

Draft Definitive Strategy

Fourth draft June 2017

DRAFT

## **Definitive Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy**

A strategy to mitigate the impact on the Solent Special Protection Areas of the increased recreational visits which will arise from new housing

**Consultation draft – June 2017**

**Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership**

## Your comments invited

In 2014, local authorities and key conservation bodies around the Solent adopted an interim strategy to mitigate the recreational impact of new housing on the Solent Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Implementation of it has been funded by a developer contribution for each new home built within 5.6 kilometres of the SPAs - in 2014 it was £172 per dwelling but has since risen to £181 in line with inflation.

The strategy has limitations, but it enabled some mitigation to be put in place while a definitive strategy was being prepared. A small ranger team is now in post, supported by a website and publicity using the brand name 'Bird Aware Solent'.

This is the consultation draft of the definitive strategy. Based on a full assessment of the evidence, it proposes a more comprehensive package of mitigation measures and a higher baseline developer contribution of £564 per dwelling. Encouragingly, the majority of development industry representatives who attended three seminars in February 2017 indicated that the higher developer contribution would not hinder the delivery of homes.

Now it's your chance to comment. The Partnership wants to hear your views on the questions at the end of the document. Please reply on-line at [www.xxxxxxxx](http://www.xxxxxxxx) (*new email account to be created*) or post back the form at the end of this document **by 19<sup>th</sup> September 2017**.

Further information about this consultation including related documents and answers to frequently-asked questions is available at: [www.xxxxxxxx](http://www.xxxxxxxx) (*new web page to be created*)

We look forward to hearing from you and will acknowledge your reply.

*Simon Finch*  
*Project Board Chairman*  
*Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership*

*NB: In the final version of the document, this page will be replaced by a Foreword from the Partnership Chairman, Councillor Seán Woodward*

## Contents

Summary .....	4
1 Introduction .....	5
2 The need for mitigation .....	6
3 Overall approach and benefits .....	9
4 The mitigation measures .....	11
5 Resource costs and funding .....	14
6 Developer contributions .....	17
7 Implementation, governance and reporting .....	20
Appendix A: Calculation of number of new dwellings mitigated .....	22
Appendix B: Criteria for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces(SANGs) .....	23
Appendix C: Resource costs .....	25
Appendix D: In-perpetuity funding .....	26
Appendix E: References .....	28

The Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership was established to formulate, implement and monitor the strategy using developer contributions transferred from the local planning authorities. The Partnership comprises the fifteen Solent local authorities, Natural England, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and Chichester Harbour Conservancy. The authorities are: Chichester District Council, East Hampshire District Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, Gosport Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, Havant Borough Council, Isle of Wight Council, New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, South Downs National Park Authority, Test Valley Borough Council, Winchester City Council.

Further information about the Partnership and its work including answers to frequently-asked questions is available at: [www.birdaware.org](http://www.birdaware.org)

## Summary

Tens of thousands of coastal birds fly from as far as the Arctic to spend the winter on the Solent. They need to be able to feed and rest undisturbed, if they are to survive the winter and fly back to their summer habitats. Three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been designated to safeguard the birds.

Over 60,000 new homes are planned around the Solent up to 2034. Research has shown that these will lead to more people visiting the coast for recreation, potentially causing additional disturbance to these birds.

The strategy set out in this document, aims to prevent bird disturbance from recreational activities. It seeks to do this through a series of management measures which actively encourage all coastal visitors to enjoy their visits in a responsible manner rather than restricting access to the coast or preventing activities that take place there. Prepared by the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership of local authorities and conservation bodies, the strategy proposes:-

- a team of 5-7 coastal rangers to advise people on how to avoid bird disturbance, liaise with landowners, host school visits, etc;
- communications, marketing and education initiatives and a part-time officer to implement them;
- initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking and a full-time officer to implement them;
- preparation of codes of conduct for a variety of coastal activities;
- site-specific projects to better manage visitors and provide secure habitats for the birds;
- providing new/enhanced greenspaces as an alternative to visiting the coast;
- a partnership manager to coordinate and manage all the above.

Implementation of these measures and monitoring of their effectiveness, will be funded by an average of £564 per dwelling 'developer contribution' for new homes built within 5.6 kilometres of the SPAs. (This 5.6 kilometre zone is where the majority of coastal visitors live.) Some developments may require additional mitigation due to their size or proximity to a SPA.

The developer contributions will be collected by the local authorities and transferred to the Partnership which will implement the measures. Some of the money received will be set aside to fund the measures 'in-perpetuity' (i.e. for 80 years) after 2034.

Council leaders will steer and oversee the Partnership's activities and expenditure. Progress on implementation and financial accounts will be published in an annual report.

