



SevernTidings

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Photo of the Year
credit – © Gavin Evans





WELCOME

John Harrison
Chairman of the Severn Estuary Partnership

Welcome to the 2022 edition of Severn Tidings. I hope you find the articles interesting, and they give you useful insights into our work and that of our partners.

The past few years have presented unprecedented challenges for everyone across the estuary and recent events are only adding to these challenges at a local and global level. Reduced water quality and quantity are two key challenges along with the need to secure sustainable sources of energy to limit the impacts of climate change.

Partnership working is vital to addressing these challenges, a key priority for the Severn Estuary Partnership. In this issue we outline how we have enhanced our links with the Bristol and Avon Catchment Partnership, Severn Rivers Trust and the Somerset Catchment Partnership.

Core to the work of the Severn Estuary Partnership are the working groups. Updates in Severn Tidings explain how they help deliver a unified approach to climate change and flood risk, marine pollution incidents and protection of designated habitats.

The Severn Estuary Partnership team have been working hard to promote opportunities to influence new policy and strategic forums such as the Western Gateway and the Motion for the Rivers and Ocean by Monmouthshire. In particular, how cross-border planning is crucial to their future success.

It is pleasing to read about the growing number of successful projects which are taking action on the ground (or in water!), all driven by partnership working with local communities. Two good examples being the Flatholm project and the Litter free Coast and Sea Somerset project. These are providing new opportunities for people to enjoy the benefits of the estuary and care for their local environment.

Whenever I travel around the estuary, I am always fascinated how different it looks from different viewpoints, different tides and weather conditions. Our monthly E-news photographs taken by amateur photographers (some included here in Severn Tidings) help showcase the stunning beauty of the estuary and its wildlife. Sustaining these special ecosystems will benefit people now and future generations.

Finally, I would like to thank Cardiff University for their support in providing the Severn Estuary Partnership with a strong foundation over the past 27 years and we look forward to many more years of successful partnership working. Central to this success has been one outstanding individual, Dr Rhoda Ballinger. Her enthusiasm, dedication and knowledge have made a real difference as well as inspiring many students and professionals working across the estuary. Thank you Rhoda.



Dr Rhoda Ballinger

Severn Estuary Partnership Update

Alys Morris, Severn Estuary Partnership Manager

The last 12 months have been busy for SEP, despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19, we have continued to support the Estuary groups, engaging with stakeholders and communities on both sides of the Estuary and providing up to the minute information about the Estuary using a range of social media outlets including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as well as our monthly e-newsletter.

In recent months we have seen a slow return to some face-to-face meetings, enabling us to hold our first in person Joint Estuary Day in Gloucestershire earlier this year. This year also marks the return of our first in-person forum since 2019, which this year will be held in Bristol on the 12th October, showcasing an exciting range of speakers representing some of the projects and research happening across the Estuary.

Our new Strategic Business Plan is due to be launched in January 2023, setting out the aims and ambitions of the Partnership and guiding our activity over the next 5 years (2023-2027). We have also welcomed back North Somerset and Monmouthshire as active members of our Management Group and are delighted to have their input, steering the work of the Partnership moving forwards.

The Partnership Team continue to work as an active member of Wales Coasts and Seas Partnership to develop Wales's Blue Recovery and in England, as part of the Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN), we continue to provide valuable cross-border input to the development of national plans and strategies.

The SEP Team

Over the past 12 months SEP has welcomed three new team members. Daisy Blyth joined the SEP Team in September 2021 as Communication and Engagement Officer, predominantly working on the Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset Project. Daisy is responsible for the day-to-day running and communications of the Litter Free project. Together with local communities and partners, she works on

We are pleased to award Gavin Evans with 'SEP Photo of the Year 2022'! If you have a Severn Estuary related photo that you would like to submit for Photo of the Month, please send your images to severn@cf.ac.uk, or tag us on Twitter (@SevernEstuary), Instagram (@SevernEstuary) or Facebook (Severn Estuary Partnership).

Our Contributors:

At SEP, our key role is to keep all our stakeholders informed of project developments and proposals that are happening within, or will have an impact on the Severn Estuary. In this edition, we are delighted to have contributions and viewpoints from a wide variety of estuary groups, projects and organisations:

The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, Severn Estuary Coastal Group, Cardiff University, Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset, Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership, The Flat Holm Project, Severn Rivers Trust, Western Gateway, Monmouthshire County Council, Severn Vision Project, The Bristol Port Company, Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area and the (Future) Wales Coast Path.

