Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **04 March 2026**

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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee - and that will be put to Joint Committee for decision or for information. The report is divided into Parts A and B accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

i) NOTES the contents of this report;

ii) NOTES that Joint Committee will be asked to:

(a) AGREE the proposed Joint Committee schedule of meetings for the committee year 2026-2027;

(b) NOTE and AGREE the light-touch revisions made to the PfSH Business Plan 2026;

(c) NOTE and ENDORSE the updated Terms of Reference for the Bird Aware Partnership; and

iii) CONSIDERS any comments to pass on to the Joint Committee for its consideration.

PLEASE NOTE this report is a draft version of the PfSH Joint Committee report and is subject to change before being considered by the PfSH Joint Committee. The final report will be published ahead of the PfSH Joint Committee.

PART A: MATTERS FOR DECISION

1. PfSH Joint Committee Schedule for the Committee year 2026 to 2027

1.1 Following a coordinated review of the committee schedules across the PfSH member local authorities, the democratic services team at Fareham Borough Council, on behalf of PfSH, have prepared a committee schedule for Joint Committee meetings for 2026-2027. It proposes Joint Committee meetings on the following dates:

1) Monday 13 July 2026
2) Monday 28 September 2026
3) Thursday 10 December 2026
4) Monday 15 March 2027

1.2 All meetings of the Joint Committee are to be hosting at Fareham Borough Council offices and scheduled to last two hours, although in reality they do not last this long. Joint Committee will be asked to agree the scheduled dates and note that the associated meetings of the PfSH Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be organised for the 2 July 2026, 16 September 2026, 3 December 2026 and 3 March 2027.

2. PfSH Business Plan 2026

2.1 The current PfSH Business Plan expired on 31 December last year, following its previous review and amendment in September 2021. In July last year, Joint Committee agreed that a light-touch review should be undertaken to ensure that the Business Plan remains up-to-date and relevant.

2.2 The Plan must reflect developments since 2021, including the increased focus of PfSH activity on environmental matters. This includes the establishment of the Solent Mitigation Partnership to generate and sell nutrient mitigation credits supporting new housing delivery, and the transfer of The Solent Forum to high-level PfSH oversight from 1 April 2026 - with Southampton City Council acting as host and accountable body.

2.3 The Plan should also note that, in light of forthcoming local government reorganisation and the creation of a strategic mayoral combined authority (MCCA), the future role and operation of PfSH remains uncertain. It is anticipated that a number of existing PfSH functions will, or could, be incorporated into the MCCA once it becomes operational.

2.4 The revised PfSH Business Plan for 2026 is attached at **Appendix A** for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration.

3. Changes to the Bird Aware Solent Steering Group's Terms of Reference

3.1 In preparation for devolution and local government reorganisation, the governance arrangements for the Bird Aware Partnership are being streamlined to ensure it remains efficient, coordinated, and well placed for the changes ahead. As part of this work, and with the approval of the Project Board, the Bird Aware Steering Group is being reshaped.

3.2 Going forward, the Steering Group's current reporting arrangements will come to an end. Instead, Bird Aware will be providing regular updates on its work and progress to members of the Partnership for South Hampshire Natural Environment Group. This change will bring Bird Aware in line with the way the Solent Mitigation Partnership is operating and will support greater alignment across the wider natural environment programme and create a more integrated governance structure.

3.3 As part of this work, the Terms of Reference for the Partnership have been reviewed and updated (**Appendix B**). The updated version has been shared with legal advisors and received their confirmation that it is 'fit for purpose'. With the above in mind, the Joint Committee is asked to note and endorse the updated version.

PART B: MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

4. Solent Forum

4.1 At the December meeting of Joint Committee last year, members agreed that, following Hampshire County Council's decision to rescind its hosting responsibilities of The Solent Forum, PfSH assumes the role of host with Southampton City Council acting as accountable body and operational host (staff, human resources, accounting et cetera) on its behalf.

4.2 On 10 December, the lead PfSH chief executive, James Strachan, wrote to the Chair of The Solent Forum to confirm Joint Committee's agreement. The letter advised that Southampton City Council will discharge its function under delegated powers, and a new Partnership Agreement will be developed to set out the relationship between PfSH, Southampton City Council, and The Solent Forum. The proposed term of this agreement is five years, aligning with the Solent Forum's business plan period.

4.3 The Solent Forum Manager met with colleagues at Southampton City Council in late December to organise for the transfer, and the respective legal, HR and finance officers are now working together make arrangements alongside the development of a formal partnership agreement. At time of writing, the Chair of The Solent Forum, together with The Solent Forum Manager, plan to meet with PfSH Coordinators to carry out introductions and discuss any outstanding arrangements ahead of the formal transfer of responsibilities on 1 April 2026.

5. Bird Aware Solent Award

5.1 On 22 January Bird Aware Solent won the Outdoor Recreation Network (ORN) Award for "Best Project for Protecting Nature and Responsible Access". The ORN aims to encourage more people to enjoy and engage with the outdoors. It's members work in collaboration to help share research, facilitate information exchange and champion sustainable good practice. The recognition highlights Bird Aware's innovative work to reduce disturbance to coastal wildlife while helping people enjoy the Solent responsibly.

