



Exe Press

Newsletter of the EXE Estuary Partnership

ISSUE 23 • WINTER 2010

In this issue:

Exe Patrol Boat update

Exe Estuary Forum Agenda and

Booking details

Up the Creek

Free cycling Opportunities

on the Exe Trail



The Winter Delights of an RSPB Wetland Reserve

The autumn colours and the shiny bright berries lining the hedgerows are just the tasters to wet our appetite ready for the onset of the real delights of this time of year. The one thing about working on a wetland reserve, you look forward to the autumn and winter, as the winter wildlife is as good if not better than in the spring and summer. Although this time of year brings with it shorter days and wet weather, on the positive side it attracts large numbers of wetland wildlife. If you get a chance pop out to Exminster Marshes and listen for the arrival of the winter months, the sounds of wigeon and teal or the chattering of black-tailed godwits. Of course we shouldn't forget the cry of the winter lapwing and the eerie call of the curlew, all sounds we associate with this time of year, with misty mornings and dewy grass, are a delight to hear.

The winter roost at Bowling Green Marsh Reserve, Topsham continues to build, and should be in people's diaries for a visit during the winter months, best times are two hours before and after high tide, however there is always something to see in this area whatever the weather, tide and time. Avocet numbers are to still to increase, however black-tailed godwits have already

risen to over 400. The peregrine has been a regular visitor, taking advantage of the large number of birds in one place for an easy meal. The birds will soon tell you of his presence as they take to the wing and flock together jostling for space in the middle of the flock so not to be the one on the edge more likely to be picked off by the master of the sky. Why not join one of our walks and see such delights for yourself:

Exminster Marshes to see winter waders and wildfowl:
9th January 2011, 10am – 1pm

Bowling Green Marsh to see the winter high tide roost:
12th December 2010, 9am – 12noon
27th February 2011, 1pm – 4pm.

Booking essential, if you would like to know more then call the RSPB on 01392 432691.

Sally Mills
Site Manager,
Exe Estuary Reserve Office 01392 824614

Santa Cruise

With the Exe Estuary teeming with birds and children bouncing up and down with Christmas excitement Stuart Line Cruises are offering the perfect combination this festive season on their Sail with Santa Cruise! With an on board grotto, presents, magic, face painting refreshments and the main man himself these trips are certain to be a Christmas treat this winter.

Our Santa Cruises are often the first time children have sailed on the Exe Estuary and are a great opportunity for them to start to appreciate the history, beauty and wildlife it has to offer. Sailing on

the 12th, 13th, 18th and 19th December from Exmouth on a covered and heated vessel with a costumed crew you can combine festive magic with surreptitious learning!

Advanced booking is essential so that the Elves are prepared. Stuart Line also run River Exe Cruises throughout the winter season as well as Guided Bird Watching Cruises, simply ring for details:

Stuart Line Cruises
Tel: 01395 279693
Web: www.stuartlinecruises.co.uk

Photo credit cover image:
Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)



Councillor Bernard Hughes OBE,
Chairman of the Partnership's
Management Group, with Peter
Exley of the RSPB

Some Famous Faces on the Buses



Look out for the new Go57 buses between Exeter and Exmouth which have taken on a whole new identity with Exe wildlife themed pictures and information proudly displayed.

The 57 route runs between Exeter and Brixington via Topsham, Lympstone and Exmouth and carries in excess of 1.2 million passengers a year. The buses were jointly purchased by Stagecoach South West and Devon County Council and represent an investment of over £1.5m in the service, providing ten high specification and low emission Enviro 400 vehicles to operate along this important corridor.

Given the environmental credentials of the new buses, coupled with the Exe Estuary route they traverse, it seemed a natural fit for the livery design to showcase some of the wildlife which can be found in this important conservation area. Accordingly, Stagecoach has worked closely with the Exe Estuary Management Partnership - and in particular the RSPB - to develop a simple, yet striking livery depicting species which populate the Exe Estuary. Of the ten buses purchased, eight feature a different bird or animal, many of which can be seen by visiting the RSPB reserve at Bowling Green Marsh which is located just one bus stop past Darts Farm.

See if you can spot all 8 of the buses!!



Exe Estuary Forum Chair

Integral elements of the Exe Estuary Partnership governance are our Forum Chair and Vice Chair positions, currently Neil Downes and Lynn Trout respectively. The Chair and Vice Chair not only lead the Forum and provide essential input to the Management Partnership on behalf of the Forum but they also provide vital support to the Exe Estuary Officer; attending meetings, chairing Exe Action Groups and providing valuable advice on estuary matters.

