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From: alison.fowler@hants.gov.uk

To: sandra.ambition@btinternet.com

Sent: Friday, September 20th 2024, 15:33

Subject: RE: Validation of the river

Dear Sandra

I hope you are well. Thank you for your message of support for what we do to assist in the protection of the river. This of course is a role and effort shared by many, many organisations, regulators, charities and local interest groups.

Your questions, although short, are extremely wide reaching and complex, so I will try to give a summary below, but you ask something that covers a vast range of areas concerning conservation management of the coastal environment. Please note that the Harbour Authority is the navigation authority with a very small team. RHHA must ensure navigational safety of the river, and through this function and through the permissions RHHA permits of others, that RHHA has regard for the environment. Our remit is relatively small, although we do put in a huge effort in relation to the environmental work and are known to be key in facilitating improvement projects and management measures to happen here on the Hamble estuary. Our remit does not extend above mean high water, so I will keep this response to just coastal management below mean high water mark.

The key organisations in the protection and management of the Hamble estuary's environment include the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation, Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority, Local Planning Authorities, The Hants & IOW Wildlife Trust, Bird Aware Solent, National Trust, the RYA's Green Blue, Southern Water, charities and volunteer groups and so on, the list is long. There is so much work going on within and between these organisations to protect the designated sites of the Solent, which include the those of the Hamble estuary. The Solent Forum is a great website to get information <https://www.solentforum.org/> and also look at the 'Services and Projects' section on the top bar as well as the section on [Solent Forum - Information Hubs](#) as you'll find many examples and answers to what is being done about environmental concerns in the Solent.

Usage of the river:

The Hamble has around 3000 permanent moorings afloat for vessels to be berthed. These are either in a marina or on a mooring pile or buoy. In addition to that, smaller craft such as RIBS and small motor craft are housed in dry stack systems in a few of the marinas and are craned off and into the water at owners' requests. Then you have vessels which are brought via road trailer and launched for a day trip at a slipway such as motor boats, sailing dinghies, rowing boats and jet skis. All of these above vessels which are over 6m in length have a motor of more than 10 horse power must pay harbour dues. This funds the Harbour Authority and its ability to fulfil its statutory and safety functions.

Aside from the above vessels, there are also smaller craft which can be launched by foot or from gardens or car roofs, such as canoes, kayaks, small sailing dinghies, windsurfs and paddleboards. These do not pay harbour dues and there is no law or means for registering usage or volume of these. But there are means by which the impact of their activity is managed, see 'SEMS' below.

It is important to note that impact on the environment of usage of the River is managed in one of two ways.

1. Development - At the development stage when a proposal for a build or an extension might impact designated habitat either through loss or/and through creating increased disturbance of habitats or species on the river. It is if unacceptable than it is refused, if it is acceptable but presents some risk then conditions are added to mitigate risk. For example, a new paddleboard hire centre would have to add information about the importance of the local environment and habitats to its signage and its customer briefings. Or certain loud foreshore work might have to be done outside of the protected over-wintering bird season.
2. Activities – Certain activities can impact the designated sites but these activities are not regulated or licenced. These include activities such as walking or dog walking, paddle sports, bait digging, people anchoring their boats in designated sites. These are managed through Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme. There is a full list of the activities on the SEMS website. Regulating Authorities (see first half of my list earlier) research and assess these and collectively try to reduce the impacts on these unregulated activities with certain measures. An example is the introduction of Bird Aware to erect signs and employ rangers to educate dog walkers about how disturbance to the protected migratory birds by dogs can mean they fail migrations home because they never took on enough calories because they kept getting disturbed. Another example is the current project to install eco moorings in popular anchoring locations so anchors and chains do not damage sea grass beds. You would be very interested to look through the SEMS to see how much work is going on. [Solentems - Welcome to the Solent Marine Sites \(SEMS\) Website](#)

In addition to the above, there are other means by which the Hamble's estuarine environment is being protected and enhanced:

1. Research, Plans and Projects.

There are too many to state, but a few are:

- Hamble's recently built native oysters restoration reef.
- Our office's new sea wall with biodiversity features built in.
- Saltmarsh restoration research work in the creeks adjacent to Old Bursledon.
- Numerous government plans and policies to address the fact the UK is one of the world's most nature depleted countries – e.g. the introduction of Local Nature Recovery Strategies <https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/nature-recovery-hampshire/hampshire-strategy>

Designated Sites:

This is a huge topic. You can find out about each of the sites, its status, its protected features, its management, the risks to it and much more on Natural England's specific and separate Designated Sites System website <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>. NE is the government's advisor for the natural environment.

RHHA's own website has some information on the Hamble's named sites, as well as other aspects of our environmental work, so it's worth clicking through the various sections starting here <https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hambleharbour/environment>

This is an informal response to assist you in gaining more information. As you can see, there are so many parts at play in this, and it is complex.

Please note the other email address you used had a typo and was missing the 't' it ishants.gov.uk

Kind regards

Alison

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