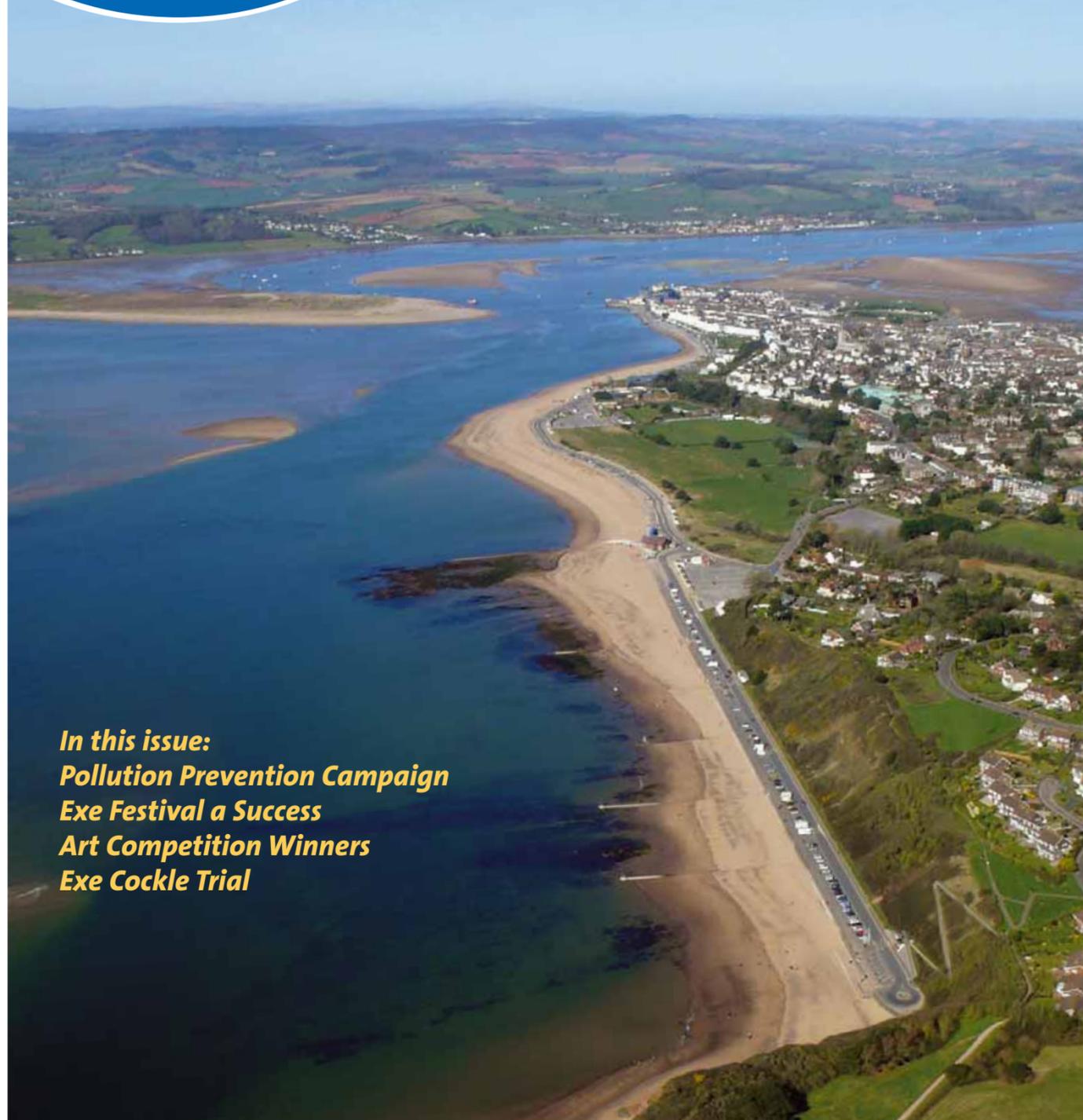




Exe Press

Newsletter of the EXE Estuary Partnership

ISSUE 18 • AUTUMN 2009

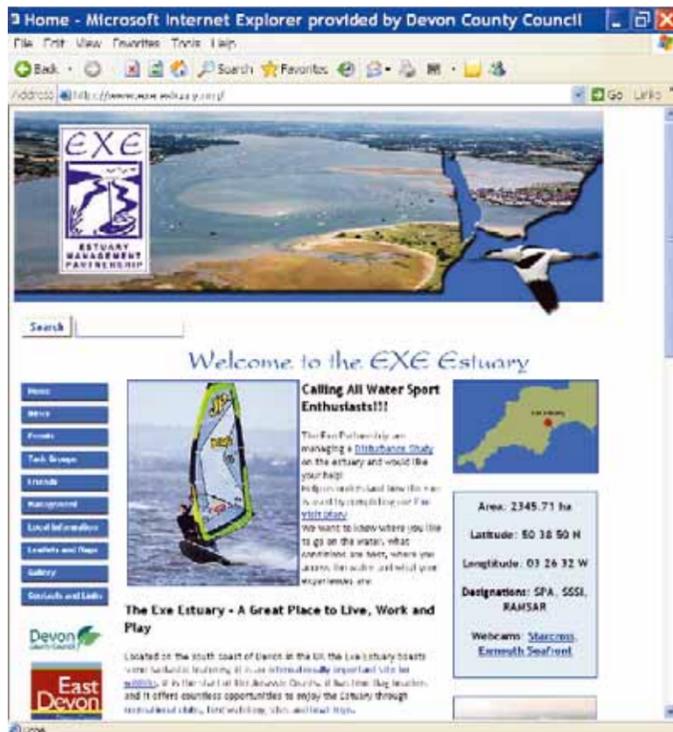


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For the latest estuary-wide information, news and events visit www.exe-estuary.org

Exe Estuary Website is a Community Resource

www.exe-estuary.org



The redesigned Exe Estuary website has been up and running for almost a year and while we are incredibly proud of how successful it has been we would like to make it even better.

The long standing website received a complete makeover last year as the Partnership strove to make the site more informative and useful to local communities as well as visitors to the area. As well as the standard Management Partnership information that has always been available through the site you can now find everything you need to know about the estuary from leaflets and maps to places to stay and local businesses.

With more than 7,000 visits to the website in less than a year we are confident that we have achieved our aim of making it more useful and user-friendly, but we are sure that there is more that we can do to make it even better.

So far we have added some key community tools, such as our events calendar and notice board but we would like to hear your ideas of what else we could include?

Please contact us with your ideas as well as events and information that you would like us to add and we will be happy to make sure it is displayed on our website.

Jenny Lockett
 Exe Estuary Officer
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 Email: exeestua@devon.gov.uk

Come and see the avocets!

They are one of the great conservation success stories! For a hundred years, avocets were extinct in this country, but since the 1940s have made the most remarkable recovery. Today, you can see up to 500 of these gorgeous birds on the Exe each winter, together with around 40,000 other waterbirds and several grey seals, and for the best wildlife experience, you really need to go out on a boat.

