Studland Bay r-MCZ:

Potential Negative Impact on the Leisure Marine Economy in the Poole Area

Poole Quay Boat Haven

In the Defra document **Studland Bay: Candidate Marine Conservation Zone not proposed for designation in the second tranche, January 2015** (https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine/tranche2mczs/supporting_documents/Studland%20Bay%20cMCZ%20site%20summary.pdf)

- it was stated:

"The designation of the site is expected to impact on commercial fishing, local port and harbour activity and recreational boating activities, with **high costs associated with the port and harbour sector and recreational boating**. Local stakeholders have also raised further concerns regarding the potential impact on local shore-based businesses if there are restrictions on recreational boating in the area**; such potential impacts have not been quantified.**"

Here we, the Boat Owners' Response Group (BORG), a stakeholder in this process, present some quantitative estimates of the potentially damaging impact on marine leisure and other businesses in the Poole Harbour area which could arise from designation of Studland Bay as a Marine Conservation Zone with restrictions on the leisure use of the Bay.

Key Points:

The starting point is that one of the reasons for choosing to keep a boat at Poole is that Studland Bay is an attractive nearby destination offering generally sheltered anchoring, and a very pleasant afternoon or day out in a boat. The evidence for this is the considerable number of boats which come out from from Poole Harbour and proceed round to Studland Bay on summer days. If, following designation as an MCZ, management measures result in restrictions or added costs in visiting the Bay, then, depending on the severity of the restrictions / costs, a proportion of people are likely to choose to move their boats elsewhere.

Clear evidence that a reduction in boating amenity can drive people away is found on p66 of the Poole Harbour Commissioners Master Plan:[1]

"In excess of two hundred boats have vacated the marinas in Holes Bay since the completion of the Twin Sails Bridge and the attraction of berthing south of Poole Bridge is evidenced by the rapid and full take-up of berths in the Port of Poole Marina."

The Holes Bay marinas have 944 berths, so in excess of 200 boats represents **over 20% of the boats re-locating** due to the additional 20 minute delay in passage time to and from Holes Bay caused by installation of the Twin Sails Bridge.

(This is not to imply any criticism of this iconic bridge, but simply to make the point that a reduction in boating convenience or amenity results in boats being relocated elsewhere).

Loss or reduction of the Studland Bay amenity through MCZ designation would potentially impact all leisure vessels which are berthed or moored in the Poole Harbour area. Details are given below, but the key points are that there are about 4500 berths or moorings in the area, which can generate **local revenue of £13.5 Million a year** in marine service charges alone (mooring/berthing charges, maintenance, harbour dues). For details and sources, see p.3 below.

If loss or reduction of the Studland Bay amenity were to result in boats being relocated elsewhere, just a **1%** relocation of boats from the area would then result in an **annual loss of £135,000** in marine services revenue, a **5%** relocation a **£670,000** loss, a **10%** relocation a **£1.35 M loss**, and a **20% relocation a £2.7 Million loss to the local economy**, with attendant job losses.

These figures are based on 100% occupancy of berths and moorings as a starting position: in practice it will be less, but it is still believed to be high, perhaps of the order of 90%.

The above figures apply to marine services expenditure for boats based in the Poole Harbour area, and do not include non-marine expenditure by boaters and their guests such as food and drink, restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars and accommodation, and general shopping. Also not included is spending by visiting yachts - the PHC Master Plan estimates that 5000 yachts from elsewhere visit the Harbour each year – nor does it include spending by visiting trailer boaters who launch their boats at local slipways, who are also likely to spend locally on food, drink and accommodation. These non-marine expenditures by both residents and visitors are likely to add up to significant sums of money, which would also be vulnerable to relocation of boats or to visitors staying away, but no attempt is made to estimate such spending in this article. The figures presented here should thus be viewed as a minimum base case.

A direct estimate of the impact on the Poole Harbour Commissioners' (PHC) revenues can also be made: the March 2015 PHC accounts[2] give PHC turnover in the marine leisure sector as £1,001,000, compared with £1,048,000 the previous year, showing a small decline in the market. Thus boat relocations of 5%, 10% or 20% would result in revenue losses to PHC alone of £50,000, £100,000 or £200,000 respectively.

