

Poole Harbour

Aquatic Management Plan

Incorporating the European Marine Site Management Scheme

2006



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Poole Harbour



Aquatic Management Plan 2006

Produced by the Poole Harbour Steering Group

*Borough of Poole
Dorset County Council
Environment Agency
Natural England
Poole Harbour Commissioners
Purbeck District Council
Southern Sea Fisheries District Committee
Wessex Water Services Ltd*

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Executive Summary



Management

The need to manage Poole Harbour with its multitude of activities has long been recognised and this plan aims to do just that, by promoting its safe and sustainable use, whilst balancing the demands on its natural resources, minimising risk and resolving conflicts of interest. As a non-statutory plan it seeks to guide the current and future management of the Harbour and act as a vehicle for communication between the key statutory organisations that make up the Poole Harbour Steering Group, as well as other stakeholders. The Steering Group is a voluntary partnership and its members work under a Memorandum of Agreement to promote the sustainable use of the Harbour whilst securing the long-term nature conservation importance of this site. The plan itself, consolidates and updates the original Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan, 1994 and the 1998 Poole Harbour Management Policies, as well as drawing on many other current planning and guidance documents.

Assets and Activities

The ecological importance of Poole Harbour is internationally recognised with its designation as a Ramsar wetland site, whilst nationally it was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1991 to protect its valuable intertidal and coastal habitats. In 1999 it was also classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Birds Directive due to its internationally important assemblages of waterfowl and populations of certain regularly occurring resident and migratory species. Under UK legislation the Habitat Regulations form the basis for protecting and managing the SPA. The part of the SPA which covers the intertidal zone of the Harbour is referred to as a European Marine Site (EMS). The revised Aquatic Management Plan will serve as a management scheme for the European Marine Site to provide a framework for relevant authorities to ensure their functions have regard to the nature conservation interests of this part of the site. Much of the Harbour also lies within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which was designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the site. The archaeological importance of the Harbour was also recognised in 2003 when, it was identified as a Wetland of National Importance by English Heritage.

Whilst recognising the environmental importance of the Harbour, management initiatives also need to balance the requirements of many other commercial and recreational activities.

Poole is a busy commercial trust port, which makes a significant contribution to the economy of the local area. As well as handling bulk cargo imports and roll on, roll off freight, some 600,000 passengers also pass through the port each year. Luxury motor yachts are built in the area whilst other marine industries include boatyards, marinas and chandleries. The Harbour is home to Europe's largest onshore oil field and Poole is the National Headquarters for the RNLI.

In order to ensure the commercial viability of the Port and the local economy as a whole, there needs to be a robust supporting transport network. Local plans acknowledge and address the need to renew and develop the road and rail links of the region whilst channel deepening works have safeguarded the short-term future of sea transportation, supporting local and Government policies.

Responsibility for maintaining the Harbour for safe navigation for commercial and recreational users lies with Poole Harbour Commissioners. As well as continually surveying the Harbour and maintaining navigation aids, the Commissioners monitor and control shipping movement and arrange pilotage for larger vessels. They also work with other marine agencies to police the Harbour and prosecutions are regularly brought against offenders who break speed limits and other local byelaws.

Management of many recreational activities is done through a zoning scheme, which was introduced by the first Aquatic Management Plan. The use of these zones assists in the reduction of disturbance to environmentally sensitive areas and in the dangers associated with the mixing of powered and non-powered craft. Zones were identified for water-skiing, personal watercraft and windsurfing, with the south of the Harbour being designated as a quiet zone. As well as zoning, the use of personal watercraft and water-ski boats are also regulated through a permit scheme and access is restricted to specific launch points around the Harbour. Motor boating and sailing however are by far the most popular recreational activities in the Harbour with many owners keeping their boats in marinas or on swinging moorings. All moorings within the Harbour are managed and regulated by Poole Harbour Commissioners, with the Environment Agency being responsible for a small number in the Wareham Channel.

Along with the commercial and recreational activities that take place, Poole Harbour also sustains a significant fisheries resource. Many different species of finfish, shellfish and crustacean are harvested from its waters, while the extensive mudflats are home to several bait species. The fishery of the Harbour is primarily regulated by the Southern Sea Fisheries District Committee who work to keep all stocks at sustainable levels through the use of byelaws and enforcement. However management for eels and migratory species is overseen by the Environment Agency who also have enforcement powers.

All activities have the capacity to impact the natural environment. The water quality of the Harbour is regularly monitored by the Environment Agency who are responsible for ensuring standards set by EU Directives are met. Initiatives to reduce nutrient inputs to the Harbour focus on the improvement of sewage treatment works and changes to farming practices, while new legislation has helped to regulate the input of chemicals from antifouling paints and industry into the marine environment. As well as ongoing monitoring there is also a contingency plan in place for the Harbour, which provides the management, control and communication structure for dealing with pollution incidents.

The extensive marine historic assets found at this site need to be taken account of as part of the management of the Harbour. The Plan also needs to consider the future impact of climate change and sea level rise. A Shoreline Management Plan details the coastal defence options for the management of different sections of the Harbour shoreline and an update of the plan will set out a strategy for the next 100 years.

Structure of the Plan

This Plan is split into two main sections; The Base Plan (Section 1) discusses in detail the activities and issues associated with the Harbour. It contains the strategic aims and objectives of the Plan and lists the guiding principles that underpin the management of the Harbour. Where appropriate each chapter ends with a list of management objectives relevant to that activity or issue and these feed into the Matrix that makes up Section 2.

The management Matrix in Section 2 lists the various activities that need to be considered when developing a sustainable management strategy for Poole Harbour and its hinterland. It details the potential impacts of specific activities, existing management initiatives and ongoing objectives. From these objectives, proposed actions, relevant lead authorities and timeframes for delivery have been identified. A summary of some of the more immediate management actions can be found listed in Table 1 (right).

Table 1: This table lists some of the activities and management actions identified in the Matrix in Section 2, as having a short timescale for delivery.

Activity	Management Action
Unauthorised landing on shorelines	Develop codes of practice to raise awareness of potential impacts
Low flying aircraft & helicopters	Initiate discussions with relevant authorities regarding setting up no fly zones
Illegal egg collecting	Monitor gull colonies
Shoreline & intertidal based developments	Write guidance on how small developments could be designed to minimise adverse impacts
Anchoring	Identify anchorage sensitive areas & promote awareness of them
Use of antifouling paints	Education of boatyards, yacht clubs and owners on best practice
Use of sacrificial anodes	Continue review of existing research into the environmental effects of sacrificial anodes
Marine & terrestrial littering	Look to organise annual beach cleans around the Harbour
Shellfish dredging	Promote awareness of Bird Sensitive Areas
Bait digging	Commission further research into the impacts and extent of bait digging
Illegal fishing	Increase policing effort to catch & prosecute illegal fishermen
Maintenance dredging	Develop Sediment Management Plan including alternative dredging techniques
Capital dredging	Commission further research into potential impacts
All recreational activity	Evaluate effectiveness & adequacy of existing launch sites
Yachting	Continue with existing liaison and safety meetings
Motor boating	Investigate setting up workshops & presentations with user groups
Moorings	Review moorings policy to ensure adequate facilities for users and minimise impact on EMS
Water-skiing and Personal Watercraft	Review effectiveness of current recreational zoning

For a full list of all the management actions identified by this Plan please see Section 2.

