

Response by The Friends of Chichester Harbour
3 Feb 10

Part A: Introduction

Chapter 1 : The Scheme

1a Improvements

The Friends of Chichester Harbour (registered charity 1051162) have some 3,000 members and are supported by 26 local Corporate and Group members. The charity was formed 22 years ago for the benefit of the public to help maintain and improve Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As such its objectives are to protect and preserve the countryside and wildlife along its shores and to advance the education of the public in relation to the harbour.

With the South Downs as a backdrop, the entrance channel opens into four different channels providing 50 miles of shoreline. Views from any point on the shoreline provide nature's landscape masterpieces in this finest of maritime related Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

To help the public enjoy this there are shoreline paths along 90% of the 50 miles in Chichester Harbour. In the adjacent Langstone harbour some 98% of the 12 miles shore has footpaths and Pagham Harbour, immediately to the east almost 99 % of its 4 miles is accessible to the general public.

The AONB is readily accessible to large areas of population in the south east, particularly from Southampton, Portsmouth and Chichester.

Chichester Harbour is of international importance for nature conservation. Many of the walking public come to see its diversity of wildlife particularly wintering and breeding birds. If this wildlife is to be conserved and encouraged to continue to inhabit this area, control of access is necessary. The few areas where roosting and breeding birds are left relatively undisturbed must be kept as such.

As illustrated the area is not short of shoreline footpaths and the spirit of the coastal access legislation is not met by opening up every inch of shore in this area to walkers. To do so may drive away the very wildlife that most come to see and upon which the harbour is designated.

Full allowance should be made for nature conservation interests in the excepted list.

This maritime area has 18 Sailing Clubs and Sailing Schools and 13 boatyards. Whilst it is hoped that boatyards are excepted under 5.1 it is not clear whether Sailing Clubs would fall under the same category. Some small areas of shoreline are needed for members only, to safeguard the security, operations and fundamental nature of club membership. Relying on informal management control is not considered practical.

Short diversions inland to safeguard wildlife and boat operations would take the walk briefly through rural stretches which would enhance the pleasure of the walk.

The Friends of Chichester Harbour support and associate themselves with the detailed responses by the Chichester Harbour Conservancy to each chapter and section of Natural England's Scheme consultation in entirety.