



# EXE-Press

Summer 2005 Newsletter of the Exe Estuary Partnership Issue 10

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We need **YOUR** views on the Exe Estuary Management Plan

For the latest on estuary-wide information, news and events check out the Exe Estuary website: [www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org)

# Seahorses on the Exe

Seahorses and the Exe Estuary are not two things you would automatically put together, but they have been associated for a long time. There is a lot of talk of global warming these days bringing unusual species to our shore, but Seahorses are one of the unusual tropical looking species that have always been here, and Devon is a major hotspot for them.

Historically we have sightings of Seahorses from inside of the Exe Estuary in the eelgrass beds just off Starcross. These date back to the sixties, unfortunately we cannot confirm them but there are regular sightings off Dawlish Warren and it is known that Seahorses occupy all of the major estuaries in the South West.



Spiny Seahorse



Short Snouted Seahorse

There are two species of Seahorse in our waters, The Spiny Seahorse *Hippocampus guttulatus* and the Short Snouted Seahorse *Hippocampus hippocampus* and they are surprisingly big, the Spiny can be up to 7" (18cm) from the top of its head to the end of its tail. As its name suggests it has a mane of spines all over its head and back whereas the Short Snouted Seahorse is stockier but only just smaller at up to 6" (15cm). Its snout is shorter and wider than the Spiny Seahorse and because of this

they can occupy the same areas, the difference in snouts allowing them to feed on different types of food and in different ways.

Both species can occupy a wide range of habitats from eelgrass beds to rocky seabeds and the **British Seahorse Survey** is trying to understand more about them.

The **Seahorse Trust** set it up 10 years ago and we have learnt a great deal about our most enigmatic species. Because of the information we have gathered we have submitted them for named protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and we have great hopes that full protection will come through later this year. Worldwide Seahorses are under major threats from the traditional medicine trade and as curios often sold in tourist shops. The Seahorse Trust has been set up to change this.

Neil Garrick-Maidment, Director of The Seahorse Trust lives on the Exe so if you would like to know more about seahorses, please contact him by phone on 01392 875930, or by e-mail [neil.seahorses@tesco.net](mailto:neil.seahorses@tesco.net), or visit the website [www.theseahorsetrust.co.uk](http://www.theseahorsetrust.co.uk) and the survey site [www.britishseahorsesurvey.org](http://www.britishseahorsesurvey.org)

## Spring Clean on the Exe

In April the Exe Estuary Partnership Assistant, Melanie Parker, joined a group of volunteers for two 'spring clean' events at Cackle Sands in the mouth of the Estuary. Due to the tidal currents and last autumn's storms a lot of debris had collected in the area. Volunteers from Devon Sea Fisheries, East Devon District Council, Exmouth Mussels, Edge Watersports, and the RNLI worked together to fill three skips with abandoned fishing gear, old trolleys, part of a fridge, tyres, an oven and even an old go-kart! The rubbish was causing a hazard to people practising watersports on the 'Duck Pond' and was an eyesore affecting the view of Exmouth's Local Nature Reserve. Some other stretches of the estuary foreshore are regularly cleared by local community groups, and the Royal Marines maintain the foreshore adjacent to the Marine Camp at Lympstone. If you would like to join one of these clean up events, please contact the Partnership on 01392 382236.



## Exe Estuary Cycle/Walkway

In April, the National Cycle Network in Devon received a further boost when Devon County Council's Executive gave approval to go ahead with the proposal for the Exe Estuary Route. This will form a Cycle/Walkway as part of Devon's South Coast Route right around the estuary.

On the East, the route will be from Exmouth via Lympstone and Exton to Topsham (connecting with the existing route to the City Centre via Double Locks) and, on the west, from Bridge Road near Countess Wear via Turf Lock, Powderham, Starcross, Cockwood to Dawlish Warren. At some locations there will be stunning views from the route across the estuary.

During November 2004, local communities were invited to a series of public exhibitions of the proposals, in the form of a travelling display caravan visiting the towns and villages around the Exe Estuary.

