

Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management Plan Annual Review 2016-2017



for land, for water, for all

Chichester
Harbour
Conservancy

Chairman's Welcome



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Annual Review for Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The evocative cover photograph was taken from Bosham, looking out across West Itchenor towards Portsmouth. It is thought provoking and serves as a reminder to us all of the growing development pressure we are experiencing in and around Chichester Harbour.

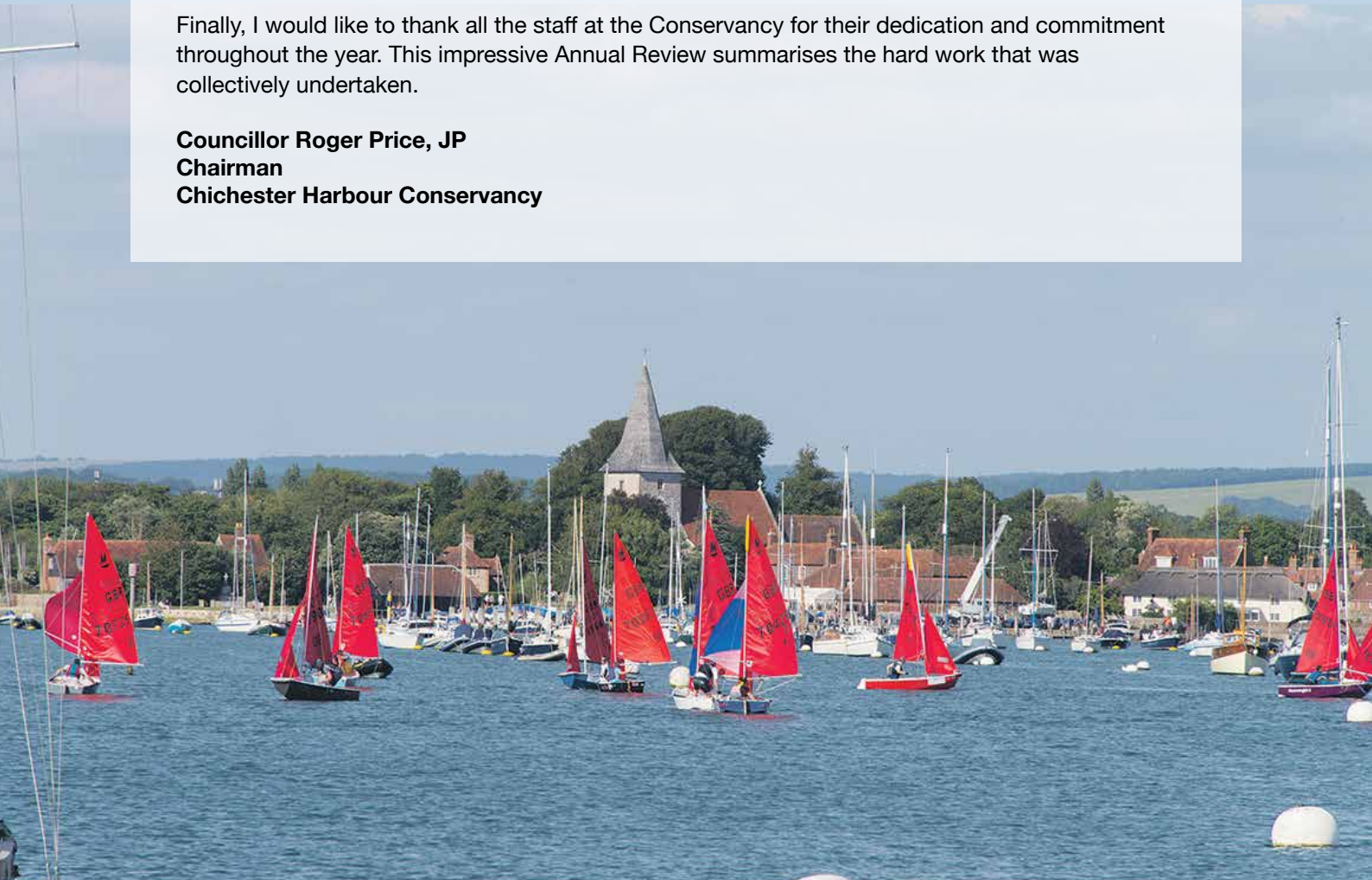
2016/17 was another busy year for the Conservancy and its partners. On a strategic level, we responded to the A27 Chichester Improvement Scheme consultation. The Conservancy was concerned about the detrimental impacts it would have on the AONB and urged Highways England to re-think their proposals. We hope that a long term and acceptable solution can be found. Meanwhile, the Conservancy is also continuing to work closely with Natural England on the England Coast Path around Chichester Harbour. Although this is still a work-in-progress, the Conservancy will consider supporting the initiative providing that our ecologically sensitive areas continue to be safeguarded.

