

Protecting, Preserving & Promoting the River Itchen in Southampton - Final Report Recommendations – August 2024 update

#	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Accepted?</u> <u>(Y/N)</u>	<u>Draft Response / Associated Actions</u>	<u>Lead Executive Director</u>
1	<p>Establish an Itchen River Forum comprising key stakeholders, including representatives from recreation users, community groups (Respect River Campaign), Wessex Rivers Trust, Southern Water, statutory agencies and the business community to develop relationships, acquire a greater understanding of the issues and to determine collective solutions. <i>(Strategic Management and Partnership Working)</i></p>	Y	<p>SCC supports the development of relationships between stakeholders to better understand issues and to determine collective solutions. There are a number of existing initiatives already underway e.g. the Environment Agency’s Preventing Plastic Pollution Project. SCC believes the best approach would be to participate in these and work to develop this into a broader initiative as recommended.</p> <p>Update August 2024: The Preventing Plastic Pollution Project was established following an EA funded study and workshop which took place in May 2023. A Steering Group comprising the EA, Evolved Research & Consulting (ERC), Crown Estate, Friends of Chessell Bay, Final Straw Foundation, Natural England, Oil Spill Response, Portsmouth Water, RYA, SCC, Solent Forum University of Southampton has met three times and has agreed an aim, vision and objectives. An action plan has been drafted and a grant application has been submitted to the Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) fund. The grant bid is being led by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and if successful, will provide funds to support the development and facilitation of the Partnership throughout this financial year (until March 2025), in addition to funding the development of a Plastics Data Hub for the Itchen, several specific actions to reduce plastic pollution and develop a theory of change and communication strategy to enable behaviour change in the catchment.</p>	Debbie Ward

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2	<p>Develop, through the Forum, a River Itchen vision and plan that sets clear objectives for the River Itchen in Southampton.</p> <p><i>(Strategic Management and Partnership Working)</i></p>	Y	<p>Pending the outcome of the above (1), utilisation of existing plans and documents, such as the Local Plan Review and the Southampton City Council Biodiversity and GI Strategies, to set out a clear vision and objectives for the River Itchen.</p> <p>Update August 2024: The council adopted its Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy in January 2024. This framework will be used to help improve and increase the green and blue spaces across the city, playing its part in helping to halt the loss of habitat. SCC realises the importance of acting without delay; halting the decline and fragmentation of GI in the city needs to be addressed urgently. Making important changes now to how we deal with our natural environment will have lasting physical and mental health benefits for the city's population and make the city a more attractive place to live in, work in, and visit. This strategy, along with the related Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategies and the Public Realm Masterplan, outline the key ways in which we will work together with our partners to make improvements in the quality and extent of green and blue space across the city.</p> <p>Actions relating to the conservation of specific sites, habitats and species such as the River Itchen, will be set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The BAP will be drafted and undergo consultation during 2025, with a target date of the end of 2025 for a final version.</p>	Debbie Ward
3	<p>Undertake regular monitoring and evaluation to underpin the plans objectives.</p> <p><i>(Strategic Management and Partnership Working)</i></p>	Y	<p>As above (2).</p> <p>Update August 2024: A draft Green Infrastructure (GI) delivery plan has been developed. This delivery plan includes a range of actions intended to improve the quality of blue infrastructure such as the River Itchen. KPIs will be developed to enable implementation of the delivery plan to be monitored.</p>	Debbie Ward

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4	<p>To develop understanding and influence regarding issues impacting on the Solent coastline, the City Council should re-join Solent Forum as a full and active member.</p> <p><i>(Strategic Management and Partnership Working)</i></p>	Y	<p>Southampton City Council was formerly a member of the Solent Forum and sat on the Steering Committee, but withdrew in 2017/18. We will review this and assess whether this offers SCC value-for-money in the current financial situation.</p> <p>Update August 2024: Southampton City Council is discussing membership and potential support with the Solent Forum. A further update will be provided as these discussions progress.</p>	Debbie Ward

