Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: **14 July 2025**

Report of: **Paddy May, PfSH Coordinator**

Subject: **PFSH CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT**

SUMMARY

The Co-ordinator's report provides an opportunity for issues which are significant, but do not justify a full report in their own right, to be brought to the attention of the Joint Committee for decision or for information. The report is divided into Parts A and B accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee:-

i) NOTES the contents of this report;

ii) AGREE that future contributions (2026/27) be recalculated and updated to reflect East Hampshire District Council's withdrawal from PfSH using the established methodology for doing so; and

iii) Agree that PfSH Coordinators should undertake a light-touch review and update of the PfSH Business Plan 2021-2025 (reflecting its current operational context as local government reorganisation and the creation of a strategic mayoral combined authority progresses).

PART A: MATTERS FOR DECISION

1. Amendment to the contributions payable under the PfSH Joint Agreement

1.1 East Hampshire District council (EHDC) formally withdrew from the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) on 4 April. The terms of its withdrawal were discussed and agreed at the last meeting of the Joint Committee on 5 March. Following legal advice, it has been confirmed that no formal amendment will need to be made to the PfSH Joint Agreement - of which EHDC was a signatory. Within the Joint Agreement there is a table that outlines the contribution from each authority and this includes a 1.1% contribution from EHDC (equating to £1,200 in 2025/26). At the last Joint Committee it was agreed that for 2025/26 the EHDC contribution would be covered by unallocated balances. For 2026/27 it is proposed that the established method is used to apportion the former EHDC contribution between the remaining authorities using the existing population proportions as of today as the basis for the calculation. The contributions can be varied by Joint Committee as envisaged in the PfSH Joint Agreement (paragraph 10.1 refers). This should have a minimal impact on the present contributions that member local authorities are asked to contribute. If this is approved by Joint Committee this will supersede the table used in the Joint Agreement. Notwithstanding that, it is currently unknown what impact local government reorganisation and the establishment of a strategic mayoral authority will have on the future of PfSH's operation.

2. PfSH Business Plan from 2025

2.1 The current PfSH Business Plan will expire on 31 December this year, following its last review and amendment in September 2021.

2.2 While, in essence, the content of the current Plan remains relevant, some references have become outdated - for example to the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (now decommissioned), and to the development of a Joint Agreement (spatial position statement) for new development across South Hampshire (now complete, albeit under regular monitoring review).

2.3 Significantly, the current Plan does not reference the shift in PfSH activity towards more environmental concerns, in particular the creation of the Solent Mitigation Partnership for the creation and selling of nutrient mitigation credits to facilitate new housing development.

2.4 In the context of up-coming local government reorganisation and the creation of a strategic mayoral combined authority (MCA), the future role and operation of PfSH is uncertain and it can be anticipated that many of its undertakings may be absorbed into MCA functions once it is operational. Joint Committee is asked to consider how PfSH should reflect its purpose, aims and objectives once the current Plan expires.

2.5 It is recommended that the PfSH Coordinators undertake a 'light-touch' review and update of the Plan, given the current political landscape for 2026 year. Other options that Joint Committee could consider would include:

a) letting the existing Business Plan roll over, with no formal amendment, until the future landscape of local government across Hampshire and the Solent becomes more clear; or

b) undertake a complete review and update of the Plan for the 2026 year.

PART B: MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

3. Solent Forum

3.1 In May 2025, Portsmouth City Council was approached by the Solent Forum, Phil Horton (Chair) and Kate Ansell (Manager) to discuss providing hosting for the Solent Forum. The Solent Forum was established in 1992 as one of the Coastal Partnerships around the country to facilitate collaboration and partnership working across the Solent's coastal and marine space. It covers multiple sectors, issues and jurisdictions which need to be addressed via partnership working at the strategic seascape scale. Its work covers economic, environmental and social matters. The Solent Forum is a non-statutory membership partnership which has been hosted by Hampshire County Council since its inception; as host the County Council acts as its accountable body. It has 57 members (ranging from the Environment Agency, local and harbour authorities, to other more local interest groups) which pay annual subscriptions. Eleven local authorities also pay the Forum to manage the Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Management Scheme (see **Appendix 1**).

3.2 In response to ongoing financial pressures and its return to core purpose, Hampshire County Council has taken the decision to cease its role as host and accountable body for the Solent Forum. The Solent Forum is therefore exploring what options are available for its functions to be hosted elsewhere. We are aware that it has also approached Southampton City Council.

