

Flood and coastal defence - the landowners view

Many farmers and landowners are totally dependent on the land drainage, flood and coastal defence infrastructure to protect their economic and environmental interests. An integrated approach to land drainage and coastal defence has been established with considerable public and private investment, and it is against this background that policy and procedures should be judged and established.

Agriculture is a major occupier of river and coastal plains thus influencing specific land uses as well as landscape features and valuable wildlife habitats, but most importantly the people and the rural communities themselves. There are, therefore, significant environmental, social, and economic aspects related to agricultural land use in these plains. Over 50% of agricultural land in England and Wales is totally dependent on land drainage to support existing agricultural enterprises with a similar percentage of grade 1 agricultural land lying close to sea level.

Tensions are sometimes created over perceived insensitive land drainage or flood defence works and their impact on the environment, although much has been done recently by MAFF, the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards in terms of design and practice to resolve these problems.

The Country Landowners' Association (CLA) has reservations on certain aspects of policy, including that of 'managed retreat' and believes that landowners, whose land has been protected for generations, should not be exposed to solutions that will have a major negative economic impact. In the CLA's view, this issue is becoming significant and needs further attention by the Government and the drainage authorities.

Geoffrey Hopton, Regional Secretary - Gloucestershire, Hereford and Worcester Country Landowners' Association



Goodbye from Nicky

"I was Project Assistant with the Severn Estuary Strategy from March 1997 to December 1998 and therefore fortunate to have been involved with a particularly exciting phase of the project. Key events which took place during this time included the Joint Issues Report, a second series of public meetings, the collation and publication of responses to the Report, the publication of our first newsletter and the 'Stakeholder' autumn workshops. I have however decided that it is time to move on and have taken up the position of Estuary Officer on the Taw Torridge Estuary. I have thoroughly

enjoyed working on the Severn Estuary Strategy and would like to take this opportunity to wish it, and everyone involved in the project, every success in the future."

Nicky Spurr

We are grateful to Nicky for all her hard work and dedication to the SES project and wish her well in her new post.

Janet Brown



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

Contact us

To obtain further information on the articles in this newsletter, to be added to our mailing list, or for any other queries, please contact:

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Severn Tidings

Newsletter of the Severn Estuary Strategy



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Hyder's challenge is plain sailing

The Severn Estuary has always been a favourite venue for water sports and with the development of waterfront projects in Cardiff and Bristol, and the new marinas that have been built around these - sailing is enjoying a growth in popularity.

The challenge of facing the second highest tidal range in the world offers a unique set of circumstances for sailors to face and the added competition of racing means that not only are local yachts now visiting the area, but also boats from other parts of the UK.

One such event is the Hyder team challenge - for the Shanghai Cup.

The event which Hyder has sponsored for the last two years consists of a series of nine races including channel, round-the-cans and windward/leeward races. It is competed for over four consecutive weekends during September with the racing centred around Cardiff but can spread far and wide around the Bristol Channel. Teams of three yachts compete, with the best two results for each race, counting

towards the teams final score. The 1998 event attracted a fleet of thirty yachts.

Yachts Barrafundle, Micky Finn and Naida, owned by Dr Neil White, Tony Ackland and Gregg Burgess respectively, from the Mumbles Yacht Club put an end to the Cardiff domination of the Hyder team challenge.

The first race consisted of two feeder races, one from Cardiff to Swansea and the other from Neyland to Swansea. The team from Mumbles took the lead from day one with two first place finishes and held onto the lead throughout the competition despite a determined effort from the Cardiff team who had won the cup the previous two years. Second place went to the team from Cardiff consisting of yachts Shifter, Wavetrain and Projection while third place fell to Cardiff yachts Wishbone, Sprack and Shortcut.

The prize for the victorious team is the Shanghai Cup, a cup that was crafted in 1876 and so named because it was originally raced for at the Shanghai Yacht Club in China.

In 1876 the cup was presented to British engineer George Baillie-Hill after three consecutive victories at the club's annual regatta on his yacht Nimrod. The cup was eventually passed to his granddaughter Georgina who donated the cup to Penarth Motor Boat and Sailing Club having decided that it should be reinstated as a yachting trophy.

