

Severn Tidings

Working in partnership for the future of the Severn Estuary

www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk

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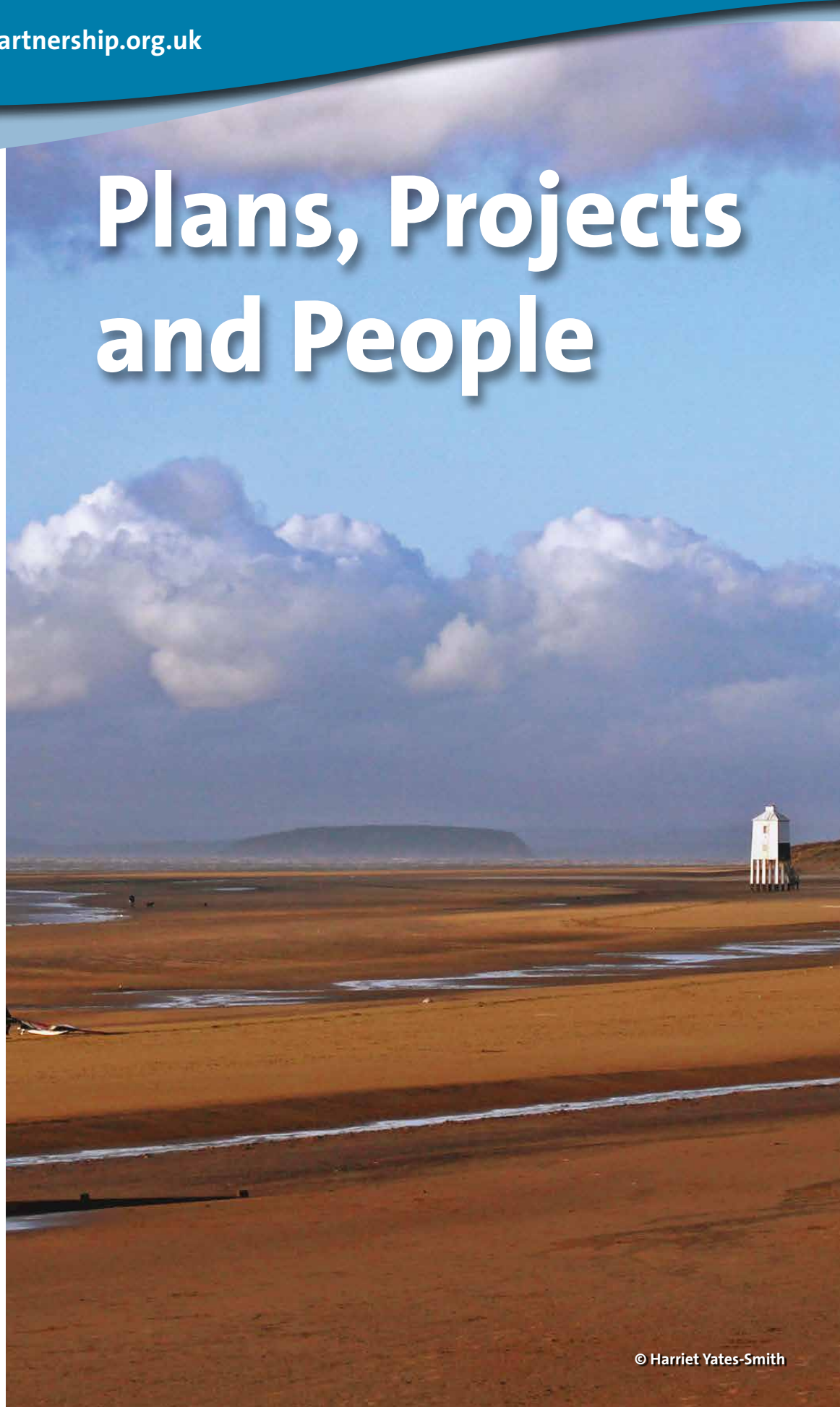
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Welcome



John Harrison
Chairman of the
Severn Estuary
Partnership

Welcome to the 2017 edition of Severn Tidings newsletter, which I hope you find of interest and

helps increase your understanding of the benefits of the stunning Severn Estuary and Inner Bristol Channel. Most people would agree that water lies at the heart of all the communities, wildlife, habitats, businesses and cultural history that have evolved in and around our estuary. But do we really appreciate its true value and are we doing enough to sustain it for future generations?

The focus of this issue explores this challenge with articles about improvements in our planning for the future to appreciate the true value of the estuary and also what it means to people from a personal perspective. We have articles on cross-border marine planning from Welsh Government and the Marine Management Organisation and the launch of the 2017 Severn Estuary Strategy. From a personal level we have a theme called 'What does the estuary mean to you?', which includes fascinating perspectives from a local artist, traditional fisherman and from the Visitor Experience Manager at RSPB Newport Wetlands.

Our major achievement this year has been the launch of the new 2017-2027 Severn Estuary Strategy. It sets out a strategic framework for partnership working on common issues and opportunities across the Severn Estuary. Over the past 18 months, we have been pleased to have had such a wide range of stakeholders continue to support its development and we look forward to the challenges of beginning to implement the new Strategy and delivering on the actions set out over the coming months. The success of the Strategy will be judged by how well it helps to facilitate collaborative working on the sustainable use of the estuary's resources to benefit future generations.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank SEP partners and associates for their continued dedicated support throughout the year and to all those who continue to contribute their part towards making our stunning estuary a sustainable one.



Members of the Severn Estuary Partnership and associates of Cardiff University at Saul Junction
© Lucy Taylor

Severn Estuary Partnership Update

The key themes throughout this edition are projects, plans and the people. It is great to see such a diverse range of projects and plans that are being developed from a local to national scale, and we are delighted to showcase some of their key achievements in our newsletter. The Partnership will continue to work hard over the coming year to connect stakeholders and facilitate communication across sectors and across the border, particularly as new plans and policies relevant to the Severn Estuary are developing. I hope you enjoy this 2017 edition of Severn Tidings!

We are delighted to have launched our 2017-2027 Severn Estuary Strategy on 24th May in Chepstow at the Joint Estuary Day. The Strategy promotes an ecosystem-based approach to the planning and management of our Severn Estuary. It has been developed over an 18-month period, with stakeholders at the forefront of discussions and directing the focus of the document. On behalf of the Partnership, I would like to give a huge thank you for the support, guidance and input we received in developing the Strategy over this period. Our focus moving forwards for the next year is developing detailed action plans to support the delivery and implementation of the Strategy. If you would like to get involved in the delivery of some of these estuary-wide actions, please get in touch at Severn@Cardiff.ac.uk. Find out more on page 4.

