

## HABITATS DIRECTIVE – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### What's happening in Southern region?

Laws have been introduced under the Habitats Directive to safeguard Europe's most endangered plants, animals and habitats.

As part of this, the Environment Agency has to review all of the existing permits and consents we regulate. This will ensure there are no adverse effects on the nature conservation interests of designated sites such as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA).

In Southern region, there are six high priority sites, 16 medium priority sites and 24 low priority sites. We have focussed our efforts first on the high priority sites - those at greatest risk of impact from Environment Agency regulated activities. These sites are:

- River Itchen SAC
- Solent Maritime SAC
- Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC
- Portsmouth Harbour SPA
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA
- Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA.

We are using a staged approach to do this:

- Stages One and Two – lists all permits and consents and look at those with the potential to have a significant effect;
- Stage Three – looks in detail at whether they have an adverse affect on special sites;
- Stage Four – identifies and assesses options. Permissions (permits and consents) with no adverse affect will remain unchanged. Those that have an adverse effect will be examined further to see what to do next.

### Timetable

Stages One and Two were completed in March 2002. Permissions that failed the test were passed to Stage Three for appropriate assessment.

Stage Three for high priority sites was completed in 2005. During this stage, each permission was assessed alone, and in combination with one another. Impacts from other plans and projects were taken into account. Our work was underpinned by the Conservation Objectives for each designated site. Stage Three produces an Appropriate Assessment document for each designated site.

We are solely responsible for the Appropriate Assessment and subsequent decisions. There are two possible conclusions to this assessment:

- The permission can be shown to have no adverse effect on the integrity of the site; or
- The permission cannot be shown to have no adverse effect on the integrity of the site.

Stage Four assessments for the six high priority sites were completed in October 2007. This stage produces a Site Action Plan for each designated site, which identifies and appraises options on a function by function basis, for example, water quality or water resources. It sets out the action we propose to take on each permission as a result of the review. Our preferred options take into account the cost and disruption to permission holders. Permission holders have been involved in this stage of the process and are informed of our decisions.

We have consulted Natural England on our preferred options. These comply with our Stage Four principles and the conclusions are to either:

- affirm;
- modify; or
- revoke permissions.

Stage Three and Four Assessments are being progressed for the medium and low priority sites across the region, and are due for completion by Spring 2008.

Individual factsheets are available which provide further detail on the site-specific issues and outcomes of the Review of Consents for individual European sites.

## Summary

Site	Stage 3 completed	Stage 4 completed	Number of permissions		
			Affirmed	Modified	Revoked
River Itchen SAC	April 2005	October 2007	179	22 discharge consents 9 abstraction licences	0
Solent Maritime SAC	April 2005	October 2007	639	11 discharge consents 12 abstraction licences 1 waste licence	2 abstraction licences 1 discharge consent
Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC	April 2005	October 2007	168	2 discharge consents	0
Portsmouth Harbour SPA	April 2005	October 2007	128	2 discharge consents 3 abstraction licences	0
Solent and Southampton Water SPA	April 2005	October 2007	693	10 discharge consents 14 abstraction licences 1 waste licence	2 abstraction licences 1 discharge consent
Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA	April 2005	January 2007 (Water Quality section) & October 2007	198	5 discharge consents 7 abstraction licences	0

For more details about this process, contact Jo Simmons  
[jo.simmons@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:jo.simmons@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Further information can be found at:

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) under Southern>Habitats Directive  
 or visit [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk) for contacts within Natural England

For guidance e-mail: [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)