



SevernTidings

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Photo of the Year
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Working in partnership for the future of the Severn Estuary

www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk





WELCOME

Dr. Rhoda Ballinger, Chair

Having recently taken over as Chair of the Severn Estuary Partnership, I'm both delighted and honoured to welcome you to this 2023 edition of Severn Tidings.

There's a lot going on and it's great to see the SEP Team involved in so many projects which are trying to make our estuary more sustainable. From items on safeguarding and improving water and beach quality, to ones on habitat improvement and restoration, there's much to keep you interested! A central feature of many articles is the essential role of community engagement and the need for better understanding of community values and aspirations to inform future management of our estuary.

It's heartening to see contributions from so many organisations, from those promoting and enhancing the estuary's natural environment to others more focused on fostering innovation and resilient communities. This issue showcases effective partnership-working at various scales. These range from large-scale partnerships, including the pan-regional Western Gateway and the recently re-established Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group (BCSEG), to new catchment-to sea and more locally-focused partnerships. It highlights the ongoing and increasing efforts of our long-standing estuary-wide networks including the Association of Severn Estuary Authorities (ASERA) and the Severn Estuary Coastal Group (SECG), which support statutory obligations related to the estuary. We're also proud to report we've now got two local authorities endorsing *A Motion for the Ocean*¹, hopefully inspiring others to follow suit and publicly declare their vital role in ocean recovery. A key challenge will be ensuring that all these excellent efforts are coordinated and balanced, both sectorally and spatially. In this context, it's heartening to note the joint ambition of Welsh Government and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to work more closely together for the estuary in their recent *marine planning guide*². The implementation of SEP's new Strategic Business Plan, alongside the SEP Management Group's current governance review, will be vital in ensuring more appropriate and sustainable governance for our estuary.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Tidings. We should be grateful for the efforts of the SEP team who facilitate the production of such a broad overview of estuary-related management efforts. I'd also like to give special thanks to my predecessor, John Harrison, whose leadership and insight are a hard act to follow! However, building on my previous involvement with the Partnership, I'm really looking forward to my new role and to your continued support.

1 <https://tinyurl.com/mvskhhk8>

2 <https://tinyurl.com/4vwtj9n8>

We are pleased to award Marko Dutka with 'SEP Photo of the Year 2023'!

If you have a Severn Estuary 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, Instagram (@SevernEstuary) or Facebook (Severn Estuary Partnership).

Severn Estuary Partnership Update

Alys Morris, Severn Estuary Partnership Manager

The last 12 months have proved an exciting time for SEP.

We successfully held our annual joint estuary day in Slimbridge, which this year included the re-established Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group, and we were delighted to welcome over 120 participants to our annual Forum, which this year was held in Cardiff, showcasing an exciting range of speakers representing the projects and research happening across the Estuary.



© Lucy Iley

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 ENews.

Our new Strategic Business Plan, which was launched earlier this year, sets out the aims and ambitions of the Partnership, guiding our activity over the next 5 years (2023-2027). Work to take forward the actions is starting this year.

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, Marko Dutka, Associated British Ports, Severn Vale Catchment Partnership, Natural England, West of England Nature Partnership, Western Gateway, Natural Resources Wales, The Vale of Glamorgan Council, The Severn Vision Project, Monmouthshire County Council and the Marine Management Organisation.

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

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.

Beach Cleans

This year, as well as our annual Big Beach Clean event in September, we successfully ran our send Spring Clean event in March. We hope that 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!

SEP Chair

Finally, this year we said goodbye to our outgoing Chair John Harrison. John has led the work of SEP for the past 9 years and his passion for coastal conservation and his ability to inspire and motivate others has been an essential asset to SEP. John's contributions as Chair have been instrumental in the success of SEP over this time. We would like to take this opportunity to thank John for his dedication and hard work during his tenure and wish him all the best in his retirement.

We are also delighted to welcome our incoming Chair Dr Rhoda Ballinger. Rhoda will be familiar to many of you, having been involved with SEP for over 20 years. Rhoda is a Reader in Marine and Environmental Geography in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Cardiff University. We are confident that Rhoda's expertise, vision, and leadership will be invaluable to SEP moving forwards.

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 8), working with fantastic groups of partners and volunteers to expand the project across Somerset. The Team have also been involved in a number of projects, including 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; bringing together partners around the River Severn catchments, estuary and coast to explore issues and opportunities for greater collaboration; and 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.

As winter approaches we are also commencing two exciting projects, the first working with the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities and Natural England to explore public perceptions of disturbance and attitudes to possible interventions around the Marine Protected Area. With a focus on recreational visitors to the Severn estuary, the aim is to build a better picture of recreational activity within the MPA and mitigate disturbance by enhancing public understanding about the estuary's ecological significance. The second, drawing from the collective expertise and local knowledge of various stakeholders to develop a cross-border biosecurity plan for the estuary. The outputs of which will be developed into a live resource, hosted on the SEP website.



Severn Estuary Coastal Group

Jacob Kevern, Coastal Officer

Great work continues to be done across the Severn Estuary in the delivery of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management.

As a Coastal Group, we continue to be involved in the roll out of the Shoreline Management Plan Refresh work which aims to clarify flood and coastal erosion risk management policies, application, and strategies along the English and Welsh frontage of the Severn Estuary. As part of this work, members have been working to improve the accessibility of erosion risk data and Shoreline Management policies through the EA developed Shoreline Management Plan Explorer. With the aim to be released in early 2024, this tool will allow interested parties to access the policies for a specific stretch of coastline, alongside any relevant flood and coastal erosion risk data, being a one-stop shop for coastal practitioners and the public. As a cross-border Coastal Group, it's great to see the inclusion of the Welsh stretch of coastline from Chepstow through to Penarth.

The Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis and have managed to meet twice in person this year, both at the Severn Estuary Partnerships Joint Estuary Day and an SECG meeting and site visit to WWT Steart Marshes. We took the opportunity to make the most of these in-person events running a workshop at the Joint

Estuary Day held and WWT Slimbridge and participating in the Marine Management Organisation's Marine Planning game before a site visit to Steart.

The Marine Planning game was a great experience, allowing members to appreciate and gain awareness of the multiple pressures the coastal habitat and marine areas are under, and how there are no simple solutions to many of these challenges. As a Coastal Group, we continue to advocate for integrated coastal planning, promoting the communication between a range of stakeholders, communities, and cross-border governing bodies. So, to be able to quantify and visually see these pressures and work through potential solutions was a great experience.

This year, the members of the Coastal Group aim to continue to deliver a range of projects ranging from engagement and communication, coastal adaptation pathways and the deployment of management triggers and habitat assessments. Alongside advocating and practicing integrated coastal management and continuing to facilitate the exchange of information and best practice within our meetings.



© Jacob Kevern

Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA)

Katie Havard-Smith, Severn Estuary Partnership and European Marine Site 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.

ASERA has a Management Scheme for the Severn Estuary European Marine Site for 2018-2023. The ASERA Management Scheme 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. The current Scheme is being extended for an additional year to align with funding obtained via the Nature Networks fund from the Heritage Lottery, for the update of the document (amongst other aims. See page 6 for more information). A new Scheme will, therefore, be implemented by 2025.

Cardiff University funded an 8-week summer placement for an undergraduate student to work with ASERA on a research study focusing on Land-Based Recreation and its impact on the European Marine Site. Amy McNutt focused her research, using GIS, on high-tide roost site data and proximity to areas of known land-based recreation, based on data held by ASERA members. Amy found that land-based recreation is poorly monitored but has a significant potential to disturb features of the EMS, with particular concern surrounding bird species designated under the Special Protection Area. There are many gaps in knowledge around the estuary, especially on frequency and intensity of these activities, making it challenging to draw conclusions from the data. However, there are many activities being undertaken near high tide roost sites all around the estuary. Key recommendations from Amy's work, include:

- Targeted action for activities of concern, like dog walking, through awareness raising, education and monitoring via on-site rangers or engagement officers
- Promotion of the 'Wales Coastal Explorer app' and other initiatives to engage the public in citizen science and report incidents of disturbance across the estuary

The most recent ASERA AGM was held in November 2022. At the AGM, Simon Bunn, of North Somerset Council) was elected as Chair of the Association and Management Group for a term of one year. Christine Nelson was elected as Vice-Chair and Cardiff University will now be responsible for the finance of the group.

ASERA would like to thank Anne Hayes and Louise Hemmings (both of The Bristol Port Company) who stepped down from their roles last year, after many years with ASERA. Anne Hayes remains the Bristol Port Company representative for the group.

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.



© Katie Havard-Smith

The Severn Estuary Big Beach Clean: Working to tackle marine litter from catchment to coast

Katie Havard-Smith, Severn Estuary Partnership and European Marine Site Officer

Every year, the Severn Estuary Partnership runs two litter picking events, aligning with national events, and designed to get people out and about cleaning up their local blue space.

In September, we run the Severn Estuary Big Beach Clean which aligns with the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Great British Beach Clean. This event has a focus on encouraging those cleaning up the coast to use the MCS Beachwatch methodology to record the litter they pick around the Severn Estuary. This data is so important as it allows MCS to track common items found on beaches and campaign to reduce this pollution. MCS have shared data with us which was produced by volunteers around the Severn Estuary from 1994 to 2020. To help us analyse this data, Cardiff University funded an 8-week placement for an undergraduate student over the summer. This analysis will inform next year's litter picking events and future management. This year we are grateful to have been successful in funding the Severn Estuary Big Beach Clean via the Nature Networks 2 Heritage Lottery Fund. For more information take a look at page 6.

Our Severn Estuary Spring Clean event happens between March and April every year and aligns with the Keep Wales Tidy Marine Clean Cymru national event.

Both events have a particular focus on litter picking not only on the Severn Estuary coast, but also into the Severn catchment. We aim to raise awareness of the prevalence of litter in both marine areas and our river systems and that tackling litter higher in the catchment will ultimately prevent it from reaching the sea. We have

welcomed cleans from all over the Severn catchment, from Oswestry in North Wales all the way down to Minehead in Somerset.

As ever, we are mindful of our impact on the special landscape of the Severn Estuary. Over the winter and spring months, we welcome thousands of migratory birds to the nutrient rich muds of the estuary which join the spectacular array of birdlife that use the estuary year-round. With this in mind and with guidance from the Marine Conservation Society, Final Straw Association and Bird Aware Solent, we produced a 'Responsible Beach Cleaning Guide' for the Severn Estuary. This guide informs beach clean organisers and attendees on the best way to reduce disturbance to birds and habitats. This guide can be found in the resources section of our website.

Thank you to Marine Conservation Society, Heritage Lottery, Natural Resources Wales, Keep Wales Tidy all those who have joined us in the past, we hope to welcome you again in the spring. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch at severn@cardiff.ac.uk, and take a look at our website.

severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/get-involved/big-beach-clean/

