

Raising awareness of marine wildlife disturbance in Dorset

News story

MMO joins up with stakeholders for day of engagement with recreational sea users



Building on the success of engagement activities during Summer 2020 in Poole and Weymouth, MMO officers from Poole, along with a variety of stakeholders, engaged with recreational vessels and powered watercraft users in Weymouth (on 12 June) and Poole (on 3 July).

Concerns have recently been raised on social media regarding wildlife disturbance from craft users – chasing dolphins and moving through rafting seabirds causing them to disperse in a distressed manner. Quayside discussion with users, providing guidance on how to enjoy the local wildlife respectfully followed by an on water patrol from partner agencies was met with positive approval from the public.

Further engagement days will take place throughout July and August at the main slipways in Poole and Weymouth.

A spokesperson for the Marine Management Organisation said:

We are very lucky to have such a wide variety of wildlife on the South Coast and it is wonderful that people are able to observe it. People should be aware of how their actions can cause stress and disturbance to the wildlife and moderate their behaviours when on powered craft around the wildlife. Thank you to our partners who have assisted with these events.

The team in Poole

Jamie Joyce, Weymouth Harbourmaster said:

Weymouth Harbour would like to thank members of the MMO, Police, Fisheries, Coastguard, RNLI and the Harbour Board Chairman, who provided a multi agency approach to advise and educate vessel owners on safety and Marine Regulations. The joint operation has set the standard for a safe summer season.

Sam Dell, Acting Deputy Chief Officer of the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, said:

Our Fisheries Protection Team supported the recent operation in Poole by providing a patrol vessel, mobile interpretation unit and drone capability, these assets were utilised by partner agencies throughout the operation.

Southern IFCA will continue to work closely and support our partner agencies to deliver a joined up approach to compliance with all conservation measures, including issues surrounding wildlife disturbance and other marine related crime. This work is hugely important in order to protect our coastal fisheries and communities.

Dolphin guidelines for watercraft users

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency encourages water users to:

- Always wear a person flotation device (PFD)
- Always wear a kill cord if fitted & carry a spare
- Always carry a means of calling for help on your person
- Develop your skills
- Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back
- Always check the forecast and tide times
- Ensure your engine is well maintained
- Always check your equipment

The MMO would like to thank: Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority; Poole Harbour Commissioners; Weymouth Harbour; Dorset Council; BCP Council; Maritime & Coastguard Agency; RNLI; Dorset Police – Marine Policing Team & Rural, Wildlife & Heritage Crime Team for their support and attendance during these events.

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