There were approximately 1000 visitors to the exhibitions and nearly 700 visits to the relevant pages on the Devon County Council website. Approx 3500 colour leaflets and questionnaires were distributed and, with an encouraging high return rate of the consultation questionnaire (43%), 80 - 81% of respondents were in favour of the cycle / walkway.

80% felt that access to the Estuary was of high importance and 91% felt that improved opportunity for walking and cycling as a sustainable means of transport for work, school and recreational trips was of high importance. Some responses suggested that alternative routes should be considered at such places as Exton, Lympstone and Cockwood but overall the responses gave support to Devon County Council's strategy regarding walking and cycling around the Estuary.

Devon County Council's Executive recommended that the proposals be given a high priority for delivery within the next Devon Local Transportation Plan Period 2006-2011 and that the individual sections be progressed. For more information please contact Roger North, Parsons Brinckerhoff on 01392 229700.

# A Secret on the Marshes

The Second World War had a major impact on the landscape of Britain. Military sites and buildings had to be swiftly established, among which were airfields, pillboxes, anti-aircraft gun emplacements, stop lines, searchlight positions and radar installations. The subsequent "Cold War" years brought their own distinctive architecture into the landscape, such as missile sites, nuclear bunkers, Royal Observer Corps monitoring posts and regional seats of government.

The marshes at Exminster did not escape this necessary intrusion into the environment, for here was sited a strategic RAF radar station.

Developed during the 1930s, radar has played a crucial role in the defence of Great Britain since the beginning of the Second World War.

At the start of the war a series of radar stations was established along the east and south coasts, known as Chain Home (CH) radar.

Systems that could detect low-flying aircraft soon followed – Chain Home Low (CHL) and Chain Home Extra Low (CHEL). However, such radars had limitations; they were early-warning systems, and were not particularly effective once enemy aircraft had crossed the coast, or at night. To this end new technology was developed in the form of Ground Controlled Interception (GCI) and was brought swiftly into action. GCI could be successfully used at night, was able to track enemy incursions, and could direct RAF pilots accurately on to their targets. A GCI station was established on Exminster Marshes in 1941, working closely with Fighter Command's airfield at RAF Exeter.

This was Exminster's wartime secret, its role known only to a few.

At first RAF Exminster was a mobile unit, operating from lorries and trailers. It then passed through a more permanent, intermediate phase

until, in 1943, it reached what was known as the Final, or Fixed, stage. A brick and concrete operations block was built, and nearby a standby generator house was constructed. Search radars, a height-finding radar and equipment that could identify friend from foe were installed in the fields adjoining the main site. RAF Exminster operated throughout WWII and periodically during the subsequent Cold War era,

until the Air Ministry disposed of the station's assets in 1959.

Throughout the country many buildings and equipment of this type have disappeared through decay, neglect, or the need for alternative uses for their sites. At Exminster, however, several former RAF buildings and structures still exist. The older buildings seen today on the Lion's Rest business estate and the small, brick-built structures in the fields beyond are the remnants and reminders of the Final GCI.

The site has inevitably changed in character over the years, and could well be at risk in the future. Thus, with the ready co-operation of the landowners, a detailed archaeological record has been prepared. Previous interpretation of the site had been made from air photographs, or visually from the public highway, and was thus somewhat tentative.

For the recording to be meaningful, it was also necessary to determine the original purpose of the buildings and structures and to complete the picture by exploring the history of the radar unit and its role in the broader scheme of wartime and post-war activities.

The results of this study were published by the



Plinth of a WWII Type 14 radar on Exminster Marshes. This once supported a horizontal aerial and a steel cabin. Photograph © Mike Passmore.

researchers, Andrew and Mike Passmore, in a document entitled *Radar on the Marshes. A Brief History and Archaeology of Royal Air Force Station Exminster*. Copies have been deposited with national and local archival bodies, such as the Imperial War Museum, the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum, the RAF Museum, the Sites and Monuments Register at County Hall, Teignbridge District Council, the West Country Studies Library, the Environment Agency and, of course, the Exe Estuary Management Partnership. Some of the material could have a more general appeal, and so an abridged version is in preparation, under the title *Exminster's Wartime Secret*. The booklet omits some of the more technical aspects of the research findings and the detailed descriptions, measurements and plans of specialist buildings and will be on public sale during the summer.

