

www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk

Engaging the Estuary

Welcome



John Harrison
Chairman of the Severn Estuary Partnership

Welcome to the 2016 edition of *Severn Tidings*. It has been a busy year for the Severn Estuary Partnership and its members. There is a common theme in this edition which demonstrates how Plans, Projects and People have come together to make a difference to the current and future state of our amazing estuary.

Refreshing our Severn Estuary Strategy has been a major achievement thanks to all the input from a wide range of interested parties. It has been informed by the emerging marine planning of both Welsh and UK Government, both of whom recognise the need for collaborative working in complex estuarine areas like the Severn.

Our new Strategy aims to use the collective strengths across the estuary to share information and best practice. I believe this is by far the most effective way to work during challenging times for industries, governments and voluntary sectors alike.

There are several practical examples of this approach in this edition e.g. Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset and the Gwent Wildlife Trust project, The Living Levels.

Over the past year, I have met many dedicated people who are committed to working towards a better coastal future for all our communities and feel confident our Partnership will continue to benefit from their efforts. Finally, I wish to thank the Partnership support team based in Cardiff University and the SEP Management Group for their hard work, enthusiasm and specialist advice.



Members of the Severn Estuary Partnership and associates of Cardiff University at Brean Down
© Azmath Jaleel

Severn Estuary Partnership Update

As I reflect over the past 12 months, I appreciate how the marine and coastal sector is continually changing, diversifying and evolving. With marine planning underway on both sides of the estuary, it is an exciting time in marine and coastal management. As the planning and policy landscape changes and new legislation and plans comes in to play, the Partnership will continue to work hard to keep you engaged and informed, and ensure that your views are represented.

It has been a busy year for the Partnership, with our key priority the development of our new 2016 Severn Estuary Strategy. The Strategy will provide a framework to inform more co-ordinated policy development, practices and strategies for the estuary. The consultation of the Strategy will be launched at the 2016 Severn Estuary Forum in September. Throughout this process, we have engaged with and had a significant level of input from a wide range of estuary stakeholders. We look forward to hearing what you think, so get in touch at Severn@cardiff.ac.uk. Find out more on page 4.

We are excited to celebrate the success of the new Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset project. We have welcomed Project Co-ordinator Harriet Yates-Smith to our team, who has a background in environmental science, community engagement and marine conservation. Harriet's key achievements over the past 9 months are detailed later on page 6.

Like so much activity at the coast both here and elsewhere throughout the UK, the Partnership is based on constructive working relationships with industry, public bodies, local initiatives and other partnerships. As part of this, we continue to provide a range of secretariat services to the estuary-wide groups BCSEG, ASERA and SECG – the Estuary Round Up sums up their latest news and developments on the page opposite! The annual Joint Estuary Day was held in May, which brought together these estuary groups for a day of discussion and debate.

The Partnership continues to work closely with Welsh Government and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) regarding marine planning in the estuary and we aim to keep all of our stakeholders abreast of changes and key developments. Through the support of both Welsh Government and the MMO, SEP has been involved in facilitating two marine planning workshops this year. The first focussed on the cross-border challenges and opportunities for marine planning in the

estuary, and the second on the issues and evidence specific to the SW Marine Plan area. We are pleased to have the MMO speaking at our 2016 Forum, who will give us an update on the stakeholder engagement process for the SW Marine Plan.

We hosted our 10th Severn Estuary Forum in Bristol in September 2015. The successful day examined and debated the challenges and opportunities for managing our estuary, celebrated our estuary resources and provided an insight into a diverse range of local hot topics. Over 120 people attended the event supported by The Bristol Port Company, BMAPA and Cardiff University.



The Partnership is also pleased to have welcomed placement students Alex Gorringe and Samantha Jeeawock who have supported SEP over the summer months. Samantha has been working to review the State of the Severn Estuary Report (SOSER) reporting system and has reviewed some of our Estuary webpages. Alex has been instrumental in the run up to the 2016 Severn Estuary Forum and the production of our monthly E-news and latest edition of *Severn Tidings*.

I would like to thank all our supporters and sponsors and hope that you will find the content of our keynote publication an informative, educational and enjoyable read – I look forward to seeing you at the 2016 Severn Estuary Forum in Gloucester!

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 range of estuary groups and developers:

Marine Management Organisation, Friends of Burnham Beach, Severn Vision, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Welsh Government, Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset, Environment Agency, Natural England, Berrow Conservation Group, CITIZAN, Gloucestershire County Council, Severn Estuary Coastal Group, Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group, Cardiff University, Associated British Ports, SGS Berkeley, National Trust, Burnham-on-Sea Motorboat and Sailing Club.

We would be interested to hear your views on the wide range of topics featured in this edition, particularly given the considerable complexity and sensitivity that surrounds some of the key estuary issues and opportunities. Please get in touch by emailing Severn@cardiff.ac.uk.

An Estuary Round Up

The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) – Working Towards the New ASERA Management Scheme



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 announce the launch of the new website www.asera.org.uk, featuring information on ASERA and its membership, the protected features of the site and the Severn Estuary EMS Management Scheme - all in a

user-friendly and easily accessible format. Please let us know what you think!

The Recreational Boating in the Severn Estuary Report went out to a focussed consultation this year and is now being revised in light of the comments received. The report will be published on the ASERA website shortly. We are also working towards producing activity summary reports (with maps & GIS layers) on land and beach-based recreation, recreational angling and bait digging in the estuary.

ASERA have been working towards developing a draft of a revised Management Scheme for the EMS. As part of this, the ASERA Officer has been meeting up with all the member Relevant Authorities on an "ASERA Road Show" to discuss their recreational activities and the possible impacts these are having on the EMS and its

protected features. In light of any potential impacts, management measures will be developed in partnership with the Conservation Agencies and Environmental Regulators.

A draft of the Management Scheme will be produced for the ASERA AGM in November and will go out to a focussed consultation following discussions at the meeting. Once finalised, the Management Scheme will be published on the ASERA website. Alongside the Management Scheme, a Severn Estuary EMS Code of Conduct is being developed, which will provide advice for estuary users when carrying out their activities.

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

Lucy Taylor, ASERA Officer

Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group (BCSEG)

Over the last year BCSEG, a multi-agency group that convenes to provide public health and environmental advice during a maritime pollution incident, continued to improve its preparedness and build links with other stakeholders on both sides of the estuary.

