



Solent Protection Society

News

Protecting the Solent and its Environment for Future Generations

Spring 2004

Oil Shipments in the Solent



AP/Wide World Photos

Our escalating campaign for extra safety

The European Union followed the French and Spanish initiative last autumn and now prohibits single hull tankers carrying fuel oil and heavy crude oils from entering their ports or coastal waters. This has been part of the Society's aim and should be considered a positive step forward.

We are, however, still faced with the potential for the two major oil companies operating here to use single hull tankers trading with other crude oils in the Solent up to 2010, when international law will preclude them.

The Solent Protection Society has now had a constructive meeting with one of these companies, which claims to be sympathetic to our objectives and for the past months have only used double hull tankers which they agree offers extra protection. From the other company we continue to seek more assurance and clarity of their operation.

In addition, we are now also focusing our attention towards the safe navigation of the increasingly large container carriers and cruise liners, which carry significant quantities of bunker fuels in single hull tanks. We believe greater tug escort presence is essential to minimise

groundings or collisions where in some cases pilots state the safety clearance margin can be measured in inches not feet.

The oil industry has been associated in the recent past with disastrous marine pollution in countries such as Spain, France, Wales and Alaska.

In the event of a major oil spill, the damage to the Solent area would be devastating. As well as wildlife and the environment marine and tourism businesses would also be adversely affected.

As an Isle of Wight hotelier put it: "If there was a major oil spill in The Solent I would go out of business – no-one would want to come to the area or to my hotel".

The Solent Protection Society continues to campaign for the ban on the use of single hulled ships in Solent waters. If you are not already an SPS member you can help too by joining the Society. **See the application form under 'Join us' on the website or call the Society's Secretary, Mrs Judy Davies on (01590) 612345 (day) or 01425 621524 (after 5.00pm).**

SUMMER SOCIAL – Thursday 17th June

Please come along and join Solent Protection Society at our Summer Social on Thursday 17th June at the Royal Southern Yacht Club at Hamble. We look forward to meeting as many SPS members as possible and please bring along friends and relatives who are interested in the work of the Society. The Royal Southern Yacht Club in picturesque Hamble village has a unique view over the Hamble River (when our photo was taken it was rather a grey March day, but we are hoping to enjoy the view on a fine evening in June!).

Our Guest Speaker will be Keith Hamilton, Shipping Editor of The Southern Evening Echo, who will be talking to us about the history of Southampton as a port and the resurgence of the cruise liner industry. Keith is quite an expert on ships and has some interesting and amusing anecdotes, so it should be a lively and fun event.

With this newsletter you will find an A4 sheet with directions to the Royal Southern Yacht Club and a tear off reply to send back to us so that we can gauge the number of members and their guests who will be attending.

Supper will be available at the Club after the talk – **two courses and coffee for £15.00 so please indicate on the reply slip whether you will be staying for supper.**



Renewable Energy

Most people now know of the Government's intention to increase the degree of renewable energy. Within the UK Energy White Paper there is provision for the use of tidal energy, solar energy, re-cycled waste, biogas from manure and sewage as well as energy from wind turbines.

The Government has issued a Revised Planning Policy Statement for renewable energy to provide guidance for Local Authorities, which excludes offshore methods as these are outside Local Authority planning control; moreover, it is not meant to be regulatory. It is perhaps disquieting that this Planning Policy Statement is thus directed toward land use and wind turbines in particular, to the exclusion of maritime (the trend which both the White Paper and House of Commons Select Committee Science and Technology Report of May 2001 identify). Wind turbines do not operate effectively in wind strengths below 10 knots and if above 32 knots they self-destruct and often have to be closed down. On land, wind is variable in strength, on sea it blows harder and more consistently thus providing more predictability.

It is probable that over the long term tidal energy will be developed to the exclusion of wind energy but in the short to medium term, and to realise the Government aim to produce 10% renewable energy by 2010 followed by 20% in 2020 plus an increase thereafter, wind turbines will inevitably have to play a part. This will necessitate a number of wind farms up and down the

country being created on downland to include 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. Wind turbines will not necessarily protect the countryside from unjustified development, and because of the visual impact plus the noise factor may prove environmentally unacceptable. One of the dangers concerns the probable size of turbines since blades of 60metre length are now being made requiring taller towers (up to half height of the Eiffel Tower). The picture included with this article shows what size could be attained.

