

Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan 2006 Non-Technical Summary



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www.pooleharbouraqmp.co.uk



Introduction

Poole Harbour is one of the outstanding natural features of Southern England and one of the largest natural harbours in the world. The Harbour is of exceptional ecological value with, National, European and International nature conservation designations. It also supports significant commercial and recreational activities and the need to manage these different interests has long been recognised.

The 2006 Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan provides a framework for the effective, co-ordinated management of the Harbour and the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) and serves as a Management Scheme for the European Marine Site, as set out in Regulation 34 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994. It also covers the present and future needs of nature conservation, recreation and commercial use and other legitimate interests of the Harbour.

This non-statutory Plan has been produced by the Poole Harbour Steering Group and contains guidelines, principles and objectives designed to inform, advise and guide current and future management of the Harbour. It aims to build on established partnerships and be a vehicle for communication, providing a framework within which decisions can be made and appropriate action taken.

The full Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan and further information on the project can be found at www.pooleharbouraqmp.co.uk

Strategic Aim

To promote the safe and sustainable use of Poole Harbour, balancing the demands on its natural resources, minimising risk and resolving conflicts of interest

Objectives

- To provide a framework for the co-ordinated management of the Harbour and continue to improve communications between Harbour users and regulators
- To promote the safe use of the Harbour for all
- To fulfil the requirements of a Management Scheme for the European Marine Site
- To promote the sustainable and wise use of the Harbour for commerce, recreation and amenity
- To protect and maintain the special natural features of the Harbour
- To create a culture of openness and communication and an awareness of other users



Poole Harbour Steering Group

The Poole Harbour Steering Group is a voluntary partnership that provides a framework for coordination between statutory bodies with responsibilities in the Harbour. Its members work together to review, prepare and implement common plans and policies, with a view to promoting the sustainable use of Poole Harbour, securing the long-term conservation of its internationally important wildlife and natural habitats.

- Borough of Poole
- Dorset County Council
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Poole Harbour Commissioners
- Purbeck District Council
- Southern Sea Fisheries District Committee
- Wessex Water Services Ltd

What the Plan covers:

- Nature Conservation
- Water Quality & Pollution
- Managing the Shoreline
- Fisheries
- Conservancy & Marine Safety
- Recreation
- Commerce
- Transport
- Emergency Planning
- Archaeology



Special Protection Area, (SPA)

The European Birds Directive requires member states to designate SPAs where an area supports significant numbers of wild birds and their habitats. Poole Harbour was designated a SPA in 1999.

The marine part of the SPA, the intertidal zone, between mean low water and highest astronomical tide, is termed the **European Marine Site (EMS)**.



Nature Conservation

The wetland habitats fringing the Harbour support large numbers of wintering, migrating and breeding birds along with many rare and uncommon plants and invertebrates. The Harbour bed is important for marine invertebrates such as sponges, tube worms, sea squirts and sea mats, including some that are rare around Britain's shoreline. Areas of heathland support further rare and uncommon birds, invertebrates and reptiles, while pine woodland on some of the Harbour's islands are of national importance for some of England's last surviving populations of red squirrel.

This range of estuarine, wetland and heathland habitats and the animals and plants they support, together with the large variety and number of birds, means Poole Harbour is recognised as being of international importance and the area holds a number of statutory designations which serve to protect the natural environment. Among others the Harbour is designated, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar site as well as falling within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Annually the Harbour supports over 20,000 wildfowl and waders of around 60 different species, 17 of which are considered to be of national or international importance. The Avocet, Mediterranean Gull and the Common Tern along with the Black-tailed Godwit and Shelduck were recognised as important through the Special Protection Area designation.

Water Quality & Pollution

The environmental quality of the Harbour is considered to be good but its poor flushing characteristics make it vulnerable to pollution. Pollution of water, sediment and air can come from many sources and as a result of a range of activities such as agriculture, industry and recreation. The Environment Agency is the competent authority for routine monitoring of the waters of Poole Harbour, its freshwater inputs and coastal waters. This monitoring is undertaken according to frequencies outlined in various EU Directives.

