

# Severn Tidings

Working in partnership for the future of the Severn Estuary

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# Welcome!

2006 was a significant year for the Severn Estuary Partnership with the launch of the Severn Estuary Forum and the Severn Wonders Festival. The Forum will now become an annual event. We're exploring ways to keep the Severn Wonders brand alive through estuary-related events. As we move into 2007, we face big issues on the horizon over future use of the Severn

Estuary. Perhaps now more than ever we need to work together by utilising SEP's services.

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.



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

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**Editor** Natasha Barker

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unless otherwise stated.



From left to right: Wendy Dodds (SECG Secretariat),  
Natasha Barker (Partnership Officer) and Steve Knowles  
(ASERA Implementation Officer)

The SEP are grateful to Jim Mitchell (Access, Interpretation & Communication Officer) and Lia Moutselou (Partnership Assistant) for their work over the past few years. Jim has moved on to work for the New Forest National Park and with new family commitments we wish him health and happiness. Lia has moved onto a full time position as the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership Officer just over the road so we'll be keeping in touch. We welcome a team of volunteers into SEP to help fill their roles!

## Working Together

**The Severn Estuary is one of the largest and most complex estuaries in Britain. With its vast mudflats, dynamic tides and expanse of low lying land it has provided the ideal environment for human development.**

Centuries ago people started to drain the land and embank the shoreline for agriculture. Now, about 80% of the estuary shoreline has artificial defences to protect us from tidal inundation and flooding. Behind these defences we occupy land in our villages, towns and cities and rely on major infrastructure across, around and under the estuary through major ports, road and rail links. The three million people now living around the estuary have more in common than might first meet the eye. Concerns about climate change, flooding and opportunities for renewable energy – amongst others issues raised by our society today - require us more than ever to work together to find long term solutions.

The Severn Estuary Partnership 'SEP' has been working since the mid 1990s to bring people together to implement the recommendations of the Strategy for the Severn Estuary (2001). The SEP provides many services to encourage communication, co-operation and collaboration over estuary issues. In 2006, the SEP breathed new life into this work, with the organisation of the 1st Severn Estuary Forum. People from all around the estuary - from many different organisations and communities - got together to hear and talk about common concerns. Over 400 people joined the discussions after the conference, for a cruise on the Waverley to celebrate the culmination of the 1st 'Severn Wonders' festival (more on that inside). The momentum will be maintained with the SEP continuing to provide an annual Severn Estuary Forum to help improve communication between people who use and manage the Severn.

Other estuary-wide groups exist and new ones are being formed to work together on areas of common concern. The role of other estuary-wide initiatives are featured in this issue of Severn Tidings and regular updates provided on the back page under 'News in Brief'

Working together is a theme that has been adopted nationally over the past year through the establishment of a Coastal Partnerships Working Group. Coastal & estuary partnership officers from around the country are now meeting to share best practice and have a stronger voice into Government proposals for a Marine Bill. The new marine spatial plans to be introduced through this Bill are welcomed, but many questions remain about how they will link with land use planning. Coastal Partnerships are raising the issue of how we should best look after the future of our valuable coasts and estuaries - and offering experience from 10-15 years of voluntary partnership working, such as through the SEP.

There are big issues facing the future of the Severn Estuary which will challenge our ability to work together. Renewable energy options, including the renewed interest in a Severn Estuary barrage, are very much under the spotlight nationally, regionally and locally. Results of the Sustainable Development Commission study into the UK tidal power resource are likely to move the debate on much further this year.

It would be good to see the SEP's services which are mainly supported by the public sector, develop to meet the needs of industry and the private sector. With your support and involvement, SEP can provide useful services and encourage us all to tackle current and future issues together.

*Natasha Barker, Severn Estuary Partnership Officer, January 2007  
Chair, English Coastal Partnerships Working Group 2006-07*

# Championing estuary-wide co-operation

## SEP's Secretariat Services

The SEP provide Secretariat services to estuary-wide groups:

- Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) who look after the internationally designated nature conservation interests.
- Severn Estuary Coastal Group (SECG) who are responsible for developing the Shoreline Management Plan.

Regular updates from the estuary-wide groups to which SEP provides Secretariat Services are featured on the back page of Severn Tidings.

