



**Solent Protection Society**

Registered Charity No. 236539

**News**

Protecting the Solent and its Environment for Future Generations

**Autumn 2008**

# Solent Protection Society Conference: 'What Future for the Solent's Saltmarshes?'

On 17th September 2008 the Solent Protection Society held a major Conference at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, on the theme 'What Future for the Solent's Saltmarshes? The Society's ability to attract eminent speakers from a range of key organisations, and the fact that around 120 people attended, shows that it is a highly important and topical subject.



Ian Townend, HR Wallingford's Research Director, one of the country's leading experts on saltmarsh research and restoration and habitat creation schemes, gave a thought provoking scene setting overview. Speakers from Natural England and the Environment Agency emphasised the importance of saltmarshes for biodiversity and coastal defence, respectively. Channel Coastal Observatory staff gave an impressive presentation on past and predicted changes to saltmarshes which showed that saltmarshes are likely to disappear from parts of the Solent within 30 to 50 years. This was reinforced by the conclusions of the EU-funded BRANCH project that also looked at the implications for spatial planning.

The afternoon session was devoted to Saltmarsh Restoration and Habitat Creation, starting with the best examples from around England (primarily the Humber and Thames estuaries), and then looking at the potential for schemes in the Solent. The Environment Agency's Regional Habitat Creation Programme was presented, followed by a summary of Southampton University's study (for the EA and Hampshire County Council) of the potential for the beneficial use of dredgings for the restoration and recharge of saltmarshes. Andy Bradbury of New Forest District Council gave a brief talk on the possibilities for saltmarsh restoration in the western Solent. The

Conference concluded with a panel discussion on the key issues.

Feedback about the Conference has been very positive. There is no doubt that it greatly improved the understanding of saltmarsh issues and aroused a great deal of interest. However, as with most if not all conferences, although many important issues were highlighted and debated they remain unresolved. The SPS Council is considering what needs to be done, and in particular what role the Society should play. In order to be as well informed as possible, the Society would welcome views from all who have an interest in this important subject.

Conference Proceedings are being produced, and are expected to be available by early December. Every Conference delegate will receive a copy, and additional copies can be purchased at £10 each from the SPS Secretary, Mrs Judy Davies: telephone 01453 511175, or email [secretary@solentprotection.org](mailto:secretary@solentprotection.org)

The Conference was supported by Beaulieu Manor Estate and BP Shipping.

*Alan Inder SPS Council*

## Marine Bill

In April the Government published a draft Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny by Parliament and public consultation. It was based on the proposals set out in the White Paper – 'A Sea Change'. These included a new marine planning system and licensing rules; a new organisation to ensure better marine management and new power to enable the creation of a network of marine conservation zones.

Pre-legislative scrutiny was completed by a Joint Committee of the House of Lords and House of Commons and also the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee (EFRA). They received evidence from over 100 different witnesses (either in writing or orally), and made 119 specific recommendations to the Government in their reports which were published in July. In addition nearly 500 organisations responded to the public consultation by Defra. The Society responded to the Defra consultation and made submissions to the Parliamentary Committees.

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In September the Government published its response to the pre-legislative scrutiny and the public consultation in its Command paper "Taking Forward the Marine Bill". A summary of responses to the public consultation was published on the Defra website.

The key proposals remain unchanged in principle. The Government intends to :-

- Establish a new organisation, the Marine Management Organisation to deliver marine function in the waters around England;
- Place Ministers under a statutory duty to designate Marine Conservation Zones and include their duties and responsibilities in the Bill;
- Take forward the proposed marine planning system and place marine plan authorities under an obligation to ensure compatibility with terrestrial plans. Also ensure that the policy authorities review the Marine Policy Statement and that it is subject to Parliamentary scrutiny;
- Strengthen the management of marine fisheries including the streamlining and modernisation of the licensing and enforcement systems; and
- Place a duty on the Government and Natural England to establish a long distance coastal path and land available for open-air recreation.

The Government had included a Marine Bill in the draft legislative programme for the forthcoming session of Parliament. However the latest publications clearly state that the introduction of the draft Bill remains subject to the availability of Parliamentary time and the Society is concerned that, given the scale of the Bill, it will be omitted from the programme.

The Society will continue to monitor developments on the Bill and raise concerns when considered necessary. Further information can be obtained from [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

## Dibden Bay

Rumours have spread about the future of the Dibden Bay container port project, which was rejected by the Government in 2004 after a year-long public inquiry in which we took an active part along with other objectors. The Southampton port Director, Doug Morrison, is reported to have said recently that he backed the proposals. This is understandable, but it has naturally caused concern and an ABP spokesman subsequently said: "He was speaking about the future. We have no plans to do anything with that land". Meanwhile, as widely reported, including in our 2007 Spring Newsletter, ABP are planning major changes in the existing Western Docks to enlarge, sustainably, their deep-sea container and cruise ship capacity.

