

EXE-PRESS

Spring/Summer 2002

Newsletter of the Exe Estuary Management Partnership

Progress on Actions

The Partnership have signed up to a wide range of work in next year's Action Plan. Due to the success of last year's Action Plan we will see many initiatives continue:



Inside news

- Harbour Authority Review
- Warren News
- New World Heritage Site
- Topsham Quay
- Eelgrass Study
- Forum and Focus Groups Update



- Website
- Exe Estuary Handbook
- EXE-PRESS Newsletters
- Who's Who Contacts Database
- State of the Environment Mapping

New actions will include:

- Workshops
- Water Safety Day
- Environmental Health Audit
- Leaflet on What is the Exe Estuary Partnership?

Full details are contained in the Partnership's Action Plan 2002-2003, available on the website www.exe-estuary.org or from the Estuary Officer (contact details on the back page).

Aims of the Exe Estuary Partnership

EXE-PRESS is the newsletter of the Exe Estuary Management Partnership which was established in the mid 1990s to:

- promote the sustainable use of the Exe Estuary, balancing demands made on its natural resources and resolving conflicts of interest where they arise;
- provide a framework for the co-ordinated management of the Exe Estuary and improve communications between estuary users and organisations with authority over the Exe.

Website Launched!

All you need to know about the Partnership's work is now available on-line. Through the website there is easy access to the Exe Estuary Management Plan, Action Plan and minutes of the Partnership's regular meetings. There's also a Clubs and Events Diary and a News section which will be regularly updated. Links to many other useful sites for users of the Exe Estuary and surrounding areas are also provided.

www.exe-estuary.org



Gateway to the New World Heritage Site



In December 2001 the Dorset and East Devon Coast from Orcombe Point (just east of Exmouth) to Studland Bay (in Dorset) was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This is the only natural World Heritage Site in England, achieved after some 8 years of preparation by a team led by Dorset County Council, Devon County Council and the Dorset Coast Forum. The site is spectacularly beautiful, but the main reason for its designation is its outstanding geology,

which offers a near complete record through 185 million years of Earth History.

The Exe Estuary lies to the west of the World Heritage Site with Exeter, Exmouth and the eastern side of the estuary offering a gateway to the site. Development and economic enhancement opportunities may arise from the designation of the nearby coast.

For further details contact: Richard Edmonds, Earth Sciences Co-ordinator Tel: 01305 224477
r.edmonds@dorset-cc.gov.uk or Sally King, Visitor Manager Tel: 01395 225091 s.a.king@dorset-cc.gov.uk

LOSPAN project findings

The Exe Estuary Partnership have been involved in an EC funded Interreg IIC local spatial planning project over the past two years. The purpose of the project was to assess how policies at the European, national and local levels are effecting estuary management. All legislation relating to the Exe Estuary has been documented, with more detailed assessment of methods for monitoring the health of the estuary. A group of technical experts was brought together to identify survey options, in particular ways of collecting information to improve understanding of the links between land use activities and estuarine health.

A new Geographic Information System (GIS) has been set up to present and analyse existing data. Representatives of the Agriculture/Land Use, Fisheries and Water Quality Focus Groups met to view the findings of the LOSPAN project in December 2001. They recommended further development of the GIS and that the Partnership undertake an environmental health audit of the estuary in next year's Action Plan. The GIS will also assist in state of the environment mapping to help inform the upcoming review of the Exe Estuary Management Plan.

Eelgrass Study – we need your help!

Every summer, eelgrass (*Zostera*) grows in expansive inter-tidal areas of the Exe, particularly between Exmouth and Lympstone, Dawlish and Starcross. It provides important feeding grounds for wintering wildfowl where huge crowds of Brent Geese can be seen in the autumn. The presence of eelgrass reminds us of the richness of estuaries for biodiversity, with the Exe Estuary being one of the most important sites in the south-west.

Devon Wildlife Trust have awarded the Exe Estuary Partnership a £250 grant to progress the eelgrass project work of the Conservation Focus Group. The grant will be put towards researching historical patterns of eelgrass distribution in the Exe Estuary.



