

## 13 RECREATION AND LEISURE

### 13.1 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

13.1.1 This section considers the existing recreation and leisure interests of Poole Harbour and Poole Bay. Recreational fishing is considered separately in Section 10 and recreational navigation is discussed in Section 11.

13.1.2 Information on the existing recreational uses of Poole Harbour and Poole Bay has been obtained from existing data sources, such as the Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan, the Borough of Poole tourism department, and data collected by PHC.

#### *Water-based recreation*

13.1.3 Poole Harbour and Bay are popular areas for a wide variety of recreational pursuits, including sailing, windsurfing, surfing, angling and waterskiing.

13.1.4 Recreation within Poole Harbour is managed by PHC in accordance with the Poole Harbour Aquatic Management Plan, which is produced by the Poole Harbour Steering Group. The aim of the plan is “to promote the sustainable use of Poole Harbour, balancing the demands on its natural resources and resolving conflicts of interest”. As part of the plan, a separate Zoning Plan has been developed which operates over the open water of Poole Harbour and has designated the following areas (amongst others):

- Waterskiing Zone;
- Windsurfing Zone;
- Personal Watercraft Zone;
- Quiet Areas; and
- Commercial and Small Boat Channels.

13.1.5 The Harbour is popular for windsurfing, most of which takes place around the northern/eastern shores, especially at Whitley Lake. This area of the Harbour is shallow, with a sandy bed making it ideal for windsurfing. The Harbour is one of the most popular locations on the south coast for windsurfing due to the large extent of sheltered shallow waters. The most popular launching site is on the westward edge of Sandbanks road (B3369) at Whitley Lake. Some windsurfing also takes place at Hamworthy and on the seaward beach at Sandbanks, although the latter is more exposed to the wind and waves. Swanage and Studland Bay are also good locations for windsurfing in light conditions. The Harbour and Bay are also used for kitesurfing.

13.1.6 Waterskiing and personal watercraft are also popular. An area is designated for waterskiing in the Wareham Channel. This is approximately 2000 m long and varies in width between 300 m and 600 m. The area is marked by blue and white stakes and notice boards. Water skiers are exempt from the 10 knot speed limit when operating within this area. Outside the Harbour, water skiing may take place anywhere seaward of the 5 knots yellow buoy markers off the beaches.

13.1.7 The designated personal watercraft zone, which is exempt from the 10 knot speed limit, lies to the north of Brownsea Island between the Wych Channel and the Middle Ship/Small Boat Channels. Personal watercraft are also taken out into Poole Bay and are usually launched from the Baiter slipway. Permits are required for the operation of

personal watercraft and for waterskiing within the Harbour, which can be obtained from PHC. Personal watercraft (PWC) permits allow their operation above the general speed limit within the PWC zone, elsewhere in the harbour they must abide by the limit but they are prohibited altogether from operation in the designated quiet areas.

- 13.1.8 The Harbour and Bay is also popular for recreational angling (both from boats and shore-based; this is described in further detail in Section 10) and recreational diving.

*Shore-based recreation*

- 13.1.9 Visitors to Poole are attracted by the area's natural coastal scenery, beaches, the Quay and the opportunities for water sports. The beaches within Poole Harbour and Poole Bay (particularly those at Bournemouth, Poole and Swanage) are particularly popular and form a major attraction for both residents and visitors. Sandbanks beach is three miles long and has been a consistent winner of the European Blue Flag award for cleanliness. Canford Cliffs beach is also popular and is situated between Shore Road and Branksome Chine. Access to the beach is from footpaths through the Chines and down the cliffs and from various car parks. Various facilities are available on the beaches, including beach huts. Several bathing only zones are marked and the beaches also have a lifeguarding service.

- 13.1.10 Studland beach is owned by the National Trust and is an important area for tourism and recreation. Fine beaches stretch continuously for 3 miles from South Haven Point to the chalk cliffs of Handfast Point and Old Harry Rocks, and include Shell Bay and a designated naturist area. To the east, Bournemouth beach is used by significant numbers of tourists.

**13.2 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE APPROACH CHANNEL DEEPENING**

- 13.2.1 The only route for the approach channel deepening itself to affect recreation is by affecting recreational angling or recreational navigation. These issues are considered in Sections 10 and 11 respectively.

**13.3 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OFFSHORE DISPOSAL OF DREDGED MATERIAL**

**Construction phase**

*Effects on bathing waters designation*

- 13.3.1 The disposal at sea operation has the potential to have an impact on recreation by causing a breach in water quality standards specified in the EC Bathing Waters Directive.

