

# Severn Tidings



Newsletter of the Severn Estuary Partnership

Issue 3 Spring 2003

Working in Partnership for the future of the Severn Estuary

Message from the Chair



George Ashworth  
Chairman

I am very pleased to welcome you to another edition of the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) newsletter, *Severn Tidings*.

Over the last 5 years in my position as Chair, the Partnership has provided a much needed role in bringing organisations with an interest in the Estuary together, to provide a co-ordinated approach to the management of the Severn. One of our successes to note has been the development and recent publication of the Strategy for the Severn Estuary. I would personally like to thank everyone who was involved in contributing to its success.

This newsletter reports on the next stage of the Severn Estuary Partnership's work in progressing from policy to practice. In proceeding with this stage of the project, your input is essential and the SEP will welcome your involvement. I look forward to being in contact with you again in the future as the project progresses.

George Ashworth  
Chair,  
Severn Estuary Partnership

## From Strategy to Action on the Severn

The Severn Estuary Partnership is an independent organisation involving Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, countryside agencies and users of the Estuary. The aim of the project is to bring together all those involved in the development, management and use of the Estuary. The Partnership provides a framework which encourages the integration

of interests and responsibilities for the Estuary's sustainable use.

The first step towards this aim has been achieved in the publication of the Strategy for the Severn Estuary in late 2001. The Strategy sets out the way in which sustainable management of the Estuary can be achieved in terms of social, economic and environmental interests.

The Partnership is now embarking upon the implementation phase of the Strategy.

Being a non-statutory document, a voluntary and co-operative approach to the Strategy is required for its successful implementation. The SEP will guide this process ensuring that all those with an interest in the Estuary view it as a strategic management framework, around which, initiatives and action shall be undertaken.

*The Severn Tidings newsletter reports on current news from the SEP and other organisations with Estuary interests. This issue focuses, in its centre pages, on the Severn Estuary European marine site and the work of the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA). If you have ideas or articles for future editions of Severn Tidings, the SEP would like to hear from you.*

For more information on the Severn Estuary Partnership, the Strategy for the Severn Estuary, and to find out how you can become involved, please contact the SEP office. To pass your details on to us, or to inform us of any changes, please take the time to complete the enclosed leaflet.

Tel: 029 20 874713  
Email: [severn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:severn@cardiff.ac.uk)  
[www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk](http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk)



The Strategy for the Severn Estuary (2001)

## Introducing the SEP Team

The Severn Estuary Partnership is pleased to welcome Charlotte Street who joined the SEP team as Project Officer in January 2003. Charlotte came to the Partnership from the Isle of Wight Centre for the Coastal Environment, where she was working on a number of local, national and European coastal and estuarine research projects.

Prior to this, Charlotte gained a BSc in Geography from the University of Southampton and specialised in shoreline management and coastal defence.

'I am extremely pleased to be working for the Severn Estuary Partnership and I'm very much looking forward to working with the wide range of organisations and individuals in implementing the Strategy for the Severn Estuary. A very important aspect of coastal management is the involvement of stakeholders and I will be in contact with you as this project develops. I am lucky to be joining the SEP at a very exciting time.'



Left to right: Evangelia Moutselou, Nick Rodgers & Charlotte Street

Joining Charlotte is Commander Nick Rodgers. Nick is assisting the project in a financial planning capacity and holds expertise in both meteorology and marine tourism.

The project is also assisted by Evangelia Moutselou. Evangelia's background is in environmental law and coastal planning.

The team can be contacted in the SEP office and would be happy to hear from you.

### CONTENTS

SEP Update	1
The Severn Estuary European Marine Site	2
The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA)	3
Severn Bids for European Funding	4
EU Recommendation on ICZM	4
Estuary-wide Organisations Sign up to Co-ordination	4

### Next Issue

Autumn 2003...

Focus on archaeology and the work of the Severn Estuary Levels Research Committee

# The Severn Estuary European Marine Site and the Asso

## Why is the Estuary wildlife so special?

The Severn Estuary is internationally important for birds and for wildlife habitats. It may seem just like mud and saltmarsh to many, but over the whole of Europe, these estuarine environments are quite rare and very important.

The Severn Estuary is one of the most important estuaries in the UK for wintering wildfowl and waders, especially when there is severe weather affecting other sites further north and on the east coast of the UK. The Estuary regularly supports over 20,000 birds, with over 100,000 recorded in the winter season of 1994-95. Species include the European white-fronted goose, dunlin, shelduck, widgeon, teal and ringed plover.

The mudflats and sandflats provide an undisturbed refuge for the wading birds and wildfowl that flock to the Estuary, and the billions of invertebrate species living in the mud provide a rich source of food. At high tide the saltmarsh become roosting areas for the birds, while some species feed on seeds of saltmarsh plants.

The Bewick's Swan, found in important populations on the upper reaches of the Estuary, is an Annex 1 species as it is considered to be particularly threatened or vulnerable. It feeds on the saltmarsh and nearby meadow grasses and uses the mudflats as a refuge when they are disturbed.