We would be interested to hear your views on the wide range of topics featured in this edition. Please get in touch by emailing severn@cf.ac.uk

behaviour change and engagement projects focused on bathing water quality and marine litter along the Somerset coast. Daisy also supports the SEP team with events planning and secretariat responsibilities.

This summer we also welcomed Jacob Kevern, who will be working as Coastal Officer, playing a key role in contributing to the successful delivery of the work of the Severn Estuary Coastal Group and the Wales Coastal Groups Forum, working with stakeholders (at a regional and national level) to advocate for improved coastal risk management policy, raise awareness of coastal processes, plan for change and manage some specific coastal projects.

And finally, we welcomed Lucy Iley in June 2022. Lucy, is currently studying Environmental Geography at Cardiff University and is undertaking a Professional Training Year Placement with the Severn Estuary Partnership, providing invaluable assistance across our portfolio of work and gaining valuable access to professional expertise and real-world learning.

Project Development

Over the last 12 months we've continued to develop our flagship Litter Free Coast and Seas Somerset project (find out more on page 6), working with fantastic groups of partners and volunteers to expand the project across Somerset. We've also had the chance to be part of

a number of projects, funded through the Environment Agencies Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) initiative, working with the Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN) to co-design recommendations for a national framework, to streamline the communication and implementation of Government strategies for a wholescale approach to management across catchment, coast, and marine environments. We have also worked with partners around the River Severn catchments, estuary and coast to explore issues and opportunities for greater collaboration. And finally exploring opportunities to turn the Severn Vision into a deliverable framework for action; one which maximises nature restoration, climate mitigation and adaptation benefits for the whole Severn Estuary.

We have also been involved in a number of projects with ASERA and the Wales Partnership of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) over the last year, including working on the content and launch of the Wales Coast Explorer App with Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (find out more on page 5), investigating the impact of Covid-19 on litter picking groups across Wales and working to standardise marine codes across the five largest MPAs in Wales. There are more exciting projects in the pipeline for this group, so do look out for



updates in our monthly e-newsletter.

Beach Cleans

This year, as well as our annual Big Beach Clean event in September, the Partnership hosted our first ever Severn Estuary Spring Clean to align with the Keep Wales Tidy Spring Clean events and in partnership with Marine Conservation Society and their Beachwatch initiative. Over the past year we have worked to develop stronger links with Catchment Partnerships around the Severn Estuary in order to tackle the issue of litter on a whole catchment scale. We hope that by encouraging local litter picking groups from all across the Severn catchment that we can shine a light on the incredible positive impact that litter picking has on reducing the flow of litter into our estuaries and seas, whether that is inland or on the coast!

We have also been working with Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and ASERA to collate beach cleaning guidance designed to protect the special features of the Severn Estuary, incorporating guidance from the 'Wildlife-friendly beach clean' guide that was created by the Final Straw Foundation, Bird Aware Solent, Marine Conservation Society and The 2 Minute Foundation. The guidance focuses on reducing disturbance to habitats and species at the coast. To find out more, visit our website.



An Estuary Round Up

The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA)

Katie Havard-Smith, ASERA Officer

ASERA is made up of the statutory organisations around the Severn



Estuary that collectively manage their activities on the Severn Estuary European Marine Site (EMS). The Severn Estuary EMS incorporates the marine areas of both the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), protected under the Habitats Regulations.

The current ASERA Management Scheme for the Severn Estuary EMS runs from 2018 to 2023 and provides a mechanism for Relevant Authorities to set the framework within which their activities will be managed to achieve the nature conservation objectives of the site. It considers whether activities are causing adverse effects and, if so, how such activities can be regulated by Relevant Authorities to prevent damage to the designated features of the EMS. With the current Management Scheme due to expire in 2023, a new 5-year Scheme is being developed and will be implemented by 2024.

ASERA has updated the Good Practice Guidelines for recreational activities taking place within the Severn Estuary EMS. These are published on the ASERA website (www.asera.org.uk) in both English and Welsh and are being promoted across the estuary. Turn to page 11 for more information on the purpose of the guidelines and the activities they cover.