## Estuary Groups' Day

Twice a year the SEP organise an Estuary Groups' Day where people from all around the estuary gather to share information and attend meetings. Representatives from local authorities, statutory agencies, industry and non-governmental organisations attend the SEP's Joint Advisory Committee meeting. On the same day in the same location, meetings of estuary-wide groups to whom we provide a secretariat service take place: ASERA and SECG (described above). Updates from other estuary-wide groups are also provided:

- Bristol Channel Counter Pollution Association (BCCPA)
- North Devon & Somerset Coastal Group (NDSCG)

With such a wide range of estuary interests it is vital that people share information and are aware of each other's activities. The Estuary Groups' Day provides a valuable platform for a wide range of stakeholders to meet and discuss common issues and opportunities relating to use and management of the Severn Estuary. Minutes of all meetings and dates of forthcoming meetings can be found on the SEP website: [www.severnestuary.net/sep](http://www.severnestuary.net/sep)

## New Severn Estuary Aggregates Working Group

The extraction of sand from the Severn Estuary has been going on for many decades and is regulated by The Crown Estate. To compensate for the decline in the sand resource at some dredge areas and to meet projected future demand, the marine aggregate industry has sought to increase the take

from other existing licensed areas and to establish new extraction areas within the estuary.

At present there are 6 existing or proposed dredging areas, from which a combined volume of over 2 million tonnes a year could be extracted. Dredging applications have been submitted for areas in fairly close proximity to each other and the foreshore. This has led to a need to determine how the removal of sand will affect coastal processes and the foreshore – because of the international designated features and importance of sea defences. This is no simple task!

Work on individual impact assessments is being undertaken. However, in an attempt to look at the issue on a more regional basis, The Crown Estate has encouraged the principal stakeholders to contribute to the newly created Severn Estuary Aggregates Working Group. One of the major features of the discussions has been that all of the dredging companies have agreed to work together to conduct detailed estuary-wide studies.

The first phase of work began in Autumn 2006, the results of which will determine the type and extent of future studies.

*For further information, please contact:*

*Rhys Morgan, Severn Estuary Officer, Environment Agency Wales.*

*Email: [rhys.morgan@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk](mailto:rhys.morgan@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk) Tel: 02920 245200*

## Health and Environment Liaison Group

The Severn Estuary Health and Environment Liaison Group (SEHELG) is a meeting of health and environment professionals that have a common interest in issues relating to the Severn Estuary. Representatives from the three regions of the Environment Agency and Health Agencies which border the estuary form the Liaison Groups' core membership.

SEHELG aims to enhance the benefits as well as prevent and reduce the impact upon human health of activities that occur on or around the Severn Estuary.

The organisations that attend the meeting agree to:

1. Work in collaboration to identify, prepare and respond to existing, new and emerging diseases and health threats along the Severn Estuary.
2. Develop cross boundary liaison between the Health Protection Agency, Environment Agency and the National Public Health Service for Wales, around the defined boundary of the Severn.
3. Establish clear routes of communication for routine and out of hours public health enquiries and incidents relating to the Severn Estuary.
4. To inform and update on regional environment and health issues that may or will impact on neighbouring regions.

SEHELG meet 3 times a year. The meeting is hosted on a rotational basis between the various partners.

*Contact: Eirian A Thomas, Regional Environmental Health Adviser, Health Protection Agency (South West) Tel: 01453 829993 Email: [Eirian.thomas@hpa.org.uk](mailto:Eirian.thomas@hpa.org.uk)*



# Celebrating the Severn...

## 1st Severn Estuary Forum - a sellout!

June 2006 saw the first Severn Estuary Forum with a theme of 'Changing Tides and Times: the future of the Severn Estuary.'



Excellent speakers from organisations such as the Welsh Assembly Government, the National Oceanographic Centre, the SW Climate Change

Impacts Partnership, WWF and the Bristol Port Company provided the opportunity for 140 people from a wide range of organisations to discuss engaging issues of common interest. These included celebrating the Severn Estuary, how it maybe affected by climate change, renewable energy and flood risk. Attendees to the Forum described it as engaging, thought provoking and a 'great day for £25'.