The Partnership is pleased to have recently appointed a new Litter Free Coast & Sea Somerset Officer, and we look forward to welcoming them to the SEP team in mid-November. We would like to thank Harriet Yates-Smith, who moved on from the project earlier this year, for all of her hard work in setting up the project and running some excellent community engagement campaigns such as "Don't Feed the Seagulls", and helping to set up community groups like the "Friends of Burnham Beach" and the "Burnham Pooper Troopers". To find out more on the successes of the project so far, visit <http://www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk/somerset/> or contact us on severn@cardiff.ac.uk.



We are continuing to engage and feed into marine planning discussions on the Severn Estuary, connecting with both the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Welsh Government (WG) Marine and Fisheries Division. SEP continues to participate in the WG Wales Marine Advisory and Action Group (WMAAG) and Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group. WG are likely to go out to consultation later this year for the Welsh National Marine Plan, and SEP will keep you

informed of any consultation opportunities as they arise. We co-chaired and facilitated the MMO's Taunton workshop in March, which focussed on common policy responses to issues or opportunities that could exist over more than one plan area – to find out more on marine planning and SEP's role, see page 5.

Our 11th annual Severn Estuary Forum was held at Blackfriars Priory in Gloucester in September 2016. Over 80 people attended the event, which was supported by Cardiff University and the British Marine Aggregates Producers Association (BMAPA). Discussion focussed around cross-border planning and governance, the coastal and historic environment and transport and infrastructure. We are looking forward to our 2017 Severn Estuary Forum, located in Bridgwater this year on 5th October.



Severn Estuary Forum 2016 © SEP

We are also keeping busy by ensuring our stakeholders are kept up to date with the latest estuary developments and updates! If you aren't already receiving our monthly e-news, please sign up on our website to stay in the loop with the latest SEP and estuary news, consultations, policy updates and events. The Partnership is pleased to have welcomed Megan Wilde to the Partnership team, who has been working hard helping with the organisation of the Severn Estuary Forum, development of the Severn Tidings newsletter and our monthly e-news.

I would like to finish by thanking all those who have continued to support the Partnership over the past 12 months – it has been another successful and busy year and I looking forward to a day full of lively discussion at our upcoming 2017 Severn Estuary Forum. Hope to see you all there!

Lucy Taylor
Severn Estuary Partnership Officer

Lucy Taylor
Severn Estuary Partnership Officer

Our Contributors

At SEP our key role is to keep all of our stakeholders informed of project developments and proposals that are happening within, or will have an impact on, the Severn Estuary. In this edition we are delighted to have contributions and viewpoints from a wide variety of estuary groups and developers:

The Marine Management Organisation, Welsh Government, The Black Rock Lave Net Fishery, Newport Wetlands, Flow Projects, RNLI, North Somerset Council, Natural England, Cardiff Capital Region, Severn Area Rescue Association, SevernNet, Environment Agency, Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group, Severn Estuary Coastal Group, Cardiff University, A Foughten Landscape.

We would be interested to hear your views on the wide range of topics featured in this edition. Please get in touch by emailing Severn@cardiff.ac.uk.

An Estuary Round Up

The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA)



ASERA is made up of the statutory organisations around the

Severn Estuary that collectively manage their activities on the Severn Estuary European Marine Site (EMS). The Severn Estuary EMS incorporates the marine areas of both the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), protected under the EC Habitats and Birds Directive.

ASERA is excited to have launched the new Good Practice Guidelines for recreational activities taking place within the Severn Estuary EMS. These are now published on the ASERA website (www.asera.org.uk) in both English and Welsh and are being promoted throughout the

estuary. Turn to page 7 for more information on the purpose of the guidelines and the activities they cover.

ASERA is undertaking a desk-based study to review land-based recreation activity in the Severn Estuary. Data is currently being collected on the intensity, frequency and location of various land-based activities taking place within and adjacent to the Severn Estuary. Some of the activities being reviewed include coastal access, bird watching, horse riding and dog walking. This summary report and series of GIS maps are likely to be consulted on later this year. If you have information/data that would be useful to inform this study, please contact the ASERA Officer.

We are also working towards consulting on the 2017 Severn Estuary EMS Management Scheme

and Action Plans, which are currently being reviewed within the ASERA Management Group before public consultation. This has been informed by a thorough review of activities taking place and the potential impact they may be having on the EMS. If you are interested in commenting on the consultation, please get in touch.

For more information, please contact the ASERA Officer, Lucy Taylor, at Severn@cardiff.ac.uk or visit our website www.asera.org.uk.

Lucy Taylor, ASERA Officer



Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group (BCSEG)

The BCSEG is a multi-agency group tasked with acting as the single point of contact for response cells in terms of the provision of public health and environmental advice during a major maritime incident. The group covers the Severn Estuary and the Inner Bristol Channel out to a line between Ogmere and Lynmouth. The Group's core membership comes from Natural Resources Wales, Environment Agency, Natural England, Devon and Severn IFCA, Welsh Government, Marine Management Organisation, Public Health England and Public Health Wales

Over the last year the group has continued to improve its preparedness and build links with stakeholders on both sides of the estuary.

In January, the Group completed a major review of its Activation Plan which was subsequently tested in April during Exercise Holm Islands. In addition to the group members, the exercise was attended by representatives from ports, local authorities and the Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA).

The Group is now working on the revision of its Shoreline Sensitivity Manual and an assessment of safe anchorages for vessel casualties.

The BCSEG page on the Severn Estuary Partnership's website (<https://goo.gl/K4HWoc>) provides a general description of the Group, but for more detailed information contact SEP at severn@cardiff.ac.uk.



Rhys Morgan, Senior Natural Resources Planner (Marine) Natural Resources Wales

Severn Estuary Coastal Group (SECG)

The Severn Estuary Coastal Group (SECG) is a technical group of local authorities and other key organisations that share an interest in the management of the shoreline around the Severn Estuary. SECG works to promote a coordinated and sustainable approach to coastal risk management around the Severn Estuary. The group meets on a quarterly basis, with two meetings having taken place so far this year, with SEP providing the secretariat services.

Patrick Goodey, Bristol City Council, has taken over as Chair this year from Dave Harris, Monmouthshire County Council. SEP and SECG would like to take this opportunity to give a huge thanks to Dave Harris for all of his hard work directing the group as Chair, as well as the continued support he has provided to SEP

over the years! Freddie Holland, North Somerset Council, and Dave Brain, Cardiff Council have also both taken on the role of Vice Chairs of the group.

The group were pleased to have received final approval of the Severn Estuary Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) in February this year. The SMP2 was reviewed in 2012 by the SMP Quality Review Group (QRG) and is now approved by the Environment Agency, having received Defra and Welsh Government approval of the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Imperative Reasons for Over-riding Public Interest (IROPI) case. See www.severnestuarycoastalgroup.org.uk/shoreline-management-plan/ for more information on the Severn Estuary SMP2.