Surveying the eelgrass beds near Lympstone, September 2001.

Do you have any old photographs, descriptions, illustrations or paintings which show where the eelgrass beds used to be? If so, please contact the Estuary Officer.

Floating Pennywort – progress!

The Environment Agency, English Nature and RSPB have been tackling this invasive species on Exminster Marshes over the past two years. Major clearance of infested ditches was undertaken by the Agency in Autumn 2001, removing the plant from the vast majority of ditches. The three parties met in February to set out action for this year. The first stage is to re-survey all of the ditches (now underway) and follow up with appropriate management. Following this work a survey in autumn will concern whether management has been successful and help to determine future action. All parties expect to be tackling the plant for several years to come – illustrating the danger to native wildlife if this plant is released into the wild.

For more information contact the Environment Agency on Tel: 01392 444000.

Sharing our Experience with the Black Sea

During 2002 our experiences of estuary management in south Devon are being shared with a team of coastal scientists from Odessa in Ukraine. The project is an initiative from EUROCOAST which is hosted by the UK's coastal heritage network, CoastNET. In January the team visited coastal sites along the south coast of England including the Exe Estuary. They are initiating coastal management in Tiligul Liman, a lagoon-like estuary on the Black Sea coast. Despite the contrasting political and economic position of our estuaries, the exchange will highlight some interesting comparisons and lessons for us on the Exe.

Did you know?
Estuaries are as important in life as the sea.
One cubic metre of mud contains 100,000 of e...

Forum and Focus Groups update

September 2001 saw a gathering of well over one hundred people interested in the management and use of the Exe Estuary. An informal Forum event was organised by the Exe Estuary Officer including a guided walk of Exmouth Local Nature Reserve, a Harbour Services meeting and a boat trip.

Geoff Jones led a guided walk on Exmouth Local Nature Reserve



Presentation from consultants Adams Hendry on the Harbour Authority review at Exe Sailing Club



Returning from the boat trip at the end of the afternoon's activities.

The Forum met again in April at County Hall, Exeter, to launch the Action Plan 2002-2003. Presentations were given by the Estuary Officer and Focus Group Chairmen with guest speakers on the World Heritage Site, harbour authority review, proposed gas pipeline crossing and management of Dawlish Warren.

The Exe Estuary Partnership continue to facilitate the work of eight focus groups throughout the year. Details of this work can be found in the Action Plan or obtained from the Focus Group Chairmen.

If you do not receive notice of Forum or Focus Group meetings and would like to be included on the Partnership's database, please contact the Estuary Officer.

Topsham Quay – an unexpected rarity!

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One of the few British mainland locations for the nationally rare plant Smaller tree-mallow (*Lavetera cretica*) is on the eastern side of Topsham Quay. Surprisingly, the dirt and loose grit surface provides ideal habitat for this plant, which benefits from the sheltered conditions here.

The plant is best viewed in June or July when flowering. To the untrained eye the plant looks much like its' close (and widespread) relative the Common Mallow.

In recognition of the rarity of this plant, Topsham Quay has been designated as a 'Site of Nature Conservation Importance' through the Exeter Local Plan. A set of management guidelines have been drawn up and agreed by the City Council to ensure that there is no conflict between the survival of the plant and the continued use of the area for winter boat storage. This demonstrates how wildlife and boating interests can coexist through careful management.

Warren News New Dogs Byelaw

Dawlish Warren national nature reserve is regularly enjoyed by many dog walkers. As one of the most important wildlife sites in the south west, great care is required to protect wildlife in sensitive areas or at sensitive times. Teignbridge District Council has agreed a new byelaw to allow enjoyment of the site whilst protecting its unique wildlife.

Dogs can continue to be taken over a large area of the beach and over much of the rest of the Reserve on a

lead. However, dogs are no longer allowed on the dunes, beach or mudflats beyond groynes 9 under the new policy, all year round. This is to protect birds roosting and feeding on the shore and mudflats in the area towards and around Warren Point. The mudflats on the inshore side of the Warren are used for internationally important numbers of Brent Geese and other important birds.