Specific work areas include:

- The review of advice on the deployment of oil spill dispersants.
- An assessment of 'Places of Refuge' including safe anchorages for vessel casualties.

- Shoreline clean-up techniques.

The Group is also in the early planning stages of a major exercise to be held in spring 2017, which will test the Group's revised Activation Plan and also involve ports and local authorities from around the estuary.

The BCSEG website provides a general description of the Group, but for more detailed information contact the Severn Estuary Partnership at Severn@cardiff.ac.uk.

*Rhys Morgan,
Natural Resource Planner (Marine)
Natural Resources Wales*



Contingency Plan © BCSEG

Severn Estuary Coastal Group (SECG)

The Severn Estuary Coastal Group (SECG) meets on a quarterly basis, with two meetings having taken place so far this year. The Group last met in May at the Joint Estuary Day where the Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2), tidal lagoon proposals, marine planning and coastal monitoring were the key topics of discussion.

The SECG celebrated having the IROPI sign off for the SMP2 by Defra earlier this year. It now awaits final approval, which is expected within the next few months. The SMP2 has already received sign off by the Welsh Government. In light of the SMP2 final approval, the Group are looking to review and update the SMP2

Action Plan to identify where the Group can help to oversee, review and assist in progressing actions. This will be carried out in partnership with SEP, who provide the secretariat services for the Group. Once signed off, details will be released in SEP E-news (email Severn@cardiff.ac.uk to subscribe).

Following discussions at the National Chairs meeting in April, the Group are looking into how to ensure they are achieving consistency across the region with regard to coastal defence asset registers and management approaches for ease of reporting during storm or flood events. The Group also continues to engage with Tidal Lagoon Power and the MMO regarding Marine Planning and tidal lagoon proposals in the estuary.

Welsh Government have finished their review of Coastal Groups across Wales and, as a result, have produced a series of recommendations. This

includes increased consistency on agenda issues for all Coastal Group meetings and having stronger links with the new

Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee that will be developed this year. Welsh Government are also progressing the Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre and are hoping to put the management of this out to tender shortly and be operational this year.

Bristol City Council have led on a literature review of "The Sediment Regime of the Severn Estuary", which is now available on the SECG website. Further information regarding the activities of the Severn Estuary Coastal Group and the progress of the SMP2 can be found at www.severncoastalgroup.org.uk. SECG have also been working towards a new website, which is available to view now!



Towards Newnham © Rhoda Ballinger

Launch of the Severn Estuary Strategy!

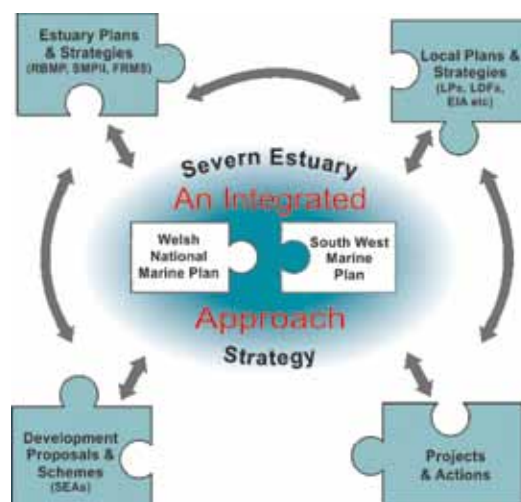
The Severn Estuary Partnership is excited to launch the consultation of the Severn Estuary Strategy. The new Strategy will provide a framework to inform more co-ordinated policy development, practices and strategies for the Severn Estuary. As marine planning develops in both England and Wales, the Strategy document will ensure that an integrated approach is

taken for the Severn Estuary Region. The Strategy will also provide context to inform and support decision-making for a wide range of proposed estuary developments, including those related to maritime uses, minerals and marine renewable energy. The Strategy will cover a 10-year period from 2016-2026.

Our Strategy is a simple, easily accessible and user-friendly document that has the following structure:



*HRA- Habitats Regulation Assessment



The Partnership will be dedicated to addressing the actions set out in this Strategy, collaborating with other organisations as appropriate.

Who is the Strategy for?

This Strategy is for the whole of the Severn Estuary coast 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 the future sustainable management of the estuary. Through this commitment, the Strategy will ensure that a more joined-up approach to the use and enjoyment of the Severn Estuary is taken.

Why Do We Need a Severn Estuary Strategy?

- To ensure an **integrated approach to 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).

Stakeholder Engagement

We have been working with key Severn Estuary stakeholders and policy makers throughout this process and facilitated three workshops with a wide range of sectors to gain input:

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

Our New Vision for the Severn Estuary

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

Taking the Strategy Forwards

The Actions outlined in this Strategy will be taken forward and incorporated in to the new SEP Business Plan (2017-2022). The Strategy consultation process will inform the priorities for SEP to focus on over the next 5-year period. The timeline for publishing the SEP Business Plan is Spring 2017.

Have your say and input into the Strategy!

Think we have missed anything? Make sure you have your chance to input into the Strategy development process and comment on our Vision, Principles, Objectives, Outcomes and Actions. The consultation period will be for 6 weeks, starting on 22nd September and ending on 3rd November and will be available on the SEP website: <http://www.severnpartnership.org.uk/sep/strategy/15-16/>.

If you have any further, more specific queries, please get in touch with us at Severn@cardiff.ac.uk. We look forward to hearing your comments!

Wales & England Cross-border Marine Planning Workshop



SEP chaired and facilitated a workshop for Welsh Government and the Marine Management Organisation in March 2016 in Cardiff. The workshop aimed to discuss the approach to cross-border issues to inform marine planning compatibility and integration. It was a highly productive event that stimulated thought-provoking discussion on cross-border approaches to marine planning.

The workshop sessions focused on:

- identifying common issues and associated evidence;
- understanding the relationship with other relevant plans in cross-border areas;

- development of responses to cross-border issues that promote compatibility and integration;
- exploration of the role of partnership working and liaison to facilitate approaches to cross-border marine planning; and,
- lessons learned from planning and management initiatives in the Severn Estuary that could inform cross-border planning elsewhere.