3.3 **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the Solent Forum's operating model and governance structure. The Forum is an unincorporated association that is based on a member subscription model. As noted above, the Forum also provides the Secretariat for the statutory Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) Management Scheme. This scheme of management was established in 2000 for Relevant Authorities to work in partnership to manage activities so as to comply with duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Scheme surveys and reports on the impacts of non-licensable activities across the Solent's designated sites on behalf of SEMS Management Group members. It looks at potential impacts and management measures and agrees strategic actions. The Solent Forum has undertaken an evaluation exercise of what the cost would be to individual relevant authorities if they had to comply with this duty individually. The figures show a £9k pa cost saving to local authorities if their existing staff are used (staff time and resources), and a £13k pa saving if they opted to contract to work out externally. To note, the SEMS Management Scheme, as currently undertaken, cannot be delivered without the existence of the core Solent Forum partnership.

3.4 At a meeting on 13 May, representatives of Portsmouth City Council (Ian Maguire, Assistant Director, Economy, Transport and Planning) and Paddy May (PfSH Coordinator) met with Kate Ansell and Phil Horton from the Forum, and Simon Cramp (Head of Waste and Environmental Services at Hampshire County Council) to discuss the possibility of Hampshire County Council transferring its hosting responsibilities to either Portsmouth City Council, or PfSH (as an umbrella organisation that would potentially host the Solent Forum in a similar way to Bird Aware Solent). At the meeting, the Solent Forum presented its current contractual agreement with Hampshire County Council and budget for the financial year 2025/26. The rationale behind Hampshire County Council's decision to cease its role as host

for the Solent Forum was discussed, as was the current situation in the context of local government reorganisation and the creation of a Strategic Mayoral Combined Authority. On this basis, Hampshire County Council was asked to consider whether it would review its decision to rescind its current responsibilities.

3.5 Notwithstanding that, Portsmouth City Council officials agreed to consider the proposal more closely, including an examination of the hidden, or in-kind costs (procurement, HR, legal costs, other resource), of hosting the Solent Forum outside of core funding. Officials also agreed to liaise with colleagues at Southampton City Council given that it has also been approached as a potential host. There is a strong view that the Solent Forum could fit well within the PfSH structure, given the current focus of PfSH.

A combined meeting of Portsmouth, Southampton, and PfSH officials met on 12 June to discuss the proposal. The officials' preference would be for the Solent Forum to move under the auspices of PfSH (with PfSH acting as an umbrella body). It is anticipated that the Solent Forum to function in a similar way to that of Bird Aware Solent. Southampton City Council could act as the accountable body (as it is for PfSH). This was considered the least disruptive (for the Solent Forum) and cost-effective offer that might be put forward.

Officials at Southampton City Council are therefore undertaking internal discussions concerning the implications of this possible proposal. Joint Committee's approval would, of course, be sought before any formal transfer taking place - should the Solent Forum opt to accept an offer from PfSH.

4. Greenprint for South Hampshire

4.1 At the December 2024 meeting of Joint Committee, members endorsed the formation of a 'Greenprint Network' of relevant officials drawn from across (but not confined to) the PfSH membership of local authorities. The purpose of the group is to grow collaboration, share skills and knowledge, facilitate projects, encourage joint working and win resources. Leadership of the wider Greenprint initiative is retained by the existing Greenprint Steering Group including New Forest National Park Authority and the universities of Portsmouth and Southampton.

4.2 The inaugural meeting of the Network took place on Friday 14 March and was hosted by the University of Portsmouth. The chosen theme for the session was 'Climate Resilience and Economic Growth'. Climate resilience is the ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the effects of climate change. It involves understanding the risks of climate change and taking action to reduce the damage to people, property, and the environment. Economic growth is needed so that we can make a just transition and are 'climate ready' across the region. The Network session explored the opportunities and tensions of economic growth in key sectors. It looked at examples and measures of best practice that can be employed to promote both of these necessities across our Partnership.

4.3 The programme on the day included a series of key speakers to facilitate, and add colour to, the workshop sessions:

- **Professor Tim Coles (University of Exeter)** introduced his research on climate resilience and tourism for the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership.
- Claire Buckley, programme lead at **Julie's Bicycle**, a not-for-profit organisation mobilising the arts and culture industry to act on the climate, nature and justice crisis also presented.
- Heidi Roberts from ABPMer (Associated British Ports) presented the findings from the research that her team has carried out on the climate resilience requirements across the maritime industries.