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5	<p>The Council works with partners to actively pursue opportunities to restore and enhance biodiversity and natural habitats along the river to improve the situation for wildlife. The Nitrogen Neutrality Scheme could be a source of funding to support such initiatives, dependent upon discussions with Natural England.</p> <p><i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategies being developed by SCC are currently out for public consultation. Consultees are being specifically asked if the strategies deal adequately with the aquatic environment. Responses to the consultation will be used to revise the strategies and develop action plans to be implemented by the City Council and others.</p> <p>In practical terms, the SCC Ranger Service and ecologists will actively seek opportunities to restore and enhance biodiversity and habitats on land the City Council manages along the river. In undertaking such work, the council will work with in partnership with local communities, individuals and organisations.</p> <p>The Biodiversity Net Gain new burdens funding and Nutrient Neutrality Scheme are potential sources of funding for biodiversity improvements. However, SCC understands that the latter scheme is under review. The City Council will identify opportunities and develop projects suitable for these funding streams.</p> <p>Update August 2024:</p> <p>The Green Infrastructure (GI) and Biodiversity Strategies were adopted by SCC in January 2024. A draft GI delivery plan, which includes general actions designed to improve the quality of blue infrastructure, has been produced. Implementation will be achieved through a combination of existing resources, for example the Ranger Service and Tuesday volunteers, and new resources secured through grant bids.</p> <p>The Nutrient Neutrality scheme is still in operation although the new government has suggested there are likely to be changes. At present there are no suitable sites within Southampton however, there is a site in Eastleigh which should help to reduce nitrate levels in the Itchen.</p> <p>Mandatory BNG has commenced however, it is not clear at present what impact, or income, this could generate as none of the affected developments have reached the conditions discharge stage.</p>	Debbie Ward

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6	<p>Whilst the Panel support the proposed additional investment in Southampton's infrastructure by Southern Water to reduce wastewater incidents, Southern Water are encouraged to follow the example set by Thames Water relating to inland waterways and provide real time information about pollution events impacting on the River Itchen. The Panel request that this is undertaken as soon as possible, via the Beachbuoy tool or through other communication outlets, to enable informed decisions to be taken.</p> <p><i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>The Environment Agency is the relevant enforcement agency and works with water companies to reduce pollution and tackle the areas of biggest concern like storm overflows. SCC would support enhanced monitoring of pollution events and will convey this to partners.</p> <p>Update August 2024: Southampton City Council has expressed its support for enhanced pollution monitoring to partners. Southern Water is currently upgrading its Beachbuoy system (link) and its pre-release version will be reviewed when it becomes available on 14/08/2024. This was originally promised to be available in May 2024.</p>	Debbie Ward