# Lymington Ferries - Update



At the last AGM of the Society, on 3rd December 2007, the following resolution was passed:-

*"It is agreed that the Solent Protection Society will register its objection to the introduction of new ferries on the Lymington to Yarmouth route, pending the completion of the relevant competent assessments prior to the ferries entering service. These assessments must be made public"*

The Society's position has not changed.

On 22nd April 2008, the Society hosted a briefing meeting of principal parties to further consider the situation regarding the new ferries for the Lymington to Yarmouth route. The meeting was attended by over 60 invitees and was fully reported in our Spring 2008 Newsletter and on the Society's website.

The purpose of our objection to the introduction of the new ferries is to maintain the right to ask questions and where appropriate to express concern regarding the development of the project and its subsequent operation. The Society remains firmly of the opinion that reliance must be placed upon the legal process for approval of plans and projects and on the powers of the operating authority, which in this case is the Lymington Harbour Commissioners.

The Society's position is more fully described in its Position Statement dated 12th September, published on its website – [www.solentprotection.org](http://www.solentprotection.org)

Currently, the first of the new ferries, Wight Light, has arrived in Lymington. BMT Seatech, the independent consultants retained by the Lymington Harbour Commissioners, have started Phase 2 of the sea trials as part of the Risk Assessment. The second ferry, Wight Sky, has arrived in the Solent.

No further action on this issue is contemplated by the Society until the results of the sea trials are published and Natural England has made its recommendations to the Marine Fisheries Authority on the environmental aspects and the MFA has published its decision regarding the application to develop the Lymington ferry terminal.

# Fort Gilkicker

Askett-Hawk, a company which has specialist experience in the conversion of historic buildings, has submitted an application to Gosport Borough Council to convert the Fort for residential use, with 26 dwellings, residents' stores and an interpretation room. This represents an increase on the 17 dwellings proposed by previous developers who found that their proposals were not economically sound.

Askett-Hawk will achieve the extra units by adding a second floor above the casemates and opening up two that were filled with concrete to stabilise the structure, adding material to restore the building's integrity. This extra floor will be partly hidden behind the parapet and is a practical solution to the problem.

The current position is that the consultation period ended on 30th September and the application is now to be considered by Gosport Council. The Society continues to support the development of the Fort as it is probably the only solution which will relieve the County Council of the huge expense of maintaining the building in a safe condition.

*Roy Rolf*

## The West Solent

Three years ago we began to develop ideas for the designation of the West Solent as a Marine National Park. A lot of thought, including a research study, was put into this, as reported in our newsletters, and we received some encouraging responses. Nevertheless, with the publication of the Government's very far-reaching Marine Bill, it became clear, as reported in our Spring 2007 Newsletter, that the time was not right for such a radical proposal. Instead, we should look at possible arrangements to ensure that the policy and management requirements of the Bill might best be applied in a balanced way in the interest of this very special area.

As a result, we have produced a paper describing the West Solent's character and emerging problems and suggesting how the Bill's proposals for 'Marine Spatial Planning' (MSP) might be directed towards priorities for its conservation, recreation use and economic well-being, in relation with its hinterland. Our paper foresees the long term need for a small, very low-cost co-ordinating body of Local, Harbour and other Authorities and key non-statutory bodies, which, in consultation with a wider stakeholder group, might guide proposals for the area in a truly representative way, using voluntary codes of practice as far as possible. It would also give the West Solent a 'voice' in the application of MSP in the Solent as a whole.

We are aware that some organisations could well have reservations about the idea. The RYA, for example, with whom we have a close working relationship, have told us that it would be premature before national strategic guidelines have been settled. We feel nevertheless that time would be required to establish effective co-ordination, and we have therefore decided to put our paper on the table, so to speak, for wider consideration. It is therefore on our website, and if there were to be an opportunity to present it at any local conference on the Marine Bill, we would be happy to do so.

*Professor Gerald Smart*

## Yarmouth Pier Restoration

Yarmouth Pier is the longest British wooden pier constructed in 1875/6 and now 609 feet long and Grade II listed.



In the past Solent Protection Society has contributed to the maintenance of the pier for public use and the Society's Conservation Award plaque is located in the cabin at the end of the pier.

In recent years the cross timbers and support legs have been attacked by wood boring Gribble worms, putting the pier's safety and future at risk. After much local lobbying the Heritage Lottery Fund made a substantial donation for the restoration of the pier and, combined with individual donations and those from charities such as SPS, enough money was raised for its total repair. Donors names have been carved on pier planks in recognition of their contribution to the restoration fund.



On Saturday 26th April the Isle of Wight High Sheriff, Alan Titchmarsh, officially reopened the pier for operational purposes. The structure's importance was further reflected by a visit by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on 5th August to unveil the final plank carved with his name.

The Solent Protection Society believes that the restoration of Yarmouth Pier is a positive development, where we felt it appropriate to donate some modest SPS funds towards the successful restoration of a well known and loved Solent feature.

