



Our Speakers

Severn Estuary Forum 2025

Ffion Mitchell-Langford is an award-winning early career professional passionate about the intersection between environmental and social justice in blue spaces. Currently, Ffion is spearheading the development of National Marine Parks at Campaign for National Parks and scoping the people-centred components of the Marine Conservation Society's new Atlantic Coast Programme. Ffion holds a background in project management, stakeholder engagement, as well as a commitment to furthering Equity, Diversity & Inclusion best practice and implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in Wales.

**Ffion
Mitchell-
Langford**

Atlantic Coast
Engagement
Development Lead,
Marine Conservation
Society

**Claire
Dinnis**

Director of Wetland
Conservation,
WWT: the charity for
wetlands and
wildlife

Clare joined WWT at the start of 2024 and her primary focus is leading the team to deliver bigger, better-connected wetlands where nature thrives and enriches lives. Working across the UK, Madagascar and Cambodia, as well as supporting the International Ramsar Convention for wetlands, Clare uses WWT's projects and science to tell the story of wetland superpowers in a way that inspires everyone to value the solution they bring.



Simon Phelps is a Senior Officer working for Natural England in their Somerset Area Team. His role focuses on a range of nature recovery workstreams. He project manages the Somerset Coast, Levels and Moors Nature Recovery Project, and also supports the Somerset Council to produce their Local Nature Recovery Strategy. He also helps support some species work in Somerset.

Simon Phelps

Senior Officer,
Natural England

Richard Acornley

Senior
Environmental
Monitoring Officer,
Environment
Agency

Richard is a Senior Environmental Monitoring Officer with the Environment Agency, responsible for a range of activities including bathing water investigations, estuarine fish monitoring, and chemical and ecological monitoring for coastal nutrient status assessments. He currently serves as the technical lead for bathing waters across the EA Wessex area, which includes the Severn Estuary coast between Clevedon and Porlock, encompassing resorts such as Weston-super-Mare. He has been part of the Environment Agency's Analysis and Reporting Team at Blandford since 2012. Prior to this role, he worked on shellfish water quality at Cefas in Weymouth.

Emma started working for Project Seagrass as a volunteer, before joining as a Marine Biology Assistant in June 2021. In her role she has been conducting research into how seagrass health is affected by water quality and nutrients as well as taking part in fieldwork and outreach. Emma has a BSc degree in Biological Sciences and a MSc in Marine Systems and Policies from the University of Edinburgh.

Emma Fox

Marine Biology
Assistant, Project
Seagrass





David Tudor

Director of Ocean
and Coastal
Futures & Pelagos

David is a marine management expert with 25 years of global experience, specialising in natural resources, offshore wind, conservation, and marine policy. He co-founded Ocean and Coastal Futures, and has worked with The Crown Estate, the Environment Agency, Blue Marine Foundation, Pelagos, consultancies and NGOs. Appointed by Welsh Government Ministers, he chairs the Wales Coasts and Seas Partnership.

William led the the work for the Western Gateway to establish the Severn Estuary Commission and deliver its programme of work and recommendations. He is now taking this work forward in a jointly funded role between the West of England Combined Authority and Cardiff Capital Region.

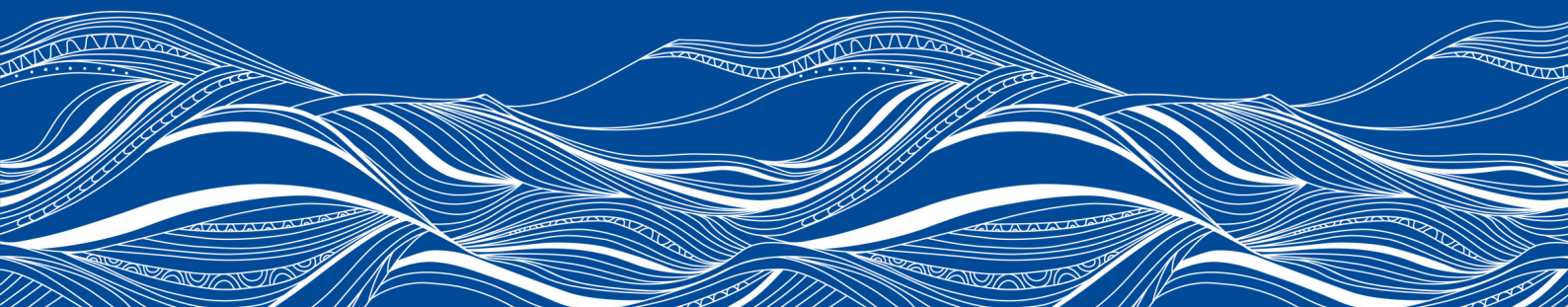
William Mansfield

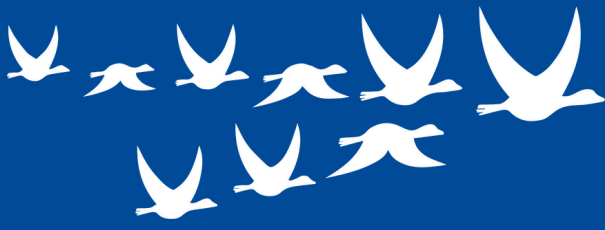
Severn Tidal Energy
Programme Lead, West
of England Combined
Authority and Cardiff
Capital Region

Marc Turner

Principal Planning
Officer, Natural
England

As a Principal Planning Officer at Natural England, Marc supports Area Teams in the delivery of complex, high-risk, and innovative planning casework. This includes work on Local Plans and recreational disturbance issues, as well as involvement in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), air quality assessments, and slurry lagoon developments. He also serves as the project manager for Natural England's Homes Accelerator Project, promoting sustainable development through strategic planning and environmental leadership.