7	<p>To reduce and slow the run-off and pollution into the River Itchen, build sustainable drainage solutions into highway projects, as well as those mandated for new developments by the enactment of Schedule 3 of the in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, and utilise new gully technology to limit harmful chemicals from the highways entering the watercourse. <i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>Inclusion of Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) is currently a planning requirement in all major development, with a Drainage Strategy required at planning submission stage. The Flood Risk Management Team review the Drainage Strategy supplied. The Government announced that Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 will be enacted in 2024 ending the automatic right to connect into the public surface water sewer. This will make SCC both a Lead Local Flood Authority and a Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB). The SAB will require SuDS in all development (minors and majors) where 1 or more dwelling, or construction covers more than 100sqm of ground. The SAB will be responsible for review, approval, verification and adoption of a SuDS implemented. This should increase the quality of SuDS achieved and improve water quantity reduction and improve water quality, biodiversity and amenity.</p> <p>Flood Risk Management are currently in development of a Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in schools project, delivering SuDS (e.g. rain gardens, ponds, tree pits and green roofs) in 5 schools that are at risk of surface water flooding. Outputs of the scheme will include monitoring data on surface water flood risk reduction and standard designs that can be incorporated into future highway schemes. If successful additional funding sources could be explored to roll out the scheme at other schools.</p> <p>Flood Risk Management will continue to strengthen partnership working with Southern Water to actively encourage use of SuDS or other Natural Flood Management to 'slow the flow' - this will support improvement of water quality by filtering water, and reducing the volume of surface water entering the foul/combined sewer network therefore contributing to reduction of combined sewer overflows.</p> <p>Highways to examine opportunities to include SuDS and new gully technology to improve the quality of runoff from highways prior to entering the public surface water sewer, rivers or estuaries.</p> <p>Update August 2024:</p>	Nawaz Khan
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			<p>SCC working on a partnership proposal with Southern Water on the delivery of storm water attenuation projects such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). This is in the early stage of scoping and workshops planned this summer. Final details on the partnership and delivery expected in 2025.</p>	
8	<p>If requested, the Council provides timely support to community groups in their campaign for areas of the River Itchen to be awarded Designated Bathing Water Status. <i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>DEFRA is responsible for designating bathing water and anyone can apply for an area to be designated in this way. Advice on this process is available here https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bathing-waters-apply-to-designate-or-de-designate/designate-a-bathing-water-guidance-on-how-to-apply</p> <p>A proposed designated bathing water must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a coastal or inland water • have at least 100 bathers a day during the bathing season (15 May to 30 September) • have toilet facilities bathers can use during the bathing season, within a short distance of up to about 500m from the site <p>Community groups must conduct a consultation before submitting their application, and Southampton City Council is a mandatory consultee. SCC commits to responding to such consultations in a timely manner.</p> <p>Whilst the council, in principle, is happy to support the potential for designated bathing waters at areas of the River Itchen it is recognised that as landowner the council will be responsible for public safety. Pending the designation proposal, the council would need to undertake its own investigations in order to determine how any such facility could be safely managed.</p> <p>Update August 2024: The Bathing Water Regulations and application guidance are currently being revised, and applications for bathing water designation will not be considered by DEFRA until this is undertaken. DEFRA expects to begin accepting applications again in spring 2025. SCC will monitor developments.</p>	Debbie Ward

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9	<p>If pilot schemes in the River Hamble and Isle of Wight identify them to be beneficial to the river environment, the Council should support the establishment of oyster reefs in the River Itchen to help improve water quality.</p> <p><i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>The City Council will discuss with Natural England and the Blue Marine the findings of The Solent Oyster Restoration Project and decide whether there are suitable locations within the River Itchen to re-introduce native oysters. If suitable locations are identified, funding from the Nutrient Neutrality Scheme will be sought if available.</p> <p>Environmental enhancements are proposed within the development of the River Itchen Flood Alleviation Scheme as part of the requirement to meet Biodiversity Net Gain targets (note, the RIFAS is targeting 20% Biodiversity Net Gain as opposed to the standard 10% minimum). These enhancements may include use of oyster reefs where appropriate and viable.</p> <p>Update August 2024: No update is available at this time; this will be provided to a future OSMC meeting.</p>	Debbie Ward
10	<p>To help reduce locally produced waste and pollution and to build upon the momentum created by the work at Chessel Bay, work with partners to develop an accreditation scheme for businesses that 'respect the river'. There is potential for this initiative to be funded through the Southampton Airport Community Fund.</p> <p><i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>Such an initiative would best be developed through a representative group such as a River Itchen Forum.</p> <p>An initial step would be to establish whether similar schemes are already in operation elsewhere in the country.</p> <p>Update August 2024: At present, the focus of developing a representative group for the River Itchen is around the PPP Project which is looking at reducing plastic waste in the river. A steering group has been established and attention is now turning to building a wider partnership. A grant application aimed at securing funding to help build the partnership has been submitted to the Championing Coastal Coordination Fund.</p>	Debbie Ward