Under the constitution of the Partnership these roles are subject to an election every two years and we now need to do this. Therefore, if you are interested in taking a more active role in the management of the estuary then this is your opportunity to do so.

To be nominated you must be supported by 2 other members of the Exe's community. A ballot will take place at the Forum on the 3rd February with the winning candidates announced at the end of the evening. Neil and Lynn are both happy to let their names go forward to be considered for a further term as Forum Chair and Vice Chair. They have both provided a brief account of how they have found the role and what made them decide to take part below:

Neil Downes, Forum Chair

"I have lived for most of my life beside the Exe Estuary enjoying the facilities it offers both on the water and on the land. In 1989 I was fortunate to become the Chief Fishery Officer of Devon Sea Fisheries Committee and the fisheries, shellfisheries and marine environmental issues within the Exe Estuary came within the organisations responsibilities. I retired from this post in March 2007. I am Vice- Chairman of the Lymstone Fishery and Harbour Association where I am actively involved with the issues in concerning leisure boating and harbour management.

As Chief Fisheries Officer I attended many meetings concerning the management of the estuary, the first of which was in 1993 when the first ever Management Plan was submitted. This document attempted to identify the many and varied interests that took place in and around the estuary and set a scheme of management for ensuring the future of this globally important site, just as today's Management Plan continues to provide. The Estuary being a European Site, a Ramsar Site and SSSI is a sensitive area where the interests of those who live in the vicinity have to be dovetailed with the interests of nature.

Over the years it has been a challenge to balance the interests of the various topic groups alongside the effective management of the Exe Estuary's assets. One way that this has been achieved is by highlighting the variety of activities that can be enjoyed together with the codes of conduct that need to be followed by those visiting the estuary and those who live in the locality.

During the last few years I have been delighted to be a part of the creation of leaflets that publicise the activities, wildlife, and interests that are available as well as contribute to the Exe Press newsletter and get involved with community events, such as the biannual clean ups. I am pleased to represent the estuary's many and varied interest groups and contribute to the management of this very special site".



Neil Downes chairing last year's Forum

Lynn Trout, Vice Chair

"As a child a favourite book was 'A Valley Grows Up' by Edward Osmond. The book charts the development of a valley over a million years; the geology, the environment and the human effects on its progress from gully to a full river flowing into the sea. Fifty years ago my family settled in Topsham and one of our first purchases was a yacht with dinghy. My first memories of the Exe are rowing around the reed islands and sailing down to the Warren. Then I married into the Trout Family with their history and dependence on the health of the Exe.

The Exe and its health is essential to me and my family and I am fascinated by it. My involvement in the Exe Estuary Partnership gives me greater opportunities to contribute to our knowledge of it, especially in its current dynamic state of change and to introduce it to others, such as through the annual festival."

For more information please contact Jenny Lockett 01392 382236

The Exe Estuary Forum

Your Free and Informative Opportunity to find out about:

- * Findings of the Exe Estuary Disturbance Study
- * Progress of the Exe Estuary Strategy
- * Management of the RSPB's reserves
- * The future of the Estuary Patrol Boat
- And much more.....

Book your place for this year's Exe Forum to find out about some of the key issues affecting the estuary, local businesses, clubs and communities. With studies and monitoring to tell you about this year's event is shaping up to be a jam packed session of information and discussion.

To book your free place email or call Jenny on the contact details below. Places are available on a first come first served basis so book early to avoid disappointment. Where possible please limit representation of one club or organisation to 3 people to ensure an equal opportunity for all of the local businesses and clubs around the Exe to attend.

Date: Thursday 3rd February 2011
Time: 6.30pm till 9.30pm
Venue: Coaver club, County Hall, Exeter

Draft Agenda

Some amendments to this agenda may be necessary as plans continue to develop

- 6.30 Arrival, refreshments available (please ensure arrival by 6.50 at the latest) Chance to view East Devon District Council's new educational film Ecologic
- 7.00 Introduction: Neil Downes, Forum Chair
- 7.05 Election of Chair and Vice Chair
- 7.15 Looking back over the last 4 years, a Partnership update – Jenny Lockett
- 7.30 Questions
- 7.35 Planning for Coastal Change; the Exe Estuary Strategy: Steve Rendell
- 7.50 Questions
- 8.00 Results of the Disturbance Study: Durwyn Liley, Footprint Ecology
- 8.10 Workshops: What do the results mean?
- 8.45 Reconvene in Council Chamber
- Soapbox sessions
- 8.50 The future of the Estuary Patrol Boat
- 8.55 Starcross Yacht Club's new Environmental Policy
- 9.00 Managing the RSPB's reserves
- 9.05 Questions to soapbox presenters
- 9.30 Close

Countryfile Comes to the Exe

The life and bustle of the Exe Estuary is to be captured for all to enjoy when Countryfile come to the Exe this month. Presenters Adam Henson and Julia Bradbury will be paying a visit to the globally important site to find out more about the 'fruits' of the estuary, the spectacular Avocet populations and much more. The show, which will be aired on Sunday 12th December, will aim to feature some of the Exe's local characters as well as capture the beauty of the estuary at this time of year, while more than 20,000 migratory birds are holidaying for the winter months.

