

Statement on the Role of the Southern Regional Habitat Creation Programme in the compliance of the Isle of Wight SMP with the Habitats Regulations



For information

Part A

Regional Habitat Creation Programme manager to complete this section

Name of the SMP	Isle of Wight SMP
Sites of international importance within the SMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area • Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site • South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation • Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation • Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons Special Area of Conservation • Briddlesford Copses Special Area of Conservation • Isle of Wight Downs Special Area of Conservation
Conclusion of the Habitats Regulation Assessment	<p>The assessment concluded that there may be adverse effects on the following designated sites:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area • Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site
How the compensatory habitat will be delivered (as described by the Statement of Case)	The habitat requirements arising from the Isle of Wight SMP will be delivered by the Environment Agency's Southern Regional Habitat Creation Programme (SRHCP)
RHCP programme manager	Ruth Jolley

Part B

The Role of the RHCP in delivering the compensatory habitat

What is an RHCP	<p>A Regional Habitat Creation Programme (RHCP) provides a strategic approach to identifying and addressing potential losses of internationally protected habitats, thus helping to ensure that our flood risk management activities are compliant with the Habitats and Birds Directives.</p> <p>A Regional Habitat Creation Programme has three distinct phases or elements:</p> <p>PHASE A - Habitat Account Assessment - involves the identification of future losses to European Sites due to flood risk management activities and where habitat has to be created to compensate for those losses. It also involves the identification of losses of BAP habitat as well as gains that offset these losses and contribute to the target of creating 200ha of new BAP habitat a year.</p> <p>PHASE B - Finding and Securing Habitat Site - involves the identification and investigation of suitable sites on which compensatory habitat can be created. It also involves identifying schemes where there may be opportunities for BAP habitat creation.</p> <p>PHASE C - Creating the Habitat - involves gaining control over those sites and the creation and long-term management of appropriate habitat.</p> <p>The programme has a cyclical nature. In each phase a series of actions need to be completed, and each phase needs to be revisited at regular intervals.</p>
How the RHCP works	The SRHCP monitors habitat creation needs arising from Flood & coastal risk management plans and projects, and coordinates searches for suitable land for habitat creation. Depending on the circumstances, land is either purchased or an agreement is drawn up with the land-owner to ensure habitats are created and secured until the point of designation. The SRHCP then commissions a design and obtains planning permission for the habitat creation work. The programme normally partners with a nature conservation NGO to deliver and manage the required habitats.

Part C

Review of the habitat losses predicted in the SMP and the compensation requirements arising

SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area and Ramsar site 				
Predicted Losses	<i>Location</i>	<i>Habitat type</i>	<i>Area of habitats likely to be lost during Epoch 1 (first 20 years) in hectares</i>	<i>Area of habitats likely to be lost during Epoch 2 (50 years time) in hectares</i>	<i>Additional area of habitats lost by the end of Epoch 3 (100 years time) in hectares</i>
	Thorley Brook and Barnfields Stream, Yarmouth	Coastal grazing marsh (with the function of providing high tide roost sites and feeding areas for winter grazing birds)	0	31	0
Compensation ratios to be used	(must be agreed with Natural England/CCW) A ratio of 1:1 will be used				
Total Compensation habitat requirement arising from the SMP	<i>Habitat Type</i>	<i>Epoch 1 (first 20 years)</i>		<i>Additional requirement by end of Epoch 3 (100 years time)</i>	
	Coastal grazing marsh	0		31	

Part D

Work undertaken to identify sites for compensatory losses

Sites being developed by the RHCP to provide compensatory habitat for the SMP	<i>Location</i>	<i>Species the site is compensating for</i>	<i>Habitat Type</i>	<i>Area to be Created</i>	<i>Current Progress</i>	
	Lower Test		grazing marsh	70 ha	Feasibility study starting 2011	
	Thorley Brook		grazing marsh	14 ha	Site identified as potential compensation – no studies undertaken to date	
	Totals		start 2011 possible projects	-	84 ha	

