

## The Joint Estuary Groups Initiative

Following the report on the Joint Estuary Groups initiative in the last edition of Severn Tidings, the first Joint Estuary Groups Meeting was held in April. The groups involved include the SEP, the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (nature conservation Directives), the Severn Estuary Coastal Group (coastal defence), the North Devon and Somerset Coastal Group (coastal defence), the Standing Conference of Severnside Local Authorities (planning and development issues) and the Bristol Channel Counter Pollution Association. This initiative has come about as a result of such groups wishing to streamline working and avoid duplication in this complicated, pressurised and environmentally sensitive area that is our Estuary.

The SEP has subsequently received some very positive and encouraging feedback from individuals and organisations involved in the first joint meeting day.

The Chairs of the Groups will be gathering later this autumn to discuss the future direction and the opportunities this initiative presents into 2004.

## UK ICZM Workshops

Several workshop events for all coastal management initiatives were held in a number of locations around the UK this Autumn. These events were the latest progression in DEFRA's response to the European Commission's Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), which was reported in the last issue of Severn Tidings.

A stocktaking exercise is being carried out in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, to establish the current situation with regard to coastal management initiatives. These workshops aimed to get representation from all such initiatives to establish the current state of play.

The Severn Estuary was represented by Charlotte Street, SEP Project Officer and Steve Knowles from ASERA, as well as other individual organisation representation, at the workshop held in Newtown, Wales.

Discussions took place as to how the ICZM process could be better supported by Government, to ensure that coastal initiatives such as the SEP deliver tangible outputs that result in the better management of our Estuary.

The results from the workshop will now be presented to DEFRA, which will aid in drawing up national strategies for Coastal Management.

## The Severn Estuary European Marine Site

The Severn Estuary is internationally important for birds and wildlife habitats and is one of the most important estuaries in the UK for over-wintering wildfowl and wading birds. The Severn Estuary is consequently designated as a European marine site. The relevant authorities on the Severn Estuary, those with statutory duties (Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities - ASERA), are currently producing a management scheme for the site, and a consultation draft will be available to view on the ASERA web site in early 2004. ([www.severnestuary.org.uk/asera](http://www.severnestuary.org.uk/asera))

## What's New on the SEP Website

### Image Gallery

The SEP Image Gallery was launched this summer. A selection of images from around the Estuary, accessible through an interactive map enables the Website visitor to take an online photographic tour of the Severn Estuary. Our Image gallery can be viewed at: <http://www.severnestuary.net/sep/gallery.html>

### 'Who Does What' Guide

In an attempt to enable stakeholder communication, participation and enhance the understanding of the role and activities of various groups and organisations, the SEP has compiled an electronic 'Who Does What' Guide. Following consultation with the listed organisations, the online directory was made public this September and can be viewed at: <http://www.severnestuary.net/sep/WDW.html>

Thank you to all those who contributed to the completion of the Image Gallery and the Guide. If your organisation wishes to be included in the Guide or if you wish to have your photos of the Severn published on our website, please contact the SEP at the below email address.

## Thanks to Lee Ann

A big thank you to Lee Ann Gosse from the Maritime Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, who has been working with the SEP over the last three months as part of her Advanced Diploma in Coastal Zone Management.

The SEP would like to thank Lee Ann for all her hard work and wish her every success for her future.

# Severn Tidings

Newsletter of the Severn Estuary Partnership Issue 4 Autumn 2003



## Severn Estuary Success in Europe



A hallmark of the project will be the involvement of local stakeholders and joint working with our European Partners who face similar challenges in other coastal locations.

Work is planned to start in early 2004, when the Severn Estuary Partnership will be establishing or tapping into existing Stakeholder Groups and Forums to focus on the key themes of Coastal Access, Rural Landscapes and Economies, Nature Conservation, Archaeological Heritage and the exchange of electronic information about the Estuary environment.

With the project covering such a wide area, it is hoped

That the pilot projects that result from this funding will lead to further and wider action in the future.