## Nature Conservation Designations

The Severn Estuary was classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) in 1995 under the European Birds Directive and is also a possible Special Area of Conservation (pSAC) under the European Habitats Directive. Both SPAs and SACs contribute to a European network of protected sites called Natura 2000. Where an SPA, such as the Severn, or SAC incorporate intertidal areas, they are referred to as European marine sites. The Estuary is also a Ramsar site, an internationally agreed designation for wetlands sites.

## What features have been designated?

### FEATURES (Species)

- Internationally important populations of regularly occurring Annex 1 species: Bewick's swan.
- Internationally important populations of 5 regularly occurring migratory bird species: shelduck, dunlin, redshank, European white fronted goose, gadwall.
- Internationally important assemblage of wintering wildfowl.

### SUB FEATURES (Habitats)

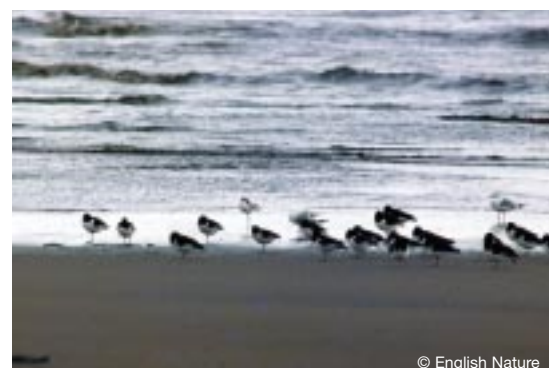
- Intertidal mudflats and sandflats
- Shingle and rocky shore
- Saltmarsh



Bewick's Swans

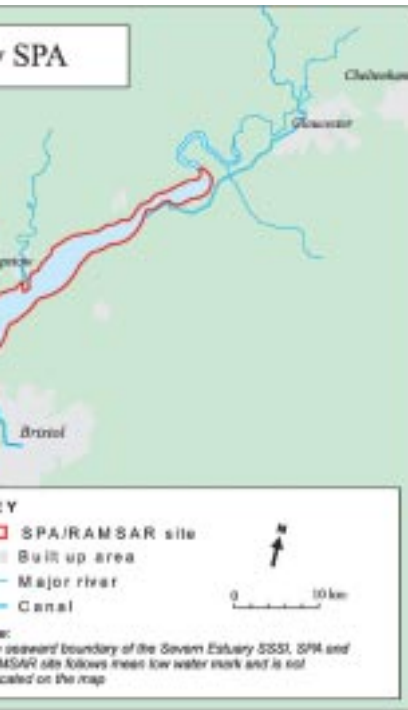


Intertidal Sandflats



Dunlin

# Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA)



## How can we keep it special?

The Estuary, whilst being important for nature conservation purposes, is also a vibrant working environment with a great number of land uses sited round its shores. These include areas of development, areas of transition, industrial complexes and farmland. It attracts many thousands of tourists each year and is enjoyed and used by many groups and individuals for a variety of reasons.

Due to the nature conservation designations on the Estuary, the relevant authorities, those organisations with statutory marine functions, are advised by the UK Government to produce a management scheme, to ensure that human activities are managed in ways that are compatible with the wildlife feature of the site.

Due to the size of the Estuary and the complexity of issues, the relevant authorities have formed the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) in a co-ordinated inter-agency approach to produce a management scheme.

## What is the Management Scheme?

English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales are in the process of drafting conservation objectives for the special species (features) and habitats (sub-features) of the site. Once these are agreed, the management scheme will be an ongoing process that will set the framework within which activities can be managed to ensure that conservation objectives are being met.

## How is it developing?

The Relevant Authorities are currently collating information on where activities occur, how often, when and what management is already in place. User groups and other interests are providing advice to the development of the scheme as an Advisory Group. A Foundation Document, which describes the legal background, the process and principles on which the management scheme will be based, will be published in March 2003, with the final management scheme expected in September 2004.

## How will it affect me?

The management scheme is concerned with promoting the sustainable use of a living, working Estuary. There is no intention to stop people using the estuary, unless the activity they are involved in is damaging the specific features for which the Estuary is designated.



The First Severn Crossing



Weston-Super-Mare

## For further information

Contact the ASERA Technical Officer:

ASERA, c/o ABP Port Office,  
Alexandra Dock,  
Newport, South Wales.  
NP20 2UW  
01633 777706  
asera@abports.co.uk  
www.severnestuary.net/asera/

## Who are the Relevant Authorities?

### Port and Harbour Authorities

- Associated British Ports
- Bridgwater Port Authority
- British Waterways, Sharpness
- Cardiff Harbour Authority
- Gloucester Harbour Trustees
- Newport Harbour Commissioners
- The Bristol Port Company
- Trinity House Lighthouse Service

### Local Authorities and Countryside Agencies

- Bristol City Council
- Cardiff Council
- Countryside Council for Wales
- English Nature
- Forest of Dean District Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Newport City Council
- North Somerset Council
- South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Stroud District Council
- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- West Somerset District Council\*

### Environment Agency, Water Companies and Drainage Boards

- Bridgwater and Pawlett Drainage Board
- Bristol Water\*
- Caldicot and Wentlooge Internal Drainage Board
- Cannington and Wembdon District Drainage Board\*
- Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
- Environment Agency
- Gordano Valley Internal Drainage Board\*
- Lower Axe Internal Drainage Board
- Lower Brue Internal Drainage Board
- Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board
- North Somerset Internal Drainage Board
- Severn Trent Water
- Stockland District Drainage Board
- Wessex Water
- West Mendip Internal Drainage

\* Non-contributing organisations at time of print.



