Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership
Monitoring Plan

Introduction

1. This Monitoring Plan sets out the data collection which the Partnership will undertake over the coming years to monitor the effectiveness of the individual mitigation measures and the mitigation strategy as a whole. It is based on advice provided by consultants Footprint Ecology on what to survey, where and at what frequency.

2. The Plan covers the data needed to monitor the Interim Mitigation Strategy and those needed to monitor the additional mitigation measures which may be included in the definitive strategy. It reflects the need to ensure that the cost of monitoring is proportionate to the expenditure on the mitigation measures.

3. Please note that the monitoring which the Partnership will undertake is not exactly the same as that recommended by Footprint Ecology. The differences are the amount of data to be collected about bird numbers on the Solent, and the year in which each data collection/survey will be undertaken.

Data to be collected

4. The Partnership has accepted the recommendations of Footprint Ecology for a comprehensive range of data collection and analysis as follows:-
   i. Automated counters at ten locations in order to monitor the number of people visiting the coast over time;
   ii. Car park counts & vantage point watches - counts of vehicles in coastal car parks together with counts of people, dogs on/off lead, and activities being undertaken (viewed from vantage points at/near selected car parks) in order to monitor changes in visitors;
   iii. Data recording by the rangers of people numbers, activities undertaken, dogs on/off lead, whether birds are disturbed, whether behaviour modified on seeing the ranger;
   iv. Visitor surveys at SANGs - Face-to-face interviews at each SANG when it opens and repeated over time, to establish whether it is being effective in diverting people away from the coast;
   v. Disturbance levels at rangered sites - observation of people numbers, activities, bird numbers, and disturbance levels at ten locations with regular ranger patrols to show if there has been a reduction in disturbance over time due to the rangers presence;
   vi. Visitor surveys in the SPA - Face-to-face interviews of visitors at ten locations in the SPA to assess changes to access patterns, whether these are linked to new housing, and potentially to show the extent to which the mitigation measures are influencing behaviour;
   vii. Bird numbers and distribution - procuring bird data collected by the British Trust for Ornithology;
   viii. Housing data - annual collation of data on housing completions collected by local authorities;
   ix. SANG creation/enhancement - recording when individual SANGs open for access and any subsequent improvements made to them;
   x. Ranger time/deployment - recording locations visited, time spent at each, numbers of people spoken to, details of the interactions, etc.

5. Further details of each of these ten is in the appendix. The final three items viii - x and data recording by the rangers (item iii) will be collected/collated by the Partnership itself, but the other items will require data provision/collection by external bodies.

Timing

6. Footprint Ecology advised that some of the data in the list above should be collected every year but that for others data collection every few years would suffice. This will ensure sufficient data for robust monitoring whilst avoiding unnecessary expenditure. Taking account of their advice, the Partnership intends to undertake data collection as follows (a tick indicates that the data would be collected during that year):-

Monitoring component	***16/17***	***17/18***	***18/19***	***19/20***	***20/21***
i. Automated counters		✓		✓	
ii. Car-park counts & vantage point watches	✓		✓		✓
iii. Data recording by rangers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
iv. Visitor surveys of SANGs			✓	✓	
v. Disturbance levels at rangered sites	✓		✓		✓
vi. Visitor interviews in SPA		✓			✓
vii. Bird numbers and distribution		✓			✓
viii. Housing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ix. SANGs creation/enhancement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
x. Ranger time/deployment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

7. All the data collection will be undertaken at regular intervals into the future with the exception of the visitor surveys of SANGs. Those surveys will help assess the effectiveness of four new/enhanced strategic greenspaces which are being part-funded by the Solent Local Growth Deal in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Two will be surveyed in 2018/19 and two in 2019/20 once visitor patterns have been established following them opening to the public. In the event that the Partnership funds the creation of further SANGs, then post-opening visitor surveys at those would also be needed. The monitoring of disturbance levels at rangered sites is to establish whether a ranger team is an effective mitigation measure: it may not be continued beyond 2020/21 in line with Footprint Ecology's advice that this is a targeted piece of research rather than regular monitoring.

Reporting

8. The Partnership already publishes an Annual Report which records the progress made in implementing the mitigation measures. Future editions will contain a summary of the conclusions from the data collected each year, with the detailed data being set out in an appendix or separate monitoring report.

Appendix: Footprint Ecology's recommendations for data collection and analysis

This appendix contains material reproduced from the Footprint Ecology report.

i Automated Counters

These will provide data on the change in visitor numbers over time. This is important to detect how visitor numbers are changing. Such data can then be used with the other people count data (for example the bi-annual car-park count data) to show how access is changing in relation to new housing. This will allow checks that mitigation is in the right places and help to target resources effectively. Ten counters are suggested, sited at key locations.

Key outputs: baseline trends in access numbers; very detailed data from a small number of locations. Will allow changes in access levels at very specific locations to be monitored over time.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Specialist contractor for the devices and potentially other elements (installation, checks, calibration, data collection etc). Some elements such as data collection and calibration could potentially be undertaken by ranger team. It may be possible to extend an existing local authority contract.

Options: Additional counters could be useful and it would be possible to add additional counters if necessary (e.g. particular opportunities arise or particular issues at set locations means additional data is useful).

ii Car-park counts/vantage point watches

These will cover a broad area and show how visitor numbers are changing. The data will highlight locations where access is changing and help to target mitigation. Vantage point data will show activities, for example, dogs off leads, and such data can be used to check whether visitor behaviour is changing and whether such change is consistent. Five transects are suggested with associated watches from vantage points near to selected car parks.