After the Forum over half of the delegates joined a further 300 people on board the Waverley as it cruised between Penarth and Clevedon on a balmy June afternoon. MPs and local Cllrs joined the discussions to learn more about the estuary. The cruise marked the culmination of the Severn Wonders Festival and 1st Severn Estuary Forum.

Natasha Barker, the Severn Estuary Partnership Officer, was enthused about the positive and lively atmosphere that the Forum and Waverley cruise created and was encouraged by delegates to hold the Forum on an annual basis.

So, the Severn Estuary Forum will be held again this year on Thursday 7th June with the theme of 'working together'. It is hoped to attract even more people to the Forum than last year, particularly representatives from industries and community groups around the Severn Estuary.



## Severn Wonders Festival

A new estuary-wide festival branded as 'Severn Wonders' took place in the lead up to the 1st Severn Estuary Forum in 2006. Over 40 different clubs and organisations hosted activities or events which carried the Severn Wonders label. From guided walks, children's activity days, regattas and angling competitions to the Bristol Festival of Nature, there was something for everyone. The 3 week festival culminated in a display of the events on board the Waverley for the Severn Wonders cruise.

The Severn Wonders festival marked the beginning of a new era for the Severn Estuary Partnership; to increase opportunities for local clubs and interest groups to use the partnership's services and the Severn Wonders brand to help promote local estuary-related events and activities.

**For further information please contact the Severn Estuary Partnership office.**

# Severn Wonders



# New Publications



**Bristol Channel Shipping Memories** by Andrew Wiltshire.  
Hardcover: 80 pages

A superb all colour photo album depicting a wide variety of ships, large and small, that visited the Bristol Channel ports in the years 1966 to 1973. Starting at Swansea in the west and travelling east

and crossing to Bristol and Avonmouth, each high quality image has an extensive and informative caption. From tankers to tugs and colliers to general cargo vessels this new book contains 97 colour photos and 80 pages in a hardback landscape format. It's available for £15.00 from <http://www.xkeys.free-online.co.uk/xkeys/bookshop/misc.htm>

## The Severn Estuary – its wildlife and you

The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) in conjunction with the Severn Estuary Partnership, has produced a new leaflet and poster highlighting the 50,000 visitors that come to the estuary every winter. These visitors are in fact birds, and arrive from all over the world.

The leaflet shows how people can appreciate the migrating birds without having a negative impact on them or their habitat. It highlights what people, who live, work and play around the estuary, can do to help ensure the birds come back each year. The leaflet and poster is being distributed to libraries and visitor centres all around the estuary. English and Welsh electronic copies of the leaflet and accompanying poster are available at: <http://www.severnestuary.net/asera/pubs.html>



## New Guidance Notes for Decision-Makers and Planners now available

New guidance notes for planners and decision-makers have been produced by the Severn Estuary Partnership in conjunction with the statutory authorities and South Gloucestershire Council. European funding through the 'Coastatlantic' project made this work possible.

### Archaeology

**The Archaeology of the Severn Estuary – a guide for planners, developers, decision makers and local communities** provides a wonderful insight to the history of the estuary. It illustrates a range of archaeological finds that have been revealed by previous development activity and shows just how much potential there is for new discoveries. Steps to follow when planning development or reviewing activities and proposals are given, to ensure careful consideration of the archaeological potential in and around the estuary.

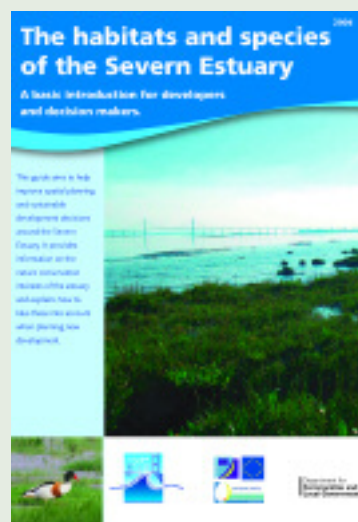
### Habitats and Species

**The Habitats and Species of the Severn Estuary - a basic introduction for developers and decision-makers** explains the nature conservation designations and designated features of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). It shows why the Severn Estuary requires special attention when considering plans for development activity.