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11	<p>To aid policy and decision making and encourage investment in our natural environment, consideration should be given by the Council to adopting a natural capital approach by placing a value on Southampton's natural environment.</p> <p><i>(A Healthy & Resilient River)</i></p>	Y	<p>A natural capital assessment of the whole city would be useful to establish the value of benefits being delivered by the natural environment. Such benefits include climate change adaptation, commercial recreation (marinas) and health and wellbeing (informal recreation on and alongside the river). Such a study would need to be undertaken by a specialist consultant and would consequently need to be resourced. SCC will review this and assess whether this offers SCC value-for-money in the current financial situation.</p> <p>Update August 2024:</p> <p>The following actions have been included in the draft GI Delivery Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Natural Capital Register and Ecosystem Services List. Undertake a Natural Capital Assessment • Create a Natural Capital Plan based on protecting current Ecosystem Services provision and creation of enhanced level of protection • Use results of Natural Capital Assessment to create business case to attract investment in GI (ie. cost of management/cost of extending and improving GI) • Funding to undertake the Natural Capital Assessment is still being sought. 	Debbie Ward

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12	<p>Whilst the Panel welcome the safeguarding of sites in the draft Local Plan for marine uses, to enable this vitally important sector to grow and prosper in Southampton it is recommended that the Council works collaboratively with partners, including British Marine, Solent Freeport, business representative organisations, and with existing marine and maritime businesses, to address the recruitment and training challenge via the Local Skills and Improvement Plan, to develop a skilled workforce now, and in the future.</p> <p><i>(A Vibrant River)</i></p>	Y	<p>SCC views the development of a vibrant marine sector as a key goal and will work with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and city stakeholders to support this through the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan and other partnership work.</p> <p>Update August 2024: No update is available at this time; this will be provided to a future OSMC meeting.</p>	Nawaz Khan

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13	<p>The Panel recognise the potential of the redevelopment of the Itchen Riverside to revitalise the waterfront, enhancing the quality of the natural and built environment. The Panel would support the creation of a distinctive, design led waterfront that, through the master-planning process, integrates biodiversity, public access to the waterfront, flood resilience and high quality green spaces into its design and planning from the outset.</p> <p><i>(A Vibrant River)</i></p>	Y	<p>Itchen Riverside is an identified area for regeneration. Guided by the Renaissance Board updated to the masterplanning vision will be undertaken that will build on the existing 2013 City Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>Integrating and improving access to the waterfront is being considered within the development of the River Itchen Flood Alleviation Scheme (west bank River Itchen). This is likely to be improvements to the riverside walk leading to the Boardwalk (Mount Pleasant Industrial Estate) and the park at Crosshouse Hard (under the Itchen Bridge). Flood resilience to new development (and change of use) is considered and secured through planning policy.</p> <p>Update August 2024: Overseen by the Renaissance Board – Prior & Partners have been commissioned to undertake a comprehensive masterplan update for the city centre, with the Itchen Riverside identified as a priority area. Master planning work will complete this autumn for consideration to support future development ambitions.</p>	Nawaz Khan

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14	In collaboration with partners, draft a 'Blue Space Strategy' for Southampton enabling a city-wide approach to recreation on the water to be developed and priorities for maintenance and infrastructure improvements to be identified. <i>(A Vibrant River)</i>	Y	<p>Blue spaces are an importance part of SCC's Leisure mission. So, although we do not have capacity to undertake a 'Blue Space Strategy', we will incorporate blue spaces into the Leisure Strategic Action Plan.</p> <p>The council's new Leisure Mission is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in Southampton through 'fit for purpose' leisure services and 'spaces' • To provide leisure services and 'spaces' which support physical activity, sport, play and recreation • To enable more leisure opportunities within the place of Southampton, with emphasis on (1) local communities developing, adapting and maintaining these opportunities to meet their needs and (2) securing financial sustainability <p>Update August 2024: No update is available at this time; this will be provided to a future OSMC meeting.</p>	Debbie Chase
15	To enable access to the water for watercraft, review the accessibility of the public hards on the River Itchen and ensure that they are well maintained and fit for purpose <i>(A Vibrant River)</i>	Y	<p>SCC maintains public slipways to ensure they remain in a safe and accessible condition: These are: Priory, Old Mill Quay, Belvedere Wharf, Cross House, Nuns Walk, Itchen Ferry, Victoria Road, Weston Shore</p> <p>Update August 2024: No update is available at this time; this will be provided to a future OSMC meeting.</p>	Nawaz Khan