Feedback from the event was positive, with delegates supporting the first of cross-boundary discussions with stakeholders. It brought together a wide range of sectors to discuss, gain insight and stimulate debate on the wide variety of issues affecting

Marine Planning in the South West

By Neal Gray, Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Last month we reached a milestone in the marine planning process through our call for issues with supporting evidence for the South West Marine Plan areas. It marks an important step in the marine planning process, but is just the beginning of the journey.

Since the launch of our consultation on the draft Statement of Public Participation (SPP) for the South West Marine Plan in April, we have made good progress. As well as the five-week online consultation on the SPP, we held events across the area to introduce marine planning and meet our new stakeholders. The events provided a great insight into the passion there is for the marine area in the SW and also the vast scope of the activities, environments and communities we will need to consider.

To understand these better, in July we launched

a call for issues with supporting evidence. The call asked for challenges and opportunities that the South West marine area faces over the next 20 years. The call closed on 5th August 2016.

Understanding the issues of a plan area, and what evidence supports them, is essential to the marine planning process. The call helps us to gather the views of our stakeholders on what opportunities and challenges there are for the marine plan areas. My role in the SW is to engage with stakeholders and assist in bringing identified issues forward into the planning process. With particular regard to the Severn Estuary, it is important that we work closely with Welsh Government colleagues to ensure that planning regimes on either side of the median line are coherent and effective.

As an important part of the call, three

workshops took place across the SW in mid-July and they have provided a great opportunity to discuss with stakeholders the different opportunities and challenges for the plan area. Thank you to everyone who attended and particular thanks to the SEP for chairing the Bristol workshop. The workshops were a great experience and brought out the full diversity of interests in our seas.

The next step is to collate the issues received at the workshops and from the call, and follow up on sources of evidence. This will include contacting individual stakeholders if we need further information. 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/south-west-marine-plan>.

Developing the first Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) – Update on Progress and Next Steps

By Leanne Fraser, Marine Policy Branch, Welsh Government

Welsh Government is introducing a pioneering method of marine planning for Wales that will help manage our seas in a more integrated and planned way. As a broad and cross-cutting concept, marine planning has grown in prominence as our seas have become busier and more populated.

The first ever Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) is being developed to help provide clarity on our marine policies for all sea users and help to ensure that marine natural resources are managed and used in a sustainable way.

We can expect maximum benefit to our communities and our economy as opportunities for increased blue growth potential are realised without compromising our marine environment.

Our focus is on setting government policy, implementing legislation and delivering on our commitments to achieve the shared UK vision of

“clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.”

Progress to Date

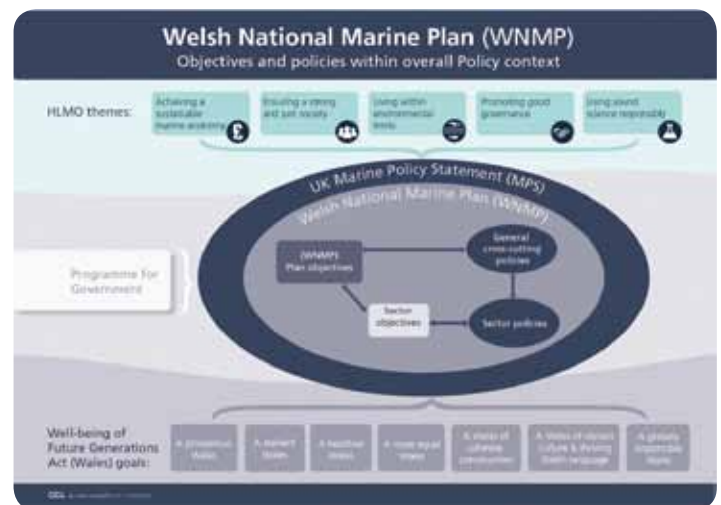
An initial draft of the plan was shared online last November and a series of stakeholder workshops were held to support and encourage engagement. Comments received were positive and we have been working to build these into revising our planning policy approach.

cross-boundary areas. Whilst there was good representation from the Severn Estuary, there was limited attendance from the Dee Estuary. The lessons learned from this workshop however, will still be able to be applied in the Dee Estuary and elsewhere throughout the UK. Further engagement is required with representatives of other sectors, particularly ones deemed harder to reach. The challenge now lies in building on this successful event, maintaining momentum and developing tangible solutions to the issues identified.

The report from the event is now publicly available on the SEP website <http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/sep/projects/current-projects/>. If you would like to hear more, please get in touch with SEP at Severn@cardiff.ac.uk.



The Benefits of Marine Planning review is ongoing. A huge range of bilateral meetings with policy and industry leads have also taken place over the last few months, providing very useful feedback.



We have been working closely with Welsh Government terrestrial planners to share ideas between marine planning and the National Development Framework. The Review of Terrestrial Planning with Relevance to the Welsh National Marine Plan (undertaken by Cardiff University and the Severn Estuary Partnership – page 10) will be utilised in engagement with Local Planning Authorities.

We continue to work closely with the Marine Management Organisation on cross-border opportunities and issues. The output from our joint workshop held in March, is available here:

<http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/sep/projects/current-projects/>.

The Welsh Government Marine Planning Evidence Portal continues to evolve with more functions being added. Version 2.0 will be released soon and can be found here: <http://lle.gov.wales/apps/marineportal/>.

Next Steps

Our aim is to progress to a formal public consultation of the draft WNMP during 2017, with adoption and implementation to follow. Thank you to all those who have contributed so far in the process. We look forward to this continuing in the future.

Working Together

Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset

By Harriet Yates-Smith, Project Co-ordinator, Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset

Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset (LFCS Somerset) is an exciting new community led campaign in Burnham-on-Sea, aiming to improve bathing water quality and reduce marine and beach litter. Since Burnham's popular beach suffered a 'Poor' rating last November under the stricter classification of the revised Bathing Waters Directive, LFCS Somerset has been working with the local community to deliver events, campaigns and education to communicate the simple things people can do to achieve cleaner seas and beaches.



Burnham-on-Sea Escape Day © Swamp Dog Photography

Community means everything to people in Burnham-on-Sea and the beach and seafront are where many live, work and play. From the very beginning of the campaign it was clear that the future of Burnham's bathing water was everyone's responsibility including the water company, dog walkers, farmers, local residents, visitors and businesses, but it is only by working together that we can raise the bathing water standards.

