

# Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water - our partnership with the SES

I first became aware of the Severn Estuary Strategy when I was invited as a representative of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water to a private sector launch held in Magor in early 1996.

I was impressed by the number of public organisations who had come together under the banner of the Strategy. We were pleased to support the SES when given the opportunity.

There are many organisations with different agendas all seeking to influence the evolution of the estuary and it seemed to me, at that initial meeting, that the Strategy could help to bring many of these issues together which indeed it is doing through involvement with many organisations, the production of the Issues Report and working towards a management strategy for the estuary.

As a member of this partnership I have been able to liaise with the statutory bodies in an open

forum and have had the opportunity to properly present Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's needs and agenda associated with the estuary.

Often industry feels held back by environmental constraints and conversely the environmental lobby is suspicious of industry. Being a partner in the Strategy gives an opportunity for differing users to understand the broader picture. Some of the most important events for me associated with the project were the early public meetings which I attended as a facilitator.

Although pollution was high on the agenda and my own company was cited as an offender, I was pleased to note that most people knew that it was only a matter of time before the pollution issue had been dealt with and that there are many other issues associated with the estuary which we still need to address.

**Andrew Swift, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water**

## 'Managed retreat' on the Axe Estuary

The term coastal squeeze is becoming a more familiar one, describing as it does the reduction of the intertidal area between the rising sea level and the fixed coastal defences. Salt marshes are an extremely important habitat of this zone that support a range of specialised plants, invertebrates and birds. Those around the Severn Estuary are particularly important, amongst other things, for populations of nationally scarce plants such as Bulbous Foxtail and Slender Hare's-ear and as roosting and feeding areas for some of the internationally important bird populations. In the increasing stormy environment of the Severn most of the salt marshes are eroding.

Creation of new salt marshes by setting back existing sea defences is one way of ensuring that the overall amount of salt marsh does not continue to decline. This simple sounding process is actually quite complex as much research must be done to ensure that the scheme succeeds. As yet, very few schemes have been undertaken nationally.

The Axe Estuary empties into the Severn just south of Weston-super-Mare and provides opportunities for salt marsh creation. Two sites are involved; one is part of a recently acquired Avon Wildlife Trust reserve and the other, further upstream, is owned by Wessex Water and is close to their major new water treatment works. These two organisations are working closely together to make the scheme a success. If all goes to plan the works could begin in the summer and 15 hectares of new salt marsh could be created.

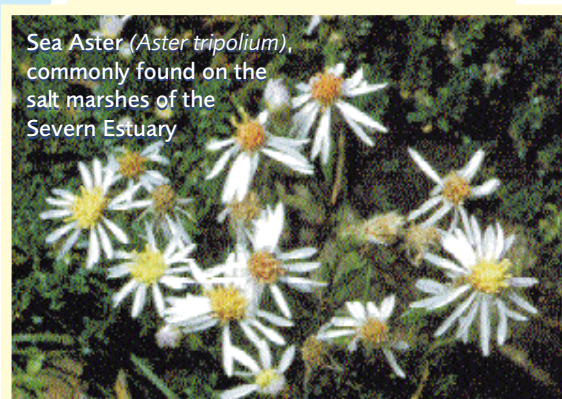
**John Martin, Avon Wildlife Trust**



*The Severn Estuary Strategy is grateful for financial support and help in kind provided by: Associated British Ports, Bristol City Council, Cardiff University, Cardiff County Council, Country Landowners Association, Countryside Council for Wales, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, English Nature, Environment Agency, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester Harbour Trustees, Government Office for the South West, Hyder, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport County Borough Council, North Somerset Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Severn Estuary Levels Research Committee, South Gloucestershire Council, The Bristol Port Company, The Vale of Glamorgan Council, Wales Tourist Board, Welsh Office, and all our other partners.*



This newsletter has been sponsored by Hyder, the international infrastructure group



Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), commonly found on the salt marshes of the Severn Estuary

# Severn Estuary Strategy Newsletter



Issue 1 Summer 1998

## From the Chair

I am pleased to welcome you to the first Severn Estuary Strategy Newsletter, having recently taken over the Chair of the SES. As Assistant Director of Planning with Monmouthshire County Council, I have direct involvement in some of the major issues affecting the Severn Estuary, and I trust this will stand me and the Strategy in good stead for the challenging times ahead. We are indebted to the dedicated involvement of my predecessor, Kay Powell, who relinquished the Chair upon her appointment as Head of Planning Division with the Welsh Office. I hope to carry on her good works, and in so doing am grateful for the wholehearted support of my Director, Jeff Martin, and of Planning Chairman, Graeme Nemes, both of whom recognise the importance of seeking a co-ordinated approach to the issues which face all of our partners on both the English and Welsh sides of the estuary.