4.4 The Greenprint Steering Group is keen for there to be palpable outcomes for our people attending the Network meetings which included:

- increased awareness of the inter-play between the need for climate resilience and generating economic growth
- provided a focus on the relevance of local authority activity designed to promote climate resilience and economic growth - and how that can be done
- demonstrate what, by working together with partners across the region, can be achieved locally

4.5 At time of writing, the second meeting of the Network is being planned for 27 June, which will be hosted by the University of Southampton, covering the theme of 'Green Skills and Jobs'. It is anticipated that the programme for the day will include presentations from:

- **Jamie Mackay -** Strategic Skills Lead, Hampshire County Council - who will reflect on skills need and horizon scanning. *'The future of work is being shaped by powerful global forces—from AI and automation to shifting demographics and evolving employee expectations. But one megatrend stands out as both a challenge and a strategic opportunity: the Green transition. In this session, we'll explore how sustainability is redefining the skills landscape, reshaping talent strategies, and creating new avenues for innovation and growth. For forward-thinking leaders, embracing the Green agenda isn't just good ethics—it's smart business'*.
- **Ashra Khanom** - Project Fellow, University of Swansea will introduce 'Creating Opportunities Through Local Innovation Fellowships (COLIF)' - a project focussing on community organising to address local priorities. *'Its aim, through the Creating Opportunities for Local Innovation Fellowship (COLIF) project, is to support the development of a responsive green skills system, enhancing regional productivity and mitigating employment inequalities'*.

4.6 Members will receive an update on the outcome of the second Greenprint Network event on 27 June, via this report, at the next meeting of Joint Committee on 18 September. The third meeting of the Network will take place sometime in the Autumn.

5. Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy

5.1 The purpose of this update to Joint Committee is to update members on the progress of the elements of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (SW&BGS) funded by the PfSH local planning authorities' £14k annual contribution. 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. The SW&BGS 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 the SPAs.

5.2 Over the 20 years since the inception of the Strategy, with over 23,000 individual records submitted and a network of almost 900 sites spread across three counties, the SW&BGS has entered a new, next phase. Throughout 2024, a comprehensive review of the Strategy was undertaken, beginning in June 2024, with an 'Away Day' where the Steering Group met in Havant to discuss the future of the Strategy. The evidence base was refreshed by incorporating thousands of new records from partners. Following meetings with each local planning authority - and Local Records Centre which wished to consult on the updated strategy, the updated Strategy was launched in April 2025 - with updates made to the mapping, mitigation strategy documents and the website.

5.3 The Strategy is a vital tool for local planning authorities (LPAs), informing decision making by providing key spatial information, as well as a mechanism for effective mitigation. The strategy document 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. Solent-waders-brent-goose-strategy-2024.pdf

6 PfSH Support for the Cultural and Creative Industries.

6.1 **Solent and South Hampshire Film Agency.** At its meeting on 5 March, Joint Committee agreed to support the proposition to establish a screen location agency which will operate across the whole PfSH area. The prospectus for the PfSH and Solent Growth Partnership Solent and South Hampshire Film Agency is currently being advertised on the Portsmouth City Council Procurement Website. The tender submission deadline is the 14 July and it is hoped that a final appointment will be made by the end of July. Film Office opportunity set to boost the region's Film Industry.

6.2 **Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).** Creative Network South (CNS) is continuing to work with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce on the LSIP. Hampshire and Surrey Chambers of Commerce have jointly commissioned a project to explore skills requirements within the Screen Sector.

6.3 CNS is continuing to work with the games sector to develop pathways to employment for FE students completing games courses. A particular focus will be on the way games industry skills are transferable to roles in other industries such as marine and aviation. CNS is funding the formation of a network of games designers.

6.4 CNS is also working with Artswork, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and Portsmouth Creates to support a range of employability projects, ranging from apprenticeships to paid internships and T Level placements - designed to support young people in finding pathways to employment in the creative sector.

6.5 **Partnerships with other organisations working in the creative digital and tech sectors.** CNS is continuing to support:

- a network of artist studio providers across south Hampshire
- a network of academic researchers at the four South Hampshire universities in the area and will sponsor a fourth symposium in January 26
- Venturefest South which acts as a festival celebrating innovation and creativity in the area.
- the Southampton branch of Ladies Wine, Dine and Design – which is undertaking a skills need assessment for the design sector
- Solent Creative Catalyst, which is building a network of commercial businesses in the sector. CNS is also working with Solent Creative Catalyst and Tech Solent to explore the need to build an alliance of organisations which can voice the needs of businesses within the tech digital and creative sectors

7 Strategic Recreation and Mitigation Partnership (Bird Aware Solent) Key Performance Indicators.

7.1 The following covers the period 1 January to the end of April 2025. As this covers both our Winter and Summer operational seasons, the first sets of statistics have been split to reflect what was achieved during each.

1 January to 31 March 2025:

In this time period, the Rangers delivered 267 on-site engagement sessions[1], of which:

• 171 site patrols
• 73 site pop-ups
• 23 guided walks

While on site, rangers had 3,339 interactions with visitors, of which:
• 1,778 on site patrols
• 1,351 on site pop-ups
• 210 on guided walks

Additionally, rangers delivered 37 events in this time period, during which they had 1,095 interactions with members of the public.

