

# Severn Tidings

Working in partnership for the future of the Severn Estuary

Issue 8 Summer 2006

All the  
**latest news**  
from around  
the estuary  
...and much more!



## Inside...

**Marine Bill**  
Update

**Severn Estuary**  
Forum

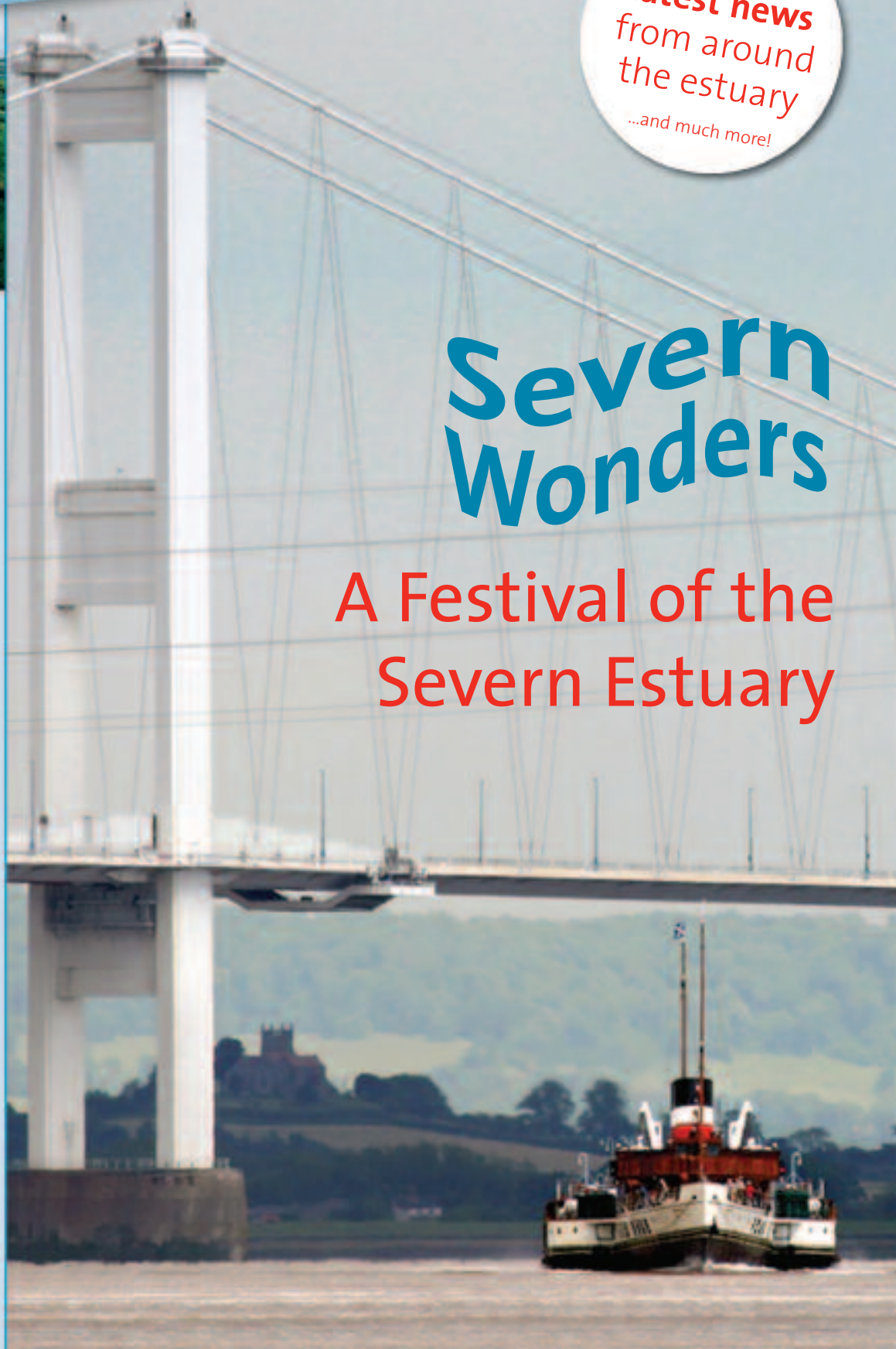
Newport  
**Transporter**  
**Bridge**

Explore the  
Severn-  
**Portishead /**  
**Clevedon**



## Severn Wonders

A Festival of the  
Severn Estuary



# Welcome!

This issue of Severn Tidings focuses on the exciting Severn Wonders Festival, running in May and June. There are many different and engaging events to attend and also the first Severn Estuary Forum and Severn Wonders Cruise, designed to give a platform for groups, clubs and interested individuals. Please contact the Partnership office if you would like to know more.



Chairman of the Severn Estuary Partnership  
Cllr Peter Tyzack

This newsletter is produced by the Severn Estuary Partnership.

Our aim is to bring together people to work in partnership for the future of the Severn Estuary.



## Would your organisation like to sponsor future editions?

For further information on the articles in this newsletter or for any other queries please contact:

**The Severn Estuary Partnership**  
School of Earth, Ocean and Planetary Sciences,  
Cardiff University, Main Building,  
Park Place, Cardiff CF10 3YE.

Tel: 02920 874713

Email: [severn@cf.ac.uk](mailto:severn@cf.ac.uk)

[www.severnestuarypartnership.org](http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org)

**Editor** Jim Mitchell

**Articles** Natasha Barker, Steve Knowles,  
Lia Moutselou

All photographs © Severn Estuary Partnership  
unless otherwise stated.

## Valuing the Severn

**It's easy to forget what we owe to the environment around us: the source of our energy, our shelter, our recreations and our employment. On the Severn, the estuary is also the reason why most of the villages, towns and cities are where they are. But what would the Severn be worth in cash to each man woman and child around the estuary? Whatever the answer, it can only reinforce how valuable the estuary is.**

In the case of the many low-lying areas, then the estuary could be seen as a threat. Predictions of national sea-level rise and flooding are many and confusing, as there are so many factors to explore in gaining an accurate picture. In June this year the first Severn Estuary Forum will be discussing such issues, and the related issues of renewable energy and climate change. By working together on these big issues we can be better prepared for the future and try to gain opportunity from the threats.