### Local Produce

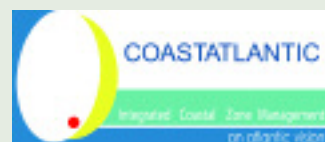
**Promoting Local Produce – innovative ways to conserve and enhance the cherished landscapes and habitats of the Severn Estuary and Levels** is an innovative guide to help promote our local economy. With examples from across the Atlantic coast of Europe, South Gloucestershire Council show how we can help promote the local economy by buying local produce. The guidance note is accompanied by an interactive local food website pilot project to apply lessons learned: [www.southgloslocalfood.org](http://www.southgloslocalfood.org)

The guidance note provides advice and recommendations for hosting local food forums, food quality marques, branding, cooperatives, food festivals, events and centres of excellence.



All three guidance notes are available from the SEP Office.

Department for  
**Communities and  
Local Government**



# The 1607 Flood - 400 years on!

**Around 9 o'clock in the morning on 30th January 1607 the sea inundated the coastal lowlands around the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary surprising the inhabitants and leaving behind a scene of destruction and tragedy, such as depicted in woodcuts of the day.**

This event remains the worst historic land-based natural disaster to hit the British Isles, so understanding what caused it and the implications for present and future populations in the region is important.

Bath Spa University organised a sell-out public forum to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the event at the University of Wales, Newport campus at Caerleon in January. Public interest in the 1607 flood was stimulated by research undertaken by Professor Simon Haslett (Bath Spa University) and Dr Ted Bryant (University of Wollongong), who theorised that the flood may have been caused by a tsunami. Their theory was portrayed in a BBC2 Timewatch programme *Killer wave of 1607* in 2005, shortly after the tragic Asian tsunami. The 400th anniversary event also attracted a lot of media attention and was an opportunity to inform the public on coastal flooding in general.

The basis of the tsunami theory included a re-reading of contemporary accounts that suggest the weather may not have been stormy and that a wave inundated the lowlands travelling as fast as a greyhound could run and penetrating up to 4 miles inland. Also, physical evidence, that indicates a high energy event,

exists in the coastal landscape that possesses a chronological link to the early 17th century, such as the almost complete removal of pre-17th century salt marsh, erosion of spurs of agricultural land, and transport and deposition of coarse sediment in an otherwise muddy environment.



The tsunami theory is hotly contested and the public forum provided an opportunity for the controversy to be aired. Other scientists consider a storm surge to be a more appropriate interpretation of the event, and estimate that if a similar flood occurred today then it would cost £13 billion!

*Simon Haslett, Quaternary Research Centre, Bath Spa University*

## Events of 1607

'Flood 400' is a church and community partnership set up in 2006 to commemorate the 'Great Flood of 1607' in 2007. The villages of Redwick, Nash and Goldcliff and their communities along the shoreline of the Severn Estuary, have traditional rural communities which were significantly affected by the flood.

The 1607 flood was a significant natural disaster during which hundreds of lives were lost, homes destroyed and thousands of acres of farmland destroyed, depriving local people of a livelihood and an income. This disaster affected most of the South Wales coast, along with parts of Gloucestershire, Somerset and North Devon.

A commemorative religious service was held on the actual anniversary of the 'Great Flood' - January 30th 2007 - with the Bishop of Bath & Wells. A packed church, including local people, civic dignitaries & local schools, gathered to commemorate the great loss of life & the affect it had on these local communities. The service was a fitting tribute, incorporating aspects of church liturgy from the 17th century as well as more contemporary ones.

A series of events are taking place throughout 2007 under the banner of 'Flood 400' focused around the only public buildings in these communities; the church, village hall & public houses. Events include lectures, exhibitions, religious services, school visits, guided tours & walks, etc. The culmination of these events will be a festival weekend which will include heritage exhibitions, a flower & craft festival, guided tours, audio visual displays, guest speakers and choral & music concerts. Local schools are involved in the planning and creation of 'Flood 400'. The anniversary presents a unique occasion to use our actual local history from 400 years ago to commemorate and communicate fundamental questions for people & society today.