The most recent ASERA AGM was held in November 2021. At the AGM, Dr James Stewart, of Devon & Severn IFCA was elected to remain in position as Chair of the Association and Management Group for a term of one year. Anne Hayes and Louise Hemmings (both of the Bristol Port Company) were elected to remain in their respective roles as Vice-Chair and Honorary Treasurer of the Association.

For more information, please contact the ASERA Officer, Katie Havard-Smith, at severn@cardiff.ac.uk or visit our website at www.asera.org.uk.

Severn Estuary Coastal Group Update

John Buttivant, Severn Estuary Coastal Group Chair

The Severn Estuary Coastal Group has a core membership of local authorities and statutory agencies (such as Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency) and covers the Severn Estuary coastline from Lavernock Point up to Gloucester and back down to Anchor Head in North Somerset. The group is responsible for producing and maintaining the Severn Estuary Shoreline Management Plan and the associated Action Plan. The Severn Estuary Coastal Group facilitates an exchange of information, knowledge, research and best practice between its members who all have interests in managing the flood and coastal erosion risks around the estuary and its interaction with the natural and built environment.



Following lessons learnt from 2019 and the impacts of Covid-19, the majority of meetings are held and hosted via Teams allowing members to attend with no lost time travelling, reduced costs and minimising the groups carbon footprint. Usually, one meeting annually will be face to face, facilitating networking, offering the chance for detailed discussions and site visits.

The Group has recently welcomed a new Coastal Officer Jacob Kevern who was employed by the Severn Estuary Partnership in August 2022. As a recent graduate from Cardiff University, Jacob has a keen interest in the coastal processes occurring in the estuary and will be supporting the coastal group in liaising with local authorities and key organisations that share an interest in shoreline management around the Severn Estuary. A joint appointment between

the Severn Estuary Coastal Group and the Wales Coastal Group Forum, Jacob's role will focus on the implementation of the Shoreline Management Plan Refresh (SMPr) programme in England and stakeholder engagement (at a regional and national level) to advocate for improved coastal risk management policy, raise awareness of coastal processes, plan for change and manage some specific coastal projects.

School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Cardiff University

Dr Emma McKinley

It has been another busy year since the last update from EARTH for Severn Tidings! Work on the CCAT project, which focused on coastal



community adaptation to a changing climate and coast, finished in February 2022. All outputs from the project, including a report on community perceptions of climate change, and the project's online event series can still be accessed on the CCAT website.

SEP have been working closely with Dr Emma McKinley, supporting two key projects. The first, funded by the Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources programme, explores the importance of diverse relationships, connections and values and thinks about how these can be better integrated into management and decision-making. Led by the University of Portsmouth, the Diverse Values Project runs until Summer 2024, with Chepstow selected as a case study – highlighting the importance of the wider Severn Estuary catchment and the Estuary itself as a gateway to the coast and ocean. More information about the project can be found at www.smmr.org.uk/

Throughout 2022, Emma has also been working with Alison Neighbour on the Arts Council Wales funded project, The Future Wales Coast Path, which has adopted a wide range of creative approaches to engage communities in Magor and Newport on issues relating to their changing coast.

Following a successful programme of summer events, the project is coming to its end later this Autumn with events planned for October, more information about the project can be found at Futurecoastpath.org/events/

As in previous years, SEP have been successful in co-applying for funding to support two student research placements

over the summer months. Focusing on the importance of the Severn Estuary as a recreational space and for wellbeing, and exploring the concept of ocean literacy among communities around the Estuary, the results of these projects will be available later in the Autumn. Get in touch with Emma McKinley on mckinleye1@cardiff.ac.uk for more information.

Finally, with a new Head of School, this is a chance to thank Professor Ian Hall for his support and encouragement for the ongoing partnership between EARTH and SEP and to welcome Dr Jennifer Pike as the new Head of School. We're excited to look to the future and continue these successful collaborations.

Wales Coast Explorer | Crywdro Arfordir Cymru: Become a Wales Coast Explorer with us!

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum

Explore the Welsh coast with the new, free Wales Coast Explorer | Crywdro Arfordir Cymru App.

From dramatic rocky cliffs to wide open beaches, Wales is a nation shaped by the sea. We invite you to discover this wonderful marine environment. Enjoy the rich experiences that it has to offer and help to maintain its wild and pristine nature by respecting it.