Military presence in the landscape is often controversial and its architecture is not to everyone's taste, but the RAF's occupancy of a part of Exminster Marshes has added an important chapter to the area's history, and – in that some of the former radar buildings are now put to industrial and office use – has unwittingly contributed to Exminster's present economy.

## Harbour Revision Update

**Exeter City Council's advisors have produced a first draft**

**Harbour Revision Order (HRO) which has the standard clauses**

**needed to run a harbour.** The Council's officers have now looked at the best way to deal with issues that

are particular to the Exe, and these have been put to their advisors for comment. The details will next be refined, perhaps taking some advice from the Ports Division. The issues relate to a variety of areas, including:

- existing and future legislation – powers, duties and byelaws
- public quays
- Exmouth Docks Company (a statutory harbour authority)

- freight handling on the Exe
- relationship with the Exe Estuary Partnership (which will be invited to act as the New Harbour Authority's formal consultative body)
- harbour dues
- moorings
- wrecks and debris
- environmental responsibilities
- pilotage

Meanwhile, a business plan is being written, and it is hoped that this, along with the next draft of the HRO, will be available for informal consultation in the autumn. The revised papers should then be ready for formal submission to the Ports Division early in 2006.

For further information please contact Ian Cowe, Exeter City Council on 01392 277888.

# New Sub-tidal Survey for the Exe



**Ever wondered what lurks below the tideline on the estuary? Well, it is time to find out because the Exe Estuary Partnership is undertaking a survey of sub-tidal habitats and mapping the depth profile of the whole estuary from Topsham to the Outer Approaches. Many organisations are funding this project.**

Hydrosurveys, an environmental consultancy, carried out the survey in May 2005 and there is already great interest in the results. Exeter City Council is interested in the navigational implications. Devon Sea Fisheries Committee has an interest in mussel beds and fisheries assessment. Transco would like to use the information for an Environmental Impact Assessment on the laying of a new pipeline between Lypstone and Starcross. The Environment Agency would like to update

their current environmental information. Teignbridge and East Devon District Councils will use the survey results for investigations into coastal defences. English Nature will benefit from the information regarding habitats in the highly designated estuary. The Hydrographic Office would like the data to update their Admiralty Charts and the Exe Estuary Partnership hope to work with them to produce a Small Craft Guide with environmental information which will be published on the back of future charts. As you can see, this is a very positive example of partnership working.

The information gathered from this survey will make an important contribution to the Partnership's State of the Estuary Environment Report, which is being compiled as part of the European-funded Cycleau project. The State

of the Environment Report will then form Part 1 of the Exe Estuary Management Plan following its review in 2005-06.



## Access Assessed

The first draft of the long-awaited Exe Estuary Access Strategy is now being considered by the Partnership's Focus Group Chairmen. Wider consultation on the draft document will take place once it has formal JAC approval.

## Business Plan for the Exe

This year we have been developing the first Exe Estuary Partnership Business Plan. In addition to the existing Annual Report and Action Plan, a Business Plan will highlight how the Partnership's actions relate to the objectives of our Partner organisations in order to justify funding. The 3-year Business Plan will be presented to the JAC for formal adoption in spring 2006, and will be launched at the same time as the revised Management Plan.

## Devon Maritime Forum

Devon County Council is working with a number of other organisations on the formation of a new initiative, a Devon Maritime Forum. The first Forum meeting will take place later this year and the Exe Estuary Partnership will be closely involved.