Partnership is the underlying theme of the Strategy which has been successfully promoted by Janet Brown and Project Assistant Nicky Spurr. I look forward to working with all those who share an interest in the estuary and the surrounding coastal lands - public, private and voluntary organisations, and individuals, to carry this process forward and bring to fruition the publication of our strategic plan for the Severn.

*George Ashworth  
Chair, Severn Estuary Strategy*



## Welcome to our first Newsletter!

I am very pleased to be in contact with you via the first Severn Estuary Strategy Newsletter, particularly in this, the International Year of the Ocean. We want to keep in touch and let you know the progress of the SES, and we are very grateful to Hyder who have generously provided the funding to publish and distribute three newsletters in the next twelve months.

As many of you know, the highlight of the last twelve months for the SES was the production of the Severn Estuary Joint Issues Report. This document not only identifies the issues and concerns which we must address as we go forward, but provides a wealth of information about the estuary.

The report was produced in partnership with the Environment Agency, who needed the same information for their Severn Estuary LEAP (*Local Environment Action Plan*), but many others have contributed by participating in our public meetings, helping with the draft report or stating their concerns through the SES. My colleague, Project Assistant Nicky Spurr had the unenviable task of processing all the responses to the Report. These are collated in the way they can be best used as we go forward.

Now we have identified the issues, we can move to the next phase of the project. This year, key representatives will work together, to provide a 'way forward' for strategic management of the estuary, taking into account the natural, social and economic interests.

This newsletter is also a chance to provide information on 'good practice' already happening on the estuary, such as Hyder's project to design Dow Corning's new treatment plant, and the campaign by the ports to reduce litter.

It is easy to get confused by all the different management initiatives which are already in place. We aim to explain some of the key projects through this newsletter. Our remit at the SES is to promote co-ordination and co-operation of all organisations, so work (*such as consultation*) will not be duplicated, and we share and build on information gleaned, to help provide a healthy estuary for future generations to enjoy.

*Janet Brown, Project Manager*

*Please contact the SES office if you have ideas for future articles, or if you know of events which could be mentioned here. Of course, please also contact us if you wish to be added to our mailing list, or have any queries about our work or about the estuary:*

**Severn Estuary Strategy**

**PO BOX 907**

**CARDIFF CF1 3YP**

**Tel: 01222 874713 Fax: 01222 874301**

**Email: SEVERN@CARDIFF.ac.uk**





# Dow Corning

In 1993 the company began to review its options for all aspects of pollution management as required by IPC (*Integrated Pollution Control*) and with consideration of the then forthcoming Genesis project.

The Environment Agency has recently undertaken a review of the whole manufacturing site, including the waste water treatment plant, and Hyder will continue to work with Dow Corning to ensure the discharge will meet the new authorisation consents that may be enforced.

This is just one example of industry working with Hyder to minimise the risks associated with waste water treatment.

Hyder is proud to be associated with the Severn Estuary Strategy and wishes it well in highlighting both the natural beauty and strategic importance of this area.

**Meryl Jones, Hyder**



**The waste water treatment plant under construction**

The issue of both industrial and domestic waste water discharge into the Severn Estuary is one that has a very high profile. With the Environment Agency now tightening consent levels for discharge and various new capital expenditure programmes being implemented along the coastline, improvements in water quality should soon be in evidence.

Industry will play its part as well - one such company is Dow Corning the chemicals giant which has had a manufacturing site at Barry since 1952. It employs more than 700 people and is the largest silicone plant in Europe. Its latest investment 'Project Genesis' a £150m scheme, will double production, increase staffing levels and make the site the most technologically advanced silicone manufacturing facility of its kind in the world. The project is due for completion in 1999.

Hyder was involved from the early stages to advise on how to ensure Dow Corning's waste water discharge to the River Cadoxton, and onward to the Bristol Channel, would comply with the new regulations.

The manufacturing site had an existing waste water treatment plant on-site, however with the expected increase and change in production, Dow Corning needed to upgrade its existing facilities to cope. The most appropriate option was seen to be a brand new treatment facility - a £3m plant that would be designed, built, financed and operated by Hyder's industrial business for a period of 10 years.

Construction work commenced on-site in 1996 and final commissioning was completed last summer. The provision of the necessary skills, qualified staff and back up systems to ensure that the plant, which is designed to cope with flows of up to 9,000m<sup>3</sup> day, operates smoothly, now lies with Hyder.