Discussion of the group has recently focussed around the future direction of the SMP2, habitat creation and flood risk management plans. It has also received presentations on projects such as the Adaptation and Resilience of Coastal Energy Supply (ARCoES) from the University of Liverpool, and tidal lagoon development proposals from a flood and coastal erosion risk management perspective.

For more information on the group and its activities, contact severn@cardiff.ac.uk or visit <http://www.severnestuarycoastalgroup.org.uk/>



Launch of the Severn Estuary Strategy

“The Severn Estuary Strategy champions an integrated approach to the sustainable use and enjoyment of the Severn Estuary”



Launch of the Severn Estuary Strategy at the Joint Estuary Day: May 2017 © SEP

The Severn Estuary Partnership was delighted to launch the 2017-2027 Severn Estuary Strategy in Chepstow in May as part of the SEP Joint Estuary Day. The Partnership would like to thank those who have input into this important process, for their detailed and thoughtful comments and feedback throughout its development and during the consultation period.

The new 2017-2027 Strategy will provide a framework to inform more coordinated policy development, practices and strategies for the Severn Estuary. As marine planning develops in both England and Wales, this Strategy document will help to ensure a more integrated approach for the Severn Estuary, particularly at a time of uncertainty in European governance.

The aims of this Strategy are to:

- update & streamline the 2001 Severn Estuary Strategy;
- provide a strategic policy framework for the Severn Estuary;
- provide context to inform and support decision-making; and,

- facilitate the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) obligations related to cross-border integration, land-sea integration and taking an ecosystem-based approach to management.

This Strategy is guided by a Vision, which sets out what we (and you) would like the estuary to look like in the future. The document is split under five key Principles (outlined below), based on the UK High-Level Marine Objectives. Under each Principle are a series of Objectives, Outcomes and Actions. The Strategy will have a 10-year timeframe between 2017-2027, but will be flexible enough to change priorities in light of any new and emerging evidence.



Who is the Strategy for?

This Strategy is for the whole of the Severn Estuary region and for the members and associates of the Severn Estuary Partnership. For the Strategy to be successful, all those with an interest in the estuary are encouraged to accept it as a strategic management framework to inform their approach/contribution to the future sustainable management of the estuary. Through this commitment, the Strategy will ensure that a more integrated and joined-up approach to management of the Severn Estuary is taken.

Engagement and Consultation

The Partnership has developed the Strategy over an 18-month period (April 2015 to Spring 2017), with significant input from a wide range of estuary stakeholders, SEP members and associates:

- The Strategy Vision (Newport, May 2015);
- The Way Forward (Bristol, September 2016); and,
- Strategy Outcomes & Aims (Chepstow, May 2016).

It has taken account of the latest legislation, policies and plans from a

local to international scale and has followed best practice from other UK Coastal Partnerships and cross-border institutions, such as the Gulf of Maine Council.

The Partnership consulted on the draft 2017-2027 Strategy for 6 weeks during September to November 2016. A range of questions were posed and there was the opportunity for consultees to contribute further comments. To view the consultation summary, visit www.severnesteriumpartnership.org.uk/sep/strategy/15-16/

Why Do We Need a Severn Estuary Strategy?

- To ensure an **integrated approach for marine planning** in the Severn Estuary Region.
- To provide context to **inform and support decision making** for a wide range of proposed estuary developments, (e.g. maritime uses, minerals and marine renewable energy).



Taking the Strategy forwards – How can you get involved?

The Actions outlined in the Strategy are being taken forward and incorporated in to the new SEP Business Plan (2017-2022). The timeline for publishing the SEP Business Plan is late 2017 and will be available on the SEP website. The Partnership will seek to address the Actions set out in this Strategy, collaborating with other organisations as appropriate, to provide an integrated approach to the management of the Severn Estuary. Would you like to get involved in delivery of some of these estuary-wide actions? Please get in touch at Severn@Cardiff.ac.uk.

For more information, visit <http://www.severnesteriumpartnership.org.uk/sep/strategy/15-16/>.

Consultation on the First Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) – Update on Progress

By Anwen Davies, Marine Policy Branch, Welsh Government

Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) – Welsh Government is now in the final stages of completing the draft plan for consultation in the autumn. Amendments to the plan have been completed following a huge range of bilateral meetings with policy leads and wider stakeholders. Overall, input has been very positive and extensive. Focus is now clearly on the practical implementation of the draft plan and its policies.

The plan will help ensure that marine natural resources are managed and used in a sustainable way and therefore contribute to the achievement of Wales' Well-being of Future Generations goals. Emphasis will be on how the Marine Plan is a new way of working and will direct decision making to maximise opportunities and meet Welsh Government priorities- e.g. supporting ecosystem resilience and blue growth through marine energy, tourism and recreations, ports and shipping, aquaculture.

As Marine Planning is relatively new it is important to have a clear understanding of the

benefits marine users ultimately want to see from the marine planning process in Wales. To achieve this, a series of semi-structured interviews were undertaken with members of the Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group (MPSRG) and wider marine interests in Wales. As a result a Marine Planning Benefits and Opportunities report has been produced alongside an accompanying video. See links for further information:

<http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/170531-marine-planning-benefits-en.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IligdT4J8Ec&feature=youtu.be>

The Welsh Government Marine Planning Portal is continuing to evolve and we are set to release version 3 & 4, which will include spatial plan policy that will allow users to understand the potential impact of policies upon their interest as we consult on the draft Plan. To view the Portal see: <http://lle.wales.gov.uk/apps/marineportal/#lat=52.5145&lon=-3.9111&z=8>

As we progress to consultation more information will be published on the Welsh Government website. Should you require any further information please contact our Marine Planning mailbox - marineplanning@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you to all those who have contributed so far in the process and we look forward to continuing in the future.



The Welsh Government Marine Planning Portal
© Welsh Government

Marine Planning in the South West

By Neal Gray, Marine Management Organisation

Work towards development of a marine plan for England's south west has continued over the last 18 months with the support of stakeholders. At the MMO we are constantly impressed by the passion and commitment to the marine environment exhibited by the wide range of people and organisations within the plan area. This has resulted in a fantastic amount of knowledge being fed into the planning process. Coastal forums have proved instrumental in synthesising the enormous amount of data and knowledge into a range of clear and succinct issues and opportunities which the MMO's marine planners are able to work with. The south west plan area has two very distinct, diverse coasts. The Severn Estuary Partnership ensures we never lose sight of this and the fantastic ecosystem, opportunities and challenges within the estuary itself.