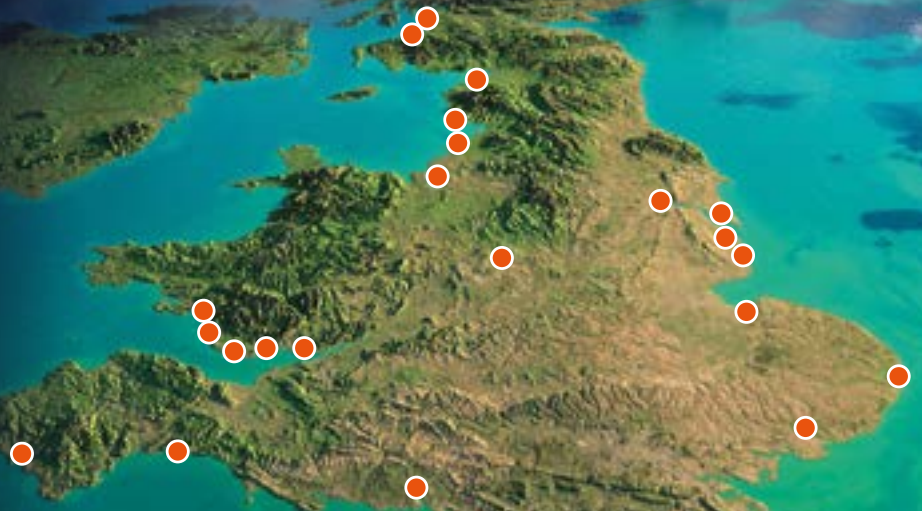


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Improving the condition of our Marine Protected Areas in Wales

Katie Havard-Smith, Severn Estuary Partnership and European Marine Site Officer

We are excited to announce that the Welsh Partnership of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has successfully secured funding from the Nature Network Fund, administered by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This collaborative project involves five MPA officers across Wales and has secured funding through March 2026.

The project will focus on several critical areas, including: Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Cardigan Bay SAC, Pembrokeshire Marine SAC, Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Site (EMS) and the Severn Estuary EMS.

Why Our Seas are Special

Wales boasts a unique marine environment, where the convergence of three oceanic and climatic zones creates a setting teeming with diverse species and habitats. From rugged cliffs to tranquil estuaries and sandy beaches, the Welsh coast serves as a reminder of the deep connection between our seascapes, landscapes, and communities.

Our Mission

Our overarching aim is to create a balanced and healthy marine environment. A well-managed network of MPAs not only enhances marine resilience but also significantly benefits local communities.

Current Challenges

However, the MPAs under our management face various challenges, such as declining water quality, litter accumulation, and the ongoing threat of climate change. Over time, these issues have degraded our sites, leaving many in an unfavourable condition.

Our Project Goals

The "Partnership Delivery of MPA Improvements in Wales" project aims to bolster the resilience of five major MPAs in Wales through coordinated partnership working. Our initiatives include:

- **Water Quality:** Launching a citizen science programme to monitor water conditions around the Welsh coast.
- **Coastal Otter Research:** Initiating a citizen science programme and data analysis project to understand coastal otter populations and the impact of pollution on them.
- **Marine Litter:** Providing guidelines to minimise litter and promote marine pollution awareness.
- **Reducing Disturbance:** Supporting citizen science projects aimed at reducing disturbance to marine species.
- **Community Outreach:** Engaging with stakeholders and the local community to foster support and collaboration.
- **Awareness Building:** Raising public awareness about the importance of MPAs.
- **Management Document Updates:** Revising site management documents to reflect the latest research and community input.

We believe that targeted, cooperative action can help to overcome the challenges facing our MPAs, leading to a healthier marine environment for all. Thank you for your continued support and interest in our efforts.

Partneriaeth i Sicrhau Gwelliannau i Ardaloedd Morol Gwarchodedig yng Nghymru

Katie Havard-Smith, Swyddog Partneriaeth a Safle Morol Ewropeaidd Aber Afon Hafren



Rydym yn falch o gyhoeddi bod Partneriaeth Ardaloedd Morol Gwarchodedig (AMGau) Cymru wedi llwyddo i sicrhau cyllid gan Gronfa'r Rhwydwaith Natur, sydd wedi'i gweinyddu gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri. Mae pum swyddog mewn AMGau ledled Cymru'n rhan o'r prosiect cydweithredol hwn, ac mae'r cyllid wedi'i sicrhau ar gyfer y prosiect hyd at fis Mawrth 2026.

Bydd y prosiect yn canolbwyntio ar sawl ardal hollbwysig, gan gynnwys: Ardal Cadwraeth Arbennig (ACA) Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau, ACA Bae Ceredigion, ACA Morol Sir Benfro, Safle Morol Ewropeaidd (SME) Bae ac Aberoedd Caerfyrddin ac (SME) Aber Afon Hafren.

Pam mae Ein Moroedd yn Arbennig

Mae i Gymru amgylchedd morol unigryw, lle mae tri pharth cefnforol a hinsoddol yn cyfuno i greu lleoliad sy'n gyforiog o amrywiol rywogaethau a chynefinoedd. O glogwyni geirwon i aberoedd tawel a thraethau tywodlyd, mae arfordir Cymru yn ein hatgoffa o'r cysylltiad dwfn rhwng ein morluniau, ein tirweddau, a'n cymunedau.

Ein Cenhadaeth

Ein nod cyffredinol yw creu amgylchedd morol cytbwys ac iach. Mae rhwydwaith o Ardaloedd Morol Gwarchodedig sydd wedi'i reoli'n dda nid yn unig yn gwella gwytnwch morol ond hefyd o fudd sylweddol i gymunedau lleol.

Heriau Presennol

Fodd bynnag, mae'r Ardaloedd Morol Gwarchodedig sydd o dan ein rheolaeth yn wynebu amrywiol heriau, megis ansawdd dŵr sy'n dirywio, sbwriel yn cronni, a bygythiad parhaus yn sgîl newid yn yr hinsawdd. Dros amser, mae'r materion hyn wedi diraddio ein safleoedd, gan adael llawer ohonynt mewn cyflwr anffafriol.