## The Environment Agency view of the Severn Estuary Strategy

**Roger Wade, Environment Agency**



**Working together on the issues at a public meeting in Burnham**

The Environment Agency is pleased to have played their part in the establishment of the Strategy as a respected and authoritative partner. The Agency believed from the start of the process that it was essential that all the projects and management plans for the estuary should be co-ordinated. We were an enthusiastic supporter of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Agency, the SES and the Coastal Cell Groups (*who are addressing coastal defence*). We share resources and this approach is even more important now, with the development of the group of relevant authorities, who will be charged with developing a management plan to meet the conservation objectives for the estuary if it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation. There are so many aspects to consider in the

management of the estuary that it is essential there is an independent body with an overview of all the current initiatives. This we believe is the role of the Strategy.

The Joint Issues Report has brought in many detailed responses and the Agency will use these to develop its action plan for those issues which are its prime responsibility. The Environment Agency will also play its part in topic or local groups which are formed to discuss policies or issues. Where possible it will incorporate comments and suggestions from these groups in its final action plan.

The Agency will also be pleased to contribute to other action plans produced by other organisations with interests in the estuary.

# Campaign to reduce marine litter

I was interested to learn recently that pollution and litter were the two items which caused most concern to the majority of the 300 or so people who attended the public meetings organised by the Severn Estuary Strategy last year.

Readers of this newsletter will, I think be pleased to know that Associated British Ports (ABP), the UK's largest ports group which owns and operates 23 ports including Newport, Cardiff, and Barry on the Severn Estuary, has taken a strong lead in the management of ship generated waste including oil, garbage and sewerage. So too has the Bristol Port Company.

Waste management plans for all ports in the group have been submitted to the Maritime Safety Agency in compliance with Department of Transport guidance. The plans, which are designed to assist in discouraging the dumping of waste at sea through the provision and use of waste reception facilities in ports, have been successfully implemented and are working well. We are making every effort to ensure that ships crews are aware of the facilities and make full use of them.

Nationwide surveys of UK beaches by the Marine Conservation Society revealed that the main source of litter and waste was in fact shore based tourism and recreation.

Shipping nevertheless generated an estimated 17% of the total, and the ports are doing all they can to help reduce that figure.

**Rob Gravestock, ABP Cardiff and Barry**



Cardiff docks

## The Severn Estuary possible Special Area of Conservation

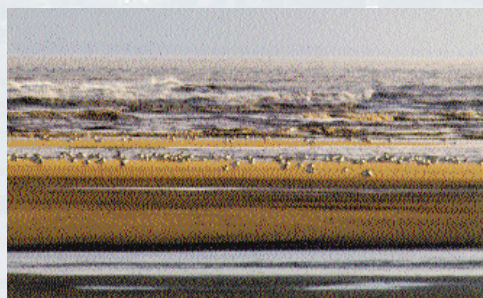
The Severn Estuary has been put forward as a possible Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because it supports outstanding examples of habitats of European importance. These specific features are the estuary itself, the saltmarsh, the extensive mudflats and sandflats and the subtidal sandbanks.

The tidal range of the Severn Estuary is the highest in Europe and this, together with the funnelling effect of the estuary, results in strong tidal streams which scour the seabed. These dynamic conditions produce characteristic communities in the mud and sand, some of which are unique to the estuary.

Part of the estuary is already designated a Special Protection Area for birds (SPA) as the mud and sandflats are important feeding grounds for significant numbers of overwintering birds. At the moment there is no overall management scheme for the important nature conservation resources. The Severn Estuary Strategy will be producing a management document for the Severn Estuary, taking into account a wider area and other

issues as well as nature conservation. Under the UK Conservation (*Natural Habitats &c*) Regulations 1994, each European marine site (*SAC or SPA*), where appropriate, should have a management scheme. The Regulations make relevant authorities (*with statutory powers on the estuary*) responsible for the conservation and management of European marine sites and so they have a statutory duty to produce a management scheme.

The relevant bodies include local authorities, the Environment Agency, English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), internal drainage boards, the harbour authorities and sea fisheries committees.



### Win a boat trip on the estuary!

Think of a suitable name for the Severn Estuary Strategy Newsletter, and you could win a trip for two to Flat Holm. Send your ideas to the SES office by 6th July.

Though the Severn Estuary is not yet a candidate SAC (*which means the site has not yet been submitted to Europe*), the relevant authorities are going ahead with a 'shadow' management scheme and have formed ASERA - an association of Severn Estuary relevant authorities'.

The main aim of the management scheme document is to identify the management practices which will protect the conservation features of the SAC and SPA. Its development is an ongoing consultation process involving the views of the relevant authorities, interested parties, other authorities, local specialist groups and the owners of property on and adjoining the site.

As the work of the Severn Estuary Strategy will assist in the consultative process, we will work closely with them in the future.

**Karen Pollock, English Nature and CCW**