Back in March we held three

workshops across the south west plan area to inform our Iteration One work. This involved testing a number of potential common policy responses to issues or opportunities which may exist over more than one plan area. The SEP chaired our well-attended workshop in Taunton. Results of the workshop have really helped our understanding of the specific issues facing marine planning in the Severn Estuary, particularly the need for a carefully considered policy response.

During early August we held a number of small workshops to further test and validate our understanding of the causes and effects of identified issues. This authentication process will help us in deciding where a marine policy response would best fit. For example by restricting or influencing the cause of an issue or by addressing its effects.

The cause and effect process will feed into our Iteration Two

work. This will begin in the autumn and we will be looking to develop options for responses to issues, together with a vision for the south west plan area. The Iteration 2 work will be backed by a series of workshops in the spring of 2018. In the meantime, if any stakeholder would like

to discuss any planning issues, please do get in touch. Find out more at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-planning-in-england>

Contact me direct at: neal.gray@marinemanagement.org.uk



South West Marine Plan workshop © MMO

Perspectives of the Estuary – What Does the Severn Estuary Mean to You?

Flow Contemporary Arts

By Carolyn Black, Flow Contemporary Arts

I have lived close to the River Severn for thirty six years, twenty five near the east side and eleven on the west bank. I'm an artist/writer/producer and all I do is related to the visual arts. Most recently, I have been drawing large panoramic views of the Severn in charcoal, capturing views of both banks lying opposite to each other. They are big so that I, and the viewer, can inhabit them. My ambition is to create an immersive Virtual Reality experience. I used to create video installations in the past that immersed viewers, now I

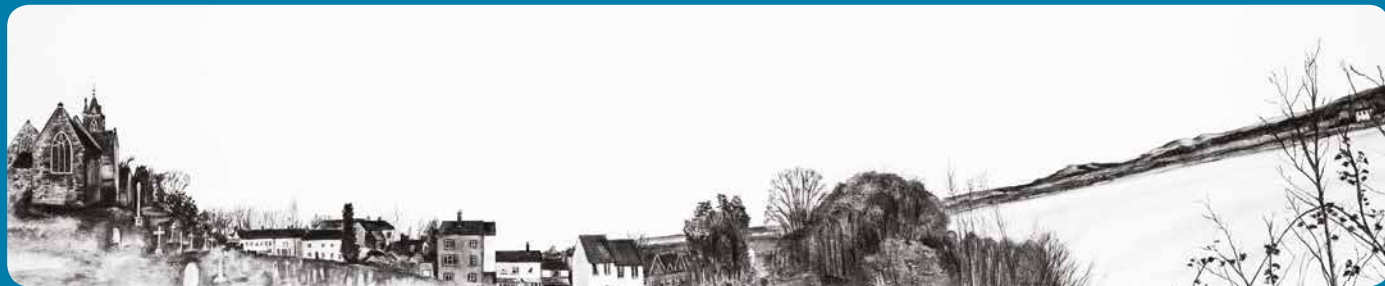
wish to take them deeper into experiencing the wonders of the Severn in a way that will provide a fantastic experience of the Severn, without getting wet.

What does the Severn Estuary mean to you?

The estuary has been central to my life for many years, both literally and philosophically. It is a place I go to where I can connect with myself and with nature. Its flux reminds me that everything shifts and changes, constantly exchanging and shedding as it goes. We carry

things with us in life, we also discard as we go. I enjoy the ambiguity of the estuarial substance – salt water switching with fresh water – dry riverbeds transforming into floodwaters, smashing against edges. The river has been, and continues to be, an endless delight for me to witness and I'm keen to share it.

Now living in Newnham on Severn, you can contact me on 07775938500 or email carolyn@flowprojects.org.uk



Newnham Church to Arlingham © Carolyn Black.

Black Rock Lave Net Heritage Fishery

By Martin Morgan, Fisherman, Black Rock Lave Net Fisherman's Association

Growing up on the banks of the Severn Estuary, this mighty body of water was always going to have a huge influence on my life - little did I know as a young boy how great this would be. As I left my childhood home in Sudbrook to play my mother would always say "keep out of the river" - not a chance! Swimming, fishing, digging bait and exploring an uncomplicated childhood. As a steelworker for 40 years, I grew to love the peace and tranquillity of the estuary and all it has to offer - you would never starve or go cold living by the Severn! Fishing is in my blood, always a rod and line fisherman, but in the late 1990s, two lave net fishing licences became available. The fishery at this time was under pressure of closure with an average age of around 70. All the other traditional fisheries in the Welsh region of the estuary had one-by-one been closed down.



© Martin Morgan

What does the Severn Estuary mean to you?

The estuary and lave net fishing has become a huge part of my life. To share all this with friends and the wider world has been fantastic. We always aimed to preserve the fishery in a viable form and that we have - the group is now thriving with an agreement forged by the fishermen and the Welsh Assembly and agreed by the Environment Agency as sustainable, which has given the fishery its rightful place on the mighty Severn.

For more information on the fishery, see <http://www.blackrocklavenets.co.uk/>

Newport Wetlands, RSPB

By Helen Gottschalk, Visitor Experience Manager

Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve (NNR) is an important part of the Gwent Levels unique landscape, bordering the edge of the Severn Estuary. The reserve is a significant area for wildlife, harbouring many species of birds, insects and plants. During a recent BioBlitz a species of shieldbug was discovered that has only been recorded in Wales three times. This is an example of how crucial the reserve is in providing a robust habitat not only for resident species, but for those affected by climate change and other environmental pressures.

The reserve is not only a haven for wildlife, it also offers a tranquil and relaxing place for people to visit and enjoy the magnificent views offered from the Wales Coast Path. With a variety of accessible routes weaving between reedbed, lagoons and salt marsh, the reserve is a special place that can help improve our health and wellbeing. The RSPB visitor centre welcomes over 109,000 visitors a year, and has an



© RSPB

exciting and varied programme of events to appeal to a wide range of age groups and interests, ranging from creative writing workshops to autumn wader walks.

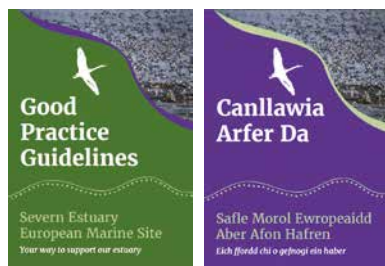
What does the Severn Estuary mean to you?

For us, the diverse ecosystem that the Severn Estuary provides offers an opportunity for people to reconnect with nature, and share our fascination and wonder of the natural world around us. One of our key roles is to ensure that children and their families value this special place and understand why it's so important to conserve it for future generations.