Nodau ein Prosiect

Nod y prosiect "Partneriaeth sy'n Sicrhau Gwelliannau i AMGau yng Nghymru" yw cryfhau gwydnwch pum prif AMG yng Nghymru trwy weithio mewn partneriaeth sydd wedi'i chydlynio. Ymhlith ein mentrau mae:

- **Ansawdd Dŵr:** Lansio rhaglen gwyddoniaeth er mwyn i ddinasyddion fonitro amodau dŵr o amgylch arfordir Cymru.
- **Ymchwil ar Ddyfrgwn Arfordirol:** Cychwyn rhaglen gwyddoniaeth ar gyfer dinasyddion a phrosiect dadansoddi data er mwyn deall poblogaethau dyfrgwn arfordirol ac effaith llygredd arnynt.
- **Sbwriel Morol:** Rhoi canllawiau ar leihau sbwriel a hybu ymwybyddiaeth ynghylch llygredd morol.
- **Lleihau Aflonyddu:** Cefnogi prosiectau gwyddoniaeth ar gyfer dinasyddion; nod y rhain yw aflonyddu i raddau llai ar rywogaethau morol.
- **Allgymorth Cymunedol:** Ymgysylltu â rhanddeiliaid a'r gymuned leol i feithrin cefnogaeth a chydweithio.
- **Meithrin Ymwybyddiaeth:** Codi ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd ynghylch pwysigrwydd AMGau.
- **Diweddariadau ynghylch Dogfennau Rheoli:** Diwygio dogfennau ynghylch rheoli safleoedd i adlewyrchu'r ymchwil ddiweddaraf sy'n mynd rhagddi gan gynnwys y mewnbwn cymunedol.

Rydym ni o'r farn y gall gweithredu cydweithredol wedi'i dargedu helpu o ran goresgyn yr heriau mae'n AMGau yn eu hwynebu, gan arwain at amgylchedd morol iachach ar gyfer pawb. Diolch am eich cefnogaeth barhaus a'ch diddordeb yn ein cyrsiau.

Restoring Saltmarsh at Rhymney Great Wharf



Chloë James, Natura 2000 Sustainable Management Advisor, Natural Resources Wales

A project to help restore and extend the saltmarshes at Rhymney Great Wharf is getting under way by Natural Resources Wales.

This project is funded through the Welsh Government's Nature Networks Programme, which has a purpose to strengthen the resilience of Wales's protected land and marine sites. This investment will help halt and reverse the loss and decline of habitats and species and put Wales on a solid footing on the path to nature's recovery.

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

We want to install and extend a specific type of fencing, known as sedimentation polders, along the Rhymney Great Wharf. The fencing will be placed in a rectangular pattern with shrub cuttings inserted between the wooden stakes.

Below (figure 1) is an aerial image (at the top) from Google Maps showing the footprint of the existing sedimentation polders; purple lines show the fencing built in 1988 and the yellow highlighting the fencing built in 2005. The blue line illustrates the fencing which is in the photograph (taken in 2010, with the blue border), consisting of two rows of wooden stakes with shrub cuttings in between.

WHY?

The new fencing will help slow the movement of water and encourage sediment to settle, which could halt erosion and allow saltmarsh to regenerate. It has been estimated that over time there is potential for up to 5.9ha of saltmarsh to be gained within the proposed fence boundary, using this sedimentation polder technique.

WHERE?

In South East Wales at [Rhymney Great Wharf](#)¹, which sits between Cardiff and Newport, East of the river Rhymney within the Gwent levels.

Currently, all that remains of the previous polders are the wooden stakes. The newest fencing (in figure 2 below) will extend West and sit closer to the shore than the previous fencing, providing it a better chance of success. Construction is planned between April 2024 to August 2024.



Figure 2

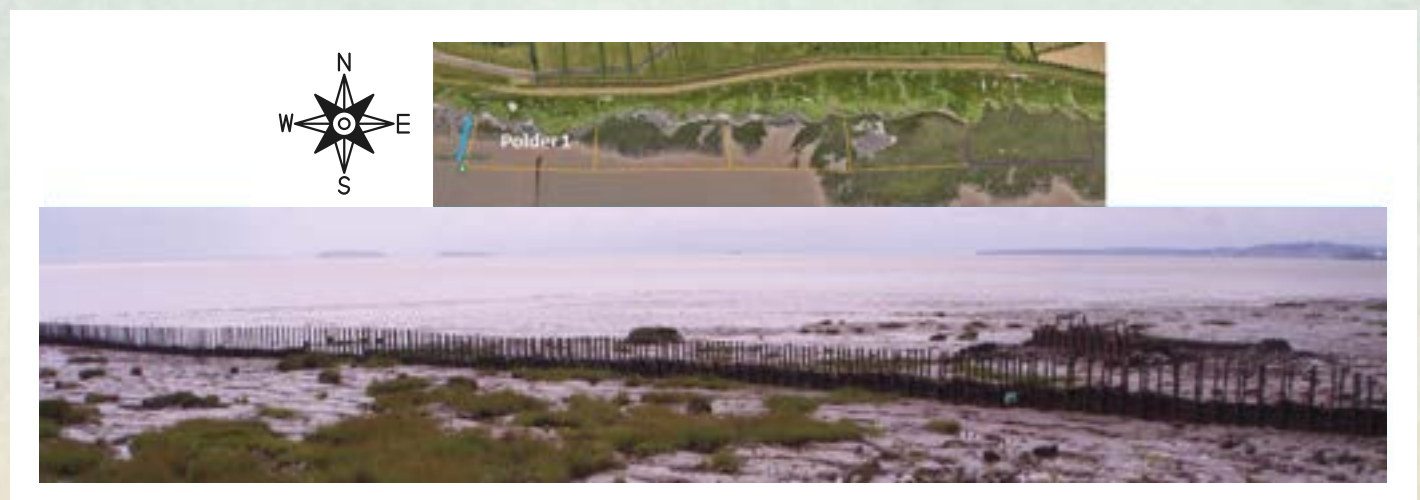


Figure 1

¹tinyurl.com/5dm68mzk



Litter Free Coast & Sea Somerset

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 across Somerset.