The DEFRA best estimate cost for MCZ designation of Studland Bay is given as £112,000 per annum, but this is basically the direct cost of administration and implementation of the MCZ itself, and takes no account of knock-on effects on the local economy as considered here, which have the potential to **completely eclipse the £112,000 figure.**

<u>Comment:</u>

We consider the sums of money potentially involved, from hundreds of thousands of pounds to one or two million or more, to be very significant to the local leisure marine sector, with people's livelihoods at stake. We suggest that the actual conservation gains from MCZ designation would be small or slight: considering the two main features under consideration, the eelgrass in Studland Bay appears already to meet the criteria for Favourable Condition (see appendix), while recent evidence shows seahorses to be widely if thinly distributed in the general Poole area, and the generally acknowledged extent of the eelgrass (approaching 1 sq km) is sufficient for a thousand or two thousand seahorses, far in excess of the single digit numbers or less which have sometimes been observed in the Bay. Even if MCZ status were to give some increase in the already extensive eelgrass beds, the practical benefit would be slight, and the effect on seahorses absolutely negligible. Any rational cost-benefit analysis would come down heavily against MCZ designation of Studland Bay on grounds of both economic and social costs for very little conservation gain, if any.

An objective of the MCZ programme is also to contribute to an ecologically coherent ecological network of Marine Protected Areas around the UK: if a particular building block in the network has especially high economic or social costs associated with it, it would make sense to seek an alternative building block. Seahorses, for example, have been found at many sites around Poole and along the South Coast, so Studland Bay is not the only show in town. 87% of the Dorset coastline is in a Marine Protected Area of one sort or another already, and one of the existing MPA's could be upgraded if necessary to fill any gaps in the network.

Details of numbers and costs

Figures are available (Practical Boat Owner magazine April 2016, and Parkstone and Poole YC web sites)[3,4,5] for charges and numbers of boats boats kept in marinas in Poole Harbour. Charges for Poole YC Haven are estimated. Together they come to 2027 boats and, assuming an average boat length of 8.0 metres, the revenues (berths x £/m x 8) amount to £7.53 Million:

Marina	No. of Berths	£/metre/yr	£ revenue
Cobbs Quay	850	495	3,366,000
Davis Boatyard	94	422	317,344
Lake Yard	46	559	205,712
Parkstone Marina	50	661	264,400
Port of Poole Marina	75	575	345,000
Poole Quay Boat Haven	45	695	250,200
Salterns Marina	285	637	1,452,360
Parkstone YC Haven	232	341	632,896
Poole YC Haven	350	250*	700,000
* unknown, arbitrary guess			
Totals:	2027		7,533,912

A further £450 estimated for marina services and maintenance, plus £81 harbour dues, per boat, increases this total by about £1.08 M p.a. = £8,610,000 total per annum for marinas.
Additional to this are 240 dry stack berths at Cobbs Quay Marina. Typical charges for a 7 m boat are £3700 pa, so a potential revenue of about £888,000 pa plus 240x270 = £65,000 for maintenance and harbour dues gives total potential revenues of £953,000 for dry-stack boats.

The Poole Harbour Commissioners Master Plan states there are 2488 swinging moorings in the Harbour and River Frome (p.48). Annual per boat costs could be £1000 for mooring / berth, £400 maintenance, £80 harbour dues, £120 for boat access, say £1600 in all. For 2488 vessels, that makes £3,980,080 a year.

Adding in the revenue from marina and dry stack boats, this gives a total of £13.5 million paid into the local economy annually for boat services. These figures do not include costs of purchase of vessels and equipment, as these are spread over a wider geographical area, but some of this will accrue to the Poole area. As explained above, this figure does not include expenditure by the 5000 yachts which visit annually, nor by trailed boats launched into the Harbour in considerable numbers, and does not include non-marine expenditure such as food, drink, shopping and accommodation by either resident or visiting boats. Total leisure marine revenues will therefore be very substantially above £13.5 million.

Appendix : definition of Favourable Condition:

(From Poole Rocks MCZ designation order 2013:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukmo/2013/18/pdfs/ukmo_20130018_en.pdf)

(2) In paragraph (1), —favourable condition—

(a) with respect to a broadscale marine habitat within the Zone, means that—

(i) its extent is stable or increasing; and

(ii) its structures and functions, its quality, and the composition of its characteristic biological communities are such as to ensure that it remains in a condition which is healthy and not deteriorating;

(b) with respect to a species of marine fauna within the Zone, means that the quality and quantity of its habitat and the composition of its population in terms of number, age and sex ratio are such as to ensure that the population is maintained in numbers which enable it to thrive.

(We believe that observed data over recent years show these criteria to apply to the Studland Bay eelgrass beds, despite ongoing anchoring by leisure vessels over many decades)

References

1. Poole Harbour Commissioners Master Plan
   http://www.phc.co.uk/downloads/PHC_Masterplan.pdf
2. PHC Annual accounts 2015
   http://www.phc.co.uk/downloads/PHC_AGR2015-Complete-WEB.pdf
3. Practical Boat Owner magazine, issue 598, April 2016, p.35
4. https://www.parkstoneyachtclub.com/Footer_Links/Haven_Yard/Haven_Information.aspx
5. http://www.pooleyc.co.uk/the-club/facilites/yacht-haven

by Michael Simons, April 2016, for the Boat Owners' Response Group