Further information about the Partnership and its work is available at:

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

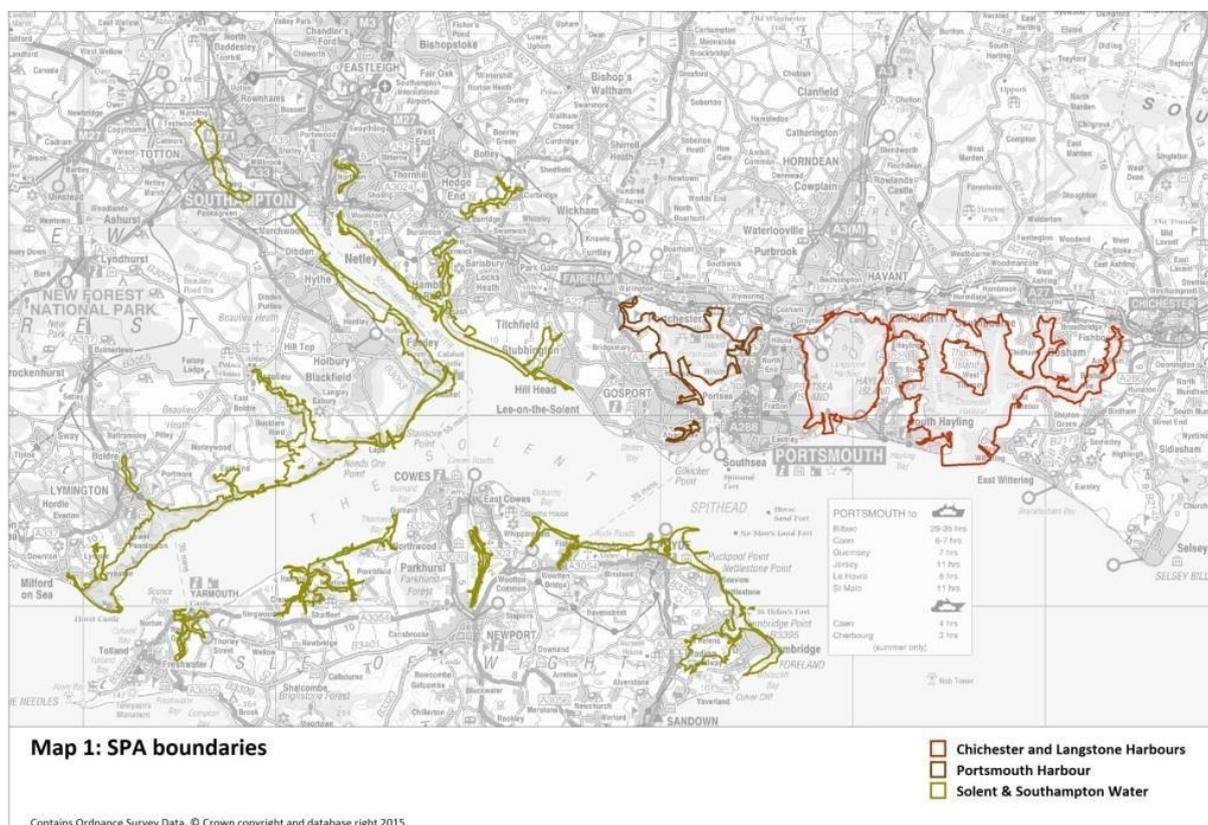
## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Solent is internationally important for its wildlife. Each winter, the Solent hosts over 90,000 waders and wildfowl including 10 per cent of the global population of brent geese. These birds come from as far as Siberia to feed and roost before returning to their summer habitats to breed. Three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) were designated by the Government predominantly to protect these over-wintering birds (see map on page 6).
- 1.2. Legislation requires mitigation for any impact which a proposed development, in combination with other plans or project, is likely to have on a SPA. It requires local planning authorities before they grant planning permission for the project, to ensure the necessary mitigation will be provided.
- 1.3. A development can have various impacts, but one which is likely to arise from all new housing around the Solent SPAs is the impact of additional recreational visits. Although the developer has the legal duty to provide the mitigation, the local authorities and conservation groups have devised a strategic approach to the provision of the mitigation for recreational impacts.
- 1.4. This document sets out that strategic approach, the mitigation measures to be implemented, and the arrangements for governance, reporting, and monitoring. It provides mitigation for the recreational visits arising from housing which is planned around the Solent up to 2034. It does not deal with any other impacts on the SPAs - loss of habitat, increased noise, effect on water quality etc - which may arise from new housing, or the potential impact of other types of development such as new employment sites.
- 1.5. The aim of the strategy is to prevent any net increase in bird disturbance as a result of additional recreational pressures arising from new residential development: addressing the impact of existing activities is the role of the separate Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS) initiative.
- 1.6. This strategy enables a housebuilder to make a monetary 'developer contribution' instead of providing bespoke mitigation themselves. A developer can provide their own mitigation, but for the vast majority it will be simpler, quicker and less costly to pay the developer contribution. This approach provides clarity and certainty for both developers and local authorities. It helps to deliver coordinated and effective mitigation, whilst simultaneously speeding up the development approval process and reducing the costs for all parties. It also provides a means for mitigating the impact of small developments for which it would not be practical to provide bespoke mitigation.