The forum is a culmination of three weeks of celebration around the estuary. The Severn Wonders festival is a series of events ranging from walks and talks to boat trips and farmers markets. This is a unique opportunity to raise the profile of our estuary to the general public and to children, the future custodians of the estuary. Come out and join in the celebrations.



The Partnership Team on Steep Holm

From left to right, Natasha Barker (Partnership Officer), Jim Mitchell (Access, Interpretation and Communication), Lia Moutselou (Partnership Assistant), Steve Knowles (ASERA Officer), Wendy Dodds (Partnership Assistant).

# The Bristol Channel Yachting Association's

## “Blue Book”

The geography of the Bristol Channel makes it one of the most challenging and engaging sailing areas in Britain. With the two coastlines and extreme tides (which can double a boat's speed) there are many destinations available to the day sailor. The entry to Bristol Docks up through the Avon gorge is one of the most spectacular harbour entrances anywhere in the World and the barrage at Cardiff has created a huge asset to the sailing community. In addition to these principle features, there are countless smaller but by no means less delightful harbours, inlets, creeks and moorings dotted around the coastlines.

For the yachtsman in addition to these attractions are the various sailing and yacht clubs all extremely friendly and social organisations, bonded together by the challenge of the extreme tides, and the camaraderie that comes about from

shared experiences. Consequently there is a wealth of mutual assistance and goodwill. This amity exists not only between members within any one club, but also crosses club and national boundaries.

To assist in co-ordinating the timing of the many rallies and regattas that are held around the channel the various clubs meet annually. This meeting has led ultimately to the formation of the Bristol Channel Yachting Association. Its committee is populated by enthusiastic amateurs representing the clubs around the channel, it aims to communicate the broader picture on issues both concerning and impacting on the use of the channel by its sailing fraternity.