In January we were delighted to start the refurbishment of our Education Centre thanks to the generosity of the Woodger Trust, the Friends of Chichester Harbour and Waitrose. When completed, the improvements will benefit thousands of children and adults for years to come.

The Conservancy is grateful for the support of a number of key partners that help us to operate a safe Harbour and to look after the AONB. I would like to give my thanks to the Chichester Harbour Federation, who continue to provide a strong representation of the sailing interests, the Friends of Chichester Harbour, through their ongoing volunteering and grants, and the Chichester Harbour Trust, who are actively looking to buy or lease new sites so they can protected for generations to come. Of course, there are many other organisations that help the Conservancy and their constant assistance is also very much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank all the staff at the Conservancy for their dedication and commitment throughout the year. This impressive Annual Review summarises the hard work that was collectively undertaken.

Councillor Roger Price, JP
Chairman
Chichester Harbour Conservancy



A Landscape for Habitats and Wildlife

At 29 square miles, Chichester Harbour is the smallest AONB in the South East of England yet is one of the most intensively used. It is a landscape internationally, nationally, and locally important for nature conservation. It encompasses a diverse suite of marine, intertidal and coastal habitats, together with the farmland, hedgerows, and woodland of a coastal plain. A number of designations help to protect these qualities, including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Ramsar site, the Special Protection Area, the Special Area of Conservation, the Site of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves. There is a 53 mile shoreline, of which 33 miles are engineered defences.

In 2016/17 the Conservancy managed 35 Friends of Chichester Harbour Conservation Work Parties, with an average attendance of 26 people. They collectively worked over 1,800 hours of volunteer time. The Harbour Watch volunteers picked-up over 170 bags of litter. The Conservancy planted 2,784 trees.

In October the Conservancy adopted new Shoreline Defence Guidelines, co-authored with Royal Haking DHV. The Conservancy's preferred shoreline defence is a natural solution, for example, saltmarsh.

Peter Hughes was appointed as the Conservancy's Ecologist in November, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise in his field, and in particular, his knowledge of birdlife.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

On a monthly basis between September and March, Chichester Harbour non-breeding waterbirds are surveyed by a team of volunteers that are coordinated by CHC. During the summer months (April-August) the Conservancy carries out a much reduced survey, reflecting the smaller numbers of birds using the Harbour during this period.

23 individuals were involved in the counts over the course of the year. We are ever grateful for the efforts of these volunteers, some of whom have been involved with these surveys for decades.

As with the previous year, the peak count for the whole Harbour occurred in January, with a total of 51,323 birds. The Brent Geese peak of 14,260 and the Wigeon peak of 2,938, were both the second highest over the previous 5 years. Teal, Pintail, Shelduck, Red-breasted Merganser all recorded in lower numbers than in any of the previous 5 years. The peak count for Grey Plover of 1,667 was the highest since 2009-10. The peak count of Dunlin of 9,853 meant that the two lowest counts of Dunlin in the Harbour in recent times have occurred during the last two winters.

The Conservancy and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust carried out fortnightly surveys of Brent Geese feeding areas during January and March 2017. The aims of the surveys were to confirm or amend the use of sites outside of the SPA, previously identified by the Solent Brent Goose and Wader Strategy. It was also to provide evidence of how these birds move within the Solent, between the SPA and inland areas. Information was gathered on how often the birds were disturbed, what caused the disturbance (e.g. walkers, farm machinery, dogs, aircraft) and how far they travelled when they were disturbed.

Breeding Birds

Breeding seabirds were monitored on North Stakes, South Stakes, and Ella Nore on a weekly basis during May-August.

