

Natural Environment Group:15 October 2026

Agenda

- Chair's welcome
- NEG Manager's update
- Marine Heatwaves: the UK's new normal? Dr Zoe Jacobs, National Oceanography Centre
- NEG Funding Awarded Projects – Updates x 2
- [Protected Site Strategy](#) for the Solent introductory workshop - Natural England

We will be recording for purposes of note taking

Staff

- Jason Scott – Chair, SEMS Management Group
- Kate Ansell – SEMS and Natural Environment Group
(NEG) Officer
- Jess Taylor – Natural England lead for SEMS and
Chair of NEG

The map displays the South Coast of England, highlighting the proposed High Speed 2 (HS2) route. The route is shown in orange and green, indicating different sections or types of infrastructure. Key locations include Southampton, Portsmouth, Brighton, and the New Forest National Park. The map also shows the surrounding coastline and major roads.

Matters Arising: Finance

- You should all have received an invoice for your Solent Marine Sites/NEG membership contribution. If you are also members of the Core Partnership you will receive one invoice with two product lines.
- If there are any officer or finance contact changes, please could you inform us.
- We send an advisory letter each November with expected contributions for the next Financial Year.
- In April, we will request POs where required. Please could you send all POs direct to the Solent Forum Office. If you don't require a PO you will be invoiced direct.

NEG Project Updates

2025/26 Funded

Drug accumulation in fish of the Solent. Louise O'Neill, Uni of Soton, £2,000

2026/27 Funded

Early detection of non-native and invasive species using eDNA in Southampton Water. Cathy Lucas, Uni of Soton, £2,000

Ending bogus bivalve labelling: developing finger-printing techniques to manage Solent fisheries. Gordon Watson, Uni of Portsmouth, £1,025

Headlines of SEMS Annual Survey 2026

1. 30 out of 31 Relevant Authorities responded to the Annual Survey.
2. Increases in activity recorded at more than one site were for litter and paddlesports. Mode for all activities is 'no change'.
3. The activities highlighted by respondents potentially *impacting* on SEMS sites are: coastal walking (mainly with dogs), littering, coastal squeeze (from FCERM works), non motorised watercraft use (paddlesports) and powered craft.
4. Trend data (2019 to 2025) shows that the mode response to changes in activity levels across the Solent remains as 'no change'.
5. 'No change' does not mean activities are not having an impact, as current levels could still be causing damage to designated sites. The Solent is a busy space (see use data in the Management Report)

Table 5b. Activities Impacting on Designated Sites by Percentage stating 'yes'

Activity	Yes	No	Total	Percentage yes
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	14	3	17	82%
Littering and removal of litter	11	8	19	58%
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	11	9	20	55%
Operation of FCERM	8	8	16	50%
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	9	9	18	50%
General Beach Recreation	8	9	17	47%
Mooring and Anchoring	5	10	15	33%
Wildfowling	2	4	6	33%
Fishing (shore-based activities)	6	13	19	32%
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	3	9	12	25%
Grazing and Foraging	2	6	8	25%
Accidental vessel discharges	2	12	14	14%
Operation of ports and harbours	2	13	15	13%
Recreation - light aircraft	1	8	9	11%
Boat Repair and Maintenance	1	11	12	8%
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	0	14	14	0%

Table 4b. Percentage of respondents that reported 'don't know' to activity changes

Activity	Don't know	Total Responses	% Don't know
Recreation - light aircraft	5	9	56
Fishing (shore-based activities)	9	19	47
General Beach Recreation	7	17	41
Recreation - non-motorised watercraft	8	20	40
Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs)	6	17	35
Fishing (including shellfisheries)	4	12	33
Wildfowling	2	6	33
Recreation - powerboating or sailing with an engine	5	18	28
Littering and removal of litter	5	19	26
Boat Repair and Maintenance	3	12	25
Operation of coastal flood and erosion risk management schemes	4	16	25
Grazing and Foraging	2	9	22
Accidental vessel discharges/emissions including oil spill and clean-up	3	14	21
Mooring and Anchoring	3	15	20
Slipway and jetty cleaning and maintenance	2	14	14
Operation of ports and harbours (maintenance of infrastructure)	2	15	13

SEMS Actions Relevant to NEG

1. SEMS Management Group and NEG members to feed concerns on or new management measures that are introduced on non-licensable activities to the SEMS office throughout the year, (info@solentforum.org) to enable the promotion and sharing of good practice throughout the Solent.
2. Trend data for activity change is showing that activities in the Solent are elevated but stable, to ascertain whether this is the case or people do not have sufficient data to make a judgement year the SEMS Survey includes a 'don't know' option for respondents when asked about activity changes. Feed this data into NEG (table 4b.).
3. NEG to continue to support the development of the Solent Seascapes project's Seascape Recovery Plan. The Solent Forum sit on the working group that is helping to draft this plan and provide the NEG Secretariat.
4. Solent Marine Sites Management Group members and NEG to report wildlife disturbance from marine non-licensable activities via email to the [MMO](#). The MMO are trialling a 'seasight' reporting form to capture disturbance from recreational activity, we will share this more widely once it has fully launched.

NEG Project Funding 2027/28

Q. Do we want to put out a general call for projects, or do we want to specify more closely the evidence needs arising from the Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme? Approx £3k available for research/project establishment. Call will be in Feb.

Solent Marine Sites activities being highlighted as impacting sites:

- Land recreation (incl. walking with dogs) – covered by Bird Aware Solent
- Littering and removal of litter – very limited evidence on impacts
- Recreation - non-motorised watercraft – Bird Aware Solent expanding to address this activity

Solent Marine Sites activities highlighted by respondents as an evidence need for more data:

- Recreation - light aircraft
- Fishing (shore-based activities)
- General Beach Recreation

Protecting Poole's Seahorses



Did you know?
The calm and sheltered waters of Poole Harbour and nearby Studland Bay are home to one of our most beloved and recognisable marine animals - the seahorse! They can sometimes be found stranded on the shore or accidentally captured whilst crabbing.

How you can help a seahorse:

- Gently place the seahorse in a cold bucket of seawater
- Quickly take a photo without flash
- Gently return the seahorse back to the sea as quickly as possible
- Report your sighting to Natural England seahorses@naturalengland.org.uk and The Seahorse Trust theseahorsetrust@gmail.com



 Marine Management Organisation

There are two species of seahorse native to the UK, the spiny or long-snouted seahorse and short snouted seahorse. Both are protected under UK law.

Learn more 

Seahorse education poster prepared by MMO under their 'Your Coast' branding.

Would you like one designed for the Solent?

MMO would design and then we would circulate.

Date of Next Meeting

21 April 2027

Via MS Teams

(Placeholder will be circulated)