One of the successes of the B.C.Y.A. has been the production of its handbook.

Primarily containing a collection of pilotage knowledge, extending from Padstow, up the English coast to Sharpness and back down the Welsh coast to Milford Haven. This information is gathered locally from clubs in the channel. This handbook is invaluable both to those sailing the channel for the first time and to those who have been sailing the channel for many years and would like to explore some of its smaller backwaters.

This handbook is commonly referred to by the shorter title of 'The Blue Book', for reasons that will be obvious to anyone who has come across a copy. The latest edition of this handbook is due for publication later on this year, for further details visit the B.C.Y.A. website <http://www.bristolchannel.co.uk>.

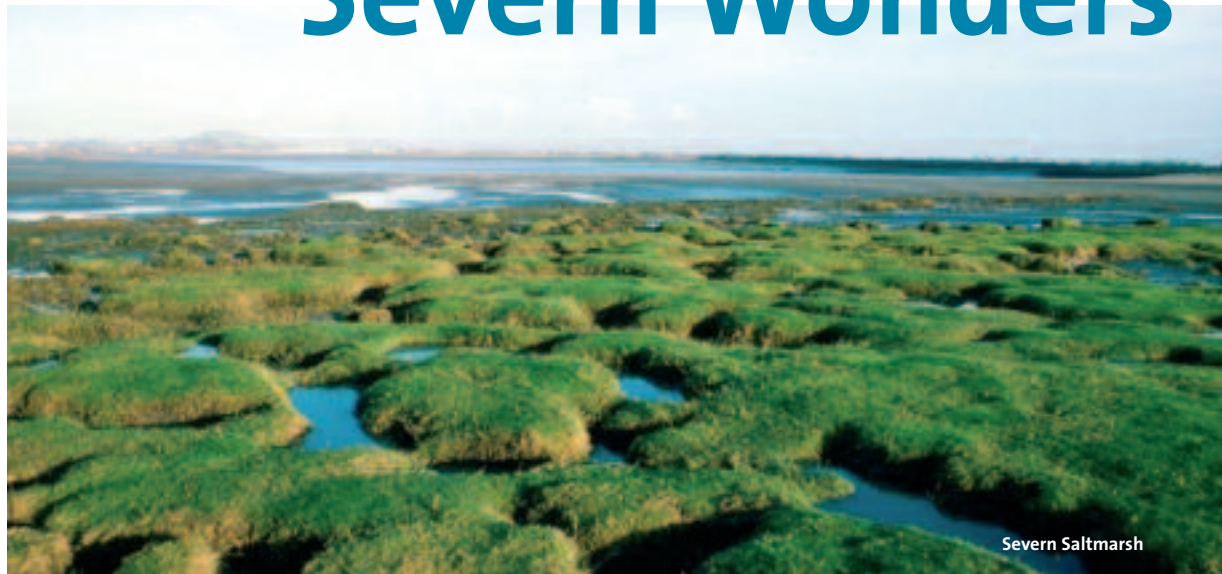
**John Filer**



'The 2006 edition of the Blue Book will be launched during the Severn Wonders Festival'



# Severn Wonders



Severn Wonders is a three week festival of events going on all around the estuary. So if you fancy a coastal ramble, a visit to some of our fascinating maritime heritage, would like to try out sailing, then see our Severn Wonders leaflet, available from us at the Partnership office or from our Website. On these pages we highlight just a couple of the events, and what they tell us about the value of the estuary we share....

*The festival is focussing on seven themes.*

## Explore the Severn

From cliffs to beaches, there is plenty of opportunity to get out and enjoy the Severn over the course of the festival. For example there is Brean Down, one of the most prominent headlands on the estuary. On Sunday May 21st there is a guided walk around the National Trust managed headland. Phone 01934 844518 for details. The estuary has many surprisingly remote areas, and several areas where access is limited. The festival wants to promote responsible access to the coast, and all the events are being evaluated to ensure a low impact approach and as little disturbance to wildlife as possible.