- 13.3.2 As described in Section 5, a number of beaches within Poole Harbour and Bay are designated under the EC Bathing Waters Directive. Bathing water quality at these sites is monitored between May and September for a variety of parameters, including bacterial counts and suspended solids. The effect of the disposal operation on the bathing waters designation has been assessed in Section 5.5. It has been predicted that due to the rapid dilution that will occur, the offshore disposal of material would have

a **no impact** on bathing waters designations and hence on the recreational use of beaches in the area.

*Mitigation and residual impact*

No mitigation measures are required. There would be **no residual impact**.

*Effects on divers due to reduced visibility*

- 13.3.3 Concern has been raised by recreational divers about the effects that the offshore disposal might have on diving activities within Poole Bay through reducing visibility and/or through leaving a deposit of fine sediment on the seabed.
- 13.3.4 As described in Section 3.6, the disposal operation will lead to temporary increases in the level of suspended sediment. Within Poole Bay, the levels of suspended sediment would be increased by up to 25mg/l during the disposal operation (up to 7 months). Following disposal, these elevated levels of suspended sediment will persist for around 2 weeks and then drop to a few milligrams per litre above background.
- 13.3.5 Within much of the Bay, only very low levels of temporary deposition will occur. For example, at position C of Figure 3.1.7, the temporary levels of deposition are less than 1mm. However, there are areas where levels of deposition will be higher. For example, at the Inner Poole Patch (Location B) levels of deposition are predicted to be around 8mm. This is an area where silt tends to accumulate within the Bay, but the current nature of the seabed at this site is not known.
- 13.3.6 It is therefore predicted that there will be a temporary reduction in water visibility during the disposal operations which might potentially hinder diving activities. However, in the majority of the bay, the visibility will rapidly increase following cessation of the disposal. Although at the Inner Poole Patch visibility may take longer to increase because the deposited silt could be agitated by wave action. However, there are a number of other dive sites that are available in Poole Bay, so divers would be able to dive elsewhere. It is therefore predicted that the disposal operations would give rise to an impact of **minor adverse significance** on diving activity.

*Mitigation and residual impact*

No mitigation measures possible. An impact of **minor adverse significance** would arise.

**Operational phase**

- 13.3.7 Given that the total volume of maintenance dredgings to be deposited at the offshore disposal ground would be reduced, **no additional impacts** are predicted as a result of the scheme.

## 13.4 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BEACH NOURISHMENT

### Construction phase

#### *Restrictions on access to beach during beach nourishment works*

- 13.4.1 During the beach nourishment works, there is the potential for conflict to arise with recreational use of the beaches. This is because during the nourishment works it is likely that access to the beaches would need to be restricted for health and safety reasons.
- 13.4.2 The beach nourishment works are predicted to last up to 7 months and would be undertaken during the autumn, winter and early spring. During this period some of the beach may require closure, preventing people from walking on the beach. Up to 400m either side of the pipeline can be discharged at one time and therefore access to up to 800m of beach could be affected at any one time. However, there are large stretches of beach which would still remain available for use. It is therefore predicted that this impact, which is temporary and reversible, would be of **minor adverse significance** on recreational users. The significance of this impact has already been minimised through the proposal to carry out the works outside the main tourist season.

#### *Mitigation and residual impact*

This impact could be further minimised by liaison with tourism and residents groups prior to carrying out the nourishment works. Publicity regarding the beach restrictions should also take place to allow residents and visitors to be forewarned and visit other areas, if necessary. It is concluded that the residual impact would be of **minor adverse significance**.

### Operational phase

#### *Potential impacts on the amenity value and existing characteristics of the beaches within Poole Bay*

- 13.4.3 Beach nourishment works can potentially affect beach users by changing the characteristics of the beach; for example, by introducing beach material of a larger grain size than previously existed or by changing the profile or colour of the beach.
- 13.4.4 The coastal protection authorities are aware of this potential impact and propose to avoid it by only placing material on the beaches which is similar in grain size and appearance to the material which is currently on the beaches. Furthermore, the beach recharge material would be distributed by bulldozers and excavators in order to achieve the required beach profile. It is, therefore, anticipated that there would be very little change in the appearance of the beach material following recharge, although the level of the beach would be raised.
- 13.4.5 The beach nourishment works would ensure that the recreational value of the existing beaches are maintained and enhanced (i.e. the works would ensure the continued presence of the beaches) and, therefore, given the importance of the beaches within Poole Bay as a recreational resource, this impact is considered to be of **moderate beneficial significance**.

*Mitigation and residual impact*

No mitigation measures are required and the residual impact would be of **moderate beneficial significance**.