If you missed Exmouth Mussel's appearance on River Cottage earlier this month then catch up at www.channel4.com/programmes/river-cottage/episode-guide/series-14/episode-2

If you missed Autumnwatch's visit to the estuary earlier this month then catch up at http://rdnedge.bbc.co.uk/local/devon/hl/front_page/newsid_9230000/9230075.stm



Disturbance study update

As winter draws in it is time to start bringing together the vast amount of information gathered as part of the Exe Disturbance Study. The study has been running since the autumn of 2009 and has involved widespread consultation on how people use and enjoy the Exe. Importantly we have also been looking at the way that key bird populations vary over time and also how each species responds to different activities on the Exe. A report will be published in the new

year which will describe the findings and outline recommendations for managing the interests of people and wildlife on the estuary. We are very grateful for all input received- with special thanks to Edge Watersports for help distributing GPS units to watersports users and also to Stuart Line Cruises for allowing us to survey the estuary during the river cruises.



Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

Planning for Coastal Change

The Environment Agency is progressing the Exe Estuary Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy, together with its Council partners, in consultation with Network Rail and Natural England.

Latest Update from the Environment Agency

We have reviewed all of the previous studies and made further analyses to determine what the flood risk in the estuary might be in a hundred years' time. We have also made an estimate of how much habitat might be lost due to rising sea levels etc. Much of this information was presented at a public exhibition on 23 September at the Devon County Council Coaver Club. It is also available for viewing on the Environment Agency website.

We are now taking the recommended policies from the South Devon and Dorset Shoreline Management Plan 2 and checking that they are still appropriate in the light of more detailed study. We will then work out the most appropriate response to the flood and erosion risks. This will take about six months. Next summer, when we have an idea of what these responses might be, we will consult local communities for their thoughts and comments..

We have written a report on the existing environmental conditions and potential impacts arising from any works. The report identifies environmental issues, constraints and opportunities within the study area, and the proposed methodology for the environmental

assessment. This report is called the Scoping Consultation Document and it is also available on our website, though the consultation period has now closed.

When complete the strategy will provide a long term plan for tidal flood and coastal erosion investment around the estuary. It will also recommend where we should create new inter-tidal wildlife habitats to compensate for losses of habitat caused by rising sea levels.

As stated above, when we have an idea of any proposed changes we will bring them to the public for discussion, but that will not be until the summer of 2011. In the meantime, for any further information or contact with the strategy team please visit our website at:

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/121321.aspx>

Or contact

Steve Rendell
Environment Agency
Manley House
Kestrel Way
Exeter
EX2 7LQ
Tel: 01392 442021



Exe-cellent Free Cycling Opportunities along the Exe Estuary Trail

The East Devon School Sport Partnership has teamed up with Cycle Devon to provide local opportunities to get more people to cycle more often. To kick-start independent cycling, we are able to offer free guided rides or personal training in and around Exmouth and the Exe Estuary Trail until the end of March 2011. There are 3 options on how training can be received:

FREE 1:1 Cycle Training (16 years +)

You could be a complete beginner who's never sat on a bicycle before, a novice rider who wants to have someone alongside them while getting confident to cycle on the road, or a more experienced rider wanting to master a particular on-road situation to start your commute to work.

One to one sessions are available for up to 2 hours to address whatever specific needs you have relating to cycling. Our qualified instructors are available 7 days a week to meet you at a time and place to suit you and run the sessions with up to 3 cyclists of similar abilities or needs.

Free Guided Rides (16 years +)

These will be informal cycle rides and are an ideal follow-on to your 1:1 training and can help build your confidence and skills in preparation for independent cycling. They will be on circular traffic free routes in and around Exmouth and on some quiet roads or along the Exe Estuary Trail. They are for adults only (18+) or accompanied young adults of 16 or 17 years old.

All cyclists are welcome, experienced and beginners. The routes will be up to 10 miles long, and will take about 2 hours in total. A qualified cycle instructor will be leading the way and can also pass on tips and advice on cycling in general as well as to be there to help should you get a puncture!