## 2. The need for mitigation

- 2.1. The Solent coast, particularly its mudflats, shingle and saltmarshes, provide essential winter feeding and roosting grounds for birds that spend the winter here. The wide range of recreational activities which take place on this coast can result in disturbance to the birds, albeit often unintentional.
- 2.2. Human disturbance of the birds can have several impacts. Birds may be more alert, resulting in a reduction in the amount of food eaten, or they may move away from the disturbance. A bird which moves away forgoes valuable feeding time whilst in the air and also uses energy in flying - a double impact on the bird's energy reserves. If the disturbance is substantial, then food-rich areas may be little used by the birds or avoided altogether, leading to other areas hosting a higher density of birds and intensifying the competition for the available food.
- 2.3. Ultimately, the consequence of human disturbance can be increased bird mortality or a reduction in the amount of energy which the individual bird has available at the end of the winter period to fly back to its breeding grounds. If as a consequence the birds are unable to complete their migratory journey or are not in sufficiently good condition to breed when they arrive, then this would lead to a reduction in the bird population.

## The Solent Special Protection Areas



- 2.4. Extensive research was undertaken during 2009-2013 to assess the impact of recreational activity on wintering birds on the Solent coast. It included recording the response of birds to disturbance, face-to-face surveys of visitors at the coast, and a postal survey of households living around the Solent. Computer modelling using that information predicted the number of additional recreational visits which would be generated by planned housebuilding.
- 2.5. By far the most popular activity taking place at the coast is walking, with jogging and cycling also proving popular. The research shows that these account for 91% of all recreational activity<sup>1</sup>. The same research also highlighted that dogs off lead were a cause of 47% of all 'major flights' i.e. bird(s) flying more than 50 metres to escape disturbance<sup>2</sup>. This is why understanding the needs of dog walkers and proactively working with them is a priority for the Partnership.
- 2.6. Although other types of recreational use such as surfing, horse riding and rowing only amount to a total of 9% of activities carried out, each occurrence can create substantial disturbance<sup>3</sup>. Therefore the Partnership has longer term goals to work with each of these groups too.
- 2.7. The research predicted a 13% increase in visitor numbers at the Solent coast as a result of planned new housing, with the change on individual sections varying from 4% to 84%<sup>4</sup>. This highlights that the planned new housing will mean a large increase in coastal visits with a likely impact on the birds unless mitigation measures are put in place.
- 2.8. The research how people behave, and how access is managed at each location determines the extent of disturbance<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.9. On the basis of this research, Natural England - the Government's advisor on the natural environment - issued formal advice to the Solent local planning authorities in March 2013. Their letter<sup>6</sup> stated: "*This follows the completion of Phase II of the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (SDMP), which reported that there is a Likely Significant Effect associated with the new housing planned around the Solent. Natural England's advice is that the SDMP work represents the best available evidence, and therefore avoidance measures are required in order to ensure a significant effect, in combination, arising from new housing development around the Solent, is avoided.*"
- 2.10. Ecological consultants Footprint Ecology were then commissioned to recommend a package of appropriate mitigation measures. Drawing on an evaluation of measures used elsewhere in the UK and the expert opinion of leading academics and practitioners, they recommended<sup>7</sup>:-
  - 2.10.1. A delivery officer
  - 2.10.2. A team of wardens/rangers
  - 2.10.3. A coastal dog walkers project
  - 2.10.4. A review of parking
  - 2.10.5. A review of watersport zones/watersport access

- 2.10.6. Codes of conduct pack
- 2.10.7. Series of site specific projects
- 2.10.8. Watersport permits & enforcement
- 2.10.9. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces/additional green Infrastructure/alternative roost sites.

2.11. Of these, the main recommendation (in terms of resource allocation) would be the team of wardens/rangers. Footprint Ecology recommended that around 5-7 rangers would form a core team, supplemented with casual staff if necessary<sup>8</sup>. The main ranger presence would be required from September through to the end of March, they advised, but that summer tasks - such as delivering projects, liaison with local landowners and stakeholders - might make it appropriate for some staff to be employed all year.

2.12. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) are a key mitigation measure at some other Special Protection Areas, but Footprint Ecology recommended caution in using them for the Solent SPAs<sup>9</sup>. In large part this was because a survey showed that many people visit the Solent coast for the sea views and the feeling of 'being beside the sea': 34% of those surveyed stated that nothing could be done to make an alternative site more attractive to them<sup>10</sup>. A subsequent study<sup>11</sup> concluded that SANGs may have a role to play in providing mitigation if they are closely linked to management at the coast, are targeted in the right locations, and are accompanied by active promotion of their existence.