Recreational Good Practice Guidelines - Your Way to Support Our Estuary

Keeping our Spectacular Severn Special

The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) is pleased to launch the new Good Practice Guidelines for the Severn Estuary European Marine Site.



Our estuary supports nationally and internationally important habitats and species, and is a key migratory route for salmon and internationally rare fish species. The extensive mudflats, saltmarshes and coastal grazing marshes make it one of the most important estuaries in the UK for its numbers of wildfowl and wading birds with over 80,000 birds visiting every winter. It is a key refuelling stop for important spring and autumn passage birds. Reefs of the tube-forming worm *Sabellaria alveolata* are also found here.

Activities undertaken around the estuary and its coastline need to ensure they are sympathetic to the needs of wildlife, especially the thousands of wintering birds that visit every year. Our estuary is particularly popular for recreational activities and so your actions really can make a difference!

Working together, we can reduce disturbance to the habitats and species of the Severn Estuary that keep our site special.

The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage the sustainable use of the estuary and its coastline, providing an enhanced and safer environment for recreational users and visitors to enjoy. Individuals and clubs are encouraged to respect, support and promote these guidelines. They cover a range of activities, which are illustrated below:



Please help to keep our coastline looking clean, beautiful and full of wildlife. If you would like copies of the guidelines for your user group or association, to set up a meeting to discuss what your club can do or for further information please get in touch with the ASERA Officer, Lucy Taylor at severn@cardiff.ac.uk. Visit the ASERA website (www.asera.org.uk) to download digital copies in either English or Welsh.

Brean Down Way Cycle Path

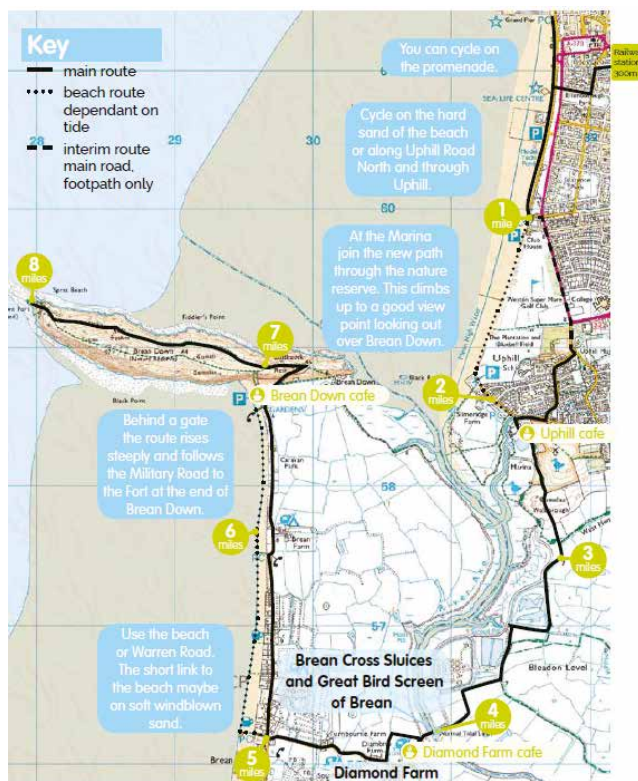
By North Somerset Council

The long-awaited section of the Coastal Town's cycle route Brean Down Way was officially opened by Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Mrs Annie Maw, on Friday 7th July. The route is designed as a leisure and commuter route and has been an aspiration for more than 20 years. It means cyclists can now bypass the long, busy and often hazardous Accommodation Road. North Somerset Council have worked in partnership with the charity Greenways and Cycleroutes, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and their contractors to complete the last leg from the sluice to Brean beach. The route also links with the existing West Mendip Way, and in the future will connect to the England Coast Path.

The Great Bird Screen of Brean (see the 4-mile point on the map) has been built to prevent disturbance to an important high tide waterbird roost on the Severn Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is just beyond the screen. For two hours either side of high tide, this site is used by roosting waterbirds, which congregate to rest or sleep, where they feel safe. Key species include redshank, dunlin and shelduck.

The 150m screen also creates small recessed seats as bird hides for watching the wildlife. The open structure gives fleeting views of Brean Down and Weston as well as allowing winds blowing across these flat lands to penetrate the barrier rather than flatten it. The screen was designed by Katy Hallett and was constructed by over 50 volunteers. The planks used to make the screen are untreated resinous larch and, over a few years will become silvery grey in colour. Please enjoy this unique structure as it marks the midway point along the route - a place to stop and rest, to learn about seasonal changes in the birdlife and reflect on this dramatic landscape.

The Brean Down Way, an eight-mile walking and cycling route linking Weston-super-and Brean Down, has been made possible by North Somerset Council and volunteers of the charity Greenways and Cycleroutes Limited. Please visit: www.greenwaysandcycleroutes.org for more information.



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Brean Down Way Cycle Path Map © North Somerset Council

Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Severn Estuary



By Christian Prescott, RNLI

The National Drowning Prevention Strategy was launched in 2016 as a partnership between the charity, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), and the National Water Safety Forum to commit to help reducing the number of fatalities around the waters of the UK. Part of this activity is to understand the future risk in and around the Severn Estuary and how the RNLI can partner and collaborate to help reduce these numbers.

Organisations responsible for lifesaving provision in the Severn Estuary gathered in Bristol in June to share expertise and knowledge, with the purpose of working collaboratively to increase water safety in the area. The day was an opportunity to bring together all those responsible for safety in and around the Severn Estuary in order to understand what could be improved, and how collectively and in partnership we can make some progress towards ultimately saving more lives.

The Water Incident Database (WAID) reports on average, there are 14 fatalities each year in and around the Severn Estuary and the RNLI have experienced a rise in launches over the last 3 years and with several developments in the planning for the area, the water way is expected to get busier.



RNLI Members and Associates at a meeting in June © RNLI

One development has been the opening of a new visitor centre at Barry Island in March 2017. The visitor centre is one of only two RNLI visitor centres anywhere in the UK and is the first of its kind to be specifically dedicated to drowning prevention and safety education.

A number of actions were created following the event and stronger relationships were developed between organisations. A risk analysis report is currently being produced to identify the correct lifesaving provision to deal with the current and future risk of the Severn Estuary. Over the coming months, the actions



RNLI Barry Island Visitor Centre © RNLI

will be developed and further events planned to progress the work and to ensure that the number of lives lost, is reduced.

Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) - Safety on the Severn

By Geoff Dawe, SARA

The Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), operate "Declared Facility" lifeboats on behalf of H.M Coastguard, covering the tidal Severn from Avonmouth (overlapping with Portishead Lifeboat) to Gloucester Weirs - in excess of 45 miles of tidal water. This includes the area of the world famous Severn Bore. The Severn, our longest river in the UK, is home to ferocious tidal flows over hazards of every description and has a unique tidal regime, resulting in both rescues and sadly at times, fatalities.