[1] An engagement session comprises a half day of a Ranger's time.

1 April 2025 to 30 April 2025:

In this time period, the Rangers delivered 9 on-site engagement sessions of which:

- 7 site patrols
- 2 site pop-ups

While on site, rangers had 122 interactions with visitors, of which:

- 77 on site patrols
- 45 on site pop-ups

7.2 Additionally, rangers delivered 2 events in this time period, during which they had 100 interactions with members of the public.

7.3 During the same 4-month period, our comms lead continued to encourage traffic to the website, run promotional campaigns and to grow our social media presence as follows:

- From the start of January until the end of April, Bird Aware Solent website achieved 37k pageviews. This is a slight decrease on the same period in the previous year when 16.5K of the views were as a result of a viral corvid post, however it was an increase of 89% on the same period in 2023.
- Blog posts continued to achieve heavy traffic with ten features added to the website in this period. The events page performed well with 2.6k visits, as did pages about the photography competition (1.8k) and the Bird Aware Art Fest (690).
- Our social media accounts saw rapid growth across our two main social media platforms as a result of excellent content provided by the ranger team. The resulting engagement is as follows:
    - Instagram: followers 4.2k (up by 500), accounts reached: 29k, engagement: 12k
    - Facebook: followers 5.7k (up by 600), accounts reached 220k, engagement: 15k
    - LinkedIn: followers 188 (up by 100)
- The winter edition of the Bird Aware Solent newsletter was distributed to almost 2,000 subscribers in January. This achieved a particularly a high opening rate of over 63% (industry norms are around 33% or less) with an extremely high click-to-open rate of 110.5%.
- Online promotional campaigns included the Bird Aware photography competition which resulted in 2.5k visits made to the competition web pages and a reach of around 100k among our target demographics. More than 300 photos were submitted to the competition.
- During this period press releases were shared about the Art Fest, about the revised strategy, about the Coast & Country Canines Dogs' Day Out event, and the results of the Bird Aware Solent photography competition, with resulting press coverage including features in the Daily Echo and the Lymington Advertiser and Times.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee:-

i) NOTES the contents of this report;

ii) AGREE that future contributions (2026/27) be recalculated and updated to reflect East Hampshire District Council's withdrawal from PfSH using the established methodology for doing so; and

iii) Agree that PfSH Coordinators should undertake a light-touch review and update of the PfSH Business Plan 2021-2025 (reflecting its current operational context as local government reorganisation and the creation of a strategic mayoral combined authority progresses).

Background Papers: None
Reference Papers: None
Enquiries: For further information on this report please contact:

Paddy May (PfSH Co-ordinator)
Tel. No. 023 9283 4020
E-mail: paddy.may@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Solent Forum Summary Paper

Introduction

The Solent Forum was established in 1992 as one of the Coastal Partnerships around the country to facilitate collaboration and partnership working in the Solent's coastal and marine space. Many issues cover multiple sectors and jurisdictions and need to be addressed via partnership working at the seascape scale. Its work covers economic, environmental and social matters.

Its aims and objectives can be viewed at: Solent Forum - What We Do.

Geographical Coverage

The Forum's geographical area of work is from the Dorset/Hampshire boundary in the west to Selsey Bill in the east and the Isle of Wight.

The Forum covers all issues that impact on the Solent's coastal and marine environment, including terrestrial drivers, so no definitive inland boundary is drawn. See: Solent Forum - Where We Are.

Operating Model

The Forum is an Unincorporated Association that is based on a member subscription model. There are two key functions that provide funding, the core coastal partnership and the Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) statutory scheme of management that is open to Relevant Authorities. More detail is available in the Solent Forum Constitution. Further information is available on SEMS at: Solentems - Solent Marine Sites.

There are 57 members as of April 2025 who are all professional bodies and organisations. There is one full time member of staff, an independent chair and a steering group that oversees the work programme and budget. It is politically neutral. It is self-funding but requires a legally constituted body as a host.

Current members are listed at: Solent Forum - Solent Forum Members Directory.

It has a Business Plan (2025 to 2030) and produces Annual Reports, see: Solent Forum - Solent Forum Business Plan and Annual Reports. The Annual Reports show both the annual core work programme and the project work in which it is involved.

Meetings

The full Forum meets in person bi-annually in Southampton, Portsmouth and Cowes in rotation. These meetings are very well attended and enable members to learn about the latest developments happening in the Solent and to network with colleagues.

Member Services

The Forum provides a range of services for its members that are included in the membership fee, these can be viewed at: Solent Forum - Solent Forum Member Services.

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