

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

2020/21
Decision No.
2191

Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 6 July 2020

Portfolio	Planning and Development
Subject:	Hook Lake Coastal Management Study
Report of:	Director of Planning and Regeneration
Corporate Priority:	Protect and enhance the environment

Purpose:

To seek approval to undertake a project to identify viable habitat creation options, to develop outline designs and produce a business case for delivering new habitat at Hook Lake, to help meet the Regional Habitat Compensation Programme (RHCP) targets in the Solent and South Downs (SSD) Area. The project will also provide opportunity to investigate additional broader outcomes important to Fareham Borough Council and the wider Fareham community, not just in relation to the environment, but also to enhance amenity, improve access and community health and wellbeing.

Hook Lake is located to the south of Warsash, on the eastern side of the River Hamble (Appendix A). The area is important environmentally, hosting national and international environmental designations including the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, the Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Hook-with-Warsash Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

The existing site, owned and managed by Hampshire County Council, comprises approximately 39 ha of coastal grazing marsh and 4 ha of reedbed habitat and the frontage is popular with locals and tourists due to its abundance of wildlife and network of footpaths passing through the reserve, including the Solent Way.

The aim of the study is to identify options to create compensatory intertidal habitat at Hook Lake, as recommended in the River Hamble to Portchester Strategy (RHPS) (2016) and the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (2010).

This project will help to meet the targets of the Solent and South Downs (SSD) Regional Habitat Compensation Programme (RHCP) to deliver compensatory intertidal habitat which is a legal requirement of the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (NSSMP) Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) agreement and Statement of Case.

Funding is already secured for the study from Environment Agency Grant-in-Aid.

Options Considered:

As recommendation.

Decision:

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) approves commencement of the Hook Lake Coastal Management Study; and
- (b) agrees that the Director of Planning and Regeneration, is given delegated authority to procure and deliver the works, subject to the award of contract being made through an Individual Decision by the Executive Member for Planning and Development.

Reason:

Across the SSD area there has been a reduction in European Designated Sites (Natura 2000), either via the direct encroachment of new coastal defences or through coastal squeeze, resulting from the combination of rising sea levels and 'Hold the Line' (HTL) SMP policies. The SSD RHCP Annual Review Report (2017), completed as part of the progress review and strategic update for the RHCP, calculated the intertidal habitat losses as, 435ha of saltmarsh and 75ha of mudflat, over the next 100 years.

The habitat compensation targets set for Epoch 1 (2005-2025) have mostly been met, primarily from Medmerry in West Sussex, but there is still 20 ha of saltmarsh habitat short. The habitat creation targets for Epoch 2 (2026-2055) are set as 149ha of saltmarsh and 70 ha of mudflat.

The creation of new compensatory intertidal habitat through the RHCP will help to offset these losses and is a legal requirement of the North Solent SMP IROPI agreement and Statement of Case. To ensure that the regional Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) programme can continue to be delivered without delay, compensatory habitat must be in place in advance for all FCERM schemes that will encroach and/or cause coastal squeeze damage to European Sites (Natura 2000 sites). Without provision of this compensatory habitat, many future FCERM schemes across the North Solent SMP area, will not have their Habitat Regulations Assessment approved, preventing planning and marine licence consents from being granted and therefore future FCERM schemes will not be able to progress.

Hook lake has been identified as a key high priority habitat compensation site to create up to 40.5 ha of saltmarsh and mudflat compensatory habitat to meet the Epoch 1 deficit and some of Epoch 2 (2026-2055).

The existing defences at Hook Lake have a residual life of 10-20 years. Given the present poor condition of the seawall, ad-hoc maintenance would be insufficient to mitigate health and safety risks associated with potential localised structure failure in the future. The Environment Agency (EA) currently maintains these however, they are not legally or contractually obliged to continue maintaining assets in the system and there is an intent to look at withdrawing maintenance in the short term.

The Hook Lake coastal management study and associated scheme are included in the EA's Capital Grant Programme. Funding for the study was approved by the EA in December 2019.

Confirmed as a true record:

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 6 July 2020