**George Ashworth, Chairman of the Severn Estuary Partnership commented "It is a fantastic achievement to have secured this funding which will make a really big difference to the work the Partnership does. It means that as well as getting a greater number of people aware of and involved in the management of the Severn, we are able to focus our efforts on visible actions around the estuary that would otherwise not have been possible."**

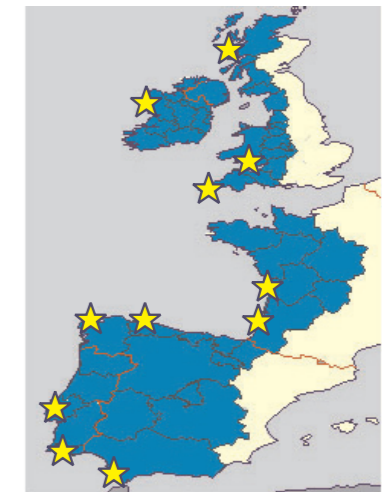
## Who we are...

The Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) is an independent organisation involving Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, countryside agencies and users of the Estuary. The aim of the project is to bring together all those involved in the development, management and use of the Estuary. The SEP provides a framework which encourages the integration of interests and responsibilities for the Estuary's sustainable use.



**Thanks to a recent award of European and UK Government funding, the Severn Estuary Partnership is due to start work on a range of projects that will benefit the communities and environment of the Severn Estuary.**

This is part of a wider COASTATLANTIC project being undertaken in partnership with eleven other regions along the Atlantic coast, stretching from the Highlands of Scotland to Southern Spain. Funding has been allocated under the Interreg IIIb programme which promotes transnational co-operation on spatial planning and development between national, regional and local authorities. The objective is to achieve sustainable, harmonious and balanced development in the Community and better territorial integration.



The Atlantic Arc and Project Partner Areas

**An update and further information will be included in the next Newsletter and on the SEP website. [www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk](http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk)**

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## What is Stakeholder Involvement?

Wendy Dodds  
Coastal Communities Network,  
Welsh Project Officer

We have all heard the term 'stakeholder' being used in coastal management initiatives, however it is not often defined, leading in some cases to its meaning becoming blurred and unclear.

To put this straight then - all those that participate in coastal management initiatives are commonly termed 'stakeholders'. This stresses that they have a stake in the future of the coast, either because they live there, earn a living from the exploitation of coastal resources, visit and use the coast for recreation as well as those who may never use or access the coast but still value it in some way. Additionally stakeholders can be defined as groups within the community having a special interest or involvement in the use of the resources as common property.

**How does someone know if they are a stakeholder then, do they have to be a member of a committee, user group or organisation?**

No! If you believe that you are affected by activities that occur on the coast, then you are a stakeholder. Participation in coastal initiatives seeks to bring these 'stakeholders' together in order to create open discussion, the sharing of ideas and in the working of solutions. Sounds like a good idea doesn't it! However in a time when people's sense of community is waning, fewer and fewer people find it harder to become involved in community projects as apathy begins to set in. It is therefore becoming more difficult to get stakeholders on board for coastal management initiatives, despite the fact that they are crucial to their success.

**So don't let this be the case on the Severn. Have your stake noticed by getting involved with the SEP COASTATLANTIC project.**



SELRC visit to Goldcliff, Newport © SELRC

# Archaeology, Maritime Trade and the Severn Estuary

Rick Turner, Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

Superficially, the muddy foreshores and the flat reclaimed land around the Severn Estuary on both the English and Welsh banks, would seem an unlikely place for archaeologists to work. However for over 25 years, this area has consistently produced archaeological sites and finds of national and often international importance. It is also a place where buried prehistoric and Roman landscapes lie below the present land surface, itself reclaimed from early in the Middle Ages to the present day. All this is found within sediments, which contain a very wide range of well-preserved plant and animal remains. These allow for the detailed reconstruction of the changing environment since the last glaciation, and the identification of man's role in its manipulation.

Since 1985, the study of this area has been co-ordinated by the Severn Estuary Levels Research Committee (SELRC). Its aim is to co-ordinate the research of all those, amateur and professional, who are interested in the history, archaeology, geology and palaeo-environments of one of the most remarkable estuaries in the world. It is probably the longest-established stakeholder and focus group of the type that the Severn Estuary Partnership is trying to establish to serve other interests. This newsletter contains a pamphlet produced by the committee, which tries to summarise the results of research by many of its members and sets out some of the key issues concerning the future of this precious landscape.