Following the project's expansion from Burnham-on-Sea, our current focus is on bathing waters in West Somerset. We've continued to develop our partnerships with local groups and organisations in the area and are very grateful for their support.

As well as continued work on our existing campaigns, this year we've been working on some new exciting projects like our angling line recycling bins and beach toy library!



Litter Free Coast & Sea Somerset project sites for 2020-2025.

Somerset School Coastal Champions Award



In 2021, we launched our school award scheme 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 they can protect it. It is made up of three levels (Ripple, Roller and Crest), each of which contain actions relating to waste, water and nature.

Two years later, we have 20 schools working through the award, including two schools who have completed all three of the levels! As a result, we are developing a new level of the award, which will be repeatable each school year. This will mean that our schools can maintain their Coastal Champion status after achieving Ripple, Roller and Crest. We are excited to see all the amazing work our schools continue to do for our rivers and ocean.



Eastover Community Primary School receiving their Coastal Champions award © Eastover Primary

Litter Picking & Community Groups

Over the past year, supporting litter picking activities has remained an important aspect of the project. We have continued to promote our **#2minutelitterpick** boards in the area, and thanks to SUEZ UK we managed to replace broken and missing equipment for several boards in West Somerset.

We have continued to support the wonderful community groups who work extremely hard to keep their beaches free from litter. We helped the Friends of Burnham Beach install new signage in litter hotspots around Burnham. Over a dozen new signs have been installed on the seafront and estuary path, using positive messaging to encourage people to dispose of their litter responsibly.

Additionally, we helped the Plastic Free Communities in West Somerset access funding from Sea Changers for 50 new litter pickers. The group hold regular litter picks, with their events attracting over 100 volunteers. This extra equipment means more people can join in and help keep our beaches clean!



A #2minutelitterpick board on the Somerset coast © Severn Estuary Partnership

Beach Toy Libraries

Working with Dunster Beach Holidays and the community group Plastic Free Exmoor, we have installed a beach toy library at Dunster Beach.

The beach toy library allows families to borrow toys for free, encouraging them to consider their plastic use and re-use existing toys rather than purchasing new items. The library has been stocked with toys found during litter picks, as well as toys donated by local families. It joins a growing network of beach toy libraries – we hope to see plenty more popping up along the Somerset coast!

Free beach toy library at Dunster Beach © Plastic Free Communities in West Somerset



Angling line recycling bin at Minehead harbour © Severn Estuary Partnership

Angling Bins

Over the past year, we've supported the installation of three angling 'pipe bins' around West Somerset as part of the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme. They are located at Dunster Beach, Minehead harbour and Watchet harbour, and a fourth bin will soon be installed at Blue Anchor beach.

The bins can be used to dispose of a variety of angling items, such as line and spools, which are then sent off to be recycled as part of the national scheme. These materials are some of the most common items found on our beaches. This scheme will allow both anglers and local beach cleaners to make sure that any fishing-related litter is safely removed and recycled, not sent to landfill. Thank you to the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme, Somerset Council and the Angling Trust for making this possible.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR LFCSS?

We are excited to be starting work in Weston-super-Mare, where we will be working with North Somerset Council and local community groups to roll out some of our existing campaigns and work to develop new ideas tailored to the area.

Next year, we are excited to announce that we will be hosting a year-long student placement. This opportunity will focus on evaluating the LFCSS project, as well as our sister project in Dorset. We're looking forward to learning more about the impact the project has had in our focus areas.

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

Coastal communities – sustainable growth & nature recovery in the Vale of Glamorgan

Emily Shaw, Vale Local Nature Partnership,
Colin Cheesman, Vale of Glamorgan Council and
Liz Hancocks, Natural Resources Wales

A Coastal Capacity Building Challenge Fund project was successfully delivered in January to March 2023 in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The 33 miles/53 km coastline is varied rocky cliffs, small valleys or cwms, saltmarshes and cobble beaches. Onshore there are a range of habitats including an important number of coastal grasslands and woodlands and out to sea there are rocky seabeds, Honeycomb Worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*) reefs and at Aberthaw a rare saline lagoon, one of only four in Wales. For much of its length the coastline is unspoiled and is designated a Heritage Coast between Aberthaw in the Vale and Porthcawl in Bridgend.

The project set out to achieve exploration of the recommendations in the Coastal Community Capacity Building Evidence-Synthesis report published by Welsh Government in December 2022. The project aimed to develop partnership working and engage landowners and communities in discussion around sustainable growth, nature recovery and coastal adaptation opportunities along the Glamorgan Coast.

We were successful in rapidly increasing understanding and supporting project development for sustainable growth and nature recovery on the Glamorgan Coast. Due to the short timescale, the project could only broadly cover the topics for coastal capacity building, and further in-depth work is required especially around sensitive topics such as coastal adaptation due to sea defence changes. Community members were concerned about nature, access and pressure from visitors and development and local businesses were concerned about the cost-of-living crisis, nature degradation, development and a lack of facilities and economically sustainable work. More coordination across projects and initiatives and in future stakeholder engagement would be beneficial. Better engagement with young people was seen as key in improving people's connection with nature.

The project also held the first Vale of Glamorgan Coastal Forum and commissioned a nature recovery report. We were delighted to present at the Severn Estuary Partnership forum in June.

The project was a partnership between Vale of Glamorgan Local Nature Partnership, Natural Resources Wales and Vale of Glamorgan Council, funded by Welsh Government's Coastal Capacity Building Challenge Fund, administered by Wales Council for Voluntary Action.



© Natural Resources Wales

The Vale Local Nature Partnership is the project lead and can be contacted on eshaw@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or ecology@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

The Western Gateway Partnership – your powerhouse working for a greener, fairer future

William Mansfield, Head of Sustainable Energy from the Severn Estuary, Western Gateway

The Western Gateway¹ is the pan-regional partnership for South Wales and Western England. It brings together business, universities and local leaders to work together to reach net zero and create new economic opportunities.

