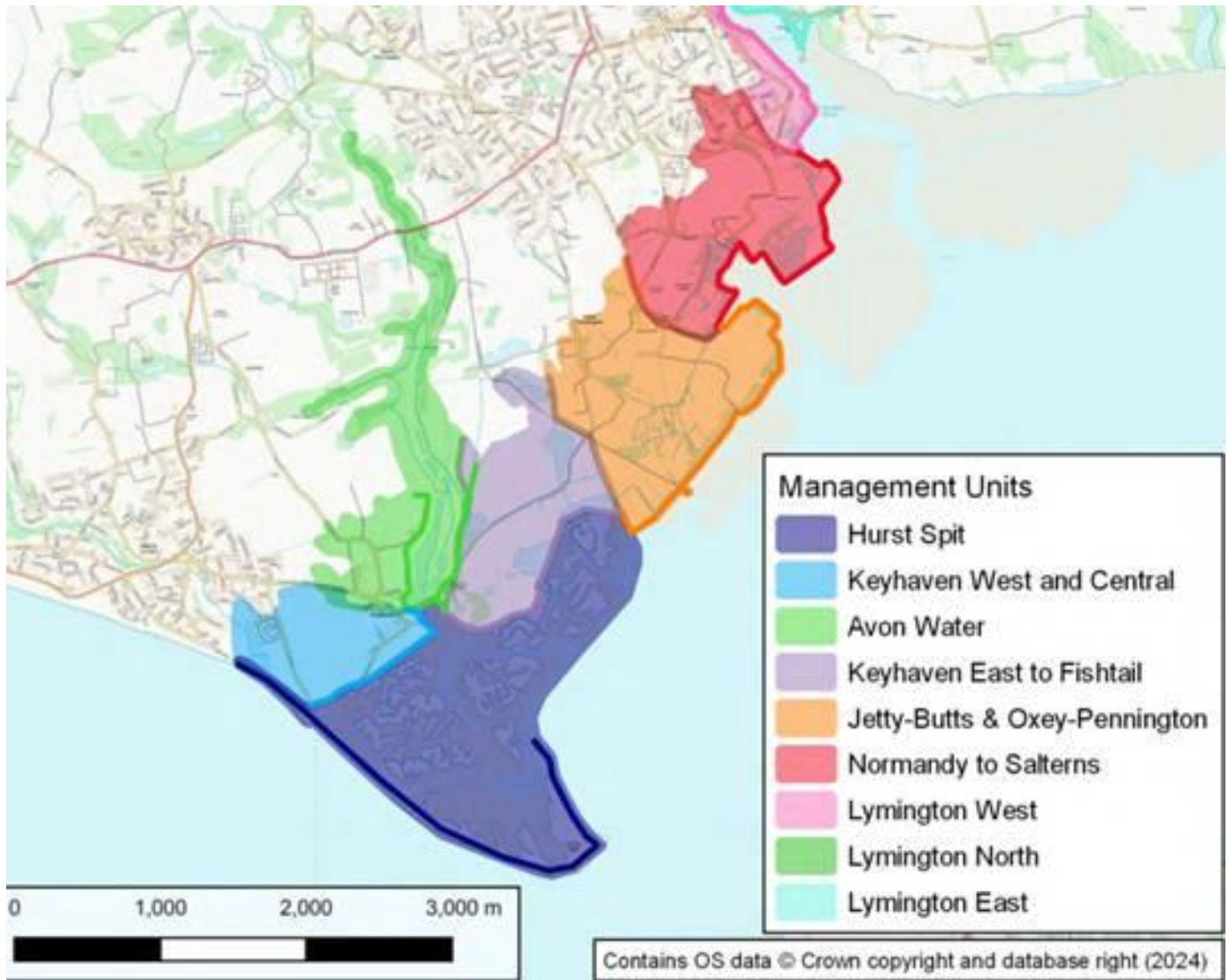


Hurst Spit to Lymington Flood Management Strategy

In case you have not seen it, I would like to tell you about the Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy. It is a consultation published late last November by the Environment Agency in partnership with New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, Natural England and JBA Consulting. It is intended to lead to a long-term flood defence plan. Full details can be found at <https://www.hurstspit2lymington.co.uk/>.

The Strategy document contains 'draft pathways' about which they are seeking feedback. There is one pathway for each of the management units in the map below.



The Strategy Team have set the deadline for feedback as **11 January 2025, this Saturday**. I apologise for writing so late but if possible please could you look at the Strategy documents on the website above and if you feel inclined respond directly to the Team at Email: hurstspit2lymington@environment-agency.gov.uk or via the feedback form on their website. The Team have said this date 'does not preclude the Strategy team from receiving comments beyond this date' so I think they will accept comments sent a few days later.

The Strategy paper is rather hazy about exactly what they see happening to our coast and when but some stakeholders have expressed alarm. One key issue for Keyhaven is whether or not Hurst Spit will survive in anything like its present form; related to this is, with rising sea levels, climate change and little public money being available, for how long can or will the Spit be maintained. It is easy to imagine that dinghy sailing and mooring at Keyhaven would be very different if not impossible without the Spit. It seems likely that we could have strong tidal flows within a short distance of the clubhouse and no highwater stand in sheltered waters.