The siting of wind farm development is vital. A number of terrestrial wind farms have been granted planning permission nationally and some have met with strong protest. Those already constructed which are in residential areas have already generated objection due to noise in the form of 'thumping', low frequency noise causing sickness, irritating flicker from the blades; there is also a very recent Court case involving judgment upon residential value where affected by the proximity of turbines.

It has to be acknowledged that wind farms are relatively easy and quick to erect, they can be in operation fairly swiftly and carry low maintenance. The case against wind farms is outlined extensively within a publication produced by Country Guardian and is well worth study (www.countryguardian.net). Matters there addressed include noise, television interference, safety, tourism, jobs, house prices, effect on birds as well as overall policy.

The position of Solent Protection Society is that renewable energy (to include wind turbines) is not opposed per se. but part of the Society objectives should be to do everything possible to preserve the beauty of the Solent area. Any planning proposal is considered as to possible adverse effect upon the visual or aesthetic enjoyment of the skyline, of the coast or open sea. Some proposed wind farms would probably offend this principle and be opposed.

What is the current situation within the SPS area? There is one approved site in the Isle of Wight at Cheverton Down where so far no proper installation has taken place; it is outside SPS area but is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nonetheless planning approval has been given. A site at Wellow (also Isle of Wight and outside an ANOB) has been tested for wind strength and consistency but to date no planning application has been sought. Local opposition to any Wellow proposal is certain and any wind farm proposed and utilising large blades would make the turbines visible from the Solent. The Island has the organisation 'THWART' (The Wight against Rural Turbines) run by Robin Laird, an active local anti campaigner; this organisation took its rise from the 'ALTENER' Project (designed to power the Island through Renewable Energy).

If the proposed site for turbines in Weymouth Bay is approved this would be the first offshore development in the South of England and should therefore alert SPS to the possibility of similar encroachments in their area.

At the time of writing no other wind farm proposals are known about but the Society would be very anxious to know of any such proposal within SPS area, as defined in their literature.



*This is what a wind turbine could look like
Photo: THWART*



Richard Price - New Council member

RICHARD PRICE was elected to the SPS Council in November 2003. A chartered accountant, Richard co-founded BPP Holdings plc which specialises in postgraduate professional qualifications training. He retired from BPP's board in 2002 remaining a consultant to the group. He is also a director of two software companies.

Richard Price lives in Yarmouth and London. In addition to his business interests he is chairman of the Bach Choir, a council member of the Royal College of Music and a trustee of the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine.

REMINDER!
If you have not already taken steps to increase your annual subscription to £12 for individual members/£25 for clubs/£50 for corporate organisations, we would ask you to complete and return the enclosed standing order amendment form to the Secretary as soon as possible.

Chichester Harbour Lottery Funding

Chichester Harbour and its surrounding land was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1964 for its landscape and environmental qualities. When Chichester Harbour Conservancy was established in 1971 it had two roles: one as the harbour authority, and secondly to manage the AONB for the purposes of leisure and recreation, for nature conservation and the maintenance of its natural beauty. In 2001 the Conservancy seized the opportunity to prepare an Area Partnership Scheme which would be eligible for a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

A programme spanning three years consisting of 53 projects, costing some £1.5m was prepared entitled 'Rhythms of the Tide'.

These projects are categorised under eight headings:

- Coastal Landscape Enhancement
- Habitat Enhancement and Conservation
- Environmental Enhancement
- History, Archaeology and Heritage
- Access for All
- Sustainable Integrated Transport Scheme
- Education and Interpretation
- Monitoring, Surveys and Research

Many of these projects, particularly those relating to the shoreside of the harbour, are directly relevant to the objects of the Society. The Heritage Lottery Fund has now approved a grant of £1.27m to implement this programme with the balance of the cost being provided from Conservancy funds and donations by supporting partners and other bodies.