2.13. The evidence<sup>12</sup> showed that mitigation should be required from all dwellings built within 5.6 kilometres of the boundaries of the SPAs. This is the zone from which 75% of coastal visitors live. The zone boundary is defined by using straight line distances from the SPA boundary. This approach is the same as that adopted for Thames Basin Heaths and Dorset Heathlands SPAs.

2.14. Two research studies were commissioned to help identify which measures would be the most effective in encouraging responsible dog walking. The first was market research with dog walkers<sup>13</sup> involving interviews at the coast and an on-line survey.

2.15. The second study<sup>14</sup> reviewed measures which have been successfully used elsewhere in the UK and would be relevant to the circumstances of the Solent. It recommended the use of a website, social media and other initiatives to raise dog walkers' awareness of bird disturbance and to promote alternative inland greenspaces. The study emphasised that these initiatives would require adequate resourcing and this has been taken into account with the staffing numbers to carry out this Strategy. They allow for a full time dedicated resource to work with dog walkers and dog interest groups to achieve a way forward that fully considers their needs.

*NB: References for the documents mentioned above are in Appendix E.*

### 3. Overall approach and benefits

- 3.1. The aim of this strategy is to prevent any net increase in bird disturbance as a result of additional recreational pressures arising from the approximately 64,000 new dwellings which are planned around the Solent SPAs up to 2034 (see Appendix A for the derivation of this figure). This will be achieved by:-
- 3.1.1. raising awareness and encouraging behavioural change of coastal visitors;
  - 3.1.2. implementing projects to better manage visitors and provide secure habitats for the birds;
  - 3.1.3. providing and promoting new/enhanced greenspaces in less sensitive areas as an alternative to visiting the coast.
- 3.2. This overall approach of better managing visitors at the coast, rather than attempting to restrict access through bylaws, permits, etc, reflects the research (paragraph 2.8 above) which found that the level of disturbance is determined more by peoples' behaviour than by the number of visitors.
- 3.3. Public access to the coast provides benefits including health, education, inspiration, spiritual and general well-being. Visitor access is also important in the management of the sites for nature conservation, because people are more likely to want to be involved with and protect local sites if they have close links with them. So by maintaining public access but with measures to ensure that recreational activity and nature conservation interests are not in conflict, the coast can be managed for the benefit of both wildlife and the public.
- 3.4. Based on the findings on the level of disturbance caused by various recreational activities (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 above), this strategy places a particular focus on walkers, cyclists, and dog walkers, but with proportionate mitigation measures for other recreational activities. So the package of mitigation measures comprises:-
- 3.4.1. A team of rangers
  - 3.4.2. Communications, marketing and education initiatives
  - 3.4.3. Initiatives to facilitate and encourage responsible dog walking
  - 3.4.4. Codes of conduct
  - 3.4.5. Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects
  - 3.4.6. New/enhanced strategic greenspaces
  - 3.4.7. A delivery officer (called 'Partnership Manager from here on)
  - 3.4.8. Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary.
- 3.5. These measures are described in more detail in the next section. The package echoes the recommendations of consultants Footprint Ecology (paragraph 2.10 above) except for their proposal for watersport permits and enforcement. The latter would be contrary to the Partnership's overall approach which is aimed at managing rather than preventing activity at the coast. The consultants' recommendations for a review of watersports zones and parking may be considered again if monitoring of the Strategy's effectiveness suggests additional steps are required and these actions are judged likely to assist with providing further mitigation.

- 3.6. Implementation of these measures will help avoid disturbance to the birds which fly thousands of miles to spend the winter here. There will be benefits for people too, with a wider range of greenspaces and better facilities at many of them. It will be a win-win outcome: an enhanced range of quality recreational opportunities **and** safeguarding of the birds which are such an important feature of our shores.

#### 4. The mitigation measures

- 4.1. This section sets out the mitigation measures required. How they will be resourced is dealt with in section 5.

##### Rangers

- 4.2. The rangers are the key mitigation measure. A small interim team was established in late 2015. They have begun to establish themselves and their presence has generally been well received. However, a larger team is needed in order to build the necessary rapport with people who regularly visit the coast, with local communities, land owners and partner organisations and to enable a satisfactory minimum ranger presence along the 250 kilometre Solent coastline.
- 4.3. During the winter period (1 October - 31 March), a team of seven rangers will focus their time on engaging with visitors at the coast, explaining the vulnerability of the birds, and advising people how they can avoid bird disturbance.
- 4.4. Five of the seven will be employed all-year. During the summer period (1 April - 30 September), the five will undertake tasks for which there is insufficient time during the winter period or which are best done during better weather. Those tasks will include meeting with landowners and stakeholders, installing/maintaining signs and interpretation panels, assisting with dog walking initiatives, staffing a stand at outdoor shows/events; hosting school visits, and preparing codes of conduct in consultation with local clubs (see paragraph 4.9 below). Once the enlarged ranger team is in place, they will prepare the Access Management Assessments described in paragraph 4.11 below.