Currently I am the Lifeboat Operations Manager at the SARA Sharpness Lifeboat Station and a Senior Helmsman on station, where I have been based for the past fifteen years. Working here brings home to me the unrivalled beauty of the Severn, but also the ever-present dangers to which we are tasked to assist those in need and in danger of losing their lives.

Sharpness Lifeboat Station, like our sister station at Beachley, houses a primary lifeboat for multiple casualty and heavy towing operations, a small "D" class type lifeboat able to operate in shallower waters (generally used

for incidents of one or two casualties in rock or sandbank-related incidents) and, uniquely at Sharpness, a hovercraft which is able to access the river bed when the tide is fully out.

The beautiful sandbanks, easily accessible from the shore at low tide, can in minutes become cut off by ferocious incoming tides - an unwary person attempting to wade ashore, can be instantly swept away by the speed and strength of the tide. This is an ever-present danger to which SARA Lifeboats respond. Other regular lifeboat callouts include broken down or damaged craft, craft swamped by the serious overfalls which can be regularly encountered, wind over tide situations which create craft-damaging seas, and debris such as whole trees washed off the shore by larger Spring tides which damage hulls, rudders and props. From the shore, deep soft mud can trap anyone who ventures out on to it, or indeed stumbles onto it where it is covered by reed beds and other marine vegetation. This type of rescue requires specialist crew training and specialist equipment, all part of the SARA response capability.



© SARA

A place of great beauty, a place with the ability to take life if not understood. When on or around it, knowledge is everything in terms of safety. If you don't know, are not sure or are not capable, stay away from the banks, always keep younger people fully supervised and never go into the water after a pet. The lifeboat stations at Sharpness and Beachley respond to anything between 80 and 100 call outs annually. Many lives are saved by lifeboats, but sadly, the recovery of lost lives is also an ever-present task.

For more information on SARA, see: <http://www.sara-rescue.org.uk/>

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier

By Vanessa Dare, Environment Agency

The flooding in 2014 led a partnership of key authorities to prepare 'The Somerset Levels & Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan' that considered all major flood risks to the county. The plan has an objective of building a tidal surge barrier to protect Bridgwater. The Environment Agency is working in partnership with Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) and supported by the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) to deliver the barrier in 2024.



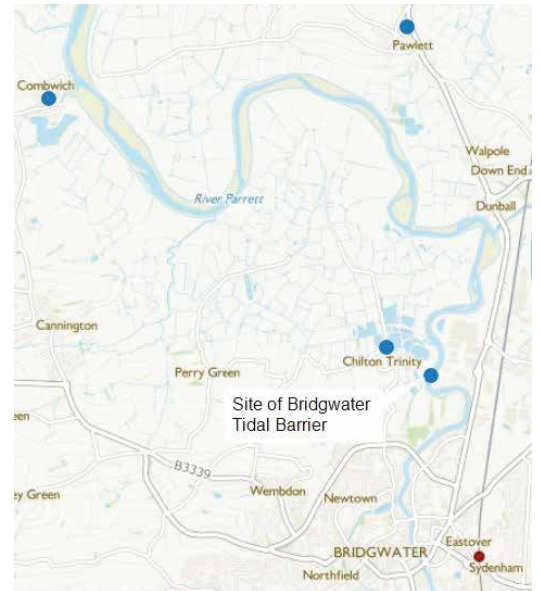
Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Design © Environment Agency

The current flood defences for Bridgwater protect over 10,000 homes and 600 businesses in Bridgwater and surrounding villages. Investigations show that a tidal surge barrier across the River Parrett in addition to improvements to downstream flood defences is the best way to manage flood risk to Bridgwater and surrounding areas into the future.

We consider the best location for the barrier is between Chilton Trinity village and Express Park on the northern edge of Bridgwater. The preferred design comprises two vertical gates. Two gates provide reliability for operation and will still allow boats through the barrier. SDC would like the barrier to have a contemporary look – possibly like the image to left.

The scheme requires improvements to flood defences downstream of the barrier to prevent tidal flooding passing around the barrier into Bridgwater and to protect the downstream communities. Improvements include maintaining the existing banks, raising some, and having a second set of banks at the margins of the floodplain. This approach would maintain the protection to land between the two sets of banks and increase the standard of protection to Bridgwater and villages downstream.

Any tidal barrier is a large and complex project that requires careful planning. Due to the scale and impacts of the barrier construction, particularly its impact on navigation, it is necessary to obtain a 'Transport and Works Act Order' (TWAO) from the Government. This is a complex process which combines the planning application, licensing, consultation and land



Map showing the location of Bridgwater Tidal Barrier © Environment Agency

acquisition, requiring final approval from the Secretary of State.

Following three rounds of consultation we are now developing the outline design and environmental impact assessment of the barrier which will form the basis of the application for the TWAO in 2018.



Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area (ASEA) Ecology Mitigation and Flood Defence Project

South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the Environment Agency are working together to improve flood defences and create new habitats for important wildlife species in the Avonmouth Severnside area, adjacent to the Severn Estuary. This project will help to support new jobs and ensure that economic development can continue within the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership's designated Enterprise Area whilst increasing flood protection to existing properties and improving biodiversity.

Proposals were published in June 2017 for public consultation and the design team is currently reviewing the useful feedback provided. The flood defence proposals, along a 17km stretch of coastline between Avonmouth



ASEA © Environment Agency

and Aust, include new flood walls and raised embankments, in places up to 2m higher than the existing flood defences. The new defences will protect the study area from the risk of a severe flood for at least 60 years. In addition, the project aims to create a minimum of 80 hectares of new wet grassland and open water habitat for breeding and over-wintering birds. The project team is working with landowners and tenant farmers in the Hallen Marsh and Northwick areas to identify sites.

It is anticipated that planning applications will be submitted to Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council in Autumn 2017. The construction work required to deliver these improvements will be phased from 2018/19 onwards with efforts made to minimise the impact on the local community and wildlife.

Further information on the proposals is available on the project webpage www.insouthglos.co.uk (Enterprise Areas – Avonmouth Severnside – Flood and Ecology). To contact the project team please email ASEA@environment-agency.gov.uk.



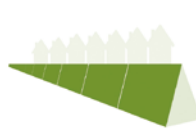
The length of coastline being studied in this project and along which enhanced flood defences are proposed. The study area extends from Aust to Avonmouth Docks.



The number of new jobs the Enterprise Area will potentially support by 2026. New flood defences are important to give businesses confidence to invest.



The number of homes in the study area that will rely on flood defences for their protection and will benefit from our proposals for many decades to come. In addition many businesses will benefit.