5.2 The award was presented to Anna Parry, Bird Aware Solent's Partnership Manager at the ORN Awards Ceremony by Pippa Langford outgoing Co-Chair of the Outdoor Recreation Network.

5.3 On accepting the award on behalf of the Bird Aware Solent Team Anna said in the associated press release "*We are absolutely delighted to receive this recognition from the Outdoor Recreation Network. Our work is built on the belief that small changes in how we all enjoy the coast can make a big difference for the incredible birds that rely on the Solent. This award is a testament to the dedication of our Rangers, our partners, and the many coastal visitors who choose to share the space in a way that helps wildlife thrive*."

6. PfSH Support for the Cultural and Creative Industries

Hampshire and Solent Film Agency

6.1 The Hampshire and Solent Film Agency was launched on the 8 December 2025, at the FOCUS location managers conference in London. Expressions of interest in filming in the area are starting to be received. FilmFixer, the company appointed to set up the agency, are also working to build a location library for the area.

6.2 The legal teams at Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils have worked with FilmFixer to agree model legal documents, setting out the legal basis on which FilmFixer can provide a film location service on behalf of local authorities. These documents have been shared with all PfSH local authorities.

6.3 As of 24 January, two local authorities were fully signed up. The other PfSH authorities have agreed in principle but are awaiting legal sign off. Discussions are taking place regarding Hampshire Prosperity Board, and Hampshire County Council engagement.

6.4 The four northern Hampshire Authorities (that are not members of PfSH) have signed letters of intent with a view to using the services provided by the agency in the future. The engagement of the non PfSH authorities is important as critical mass will help the future financial sustainability of the agency. It has however been agreed that the profit share with the northern authorities will reflect the fact that, to date, Hampshire Prosperity Board has not matched the contributions made by PfSH and Solent Growth Partnership to the agency set up costs.

6.5 The steering group managing the work of the agency, will be relaunched in April. All local authorities who will represented by agency will be represented on the steering group.

Prioritising Culture, Creativity and Visitor Economies in Hampshire and Solent Devolution

6.6 *Here for Culture and Place* has been appointed by the Solent Growth Partnership, Hampshire County Council and Arts Council England, supported by Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, to prepare for embedding the culture, creative and visitor economies within the new combined authority.

6.7 The commission is focusing on four pillars of work:

- a playbook from other combined authorities and learning from their experiences
- a mapping and analysis of cultural assets to understand the region's growth potential and cross-cutting impact

- a Cultural and Creative Charter setting out the opportunities and investment priorities
- options for multi-sector strategic partnerships including proposals around governance, leadership, membership and function

6.8 *Here for Culture & Place* are engaging extensively across the sectors, working closely with a steering group and Oversight Board led and coordinated by Carolyn Abel, Director of Culture & Tourism at Southampton City Council in partnership with local authority colleagues. The results from this work will be fed into the devolution programme.

Portsmouth City of Culture

6.9 Creative Network South is working with Portsmouth Creates to support the Portsmouth City of Culture application.

7. Bird Aware Solent Key Performance Indicators

7.1 The below covers the period 1 November 2025 to the end of December 2025 (Winter season[1]).

7.2 In this time period, the Rangers delivered 88 on-site engagement sessions[2], of which:

- 68 site patrols
- 17 site pop-ups
- 3 guided walks

While on site, rangers had 1,311 interactions with visitors, of which:

- 700 on site patrols
- 571 on site pop-ups
- 40 on guided walks

Additionally, rangers delivered 9 events in this time period, during which they had 170 interactions with members of the public.

7.3 During the same two-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 beginning of November to the end of the year, the Bird Aware Solent website recorded 10k pageviews. This represents a decrease compared with the same period in the previous year, when 6k views were driven by a vacancy promotion and viral blog posts, but a slight increase relative to the equivalent period in 2023.

[1] Figures for this period are provisional and may be subject to minor adjustments at the end of the winter season.

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

- Blog posts continued to achieve heavy traffic with 4 features added to the website in this period. Our events, homepage, and photography competition generated strong levels of traffic. Additional visits were driven by Google searches, although this source is likely to continue to diminish as users increasingly rely solely on AI rather than traditional web links for online research.
- Bird Aware Solent's social media accounts saw rapid growth as a result of excellent content provided by the ranger team. The resulting engagement is as follows:
    - Instagram: followers 5,237 (up by 157), accounts reached: 24k, engagement: 5.8k
    - Facebook: followers 6,634 (up by 269), accounts reached 157k, engagement: 4.7k
    - LinkedIn: followers 257 (up by 34)
    - YouTube: 21k views, audience 5.4k
- Coast and Country Canine's social media achieved 533 followers on Facebook by the end of the year (up 55 from the start of November) and 841 on Instagram (up 66).
- This period saw the launch of the new Bird Aware Solent animation which proved a hit on social media and on YouTube, leading to a jump of 67% in subscribers on YouTube in 28 days (currently at 1.34k subscribers).
- Press releases were shared about the results of the Great Coastal Birdwatch and the launch of the photography competition.

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Background Papers: None

Appendices:
Appendix A - Revised PfSH Business Plan for 2026
Appendix B - Terms of Reference for the Partnership

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