##### Communications, marketing and education initiatives

- 4.5. The overall approach of this strategy is to secure behavioural change through awareness raising. Communications, marketing and education are central to that mission. The 'Bird Aware Solent' brand name, a presence on Twitter and Facebook, and a high quality website provide sound foundations for further communications and education initiatives. Those further initiatives are likely to include further development of the website, regular press releases, longer articles for magazines, educational materials for schools, and a range of

leaflets targeted at different coastal visitor groups. A gazebo or a mobile display vehicle would enable key messages to be disseminated at local events/shows events.

#### Initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking

- 4.6. Key messages for dog walkers will be part of the general communications, marketing and education initiatives described above, but online and printed materials specifically targeted at dog walkers will also be produced.
- 4.7. A dedicated member of staff for dog walker engagement will roll out a series of positive measures to actively work with this group and will draw from measures that have been successful in other areas.

#### Codes of conduct

- 4.8. Codes of conduct will be developed, in conjunction with user groups, as the mitigation measure for activities such as horse-riding and water-based recreation (sailing, rowing, kite surfing etc). This measure is proportionate to the impact of these activities which is small compared to walking, jogging and cycling.
- 4.9. Codes of conduct are particularly effective for club-based activities, but their availability - via smartphone access to the Partnership's website for example - can also be promoted to casual visitors through signs at locations where the activities take place. Preparing the codes in conjunction with local clubs/user groups will ensure that appropriate language is used and will help secure buy-in as a result of the clubs being signatories to the codes.

#### Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects

- 4.10. These projects could include: signs and interpretation boards, provision of a low wall/fence/planting to discourage coastal users from accessing particularly sensitive spots, screening to reduce visual and noise disturbance to birds (but low enough to enable people to still see the birds and the sea), a new car park to replace one on a sensitive section of coast, enhancing bird roosts to make them more secure, improving an inland footpath to encourage walkers to skirt around a vulnerable site. Such measures may reduce the need for the rangers to visit the stretches of coast so frequently where they have been implemented.
- 4.11. The Partnership has evaluated an initial tranche of potential projects for implementation as soon as funding becomes available. Further projects will emerge from a detailed assessment each section of coast of the recreational uses, bird numbers, and what might be done to resolve any current and future potential bird disturbance. The first of those 'Access Management Assessments' will be undertaken during 2017: the rest will follow once the enlarged ranger team is in place.

## New/enhanced strategic greenspaces

- 4.12. The research showed that some coastal visitors would be prepared to visit alternative greenspaces for at least some of their recreational trips. That would help moderate the predicted increase in visitors at the coast and thus the potential for bird disturbance. It will be done through a combination of an enhanced portfolio of alternative greenspaces plus increased promotion of them by the rangers and through on-line/printed media.
- 4.13. The creation of two completely new strategic greenspaces and enhancements to three existing greenspaces are already underway<sup>1</sup>. In the medium-longer term, there may be a need for additional strategic greenspaces - known as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). These could be created by a developer as part of a very large housing scheme or alternatively will be implemented through the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership. (NB: funding for these will not be from developer contributions – see paragraph 5.10 below.) Whether delivered by developers or the Partnership, new SANGs should be sited and be laid out in accordance with the guidelines in Appendix B.

## Monitoring

- 4.14. Monitoring will help confirm that mitigation measures are working as anticipated, and whether refinements or adjustments are necessary. Monitoring is therefore integral to the mitigation 'package'. In the longer term, it will establish whether the mitigation strategy is being effective. The monitoring is explained on the Partnership's website at <http://www.birdaware.org/article/28103/Monitoring>

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<sup>1</sup> At Alver Valley Country Park; Manor Farm Country Park; Horsea Island Country Park; Shoreburs Greenways; Itchen Valley Country Park

## 5. Resource costs and funding

- 5.1. Implementation of the mitigation measures set out in the preceding section will require resources - a mix of staff and funds for projects, communications, monitoring etc.

### Rangers

- 5.2. The cost of the ranger team (five all-year and two winter-only rangers - see section 4) is based on the rangers who are currently employed on the Partnership's behalf. It also includes the higher salary which will be paid to the lead ranger who will manage the team and reflects the cost of vehicles. Further details are in Appendix C.

