



# **Briefing Note to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Joint Committee**

Date: **05 December 2017**

Report of: **Simon Finch, SRMP Board Chairman**

Subject: **Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership Strategy**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Joint Committee regarding the progress made on the development of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership Strategy with a recommendation that Committee endorses the Strategy, including revisions made to the draft, following public consultation undertaken earlier in the year. The new Strategy will replace the Interim Strategy agreed by PUSH Joint Committee in December 2014.
2. This matter was last considered by the PUSH Joint Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> June. At this meeting it was agreed to undertake public consultation on the draft Strategy and bring it back to Joint Committee before the end of 2017 with a view to endorsing the document. This consultation took place over the summer and attracted 49 responses which are summarised in Appendix 1. Should the Strategy be endorsed by the Joint Committee, it will need to be adopted by each of local authority within the Partnership. The process of adoption will be a matter for each council to determine.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Joint Committee NOTES and ENDORSES the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership's Strategy as a mechanism to mitigate the effects of increased recreational visits on the Solent Special Protection Areas which will arise from planned new house building in the vicinity of the coast to 2034.

## The Strategy

3. This Strategy was drafted to provide the necessary mitigation for planned new housing up to 2034 with an in-perpetuity fund to continue to mitigate against the recreational impacts of this additional house building for a further period of 80 years (2114). A public consultation exercise was undertaken on this Draft Strategy and the responses and outcomes of that survey are outlined in Appendix 1 of this report. Where considered appropriate, the Strategy has been amended to address points raised in the representations received.

## Overview and Consultation

4. The public consultation exercise took place between 17<sup>th</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> September. It took the form of an online questionnaire on the Bird Aware website ([www.birdaware.org](http://www.birdaware.org)) and to make it more accessible paper responses were also made available for sending to a postal address on request.
5. The consultation was actively promoted on the Bird Aware twitter account, in press releases and through partner organisations. Additionally an email was sent to around 1,600 contacts with a known interest in development (land owners, developers, land agents, planning consultants) informing them of the consultation and inviting them to participate.
6. The press releases were used in two national publications which were Planning Resource (specifically targeted at planners) and the ENDS Report (covering a wider range environmental and sustainability issues).

## Level of Response

7. A total of 49 responses were received. The respondents were asked to identify the capacity in which they (or their organisation) were commenting and the breakdown of this information is as follows: 19 residents, 7 planning consultants, 8 conservation interest, 5 public sector organisations, 3 developers and 7 used the category of 'other'.

## Nature of responses

8. As expected from such a wide variety of interest groups responding, the comments varied considerably, with some seeming to be 100% in favour of the Strategy whilst others commented it was misconceived and should be scrapped.
9. As the Strategy has been created to provide a strategic approach to managing the recreational pressure on overwintering birds in the Solent from an increasing population arising from additional housebuilding, it is anticipated that its main user will be developers and local authority planners. Therefore it is worth noting that a developer commented *'Providing a contribution is simpler than having to provide our own mitigation package, which can be both time consuming and costly. The Strategy allows us to understand what our contribution will be from the outset and to plan accordingly.'*

10. A full report related to the responses is available on the Bird Aware website ([www.birdaware.org/strategy](http://www.birdaware.org/strategy)), but a flavour of the feedback provided is set out below:
- The charge per development housing is extremely low and could do with being tenfold the proposed cost.
  - The approach is helpful to the development industry as a means of discharging their statutory duty to mitigate the impact of their developments.
  - One strategy for the entire Solent seems unrealistic given the widely differing areas involved
  - As a point of principle, it seems wrong to tax only the delivery of new homes to deal with an existing issue.
  - Mitigation should not be an open cheque book and a reporting system of benefit against cost should be mandatory in considering if the scheme is successful.
  - Given the lack of breakdown and justification for the overall cost figures presented, there is not confidence that the overall approach is fair and reasonable, rather it appears unnecessarily burdensome on development.
  - It is considered that the approach taken to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to protect birds on the Solent are reasonable, in that for the majority of sites, developers would be required to make one off payments rather than provide on-site (or find land for) mitigation. The document is up front in providing the required sum and as such developers will be able to incorporate this cost into initial viability work.
  - The proposed financial level of mitigation per dwelling is modest.
  - The measures being proposed to protect habitats against intrusions that could impact local bird life appear to be mostly land based. We would like to see additional measures designed to protect birds from intrusive leisure activity from the seas around coastal areas.
  - The Strategy is misconceived, expensive, inefficient and should be scrapped.
  - Great work! Love it. Well done.

