

North Solent Management Plan (SMP) Consultation

Response by the Friends of Chichester Harbour

The Friends of Chichester Harbour (registered charity 1051162) was formed 22 years ago for the benefit of the public to help protect the countryside and wildlife of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) and to advance education of the public in relation to the harbour. Its membership has grown to over 3,000 members with 26 local Corporate and Group members supporting the charity.

The Friends Executive Committee and many members attended the SMP exhibitions kindly arranged by the New Forest and Local Authorities. The North Solent Shoreline Management Plan brochure, which clearly lays out the SMP proposals, has been studied. Policy unit reference numbers stated below refer to this plan.

The Friends are concerned that retaining valuable coastal grazing land within Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty does not receive sufficient importance and will be lost in the proposed plan. Two farms with land in the AONB dependant to a large extent on this rare habitat would be reduced to an uneconomical size by the plan's proposed management realignment.

Policy Unit Reference 5AH102 – Northney Farm

The entire shoreline area of this unit is rare coastal grazing marsh from land reclaimed in the Napoleonic era. The proposed realignment for epoch 1 (0 to 20 years) will remove this highly valued grazing area in total. This area is essential to the economic survival of Northney Dairy Farm. The area helps support over a hundred prize Ayrshire dairy cows. In addition Angus beef cattle graze these pastures and are marketed direct to local customers through the successful Three Harbours Beef Scheme.

Northney Farm has also invested and is diversifying into two new enterprises based on its milk output. The first, ice cream production is up and running. This expanding business is now retailing across the area. The second, in the final planning approval stage with Havant Borough Council and fully supported by Northney & Tye village, will convert a derelict barn into a tea house/shop selling products using milk produced from the fields outside.

The farm conducts visits for local school age and young people. It also arranges very popular Open Days for anyone interested in visiting a working farm. The converted barn will provide a covered space to provide support for its farm education programme and open days. Chichester Harbour Conservancy and the Friends of Chichester Harbour are involved in these programmes.

This dairy farm relies on a relatively small grazing area and any loss of land through management realignment is likely to lead to the demise of its current activities.

It is requested that the management realignment proposed for the first epoch is changed to Hold the Line and that this remains the policy, after suitable review towards the end of each epoch, for all three epochs (0 to 100 years).

Policy Unit Reference 5AH103 – Northney Farm to Mengham

Turnebury Farm in the south of this area also grazes beef cattle for the Three harbours Beef Scheme on coastal grazing marsh along the shoreline of the farm limits. In the SMP this is designated Hold the Line for the first epoch but realignment proposed in epoch 2 (20 to 50 years) will remove the area of coastal grazing marsh.

The farm has diversified to convert part of its land to a golf driving range and nine hole golf course. This is well established, successful and popular in this area.

It is suggested that Hold the Line be planned for all three epochs.

Both the above areas of coastal grazing marsh provide a rare habitat for many less common flora and fauna making a significant contribution to its designation of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for Chichester Harbour.

Havant Borough is planning to join over three hundred Transition Communities in a dozen countries rediscovering how it can become more self-reliant in food, energy and enterprise. Plans that could destroy two farms providing food directly to the local area would seem to be in opposition to this aspiration and a blow to sustainable development in this area.

The loss of these two businesses and the loss of coastal grazing marsh to the AONB would be a tragic consequence of the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan in its present form.

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Chairman
Friends of Chichester Harbour

23 April 2010