The Harbour also receives treated sewage discharges from three main Sewage Treatment Works (STWs) which have all provided secondary treatment for many years and treat sewage to a high standard. Wessex Water Services Ltd run these STWs and are also responsible for maintaining sewers and outfalls. They have a statutory duty to treat and discharge sewage, under consent from the Environment Agency, and to ensure that discharges do not adversely affect the waters of the Harbour in complying with EC Directive standards.

Some specific objectives:

- To ensure that any development can demonstrate no adverse impact on the designated site and fully complies with the Habitat Regulations.
- To investigate appropriate measures to ensure that harvesting activities e.g. baitcollecting and shellfishing, do not adversely effect the nature conservation interests of the Harbour.
- To improve communication with all user groups & organisations to explain their potential impacts on the interest features of the European Marine Site.
- To understand the extent and health of eel grass beds within the Harbour and raise awareness of them.
- To monitor the habitats in Poole Harbour and implement management initiatives to ensure their protection and enhancement.
- To promote more research into the impact of human activity and climate change on the bird populations and habitats of Poole Harbour.



Some specific objectives:

- To ensure best practice is followed to minimise the impact of antifouling paints on marine fauna & flora.
- To ensure air quality in and around the Harbour meets agreed emission standards.
- To ensure discharges from vessels are regulated and comply with legal requirements.
- To ensure discharges from industry and STWs meet emission standards.
- To undertake planned improvements to storm sewers and emergency overflows.
- To ensure litter does not affect the interest features of the European Marine Site.
- To seek to encourage the use of more environmentally sensitive farming techniques.



Managing the Shoreline

Probably the most significant long-term trend affecting the future shoreline management of Poole Harbour is that of sea level rise. The predicted sea level rise for the Solent area is around 35cm by 2050 and climate change is also expected to affect the incidence of storms and extreme water level events.

Coastal defence is a collective term for both the protection of the coastline against marine erosion (coastal protection) and flooding by the sea (sea defence). Along with engineered defence structures, natural habitats such as beaches and saltmarsh also act to protect the coastline from the effects of natural processes such as wave energy.

Operating authorities today realise that defence developments may be more cost effective and enduring if rather than fighting nature, they harness and enhance the natural coastal processes. Establishing a natural regime has the added advantage of retaining the wildlife of the area and enhancing the quality of the landscape. Also successful man-made defences in one area may have damaging effects on neighbouring stretches of coastline if they interfere with the natural movement of sediment. This must be taken into account when considering additional coastal defence development.

Some specific objectives:

- To understand where habitats may be lost in the future due to sea level rise and where there is potential for habitat re-creation.
- To respond to coastal change and rising sea levels in the most sustainable way to comply with flood protection policy and Habitat Regulations.
- To ensure coastal defence schemes do not significantly affect the interest features of the site and comply with Habitat Regulations.



Fisheries

There are approximately 100 registered fishing boats based at the port which hold a permit issued by the Southern Sea Fisheries District Committee (SSFDC) to fish commercially. As the fisheries' managers this enables the SSFDC to monitor the fishing effort and to keep stocks at a sustainable level through local byelaws, and National and EU legislation. The Environment Agency also manage fisheries on all freshwater rivers and streams running into Poole Harbour.

As well as wet fish, such as mullet, bass, flounder, sole and plaice, which are caught commercially, the Harbour is also an important shellfish ground which is administered under the Poole Fishery Order 1985 by the SSFDC. This order allows the Committee to lease sections of the sea bed for cultivation of shellfish and to regulate the fishing for oysters, clams and mussels in the remainder of the Harbour.

Poole Harbour supports substantial populations of bait species, which form a valuable economic and ecological resource. Collecting bait for personal or recreational use is part of the public right to fish but there is no legal right to gather bait commercially for sale or reward without the landowner's permission.