John Chaplin

Director of External Affairs and Special Projects, The Bristol Port Company

John is a Chartered Engineer and Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers. After working in consultancy and contracting John joined The Bristol Port Company in 2000. He was promoted to the position of Director of Engineering in 2003 and subsequently to the Director with responsibility for External Affairs and the delivery of major schemes. John has managed an extensive range of projects for The Port. He is the Company's agent on various national and regional bodies and represents the Port in their dealings with neighbours, central and local government and stakeholders including National Highways, Network Rail and National Grid. John was appointed Chair of SevernNet in 2019, a social enterprise run by and for the businesses, community and other stakeholders in the Port's hinterland.

Rachel leads a team of archaeology, conservation, urban design professionals and project managers who input into the planning process and lead on a variety of heritage projects from community initiatives to the £20m restoration of Birnbeck Pier. This latter project is the key project lead by Rachel on behalf of North Somerset Council in partnership with The Heritage Fund, Historic England and the RNLI. The grade II* Pier structure is derelict having been neglected by a succession of private owners. Following a CPO process it is now in the ownership of the Council. The team have secured funding, planning consent and tendered the pier restoration works, which subject to formal decisions by the RNLI and the Council should start on site in late summer 2025.

Rachel Lewis

Heritage and Design Manager, North Somerset Council





Lizzie Daly

Wildlife Biologist,
Marine Scientist,
Explorer, TV
presenter, Filmmaker
and Author

With on-screen credits spanning several channels, Lizzie is well known as a TV presenter. However, as an experienced underwater and cinematographer, Lizzie shoots much of her own content. Her work has taken her to remote landscapes, such as the Arctic, Antarctica and the Amazon. Off-screen, Lizzie is committed to conservation. Her PhD used tag technology to study the fine-scale movements of wild animals in changing landscapes. Having encountered many of the world's most endangered species, Lizzie aims to demonstrate the impact of our climate's rapid decline. She is an ambassador for organisations such as the Jane Goodall Institute and the Marine Conservation Society, and is the first female patron of marine mammal conservation charity, ORCA. As an academic teaching fellow at Swansea University, Lizzie was recently awarded an honorary doctorate for her contribution. With considerable time spent on expeditions in extreme climate. Lizzie recently completed a 140km solo ultramarathon in the Arctic Circle and is also an avid rock climber, kayaker, scuba diver and freediver. Lizzie also recently published her first book.

Simon Bunn is a Civil Engineer and accomplished Flood Risk Manager with 35+ years of experience. As Vice-Chair of the Severn Estuary Partnership and Chair of the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, Simon plays a leading role in shaping collaborative adaptation strategies across the estuary. Simon's career spans local government, consultancy, and research, with particular expertise in strategic flood risk management, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), reservoir safety, and nature-based solutions. He has led major infrastructure schemes, authored local and regional flood strategies, and contributed technical evidence to parliamentary committees and national guidance documents. His work on peatland restoration, coastal adaptation, and integrated SuDS design has been nationally recognised, including multiple award-winning projects. A frequent speaker at CIWEM, CIRIA, ICE, and RTPI conferences, Simon is committed to embedding long-term climate resilience in both policy and practice, ensuring that communities across the Severn Estuary are prepared for the challenges of a changing climate.

Simon Bunn

Flood Risk
Manager, North
Somerset Council



Emma Mckinley

Senior Research
Fellow, Cardiff
University

Dr Emma McKinley is a Senior Research Fellow at Cardiff University, leading work on ocean literacy and human-ocean relationships. Emma is the Academic Lead of the Severn Estuary Partnership and is the founder of the Marine Social Science Network. She sits on the UK's National Decade Committee for the UN Ocean Decade, the International Science Advisory Group for MEOPAR and the IOC-UNESCO's Global Group of Expert on Ocean Literacy.

Rhoda Ballinger

SEP Chair, Honorary
Senior Lecturer,
Cardiff University

Following over thirty years' experience of lecturing, research and academic writing, Rhoda is currently enjoying her semi-retirement, particularly exploring our estuary's shores and sharing her experiences in her monthly blog on enews.

Stuart Ballard

River Learning
Officer, Severn
Rivers Trust

Stuart's work focuses on engaging family groups on water, wildlife, the ecosystems of the River Severn and the work of SRT. This has led him to focus on the relationship between water and life; water in the atmosphere, water in the biosphere. Stuart's working career has been in the arts and ecology, and has ranged from working as a graphic designer for WWT, to being an Environmental Co-ordinator at the Highways Agency and even as a deckhand on a Marine Ecology Survey boat! His connection with the Severn probably started as a child being taken on his uncle's small boat and seeing a grass snake swim across the river. However, it was surfing the Severn Bore that stoked this interest into a passion/obsession and lead him to surfing giant tidal bores in the Amazon and Borneo where the wildlife was bigger too.

Marsha O'Mahony

Writer, Journalist
and Oral
Historian

Marsha's work includes River Voices, an oral history of the River Wye, and a social history of hop growing in the West Midlands, Scratch of the Hop. She has written for local and national news organisations, most recently for a New York-based lifestyle desk. She is currently a Story Fellow with Cardiff Met University.