Fish

Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) carried out small fish surveys at three sites in Chichester Harbour in 2016. Each survey consisted of two visits (June/July and September). There were 1983 fish of 25 species. Bass and Sand Smelt were jointly the most abundant, followed by Common Goby and Sprat.

Seals

In conjunction with Langstone Harbour Board, seal numbers were monitored at their haul out sites in June, July and August 2016. These combined counts in Chichester Harbour and Langstone Harbour recorded a minimum figure of 44 individuals present, made up of 29 adult Common Seals, 10 Common Seal pups and 5 adult Grey Seals.

This is the second successive year in which Common Seals have been recorded breeding in the Harbour (with 8 pups in 2015). A single winter survey was carried out in December 2016, when 3 Common Seals were noted.

The Solent Seals Code of Conduct continues to be promoted, to reduce the potential for disturbance to this important seal population by Harbour users.



Habitat Management

In the summer of 2016, Fishbourne Meadows was grazed with 12 yearling cattle to further improve the sward. Hemlock Water-dropwort and ragwort were removed by hand during January 2017.

Cattle grazing was introduced to Nutbourne Farm SSSI during 2016, and continued for much of the autumn and winter. This is the first livestock grazing the site has seen for around 15 years, and will improve the habitat for wintering wildfowl and waders. Control of the native plant Hemlock Water-dropwort will continue in 2017 to reduce the risk of livestock poisoning. Natural England's condition assessment for this unit is now 'unfavourable recovering' after 10 years of being unfavourable.

In February and March 2017, habitat enhancements were carried out to improve the chances of Terns breeding at

Ella Nore Spit. This involved removing vegetation (mostly grasses and sea beet), creating small patches of fine shingle/sand, and erecting an electric fence. Breeding seabirds are an SPA feature, and Terns prefer to site their nests on bare sand/fine shingle with little surrounding vegetation and there are very few available nesting areas within the Harbour.



Breeding Birds			
Species	Pairs	Fledged young	Comment
Little Tern	16	1	Nest failure due to tidal flooding
Common Tern	45	0	Nest failure due to tidal flooding
Sandwich Tern	0		
Black-headed Gull	40	0	Nest failure due to tidal flooding
Mediterranean Gull	0		

SPA Wildfowl Species Peak Counts 2010-2017								
Species	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (peak month)	2016/17 (peak month)	5 Year Average
Brent Goose (Dark-bellied)	11,434	10,309	10,867	11,206	16,446	14,260 (Jan)	12,408 (Dec)	13,037
Shelduck	638	563	696	363	572	340 (Jan)	499 (Jan)	494
Eurasian Widgeon	3,502	2,729	2,381	3,865	2,062	2,938 (Dec)	3,387 (Oct)	2,926
Northern Pintail	268	283	193	220	296	117 (Mar)	113 (Dec)	187
Red-breasted Merganser	213	217	154	267	222	76 (Jan)	97 (Jan)	163

SPA Wader Peak Counts 2010-2017								
Species	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (peak month)	2016/17 (peak month)	5 Year Average
Ringed Plover	221	424	750	512	751	254 (Jan)	209 (Nov)	495
Grey Plover	897	1,463	1,450	1,222	1,536	1,667 (Jan)	1,443 (Nov)	1,752
Sanderling	350	450	350	606	404	148 (Apr)	106 (Dec)	322
Dunlin	16,658	15,474	12,099	14,799	8,821	9,853 (Dec)	12,830 (Jan)	11,680
Black-tailed Godwit	832	821	401	606	594	807 (Dec)	698 (Nov/Dec)	621
Bar-tailed Godwit	1,119	620	903	1,159	328	760 (Jan)	721 (Dec)	774
Curlew	1,685	1,857	1,557	1,960	1,391	1,125 (Jan)	955 (Oct)	1,397
Redshank	1,873	2,137	1,790	1,953	2,139	1,649 (Oct)	1,485 (Dec)	2,430
Little Egret	219	205	141	252	259	132 (Sept)	146 (Sept/Oct)	186

A Landscape for Leisure and Recreation

Chichester Harbour has 12 square miles of water, with 60-90 million gallons washing in and out every day. There is a resident fleet of around 11,000 leisure vessels representing about 25% of the all the recreational craft in the Solent. Combined membership of the sailing clubs amounts to 12,000 people and each year an estimated 25,000 different people, including visitors, enjoy sailing for sport, recreation or fishing. Meanwhile, the Conservancy runs an annual activities programme that encourages people to enjoy and appreciate the AONB. There are 57 miles of public footpaths and a further 7 miles of permissive routes. The 11 mile Salterns Way cycle route connects Chichester to West Wittering. In total it is estimated that 1.5 million people visit Chichester Harbour AONB every year.

