

Report to: **Salcombe Harbour Board**

Date: **20 September 2021**

Title: **Water environment action plan**

Portfolio Area: **Salcombe Harbour**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **N**

Date next steps can be taken: **Proposed plan can be adopted at 20 September meeting.**

Author: **C Sims-Stirling** Role: **Harbour Master**

Contact: **01548 843791**

Recommendation: That the Harbour Board adopts the proposed water environment action plan (at Appendix 1).

1. Executive summary. Water quality has been a long-standing concern of the Board. The attached proposed water environment action plan is aimed at co-ordinating the various strands of this business so the Board is kept aware of the current situation.

2. Background

- 2.1 Water quality and the developing spread of pacific oysters have concerned the Board for some time but, apart from academic research studies, there has been little other action.
- 2.2 Although the Harbour derives its income from the boating community, it could be said that the largest single group of harbour users are beachgoers and swimmers. For them, and for the local economy they sustain, excellent water quality is crucial. Water quality is also an important health and safety issue for people participating in water sports which involves close contact with water and getting wet, like kayaking, paddleboarding and sailing small dinghies, often done by children and young adults.

- 2.3 The Harbour is also facing the threat of the spread of pacific oysters which, if left unchecked, can dominate beaches and render them unusable, or render shallow water hazardous, because of the strong sharp spikes on their shells. The proposed water environment action plan aims to bring control to both of these issues.
- 2.4 Water quality is a national (and international) concern for locals and holidaymakers alike; and pacific oysters, which are native to Asia although widely grown elsewhere commercially, are a recognised difficult-to-control invasive species in European waters. The whole estuary catchment is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (there is no saltwater equivalent for phosphorous) and Catchment Sensitive Farming is now active in the area, which should help.
- 2.5 Over the years, there have been a number of initiatives to try to improve water quality, including phosphate-free Salcombe, encouraging responsible pumping-out, and the hull washdown facility at Batson. The proposed action plan aims to build on this and could in time become included in a future 5-year plan.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The development of an action plan aims to put the Board in a better position to
 - monitor and intervene if necessary over water quality issues
 - develop a policy to control/reduce the problems generated by pacific oysters
- 3.2 Positive outcomes should be observed in 18-24 months.

4. Proposed Way Forward

A plan was first drafted early in the summer to inform and enable consultation to take place with interested parties. Since then there have been some developments:

- The Environment Agency has been approached for historical data on water quality, both for the bathing beaches in the south of the Harbour and for the Kingsbridge Basin and the north of the Harbour. A specialist has also been approached over the control of pacific oysters.
- The AONB Estuaries Officer has ascertained that the dinoflagellate bloom around Kingsbridge is likely to be *Alexandrium tamarense*. Also he has assessed the green algal mats over the mudflats outside Gerston to be as bad as ever this year in terms of their extent.
- It has been suggested that we might collect samples during dredging to monitor the presence of toxins in the sediment.
- There has been an approach over cultivating natural oysters once again in the creeks in the north of the Harbour.
- At some stage the Board might like to consider introducing a port waste management plan.

5. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	None at this stage; but the action plan may well have financial implications for the Harbour Board to consider.
Risk	Y	There is a significant risk if control is lost over either water quality or the growth of pacific oyster colonies.
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Salcombe Harbour is part of the 'Enterprise Theme', creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow, contributing to the marine and tourism economy.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		None directly from this proposed action plan.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	None
Safeguarding	N	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	Excellent water quality is essential for the health and safety of all those participating in water sports.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

1. Proposed water environment action plan

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed/sign off	Yes/No
SLT Rep briefed/sign off	Yes/No
Relevant Heads of Practice sign off	Yes/No
Data protection issues considered	Yes/No
Accessibility checked	Yes/No