Other points on progress

- The Solent Coastal Habitat Management Plan (CHaMP) and the Isle of Wight Environmental Mitigation Study (2006), supported by the neighbouring Solent Dynamic Coast Project, provide information on potential realignment schemes in the SMP area and the Solent and contribute to the SRHCP. .
- The Isle of Wight SMP participated in a joint-environmental sub-group with the North Solent SMP to share information and support the development of the SMP HRA process and conclusions.
- The Isle of Wight SMP2 has been judged to have an adverse effect on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar sites through recommending a policy of Managed Realignment over designated grazing marsh supporting wintering roosting and feeding birds within the Western Yar Estuary, which will occur between 2025 and 2050.
- Although there is a knock-on consequence of adverse effect this policy has the full support of Natural England and the Environment Agency as the most sustainable coastal policy.
- The preferred policy of HTL/MR/NAI results in creating a significant amount of mudflat and saltmarsh, the latter of which is an important declining Biodiversity Action Plan habitat that is difficult to recreate, as there is not often opportunity to do so, as well as enabling new coastal grazing habitat with the function of providing feeding and high tide roost sites for wintering bird species to be planned and created in advance of loss. If the SMP2 were not to be implemented, and the defences and sluices in this policy unit were to be left unmaintained it would result in more detrimental consequences to the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site and its interest features than if the active policy suite was implemented. The policy provides time in the first epoch to investigate and plan the controlled management of the saline intrusion through the existing defence line (by a policy of MR in the second epoch) of the sluices at Thorley Brook and Barnsfield Stream, followed by NAI in the long term. This is the most sustainable and least damaging option in the long term.
- Therefore the Isle of Wight SMP2 identifies a need to compensate for the loss of 31 hectares of coastal grazing marsh during epoch 2.
- It may be that this amount of coastal grazing marsh (with the function to provide high tide roosts and feeding habitat for wintering wader and waterfowl) is compensated for in one location by the Southern Region RHCP, or in a number of locations to enable the functional habitat lost to be within the area from which it was lost.
- The neighbouring North Solent SMP2 requires 39 hectares of coastal grazing marsh, which together totals 70 hectares or approx. 36% of the coastal grazing marsh within Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar sites.
- The SRHCP is developing sites to provide compensatory habitat for the SMP, including 70 ha of grazing marsh identified in the Lower Test. Feasibility studies will confirm suitability for habitat creation. Other sites will be investigated if this site proves unsuitable. The landowner is willing in principle to sell but negotiations will only commence when funding to proceed likely to be available.

Part E

The risks to the RHCP in delivering the requirements in the required timescale

<p>Available powers and funds to secure the necessary compensation</p>	<p>FCRM GiA Agri-environment scheme</p>				
<p>Risks/mitigation of overall delivery</p>	<p><i>Importance (state whether the risk is high medium or low importance)</i></p>	<p><i>Risk Description (Describe what the potential risk is and how it could impact delivery of the RHCP compensatory habitat)</i></p>	<p><i>Counter measure (Describe what action will be taken to stop this risk becoming an issue)</i></p>	<p><i>Owner (who is in charge of ensuring this risk does not become an issue)</i></p>	<p><i>Comments (Add any comments relating to the progress of mitigating this risk)</i></p>
<p>Medium</p>	<p>Incorrect amount of habitat identified</p>	<p>In view of the uncertainties about future climate change, maintenance of privately owned defences and processes affecting shoreline evolution, and also because Government policy changes over time, SMPs are reviewed approximately every 10 years. The North Solent SMP will be reviewed prior to the end of Epoch 1.</p>	<p>SMP / FCERMS / Scheme Project teams</p>		
<p>High</p>	<p>Inadequate funding</p>	<p>Improve incentives to landowners for change in land use and land management for creating necessary habitat.</p>	<p>Natural England, EA, SRHCP, with support from SMP Client Steering Group Organisations</p>		
<p>High</p>	<p>Lack of opportunities</p>	<p>Proactive identification of suitable sites and engagement with landowners.</p>			