So let us introduce you to the amazing avocets on the Exe on an RSPB Avocet Cruise. This winter we are running 15 cruises, with a choice of departures (Starcross, Exmouth or Topsham) and cruise lengths (full 3-4 hour cruises, or short 1.5 hour mini-cruises), plus expert commentary and onboard guides to help you make the most of the moment.

Details of dates and ticket prices are available by calling 01392 432691, visiting www.rspb.org.uk/datewithnature/sites/avocet, or calling into our shop at Darts Farm.

Saturday Wildlife Walks at Darts Farm

Why not join us for a family-friendly walk around the farmland and wetlands at Darts Farm, to look for farmland birds, buzzards and perhaps even kingfishers? The 1-hour walks depart every Saturday afternoon at 2pm from the RSPB Shop, with the opportunity to browse our large range of wildlife products and gifts, or visit the café and other shops at Darts Farm.

Call the RSPB Shop @ Darts Farm on 01392 879438 for further information.

Just add water

new life on the RSPB Exe Estuary reserves

Change can be a difficult thing to spot, especially when it happens over a long time, but visit the RSPB Exe Estuary reserves this autumn and we hope that you will notice a big change - more water, and lots more wildlife!

Over the last 3 years, we've been working hard to create new pools, ditches and wet areas, and now for the first time we are able to directly control the water levels all over our Exminster Marshes reserve. We've also improved the flow of water to Powderham Marshes, creating new wet areas, something that should be obvious if you visit the viewing platform this autumn.

Over the estuary at Bowling Green Marsh, we've also improved the water flow and opened up new areas of water around the island, all of which should provide more viewing opportunities from the hide.

Like ducks to water, we've had lots more, well, ducks! This year has seen garganey, shoveler and teal breeding successfully, together with 14 pairs of lapwing and 4 pairs of redshank. Following their best ever breeding year further north, ospreys have again graced the estuary this autumn.