From our land, through our estuaries, to our seas, take the coastline in your pocket with the app's handy features:

- Explore: Discover ancient sites and learn how to enjoy Welsh coasts.
- Identify: Plants and animals and other wildlife!
- Record: Become a citizen scientist by sharing your sightings.

This free app is the result of a collaboration between Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum and the network of managers who look after

Wales' special Marine Protected Areas, and other partners. These Marine Protected Areas are the go-to places to spot dolphins, seals and other amazing Welsh wildlife, as well as being home to shipwrecks, ancient forts and other fascinating archaeology.

This app builds on the popular Pembrokeshire Marine Code App, helping people to understand how to avoid disturbing wildlife and damaging habitats, while still enjoying the sights Wales has to offer.

Use the app to identify the wildlife you see on your trip, whether you want to spot the difference between a dolphin and a porpoise or identify invasive species.

The app even allows photos and reports of your wildlife sightings to be shared to local biodiversity information centres. This helps to build a national picture of where our biodiversity is thriving – and where it is less so.

What's more, use the app to find archaeological discoveries like lost shipwrecks, submerged forests and other historical sites. Record your maritime

archaeology finds, helping the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales to understand the condition of our ancient sites.

As we escape to the coast for our holidays and adventures, discover the real Wales – and enjoy it even more. Your companion for all your Wales coast exploration, whether you are dolphin spotting or walking the Wales Coast path, adventuring by kayak or rockpooling on our sandy shores.

The app is available on IOS and Android devices from your App Store.

From our land, through our estuaries, to our seas – become a Wales Coast Explorer.



The Future is Green for Bristol Port



THE BRISTOL
PORT COMPANY

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bristolport.co.uk

Litter Free Coast & Sea Somerset: Project Update

Daisy Blyth, Project Officer

Litter Free Coast & Sea Somerset (LFCSS) is the flagship project of the Severn Estuary Partnership. Working together with local communities, the project aims to protect bathing water quality and reduce beach and marine litter in Somerset.

Following the success of the campaign in Burnham-on-Sea, LFCSS has expanded to incorporate four more bathing waters in West Somerset. These new focus areas are Minehead, Porlock Weir, Dunster and Blue

Anchor. We are pleased that there are plenty of active community groups already tackling litter and single-use plastics around West Somerset and it has been brilliant to form new partnerships with lots of local groups and organisations.

The past year has been an exciting time for LFCSS, with highlights including the return of in-person engagement events and the expansion of our new school award!



We are thankful for all of the volunteers, community groups and organisations who have supported the project.

southwest.coastalmonitoring.org

LFCSS Project Timeline



Somerset School Coastal Champions

The Somerset School Coastal Champions award was launched in 2021 in collaboration with Somerset Wildlife Trust and Carymoor Environmental Trust. The award aims to connect young people with their local coastal environment and help them understand how to help protect it. It is made up of three levels (Ripple, Roller and Crest), each of which contain actions relating to waste, water and nature.

We are delighted to have 19 schools around Somerset signed up, with one school who has already completed all three levels! Dunster First School, as seen below with their certificate, have worked through a huge variety of actions ranging from trips to the beach to learning about why fats, oils, and greases shouldn't go down the drain, and even writing to the prime minister about plastic pollution! We are looking forward to seeing the rest of our 'Coastal Champions' schools progressing through the award over the next year.



Dunster First School with their Coastal Champions award
© Jacqui Turton





Beach Cleaning Groups

Clearing litter from our beaches and surrounding areas has been a crucial aspect of the project since it began in 2016. We are proud to support a number of beach cleaning groups including the Friends of Burnham Beach and the Friends of Berrow beach, who have now both been active for over 4 years.

More recently, we have been working with the Plastic Free Communities in West Somerset, who operate in Minehead, Porlock, Watchet and Exmoor. We are pleased to be working with the groups on a variety of projects – not only do we support their beach cleans, we also collaborate on a number of projects aiming to reduce litter in the area. For example, this has included the installation of 2minute litter pick boards and the creation of resources for local businesses.

2Minute Boards

We have been supporting the 2minute foundation and now have 5 litter pick boards around Somerset, with the newest boards placed at Porlock Visitor Centre and Dunster National Park Centre. They have had a great response, both from the local community and from visitors to the area, and we hope that they encourage more people to give litter picking a try!