	High		Lack of public support	Continue to build and improve relationships with local communities and landowners.		
Site level risks and mitigation	Site	Likelihood of site delivery within required timescale	Importance (state whether the risk is high medium or low importance)	Risk Description (Describe what the potential risk is and how it could impact deliver of the RHCP compensatory habitat)	Counter measure (Describe what action will be taken to stop this risk becoming an issue)	Owner (who is in charge of ensuring this risk does not become an issue)
	Lower Test	Medium	Low	Site not suitable for habitat creation	Feasibility study will confirm suitability for habitat creation. Other sites will be investigated if this site proves unsuitable.	Ruth Jolley
			High	Failure to agree land purchase	Landowner is willing in principle to sell but negotiations will only commence when funding to proceed likely to be available.	
			High	Failure to complete on-site works	Ensure Natural England and Planning Authority support before commencing works.	
			Medium	Failure to develop appropriate habitat and function	Site development will be monitored to ensure any necessary modifications are incorporated to create required habitat and function for target species	
	Thorley Brook	Medium	Low	Site not suitable for habitat creation	Feasibility study will confirm suitability for habitat creation. Other sites will be investigated if this site proves unsuitable.	Ruth Jolley
			High	Failure to secure the land	Landowner will be approached if initial investigations look promising.	
			High	Failure to complete on-site works	Ensure Natural England and Planning Authority support before commencing works.	

			Medium	Failure to develop appropriate habitat and function	Site development will be monitored to ensure any necessary modifications are incorporated to create required habitat and function for target species	
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Part F

Procedures in place to review the RHCP and monitor losses

In view of the uncertainties about future climate change, maintenance activities of privately owned flood defences and processes affecting shoreline evolution, and also because Government policy changes over time, SMPs are reviewed approximately every 10 years. Hence it is envisaged that the Isle of Wight SMP will be reviewed prior to the end of Epoch 1.

Habitat compensation requirements will be reviewed to take account of the changes to the SMP in future. More detailed assessment of risks is planned in Coastal Defence Strategy Studies and other site-specific studies.

The RHCP is reviewed annually and reports on the progress of the RHCP in delivering the habitat creation requirements of the SMP. This annual report will confirm:

1. how much compensation habitat was required,
2. how much we expected to create in that year,
3. how much was actually created,
4. whether there is a short-fall/exceedance
5. how we plan to deal with any shortfall (if required).

Part G

Statement of agreed understanding/conclusions

- The Isle of Wight SMP2 identifies a need to compensate for the loss of 31 hectares of coastal grazing marsh during epoch 2. Although there is a knock-on consequence of adverse effect this plan has the full support of Natural England and the Environment Agency as the most sustainable coastal policy. The MR policy will enable an increase in mudflat and saltmarsh habitat. The SRHCP is on course to provide 70 hectares of grazing marsh in the Lower Test.

- We are currently working on a compensation ratio of 1:1. This will be kept under review, in consultation with Natural England. Subject to any future changes in the rate of loss of habitats, the ratio may need to be increased, and this will be identified through the annual review process.

- The SRHCP undertakes an annual review of habitat creation requirements. The outcome of SMP reviews will be taken into account in the relevant annual review. The outcomes of other relevant documents such as Coastal Defence Strategies will also be incorporated into these annual reviews. Any changes to the estimated timing and quantity of habitat losses will be incorporated into the SRHCP programme through its annual review procedure.

- The timing of the loss in Epoch 2 is uncertain, but given the progress of the SRHCP through the development of the Medmerry site and the identification of other potential managed realignment sites subject to further studies, there is reason to believe that the SRHCP will be able to deliver the required habitat over a 100 year period.

For Shoreline Management Plans (SMP), it is not necessary for all of the anticipated compensatory habitats to be in place at the time that the SMP is approved. However, it is essential that the RHCP provides all the required compensation habitat before any damage is likely to occur, through implementation of the SMP, otherwise schemes and projects will be unable to proceed and the SMP cannot be implemented.

Part F

Sign-off

RHCP Manager

SMP Review
Group

Regional Director