## Out on the Water

The Paddle steamer Waveley cruising the estuary and the Bristol Channel during the festival, details are available on Tel: 01446 721221. The Waverly is the only ocean going paddle steamer in the world and is the venue for our Severn Wonders Cruise on the 8th June (see over). The estuary's renowned difficult navigation and tidal conditions mean the area is not heavily used by recreational boating, but there are still plenty of local regattas and sailin

festivals, such as the Portishead Cruising Club Annual Regatta, held during the festival from Friday 9th to Sunday 11th June.

## Fishing and Farming

The Severn provides much valuable natural produce, in addition to recreational fishing and heritage fisheries. Farmer's markets around the estuary promote the produce from the fertile flood plains. Thornbury Farmer's Market on Thursday 1st June is where you can pick up Gloucestershire Cider, made from local orchards.

There is an unique history of salmon fishing in the estuary, and a lave net fishing demonstration will take place at Black Rock, Monmouthshire at 4pm also on Thursday 1st June.

## Nature and Conservation

The size and varied geography of the estuary results in a diverse set of habitats, ranging from saltmarsh and sandbanks to dune systems and cliffs. As part of the festival there will be a number of guided walks and talks, such as the Severn Beach Saltmarsh Walk on Saturday the 10th June. Run by the Avon Wildlife Trust, local expert Alan Burburry

# Festival 2006

will show how the unique plant communities are adapted to life on the water's edge. The estuary's saltmarshes, sandbanks and mudflats are vulnerable to trampling and disturbance from visitors, so educational events such as this highlight the threats to such habitats.

maritime heritage. Visitors will be guided by members of the friends organisation who helped to save the ship. Go to [www.thenewportship.com](http://www.thenewportship.com) for more information.

## Future of the Severn

## Heritage and History

One of the biggest stories on the estuary in recent years was the finding of the Newport Ship, a remarkably preserved 15th century trading vessel. As part of the festival, there will be an open day to view the ship and the ongoing recording and researching work on this unique piece of our

## The first Severn Estuary Forum - Working together

Towards the end of the end of the festival we will be holding the first Severn Estuary Forum on Thursday 8th June 2006 at the Walton Park Hotel, Clevedon. The forum is a standing conference to discuss issues affecting the future of the Severn Estuary.

*Topics will include-*

Celebrating the Severn ° Climate change: recent and regional predictions  
Renewable Energy ° Flood Risk Management

***Followed by...***

## Severn Wonders Cruise

**Thursday 8th June 2006**

Reception with speakers and workshops on a late afternoon cruise.

***Depart Penarth Pier 1400 and arrive Clevedon Pier 1500***

***Depart Clevedon Pier 1530 and arrive Penarth Pier 1715***

***Depart Penarth 1730 and arrive Clevedon Pier 1830. All times approximate.***

A programme of speakers and workshops will run between 1530 on departure from Clevedon Pier and 1715 on arrival at Penarth Pier.





# Severn Bridges

## The Newport Transporter Bridge

**This excellent example of an 'aerial ferry' is one of the gems of the Severn Estuary. It is the largest remaining example of a transporter bridge left in the world and a fine reminder of the industrial history of the estuary. It's fully operational, and well worth a visit for a gondola ride across the muddy Usk.**

Following the massive expansion of Newport as a port in the late 19th Century, various options for a crossing were investigated, which would allow all-important shipping through. Lifting bridges and tunnels were deemed unsuitable and the borough engineer convinced the council to plump for a French Engineer who had designed a type of bridge called an aerial ferry.