As one major project comes to successful completion, another is just beginning. Devon County Council has begun the initial groundworks that will lead eventually to the construction of the next stage of the NCN cycle path alongside the railway next to RSPB Goosemoor.

RSPB
 Tel: 01392 432691
 Web: www.rspb.org.uk

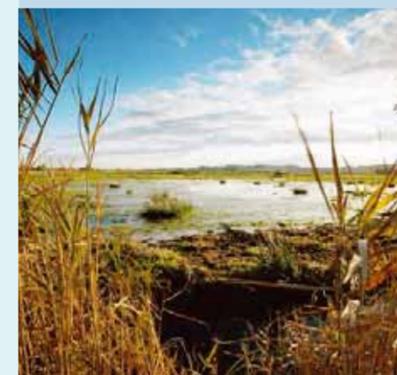
Stuart Line Cruises

Stuart Line Cruises is pleased to announce that ornithologists David Smallshire and Ian Waite have agreed to provide their fantastic guidance and commentary on our Guided Bird Watching Cruises on the River Exe Estuary this winter.

Starting at the end of October and running till March these cruises depart at low tide providing the perfect opportunity to view the thousands of wintering birds that come to the

River including Curlew, Egrets, Herons and Avocets. The commentary provides more than just a 'spotting' guidance but includes information on behaviours, feeding habitats and plumage ensuring everyone from novice through to dedicated enthusiasts can enjoy the cruise.

More information, including dates, can be found on www.stuartlinecruises.co.uk or by ringing 01395 279693 or picking up any Stuart Line Cruises Leaflet.





Inspired by the Exe

Well-known West Country artist Ray Balkwill is a familiar figure who can often be seen sketching and painting on the banks of the Exe. His knowledge and genuine affection for the Exe Estuary has been the mainspring of his art, which has spanned almost his whole lifetime, resulting in his paintings of this very special stretch of water being renowned.

Born in Exeter in 1948 he studied at Exeter College of Art before working away for a number of years, as an Art Director in Advertising, in London and Bath. However, in 1980 he decided to give up his job to paint professionally and since then he has never looked back. He is the author of five art books, with another coming out in the autumn 2010, entitled 'A Picture of Cornwall'. However, it is his book on the Exe Estuary, published by Halsgrove that he is most proud of.

He said: "It was always an ambition to put down a lasting record of my personal connections with the river in words and paint. I wanted to capture the true 'spirit' of the place and it is gratifying to hear that it has been so well received." In addition to his writing he is also a popular tutor, running painting holidays from his studio in Exmouth with painters coming from all over the UK as well as overseas.

If you have ever sat on the banks of the Exe marvelling at its beauty, as the sun slowly sets behind Haldon Hills, perhaps you will understand why I am so passionate about the place and why I constantly have to try and capture it in paint. Even though I have travelled widely in my search for new subjects the Exe continually draws me back and I don't think there is anywhere I would rather paint. I believe that the real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new horizons, but in opening one's eyes to the beauty we have right here on our doorstep."



Ray Balkwill

Each year Ray holds an exhibition in his Studio Gallery, at his home in Exmouth and this year he returns to his favourite theme. The exhibition entitled 'The Exe Estuary and Beyond' features paintings of the Exe, as well as paintings completed on recent visits to Cornwall and Venice. Alongside his paintings will be a unique collection of traditional model sailing boats by Exmouth boat-builder Geoff Holman. Many of his models are associated with the river and this is the first time the models have been displayed in public, some of which will be for sale. The show will also feature a number of mixed media assemblages, created by Ray, based on objects he has found that relate to the Exe from old boats and by foraging along the shoreline.

Ray told me why the Exe estuary is so special, "Although my early career led me away from the county, the human instinct to set down roots and return to the scenes of one's childhood can be very strong indeed. I know this is how it was for me and I am extremely thankful that Exmouth is my home.

The exhibition will be held at the Studio Gallery, Thistledown, Marley Road, Exmouth on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th December. 10am – 5pm. For further details contact Ray on 01395 270278 or visit www.raybalkwill.co.uk

EXE ESTUARY POLLUTION PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

Mike Ingman from the Environment Agency will be carrying out pollution prevention visits to Boat Yards and Sailing Clubs along the Exe Estuary over the next six months.

This campaign will focus on the storage and management of oil, waste and hazardous materials as well as looking at site drainage and discharges to the estuary. Mike is hoping to raise standards and improve environmental awareness.