Some specific objectives:

- To identify effective mechanisms (eg codes of conduct, voluntary agreements, byelaws) to manage conflicts between, shellfishing, baitdigging / baitdragging and their impacts on interest features of the EMS.
- To understand further the extent and potential implications of bait collection.
- To ensure the sustainable management of fisheries so as to not significantly affect the interest features of the European Marine Site.
- To continue enforcement & monitoring of fishing practices & awareness raising among fishermen.
- To eliminate all illegal fishing activity from the Harbour.



Conservancy and Marine Safety

Poole Harbour Commissioners are responsible for ensuring that shipping channels are routinely surveyed, maintained at the correct depth and clearly marked. They also control the movement of commercial shipping from the Harbour Control centre, whose officers maintain a 24hr watch over the Harbour. The Commissioners also have powers to create, police and enforce byelaws such as those for speed limits, safe navigation and the control of certain recreational activities.

The Harbour Master operates a number of patrol craft within the Harbour limits at times of busy recreational activity. Their main roles are byelaw enforcement, escorting commercial vessels, and educating the users who may not have sufficient knowledge of the regulations, or who are behaving irresponsibly.

Recreation

Poole Harbour is a popular destination both with tourists and recreational water users. Yachting, water skiing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, wildfowling and the use of personal watercraft are all popular activities in the Harbour and need to be managed to minimise conflict and to reduce disturbance to ecologically sensitive areas. In 1995 a recreational zoning scheme was established which has proved very successful in managing the many different recreational activities and users now restrict their activities to the relevant areas.

Poole Harbour Commissioners regulate most of the water based activities taking place in the Harbour and also regulate moorings, some of which are private and managed directly by the Commissioners, while others are leased to contractors, boatyards, yacht clubs and other small organisations.

Commerce

The port of Poole is an important local and regional asset, which makes a significant contribution to the economy of the area. Commercial ferry operators currently run regular passenger and freight services to Cherbourg, St Malo and the Channel Islands. The continued custom of ferry operators is key to the economic future of the port and channel deepening works have ensured that the port can accommodate larger vessels and also attract other ferry and cruise line operators.

Poole is also a major destination for bulk cargo imports and the port receives imports of steel, timber, bricks, fertiliser, grain, aggregates and palletised traffic. Export cargoes include clay, sand, fragmented steel and grain all. Improvements to facilities over the years mean that a variety of different cargoes can now be handled and stored which offers more economic security for the future.

Along with the port operations the Harbour is home to Europe's largest onshore oilfield and supports many other industries of differing scales such as boat building and sail lofts.

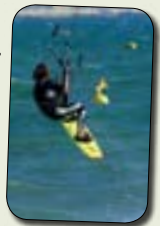
Some specific objectives:

- To ensure dredging does not result in a loss of important habitats (e.g. mudflat & saltmarsh) and that potential impacts to shellfish areas are minimised.
- To ensure minimum footprint from dredging and minimise the loss of fine material from sediment budget.
- To better understand the extent and potential effects of remobilised contaminants.
- To maintain current management initiatives and make improvements where necessary.



Some specific objectives:

- To ensure all recreational activity is undertaken in a sustainable & sensitive manner.
- To manage access to & use of the Harbour from land to minimise conflicts between users and wildlife.
- To improve communication with user groups & organisations to explain their potential impacts on the interest features of the EMS.
- To ensure safe navigation for all by minimising conflict between commercial and recreational craft.
- To review moorings policy to ensure impact on wildlife, habitats and seascape is minimised.



Archaeology

Poole Harbour has been historically important as a commercial port since before Roman times and evidence of human activity has been identified which dates back to a pre Iron Age era. This long period of human occupation, along with the excellent preservation of structures and artefacts, has led English Heritage to identify Poole Harbour as one of the most important areas for coastal archaeology in the country. A comprehensive study of Poole Harbour's heritage is currently being undertaken by the Poole Harbour Heritage Project with the aim of extending the available archaeological information.



Some specific objectives:

- To ensure coastal defence schemes do not adversely affect archaeological features, or ensure adequate mitigation and recording.
- To understand what historical assets may be lost or damaged in the future, due to natural changes in the coastline and identify the mitigation measures necessary to protect the resource.
- To adhere to best practice archaeological investigation techniques.
- To ensure dredging does not cause undue damage to archaeology through prior investigation and appropriate mitigation.