©Pete Brabham

### THE NEWPORT TRANSPORTER BRIDGE



LENGTH	210 metres
TOWER HEIGHT	128 metres
SPEED OF THE GONDOLA	3m/sec
BUILT	1906
NO. OF VEHICLES AT A TIME	6

The bridge was opened in 1906 and cost £98,000. It operated until 1985 when safety fears caused it to be shut but 10 years later it was reopened following renovation work funded by CADW and Europe. It is a real thrill to cross on such a piece of history, and just costs 50p for vehicles (pedestrians and bikes are free- it is part of the Celtic Trail route 4). On open days (usually each Spring and August bank holiday) you can access the high level walkway, with magnificent views across Newport and the Severn. There is also a visitor centre on the west bank, telephone no. 01633 250322. Website- [www.newport.gov.uk/transporterbridge](http://www.newport.gov.uk/transporterbridge)

## News Story

# News in Brief...

## Estuary Round-up

### Partnership News

### Project Updates

#### Nature Conservation and Recreation GIS launched

A free GIS CD is available from the Severn Estuary Partnership detailing the nature conservation and recreation interests on the estuary. Please contact the partnership office on 02920 874713 if you are interested in obtaining a copy.

#### Estuary leaflets and panels

The interpretation work carried out around the estuary, as part of the COAST ATLANTIC project, is now completed. Four interpretation panels have been installed, two on the Gwent levels near Newport and two at Severn Beach in South Gloucestershire. Two walk leaflets interpreting the natural and cultural history of the levels have also been produced in partnership with the Newport Countryside Service.

### ASERA update



## An Estuary of Passage Welcome to Severn Beach

In front of you is the dynamic Severn Estuary. Thousands of tonnes of water pass through here twice daily – one of the highest tides on the planet. The estuary is a thoroughfare for all types of creatures including tiny eel, flocks of wildfowl and ourselves.

#### Atlantic Flyway

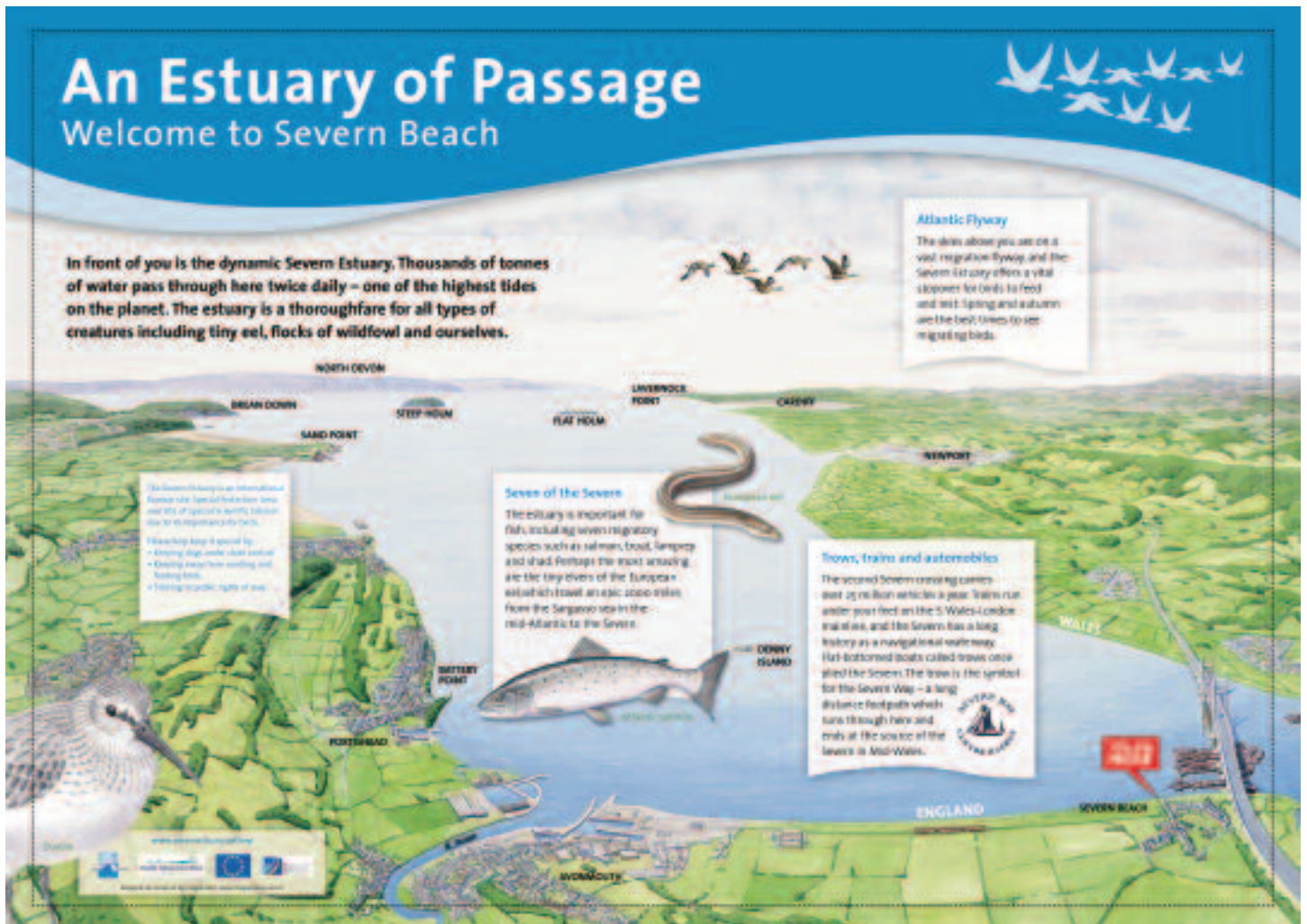
The skies above you are on a vast migration flyway, and the Severn Estuary offers a vital stopover for birds to feed and rest. Spring and autumn are the best times to see migrating birds.