If you wish to find out more, please contact Mike Ingman on 01392 316231. For information on pollution prevention, please visit the Environment Agency Website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/ppg



Exepress Article Cockle Survey

Following earlier explorative attempts in 2007 by Exmouth Mussels to fish for cockles in the Exe using their shellfish eco-harvester vessel Alibi, a survey was requested by Natural England (NE) into the likely affects of the fishery on the integrity of the Exe Special Protection Area. Talks were held between Natural England, Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, Plymouth University and Exmouth Mussels to decide the methodology of the trials in order to obtain the information required to make a decision with regard to the future of the fishery.

The trial divides Cockle Sands into four strips, each approximately 150m wide and running roughly west to east. On two of these strips fishing is permitted, but limited to a maximum of 30 minutes twice a week, and on the other two strips no fishing is allowed.

Extensive survey work was undertaken during May 2009 in order to understand the current condition of the area and create the baseline data that later results can be compared to. The survey involved conducting several key tests every 100m along a transect line, these tests included:

- Sieving a 10th/1m² quadrat of sand and counting any cockles in order to assess the density of the stocks on the ground, this is in line with standard shellfish sampling methodology.
- A standard drop test to determine the density of the substrate.
- A core sample was taken to assess the particle size of the substrate
- In addition, four core samples were taken in a random pattern around the initial sample point to assess the structure of the benthic communities.

The limited fishery commenced the following week. Surveying now takes place every month and will do so for a full year. Each survey starts with an officer going out on the harvester to look at the composition of the catch, damage rates and rate of catch and is followed by the initial tests being repeated. By sampling at low water just after a fishing operation the tests can assess the impact on small immature cockles that are disturbed by the fishing activity.

Assessment is also undertaken on the impact of the dredge tracks and how long they take to dissipate.

Following the end of the trial a decision will be made whether the fishery can be undertaken on a permanent basis and whether any restrictions on the activity are necessary to safeguard the Exe Special Protection Area.

Initial results indicate that the fishing is not impacting on abundance, diversity or number of species. Visually tracks appeared reduced after 10 days.

Tim Robbins
Deputy Chief Fishery Officer
Devon Sea Fisheries Committee
www.devonsfc.co.uk

Photo of Sarah Hulme, MSc student at Plymouth University undertaking baseline survey



First Exe Festival A Great Success



“We had a lovely day, excellent variety of stalls and interests. We would definitely do it again”

“There was so much to do that I spent more than 3 hours there with my family”

Saturday 8th August saw the first ever Exe Estuary Festival take place on the Maer in Exmouth. The event brought together many of the businesses, clubs and community groups that are vital to the life and vibrancy of the Exe and provided an opportunity to showcase their services and activities.

The story of the Exe was told through several informative presentations held throughout the day that covered such topics as the wildlife and history of the Exe. Entertainment was provided by local band the Paul Strange Quartet and the theatrical group Common Players.

The day was a lively and positive event that gave numerous visitors the chance to learn more about the Exe and take part in activities, such as puppet making, as well as enjoy local entertainment. Exmouth Mussels provided one of the most popular attractions with their ‘taste the Exe’ stall, cooking and selling delicious cockles, mussels and oysters from the estuary.

All of the organisations and individuals involved worked incredibly hard to make sure the event was informative and enjoyable and the Partnership would like to say a huge thank you to everybody who contributed to the success of the event.

Jenny Lockett, who organised the festival commented, “The event was a fantastic success, we were incredibly lucky with the weather and this contributed to the amazing community atmosphere that was really apparent to everybody throughout the day. As the first of an annual event we are incredibly pleased with how well it went and although there are lessons that we have learnt for next year we really couldn't have asked for it to be any better.”

The festival would not have been possible without the inspiration and enthusiasm of the Exe Action group, which met regularly throughout the planning of the event to discuss progress and contribute ideas. Our special thanks go to all those involved and in

particular to Jenny Budden and Diane Hill for their tireless support and commitment as well as the many Exmouth volunteers who they recruited to create interactive trails.

We hope to hold next year's ‘Spirit of the Exe’ festival in Dawlish, if you would be interested in contributing to the design and development of the festival please contact Jenny Lockett to find out more.

The Partnership is currently preparing a festival toolkit and report which will be available from our website soon.

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First Prize in Children's category



First Prize in adult competition



Littleham Primary school with their entries

Art Competition Winners

The Exe Festival displayed the competition entries for our ‘What Does the Exe Mean to You’ art competition and asked visitors to the festival to vote for their favourite entries with the winners announced on the same day.

