

Solent Forum Annual Report: 2023 - 2024

The Solent Forum is an established coastal partnership that promotes and delivers integrated coastal and marine management around the Solent. Established in 1992, it provides advice on strategic coastal and marine matters and facilitates communication and information exchange amongst its [members](#). Its work is steered by a group of key organisations, who also guide the work of the Forum Officers.

This report sets out what the Forum has achieved in the 2023/24 financial year and what it plans to deliver in 2024/25. The long term aims and objectives of the Forum are set out in its [Business Plan](#). A new plan will be prepared during 2024/5 to cover the period 2025 to 2030.

The Forum has three categories of work that it undertakes; core work that is ongoing each year, specific project work that runs for a defined time period and the servicing of subgroups. It both leads and works as a partner in external projects.

The Forum hosts regular events as part of its core service, both alone and in partnership with others, to support project work and disseminate information on important Solent issues.



Solent Forum Aims

The aims of the Solent Forum are:

- To promote, facilitate and support integrated planning and sustainable management of the Solent.
- To provide a broad based consultative forum.

Solent Forum Members

The Forum has a wide ranging membership from many coastal and marine sectors. [Members](#) are professional bodies and organisations such as local government, harbour authorities, marine businesses, user groups, trade associations and NGOs. The Forum is not open to individuals, local residents associations or issue specific lobby groups. It is politically neutral and independently chaired.

Membership benefits include:

- Access to the Solent News service;
- Free attendance at biannual [Solent Forum meetings](#) and free or reduced entry fee to other Forum events;
- Access to Forum reports, data and the Forum's [Solent Information Database](#);
- Use of the Solent Forum network to communicate with other authorities, organisations and user groups;
- Opportunity to undertake partnership work and influence the direction of future Forum project work;
- Opportunity to join Forum Subgroups: [Natural Environment](#) and [Solent Marine Sites](#) (Relevant Authorities only) and apply for the [Solent Bathing Water Quality Awards](#).
- Use the Forum network to assist with project work via letters of support for bids, stakeholder engagement, joint event hosting and legacy outputs.



Solent Forum Objectives

The Forum has six objectives. Below is a summary of the relevant core work that the Forum undertakes to deliver each objective:

1. To raise awareness and understanding of members' roles and aspirations

Relevant Forum work: Solent News Service, Forum website, Solent Forum meetings.

2. To improve sharing of the information base

Relevant Forum work: Professor Mike Clark Award, Solent News Service, Forum website, Solent Bathing Water Quality Awards, Solent Information Database, identification of research needs, Natural Environment Group grant funding.

3. To facilitate better communication, consultation and liaison:

Relevant Forum work: Solent News Service, Forum website, Solent Forum meetings, topical workshops, Solent Information Database and Coastal Consents Guide.

4. To raise awareness and understanding of the human and natural changes likely to materially affect the Solent area and its interests:

Relevant Forum work: Solent News Service, Forum website, Solent Forum meetings, Solent Forum serviced subgroups and resource hubs.

5. To promote the national and regional importance of the Solent in policy, development and plan making:

Relevant Forum work: Solent Forum Meetings, Solent News Service, Forum website, officer input into national coastal and marine policy work and partnership working.

6. To raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of Climate Change on the Solent and appropriate mitigation, resilience and adaptation measures:

Relevant Forum work: Solent Forum Meetings, Solent News Service, Forum websites and workshops.

Solent Forum Core Work

- Biannual [Forum meetings](#).
- News service - biannual newsletter, ([Solent News](#)) monthly updates, [X](#) and special alerts.
- Maintaining the [Forum website](#), including hosting partner material and [resource hubs](#) of key topical information.
- Provision of the [Solent Information Database \(SID\)](#) - a meta database of Solent research and reports.
- Servicing of subgroups.
- Administering the [Solent Bathing Water Quality Awards](#).
- Running the [Professor Mike Clark Award](#) to support student research in the Solent. Hosting a summer placement student.
- Maintaining a [Coastal Consents Guide](#) to advise those wishing to undertake development.
- Membership networking and attendance at key local meetings like Catchment Partnerships and the Southern Coastal Group.
- Collating and sharing information on key issues with member organisations, facilitating partnership working.
- Hosting of material and legacy support for external projects. Chairing external projects and facilitating workshops.