### Other staff and operating budget

- 5.3. The volume of communications, marketing and education initiatives and the specialist skills required require a dedicated part-time communications post.
- 5.4. Drawing on the experience of the other established projects (see paragraph 2.15 above), a dedicated full-time officer will liaise with dog walkers to devise initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking.
- 5.5. A dedicated Partnership Manager post is crucial to successful delivery of this mitigation strategy. The post will coordinate implementation of the mitigation measures, procure and manage the required staff and other resources, and provide the necessary reporting.
- 5.6. An operating budget will fund the procuring of graphic design skills, IT staff time to maintain/expand the website, leaflet printing etc. and any consultancy support which may be needed from time to time. A small contingency is provided for the possibility of some unforeseen essential but incidental expenditure.

### Site-specific visitor management projects

- 5.7. The site-specific visitor management projects will be implemented through a rolling five-year programme with a budget of £400,000 per year. The completed projects will need routine maintenance: a 5% per annum figure for ongoing maintenance is included in the £420,000 figure in the table below.
- 5.8. It should be noted that in the vicinity of the New Forest Special Protection Area, site-specific projects may provide a mitigation benefit for both the Solent SPA and the New Forest SPA, by diverting recreational pressure from sensitive sites. LPA's within the zone of

influence of the New Forest SPA co-operate in taking a strategic approach to ensure significant effects are avoided.

#### In-perpetuity

- 5.9. This strategy mitigates the recreational impact of new housing up to 2034, but the mitigation measures need to be in place for the duration of the impact. The Partnership has decided that this 'in-perpetuity' period should be 80 years and this has been accepted by Natural England. This is the same time period as that adopted for South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy for example.
- 5.10. So this strategy includes a mechanism for funding the mitigation measures after 2034 when the developer contributions from those planned new homes will come to an end. That mechanism is described in more detail in Appendix D, but in summary, a proportion of the money received each year from developer contributions will be transferred into an investment fund. That 'in-perpetuity fund' will grow each year through those annual cash transfers and the interest earned. By 2034, the fund will be sufficiently large to fund the mitigation measures in-perpetuity.
- 5.11. Some of the mitigation measures will not continue after 2034 or will be resourced at a reduced level. The programme of site specific visitor management projects will end, the dog walking initiatives post and the communications & education post will be combined, the operating budget will reduce, monitoring will continue at a reduced scale, and the Partnership Manager post will cease. The work of the latter will be much diminished after 2034; the local authorities have agreed to take on the remaining tasks in-perpetuity.

#### Funding

- 5.12. The five current strategic greenspace projects (paragraph 4.15 above) are funded through the Solent Local Growth Deal with complementary local funding from the local authority which is implementing it. Funding for the further strategic greenspaces will be sought from future local growth deals or other similar sources, unless the greenspace is provided as part of a large housing scheme in which case the developer will fund it. PUSH has produced a Green Infrastructure Strategy which may be able to help secure funding for further greenspace enhancements.
- 5.13. The other resource costs need to be funded from developer contributions. Those costs are summarised in the table below and are set out in greater detail in Appendices C and D.

## Summary of annual costs up to the year 2034

	£thousands per annum
Rangers	272
Other staff	93
Operating budget and monitoring	90
Site specific visitor management projects	420
Contingency	10
In-perpetuity funding	1105
<b>Total annual cost</b>	<b>1990</b>

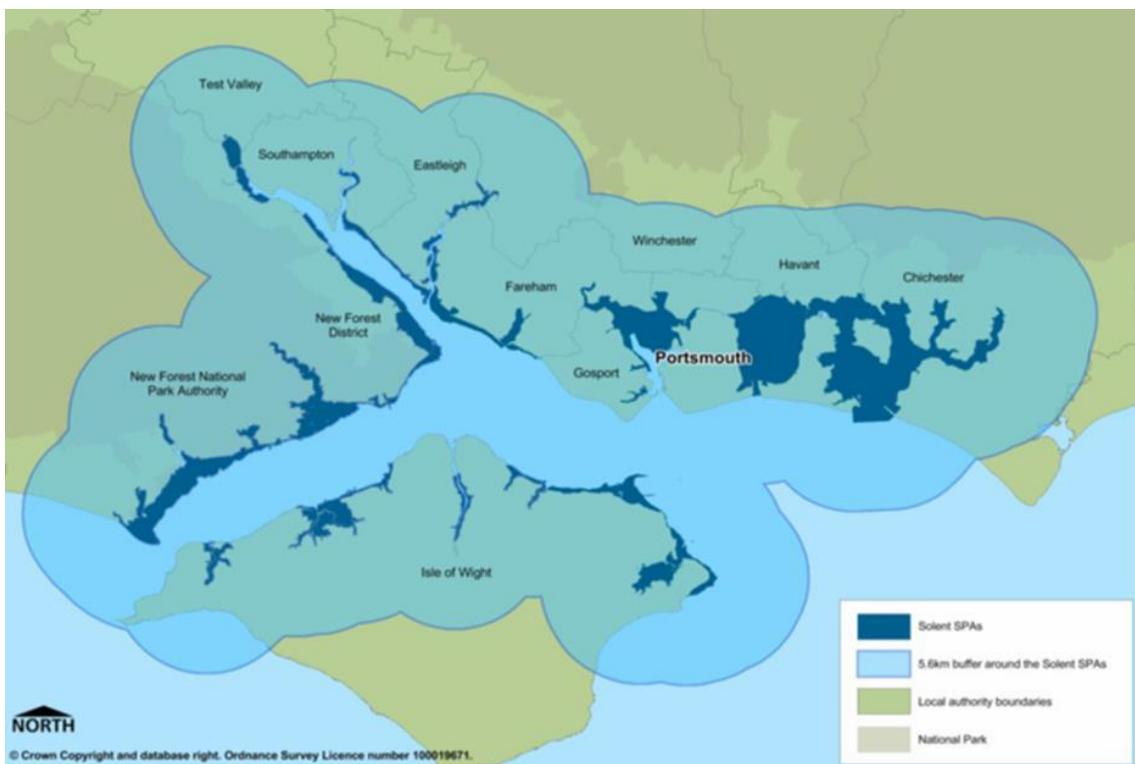
All figures are at 2016 prices because the developer contribution is index linked and will automatically rise with inflation.