Following some initial concerns raised, the team posted a paper on their website last month intended to address some of the issues raised including what they envisage for Hurst Spit. Amongst other things they say:

Current maintenance of Hurst Spit before Strategy is adopted

The historic and current maintenance of Hurst Spit is separate to the proposal in the Strategy. For the past few decades maintenance of the barrier beach has been undertaken by New Forest District Council through their powers under the Coastal Protection Act. There is no legal obligation to maintain the spit and there is not a specific yearly budget to do any work. The cost of the maintenance varies from year to year depending on what works are required. The £40,000 figure circulating is the estimated cost for this year alone and is not the annual requirement. Unfortunately, there is no eligibility for Central Government funding to undertake maintenance works this year. Furthermore, contributions needed to supplement Central Government have not been forthcoming as they have been in previous years. For further enquiries regarding current maintenance of Hurst Spit please email Coastal.Team@NFDC.gov.uk

Future proposed management of Hurst Spit if Strategy adopted

The Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy does not propose to breach Hurst Spit. The proposal under the Draft Pathway for Hurst Spit can be split into the following stages under an adaptive approach: Initially, the pathway proposes continued management of the barrier in its current form for the next 10 to 20 years (Hold the Form – Maintain). To achieve this, it is likely that recharging the beach with additional material from elsewhere will be required. This will increase the resilience of the barrier to over washing and address some of the current concerns in the vulnerability of the barrier.

However, continued management of the barrier in the face of sea level rise of up to 1 meter and the ongoing coastal processes acting within Christchurch Bay will be financially, environmentally and technically unfeasible for the 100 years duration of the Strategy. The Strategy needs to be adaptive to this change. As such, over the medium to longer term timeframe, the Draft Pathway will seek to adopt a gradual reduction in the level of intervention, eventually restoring the barrier to as natural a system as possible (Rollback – Minimal Intervention). The transition from Hold the Form will take time and require a series of enabling projects undertaken in the first 10 to 20 years, to address immediate risks. These projects potentially include rerouting of the Danes Stream River and continued provision of access to Hurst Castle to enable English Heritage's future plans for the Scheduled Monument to be implemented.

In summary, provided NFDC continue to maintain the Spit in the meantime, it appears that in 10 to 20 years time sailing at Keyhaven will start to change rather more quickly than it has been doing. I have been sailing here since I was 12 over 55 years ago. The spit and the marshes have changed a lot in that time but it seems change will be far more rapid without the shingle bank.

So far HCSC has not issued any public view to anyone on the matter, we have however been part of discussions with the other local sailing clubs and local businesses including the marinas and will meet again on 15 January. Your General Committee will be discussing the Strategy at our Committee meeting next week. We will decide then whether to make a formal response from the club. I will be submitting a my own response, I will say I am HCSC Commodore but responding in a personal capacity as, as the Club Committee has not had time yet to consider the matter fully.

I set out below extracts from the draft pathways for Hurst Spit and Keyhaven:

What is the proposal for Hurst Spit?

The Draft Pathway for Hurst Spit is seeking to reduce active management, allowing the spit to return to a more natural form (**Rollback - Minimal Intervention**) through a step-by-step approach to manage any risks.

The proposal initially is to maintain the existing shape (**Hold the Form - Maintain**) in the first 10 to 20 years and then move to a more natural spit by allowing rollback.

Before this can take place supporting projects are suggested, including;

- rerouting the opening of the Danes Stream
- provision of access to Hurst Castle

The spit will then be allowed to rollback in a controlled process (**Rollback - Reactive Management**), with the opportunity to continue to move beach material around to help the transition. Eventually when the spit has reached a more stable form, management would be removed in the final pathway (**Rollback - Minimal Intervention**).

Potential impacts

- Loss in the long term of access, saltmarsh and moorings
- Increase in wave height, overtopping and flood risk which would need to be managed by raising defences elsewhere
- Possible changes to navigation

What is the proposal for Keyhaven?

The Draft Pathway is **Managed Realignment with Saltmarsh Creation**. Under this approach, new embankments would be constructed further inland. The old defences would then be breached to allow the land in between to flood and transition to intertidal habitat. This would reduce flood risk to properties and infrastructure.

When the Strategy is approved, the managed realignment at Keyhaven West will likely be one of the earliest projects to be delivered.

At Keyhaven Central the land situated behind the current sea defence is important protected habitat and any loss would need to be compensated through the creation of new similar habitat elsewhere. Therefore, further work is needed to weigh up the benefits and costs to the environment. Managed realignment can take place.

Potential impacts

- Loss of part of Saltgrass Lane impacting access
- The England Coast Path would need diverting via new embankments
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Changes to ground and surface water levels

There are more diagrams and information about Hurst Spit and Keyhaven and details of the other pathways in the plan document. I would encourage you to look for yourselves.

Finally I think I should say this is still an early stage in the Strategy. A formal Strategy is expected to be issued in the summer of 2026 with the Strategy being approved in Winter 2026. After that projects will be developed with construction beginning 5 to 10 years later. Please send your views to the Strategy Team, before 11 January, this Saturday, if possible.

Yours

Paul Moxey

HCSC Commodore

7 January 2025