'Flood 400' events will be held throughout 2007. **Flood 400 festival weekend** will take place between **24th – 28th May 2007** at the churches in Redwick, Nash & Goldcliff & at Redwick Village Hall. Contact: [richardjones@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:richardjones@churchinwales.org.uk) to receive e-mail notification of all Flood 400 events.

*Richard Jones, Flood 400 Planning Group – 2007*



# Climate Change

## BBC coverage

### for the Severn

A workshop on 'Climate Change & the Severn Estuary' was hosted by Cardiff University and the Severn Estuary Partnership in Bristol on 29th January 2007. BBC Bristol featured the workshop on the Points West evening news and the Sunday Politics Show. Local planners and professionals met with scientists and academics that specialise in climate change research, to consider how to share efforts to plan for

the affects of climate change around the Severn. Detailed presentations were followed by interactive sessions to explore collaborative opportunities. The group will meet again during the Severn Estuary Forum in June. There will be an opportunity to hear more about this work at an international conference on climate change and the coast, to be held in Cardiff this summer – further information: [www.coastnet.org.uk](http://www.coastnet.org.uk)

## New Interpretation Panels Unveiled

### Local School Children helped celebrate new estuary panels

To mark the importance of migratory birds within the estuary, two new interpretation panels have recently been installed at Severn Beach and New Passage in South Gloucestershire. They have been funded through the Severn Estuary Partnership to highlight the important habitats around the estuary which support so much wildlife and so many people. Members of the local Parish Council and South Gloucestershire Council were joined by pupils of the local Primary School to celebrate the unveiling of the new interpretation panels. The unveiling was followed by a bird watching session in the company of local Ornithologist Rupert Higgins from Wessex Ecological Consultants. South Gloucestershire Council are looking into the feasibility of setting up a local nature reserve in this area.

Similar interpretation panels have also been prepared by the Severn Estuary Partnership working with Newport City Council for the Gwent Levels. They were also funded through the Coastatlantic project with match funding from EC Interreg and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The SEP are keen to assist other communities and local authorities provide interpretation panels around the estuary.



## Points of View

### Tidal Power in the UK Project

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), with funding contributions from Wales and the South-West region, are expecting to issue results of a new study on the tidal power potential of the UK, in early summer 2007. The SDC have sought advice from the SEP on Severn Estuary stakeholders and to participate in their stakeholder engagement programme. It is hoped that preliminary results of the work will be presented at the Severn Estuary Forum in June and disseminated through the SEP's communication services. This study is expected to further inform the debate over renewable energy options for the Severn Estuary including a Severn Barrage and other tidal power technology options. The need for communication of information and estuary-wide co-operation is clearly highlighted by this work. For further information contact: [karla.hill@sd-commission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:karla.hill@sd-commission.gsi.gov.uk)

### Marine Bill and ICZM Strategies

Consultation initiated by central governments' Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) last March is progressing to a White Paper for a Marine Bill in March 2007. The Severn Estuary Partnership Officer provided views on behalf of the SEP last year after a presentation by Defra's Marine Bill team at the Joint Advisory Committee and a workshop during the Severn Estuary Forum. Following this, Defra issued their consultation on Promoting and integrated approach to management of the coastal zone (ICZM) in England. A response was issued by the Estuary Officer with the input of the SEP's Management Group last September. Copies of both responses are available from the SEP office. The Welsh Assembly Government have produced a draft ICZM Strategy and are working with Defra in discussions over the Marine Bill. For further information email: [ICZM@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ICZM@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/marine/uk/policy/marine-bill/index.htm> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/iczm-strategy/index.htm> [http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env\\_cons\\_management/](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/env_cons_management/)

# News in Brief...

## Estuary Round-up

### Partnership News

A new marketing brochure is now available to promote awareness of the Severn Estuary Partnership's services to government, industry, researchers and the community. This is backed up by the SEP's Business Plan 2006-09 which is now in full swing. The Annual Report for 2007-08 will be available in the Spring at the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee in April. The SEP team moved office within Cardiff University during September to 49B Park Place, whilst still being hosted by the School of Earth, Ocean & Planetary Sciences. SEP project activity has been consolidated at the conclusion of funding from the 3 year EC funded Coastatlantic project but we remain involved in the EC Corepoint project through Cardiff University. A priority for SEP now is to strengthen its services and secure its local resources as we help to inform future marine spatial planning proposals in the government's Marine Bill. Plans are well underway for the 2nd Severn Estuary Forum so we look forward to seeing you there!

