



Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 June 2023

Report of: Deborah Whitfield
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Subject: PFSH UPDATE ON THE SOLENT WADERS AND BRENT
GOOSE STRATEGY

SUMMARY

In February 2022, Joint Committee agreed the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Steering Group's request for annual PFSH funding of £14k. The funding provides for an officer post to resource improved communications, access to mapping and data, and help with identifying suitable low-use site mitigation projects. The report to Joint Committee provides an update on the progress of the elements of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (SW&BGS) funded by the PFSH local planning authorities. The SW&BGS aims to identify, conserve and enhance sites that functionally support the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of the Solent sub-region, and advise on mitigation for unavoidable impacts. This proposal is aligned to, and complements, the work of Bird Aware Solent, and seeks to benefit local planning authorities by monitoring the impact of development on SPAs.

The work is delivered by the Coastal Birds Project Monitoring Officer hosted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. The majority of the post is funded by Bird Aware Solent with a proportion funded by PFSH to deliver key elements of the SW&BGS Strategy outlined below. These are separate projects but have clear synergies benefiting from this joined up approach.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

- a) NOTES the contents of this report;
- b) NOTES that Joint Committee will be asked to NOTE the contents of the report;
and
- c) consider any comments to be passed to the Joint Committee for consideration.

BACKGROUND

1. The Strategy

- 1.1 The Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy (SW&BGS) aims to identify, conserve and enhance inland sites that form the ecological network used by overwintering wading birds and brent geese. These sites functionally support the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of the Solent sub-region and any losses or impacts of development to these sites must therefore be mitigated. The SW&BGS has proven to be a useful tool for planners, developers, statutory consultees, and the NGO sector to support these aims.
- 1.2 The SW&BGS explains the conservation need, survey and analyses methodologies and recommended conservation policies. This is supported by interactive mapping of SW&BGS sites and mitigation guidance which aims to inform mitigation and offsetting requirements where impacts cannot be avoided.
- 1.3 The Strategy is a vital tool for local planning authorities, informing decision-making by providing key spatial information, as well as a mechanism for effective mitigation. This has been demonstrated recently in the cases of on-site provision, for example, developments at Forty Acres and Sinah Lane and off-site provision for Newlands Lane (mitigation project located at Gunner Point).

2. Project Governance

- 2.1 The strategy is overseen by a steering group consisting of representatives from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), Coastal Partners, the RSPB, local authority planning ecologists, Hampshire Ornithological Society and Natural England. The steering group meet quarterly to discuss survey updates, mitigation guidance, planning casework, local plans and mitigation projects.
- 2.2 Mapping and data analyses for the Strategy are carried out by HIWWT; all updates are shared electronically with the local planning authorities directly, and via Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) - which also share the data with consultants and others making requests via their biological data request service.
- 2.3 The mitigation guidance, informed by the strategy and available data, is produced by Natural England with input from the Steering Group. In 2017, the local planning authorities were consulted on offsetting and mitigation guidance and their comments included in the final published version. The guidance was then sent to Natural England's legal team, reviewed by a solicitor, and a Habitats Regulations senior specialist. The update to the strategy document published in 2020 was disseminated to the local planning authorities in May 2020.
- 2.4 The Strategy has a website where the strategy document, mitigation guidance and a summary of the mapping are published. The website can be found [here](#).

3. General Update (April 2022-March 2023)

Annual Meetings with Local Planning Authorities

- 3.1 As outlined in the approved funding proposal, meetings were offered and/or held with each PFSH local planning authority to discuss sites likely to be impacted by forthcoming development. Through this communication opportunity, the SW&BGS officer was able to prepare specific planning case information and advise the relevant local planning authority officers in good time. Advice has also been provided for mitigation management plans. Advice on managing the features of SW&BGS sites has been provided and incorporated into a large-scale natural capital scheme currently being developed on the New Forest coast.
- 3.2 It is proposed a number of “drop-in” sessions are organised this year for further advice and follow ups, the first session will be held in August 2023. All planning officers and district ecologists will be contacted and offered SW&BGS officer time for any specific cases, as well being invited to attend the drop-in sessions.

Annual Data and Mapping Update

- 3.3 Individual updates have been sent directly to local planning authorities with bespoke and dated maps where SW&BGS sites have changed either classification or boundaries. The online mapping has been regularly updated and shared as a live link. The SW&BGS site wide data and mapping update will be carried out this year and all changes will be shared with local planning authorities directly, ahead of publication.

Mitigation Projects

- 3.4. The SW&BGS officer has been working to identify potential mitigation projects. Guidance on site suitability, a scoring system and a call for sites application form have been approved and published on the SW&BGS website. The SW&BGS officer has met with the PFSH Strategic Environmental Planning Manager to discuss opportunities across the Solent for SW&BGS (alongside nutrient neutrality and BNG). To date, we have had three potential mitigation project enquiries (one on the mainland and two on the Isle of Wight), one has been progressed to steering group assessment and approval.

Collation of information on site mitigation monitoring

- 3.5 The SW&BGS officer has begun collating information on existing mitigation projects across the Solent. This will be available for publication next year in map form and key projects will be written up as case studies. Information on bird refuge habitat creation and enhancement has been published by the SW&BGS officer on the SW&BGS website. This will enable case officers and district ecologists to assess mitigation and management proposals against best practice.

Additional Work

- 3.6 In addition, the SW&BGS officer has commissioned a new SW&BGS logo and refreshed the website. Formal advice from the SW&BGS Steering Group can now be issued with the logo on headed paper. The SW&BGS officer has also

updated the website with information on site management and guidance for land managers wishing to conserve areas for waders and Brent geese and options via countryside stewardship.

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Reference Documents:-

[PfSH Support for the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy, 14 February 2022](#)

Enquiries:-

For further information on this report please contact:

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