Anyone wishing to join in 1999 event should contact Peter Pope on 01443 224507. And finally a big thank you to Hyder for sponsoring the cup.

The Severn Estuary Strategy involves representatives from the Royal Yachting Association, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the British Marine Industries Federation.



- an important year for the Severn Estuary Strategy

This year we take a major step forward as we work with our partners to produce the draft consultation document: A Strategy for the Severn Estuary.

To prepare for this next stage, we enlisted the help of a group of twenty one 'Key Stakeholders' during the latter half of 1998. People from the public, private and voluntary sector, worked with us, representing a wide range of interests on the estuary including the RSPB, industry, ramblers, boating, farmers, coastal defence and sea angling.

During a series of autumn workshops held in Bristol, our hard working group were led by facilitators from University College London, who devised a method to help us prioritise the 150 issues noted in the Joint Issues Report and the subsequent response document.

As a result of the workshops it is interesting to note that issues concerned with coastal defence, coastal erosion and flooding were placed high on the list as was rural management. Other key issues given high priority were:

- *the effects of development and growth on coastal areas*
- *development policy and guidance*
- *the effects of users on nature conservation and wildlife*
- *pollution and its effects on environmental quality*
- *pollution from major accidents*

Coastal defence and country landowners

Landowners on the estuary manage or oversee much of our estuary shores and are dependent on these coastal lands for their livelihood. The management of our coast is critical to issues of erosion, nature conservation, landscape and access, to name but a few. We are pleased to include an article for the Country Landowners Association stating their views on coastal defence in this newsletter.

The Government Agricultural Select Committee produced a report on flood and coastal defence in August 1998, which contained proposals for the integrated management of flooding and erosion issues on the coast. The Government has replied in a detailed document stating:

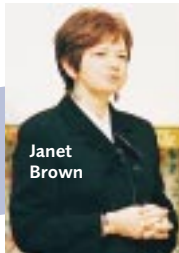
"The Government agrees with the Committee that long term sustainability has to be central to

the policy and practice of flood and coastal defence."

In 1996, the Severn Estuary Strategy signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Environment Agency and Coastal Groups (responsible for producing shoreline management plans to guide the future planning of coastal defence). We all agreed to share information and work together wherever possible. The arrangement is working well and these partners will provide an important input to the strategy document.

Links with Local Agenda 21

Many Local Agenda 21 officers from both shores of the estuary met at a workshop organised by SES last year at the CREATE Centre in Bristol. The workshop provided the first opportunity for LA21 officers from English and Welsh shores to meet and consider the estuary as one dynamic system. As a result of the meeting LA21 officers are now represented on our steering group.



Janet Brown

Local Agenda 21 officers were appointed by local authorities as a result of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where world leaders signed a global environmental action plan called Agenda 21. Local authorities play a key role and are encouraged to develop a local sustainable development strategy and to that involve partners from business, community and voluntary groups in their work towards this. Their approach is very similar to our own aims, as we work towards the concept of sustainable development for the Severn Estuary. We're pleased to strengthen our links with LA21 officers from the fifteen local authorities on the estuary.

New Project Assistant

We are pleased to welcome Steve Knowles who joined the SES team as Project Assistant in March. Steve has travelled widely, taught English and became involved with a number of environmental projects overseas. With a subsequent interest in environmental matters, on returning to the UK he undertook a BSe Environmental Management degree. As well as the usual tasks here at SES HQ, Steve will be working on our website and managing our extensive database of contacts.

Marine aggregate extraction in the Severn Estuary

The extraction of sand from the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel has for a century been vital to the construction industry and economy in South Wales and South West England. Sand aggregates are used in all forms of construction and are therefore essential for economic growth and the maintenance of living standards. The Second Severn Crossing, the National Stadium in Cardiff and the Cardiff Bay Development are all examples where marine sand has been used.

About 90% of the sand supplied in South Wales comes from marine sources. This is because there is a lack of viable alternatives and environmentally acceptable land based deposits, and because the marine sand is of an extremely high quality.