Transport

The Poole Local Plan and the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Structure Plan, both acknowledge and address the need to renew and develop the road and rail links for the region for the socio and economic benefit to the local inhabitants and the port itself. Both these plans support the Government's strategy for sustainable transport development, which considers the need for integration of different modes, including the transfer of freight transport to shipping where possible. Local authorities are encouraged to promote the role of ports by encouraging access to them by rail and road. However it is acknowledged that the benefits of securing the economic prosperity of the port need to be balanced against environmental and recreational considerations with regard to due planning process and Habitat Regulations.



Emergency Planning

Poole Harbour is considered to be at low risk from a significant oil or chemical spill within the Harbour but there is always the chance of a major oil incident in the English Channel, which could affect its waters and adjacent beaches. Authorities therefore need to be able to respond to incidents of any size and in response to the Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention) Regulations 1998, Poole Harbour Commissioners have prepared an oil spill response contingency plan known as "Poolspill".



Some specific objectives:

- To review and exercise oil spill contingency plan as required.
- To ensure appropriate emergency & contingency plans are in place.



Key Management Issues - a selection	
Activity	Management Action
Unauthorised landing on shorelines	Develop codes of practice to raise awareness of potential impacts
Low flying aircraft & helicopters	Initiate discussions with relevant authorities regarding setting up no fly zones
Illegal egg collecting	Monitor gull colonies
Shoreline & intertidal based developments	Write guidance on how small developments could be designed to minimise adverse impacts
Anchoring	Identify anchorage sensitive areas & promote awareness of them
Use of antifouling paints	Education of boatyards, yacht clubs and owners on best practice
Use of sacrificial anodes	Continue review of existing research into the environmental effects of sacrificial anodes
Marine & terrestrial littering	Look to organise annual beach cleans around the Harbour
Shellfish dredging	Promote awareness of Bird Sensitive Areas
Bait digging	Commission further research into the impacts and extent of bait digging
Illegal fishing	Increase policing effort to catch & prosecute illegal fishermen
Maintenance dredging	Develop Sediment Management Plan including alternative dredging techniques
Capital dredging	Commission further research into potential impacts
All recreational activity	Evaluate effectiveness & adequacy of existing launch sites
Yachting	Continue with existing liaison and safety meetings
Motor boating	Investigate setting up workshops & presentations with user groups
Moorings	Review moorings policy to ensure adequate facilities for users and minimise impact on EMS
Water-skiing and Personal Watercraft	Review effectiveness of current recreational zoning

Monitoring & Review

To comply with the monitoring requirements for the European Marine Site (EMS), the Poole Harbour Steering Group will review the Plan on an annual basis and assess how the specific management actions it identifies are being progressed. Updates on actions and projects will be disseminated through the individual Steering Group members as well as via the project website and an annual newsletter. The Plan will also be subject to an in depth evaluation one year prior to the end of the six yearly reporting cycle for the EMS, which is next due in 2012. In this way the Aquatic Management Plan can act as a focus point for actions to ensure the ongoing sustainable management of Poole Harbour.

Those who use Poole Harbour for recreation, commerce or who have an interest in the area's environmental resources are encouraged to discuss and provide input into the implementation of the Aquatic Management Plan. The Poole Harbour Steering Group meet every six months to discuss the ongoing management of the Harbour and its members can present issues raised with them by the general public or other interested parties. In this way areas of concern or forthcoming initiatives can be communicated and topics for future research identified.

Funding for the project was provided by all the Steering Group members, with a key contribution being made by The Crown Estate through their Marine Stewardship Fund, www.thecrownestate.co.uk

Project Officer, William Drake would like to thank all members of the Poole Harbour Steering Group and everyone who helped develop and produce the 2006 Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan.

Photographs courtesy of, Borough of Poole, BP, Kevin Cook, Kitchenham Ltd, David Harding/Sailing Scenes, Peter Dyrinda and Wessex Archaeology

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