- 5.14. This total cost when divided amongst the number of new dwellings to be mitigated each year (estimated as 3,538 - see Appendix A), means that an average developer contribution of £564 per dwelling is required (These figures will be increased on 1 April each year in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) rounded to the nearest whole pound.)
- 5.15. Although that figure is the best estimate of the number of planned new homes, the number actually constructed could be different to the estimate. However, the package of mitigation measures in this strategy is 'scalable', which means that the amount of mitigation can be increased or decreased in line with actual housebuilding.

## 6. Developer contributions

- 6.1. As explained in the previous section, the baseline developer contribution is £564 per dwelling in all the local authority. These figures will be increased on 1 April each year in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) rounded to the nearest whole pound.
- 6.2. That developer contribution will be required for every net additional dwelling within 5.6 kilometres of the boundaries of the Solent Special Protection Areas (see map below) unless the developer can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and Natural England that it will provide alternative 'bespoke mitigation' which will fully mitigate the recreational impact of the development.
- 6.3. In this context, 'dwelling' includes net new dwellings created through the sub-division of existing dwellings, second homes, dwellings to be used as holiday accommodation, self-contained student accommodation, and new dwellings created as a result of approval granted under the General Permitted Development Order e.g. change of use from office to residential (including houses and flats). It includes permanent accommodation for gypsies and travellers; temporary/transit pitches will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the local planning authority in consultation with Natural England.

### The 5.6 kilometre zone around the Solent Special Protection Areas



- 6.4. Some housing schemes, particularly very large ones or those located close to the boundary of a SPA, may need to provide mitigation measures in addition to making the financial contribution in order to

ensure effective avoidance/mitigation of impacts on the SPA. A very large scheme could have a disproportionate impact on particular sections of coast compared to the dispersed impact of smaller schemes providing the same overall number of new homes. Similarly, mitigation in addition to the developer contribution may be needed for new dwellings which are close to the SPA because the occupants are much more likely to visit the coast with the potential for a greater impact. The local planning authority, with advice from Natural England, will consider the mitigation requirements for such housing proposals on a case-by-case basis. Developers are encouraged to hold early discussions with the local planning authority on the mitigation which will be needed for such schemes.

- 6.5. The need for mitigation for the recreational impact of other types of residential accommodation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the local planning authority. The 'tests' are proximity to the SPAs and the likelihood of the proposed development generating additional recreational visits to the SPA(s). So in respect of residential accommodation designed specifically for elderly people for example, a developer contribution (or bespoke mitigation) will be required for apartments for the active elderly, but not for secure accommodation such as a residential nursing home for people who are unable to independently leave that accommodation. However, mitigation may be required for any staff living on-site.
- 6.6. New hotel accommodation - defined as both wholly new establishments and extensions of existing ones - is a residential-related use with the potential to generate additional recreational visits to the SPA(s). The need for mitigation for new hotel accommodation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the local planning authority in relation to the 'tests' set out in the paragraph above. Mitigation is unlikely to be required for new hotel accommodation in a city centre for example, if the guests will predominantly be business people or those visiting the built heritage rather than the coast. On the other hand, mitigation is more likely to be required for new hotel accommodation close to a SPA where guests will probably spend some time walking or pursuing other recreational activities at the coast.
- 6.7. Where mitigation is deemed to be necessary for new hotel accommodation, the mitigation may take the form of a developer contribution calculated on the basis of the number of new bedrooms and the monetary contributions (or a proportion thereof) in paragraph 6.2 above. Such contributions will be pooled and spent on mitigation measures in the same way as developer contributions from new dwellings.
- 6.8. This scope of this strategy is mitigating the recreational impact of new residential-related accommodation on the Solent Special Protection Area(s). Separate mitigation may be required for other impacts which may arise from new housing, e.g. on water quality, high buildings obstructing bird flight lines. Those will be assessed by the local

planning authorities, in liaison with Natural England, at the planning application stage to identify whether, and if so what, mitigation is required.

