Fishing activities within MCZs are subject to existing management measures and are routinely monitored through its ongoing patrols and evidence-gathering. Monitoring of fishing activity will continue across all MCZs within the District.

The Needles MCZ, Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ and Bembridge MCZ are situated in waters surrounding the Isle of Wight, therefore impacts are considered within Isle of Wight Council planning proposals in consultation with Natural England and MMO.

Natural England noted that the Needles MCZ, Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ and Bembridge MCZ all sit within their jurisdiction and at all of these sites, walking, dog walking, beach recreation, non-motorised watercraft and motorised watercraft all occur.

Following designation, Natural England started a baseline monitoring programme across all Marine Protected Areas:

- Inshore benthic marine survey of The Needles MCZ
- Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ intertidal baseline survey
- Bembridge MCZ Factsheet

9 Map of Solent Marine Protected Areas

Solent Marine Protected Areas © [MAGIC Map]
Orange pattern is SPA
Blue pattern is SAC
Green diagonals are MCZ