The minimum amount of wetland habitat we aim to create to help protect the internationally important habitats and species of the Severn Estuary.



Cardiff Capital Region City Deal – Regional Working, Local Impact



By Councillor Peter Fox, Leader, Monmouthshire County Council

The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is one of the most significant economic programmes seen in South-East Wales for many years. It will see £1.2 billion invested in the region over the next 20 years, aiming to deliver as many as 25,000 new jobs, and leveraging a further £4 billion of private sector investment.

The City Deal will help boost economic growth by improving transport links, increasing skills, helping people into work, and giving businesses the support they need to grow. It will also establish strong governance across the region through a Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Cabinet comprising the leaders of the ten local authorities in the region.

Key CCR City Deal programmes are:

- The delivery of the South East Wales Metro.

- The creation of a non-statutory Regional Transport Authority to co-ordinate transport planning and investment.
- The development of capabilities in Compound Semiconductor Applications, creating a South-East Wales sector cluster.
- The Cardiff Capital Region Skills and Employment Board to ensure skills and employment provision is responsive to the needs of local businesses and communities.
- A Regional Economic Growth Partnership Organisation and a Cardiff Capital Region Business Organisation to ensure that there is a voice for business to work with local authority leaders.
- The Welsh Government and the Cardiff Capital Region have committed to a new partnership approach to housing development and regeneration. This will ensure the delivery of sustainable communities, through the use and re-use of property and sites.

More locally, the City Deal will largely be advancing a 'connectivity agenda'. Monmouthshire is still poorly served in terms of domestic and business broadband capability. We expect over time to see benefits from better train and bus provision along the estuary as part of the Metro. The Region will want to maximise inward investment opportunities into south Monmouthshire as a result of the Severn Bridge Tolls being removed, and we are already seeing a more active commercial property market.

We will, though, still seek to continue to develop our relationship with Bristol and its hinterland to connect both sides of the Estuary as a west UK economic force. Both the UK and Welsh Government are contributing £500 million to the CCR Investment Fund respectively. The ten local authorities in the CCR will contribute a minimum of £120 million over the duration of the Fund.

For more information, see <https://cardiffcapitalregion.com/>



© CCR

SevernNet – Working Together for Common Good

By Kate Royston



SevernNet is a social enterprise run by, and for, the business and community interests from Royal Portbury Dock in North Somerset, through Avonmouth and Severnside in Bristol, up to Western Approach Industrial Park and Severn Beach in South Gloucestershire.

During the last 12 months our work has had a Transport focus. Limited availability of public transport and poor cycle and walking infrastructure makes it challenging for non-car drivers to get to work; and adds to local congestion. Support from the SevernNet Working Coastal Community Fund (SWCCF) during 2016-2017 brought around £300,000 investment for a pilot shuttle bus service – the SevernNet Flyer (pictured). The service links up residents in Shirehampton, Lawrence Weston and Avonmouth, rail and bus services into Avonmouth and industrial areas of Avonmouth, Access 18 and Cabot Park.

The SevernNet Flyer is now developing into an

employer funded service with the support of an experimental transport project (MODLE) and Nisbets.

SWCCF also invested £1.2m into cycle and walking path improvements from A4 Portway Park and Ride into Cabot Park. Further investment sees a new cycle and walking path open along Kingsweston Lane. A project is now being formed to establish a cycle and walking network across the SevernNet area for the benefit of local users.

The quarterly Sustainable Transport Forum brings local stakeholders together to help drive improvements.

The M49 junction and alleviation of congestion at M5 J19 and Avonmouth Way are key areas.

SevernNet's monthly Business Breakfasts bring businesses and the community together regularly to network, develop business between neighbours and strengthen local links.

SevernNet also facilitates a regular Health and Safety Peer to Peer Group bringing H&S professionals together. The Bristol Port Company hosted in July 2017.

The Circular Economy Forum, supported by GENeco and Resource Futures, is looking at ways of improving resource and energy efficiency in and between businesses. This will be a development area in the next 12 months.

For more information and membership details see www.severnnet.org, email info@severnnet.org or call 07969 569 444.



SevernNet Flyer © SevernNet

Funding Partners and Projects

The Severn Estuary Partnership is very grateful to all of our funding partners who help make our work possible. We value your continued support and look forward to working with you in the future!

A Forgotten Landscape

Katie Scaife, South Gloucestershire Council



Offering something for (hopefully) everyone, A Forgotten Landscape, a Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership project, is working with local people to explore, conserve and explore the Lower Severn Vale Levels. We provide opportunities to get involved in a wide range of activities discovering the area's cultural and natural heritage; everything from archaeology to water voles. We also work with schools, landowners, and local businesses to create and provide resources, grants and new opportunities.

Our volunteers have contributed over 1600 days of work – and they're still going strong! So far, they've surveyed more than 75 ponds, 50,000 metres of rhines, and 45 orchards. Five of our volunteers completed in-depth great crested newt surveying training and four have gone on to get licences for this activity. Our bird roost monitors have identified over 70 different

bird species. Our oral history volunteers have collected 45 oral histories from local residents, and our history research volunteers are researching 14 different aspects of the area's history. Our archaeology volunteers completed topographical and geophysical surveys of the Scheduled Monument known as The Toot in Oldbury-on-Severn, while others are analysing lidar data in the search for other sites of archaeological interest.

In June, more than 60 volunteers took part in a two week excavation of The Toot, some coming from as far afield as New Zealand! Together they helped DigVentures' professional archaeologists excavate three trenches across the hillfort and a number of smaller test pits around the village. Work on the excavation archive continues over the summer and we are eagerly waiting for specialists' reports to complete our picture of what was found.

Last December, working together with Natural England, The Bristol Port Company, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Environment Agency and a local grazier, we re-introduced sheep grazing to Chittingen Warth for the first time since the 1970s. Large areas of the warth had been taken over by sea couch, reducing the



A view of mudflats of the Severn from Aust Beach © AFL

diversity of the plant communities and the value of saltmarsh for bird species. Now, once again, a local farmer's flock graze the site. Grazing is an excellent traditional land management practice for saltmarsh. The site will be surveyed regularly to monitor the habitat changes the new management regime brings about.

You can find out more about A Forgotten Landscape on our website www.aforgottenlandscape.org.uk, where you can also sign up for our monthly newsletter. Or you can find us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.



Cardiff University



It has been an exciting year for Cardiff University with the further development of the University's inter-disciplinary Water Research Institute (<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/water-research-institute>) which is continuing to attract new funding and partners to help provide innovative solutions to the challenges of water (including coastal) use and management.