For further information please contact the Visitor Centre Tel: 01626 215754/01626 863980 or the Beach Manager Tel: 01626 888317

News Bulletin

National Cycle Network – Devon County Council are looking to prioritise cycle route options around the Exe Estuary. Consultation is underway with key landowners over difficult sections i.e. crossing the railway at Powderham and the mouth of the River Clyst. Soon they will be approaching statutory bodies for their views and in due course the Partnership will encourage consultation with non-statutory bodies.

Exmouth Marina – Partnership representatives are discussing development plans for the remaining area of Exmouth Docks, particularly on the land either side of the entrance to the marina. It is hoped that before the development is completed, there will be provisions for improvements in facilities to water users and marine related businesses.

Proposed gas pipeline – Transco have been undertaking extensive survey work to assess options for the proposed pipeline crossing between Lypstone and Powderham. The feasibility of different construction methods is currently being investigated before details are released for full consultation.

Kite Surfers Talking – Due to the increasing popularity of this sport, Partnership representatives have been raising awareness of local conditions and navigation issues through discussions with kite surfers. A successful meeting in March saw the establishment of a new kite surfers club to draw up a voluntary code to help provide beach and water safety for all users.

Have you any estuary news? If so, please contact us! Regular news is posted on the Exe Estuary Website www.exe-estuary.org

Harbour Authority Review - Update

Exeter City Council continue to work with consultants Adams Hendry on a review of options for a new harbour authority. Recommendations made in a draft report from them last autumn, and outlined at the Exe Estuary Forum (September 2001, Exe Sailing Club) were passed to central government's DTLR Ports Division with questions about the feasibility of applying the recommended Trust Ports model to the Exe Estuary.

The three key local authorities (Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and East Devon District Council) met in December and agreed that a new harbour authority was the way forward. It was intended that the Adams Hendry report would go out to wider consultation, but that two issues needed to be clarified beforehand:

- i) whether the Trust Port can be funded by local authorities
- ii) whether local authorities could nominate their own councillors onto the Trust Port board.

These two questions were directed to DTLR's Ports Division who replied in mid-February. They indicated that neither of the above proposals fits with the Trust Port review recommendations but that there may be ways of overcoming them.

Since the February response, officers of the three local authorities have met to consider alternative options. They recognised that it may be difficult to persuade the Ports Division that the local authorities should contribute, particularly as the Ports Division have made it clear that central government policy is for the provision of harbour services through the user pays principle. A number of other options for representation and funding of a new harbour authority are therefore being looked at e.g. a Trust Port with no local authority funding; local authorities vesting responsibilities in the new harbour authority; involvement of



local moorings associations; expanding the role of Exmouth Docks Company; dissolving the current structure of the Partnership to take on harbour authority roles; and other options. Adams Hendry are now taking parliamentary advice on other such options. Exeter City Council had hoped to go into public consultation before now, but it is important that consultation takes place on practical solutions that would be acceptable to the Ports Division.

The Partnership still intend to convene the Harbour Services Focus Group to comment on the review process when there is more clarity on the current complexities of options.

Exe Estuary Handbook – last chance for contributions!

A handbook of useful information about the estuary will be published this summer. Much of the information is already available on the Partnership's website, but the handbook will be available for people with no access to the internet and to provide information in an easy to use format for taking out and about.

If you have any information which could be included in the Handbook or website please contact the Estuary Officer as soon as possible.

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 6th July,

Water Safety Awareness Day

Many people expressed concern over the risk of an accident at the mouth of the Exe Estuary last summer – so the Partnership are bringing together resources to promote the water safety message this summer. Look out for posters on display around the Estuary.



Saturday 12th October,

Exe Estuary Forum

An informal opportunity to get involved and meet other estuary managers and users.



Would you like to sponsor **EXE-PRESS**? If you are interested in supporting the newsletter or other Partnership work, please contact the Estuary Officer, Natasha Barker.

Exe Estuary Management Partnership

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