Trommel

We are also lucky enough to own some specialised beach cleaning kit. Our Nurdle Trommel, which filters microplastics from the sand, has been out and about around Somerset this year. The trommel is currently in the care of Minehead Coast & Development Trust and has been used regularly on Minehead beach over summer



Nurdle Trommel on Minehead Beach © Peter Hoyland



Don't Poop and Run Stencil © Emily Wordley



Somerset Poo Fighters volunteer © David Newman

Dog Fouling

Following the success of the LFCSS 'Don't Poop and Run' campaign and the establishment of the Somerset Poo Fighters group, we have continued to spread the message about dog fouling. Thanks to the help of our volunteers, we have been able to run more dog fouling surveys with stencilling and spraying work around Burnham-on-Sea. Some of our dedicated volunteers carry on with this work in their free time to continue reminding dog walkers of the importance of clearing up after their dogs.

What next for Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset?

Over the next 2 years, we are looking forward to working with the local communities in Dunster and Blue Anchor to continue to spread our litter free messages. We are working on some new campaigns, including a recycling scheme for angling line which will soon be in place at local harbours and beaches. We also hope to see the success of the Coastal Champions award continue and are looking forward to seeing more amazing work from our Somerset schools!

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the project, please get in touch at litterfreesomerset@gmail.com.

Natural and Historic Environment

The Severn Estuary is rich, both in history and biodiversity. The articles written on these pages illustrate just some of the magnificent work our partners do to help preserve, display, and enrich the area in and around the Estuary.

Working in Partnership to improve the Bristol Avon Catchment

Siobhan Lamb, Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership Officer

The Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership (BACP) was established in 2012, backed by the Defra-led national Catchment Based Approach initiative. The partnership now works with a wide range of organisations and communities to facilitate and support the delivery of partnership projects to improve the rivers and streams that feed into the Bristol Avon, joining the Severn Estuary at Avonmouth.

An updated version of the BACP Catchment Plan was published in March 2022 on the newly launched BACP website. The Catchment Plan provides a useful steer for all partners, providing agreed guidance for how



we can continue to collaborate to improve water quality, restore biodiversity, adapt and build resilience to climate change and enhance people's enjoyment of the water environment.

The BACP supports an active group of partners, over the past 3 years their hard work and commitment has resulted with some great partnership programmes being developed. For example, the Frome Catchment Innovation Programme was 1 of 25 national projects to be granted funding from Defra to use a mix of flood resilience measures in the Bristol Frome catchment to help build resilience to climate change.

During 2021/22 the BACP launched a 'Communities Grant' as part of the Catchment Partnership Fund. The partnership is keen to



support and enable communities to improve their local rivers and streams. We look forward to building our working relationships with the Severn Estuary Partners in the coming years.

To find out more or subscribe to the BACP newsletter please visit our website:

www.bristolavoncatchment.co.uk

An Update from Severn Rivers Trust

Alice Fallon, Head of Community Engagement and Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Severn Rivers Trust is an independent charity working for a healthy, resilient River Severn for everyone. And what a busy year we've had! September 2022 marks our first ever Big River Clean Up, running in conjunction with Severn Estuary Partnership's Big Beach Clean. We are bringing together communities from around the freshwater catchments to take action and prevent harmful litter from reaching the estuary and the sea.

We have launched the Guilsfield Demonstrator Project, funded through the River Severn Partnership. This work aims to reduce flooding through hydrology modelling that improves how water on farms is managed. We have been working on a

number of fish pass projects in both rural and urban locations including a new fish pass being installed on the river Stour at Carters Mill weir in Kidderminster.

During the 2022 migration season, 725 twaite shad fish and 940 sea lamprey were recorded using the huge fish pass installed at Diglis in Worcester as part of the Unlocking the Severn project. Fish have been tagged and tracked to reveal more about how they move between the ocean, estuary and river habitats. Over 5,000 visitors have come to see the unique underwater viewing gallery which was opened in 2021 by HRH The Princess Royal.

We have been working with volunteers on several exciting Citizen Science projects. We have recently started establishing SmartRivers Hubs where volunteers collect and categorise invertebrate data that helps



us investigate the river's health. Volunteers have also been supporting fish counts and collecting eDNA samples. We will be expanding this programme under the Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative (CaSTCo) project which is all about empowering local people to take part in river monitoring.

