

## **Buoys to help protect endangered birds**

22 February 2022

Marker buoys which encourage water sports enthusiasts to watch out for endangered coastal birds at have been installed by Chichester Harbour Conservancy at Sandy Point on Hayling island.

It is hoped the buoys, which have been put in place near Hayling Island Sailing Club, will remind paddle boarders, kayakers and other leisure water users to steer clear of the beach at high tide when it is a vital spot for birds to rest.

Councillor Seán Woodward, Chairman of the Partnership for South Hampshire, the body that oversees Bird Aware Solent, said: 'We have a wealth of wildlife on the Solent coast and this project will help ensure we're able to share our shores responsibly.'

Large numbers of wading birds use the beach as a resting site in winter, including oystercatcher and dunlin which are on the UK red list for conservation. The birds feed in the food-filled mud but as the tide rises, they need somewhere to stay dry and conserve their energy.

In recent years, there has been a decline in the number of birds using the area. It is thought this may be due to the levels of disturbance from both land and water users.

The buoys provide guidance for water sports in the area with some advising users to keep clear of the area, and others identifying the area as a wildlife refuge.

Many of the birds using the beach at this time of year will be preparing for epic migrations which start next month: some of the Solent's migratory birds will travel as far as Siberia, more than 2000 miles away.

The buoys provide additional protection to regular patrols from Bird Aware Solent rangers who visit the area talk to walkers and dog owners, encouraging them to avoid this section of beach.