A Crown Estate licence permitting marine aggregate dredging will only be granted if the Welsh Office issues a favourable Government view on a dredging application. An application involves detailed environmental studies to establish whether the proposed dredging will be environmentally safe. If a licence is granted, then regular environmental monitoring is commonly required, including sea bed surveys, beach profiling and aerial photography.

Marine sands are and will continue to be vital for the economy and development of South Wales and South West England. Their extraction will continue to be subject to high environmental safeguards.

Dr Andrew Bellamy
United Marine Dredging



SABINA project heralds the way for waste minimisation around the Severn Estuary

SABINA (Sustainable Business In Action) is the flagship project for the Welsh Office 'Business and the Environment' campaign. Following the launch of the project in January 1997, a programme of workshops, seminars and assisted reviews facilitated the development of waste minimisation plans for each of the eleven participating companies around the Severn Estuary.

SABINA has identified short term cost savings and environmental benefits for all those involved. Total savings from eleven participants currently stands at almost £3 million with £1.5 million having already been implemented.

Achievements have included water savings equivalent to the water consumption required for a population of 700 people over one year. Energy-saving measures introduced by Rolls Royce plc have saved 525,000 kilowatt hours per year - equivalent to approximately 29,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year - a valuable contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

Tarmac Building has recently incorporated waste minimisation plans into the construction of a new Royal Mail distribution warehouse site in Avonmouth. As a result of their involvement in



the SABINA project, the Project Manager, Bob Cross said:

"Never before has it been so apparent that by changing our working practices, rethinking our attitudes to waste reduction, and making a more determined effort at recycling, we can not only make a difference to the environment but save a significant amount of money for both ourselves and our clients."

A dissemination seminar chaired by the Welsh Office was held in December to publicise the results of the SABINA project. The event was attended by more than 110 business delegates from companies based around the Severn Estuary with presentations and company case studies provided throughout the morning, including one from Janet Brown, Project Manager - Severn Estuary Strategy.

The two year SABINA project is supported both by the Welsh Office and the Government Office for the South West, with additional support provided by the Environment Agency, the WDA and ETBPP (Environmental Technology Best Practice Programme) and industrial sponsorship from Dow Corning.

Further information can be obtained by visiting the SABINA website at:

www.sabina.co.uk or by contacting Ken Wade, Associate Director, WSP Environmental, 14 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9LJ

Cybestuaries CD ROM of good estuary management is launched

The Severn Estuary is involved in a project which has developed a Good Practice Guide to support the sustainable management of European estuaries. Partners on the Loire in France, the Wear and the Clyde in the UK, and the Tagus in Portugal all worked with the Cybestuaries Project Officer, Richard Perry to produce a CD ROM and a manual. Case studies of the estuaries, Good Practice Guidelines (principles and techniques), and other information should prove to be an important education tool for students and prospective planners and managers. The CD can be obtained by contacting:

Cybestuaries Project Officer, [Esturiales@Sunderland City Council, Environmental Department, PO Box 102, Civic Centre, Sunderland SR2 7DN](mailto:Esturiales@SunderlandCityCouncil.gov.uk)
Tel: 0191 553 1460
E-mail: cybestuaries.sund@dial.pipex.com

Newsletter title competition

Thanks to all those who took part in the competition to find a title for our newsletter. It was great to see such enthusiasm which provided us with over 60 titles, from the very local 'Holm Sands' to the more general 'Severn News'. The entries were judged by our partners on our Steering Group of the Severn Estuary Strategy. Our final choice of 'Severn Tidings' reflects the dynamic character of the Severn, which has the second highest tidal range in the world (the highest being the Bay of Fundy, Canada). Mrs Liz O'Donnell from Somerset is the lucky winner and has received two free tickets for a trip to Flat Holm Island.

SES is on the Net!

We have now got a web site, on the Internet, albeit one informative page at the moment. We plan to expand the site, to establish links with others and provide further information. You can find us at:
<http://www.cf.ak.uk/uwcc/masts/ses/>