On the Water

The Conservancy continues to meet the requirements of the Port Marine Safety Code. Members of the Conservancy are nominated as the Duty Holder, and an auditable safety management system is maintained. A successful audit was reported by Regs4Ships in July 2016, who also provided an update to members on their responsibilities under the Code in July. The Conservancy's Designated Person is now Andrew Langford from NautX.

202 incidents were reported on the water, including:

- 5 collisions/near miss
- 30 vessels aground
- 20 vessels adrift from their moorings
- 34 tows
- 2 prosecutions
- 4 incidents with tenders

One vessel was detained in the Harbour with 17 illegal immigrants onboard. Incidents of this kind are of growing concern, and people smuggling was the focus of the Annual Joint Meeting between members of the Conservancy and Advisory Committee and addressed by senior officers of Border Force.

The Conservancy supported Chichester Harbour Federation's Crime Forums in April and November, which help to sustain a well informed network to counter illegal activity.

A 5-yearly review of aids to navigation was consulted on widely and resulted in two changes including the addition of a navigation light on the previously unlighted North Pilsley Starboard hand buoy. Separately, a special mark was approved to ease a pinch point caused by racing in the Thorney Channel. The annual inspection by Trinity House Lighthouse Service was undertaken with the aids to navigation found to be in good order, with minor issues to some third party aids.

18 Local Notices to Mariners were issued.

A maintenance dredge of Chichester Bar was completed in October 2016 with 23,000m³ of shingle removed and used to recharge the beaches on the Hayling seafront.

The Conservancy's Oil Spill Contingency was revised and approved by the MCA for the period ending December 2021.

Implementation of the Business Plan drives continuous improvement of the Conservancy operations. Management and upgrade of the Manor of Bosham moorings in the Bosham Channel helped to improve operational profitability. A comprehensive review of harbour dues led to the introduction of a new system of harbour dues based on a linear increase in rates per metres of vessel length.

The retirement of longstanding employees was an opportunity to recruit new staff and advance practice. Damian Homer took on the role of lead technician and satellite offices at Emsworth and Bosham, are now manned by Ian Jones and Chris Green respectively, with the Bosham role extended to full time to meet staff shortages in the winter. All three have impressive and relevant experience and are excelling in their new roles.

Communications and Activities

The Conservancy published 34,000 copies of the Harbour News and Guide and 30,000 copies of the Activities and Boat Trips leaflet. Each issue of the Conservancy's weekly navigation bulletin was emailed to around 5,000 people, with 1,125 clicking through to explore the safety messages. Monthly editions of Harbour CHIRP, the AONB newsletter, and What's On, the activities guide, were published and emailed to around 3,000 people. 12 new interpretation panels were erected throughout the AONB and one new Bird Hide panel on Thorney Island.

There were 126,840 total sessions on the Conservancy's website, with 82,631 unique users. There were 265,280 page views and the top 5 most visited pages (excluding the homepage) were:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Navigate Safely | 4. Moorings |
| 2. Walking | 5. Solar Heritage |
| 3. Harbour dues | |

There were 51 public trips on Solar Heritage and a further 40 private trips. 6 canoe safaris took place in partnership with Cobnor Activities Centre Trust.

The Conservancy led 37 guided walks and 11 family events, engaging participants with the AONB and encouraging the health and wellbeing benefits of the countryside.

A Landscape for Harbour Communities

There are 13 settlements in and around Chichester Harbour with an AONB resident population of 10,502 people in 5,069 dwellings (Census 2011)¹. Like many rural areas, there is an aging population with 30% of residents aged over 65 years, compared to 16.8% nationally. Although the Harbour is mostly affluent, there are pockets of deprivation with limited access to some essential services and a general lack of affordable housing. There are 455 businesses of which 75% are micro businesses. There are 12 Conservation Areas and 755 entries in the Historic Environment Record and 271 Listed Buildings.