The first two projects to be implemented are the renovation of the old grain store on Dell Quay and the acquisition of a solar powered launch for use as a field studies mobile classroom to supplement the role of the Education Centre on Dell Quay, which has received a SPS grant. Dell Quay was the official port for Chichester and in past centuries much cargo, including grain, passed through it. One of the buildings remaining on the quay is of historical interest as the former grain store, containing some of its old handling machinery. It was in a poor state of repair, with its seaward end used as a race box by Dell Quay Sailing Club and the rest for general storage. It has now been renovated to provide office space for the HLF projects team and also as a room for meetings, while still leaving part of it for use by DQSC.

A new landing pontoon is also being installed at Dell Quay to provide easy access to the classroom launch including wheelchair access.

These three projects will be formally inaugurated on 21 May, including naming the launch, officially accepting the HLF grant and introducing the 2004-2009 Management Scheme for the AONB which has been sponsored by the Countryside Agency. All the other HLF projects will be progressed during the coming three years.

Lymington River Harbour Protection

The Lymington Harbour Commissioners, using their statutory powers to levy harbour dues, have decided to establish a fund to pay for future harbour protection works. From 2004 all boats permanently moored in Lymington Harbour, including the private marinas, will pay an annual sum based on the vessel's length at the rate of £5.75 per metre of boat length for this year. Wightlink will also contribute a proportionate amount. Below is an explanation of the reasoning behind this programme.

Under the 1951 Lymington Harbour Act, The Commissioners have a statutory duty to maintain and conserve the harbour. For many years, the harbour has operated in a relatively benign environment, the upper reaches well sheltered by the outer saltmarsh. However this marsh is fast eroding. The prospect of stemming the rate of erosion is remote. After the severe storm of 15 October 1987, when storm force winds from the S.S.E. caused damage to moored craft, the present wave screen was erected. This has proved successful in reducing wave action in the upper harbour in south easterly winds. The wave screen was designed however to act within the relatively sheltered conditions provided by the outer marshes.

The illustration of marsh regression provided by the N.F.D.C. Coastal Engineers is self-explanatory. Faced with the progressive loss of protection to the harbour, the Commissioners have asked consulting engineers to prepare plans for an outer line of harbour defences as shown in the accompanying map.

At present, the favoured approach is to construct rock groynes or bastions. In the light of site investigation, consultation with the various regulating agencies etc. this plan may need to be modified. One fact is unlikely to change however, a project of this nature will be expensive and is likely to cost in excess of £1,000,000. The Commissioners consider the correct approach is to build up a fund incrementally in order to pay for this work, rather than wait until the harbour becomes so exposed that swingeing harbour dues have to be levied.

The Commissioners will explore the possibility of obtaining help with funding this project. The Crown Estate, who as landlords of the harbour are paid an annual rent of £135k by the Commissioners, will be approached. Close co-operation with the N.F.D.C., as the coast protection authority, will establish the extent to which DEFRA grants can help us. The Harbour Protection Fund as envisaged will raise £100k p.a. The fund will be "ring fenced" and will only be used for protective work in the harbour.



By courtesy of NFDC Coastal Protection Group

Educational Programme

The Society had a very promising first meeting with Jeff Stanfield, who is responsible for the Geography curriculum at Hampshire County Council Local Education authority. These days Geography includes environmental studies and citizenship and Solent Protection Society are keen to encourage young people to grow up respecting and protecting the environment.

We anticipate creating and developing, with teaching staff help, an environmental programme for ages 4 – 18 years, including some interactive areas of our web site tailored to different age groups and news sheets that can be circulated to the 700 schools in the County.

We will keep you informed about this long term project.

Woolston Riverside Southampton

The Woolston shipyard in Southampton has been bought from Vosper Thornycroft by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), who will be working with English Partnerships and Southampton City Council to redevelop this valuable twenty four acre site.

The internationally renowned Richard Rogers Partnership will be the overall masterplanners/architects.