Free Family Rides

These will be gentle informal rides that will help to improve the cycling skills and confidence of the youngsters and equips the parents with the knowledge and abilities to accompany their child effectively on quiet roads or off-road cycle paths. All families are welcome, experienced and beginners.

The circular traffic free routes in and around Exmouth will be up to 6 miles long, and will take about 2 hours in total with appropriate breaks when needed. A qualified cycle instructor will be leading the way and can also pass on tips and advice on cycling in general as well as to be there to help should you get a puncture!

After registering on-line or calling our administrator for your particular cycling experience, you will be contacted by an approved Cycle Devon instructor directly.

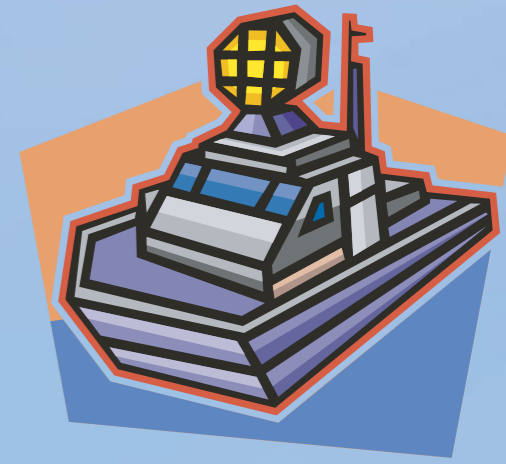
This project is funded by Cycle Devon - for further details of other cycling opportunities in Devon please visit their website www.cycledevon.info

To register or further information go to: www.eastdevonsport.com and click on the 'Cycling' tab or call 01404 814995 or contact the Project Officer Nick Gillon on 07813 31427 4



John Morton, DCC Images

Exe Patrol Boat



Over the last 2 years the Exe Patrol Boat has not been in operation. This leaves the Exe Estuary, regulated by certain legislation and byelaws but without an official patrol boat presence to ensure that the laws are observed. The Exe Estuary Management Partnership, Exmouth Town Council, Exeter City Council, the Exmouth Water User's Group and others are now working together with the aim of reinstating the patrol boat.

A Brief History

The Harbour Authority, Exeter City Council, were previously able to generate income from the sludge boat and from shipping which was paid for, amongst other things, operating a patrol boat staffed 37 hours a week by two full time operators during the summer months. Following the cessation of the sludge boat, in the late 90s the service was disbanded in the following year.

Exeter City Council is still the Harbour Authority and with no income streams left but with the costs of operation, which it has sought to minimise over the years. We are still awaiting the results of the Public Inquiry into the Harbour Revision Order and must prepare for any changes that it may bring but we are also conscious that we cannot rely on the outcome of the inquiry to solve these issues immediately and must consider the long-term enforcement throughout the Exe. If a new harbour authority is created all of ECC's current duties, that is conserving navigation and buoyage, overseeing safe navigation including hydrographic surveys would pass to the new Trust.

The situation is further complicated by ownership of the estuary fundus being divided between Lord Courtney (Powderham side), private ownership in Lymstone and the rest with The Crown. Understandably boat owners are keen to keep their fees low and

therefore there is limited opportunity for additional monies to be collected to contribute to the costs of the Harbour Authority. In 2004 an Exmouth Police Constable took forward an initiative to reinstate the patrol boat and collected funds from local clubs to pay for fuel. By coordinating with the RNLI qualified helms and Police Officers were made available to man the boat and enforce the byelaws. Unfortunately, due to the many and varied demands on Officer time the police struggled to continue their support and by 2008 the service had ceased to function.

Current Situation

Although in general life on the river is very amicable, with the many various user groups and activities making best use of the site, there are reports of unacceptable behaviour each summer. The Patrol Boat, when operating, was able to provide a presence which helped to moderate behaviour and educate users of the river.

There is now an opportunity to reinstate the boat but it relies on the involvement of dedicated and qualified volunteers. As well as helms we require volunteers willing to act as enforcement officers educating different users about the rules of the estuary.

The Exe Estuary Partnership is currently seeking the views, support and any ideas from the local clubs as to whether the patrol boat is worth reinstating and how they could support the initiative.

**If you would like further information or to submit your comments please contact
Jenny Lockett, Exe Estuary Officer
Tel: 01392 382236
Email: jenny.lockett@devon.gov.uk**



Up the Creek

Ray Balkwill's fascination for painting the Exe Estuary has spanned well over two decades and his love for this special stretch of water is well known. However, Ray told me that it was not enough just to go to a place and set up an easel. To fully understand a landscape, painters must submerge themselves in it, making it a multi-sensory experience. This also means identifying with it, getting 'under the skin' of the place as it were and learning something of its people, its culture and its history. In this article Ray describes one of his favourite locations.