#### A sliding scale of developer contributions?

6.9. Currently, the same developer contribution is paid irrespective of property size - a 'flat rate' contribution. However, larger properties can accommodate more people, with the potential for a larger number of visitors to the coast. So there is an argument that the developer contribution should vary by dwelling size - a sliding scale of contributions. There are practical difficulties with trying to vary it by floorspace or sale price, but at some Special Protection Areas elsewhere in the UK, the developer contribution varies according to the number of bedrooms in the new property.

6.10. So instead of a £564 flat rate, a sliding scale of contributions could be:-

£337 for 1 bedroom dwelling  
£487 for 2 bedroom dwelling  
£637 for 3 bedroom dwelling  
£749 for 4 bedroom dwelling  
£880 for 5 bedrooms or more

6.11. The figures above are based on an estimate of the mix of housing that will be proposed and the need to secure a total income level that is equivalent to that which would be raised through charging a flat fee. These will be reviewed bi-annually throughout the duration of the Strategy.

#### **Charging mechanism**

6.12. The Partnership has differing approaches to the charging mechanism. Authorities on the mainland will adopt the sliding scale approach, whilst the Isle of Wight Council will continue to charge a fixed fee.

## 7. Implementation, governance and reporting

### Implementation

- 7.1. The developer contributions are paid to local planning authorities. Each authority decides which legal mechanisms to use to secure the developer contributions from schemes in its area.
- 7.2. The authorities pool the developer contributions received and implement the mitigation measures through the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership. The contributions received by the authorities are transferred quarterly to the Partnership.
- 7.3. The Partnership sets a budget for each year, including the amount to be transferred that year into the in-perpetuity fund (see paragraph 5.11). Some money will be held in reserve at all times to cushion against variations in the amount of developer contributions received each quarter: such variations are inevitable due to market-driven fluctuations in the number of sites/development phases on which construction begins. The value of the contributions received by the Partnership each year and details of all expenditure, are set out in an annual statement of accounts.
- 7.4. The higher developer contribution will mean increased funding for mitigation. However, many developer contributions are only paid on the commencement of development, so there is a time delay between a planning permission being granted and the money being paid to the authority. For some schemes this can be a matter of weeks; for others it can be several years. So that time delay will mean that the amount of money received by the Partnership will increase only gradually over the next 2-3 years. This will constrain the implementation of mitigation measures in the short term: so, for example, it will probably not be possible to have the full ranger team in place until 2019 or 2020.

### Governance

- 7.5. The Partnership's management structure comprises a small Project Board of senior officers and a Steering Group which includes an officer from each of the nineteen partner organisations. The Project Board sets the Partnership's overall direction and budget. Working within those, the Steering Group manages the operational tasks. The Partnership Manager has delegated responsibility for managing day-to-day activities.
- 7.6. Further details of the composition and roles of the Project Board and Steering Group are in the Partnership's Terms of Reference, which can be seen at:  
<http://www.birdaware.org/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=27311&p=0>

7.7. The governance, political steer and oversight of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP) is provided by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) with the involvement of representatives of the three local planning authorities which are not members of PUSH - Chichester District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, South Downs National Park Authority. This is done through reports to the PUSH Joint Committee, which comprises the Leader of each PUSH authority supported by their Chief Executive. A representative from each of the three non-PUSH authorities is invited to participate in the Joint Committee meeting whenever there is discussion of a SRMP-related matter.

## Reporting

- 7.8. Normally, the SRMP presents two reports each year to the PUSH Joint Committee: one to seek approval for the proposed SRMP budget and Project Board membership for the ensuing year, and the other to seek approval of the SRMP's Annual Report. Those reports to the PUSH Joint Committee can be seen at:  
[http://www.push.gov.uk/work/latest\\_joint-committee.htm](http://www.push.gov.uk/work/latest_joint-committee.htm)
- 7.9. The Annual Report records the progress made in implementing the mitigation measures and summarises the conclusions of completed monitoring. It also contains the statement of accounts for the preceding year and the budget for the coming year. It is published immediately after approval by the PUSH Joint Committee.
- 7.10. Partnership reports on research and monitoring are published as soon as they have been completed.
- 7.11. All those reports, this strategy, and a range of other documents/information can be seen on the SRMP's website at:  
[www.birdaware.org](http://www.birdaware.org)