

**Minutes of the meeting of
The Environmental Management Panel (EMP) overseeing the Wightlink Ltd.
W Class Ferry Operations between Lymington and Yarmouth
Friday 27th November 2020**

In attendance:

John Burrows (JB) Chair	Wightlink
Colin Scott (CS)	ABPmer
Stuart McVey (SM)	New Forest District Council
Adam Cave (AC)	Environment Agency
Ryan Willegers (RW)	Lymington Harbour Commissioners
Jessica Taylor (JS)	Natural England
Ian Barker (IB)	New Forest National Park Authority
Robert Chapman (RC)	Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust

Apologies:

Michael Humphrys	South Hampshire Wildfowlers Association
Paul Kirk	Marine Management Organisation

Welcome

JB welcomed the Panel, and as meeting was being held virtually asked the individual attendees to introduce themselves. He explained that the Minutes of the last meeting held in November 2015 had been agreed at the time but as some attendees were new to the process if there were any questions on the minutes. There were none.

The role of the EMP

JB reviewed the purpose of the EMP against the descriptions set out in the S106 agreement. They had been agreed and endorsed by the EMP at the outset of its work in June 2012 and clearly minuted at that time.

The latest monitoring report

CS summarised the findings from the latest monitoring report that was issued to EMP on 9th November 2020 a copy of which will be made available on the Wightlink website. Detailed discussion followed.

AC raised two points as follows.

1) He asked about invertebrate levels in the recharge area and whether any sample surveying had been completed.

CS confirmed no detailed sampling had been done as it was unsafe to access the surface of the recharge material. However, the recharge is ecologically functioning against all three indicators as defined in the S106 agreement, and the requirement is for only one of the three to be met.

2) **AC** asked for confirmation of how the data from bathymetric surveys was aligned.

CS explained that only the data points from the Shoreline Surveys plots were used to avoid interpolation.

RW pointed out that the chart displayed by CS only had a small number of the data points displayed on it because to include more would make the chart illegible. ABPmer had the full data set and considered all the data before completing their report.

RW raised one point as follows.

1) **RW** asked for clarification as to why the report indicated the LIDAR and Bathymetric surveys had an accuracy of $\pm 15\text{cm}$ and 20cm respectively, when the Shoreline surveys data indicated $\pm 5\text{cms}$.

CS explained that it was entirely possible the accuracy of the data had improved over the years and he was happy to amend his report to reflect that as greater accuracy means we can have greater confidence in the data.

Adaptive Management Process

JB reminded the group that under the adaptive management process they had to take a stepped approach to the process.

- 1) Consider any possible ferry effects.
- 2) Assess the success of the effectiveness of the recharge works to mitigate any ferry effects.
- 3) Recommend any further actions needed.

JB confirmed that whilst Wightlink could have increase the average speed of our vessels to 6 knots below the wave screen from 31st March 2014 we have continued to operate at or below 5.5 knots and intend to continue to do so. In addition, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of trips in 2020 is now forecast to be 5440. In 2021 we are expecting to budget in the region of 8,700 trips compared to the 16,500 trips allowed under the S106 agreement.

Future of the EMP's work

JB reminded the group that at the last meeting it had been agreed that "the recharge had worked very effectively. Since March 2013, the sediment had been retained and was ecologically functioning. Based on this evidence, and the result of the separate ferry monitoring work, there was confidence that there was no adverse effect on the integrity of the Solent European Marine Site (EMS) and that such an effect would not occur over the coming years."

Panel agreed unanimously that this was still the case and as a result, agreed in principal to the EMP being stood down, subject to getting internal approval from those organisations that needed it.

The panel felt that the data collected related to this project was a valuable resource and it would be good to make it available in the future. **JB** confirmed that Wightlink were more than happy for the data to be used and CS agreed to contact The Solent Forum to see if they would be happy to host the latest report and case summary in their library to aid lesson sharing.

There being no other business, the meeting closed.