Following its launch in Newport in 2022, the partnership has published a vision for an improved rail network across the area, laid out a plan for how Hydrogen could be used in hard to decarbonise sectors and held national conferences to promote the area.

Sitting at the heart of the partnership's geography, the Severn Estuary has the highest tidal range in Europe. The potential for harnessing the power of the Estuary as a source of renewable energy has been talked about for decades.

Following discussions with experts, local leaders are clear that in the face of the climate emergency, all options for reducing our reliance on fossil fuels should be explored. Alongside its tidal range, the Estuary is home to internationally important wildlife habitats and plays a large role in the area's shipping, fishing, and recreational sectors.

The partnership is looking to establish an independent commission to explore whether an energy project which can harness the power of the Severn and protects these important parts of the estuary is possible and what it could look like. The Western Gateway will announce an official timeline for the commission in the coming months and will be looking to work with local organisations to collect evidence.

Find out more and get in touch through the Partnership website: www.western-gateway.co.uk

¹<https://western-gateway.co.uk>



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The Severn Vision: A Collaborative Future for People and Nature

Our marine and estuarine landscapes stand out as some of the most distinctive in the UK, marked by a plethora of environmental designations ranging from Special Protection Areas to Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

However, the current health of this ecosystem is of pressing concern, with many of these protected sites in unfavourable conditions. This highlights an urgent call to action for restoration and sustainable management to foster a thriving environment for nature and communities alike.

In 2021/22, the Championing Coastal Coordination initiative funded the "Delivering the Vision" pilot project, building on exiting work to co-develop recommendations for ecosystem recovery and climate adaptation. During 2022/23, the "3C's Continuing the Vision Project" refined these recommendations, further exploring the potential designation of the area as a National Marine Park. These combined efforts, drawing from extensive coastal studies, aim for a unified

approach to rejuvenate our marine and estuarine landscapes, emphasising their crucial roles in flood management, carbon storage, and water purification.

However, the journey hasn't been without its share of challenges. Waning stakeholder engagement, exacerbated by intermittent funding, emerged as a hurdle. To combat this, the current phase of the project will explore opportunities to bolster project governance and amplify stakeholder involvement.

By bridging gaps and fostering collaboration, this work showcases the potential for collective action. This holistic approach not only accommodates diverse stakeholder perspectives but also paves the way to tackle multifaceted environmental and social challenges cohesively.

For any enquiries or updates, please reach out to us at severnestuaryvision@gmail.com. For the latest news, follow us on Twitter at [@SevernVision](https://twitter.com/SevernVision).

The King Charles III England Coast Path

Olivia Beatty, Severn Estuary Marine Advisor, Natural England

On the 20th July a new phase of the King Charles III England Coast Path opened!

Starting just south of the Old Severn Bridge at Old Passage near Aust, through to Wains Hill, Clevedon. It is the second phase of the path between Aust and Brean Down with this portion of the stretch being the first to open in South Gloucestershire and the second to open in North Somerset.

The stretch provides uninterrupted views of the Severn Estuary, passes through the industrial towns of Avonmouth and Portishead via the Avonmouth Bridge and finally reaches the tranquil and rocky coastal habitats between Portishead and Clevedon. Highlights of the walk include Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve's saltmarsh wetland habitat, Portishead Point, Black Nore Point and Clevedon Pier. Check out the opening day announcement video on the Natural England YouTube page here: [King Charles III England Coast Path - Old Passage, Aust to Wains Hill, Clevedon - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtPv8jPsS3g)¹

The opening of this section adds 23.1 miles/37.2km of new path to the 12 miles/19.3km already open in this stretch. This is the latest section of the 2,700 mile King Charles III England Coast Path to be opened by Natural England and once complete, the path will be the longest, continual coast path in the world.

The King Charles III England Coast Path will provide more people with the opportunity to experience the natural environment. It is part of the government's ambition to connect people with nature outlined in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Coastal communities and businesses are also set to benefit from increased visitors to these areas.

For more information regarding accessibility and how to best plan your route, visit the National Trails website [King Charles III England Coast Path - South West - National Trails](https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/england-coast-path-south-west/)²

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtPv8jPsS3g>

² https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/england-coast-path-south-west/



The Song of The Severn

Marko Dutka, PhD Researcher and Photographer

Although the Severn Estuary is a specific location the issues it faces are symptomatic of wetlands across the planet.

It is an area of immense natural beauty, acts as a massive carbon sink and helps to relieve flooding in urban areas.

It is a home to large populations of wildfowl and the ecological chain that supports these. There is also a significant human population with considerable investment in the form of housing, power generation and agriculture. Its natural balance is however under threat from widespread pollution and habitat loss.

A balanced and intelligent approach to its sustainability and health are therefore fundamental investments to future generations of humans and non-humans. This is particularly pertinent as wetlands are especially prone to the effects of global warming with 35% of similar global wetlands lost worldwide between 1970 and 2015. It is a valuable but diminishing resource.

This ongoing project is an exploration of the interaction between these populations with particular interest in the potential of reducing ecological conflict and creating a community where human and the non-human can live together in mutual benefit and a state of environmental health.

These images are a small selection from my current PhD project at the University of Gloucestershire.

A wider range of images is available on my website:

www.markodutkaphotography.com

If this project is of interest, please contact me via the details listed on this site.



SEVERN VALE CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Wilder Frome: a catchment-based approach to river conservation

Kai'a Bellamy, Wetlands Project Officer, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

The Wilder Frome is the first flagship project developed by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership, a group of local authorities, statutory bodies, recreational groups, water companies, and conservation organisations.

It's our 2030 vision for a thriving, ecologically diverse, resilient river Frome from its source in the Cotswolds, to where it flows into the Severn Estuary. This partnership plan brings knowledge and expertise from across the catchment to focus on eight key environmental priorities, including removing barriers to fish migration, cleaning up our rivers, and engaging local communities in citizen science.