A Walk Through Time with Flat Holm

Stacey Richards, Community Engagement Officer

A Walk Through Time is a National Lottery Heritage Funded Project, based on Flat Holm, an iconic location in the Bristol Channel



visible from both the English and Welsh coasts. As well as building restoration and improving conservation and visitor numbers on the island, a large part of the project aims to strengthen the relationship people have with the nature and heritage of Flat Holm and to bring the island to life on the mainland, in Cardiff and at locations around the Severn Estuary.

On both sides of the Severn Estuary the project will deliver multisensory community workshops and education sessions, using audio and visual technology as well as island artefacts to bring the stories of Flat Holm to life. These sessions will be complemented by memory cafés encouraging a diverse

audience to share and record their memories, photographs, and family stories of Flat Holm.

We are also actively looking to increase our number of volunteers working to support mainland community sessions and events as well as assisting the island warden with conservation and maintenance on the island.

If you can help, contact us on: **stacey.richards3@cardiff.gov.uk** or keep up to date on social media:-

www.facebook.com/flatholm

Twitter - @flatholmers

Instagram - @flatholmisland

Planning, Development and Governance

Planning, development and governance dictate how we use the Severn Estuary and its natural resources for years to come. The many innovative projects that are happening all around the Estuary are helping to shape its future.

The Western Gateway Partnership

– your powerhouse working for a greener, fairer future

James Cooke, Deputy Director

What is the Western Gateway?

Given Government recognition in 2019, the Western Gateway is the Pan-Regional Partnership for South Wales and Western England, representing 4.4million people and a combined economy worth £107bn.

What started as a collaboration between the cities of Bristol, Cardiff and Newport to work on shared priorities has grown and now stretches from Swansea to Swindon.

The Partnership brings together local authorities with businesses and research to help reach net zero and attract big opportunities that can make a real difference and create economic growth.

Decisions are made together by council leaders alongside business and research representatives.

Already the partnership is leading a bid to bring the UK's first prototype fusion energy plant to the Severn Edge site at Oldbury & Berkeley (creating over 30,000 jobs). It has



launched the Western Gateway Hydrogen Ecosystem to drive investment in the area's green energy industry and is working to develop an ambitious, shared vision for an enhanced rail network to 2050.

The partnership has also announced plans to set up an independent commission to explore the potential for sustainable energy in the

Severn Estuary, which is a treasured and powerful asset for our partners and stakeholders.

With support from both English and Welsh Governments, there's much more to come from the Western Gateway. Find out more and get in touch through the Partnership website.

A Motion for the Rivers and Ocean

Hazel Clatworthy, Sustainability Policy Officer, Monmouthshire County Council

We know that the health, wellbeing and prosperity of coastal communities is dependent on a clean, healthy and productive marine environment – yet too often we consider these issues separately, rather than thinking about them in a joined-up way. The Motion for the Ocean was created to enable local authorities to tackle these potentially competing ambitions in a more holistic way. Developed by leading coastal and marine experts, at its core the motion aims to help councils and the communities we serve to “think ocean” and ensure we work to maximise benefits to people, the economy and the environment. The motion aims to help councils embed this new way of thinking at the highest levels of local decision-making, so it is not the responsibility of one individual or team, but of the whole council.

Monmouthshire is a coastal community, but its estuary location means that it is often not viewed as such. The LGA Coastal SIG who helped develop and promote the motion

contacted Monmouthshire County Council to see whether we were interested in adopting the motion as the first local authority in Wales to do so. As well as having an estuary coastline and being at the start of the Wales



Coastal Path, Monmouthshire also has the rivers Wye and Usk running through it, both of which are facing significant challenges in terms of water quality, with much publicity about pollution from sewage and agricultural run-off hitting the local and national media. In light of this, in March 2022 elected members voted for not just a Motion for the

Ocean, but Rivers and Ocean, recognising the importance of taking a catchment to coast approach to protecting water quality.

The council has put together an action plan for Rivers and Coasts, and its preparation has highlighted how complex the partnership landscape is that is working to protect our rivers and ocean. Monmouthshire is part of numerous partnerships, both in place and emerging, which are all aiming to tackle different aspects of how our rivers and coasts are managed and looked after. Likewise, there is much work going on within the council to address the nature emergency and protect water quality. The action plan aims to pull together the work that is going on across many different council services in a co-ordinated way and to address areas where the council

could be doing more to protect our rivers and coast. Local authorities cannot solve the ocean and river crises alone, but we can—and must—play our part.