Since the launch of LFCS Somerset we have had a hugely positive start to our work. We have successfully set up two community groups which include the 'Burnham Pooper Troopers', who are helping to achieve foul-free beaches in Burnham-on-Sea, and the 'Friends of Burnham Beach' who run monthly beach cleans to keep litter out of the ocean. Along with setting up community groups, LFCS Somerset joined forces with local food outlets on the seafront to help design and deliver a campaign to educate holiday makers and visitors on the negative effects of feeding seagulls in a 'Don't Feed

the Locals' campaign. The campaign has been positively received by local businesses and some have reported a visible reduction in people feeding the seagulls as a result.



Burnham Pooper Troopers © LFCS



Giant Seagulls © LFCS

Project partners include Wessex Water, Environment Agency, Sedgemoor District Council and Cardiff University. The project is led by the Severn Estuary Partnership.

For more information about the work of LFCS Somerset please contact Harriet at: Yates-smithh@cardiff.ac.uk.

Estuary User Profiles – What Does the Severn Estuary Mean to You?

Berrow Conservation Group

By Ann Griffiths, Co-ordinator of Berrow Conservation Group

Our members share a common interest in the natural world and its conservation, particularly habitats and wildlife in and around Berrow village on the Somerset coast. Putting on talks from October to March on a wide range of subjects linked to the natural world are just one of the many things we do as part of the Berrow Conservation Group and we invite the local community to join us.

Our outdoor duties include regular monitoring of the dune system in Berrow, providing information to illustrate the dynamic changes to the dunes, as well as capturing data to gauge the health of the flora. Above all, we enjoy walks and discovering the wonders of Berrow and beyond.

What does the Severn Estuary mean to you?
"The Severn Estuary is a fabulous habitat and with its mild climate, extreme tidal range, marshes and mud, is home for large and important populations of bird life."



Quadrats © Berrow Conservation Group

Burnham-on-Sea Motorboat & Sailing Club

By David Humphrey (President), Graham Wills (Treasurer) and David Wrennall (Commodore), Burnham-on-Sea Motorboat & Sailing Club

First formed in 1948, the Burnham-on-Sea Motorboat & Sailing Club, located at the end of Burnham's South Esplanade at the mouth of the River Brue, boasts views across the River Parrett and the Severn Estuary. Surrounded by National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, our club offers members and non-members alike an opportunity to experience a range of water sports such as

sea angling, pilot gig rowing, sailing and a wide variety of social events. As President, Commodore and Treasurer of the Sailing Club, it is our duty to ensure a safe, enjoyable and affordable water sports environment for everyone to enjoy.

What does the Severn Estuary mean to you?
"For us, the Severn Estuary provides a place for people to enjoy everything the water has to offer. There is nothing more enjoyable than going out on the water, taking in the views and the wildlife as part of a relaxing sunset cruise."

Sailing © Burnham Sailing Club



Friends of Burnham

By Mark Hollidge, Co-ordinator of the Friends of Burnham Beach Cleans

As the group leader for the newly established group in Burnham-on-Sea, supported by Harriet of LFCS Somerset, we aim to look after our local beaches by engaging in regular beach cleans.

We hope to work on the three main beach sites; Burnham, Berrow and Brean. We aim to enlist the help of as many volunteers as possible, but we will start out with hopefully six to ten people. Sedgemoor District Council is also helping us by providing equipment and properly disposing of the rubbish and litter we collect. It is our goal to achieve monthly clean-up events throughout the year.

Having previously led an anti-litter group in nearby Bridgwater, I have been concerned about litter spoiling our towns and countryside for many years. Whilst Burnham and the surrounding area is not considered a 'blackspot' for litter, detritus is plentiful, especially after high tides. Therefore, we seek to keep the beach areas clean, attractive and safe.

What does the Severn Estuary mean to you?
"On almost a daily basis I enjoy the Severn Estuary whether it be for bike riding or dog walking or both. We live in a great area and one enjoyed by many thousands of tourists every year. For me the Severn Estuary means fresh air, great views, sunrises and sunsets and wildlife."



Beach Clean © LFCS

at the Local Level

CITiZAN in the Severn

By Alex Bellisario, CITiZAN Archaeologist for Outreach

The coast of England is under constant threat from wind, waves and winter storms. These threats wreak havoc on England's varied coastal and estuarine heritage, not only exposing these sites but washing them away before they are ever seen. The Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network (CITiZAN) has been set up in response to these dynamic threats to our island's heritage.

We are a community archaeology project working in the areas of England exposed at low tide and under threat by coastal erosion during high tide. The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Crown Estate and National Trust, led by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) and supported by the Council for British Archaeology, the Nautical Archaeology Society and Historic England. It aims to bring together a national network of volunteers who live and work alongside England's coastline and estuaries. We are actively promoting site recording and long-term monitoring programmes led by our active volunteers and using our CITiZAN app.

The Severn Estuary is the longest river in Great Britain and working within the estuary is a challenge - many hazards come with the large tidal range and estuarine muds. Two of our largest projects are those at Brean Down and Dunster in Somerset.

At Brean Down CITiZAN is committed to a long term project of monitoring and recording and, most notably, we are looking at the WWII activity on the promontory. Working with our volunteers we have completed a number of recording days at Brean to create a baseline to enable us to monitor the rate of erosion.

Secondly, Dunster was a site bought to our attention by a member of the public who had identified a number of pottery sherds eroding out of the small cliff onto the beach. Working with Historic England's geophysics department, we set about working with the local and newly formed Dunster Archaeological Group to complete a geophysical survey of the area. Using the pottery as dating material and the results of the geophysics, it is probable that a



Brean Down CITiZAN Training Day © CITiZAN

newly identified Roman settlement has been identified at Dunster. You can find out more about the work we did at Dunster and the results by looking at our blog - <http://www.citizen.org.uk/blog/2016/Apr/14/discovering-coast-dunster-somerset/>.

Should you wish to know more about these projects, or CITiZAN on a national level please visit www.citizen.org.uk.

Gwent Wildlife Trust – The Living Levels Project

By Alison Boyes, Living Levels Programme Development Manager

At the end of last year RSPB Cymru, in partnership with 11 other organisations and local authorities in Wales, was awarded £321,100, with a further £2.5 million ring-fenced, from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help restore, protect and tell the story of the unique Gwent Levels landscape – a patchwork of tranquil fertile fields and historic watercourses sweeping the Severn Estuary coastline between Cardiff and Chepstow.