## Future of the Exe Estuary under the Spotlight

The Exe Estuary Partnership hosted their annual public Forum event at County Hall on April 23rd. The theme of the day was the 'Future of the Exe Estuary' and there were informative presentations on climate change and expected developments, including the proposed Southwest Shoreline Centre at Exmouth and the development of the National Cycle Network route around the Exe. There was also an update from Devon and Cornwall Police on the police harbour patrol boat, which started last summer and continues to patrol the estuary this year.

The Exe Estuary Officer and the Focus Group Chairmen gave the Forum an update on the progress of the Partnership over the past year and set out the actions for 2005/6.

## Exe-press Yourself

**Throughout 2005-06 we will be reviewing the existing Exe Estuary Management Plan which was adopted in 1998.** In addition to talking to our Partners and the decision-makers, we would like your input. Whether you live by the estuary or visit it, whether you want to see changes to the way it is managed or are happy with the current approach – We need your views! Please come along to our Management Plan Review days and offer us your valuable opinions. Details and dates of the events will be on the Exe Estuary website [www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org) over the summer. In the mean time, you should find an 'Exe-press Yourself' leaflet with this edition of Exe-Press. Please take the time to fill it in and return it to us, and do your bit to help shape the future of the Exe Estuary.



*Cllr Bernard Hughes, Chairman of the Exe Estuary Partnership, and Cllr David Atkins, now Exe Estuary Forum Chair, with Natasha Barker, Exe Estuary Officer*

Results of the Partnership's recent Focus Group Chairmen elections were announced and Cllr David Atkins was formally adopted as Chair of the Exe Estuary Forum, a new role for the Partnership.

Sadly, this was the last Forum for Natasha Barker, the Exe Estuary Officer, before she moves on to a new job. There was a presentation to Natasha, thanking her for her hard work on behalf of the Exe Estuary Partnership over the past four years and wishing her well for the future.

With a new Forum Chair and some new Focus Group Chairmen this Forum represented the start of a new stage in the life of the Exe Estuary Partnership.

# Focus on Focus Groups

The Chairmen of our eight focus groups all work to ensure the views of the community are represented in decisions concerning management of the Estuary. They are the eyes and ears of the Partnership, suggesting projects for the Partnership to initiate or get involved in. Each Chairman has a voting seat on the Joint Advisory Committee. Following the recent elections, we have a new set of Focus Group Chairmen for the Exe Estuary Partnership and we thought it was time to 'Focus on Focus Groups'.

The **Agriculture and Land Use** Focus Group aims to develop sustainable agricultural practices through consultation with the farming community. It works to increase communication with landowners and publicise current issues. Members were involved in the Partnership's Environmental Health Audit.

**Chairman: Michael Dart. Telephone: 01392 878200**

The **Conservation** Focus Group includes landscape and historic heritage interests as well as wildlife. It aims to maintain and improve nature conservation whilst ensuring that conflict with other users and activities is minimised. The work carried out by this group so far includes eel grass surveys and studies, implementing habitats regulations, assessing changes in bird movements to, from and within the Exe Estuary, and investigating features of historic interest. It is also currently looking at responsibilities for clearing foreshore debris.

**Chairman: Malcolm Davies. Telephone: 01392 824614**

The **Commerce** Focus Group includes coastal processes because it is believed that changes in coastal processes will affect the commercial interests on the Estuary. It aims to encourage safe use of the estuary, prevent damage to the environment and minimise conflicts with other activities. Projects include investigating future use of Exmouth Marina and the Camperdown Depot area, addressing the need for public pontoon and waste reception facilities.

**Chairman: Lynn Trout. Telephone: 01392 875176**

The **Fisheries** Focus Group aims to ensure that the Exe's fishery resources are utilised at a sustainable level and without undue detriment to other interests. It has been involved in bait collection and shellfish management, including promotion of a new Crab Tiling Code of Conduct. It has carried out work linked to the Environmental Health Audit and other Water Quality Focus Group projects.