For more information contact Hazel Clatworthy, Sustainability Policy Officer, hazelclatworthy@monmouthshire.gov.uk

The Severn Vision Project

Beccy Macdonald-Lofts

The highly protected and unique marine/estuarine environment of the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary has long been understood to be in poor health, therefore in 2014 the Severn Vision Report was produced to highlight the urgent need to support its recovery, restoration, and sustainable use to allow the area to become a healthy, ecologically resilient environment once again.

This year, the Delivering the Severn Vision project led by Somerset Wildlife Trust, funded by the Championing Coastal Coordination Partnership Grant from the Environment Agency, built on this work through stakeholder engagement to set out a roadmap for action that will turn around the future of the area.

The cross-cutting recommendations are:

- Development of a nature and people centric Marine Park;

- Sustainable development alongside restoration of nature and coastal communities;
- Cross-sector collaborative gap-analysis of data and evidence to form a greater understanding of research needs and barriers;
- Natural Capital Plan to extend the work of the North Devon Marine Plan;
- Marine Alliance formed of third sector organisations to act as a local unified voice for nature and people;
- Support for Coastal Champions and coastal communities to community-based initiatives.

The aim to create a marine and estuarine landscape that is a haven for wildlife and for people, providing vital services including flood water management, carbon storage, improved water quality whilst supporting



recreational activities is achievable. However, if we are to succeed then we will need to show bold leadership, be willing to tackle difficult issues together and work across sectors much more collaboratively.

To keep updated with progress of the roadmap for the vision please see the project website, <https://severnvision.org/>

Adaptation and Resilience

In ever-changing circumstances, especially with the pressure of the climate crisis, the Severn Estuary must adapt and evolve to preserve its habitat. These are just a few of the initiatives helping us to adapt to a present and future with climate change.

Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area (ASEA) Ecology Mitigation and Flood Defence Project

Colin Taylor, Environment Agency

A major flood defence and ecology project alongside the Severn Estuary is set to help reduce flood risk to local communities, including 2,500 homes and businesses, when complete in 2026-27.

The Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area (ASEA) Ecology Mitigation and Flood Defence Project will provide 17km of new and improved flood defences from Lamplighter's Marsh in Bristol to Aust in South Gloucestershire, including significant upgrades in Avonmouth Docks and Severn Beach. It will also create a minimum of 80ha of new wetland habitats at Northwick and Hallen Marsh (equivalent to around 112 football pitches) as locations for wildlife to thrive, providing "high-tide roosts" for the internationally important Severn Estuary's birds.



The project is a partnership between South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the Environment Agency.

The team has been making significant progress since construction work started in 2020. Last year, it completed works to the north of Severn Beach and this year finished upgrading flood defences to the south. In February, the team installed a new flood defence at New Passage incorporating a low-level wall and glass panels. This will both reduce the risk of flooding and preserve stunning views of the Severn Estuary for people walking along Severn Way. In March, the team welcomed West of England leaders to see new flood defences at Bristol Port.

The team is now landscaping the two wetland sites following their construction. It is continuing to



progress flood defence works. It will shortly install new flood gates at Aust to reduce the flooding risk. The works will also improve the Severn Way footpath.

For information on project timescales visit the project website: Map and Timeline – Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise Area (asea-flood-ecology.co.uk)



The (Future) Wales Coast Path

Alison Neighbour, Scenographer, Performance Design, Installation Artist

The (Future) Wales Coast Path is a year-long programme of creative activities and conversations on the Gwent Levels. It invites participants to consider the fluid relationship between land and water in the area, and how we might adapt to life on impermanent land as sea levels rise.

Two Lighthouses have been installed, alongside the River Usk in Newport City Centre, and on Magor Marsh, close to where predictions indicate the shoreline may be in the future. The Lighthouses connect to tidal data from the Bay of Bengal (tidally twinned with Newport, as the tide rises in both places at the same time), warning us of a present global threat that we need to prepare for.