"I must have painted most aspects of the river, but it is perhaps Camperdown Creek, in Exmouth that draws me back, time and again. Here there is everything to meet the marine painter's need - character wooden boats, rustic old boat sheds and a towering sail loft that simply demands to be painted! Camperdown Creek or, 'The Gut' as it is sometimes called, derives its name from Camperdown Terrace, which runs alongside the creek. The name commemorated a naval disaster in 1893 when the building of this terrace began. Whilst on manoeuvres HMS Camperdown collided with HMS Victoria which resulted in the loss of the Victoria and the death of 321 sailors. Up to the last war its foreshore looked out onto the wider estuary, but between the 1930's and 50's the creek was formed when land was reclaimed to create what is now the Imperial Recreation Ground. In the mid nineteenth century all along this shoreline there was a bustling shipbuilding industry. Here were yards owned by the Redways employing an army of craftsmen and apprentices employed in the several departments of rope and sail making, blacksmiths, fitting shops and block and spar making.

At the head of the creek is Lavis's boatyard, established in 1875 and behind this a three-storey sail loft. Horn's Sail Loft as it is known stands out, quite literally, as a reminder of Exmouth's once flourishing maritime past. Built in 1810, it is fitting that in its 200th anniversary year it has at last been restored. It was built of limestone and local stone quarried from nearby cliffs. Back then apart from the windmill, Point House and the Ropewalk, it would have stood practically alone and been quite a landmark. The windmill was demolished in 1849, but Point House and a fragment of the Ropewalk still remain, albeit somewhat overshadowed by modern development. Over the centuries many sail makers have used the upper two floors of the loft including Luther Knight and for over forty years Fred Horn. The last sail maker to use it in more recent times being Mike McNamara.

Exmouth may no longer be a thriving port, or have its fishing and shipbuilding industries, but we are fortunate that buildings such as the sail loft still stand to provide reminders of a rich maritime past, as well as inspiration for the painter. It is also a fitting tribute to the late Jim Shapter (1926 - 2007) who loved the river and in 2000 had the foresight to recommend it become a listed building."

Halsgrove have published a book of Ray's paintings featuring the river entitled 'Ray Balkwill's Exe Estuary.' Signed copies are available from The Studio Gallery, Thistledown, Marley Road, Exmouth. An exhibition of recent paintings is also on view here throughout December by appointment only.

Tel: 01395 270278 or visit:
www.raybalkwill.co.uk



Ray Balkwill



Operation Godwits at Topsham School

The Topsham School became involved in the International Schools Godwit Project last winter. We are continuing with this work this year as an after school club. This is a really exciting project involving children from Key Stage 2 and Claire Joules and Sally Mills from the RSPB.

Researchers have been ringing Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits for over 10 years to find out about their migration patterns. The children have been looking at these patterns, finding out about how birds are ringed and how any sightings are subsequently recorded.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We really want the local community to help us with this project. If you make any sightings or would like to find out more please email godwits@topsham.devon.sch.uk or pop along to the school and ask for Mr Vernon.

Watch this space for regular updates on the work we are doing and how it is helping us to link to other schools in Iceland and Ireland.



Lavis's Boat Yard, Exmouth



REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MARITIME NEWS

from the Devon Maritime Forum



The maritime and coastal world has seen some dramatic changes since the Autumn edition of Express. The first two marine plan areas have been announced, the Marine Management Organisation has lost two key members of staff, the system to be used for marine planning has got closer to being finalised and the Comprehensive Spending Review is going to have implications for many people working in marine and coastal management.

Marine Plan Areas

The first marine plan areas to be developed are going to be on the east of England. Through dialogue with partners and stakeholders, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has selected the sea areas off the coast between Flamborough Head in East Riding of Yorkshire to Felixstowe in Suffolk (known formally as East Inshore and East Offshore – areas 3 and 4 below) as the first two English marine plan areas that will be developed from April 2011.

These two area plans will be the first in a series that will, over the coming years, grow to become a comprehensive marine planning system around England, enabling the effective integration of economic, social and environmental factors and promoting the sustainable development of our seas. The Marine Planning System is also likely to have significant benefits for local communities and the national economy.

The decision marks a major delivery milestone for the MMO in implementing the provisions of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Government's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

MMO Staff changes

The MMO has lost both its Chief Executive Steven Gant, and its Chairman Chris Parry within a matter of weeks of each other. Steven has left to pursue other interests and will be replaced by James Cross, currently MMO Director of Operations, who will operate as Acting Chief Executive with immediate effect. James will continue the delivery of the UK government's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.