One of our most ambitious projects completed to date is a multi-species fish pass at Fromebridge Mill. Opened in April 2023, this allows fish to move past an otherwise insurmountable barrier on the river. Vitally, this is passable by both adults on their way up the river to spawn, and juveniles making their long journey from the Frome's headwaters to the ocean. Key species that we expect to use this include Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, and critically endangered European eels.

As part of our community engagement and monitoring goals, we have helped train volunteer citizen scientists to carry out Riverfly monitoring using aquatic invertebrate populations to measure water quality. With several monitoring sites along the Frome we are able to identify and report potential pollution events. This is also a great way to engage with local people, sharing the threats facing the river and the solutions we are hoping to implement.

We have many exciting projects planned for the future of the Frome catchment. We will be translocating endangered white-clawed crayfish (the only native crayfish in the British Isles) to new protected sites, removing or bypassing more barriers to fish migration, and doubling number of natural flood management measures in the catchment.

To find out more, visit:
catchmentbasedapproach.org/severn-vale



© Kai'a Bellamy

The West of England Nature Partnership

Zoe Davies, West of England Nature Partnership Manager

The West of England Nature Partnership was established in 2012 to enable local authorities, environmental NGOs, utilities and many other partners in the region (the former county of Avon) to do more for nature through collaboration.

Over the past couple of years, the Partnership has been transitioning into a new phase focused strongly on delivery of our key strategies (see [2021-30 Strategy](https://wenp.org.uk/strategy/)¹, [Strategy for Nature and Health](https://wenp.org.uk/a-strategy-for-nature-and-health-in-the-west-of-england/)² and [Forest of Avon Plan](https://wenp.org.uk/the-forest-of-avon-plan-a-tree-and-woodland-strategy-for-the-west-of-england/)³). In 2022, we published a prospectus of projects prioritised according to the mapped Nature Recovery Network for the region. Many projects have significant links to the Severn Estuary, such as restoration of the North Somerset Levels and Moors, and South Gloucestershire's 'String of Pearls'. The shift towards delivery has accelerated in 2023 with the Partnership focused on further developing its project pipeline – in collaboration with the West of England Combined Authority and the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership – and securing blended finance for projects from public, private and philanthropic sources. Indeed, the WENP conference on 12 October 2023 focused on attracting private finance to restore nature in the region, sponsored by Triodos bank and including speakers from Defra, the UK Infrastructure Bank, Finance Earth and many others.

The Partnership has also supported the delivery of 'Healthier with Nature', the Green Social Prescribing pilot for the region which aims to address inequalities in nature connection and health and embed nature-based practice into the health system. Over the course of two years, more than 70 community-based programmes have been funded. People from voluntary and statutory health sectors have been trained in nature-based practice. This has helped to build a strong nature and health offer across the region and support a growing community of practice. Partners continue to work together to secure sustainable funding for nature and health.

To stay up to date with WENP's activities, subscribe to our newsletter here: wenp.org.uk



© West of England Nature Partnership

¹ <https://wenp.org.uk/strategy/>

² <https://wenp.org.uk/a-strategy-for-nature-and-health-in-the-west-of-england/>

³ <https://wenp.org.uk/the-forest-of-avon-plan-a-tree-and-woodland-strategy-for-the-west-of-england/>

Motion for the Ocean: Supporting Local Ocean Recovery

Beccy Macdonald-Lofts, Freelance Marine Conservation & Education Consultant

The Motion for the Ocean is a recognition by local authorities that they have an essential role to play in ocean recovery.

Developed by ocean specialists Dr Pamela Buchan (Exeter University), Emily Cunningham (formerly LGA Coastal SIG) and Nicola Bridge (Ocean Conservation Trust), the #Motion4theOcean has been passed by 17 councils of all tiers, coastal and inland, including North Somerset Council who declared on 19 September following in the footsteps of North Devon Council, Torridge District Council and Monmouthshire County Council. Within the Motion, there are a set of pledges including the growth of ocean literacy, which is the understanding of our influence on the sea and its influence on us.

A trial session, focused on ocean literacy, was run with the younger years of a Monmouthshire primary school to engage the children with their connection to the sea. Interactive mapping was used to allow the children to see how their location is connected to the sea and an exploration of our amazing marine life. This was followed by classroom sessions exploring how the children felt connected to

the sea and the creation of incredible letters and posters showing their support for our seas. These were shared with Julie James MS and the local town council, both of which have recognised the importance of these letters and posters and thanked the children for sharing their concerns. The resources used for the session are being made available for all to use.

More information for councils (coastal and inland) is available through the [LGA Coastal SIG website](https://lgacoastalsig.com/motion-for-the-ocean/)¹ (a Welsh context version is under development) and on the Motion for the Ocean KHub group. For community members, who would like to encourage their local councils to adopt the motion, information is available on the [Ocean Conservation Trust website](https://oceanconservationtrust.org/ocean-advocacy/our-campaigns/call-a-motion-for-the-ocean/)².

¹ <https://lgacoastalsig.com/motion-for-the-ocean/>

² <https://oceanconservationtrust.org/ocean-advocacy/our-campaigns/call-a-motion-for-the-ocean/>

Marine Planning in the Severn Estuary – an update from the Marine Management Organisation

Carli Cocciardi, South West Coastal Planner

Over the past year, the marine planning team has been involved in the Severn Estuary area, ensuring that stakeholders are well-informed about marine planning and to offer support to effectively use marine plans.

For marine planning purposes the Severn Estuary provides the border for decision making between England and Wales. This can pose a challenge of navigating the marine planning policy of both countries. The South West Marine Plan governs the Estuary's southern half, while the Welsh National Marine Plan covers the northern half.

