

THE SOLENT FORUM

INTRODUCING THE SOLENT FORUM, THE COASTAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE SOLENT

The Solent Forum is the Coastal Partnership that covers the Solent waterbody and its surrounding coasts. It is one of many such partnerships around the coast of the UK. Its area of work includes the New Forest coastline as far west as Hurst Spit, ranging to Selsey Bill in the east and the north coast of the Isle of Wight. Established in 1992, the partnership works with numerous bodies and organisations that manage the Solent to address environmental, social and economic strategic issues. Its primary goal is to collate and share information and resources on coastal issues to facilitate management.



Hosted by Hampshire County Council, The Forum, has a steering group of funding partners, with an independent Chair and two staff.

Its work is split into two main strands, core member services and project work. It also manages the Solent European Marine Sites Management Scheme, which coordinates relevant Authority management responses to issues arising from activities that take place across the Solent's designated sites. New Forest District Council and the New Forest Park Authority are members of this Scheme and the Solent Forum.

Core services offered to members include a biannual members half day conference, a biannual newsletter, a monthly email newsletter, opportunity workshops, for example on accessing funding streams, and the opportunity to use the Forum's wide network for consultation, publicising work and identifying partners for projects.

Recently the Forum has been involved with the Rivers Trust on a national project called 'Wholescape Approach to Marine Management (WAAM)'. This is seeking to bring coastal and catchment partnerships more closely together to ensure that water issues are addressed from source to sea. The Forum had an opportunity to meet with catchment partners at a WAAM conference in London earlier this year and present on our work. Following this, we are seeking to build closer links with Catchment Partnership colleagues for the catchments that drain into the Solent, including the New Forest Catchment Partnership.

Two ongoing projects that the Forum is currently working on are 'Clean Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS)' and 'Building Biodiversity in the Solent (BBS)'. CSSS is a web based resource hub to collate and share water quality resources and initiatives, to help improve awareness and influence behaviour in the Solent. It covers the following sectors: microplastics, nutrient enrichment (diffuse and point source), polluting contaminants, oil pollution, non-native species, hydrographic and hydromorphological changes and acidification.

The hub is still under development but can be accessed by clicking here: www.solentforum.org

For the BBS hub, the Forum is working with partners to develop an information resource to share knowledge and best practice on building biodiversity into coastal infrastructure. The Solent waterside has long been used by industry and, along with dense centres of population and high levels of recreational participation, this has led to extensive coastal infrastructure.



Litter sculpture by Final Straw Solent

As a precursor to the BBS hub, the Forum did some opportunity mapping in the Solent that reviewed where and how infrastructure could be improved, this included the New Forest coast. This work can be accessed by clicking here: www.solentforum.org

BBS seeks to promote the use of 'nature based solutions,' such as the use of eco concrete or attaching vertipools (artificial rock pools) onto new or existing coastal infrastructure to increase its biodiversity. This work will become increasingly important when biological net gain is mandated in the forthcoming Environment Bill. Please see more by clicking here: at: www.solentforum.org

A further project, that the Forum is leading on, that will be piloted at Lymington, is 'Beneficial use of Dredging's in the Solent (BUDS)'. This seeks to use marine dredging's to build up the eroding saltmarsh at Lymington to preserve this habitat and its natural flood defence capability. Currently most dredged material from the Solent is disposed of at sea at the Nab Tower off the Isle of Wight. More information is available by clicking here: www.solentforum.org



Pilot project: Beneficial use of Dredging's, Lymington. Photo courtesy of ABPmer

To keep up to date with the work of the Forum, you can subscribe to our free monthly e-newsletter by emailing your details to: info@solentforum.org