We had some fantastic entries to the competition and wish to thank all those who contributed their time and creativity to capture what the Exe really means to all of us.

The winning entry for the adults competition was Manya McMahon with her amazing mosaic of the Exe created from pieces of porcelain found on the foreshore and mounted on a piece of wood that was once the Exe Sailing Club's bar. She won a Jurassic Coast Cruise with Stuart Line

Second prize was awarded to Sue Chapman for her painting of Lymptone and life-size mermaids. She won a free journey to any station in the South West with First Great Western. Third Prize was awarded to K T hemmings and fourth prize was won by Sue Parr.

In the children's competition first prize went to Joe and Megan Haward for their montage of their life on the Exe. They won an activity day at Haven Banks in Exeter to enjoy during the summer holidays.

Second, third and fourth prizes were awarded to students of Littleham Primary School for their posters of the Exe. All prizes were kindly donated by local businesses.

Look out for future art competitions and festival news and events from the Exe Estuary Partnership in Exepress and you too could win fantastic prizes.



Estuary News

For the latest Estuary News and event dates at any time please visit www.exe-estuary.org

Regional and National Maritime News Devon Marine Conservation Zones County Group

The Finding Sanctuary project is set to move in to its next phase over the coming months. Devon Maritime Forum is facilitating a Marine Conservation Zones County Group. This group will be feeding information in to Finding Sanctuary to help them define the location of ecologically coherent Conservation Zones. The group will also be used to flow information out to a wide number of sectors, ensuring as many people as possible are aware of developments.

The Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) project is the first of its kind in the UK and we are looking forward to having a lasting impact on the health and sustainability of the seas of the South West. The MCZ Group is now complete and will be meeting for the first time in October. It is anticipated that the group will meet a total of between six to eight times over the next 21 months, by which time the network of MCZs will be complete.

Work may not be over at that stage, as the group is likely to be ready to input in to other marine planning issues, and it is hoped it will have a function beyond the life of the Finding Sanctuary project.

Devon Maritime Forum

The next Maritime Forum meeting will be held on the 4th November at Saunton Sands Hotel in North Devon. All members are welcome to attend. More details will be available shortly.

For more Maritime related news visit the DMF website at: www.devonmaritimeforum.org

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Free Informative Events about the Exe

As reported in our spring edition, the Exmouth Visitor Centre Trust is to host a series of presentation evenings about the Exe. The events will take place from now until July 2010 with one talk per month being held in the Telfer Suit at Exmouth Community College, Gypsy Lane, Exmouth.

The next event, on Thursday 8th October, will discuss the connection between the estuary and Jurassic Coast and will explore the variety of strange and beautiful animals that exist in these unique environments.

All talks begin at 7.30 and are free and open to all. Each presentation lasts for approximately an hour with a break for coffee and discussion mid way through. For more information and details of each talk please visit the Exmouth Visitor Centre website at www.exmouthvisitorcentre.co.uk or contact David Conway 01395 264520 or Rod Lawrence 01884 34135.

Exmouth Strand Enhancement Approved by Cabinet

A £3 million plan for the regeneration of Exmouth Strand has been approved by Devon County Council's Cabinet and work is expected to start next February.

Devon County Council has been working in partnership with East Devon District Council and Exmouth Town Council on the scheme, and following a series of consultation events since June 2008, the final design has been developed with the help of the local community and businesses. Devon County Council will fund £2 million of the scheme, with East Devon District Council providing £1 million.

In line with the views of the majority of people, the main features include a vibrant space at the heart of the Strand, suitable to host markets, outdoor cafes, performances and Remembrance services, with an enhanced setting for the listed War Memorial. The development of the area includes the retention of most of the existing trees as well as the planting of over 20 new ones.

The design also meets people's desire to improve safety with pedestrian routes linking the Strand and other parts of the town centre and estuary, better lighting, street furniture and the replacement of the existing bus shelter.

Councillor Stuart Hughes, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, said: "For Exmouth, this is the icing on the cake and will radically improve the town centre. It will encourage visitors to stay longer in the town which will help the local economy."

Devon County Council will supervise the contract which is due to be awarded in the New Year. Construction will be phased and is expected to take around nine months. The County Council will work closely with Exmouth Town Council and businesses in the area to keep disruption to a minimum.

Copies of the plans are available in Exmouth Town Hall, Exmouth Library and online at www.devon.gov.uk/exmouthstrand