Key outputs: baseline trends in access numbers; simple counts of cars and people, covering a wide area. Will provide a broad indication in changes in visitor numbers (at least those coming by car) across a wide area.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Undertaken by the ranger team or consultancy.

Options: Additional transects could be added to ensure all car-parks were covered and potentially add more vantage points. Alternatively there would be the option to undertake counts on an annual basis.

iii Data recording by rangers

Similar to the vantage point counts, these data will show whether changes in visitor behaviour and access patterns are occurring and whether they are consistent. As these data are collected by the rangers it will reflect the times/locations where rangers have been present. Comparison will be possible with the other count data and the data will be

collected more frequently (car-park counts are bi-annual) but not simultaneously across a wide area.

Key outputs: Counts of people from wide range of times and locations, providing indication over time of the changes in visitor behaviour, visitor numbers and the effectiveness of the wardening/ranger presence.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Ranger team

Options: Survey effort can be tailored to the time ranger team have available.

iv Visitor surveys of SANGs

Visitor survey data will show whether numbers of visitors and types of visitor are changing at SANGs over time. The data will allow management to be honed to maximise the draw of the sites to visitors who might otherwise go to the coast.

Key outputs: Questionnaire data showing visitor profiles, choice of sites visited, home postcodes and use of SANGs. Repeat surveys over time will provide indication of how much access SANGs are deflecting from the SPA.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Consultancy or similar

Options: Survey effort could be adjusted to fit with SANGs delivery and it will depend how many SANGs come in the future.

v Disturbance levels at rangered sites

More of a targeted piece of research than regular monitoring, this would provide a series of case studies showing change in visitor behaviour, visitor numbers and bird use for particular areas over time. Data would be detailed and very focussed on key types of sites, such as roost sites or good feeding areas. The results will help work out how best to target ranger time.

Key outputs: Change in visitor behaviour, visitor numbers, bird numbers and bird responses over time as wardening deployment initiated.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Consultancy or similar

Options: The number of locations and range of sites could be extended, depending on resources

vi Visitor interviews

Data from face-face interviews with visitors to the SPA will show to what extent access patterns are linked to new housing, pick up changes in access patterns and potentially also show the extent to which mitigation measures are influencing behaviour. Ten survey points are suggested, with surveys undertaken every five years..

Key outputs: information on visitor numbers, types of activity, profiles, motivations, postcodes etc , and as repeated in standardised way, a means of looking at changes over time.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Consultancy or similar

Options: the number of survey points could be increased and surveys could be repeated more frequently than every five years. The suggested level set out above is probably a minimum to be worthwhile.

vii Bird numbers and distribution

Bird numbers may fluctuate over time for a range of reasons. Knowing where the key areas are for birds and whether particular species are undergoing particular declines will help to target mitigation. Analysis of the data can show whether bird numbers at particular parts of the coast are changing differently to other parts, and this may highlight where mitigation is particularly successful or not working. Bird data can be linked to visitor numbers to test whether changes in bird numbers relate to changes in access.

Key outputs: information on whether bird numbers and distributions change over time allowing mitigation to be focussed on key areas and whether bird numbers and distribution change in relation to changes in access and the introduced mitigation.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Data would be collated through the standard WeBS recording route. There would be a monthly requirement for a WeBS approved coordinator to liaise with WeBS Local Organisers and counters and a pool of professional observers to plug gaps in coverage identified each month. Based on a similar undertaking on the Severn the coordinator role requires about two days per month. A single counter can cover a single isolated sector or two, possibly three adjoining sectors over a single high tide. A single counter can cover one isolated or two, possibly three, adjoining sectors over a single low tide. Although low tide and high tide counts clearly do not overlap, during winter it will often be difficult to plan for both on the same day because of the availability of daylight. This would be less of an issue during the summer.

viii Housing

Housing data is necessary to collect to check whether any changes in visitor numbers relate to where new housing has been built or other factors (such as media coverage, tourism promotion, particular activities etc.). Knowing where new housing has been built will be important in targeting where to focus mitigation.

Key outputs: Spatially explicit data on housing recording new developments by year, collected in a standard way across local authorities and collated to give a single data set.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Local authorities

ix SANGs creation and enhancement

In order to test the effectiveness of SANGs it will be necessary to record when individual SANGs are open for access and details of improvements undertaken on sites. Temporary changes (flooding in the Alver Valley for example) will also be important to record. With detailed data from SANGs it will be possible to interrogate visitor data from the SPA to look for changes at adjacent sites.

Key outputs: Spatially explicit data on SANGs creation, improvements or any changes in accessibility.

Potential mechanism for delivery: Local authorities

x Ranger time/deployment

Knowing how much time rangers have been deployed and where is essential to check that rangers are being deployed in the key areas where access is increasing and where birds are. It will be possible to analyse with the data on visitor numbers, behaviour and the questionnaire data to work out where the deployment of rangers has been most effective and to inform the future rangering effort (e.g. optimum amount of time at locations to have biggest effect, etc.)

Key outputs: Record of deployment of rangers and details of their work. Data would be spatially explicit – for example in the form of grid references or waypoints. This will allow deployment to be mapped – for example generating a thematic map, based on WeBS sectors, to show the amount of ranger time in total over a winter in a given WeBS sector.

Potential mechanism for delivery: undertaken by ranger team.