We have walked over the four seasons with local communities from the Lighthouses to the current shore, co-creating maps and other artworks in response to the future intertidal spaces we have passed through. We've also invited dialogue with communities in the Indian Sundarbans, who live with sea level

rise and land loss as part of their "normal". Our closing events in October 2022 will invite participants to carry lanterns from the current shoreline to the future one, and onwards into the towns, to continue the conversation beyond the scope of this project.

Developed and led by artist Alison Neighbour, the project team includes Dr Emma McKinley and Producer Elen Roberts. The work is funded by Arts Council Wales, Wales Arts International, and additional support from NRW, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Newport Riverfront, Newport Fusion, and Ranan, Calcutta. For more information, please visit <https://futurecoastpath.org/about/>



Our Spectacular Severn

The Good Practice Guidelines Relaunch!

Katie Havard-Smith, ASERA Officer

The Good Practice Guidelines have been developed by the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities to facilitate the sustainable and safe use of the Severn Estuary by all. The resource raises awareness of the Severn Estuary European Marine Site and ensure that human activities around the estuary are carried out in a way sympathetic to the nature conservation objectives of the site, making sure it is protected for our future generations. This guide includes recommendations for many popular activities on the Severn, including dog walking, birdwatching, angling, wildfowling, and boating.

The Guidelines outline estuary-specific guidance on staying safe and minimising impact to the site, such as avoiding disturbance to resting, feeding, and nesting birds and sensitive habitats like saltmarsh and Sabellaria alveolata (honeycomb tubeworm) reefs. The Guidelines also focus on keeping visitors safe on the estuary, such as advice on observing tide times and walking routes, as well as marine safety such as sensitive areas to avoid.

ASERA are re-launching the Good Practice Guidelines, with updated guidance on flying drones within the Severn Estuary area. The re-release focuses on the new rules surrounding the use of drones and their licensing. This update to laws states that all fliers must carry their documents of ownership, and mark their



drone with the operator ID. In addition, the Guidelines focus on estuary-specific advice, making drone users aware of the impacts that noise can have on resting, feeding or nesting birds, and how to avoid disruption both when walking to the site and flying their equipment.

The guidelines are being launched via SEP social media channels, both SEP and ASERA

websites and through ASERA partners. If you are interested in being involved in the launch, please get in touch with the ASERA Officer at severn@cardiff.ac.uk.

ASERA hopes to encourage more sustainable activity on the estuary, in hopes that this beautiful area can be enjoyed to its fullest for many more years to come.

DISCOVER THE SEVERN GUIDES

Take a look at our *Discover the Severn* guides by selecting the front covers below!



Responsible Beach Cleaning on the Severn Estuary

Lucy Iley, Severn Estuary Partnership

Litter picking is a fantastic way to support your local habitats and species, but it is important to consider how your actions can impact wildlife.

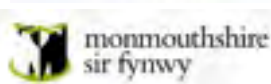
The Severn Estuary Partnership, ASERA, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales have created best practice guidance for beach cleaning in the Severn Estuary. The guidance informs beach cleaners about the impacts of disturbance on protected site features like nesting, resting or feeding birds around the Severn Estuary, whilst avoiding particularly sensitive sites.

This guide incorporates advice from 'Wildlife-friendly beach clean guidance' produced by the Marine Conservation Society, Final Straw Foundation and Bird Aware Solent and is directed towards beach clean organisers. It offers step by step advice for setting up your own beach clean and minimising disturbance to the site like trying not to organise cleans two hours either side of high tide.

Disturbance is defined as "any activity or noise that could change behaviours of an animal (feeding, resting or breeding) or habitat structure." For example, repeated disturbance can threaten the survival of our estuary's birds. It may lead to birds stopping

using an area to feed or roost, use up vital energy stores by putting them to flight and cause delays to arrival at breeding grounds. If they cannot feed enough to complete their migration, they may not survive the winter. Allowing dogs off leads, trampling of sensitive habitats or removing natural items are all activities which can cause disturbance on the coastline.

The Severn Estuary Partnership receives support from Cardiff University and core funding from Bristol City Council, Cardiff County Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Newport City Council, North Somerset Council, Somerset County Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Environment Agency South West, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England.



Established in 1995, the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) is an independent, estuary-wide initiative led by local authorities and statutory agencies, engaging and connecting with all those interested in the Severn Estuary. We work with all stakeholders to promote a sustainable approach to the planning, management, and development of the estuary for all who live and work here and for our future generations.



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