Gwent Levels © David Wootton

The Gwent Levels landscape is one of the finest examples of a landscape crafted by man and is the largest area of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh in Wales. Reclaimed from the sea in Roman times, the maintenance of this ancient drainage system of field ditches is vital to protect communities from flooding - a threat

which is becoming ever more pertinent with climate change and rising tides.

Including seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the mosaic of ditches supports aquatic plants and insects unique to Wales, which boasts populations of lapwing, otter, water vole, the great diving beetle and one of the UK's rarest bumblebees, the shrill carder bee. The area also hosts a number of specialist plants including frogbit, arrowhead and Wolffia arrhiza – the smallest flowering plant in the world.

The project aims to reconnect communities and visitors to the landscape by working with volunteers, farmers, local groups, businesses and communities to collectively restore and showcase the historical heritage. It aims to bring the stories from this fascinating



Water Vole © Ben Andrew

landscape to life, many of which are yet untold and promises to engage and captivate both old and new visitors to the Gwent Levels.

We want to make sure that we celebrate all that the Levels has to offer; its wildlife, its people and its economy. Over the next 12 months, RSPB Cymru will work together with the 11 partner organisations involved, to plan and develop a programme of activities to help shape the project. This will involve a series of community engagement events to ensure the views and wishes of local people are embedded into the heart of the project. If you would like to find out more about the project, including a list of our project partners, or tell us a story about the Levels, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Alison.Boyes@rspb.org.uk for further information.



Lapwing © Andy Hay

The Future of the Port of Newport

By ABP South Wales

ABP South Wales, owner and operator of the Port of Newport, is compiling a Master Plan document that sets out ABP's future vision for growth and development at the port from now until 2035.

The Master Plan aims to identify what needs to be achieved by 2035 to ensure that the Port of Newport is in a position to capitalise on the commercial opportunities that will arise in the next 20 years. It includes proposed infrastructure developments such as the creation of new quayside, storage and warehousing and the identification of strategic development plots to support growing market sectors.

The consultation period for the document ran until August 1st 2016 and invited local residents, key stakeholders, and port customers to comment on

a draft version. ABP South Wales are currently reviewing all feedback in order to ensure the



Newport Aerial © ABP SW

final version of the Master Plan fully meets the needs of those involved in the port community.

ABP South Wales Director, Matthew Kennerley, said: *"The Port of Newport is regarded as a major port, both in Wales and the UK, and is a vital component of the local and national economy. Given the Port of Newport's significance, and in accordance with government guidance, we believe that it is appropriate to set out our proposals for the future in a comprehensive Master Plan for the port."*

Supporting 3,000 local jobs and contributing £186 million per annum to the Welsh economy, the Port of Newport is Wales' leading general cargo port. In recent years the port has seen significant growth in key sectors such as fertiliser, grain and animal feed.

Over the last two years ABP has invested more than £19 million in developing the Port of Newport and its infrastructure to ensure it meets the needs of port customers and the regional economy. Key investments include:

- £2.76 million on the redevelopment of Atlantic Shed to accommodate the port's steel business;



New Mobile Harbour Crane, Newport © ABP South Wales

- £2 million to develop new warehousing facilities for increasing agribulk cargo;
- £6.8 million investment in renewable energy projects;
- £3.3 million on two new mobile harbour cranes;
- £1.5 million on the refurbishment of three quayside cranes;
- £1.7 million on a new rail bridge within the port; and,
- £1.1 million on quay strengthening works.

For further information or to be notified upon the release of the final version of the Master Plan please email: Newport@abports.co.uk.

Berkeley GREEN University Technical College 2017

By Andrew May, SGS Berkeley Community Relations

Plans to build a University Technical College (UTC) at the Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park located at the former nuclear laboratories at Berkeley have been approved by Stroud District Council.

The UTC, one of 60 planned or already open UTCs nationally, will provide specialist, high quality, vocational and academic education for learners with a strong interest in Advanced Manufacturing and Digital Technologies from the age of 14.

The UTC will be located at the new park for STEM, Engineering and Cyber Security just west of Berkeley. Since securing funding from the Government's Growth Fund in 2014, SGS College has quickly got to work developing the 14 acres of a now delicensed Berkeley Centre to transform it into a state-of-the-art campus, with an emphasis on low-carbon energy generation and emerging technologies.

The new campus, which is due to open in September 2017, will offer some of the best

training facilities in the country for the science, technology, engineering and manufacturing industries and will house the recently approved UTC and GREEN Skills Centre, which will incorporate education, training, business start-up and research facilities.

Since October last year, the much-hyped new Campus - part of a £30 million investment to create the Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park - has hosted a number of open events, with each event offering prospective students the chance to meet with course specialists and learn about the cyber security, engineering and digital technologies programmes that will be available to study at the Campus. In addition, a variety of external organisations attend the events, giving further insight into the different industries.

SGS College Principal and Chair of the UTC Governing Body, Sara-Jane Watkins, comments: *"The Berkeley GREEN UTC is an exciting development that will be an asset to the*



Berkeley GREEN UTC © SGS

region. Young people will have an opportunity to specialise in their chosen industry as well as gaining the GCSEs that they would do at secondary school with clear progression routes into employment, apprenticeships and higher education."

For those interested in studying or learning more about the Berkeley GREEN UTC, the next open event, where people can take a tour of the site and learn about the courses on offer, will take place on Saturday 17th September.

If you require further information on the UTC, please contact Clare Wilson at Clare.wilson@sgscol.ac.uk or info@sgscol.ac.uk.

National Trust – Shifting Shores

By Richard Neale, National Trust Welsh Coast Project Manager

Over 15 years have passed since we began to investigate how the coastline was likely to change over the next 100 years and what this meant for its properties. Out of this research came our first *Shifting Shores* (2005) report, which had one clear message – as a nation we can no longer rely solely on building our way out of trouble on the coast. With 775 miles of coastline in our care – 157 miles in Wales – we sought to use our experience to call for a shift from *defence* to *adaptation* as the default position when responding to coastal change.