The northern half of the site, which has very valuable, ongoing deep water dredging rights, is scheduled for employment. The southern half which also has a riverside frontage and is partially covered by an SSI, will be high density mixed residential housing. Fifteen to twenty storey apartment blocks are envisaged.

The river frontage, which has to be raised due to sea level rise, will be created in an attractive and environmentally friendly way rather than a concrete walling or piling.

Southampton City Council is determined to ensure that there will be high level of community consultation for this very prestigious opportunity. For further information you can contact Richard Smith at Southampton City Council on 023 8083 2588.

The Former Webb's Chicken Factory Site, Lymington

The Society has considered the proposed redevelopment of the Bridge Road site at Lymington with 300 dwellings, 69 of which are to be affordable, an hotel, restaurant and works units, described in the recent planning application by Paxton Holdings Ltd.

We have looked at how the development might blend with the landscape of the Lymington River and its valley, and enable people to obtain views of the water. In our opinion both these requirements are met, in principle, by the arrangement of the dwellings around courtyards that are open-ended to the river, by the provision of a new footpath around the river side of the site, and by the form, elevations, landscaping, and likely choice of materials of the proposed buildings. We note that provision for replacement industry is offered elsewhere.

Raising the level of the site in order to eliminate the flood risk, as shown on the plans, together with the predominantly three and four storey building heights could make the development appear prominent from some viewpoints. We accept however, that there is a good case for having a fairly high density of dwellings on this brownfield site.

We think that the only access from the site to Bridge Road, very close as it is to the level crossing, will not be able to cope adequately with traffic generated by the scheme. This is not an issue that the Society is qualified to assess but, if the Local Authorities and community organisations feel that it is necessary to reduce the scale of development on the site as Lymington Town Council have, we would agree with them.

Stop Press! Dibden Bay Inquiry

As we go to press today we have heard the good news that the Government has turned down the proposal for a container terminal at Dibden Bay. The Society has run a long campaign opposing the proposal and, together with other associations, made representations at the Public Inquiry.

Professor Gerald Smart, a member of Solent Protection's Council who, with Trevor Ward of Counsel, gave evidence several times at the Inquiry on the Society's behalf, said today:

"The rejection of ABP's proposed container terminal at Dibden Bay is a huge relief to all national and local organisations which opposed it at the year-long Public Inquiry. The government has made a wise decision, in which the evidence given by HCC and NFDC, conservation groups including Solent Protection Society, and by RADBP on behalf of local communities, has obviously been a major factor.

"Clearly the very important natural resources of the area, meriting, for example, its inclusion in the proposed New Forest National Park, and the development opportunities offered by alternative locations on the east coast, have been fully appreciated.

"We have no doubt that Southampton still has a very promising future as a major port serving the national interest in many ways."

East Head, Chichester

As a result of winter storms, which thankfully were not too severe, EAST HEAD has lost some more of the sand facing the rock berm, which was installed four years ago inside the dunes as a safeguard to prevent a breakthrough at the Hinge. As the outcome of the Pagham to East Head Shoreline Strategic Defence Study is still awaited, planning approval is being sought for the berm to be retained after the initial five years approval. However as it has not yet been exposed or overtopped, the Environment Agency and English Nature are now requiring more information and assessments regarding the need for the berm before accepting that approval may be granted for it to remain in position.

SPS 2004 Conservation Award

The Solent Protection Society presented its 2004 Conservation Award to the Bursledon Brickworks Trust at a ceremony at the Brickworks on Sunday 21st March, its first Open Day this year.

Mr Roy Rolf, Deputy Chairman of Solent Protection Society unveiled the award plaque which was accepted by Fareham Borough Councillor, Jim Murray, Chairman of Bursledon Brickworks Trust.



Bursledon Brickworks has historic connections to the Solent – the company delivered its products by sailing barge from its quay on the Hamble River and the restoration of the buildings and the range of rescued and restored historical brick making equipment continues to grow, realising the Trust's aim to become a national archive and a Centre of the Built Environment.

Other projects that have received Solent Protection Society's prestigious Conservation Award include Eling Tide Mill, Hurst Castle, Yarmouth Pier and Forton Lake Bridge.