In response, the Welsh Government and the MMO have joined forces to develop [The Severn Estuary: cross-border marine planning guide](https://www.gov.wales/severn-estuary-cross-border-marine-planning-guide)¹. The Guide does not replace the existing plans and should be used alongside the South West Marine Plan and the Welsh National Marine Plan. The guide facilitates the implementation of marine planning policies and provides clarity to marine users regarding management and governance procedures. Both plans feature cross-border policies that emphasize the necessity of collaborative decision-making and cooperation across boundaries. This approach aims to achieve integrated management of the marine environment and its resources.

In addition, Marine Planners introduced the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) game to the Severn Estuary Coastal Group in July. Eleven stakeholders from the area played and provided positive feedback. The game is designed to help stakeholders understand



© Jacob Kevern

the complexity of marine planning and immerses players in a range of diverse roles, requiring them to balance competing interests to meet shared goals. The MSP game emphasises the role of marine planning in achieving a sustainable marine area. If you believe your organisation would benefit from a similar session, please don't hesitate to contact us at planning@marinemanagement.org.uk.

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/severn-estuary-cross-border-marine-planning-guide>

Cardiff University Update

Dr Emma McKinley, Senior Researcher, Cardiff University

The Severn Estuary Partnership continues to work closely with Cardiff University, with Dr Emma McKinley taking over as Academic Lead for SEP following Rhoda's move to Chair of SEP.

Every year, the SEP Team support teaching in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences (EARTH), and this year has been no different, with the whole team getting involved with field trips, delivering lectures and collaborating on student placements over the summer months. SEP and CU collaborations on projects continue too. The Future Wales Coast Path project came to an end in Spring of 2023, with an incredible showcase event held at Magor Marshes which brought together the project team, including artist, Alison Neighbour, and many of the community members who had been involved in the project since it started.

The Diverse Marine Values project has moved into its third year. Through the project, they are exploring how people living and working in and around Chepstow and the wider catchments of the Wye and Severn Estuary feel about and value the sea, coast and estuary.

If you want to know more about the project, get in touch with Emma on mckinleye1@cardiff.ac.uk

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Dr Joel Gill, EARTH Director of Public Engagement, Cardiff University

Public engagement is an important aspect of the work we do in EARTH. In 2023, we developed a new strategy to guide this aspect of our work, with two key objectives motivating our public engagement:

1. Improving Earth/environmental literacy, including greater recognition of the links between this knowledge and actions to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Widening access to Higher Education for those groups which have historically been underrepresented within the Earth/environmental sciences.

Our wider work - both research and teaching - are strengthened by working with those outside of the University. People bring ideas, insights, perspectives, and observations on environmental issues that mean they are and must be a valued partner in our work. We look forward to collaborating with SEP, and learning from their public engagement experience, to support the delivery of our strategy.

If you want to know more about our public engagement, please contact Joel Gill gillj11@cardiff.ac.uk

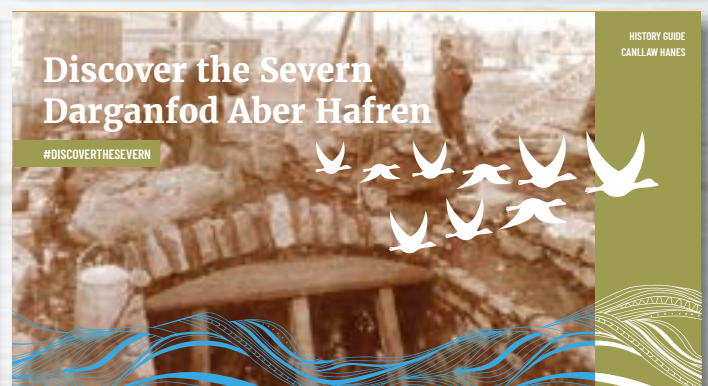
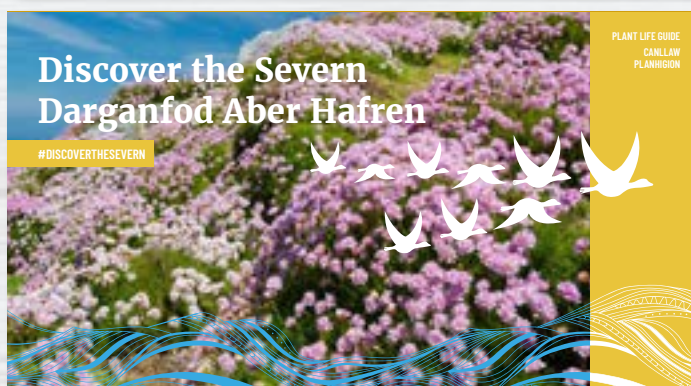
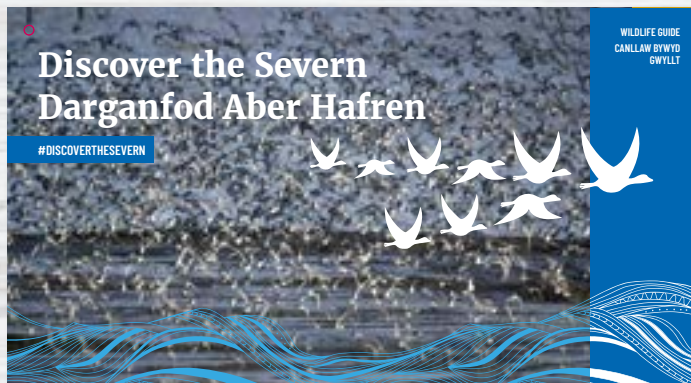
With lots of other funding bits and collaborative projects in the pipeline, the next year is going to be an exciting one!



DISCOVER THE SEVERN GUIDES

Take a look at the Discover the Severn guides on our website

<https://severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/projects/previous-projects/discover-the-severn/discover-the-severn-activity-packs/>



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 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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