**Contact: Natasha Barker at the SEP office**  
**on Tel: 029 20874713 or**  
**Email: [severn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:severn@cardiff.ac.uk).**

### ASERA update

ASERA has now produced a leaflet, 'Sharing the Severn Estuary - it's wildlife and you'. It explains that the Severn Estuary is part of a European network of nature conservation sites known as Natura 2000 - your nature which is special in a European context. These sites try to put people at the heart of nature conservation and are about 'people and nature', not nature without people.

It explains how you can help our winter visitors; the birds that fly from the Russian tundra and Scandinavia, by following some basic codes when out on and walking around the estuary.

Copies of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area leaflet and poster are available from the Severn Estuary Partnership office.

**Contact: Steve Knowles on**  
**[knowless@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:knowless@cardiff.ac.uk) or**  
**029 20 879111.**

**Copies are also available on the web site:**  
**<http://www.severnestuary.net/asera/pubs>**

### Severn Estuary Coastal Group

The Severn Estuary Coastal Group was formed in 1993 to undertake the production of the first Severn Estuary Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). A non-technical summary is available on the SECG website ([www.severnestuary.net/secg/index.html](http://www.severnestuary.net/secg/index.html)). The time has now come to produce a new SMP for the Severn. This SMP2 will assess the risk of floods and erosion around the estuary and identify policies to manage these risks over the next 100 years. The production of the second SMP will be able to utilise new information and data, such as, the Severn Estuary Coastal Habitat Management Plan, the FutureCoast study and the Foresight Future Flooding study, along with other scientific research that has been carried out on the estuary. This strong scientific evidence-base, along with lessons learnt, revised guidance, Defra's Making Space for Water strategy and the Welsh Assembly Government's Environment Strategy, will inform and guide the development sustainable coastal polices on Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management for the future of the Severn Estuary. The group will be inviting views and comments on the plan and it is expected to be produced in early 2010. **Contact the group's secretary Wendy Dodds at [doddsww1@cf.ac.uk](mailto:doddsww1@cf.ac.uk).**

### COREPOINT Project Update

The EC Coastal Research and Policy Integration – COREPOINT project is now well underway. Cardiff University are working with the Severn Estuary Partnership on several ground-breaking projects. A new maritime education pack is being produced working with schools and museums. A seminar was held in Bristol in January bringing together scientists and policy makers interested in

climate change research informing planning and management of the estuary. Feedback and the way forwards for this new Severn Estuary Climate Change Advisory Group will be explored at the Severn Estuary Forum in June. Last autumn a workshop for local planners was held in Clevedon to explore ways of collaborating over requirements for strategic environmental assessment of plans and projects. A follow-up workshop is being planned for Spring 2007. This and other work is helping to inform the project team give advise to the European Commission on best practice of integrated coastal zone management in north-west Europe.

**Contact:**

**Dr Rhoda Ballinger at Cardiff University.**  
**Email: [Ballingerrc@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Ballingerrc@cardiff.ac.uk) or**  
**Tel: 029 20 874000**

### Les Estuariales Network

The SEP are currently hosting the Secretariat for this European network of cross-border estuaries. Members of the network gathered after the Severn Estuary Forum in June 2006 for a meeting in Clevedon. In the Autumn a workshop for existing and potential members was run at the bi-annual Littoral conference in Poland followed by the new Polish partners hosting the annual conference on the Oder estuary. Plans are being put into place for the next meeting in Lisbon, Portugal before the SEP hands over the Secretariat to another member at the end of 2007. Local authorities around the Severn Estuary are demonstrating to other estuaries around Europe how to work together through an estuary-wide Strategy and Partnership services. **Contact: Natasha Barker at the SEP office**  
**on Tel: 029 20874713 or**  
**Email: [severn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:severn@cardiff.ac.uk).**



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[www.severnestuary.net/sep](http://www.severnestuary.net/sep)



## Coming up...

**Estuary Groups Day &  
SEP Joint Advisory Committee**

**24th April 2007**

**Severn Estuary Forum**

**7th June 2007**