Within the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, the new COASTWEB Project (<http://valuing-nature.net/coastweb>) is attempting to value the contribution which coastal habitats make to human health and well-being. With a focus on the alleviation of natural hazards (particularly coastal flooding and erosion), the Cardiff Team is focusing on governance aspects of this

project and its sister initiative, the RESILCOAST project (<http://www.nrn-lcee.ac.uk/resilcoast/>). Whilst we're currently focusing on the Sarnau estuaries of Cardigan Bay and the Taf Estuary of Carmarthen Bay, we're hoping that the lessons learnt from both projects will be applicable elsewhere, even on the more complex Severn Estuary! And finally, we're very proud to announce that the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences has recently been awarded an Athena SWAN Bronze Award in recognition of our efforts to ensure gender equality in the School (<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/earth-ocean-sciences>).

For further information on COASTWEB please contact:

Dr Meghan Alexander
(AlexanderM5@cardiff.ac.uk)

Dr Rhoda Ballinger
(BallingerRC@Cardiff.ac.uk)

For further information on the RESILCOAST



Saltmarshes on the Mawddach Estuary providing key protection to the A496 © Rhoda Ballinger

please contact:

Dr Emma McKinley
(McKinleyE1@cardiff.ac.uk)

Dr Rhoda Ballinger
(BallingerRC@Cardiff.ac.uk)

Natural England



England Coast Path

Proposals for the England Coast Path between Aust and Brea Down are in preparation. At this stage Natural England (NE) is in discussion with affected

land owners and tenants about the route design. There are three core themes to these

negotiations: the vision of a walking path offering views of the sea, the need to ensure that there is no significant effect on European wildlife sites, and the requirement to strike a fair balance between public and private interests. NE expects to publish its proposals later than previously anticipated, around the end of 2017.



England Coast Path © Alun Rogers

The Severn Estuary Partnership receives in-kind support from Cardiff University and core funding from Cardiff University, South Gloucestershire Council, Natural England, Bristol City Council, Cardiff Council, Environment Agency, Forest of Dean District Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales, Newport City Council, Somerset County Council and Gloucestershire County Council.



EXPLORE THE SEVERN

Steart Marshes

Breach Point via Polden Hide, by Megan Wilde

Steart Marshes has been open to the public since February 2014 and was first breached by tides in September 2014. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) managed realignment site aims to create an important habitat to a variety of flora and fauna and provide a sustainable, natural barrier against flooding. Today those aims have been reached with a wide variety of saltmarsh species already colonised here, providing an excellent natural landscape and wildlife watching area.

Begin your walk at the WWT Main Car Park at the marshes, which has toilet facilities, information boards and maps. As you enter the main site, you will be able to see a variety of saltmarsh plants and small salt water pools.

When you reach the first set of signs, head left towards Polden Hide. As you walk along the path you might see some animals on the grazing marsh to your left. The site is a 'Working Wetland' and so there are many animals including cows that graze in this area. Whilst walking along the path, keep an eye out for black-tailed skimmer and emperor dragonflies as these will fly along with you. When you reach Polden Hide, you will be able to see large pools of wetland

through the viewing areas - enter the hide (9:00am – 4:30pm) to observe birds without disturbing them - an excellent opportunity to use your binoculars.

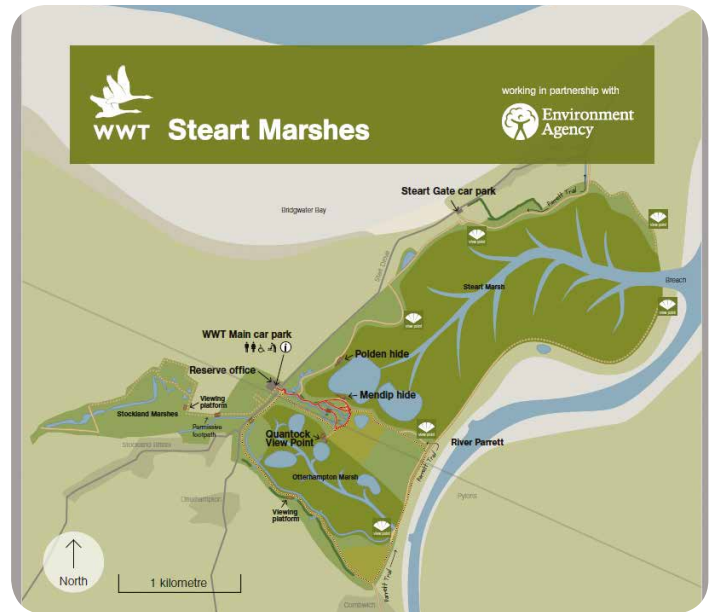
Birds that can be seen here include little egret, lapwing, swallow and skylark. If you are visiting in the later summer, shelduck can be spotted too. Not sure what the birds look like? There are image displays to help you identify birds that you might see on the wetland.

As you reach the next set of signs, head towards the breach point. In the distance you will be able to see Hinkley Point Power Station. Look out to your left over Bridgwater Bay and you will be able to spot Steep Holm Island.

Reaching the breach point is the highlight of the walk, you will get a large panoramic shot of the marshes and a 360 degree view of the area. Look out on to Bridgwater Bay and to the northeast, you can see Burnham-on-Sea.



View of the Marshes from the Breach Point
© Megan Wilde



Map of Steart Marsh © WWT

Be sure to keep your eyes peeled for any bird species that you may not have seen on your walk there, on your return journey.

Thank you to WWT for allowing us to feature this walk in this year's newsletter.

Please take care not to disturb wildlife and please take all litter home with you.

From the main car park to the breach point: 4.4km/2.7miles (5.4 miles round trip), ~2 hour round trip.

Directions to main car park: WWT Steart Marshes, Stert Drove, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA5 2PU

For more information please visit: www.org.uk/steart

Severn Estuary Partnership Photo of the Year!

We are pleased to award Martin Morgan, Black Rock Lave Net Heritage Fishery with 'SEP Photo of the Year 2017'. The winner receives a complimentary ticket to the Severn Estuary Forum.

If you have a Severn Estuary-related photo that you would like to submit for the SEP 'Photo of the Month', please send your images to Severn@cardiff.ac.uk. The winner for each month will be published in our SEP E-news so don't forget to send us your photos!



A special time and place; lave net fishing at dawn on the Severn Estuary © Martin Morgan

Severn Estuary Partnership

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Edited by Megan Wilde and Lucy Taylor

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Cover photograph: © Harriet Yates-Smith

Established in 1995, the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) is an independent, estuary-wide initiative led by local authorities and statutory agencies, engaging and connecting with all those interested in the Severn Estuary. We work with all stakeholders to promote a sustainable approach to the planning, management, and development of the estuary for all who live and work here and for our future generations.