Shifting Shores in action at Cwm Ivy, Gower – the rapidly developing tidal creek system now provides a haven for young fish © National Trust

Last year, as part of the 50th anniversary of the Neptune Coastline Campaign, we commissioned CH2M – leading independent environmental and engineering consultants – to examine how far we, and others, have come since 2005. The results informed the recommendations contained in a new report – *Shifting Shores, Playing our Part on the Coast* (bit.ly/shiftingshoreswales) and resulted in our landmark *Shifting Shores – Ten Years On* seminar at the National Waterfront Museum at Swansea in November 2015.

Running parallel with the Shifting Shores work, we have also undertaken a detailed survey of how our coastline has changed since the launch of Neptune in 1965. This work has compared the results of the original 1965 map-based survey sheets with modern digital maps and the results have been published as *Mapping our Shores* (bit.ly/mappingourshores). The original sheets and modern data can be viewed digitally on the *Mapping our Shores* browser (bit.ly/mappingbrowser).

All this activity has spurred us on to complete

the process of creating Coastal Adaptation Strategies at our 20 coastal adaptation 'hotspots' (bit.ly/ntcoastalhotspots) in Wales. These strategies are enabling us to plan for the future with communities and partner organisations at key sites around the Welsh coast.



Porthdinllaen, where a Coastal Adaptation Strategy is now being developed in partnership with the community, Gwynedd Council and the NRW © National Trust/Joe Cornish

Severn Vision Project

By Rob Shore, Chair of the Severn Vision Partnership

The Severn Vision Partnership is an alliance of organisations representing wildlife and landscape interests that have been working collaboratively to develop a positive, proactive vision for the Severn Estuary. Our aspiration is for an estuary that:

- is restored as a healthy functioning ecosystem, valued for its internationally important wildlife, habitats and landscapes;
- provides more benefits for people, local communities, places and economies, including greater resilience to climate change; and,
- becomes a natural powerhouse, where development is planned and managed in a way that sustains and enhances the estuary's resources.

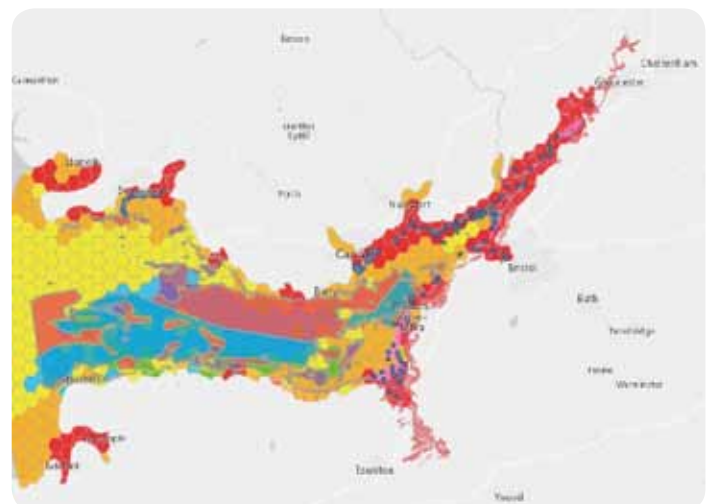


The partnership has pulled together and mapped all of the readily available information on the estuary's natural assets to support and underpin this vision, and will shortly be making this information, in the form of a spatial decision-support toolkit, available to all stakeholders. We hope that the Vision and the evidence it is based upon will stimulate better consideration of the natural environment within planning and decision-making, and act as a valuable contribution to the development of an integrated plan for the estuary as a whole.

As the Partnership moves into a new phase – seeking to bring this vision into reality – we are pleased to be able to announce that Adam Kennerley has been appointed as Severn Vision Advocacy Coordinator. Adam will

work closely with all of the Severn Vision partners to bring their collective skills and experience to bear as we engage with the wide variety of stakeholders and interests that share the Severn. If you would like to know more about the Severn Vision Partnership, please contact Adam at Adam.kennerley@wwt.org.uk.

The Severn Vision Project is a partnership project between the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, Severn Rivers Trust, National Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation UK and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

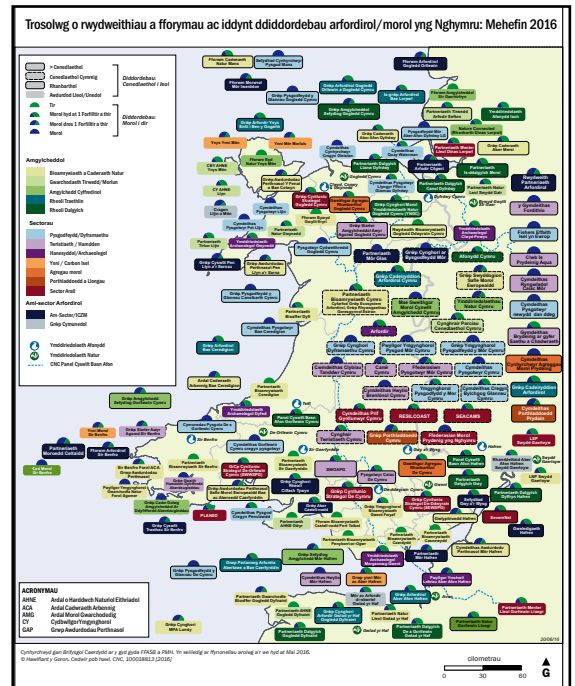
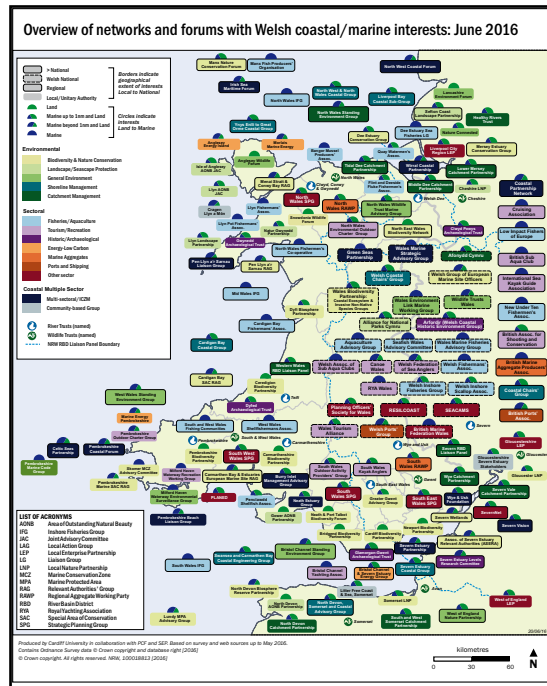


The spatial decision-support toolkit will allow users to overlay multiple data layers compiled by the Severn Vision project © Severn Vision

Launch of the 2016 Wales Coastal Directory

The Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) and Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) are pleased to announce the launch of the 2016 Wales Coastal Directory (WCD) – a project commissioned by Welsh Government: Marine and Fisheries Division.