In 2016/17, the Conservancy held two open days for local people. Our Countryside Day event at Eames Farm took place in September 2016 during 'Outstanding Week', a national initiative to raise awareness of AONBs. Our inaugural Brent Goose Day at Dell Quay took place in February 2017, to celebrate this iconic and internationally important bird in a fun and informative way. More than 250 people attended these events. We also undertook 6 outreach talks with local communities and specialist interest groups and organised 2 music events, to celebrate the cultural heritage of the Harbour.

Throughout the year, the Conservancy made 280 planning recommendations to the Local Planning Authorities. For the last full year, the accordance rate was 90%, which means that the majority of the recommendations the Conservancy made were accepted.

In September the Conservancy submitted a comprehensive response to the A27 Chichester Improvement Scheme consultation by Highways England. The Conservancy concluded that none of the presented Options were suitable and a separation of through traffic from local traffic would provide the most effective long term solution.

In October the Conservancy adopted 18 new Planning Principles for the AONB, replacing the previous guidance notes. These new Principles provide clear development management guidance for this protected area.

In February and March we consulted local people on the importance of protecting the dark skies in Chichester Harbour. We received 188 responses and 99.5% of respondents felt it was important to protect them, with widespread support for new candidate Dark Sky Discovery Sites in West Itchenor, Chidham and on Thorney Island.

Over the course of the year the Chichester Harbour Education Centre at Dell Quay hosted 10,077 education sessions (a session is a half a day learning experience per person) with 95 different organisations. The Conservancy hosted 206 education events, including outreach sessions, workshops and field trips. There were a total of 7,250 beneficiaries:

- 3,865 primary age children
- 1,330 secondary age children
- 434 young adult (sixth form and higher education)
- 1,621 adults



¹ The 13 settlements in and around the AONB are: Hayling Island; North East Hayling Island; Langstone; Emsworth; Southbourne; Thorney Island; Chidham & Hambrook; Bosham; Fishbourne; Apuldram; Birdham; West Itchenor; and West Wittering.

Financial Summary

The financial summary provides a general overview of the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Income		
Moorings from Harbour Users	£735,229	36%
Harbour dues from Harbour Users	£348,915	17%
Precept from Hampshire County Council	£188,600	9%
Precept from West Sussex County Council	£188,600	9%
AONB Grant from DEFRA	£141,441	7%
AONB Project Grant from the Friends of Chichester Harbour	£34,860	2%
Donation from the Woodger Trust	£28,000	1%
Chargeable Activities	£37,822	2%
Miscellaneous*	£356,010	17%
TOTAL	£2,059,475	100%



* Other harbour charges, boat park income, harbour rents, works licenses, legal charges, rural payments, car park, investment income, other income.

The rates for moorings and harbour dues are established in association with the Chichester Harbour Federation, to help ensure they are in-keeping with similar rates across the south coast. Income from moorings and harbour dues is solely used to run the Harbour Authority.

The precepts from Hampshire County Council and West Sussex County Council, the AONB Grant from Defra, and the AONB Project Grant from the Friends of Chichester Harbour are specifically used to help to fund the work of the AONB Unit that looks after the environment of Chichester Harbour. The donations from the Woodger Trust were used towards repairs to the Salterns Way and the refurbishment of the Education Centre.

Expenditure		
Staff costs	£890,188	43%
Estates	£348,468	17%
Administration	£47,508	2%
Professional Services	£81,177	4%
Transport	£73,051	4%
Community Engagement	£70,252	3%
Countryside Management	£70,570	4%
Contribution to Reserves	£292,331	14%
Miscellaneous*	£185,930	9%
TOTAL	£2,059,475	100%



* Miscellaneous includes moorings maintenance, bank charges, tools, repairs, insurance and contingency.



Straddling the boundary between Hampshire and West Sussex, Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1964. Chichester Harbour Conservancy, established in 1971, is unique in that it is the only Statutory Harbour Authority with responsibility for managing an AONB.

Chichester Harbour is one of England's most beautiful and cherished landscapes with valuable wildlife habitats and iconic archaeological and historical sites. It is quite rightly regarded as a treasured national resource.



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