### **SRMP's response to the public consultation feedback**

11. The comments made in response to the consultation were varied and the preceding section provides an overview of the main points raised. However all feedback provided has been carefully considered by the SRMP and this has informed the final version of the document. The Partnership has also published a summary of the comments along with a Partnership response to every issue highlighted. Where appropriate the Strategy has been changed to address particular issues and to give greater clarity for all those who will need to use it.
12. Following consideration of the comments made during the consultation period, several amendments have been made to the Strategy and these are detailed in Appendix 1.

13. For clarity, they have been collected into themes and where possible the main genre of respondents raising the issues has been identified.
14. As mentioned at 10 above, a full report on the consultation responses and the SRMP's consideration of them is available on the Bird Aware website at [www.birdaware.org/strategy](http://www.birdaware.org/strategy).
15. As supporting information, the amended Strategy is included with this paper, as Appendix 2.
16. The table below outlines the local growth deal budget position as of October 2017.

<b>LOCAL GROWTH DEAL - Finance statement as at 31st October 2017</b>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Forecast</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Complementary Spending</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<u>£'s</u>	<u>£'s</u>	<u>£'s</u>	<u>£'s</u>	<u>£'s</u>
<u>Original Plan</u>						
<i>Manor House Farm - Project replaced by 2 new projects.</i>	<i>Deleted</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>375,000.00</i>	<i>970,000.00</i>	<i>1,345,000.00</i>
Horsea Island - creation of a new country park by Portsmouth CC.	Ongoing	85,875.00	304,125.00	390,000.00	1,500,000.00	1,890,000.00
		85,875.00	304,125.00	765,000.00	2,470,000.00	3,235,000.00
<u>Revised Plan</u>						
SCC: Shoreburs Greenway Footpath Improvement Project	Added	0.00	150,000.00	150,000.00	376,000.00	526,000.00
Itchen Valley Country Park (EBC) - <i>Withdrawn - proposed replacement scheme Hayling Island Brent Geese refuge (Havant BC)*</i>	Added	0.00	225,000.00	225,000.00	835,000.00	1,060,000.00
		0.00	375,000.00	375,000.00	1,211,000.00	1,586,000.00
Horsea Island - creation of a new country park by Portsmouth CC.	Ongoing	85,875.00	304,125.00	390,000.00	1,500,000.00	1,890,000.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>85,875.00</b>	<b>679,125.00</b>	<b>765,000.00</b>	<b>2,711,000.00</b>	<b>3,476,000.00</b>

\*see coordinators report on the same agenda

## Conclusions

17. The new Strategy builds on the good work delivered by the Interim Strategy and means that an effective mechanism to mitigate the increased recreational pressure on the coast resulting from planned house building within 5.6 kilometres of Solent Special Protection Areas (SPAs) up to 2034 will continue to be available to councils and developers over the next 17 years. The Strategy will therefore enable planning permissions to be granted by local authorities which mean developers can build the homes the Solent area needs.

18. Whilst the average cost per unit in the new Strategy is significantly higher than is the case with the existing Interim Strategy (£564 compared to £181 per dwelling) it remains relatively inexpensive compared to other comparable schemes (for example the New Forest scheme is £2,050 to £5,050 depending on property size, whilst the Thames Basin Heath scheme ranges from £2,000 to £15,000 depending on property size and exact location). Based on the feedback received to the public consultation, it seems unlikely that it will render many developments economically unviable bearing in mind the mitigation costs will be clear up-front in most instances so can be factored in when land is acquired and proposals designed. Incorporating a sliding scale in the new Strategy based on the size of proposed dwellings (number of bedrooms) as opposed to a fixed cost, as in the Interim Strategy, is also likely to make it easier to manage viability issues.
19. The Strategy provides a convenient way for developers to mitigate the impacts of their developments without having to provide bespoke measures which may be difficult in practical terms and potentially far more expensive. However, as with the Interim Strategy, there is no obligation for a developer to make contributions to the new Strategy and it is open to them to pursue other ways to mitigate the effects of their scheme.
20. As is the case with the Interim Strategy the emphasis remains on managing the way visitors interact with the coastal environment, rather than trying to prevent access to it *per se*, in order to avoid harmful impacts on nature conservation interests. It focusses on informing and educating all users of the coast so as to influence how they behave when visiting the Solent.
21. In summary therefore it is considered that the new Strategy provides a practical means to deal with the effects of new house building on the Solent SPAs and is an excellent example of strategic and collaborative working involving local authorities within and adjoining PUSH as well as national and local nature conservation bodies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **Background Papers:**

- None

### **Reference Papers:**

- Appendix 1 = Issues raised and responses
- Appendix 2 = Strategy

**ENQUIRIES:**

For further information on this report please contact:-

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