The purpose of the WCD is to aid Welsh Government with dissemination of information related to the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP). The 2016 WCD project, the second of three annual updates, reviewed and updated the 2013 and 2015 Wales Coastal Directory (WCD) and associated contact list. The project also involved updating the spatial layer on Welsh Government's Marine Planning Portal (<http://lle.wales.gov.uk/apps/marineportal/>). Key information about each organisation is summarised here and available for public access, including links directing viewers to relevant websites and/or email addresses. All 168



WCD entries are available on the Wales Marine Planning Portal. The groups are defined by specific sectors and these have now been changed in line with the sector types on the Wales Marine Planning Portal. The 2D map has now

been updated with active hyperlinks to the network's website.

The 2017 update will be commencing in the later months of 2016.

We would like to give thanks to all of the

forums and networks who submitted responses to the 2016 survey - your time and input have been greatly appreciated! If you are not listed on the maps or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the team on 02920 874 713.

Have you or your organisation used the 2016 Wales Coastal Directory? Did you find it useful or helpful? Are there any gaps of networks or forums with a marine or coastal interest? If so, we'd like to hear from you: Severn@cardiff.ac.uk.

A Review of Terrestrial Planning Policies



A project undertaken by the Severn Estuary Partnership and Cardiff University for WWF

By Rhoda Ballinger, Cardiff University

This study provides a baseline of planning policy relevant to the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) within development plans, Shoreline Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans and selected conservation plans.

A simple content analysis identified coastal/marine policies relating to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations' High Level Marine Objectives (*Achieving a Sustainable Marine Economy; Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society; Living within Environmental Limits; Promoting Good Governance; Using Sound Science Responsibly*) and related themes. After a desk-top review, validation of key findings was undertaken with relevant planning officers.

The review revealed many policies relevant to the WNMP. The variety of approaches reflects the geographical remit of plans as well as formal planning guidance from Government at the time of plan preparation.

- Many plans include specific 'coastal' policies stipulating conditions or restrictions for new development. Few explicitly define a coastal

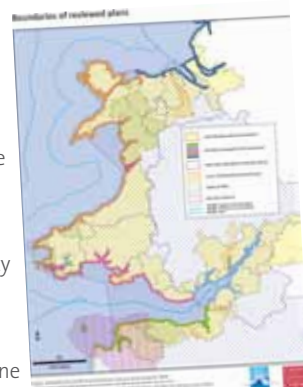
zone. Most refer to the specific characteristics of coastal areas in supporting text and some refer to the importance of the coast in their vision statements.

- Many plans contain policies relating to specific marine economic sectors with much focus on coastal tourism. Where plans have a marine or coastal sectoral policy, these generally promote, rather than deter the sector.
- Aspects of safety, water quality and litter are scarce, with most policies concerning biodiversity and nature conservation. Consideration of water quality, safety and litter generally relate to beaches.
- High regard is given to aspects of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management. Whilst few plans include reference to Shoreline Management Plans in the supporting text, the recent increase in such references is noticeable.
- There is scarce reference to Integrated Coastal Zone Management, Coastal Partnerships

and other coastal networks, including Coastal Groups (coastal defence/shoreline management groups) and Natura 2000 Relevant Authority groupings in supporting text. There is less reference to marine planning, although a few draft plans include brief consideration in supporting text.

Full report: Ballinger, Rhoda C Ballinger (2016) A review of terrestrial planning policies relevant to the Welsh National Marine Plan, A report by the Severn Estuary Partnership/Cardiff University, Cardiff, 54 pp.

<http://www.severnpartnership.org.uk/sep/projects/current-projects/>.



FUNDING PARTNERS

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

Environment Agency



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

The Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area (ASEA), adjacent to the Severn Estuary, is recognised by the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as a strategically important employment location. South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol City Council are looking to facilitate up to 1.6 million square

metres of new commercial floor space, which will potentially lead to the creation of 12,000 new jobs within the Enterprise Area by 2026. In order to ensure the Enterprise Area can reach its full economic potential there is a need to:

- Deliver new and improved flood defences to reduce the risk of flooding now and into the future; and,
- Provide new wetland habitat to off-set the impact of likely development on the nationally and internationally recognised wildlife of the River Severn.

In this context, South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the Environment Agency are working in partnership on a project to improve flood defences and create new habitats for important wildlife species. This will

help to ensure that economic development can continue to take place within the designated Enterprise Area without harming the environment. Improving the flood defences and biodiversity will also have benefits for the local community.

The project is at an early stage. Consultation will take place during Autumn 2016 and Spring 2017 with planning applications and funding bids programmed for later in 2017. It is anticipated that works would be delivered in phases to 2030. For further information please see www.insouthglos.co.uk. To be added to our stakeholder database or to contact the project team please email ASEA@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Gloucestershire County Council



Minerals and Waste Planning

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is the statutory planning authority for determining planning applications relating to minerals and waste development. As such, the authority is also responsible for setting out the spatial vision, strategic objectives and core policies for managing GCC's mineral resources and waste development over next 15 years. GCC adopted a Waste Core Strategy (WCS) in November 2012. This document was considered against the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework and replaced the majority of the former adopted 2004 Gloucestershire Waste Local Plan (WLP). A few policies are still saved from the 2004 adopted WLP.

With regards to minerals, the saved policies of the 2003 adopted Minerals Local Plan (MLP) still form the minerals policy framework

for determining planning applications. A replacement plan is in preparation. The last consultation which included site options was in 2014. The next stage will be a draft version of the MLP with consultation anticipated in the autumn of 2016.

Flood Risk Management

GCC is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) as defined in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. From April 2015 the Government made the LLFA a statutory consultee to the planning process for advice on surface water and associated flood risk management relating to major planning applications. In the period ending 31st March 2016 the Local Planning Authorities referred 230 major applications to GCC for this advice with the aim of ensuring developments incorporate suitable sustainable drainage systems where it is viable to do so. Developers are required to provide evidence to show that the new development is safe from flood risk and that it will not increase the risk of flooding for areas outside of the site.

Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan (2015-2031)

GCC, as the local transport authority, has a statutory requirement under the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008, to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP sets the long-term transport strategy for Gloucestershire up to 2031. It aims to influence how and when people choose to travel so that individual travel decisions do not cumulatively impact on the desirability of Gloucestershire as a place to live, work and invest.

Gloucestershire's LTP has been updated to support delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan, emerging Local Plans and, where possible, maximise the opportunity for further levels of investment as they become available for transport within the county. It also enhances the ability of GCC officers to successfully negotiate with developers to secure infrastructure associated with emerging developments. The LTP was adopted in July 2016.

Natural England



England Coast Path

After the successful launch of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Brea Down in March, proposals for the route 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 around the end of 2016.

Birds

NE have been working hard to better

understand some of the features of the Severn Estuary European Marine site. We have been mapping the High Tide Roosts of Special Protection Area (SPA) Birds by interviewing the volunteer WeBS counters who conduct surveys each month, and we have now completed all the WeBS Sectors from Bridgwater Bay to Aust. We are continuing with this work in Gloucestershire next year. We are really grateful to the volunteers for giving up their time to help us collect this valuable data.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Fish

We have published a report showing that Twaite Shad and Sea Lamprey are still spawning in the River Teme near Worcester, which although has been suspected for some time, the extent of spawning was not known. This year, we are working on a collaborative project with Natural Resources Wales and the Devon & Severn IFCA to test the use of a sonar camera in the estuary to characterise the subtidal *Sabellaria alveolata* (honeycomb tubeworm)

reefs that are a feature of the Severn Estuary SAC. This is an innovative technique that we hope will begin to fill some evidence gaps.

Weston-super-Mare Beach

Over the years, there have been various attempts made to develop a holistic means of identifying/assessing all of the beach activities and events that take place on Weston-super-Mare Beach – an SPA, SAC, Ramsar Site and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, none of these previous attempts appear to have succeeded with most of the 34 beach activities/events not having received relevant Assent/Consents. After three years of debate and discussion, NE suggested that the beach should be divided into several zones, identifying key habitats/features and, where possible, attempt to limit the various activities/events to specific zones. This approach has been agreed by the relevant Councils.

The Severn Estuary Partnership also receives core funding from Cardiff City Council, Environment Agency, Forest of Dean District Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales, Newport City Council, Somerset County Council and South Gloucestershire Council.



EXPLORE THE SEVERN

Brean Down

Wander along the historic Brean Down, one of Somerset's most dramatic landmarks. This 300 million year-old carboniferous limestone deposit marks the end of the great chain of Mendip Hills before it disappears into the Bristol Channel.

This beautiful, circular walk takes approximately two hours to complete. Starting from the car park, opposite the National Trust café, follow the paved and railed (steep!) steps up to the top of Brean Down. On your way, you will pass a small section of beach, home to many pre-historic fossils and bones.

Once atop Brean Down, continue along the path towards the end of the ridge, passing the site of an old Roman Temple and a series of ancient Celtic field systems before reaching the South Cliffs. Home to a plethora of wild birds, like peregrine falcons and kestrels, the cliffs boast views over an expanse of rich mudflats, where waders and ducks, such as oystercatcher and wigeon, feast in the mud at low tide.



View from the Southern Cliffs © Azmath Jaleel

The tip of Brean Down marks the location of the historic Brean Fort (free for visitors), built in 1870 to protect the Somerset coastline from the French invasion. Both Steep Holm and Flat Holm can be spotted from here. On a clear day, the view from the Fort also allows visitors a glimpse of Swansea and Cardiff on the other side of the Estuary.

Heading back inland on the northern side of the Down, vegetation changes to thicker scrub, attracting wild butterflies, like the marbled white and small heath. Some of the birds that can be seen at the North Cliffs include whitethroat, linnet and the rock pipit.

Continuing the walk along the northern side eventually brings you to a large white arrow painted on the ground, which indicated to passing bombers during the Second World War the direction of the practice range. Only a short walk further along the old military road and you will find yourself surrounded by the remnants of six Lewis guns that were used for target practice during the Second World War in Weston Bay.

Venturing inland along the old military path transports you further back in time, all the way to the Iron Age. A series of banks and ditches, still preserved at Brean Down, mark the foundations of a hill fort built in 300 BC, to defend the entrance of the River Axe.

To end your coastal stroll, continue following the path round to the right towards the car park and National Trust café.

How to get there: Brean Down lies between Weston-super-Mare and Burnham-on-Sea, approximately 8 miles from junction 22 of the M5.

Sat Nav: TA8 2RS.

Grid ref: ST 296588 – OS Landranger 182, Explorer 153.

SEP Photo Gallery of the walk:

<http://bit.ly/2c5OmR6>

Thank you to the National Trust for providing information and a guided tour throughout the walk. For more information on the Brean Down walk, visit their website: <http://bit.ly/2bRKNy5>.

Please take care not to disturb wildlife. Cliffs are extremely steep so keep to the main paths and keep dogs on leads at all times.



Brean Down Fort © Azmath Jaleel

Severn Estuary Partnership Photo of the Year!

We are pleased to award Sue Sayer with 'SEP Photo of the Year 2016'. The winner receives a complementary ticket to the Severn Estuary Forum.

If you have a Severn Estuary-related photo 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 the SEP E-news, so don't forget to send us your photos.



Father, Son & Best Friend © Sue Sayer

Severn Estuary Partnership

c/o School of Earth and Ocean Sciences,
Cardiff University, Main Building, Park Place,
Cardiff CF10 3AT
Tel: 02920 874 713
Email: Severn@cardiff.ac.uk
www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk



Edited by Alex Gorrington and Lucy Taylor

All Photographs: © Severn Estuary Partnership unless otherwise stated.
Cover Photograph: © Azmath Jaleel

The Severn Estuary Partnership is an independent, estuary-wide non-statutory initiative led by local authorities and statutory agencies. We work with all those involved in the management of the Estuary, from planners to port authorities, fishermen to farmers and many more with an interest in the future of the Severn Estuary.



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