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16	<p>In support of the ambition to activate the water the Panel welcomes the work that has been undertaken by ABP in clearing the wrecks and abandoned vessels from the River Itchen and encourage them to continue delivering their plans for further clearance activity until all such vessels are removed.</p> <p><i>(A Vibrant River)</i></p>	Y	<p>SCC supports ABP’s actions to date and will encourage further clearance to take place.</p> <p>Update August 2024:</p> <p>ABP continue to remove wrecks and abandoned vessels along the River Itchen. 30 wrecks or abandoned vessels have been removed so far in 2024. Work ongoing to remove the remaining vessels.</p>	Debbie Ward
17	<p>Access to the riverfront has improved in Southampton through developments such as the boardwalk and the River Itchen Flood Alleviation Scheme (RIFAS) provides an opportunity to extend access to the river and the waterfront footpath network. The Panel recognise the intrinsic value associated with being by the river and therefore the Council should maximise opportunities, wherever they arise, to improve public access to the Itchen River in Southampton.</p> <p><i>(A Connected River)</i></p>	Y	<p>The River Itchen Flood Alleviation Scheme is ongoing, with current scheme progress including a period of ground investigations beginning in September 2023. The ground investigations will feed into the scheme alignment and design, as well as optioneering of public areas along the scheme extent. Optioneering will include a public area at Crosshouse car park which has been identified as a key space to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain and improved public waterside access. The optioneering process will include consultation with several internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>Any new development that comes forward will also have a planning requirement for public riverfront access – similar to examples at Chapel Riverside. This will continue to be pursued through the planning process and linked to longer term future masterplanning activity.</p> <p>Update August 2024:</p> <p>Policy has been drafted to require new developments within the following areas to include public waterfront access: Mayflower Park/Town Quay, Ocean Village, Itchen Riverside (West), Centenary Quay and Weston Shore</p>	Nawaz Khan

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18	<p>The draft Waterfront Policy in the emerging City Vision Local Plan seeks to enhance public access to the waterfront wherever possible and work towards creating continuous waterfront walkways, cycleways and public spaces. To deliver on this ambition the tools available to the Council must be deployed and City Council leaders need to provide a strong message that public access to the waterfront is a priority and that the Council will pro-actively pursue Rights of Way breaches and failures to follow Section 106 agreements. This will support officers when making decisions about future developments and balancing economic interests, environmental concerns and community aspirations regarding access and connectivity. To avoid anglers from being excluded, the ability of anglers to access the water needs to be a consideration when waterfront access for new developments is determined.</p> <p><i>(A Connected River)</i></p>	Y	<p>SCC, through its Planning functions, will continue to pursue Rights of Way breaches and failures to follow section 106 agreements.</p> <p>Update August 2024: Planning functions continue to be applied to monitor and enforce S106 agreements and rights of way breaches.</p>	Nawaz Khan (Strategic Planning/ Highways & Infrastructure)

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19	To promote and raise awareness of the 'green' riverside areas and waterside footpaths, tidy up the publicly owned open spaces and improve the signage of these routes and associated waterfront historic sights. <i>(A Connected River)</i>	Y	SCC is keen to promote the city's 'green' riverside areas and waterside footpaths and will consider how these can best be promoted. Update August 2024: No update is available at this time; this will be provided to a future OSMC meeting.	Debbie Ward/ Nawaz Khan
20	The introduction of a zero-carbon water-borne, travel and transport network, connecting communities could help to create a distinctive waterfront experience in Southampton, enable businesses to connect with their workforce, and could make a significant contribution to protecting, preserving and promoting the River Itchen for years and generations to come. The Council needs to use its influence and connections to secure a Solent water taxi service, commencing initially on the River Itchen and promote within the Local Plan a requirement for new waterfront development over a certain size to include a docking facility. <i>(A Connected River)</i>	Y	SCC has been working with local business and experts in this area to understand demand and feasibility. There is no funding currently available to progress this, but we will continue to liaise with Solent Transport, Solent Freeport and Government to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Update August 2024: No update is available at this time; this will be provided to a future OSMC meeting.	Nawaz Khan