*Tom Young*

## SPS Website

In between newsletters members can catch up on all the latest SPS news on the Society's website – [www.solentprotection.org](http://www.solentprotection.org)

We have recently revamped the website, adding a 'clickable' map of the Solent for easier navigation of the site.

[www.solentprotection.org](http://www.solentprotection.org)

# Chichester Harbour – Latest News

## East Head

The Environment Agency completed their public consultation of the proposed management plan, at the end of August. They will review the responses and finalise the strategy by the end of the year. EA then plans to process all the approvals before Spring 2009. There was an overall favourable reaction during the consultation. Local organisations and residents are being asked to explore local funding options.

A brief reminder of the adaptive management plan – occasional recycling of beach material from the northern end to safeguard the vulnerable hinge to the south. A buried sill will be placed behind the recharge area to prevent a tidal channel developing in the event of a storm breakthrough.

## Eames Farm

At long last the 170 acre Eames Farm on Thorney Island has been acquired by the Chichester Harbour Trust. The 999 year lease from West Sussex County Council was signed in August.

## 2012 Olympics

Hayling Island Sailing Club has been designated an official international training centre for the 2012 Olympic Games. Olympic sailing teams from around the world can apply to establish a training base at the club throughout 2011 and up to the Olympic event in Weymouth Bay. A new windsurfing centre is proposed for Beachlands on the southern shore to make Hayling Island a world-class water sport and sailing centre.

## Wildlife

Moderate numbers of Portuguese Man of War jelly fish have been turning up on local beaches. Birds breeding season initially showed good promise but the adverse turn of the weather with periods of high wind have kept final numbers down. Good numbers of Greenshank and Black Tailed Godwits have been arriving as the winter migration to Chichester waters gets underway. There have also been fine shows this summer of rarer plants such as Sea Heath, Marsh Mallows and Golden Samphire.

## Chichester Harbour Water Quality

Public consultation of Southern Water's (SW) Business Plan for 2010 – 2015 has taken the form of Roadshows at Chatham, Brighton and Southampton with presentations and meetings with key stakeholders. Despite SW £30m modification of all 3 treatment works discharging into the harbour, to strip nutrients to meet new stringent European legislation, Chichester Harbour Conservancy is after "more please". Specifically:

- more separation of storm water and sewage drains in the area
- further increases in the size of holding tanks at Treatment Works
- upgrading all pumping stations to stop untreated sewage discharging in storm conditions
- long sea outfall for main Chichester Treatment Works at Apuldram currently discharging at Dell Quay

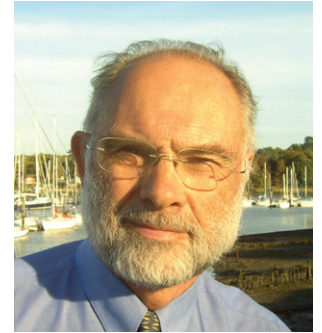
SW's hands are tied to a large extent by the Regulator and Defra imposing limits to their expenditure to meet Government concerns at the rise of residents' utility bills.

*Martin Rhodes*

# New Council Chairman

On 6th October, Jeremy Clark was elected as Chairman of the Solent Protection Society Council.

Jeremy joined the Council in 2005 and has been active in monitoring activity in the Hamble River area on behalf of the Society. For the past year he has been a member of the Strategy and Marketing Committee.



Now retired from executive roles in motor engineering, contract hire and coach travel in the Thames Valley, Jeremy held a Royal Warrant of Appointment as an automobile engineer to Her Majesty the Queen for 25 years.

Jeremy lives in a riverside house on the Hamble at Bursledon and has sailed in the Solent for 40 years. He is Treasurer of the River Hamble Mooring Holders Association; fund-raising chairman of the Swanwick, Bursledon and Warsash Regatta, and Secretary and a Trustee of a Southampton charity providing low cost counselling in the City.

Jeremy takes over the Chairmanship at a time when there are many important issues for the Society's attention and the SPS Council believe that Jeremy's business experience will be very valuable in this responsible position.

# Thanks to Sheelagh de Carteret Evans

Sheelagh Evans retires as Chair of the Solent Protection Society after nearly two years and we owe many thanks to her for her great efforts.

As well as the day to day work of Chair, Sheelagh has devoted a considerable amount of time to the Council's Lymington Ferries Committee and was very involved in the successful meeting the Society ran at Elmers Court, Lymington last April. This meeting did not seek to produce answers but attracted speakers who informed all those who attended.

Sheelagh was also the originator of the idea for the recent successful Saltmarsh Conference which took place at Beaulieu in September. We are grateful to Sheelagh for this innovative idea.

Throughout her time as Chair, as well as leading our meetings, Sheelagh has studied and interpreted the Marine Bill and explained its ramifications. We are delighted that she will remain on the Council, where we will continue to benefit from her experience, and that she will remain a member of the Lymington Ferries and Strategy and Marketing Committees.

*Jeremy Clark*