Ongoing Solent Forum Subgroups

- [Solent Marine Sites Management Group](#) (Relevant Authorities only)
- [Solent Bathing Water Quality Group](#) (to administer the Solent bathing water quality awards)
- [Natural Environment Group](#)

Work Programme 2023/24

Core Meetings and Events Held in 2023/24

| Meeting | Attendees | Date of Meeting/Event |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Solent Forum | Solent Forum members | October 2023 and March 2024 |
| Solent Forum Steering Group | Steering Group Members | Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024 |
| Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) | SEMS Management Group | Activity survey in Spring 2023, Management Group meeting in September 2023 |
| Natural Environment Group (NEG) | NEG Members | Spring and Autumn 2023 |
| Horizon Scanning survey | Solent Forum Members | Summer 2023 |
| Solent coast and marine LNRS workshop | Coast and marine stakeholders | 16 January 2024 |

Projects/Partnership Work Undertaken in 2023/24

| Project/Service | Objective | Details |
|--|---|---|
| Beneficial Use of Dredging in the Solent Project (BUDS) | Explores how dredgings can be used in coastal defence and habitat replenishment schemes. | Preparing the final reporting for Phase 3, bottom placement dredging at Lymington, including preparation of the MMO Marine Licence. |
| Solent Seascape Project | A Blue Marine Foundation project to restore and reconnect seagrass meadows, oyster reefs, saltmarsh and seabird nesting habitat over five years (2023 to 2028). | Solent Forum is a member of the project Steering Group and chair of the Recovery Plan Working Group. |
| Habitat Restoration hub | Collates information on habitat restoration, including on natural capital, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and net gain. | Hub built and will continue to be updated. |
| Clean Solent Shores and Seas (CSSS) | CSSS collates and shares information on a range of topics on the Solent's water quality. | We continued populating the directories under the CSSS umbrella. |
| Solent Plastics Pollution Hub (SPP) SPP facebook page | SPP collates and publicises work on reducing litter and preventing plastic pollution in the Solent. | We are now in the legacy phase of this project and we will continue to update the project website and Facebook page until 2026. |
| Habitat Restoration Inventory for the Solent to Sussex Bay | Working with University of Portsmouth to raise awareness and encourage partnership working on habitat restoration. | Project commenced Jan 2023, and is now complete. The Forum has access to the resources to update it as new projects come along. |
| Solent Marine Invasive Species and Biosecurity Planning | To raise awareness of marine invasive species amongst Solent stakeholders and help them to adopt biosecurity measures. | Project commenced Jan 2023. Workshops were held throughout the Solent and a biosecurity web hub launched in October 2023. |

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Work Programme 2024/25

Key Meetings and Events Planned for 2024/25

| Meeting | Attendees | Date of Meeting/Event |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Solent Forum | Solent Forum members | October 2024 and March 2025 |
| Solent Forum Steering Group | Steering Group Members | July 2024, October 2024 and February 2025 |
| Solent Marine Sites (SEMS) | SEMS Management Group | Survey of activities spring 2024, annual meeting September 2024 |
| Natural Environment Group (NEG) | NEG Members | Spring and Autumn 2024 |
| Horizon Scanning survey | Solent Forum members | Summer 2024 |
| Business planning 2025 to 2030 | Solent Forum members | Planning and consulting throughout 2024 and 2025 for a launch in 2025 |

Current Projects/Consultancy Services Committed for 2024/25

| Project/Service | Objective | Work Programme for 2024/5 |
|--|---|---|
| Solent Plastics Pollution Hub (SPP) SPP facebook page | SPP is an information hub to collate and publicise all the work taking place around the Solent and its associated river catchments on reducing litter and preventing plastic pollution. | Continuing project legacy support until February 2026. Annual updates will be produced in Feb 2024 and Feb 2025. |
| Itchen Preventing Plastic Pollution Partnership | This project is looking to address all uncontrolled plastics which have the potential for entering the River Itchen. | Solent Forum will be sitting on the steering group of this project that commenced in February 2024 for initially six months. |
| Beneficial Use of Dredgings (BUDS) in the Solent (phase 3) | To explore how material from dredging that takes place in the Solent can be used in coastal defence and habitat replenishment schemes. | During this year we will be in discussion with the MMO regarding the marine licence for phase 3, further work will depend on this outcome. |
| Solent Biosecurity Planning | To increase awareness of marine invasive species and adopt biosecurity measures in the Solent. | Our webpages will be refreshed and promoted to coincide with Marine Invasive Species week every May. |
| Solent Nature Recovery | To ensure that coast and marine are embedded in the developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex. | The first iteration of LNRS' are expected to be submitted to Defra at the end of 2024. The Forum will be working on the coast and marine elements with the Responsible Authorities. |
| Sea the Value (Developing the economics of biodiversity) | Communities and organisations will be engaged in mapping values and trade-offs, and co-developing green investments for marine biodiversity. | The Solent is one of two project field sites and we will be supporting the project team until 2025. |
| Solent Seascape | A Blue Marine Foundation project to restore and reconnect seagrass meadows, oyster reefs, saltmarsh and seabird nesting habitat over five years (2023 to 2028). | Solent Forum is a member of the project Steering Group and chair of the Recovery Plan Working Group. |