# Severn Bids for European Funding

## Integrated Coastal Zone Management: Towards an Atlantic Vision

The Severn Estuary Partnership has recently submitted an Interreg IIIb bid in partnership with other organisations along the Atlantic Arc.

A range of partners from Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal will undertake the project. Together they will test how Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is implemented, particularly in the context of spatial planning, achieving sustainable development, and in promoting environmental, social and economic well-being. Locally, the project is designed to reap the benefits of learning from our European partners, and involve stakeholders in delivering an integrated package of actions, which will result in tangible benefits on the ground.

The results from the project will contribute towards the development of National Strategies for ICZM, and towards implementing specific aspects of ICZM, in accordance with the EU Recommendation. The outputs of the project will also contribute towards the development of an Atlantic Vision

for the sustainable development and management of the coastal zone.

The project is designed to implement individual thematic ICZM actions whilst linking to other themes. For example, promoting sustainable access would provide the opportunity to also promote protection and awareness-raising of both internationally designated habitats and archaeological heritage.

### Actions Proposed in the Severn Estuary Partnership Area

The following actions will be undertaken around the Severn Estuary:

- ★ Investigate and improve methods of Stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ICZM.
- ★ Establish and manage sustainable Coastal Access around the Estuary.
- ★ Conserve and enhance valued landscapes and habitats such as orchards, hedged pastures and saltmarsh, through promoting and developing their economic potential.



The Atlantic Arc and project partner areas

- ★ Improve spatial planning and sustainable development decisions in the coastal zone, particularly in relation to conserving and enhancing biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- ★ Improve the integration of Geographic Information System (GIS) data in a multi-authority, cross-regional context.



The development of this project has resulted in the drafting of a three year work programme for the Partnership, which has been designed to deliver priority actions included in the Strategy for the Severn Estuary.

## The EU Recommendation on ICZM

The 'coastal waters' have been stirred by the European Recommendation issued May 2002, which has raised the profile of Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The environmental, socio-economic, cultural and recreational values of the coast and the need for their integrated management have been recognised at a European level.

The Recommendation asks Member States to undertake a national stocktaking of legislation, institutions and stakeholders involved in the management of the coastal zone and, based on this, to develop national strategies to deliver ICZM.

### UK Update

The stocktaking exercise for the UK is commencing in March 2003.

The role of coastal partnerships will be investigated as part of this exercise to establish whether, through such initiatives, true integration on the coast can be achieved. At present, national, regional and local partnerships are key in providing a mechanism for stakeholder involvement.

The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) seeks, in cooperation with the Local Government Association, to provide coastal partnerships with a platform. This opportunity will allow such organisations to demonstrate their role in the ICZM process and the benefits they provide.

A one day workshop has been organised by the national network CoastNET, to bring representatives from such bodies (including the SEP) together to develop a collective vision for their role in delivering ICZM.

For more information you can visit:  
[www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/iczm/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/iczm/index.htm)

## Estuary-wide Organisations Sign up to Co-ordination

On the 15th January 2003, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the Severn Estuary Partnership and other estuary-wide organisations to acknowledge the importance of working together during the development and implementation of plans and initiatives that have an estuary-wide remit.

The parties to this Memorandum include the Severn Estuary Partnership, the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (nature conservation Directives), the Severn Estuary Coastal Group (coastal defence), North Devon and Somerset Coastal Group (coastal defence) and the Standing Conference of Severnside Local Authorities (planning and development issues). The MoU has been drawn up to promote a greater understanding of the roles of each organisation, encourage joint working, share expertise, integrate administration and improve cost-effectiveness. One joint project to note at present is the construction of a Gateway website. This website, [www.severn-estuary.net](http://www.severn-estuary.net), allows you to access information on all of the groups and is due to be launched in March 2003.

The progress of this initiative will be reported in the Autumn issue of Severn Tidings. In the meantime, for more information you can visit [www.severn-estuary-partnership.org.uk](http://www.severn-estuary-partnership.org.uk).

This newsletter has been produced by the SEP in association with ASERA.



**ASERA**

Would your organisation like to sponsor future editions?

### Contact us

For further information on the articles in this newsletter, to receive the text in Welsh or for any other queries, please contact:

**The Severn Estuary Partnership**  
PO Box 914, Cardiff, CF10 3YE  
Tel: 02920 874713 Fax: 02920 874326  
Email: [severn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:severn@cardiff.ac.uk)  
[www.severn-estuary-partnership.org.uk](http://www.severn-estuary-partnership.org.uk)