#### Severn of the Severn

The estuary is important for fish, including seven migratory species such as salmon, trout, lamprey and shad. Perhaps the most amazing are the tiny eels of the European eel which travel an epic 2000 miles from the Sargasso sea in the mid-Atlantic to the Severn.

#### Flows, trains and automobiles

The second Severn crossing carries over 10 million vehicles a year. Trains run under your feet and the S. Wales & London railway, and the Severn has a long history as a navigable waterway. Flat-bottomed boats called flows once plied the Severn. The flow is the symbol for the Severn Way – a long distance footpath which runs through here and ends at the source of the Severn in Mid-Wales.





# Explore the Severn – Portishead and Clevedon

by Jim Mitchell, Access and Interpretation Officer

This walk follows the coastal path between Portishead and Clevedon for a distance of approximately six miles. There are many features of interest to be found along the route and excellent views of the coastline and Severn Estuary. Some sections face that problem common to many stretches of coastal footpath – erosion. I caught up with Gareth Withers from North Somerset Countryside Service to find out some of the issues in managing coastal paths.

**Q) What problems do you have with this length of coast Path Gareth?**

*This section of coastal footpath is particularly prone to coastal erosion and in the past years has suffered collapse when the cliffs have been undermined. While we have always strived to keep the footpath open the condition is such that we feel it is no longer suitable for large groups of people such as sponsored walks that were once popular on this route.*

**Q) Do you see this area as a priority?**

*Yes this is a very popular path with local resident's tourists and as a council we have a duty of care to the public. This walk is featured in or 'Gordano Round' booklet of walks in this area.*

**Q) What lessons can be learnt for managing other areas of coast like this?**

*Coastal footpaths have management costs that have to be realised if they are to be maintained*



Time	?
Distance	?
Terrain	?
O.S. Map Explorer	154 Bristol West and Portishead
Public Transport	<a href="http://www.traveline.org.uk">www.traveline.org.uk</a> Tel- 0870 608 2 608

## Up and coming.....

Joint Estuary Groups Day October 30th 2006  
Chepstow.....

The Severn Estuary Partnership  
School of Earth, Ocean and Planetary Sciences,  
Cardiff University, Main Building, Park Place,  
Cardiff CF10 3YE

Email: [severn@cf.ac.uk](mailto:severn@cf.ac.uk)  
[www.severnestuarypartnership.org](http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org)