1831 Map of the Severn Levels © GGAT

**For anyone studying the history of the Severn Estuary, the key question is 'Where is the sea?'**

Sea-level rise, often rapid but sometimes fluctuating, and variations of tidal range can produce dramatic changes in the type and extent of the wetlands that fringe the Estuary. These can consist of freshwater marsh, peat bog, sand dunes, salt marsh and foreshore. Each of these environments provided a wide range of plant and animal resources for people to exploit. This dynamic environment was to change with the first reclamation of the Levels around the Estuary by the Romans. Following a period of abandonment, new sea defences were built from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and evolved into the continuous system we find today by the end of the Middle Ages. Many of the most significant archaeological discoveries found in the Severn Levels relate to the exploitation of these wetlands, the Neolithic wooden trackways of the Somerset Levels, the Iron Age settlements at Goldcliff, the Roman reclamation at Rumney Great Wharf and the moated monastic grange at Woolaston.

**Perhaps more recently the Committee's members have begun to realise that the question we should spend more time addressing is "How was the sea used?"**

For those of us who work in Cardiff and have to attend meetings in Somerset, the Severn Estuary is an irritating obstacle. However before the railway and car came to dominate our means of travel, the Severn Estuary was a blessing, opening up the hinterland to Shrewsbury and beyond, and giving access as far as the Americas by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Archaeological excavation has produced a succession of spectacular discoveries of ancient boats. The oldest are the Middle Bronze Age planks excavated at Caldicot and Goldcliff, from the types of vessels also found at Dover and Ferriby in Humberside. These would have been quite capable of sailing across and along the Severn Estuary and trading within the large and more permanent settlements appearing on the dryland margins. Commercial development at Barland's Farm revealed a substantially complete Romano-British boat, re-used within a waterfront on a river channel over 3 kms inland from the contemporary coastline. This flat-bottomed vessel was ideally suited for slipping down minor tributaries and up tidal creeks to service the newly-reclaimed, Roman farmsteads around the Estuary. A most intriguing fragment of a Viking period vessel was dug up during the building of Newport Docks, suggesting the Severn Estuary was part of the trading network developed around the Irish Sea.

More challenging was the lifting of the remains of the Magor Pill wreck from the foreshore intact, in 1995. This clinker-built vessel, dating to 1240, foundered with the remains of its last cargo, iron ore and ochre from the Forest of Dean.



Excavation of Magor Pill Boat © Cadw

The most complete, largest and most modern of these vessels was the Newport ship found in 2002. This ship, probably constructed in the 1460s, was beached when in need of repair. Its hull contained lots of its broken superstructure, rigging and remains of its cargo including Portuguese pottery and coins. There has been no late Medieval ship found so well preserved anywhere else in Britain.

Boats and ships needed ports and landing places. A Roman stone quay has been found at Caerleon, fully-developed medieval waterfronts have been excavated at Bristol and Redcliffe, and 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century wharves, a dock and slipway recorded at Chepstow. Small boats could use semi-permanent facilities like the medieval quay exposed at Woolaston, or by beaching in the many pills or small river mouths, which drain into the estuary.

This pattern of trade emerges more clearly in medieval documentation and Tudor and later port books. Grain, dairy products and livestock were moved around by great landowners and monastic houses. Pottery, timber, metals and building stone were transported from their sources to the towns around the estuary. Records of wine from France, iron from Spain, and cod from Iceland show the use of ocean-going vessels and the development of international trade. The maritime heritage of the Severn Estuary is not well known to the public at large. There is a great hunger for this information. This has been demonstrated by the enormous interest in the replica of the 'Matthew' built to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cabots' voyage to America, and the queues of thousands of people who came to view the excavation of the Newport ship. Conservation of the waterlogged wood of the excavated remains of the ancient vessels from the Severn Estuary is time-consuming and expensive and we still wait to see any display dedicated to these discoveries.

The SELRC are therefore looking forward to working with the Severn Estuary Partnership to find other ways of promoting this maritime heritage. The recreational sailors and fisherman of today form a link with the past as they know the vagaries of tide and weather that make the Severn Estuary the same dangerous waterway faced by our ancestors. Trips on the Waverley and Balmoral allow the general public to experience travel on the Estuary and see the ease of maritime links, which formed the basis of trade in the past. We will look forward to working with other partners to bring this to fruition.



**For more information on the Severn Estuary Levels Research Committee please visit [www.selrc.dial.pipex.com](http://www.selrc.dial.pipex.com). For more copies of the enclosed pamphlet please contact [Richard.Turner@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Turner@wales.gsi.gov.uk).**

Excavation of the Newport Ship © R Turner