**Chairman: Myles Blood Smyth. Telephone: 01395 277720**

The **Harbour Services** Focus Group works to promote safe use of the Estuary for water-based recreation, ensuring that damage to the environment is prevented and conflicts with other activities are minimised. It

addresses issues surrounding navigation on the Exe and has investigated the options for the Exe concerning the proposed new harbour authority, buoyage, dredging and the regulation or enforcement of byelaws. The Group have also taken responsibility for promoting water safety initiatives.

**Chairman: Ivan Wilkinson. Telephone: 01395 265455**

The **Local Community** Focus Group aims to develop an effective, integrated information and interpretation strategy for the benefit of Estuary users. Outputs from this group include production of the Exe-Explorer leaflet, ExePress newsletter, Exe Estuary website, and the Handbook. The work has so far involved educational study visits, guided walks, and provision of information boards at strategic points around the Estuary. There has also been increased involvement in Parish and Town Council meetings, and regular Partnership contributions to local newsletters.

**Chairman: John West. Telephone: 01392 873338**

The **Recreation and Access** Focus Group was formed to promote safe use of the estuary for recreation, ensuring that damage to the environment is prevented and conflicts with other activities is minimised. Recent examples of this Focus Group's work include production of a draft Access Strategy. It has also been instrumental in the formation of an estuary-wide moorings association. The Group was involved in the consultation process for the proposed National Cycle Network route around the Exe and has worked with water users e.g. creation and promotion of the Kitesurfing Code of Conduct.

**Chairman: Philip Chesterfield. Telephone: 01392 875169**

The **Water Quality and Pollution** Focus Group exists to encourage implementation of measures to improve water quality within the Estuary. It works to communicate water quality information and to raise awareness of the issues surrounding foreshore debris and oil spill preparedness. The Group was involved in the Partnership's Environmental Health Audit.

**Chairman: Eileen Wragg. Telephone: 01395 273474**

The Focus Group Chairmen meet quarterly. Although the individual Focus Groups do not meet regularly, meetings are convened when relevant issues arise. If you would like to find out more about any of the Partnership's Focus Groups please have a look at the Focus Groups page on the website or contact us on 01392 382236.

## Welcome to the Forum Chair

The Exe Estuary Forum provides an open event at which any organisation, interest group or member of the public can become involved in discussion of estuary-related matters. It aims to encourage two-way communication, by drawing issues to the attention of the Focus Groups to reach agreement and make recommendations to the Partnership's main decision-making body, the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).

The JAC recently agreed that a Chair for the Forum should be sought, and elections were organised to appoint someone to the new role. Of the four candidates that stood, Cllr David Atkins received the most votes and was

formally adopted as Forum Chair at the spring Forum event on April 23rd 2005.

As Forum Chair, Cllr Atkins will be expected to undertake the following on behalf of the Exe Estuary Partnership:

- Chair the annual formal meeting of the Exe Estuary Forum (spring)
- Attend the annual informal meeting of the Exe Estuary Forum (autumn)
- Promote the value of the Exe Estuary and role of the Forum
- Be neutral in representing the Exe Estuary Partnership, not promoting one organisation/ interest/user group in favour of any other
- Represent the public voice of the Exe Estuary Partnership and promote awareness of issues to the media

■ Maintain a close working relationship with the Exe Estuary Officer and Chairman of the Exe Estuary Partnership's JAC.

■ Maintain links with the Focus Group Chairman by attending Focus Group Chairmen's meetings whenever possible.



**If you would like to contact the Forum Chair on any issues concerning the Exe Estuary, please call Cllr Atkins on 07976 415273.**



# ICZM – explained

## Growing Support for an Integrated Approach to Coastal Management

### What is ICZM?

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is an approach to the management of coastal resources which recognises the intrinsic links between their environmental, socio economic and political features. It aims to promote sustainability through encouraging management decisions to be made with full consideration of the potential impacts on all aspects of the resource. Coastal partnerships, such as the Exe Estuary Partnership, work with the ICZM principle in mind, drawing together different interest groups and areas of expertise when a management issue arises. ICZM, as opposed to more sectoral approaches, has become recognised worldwide as fundamental to good management of coastal resources... particularly estuaries!

### Coastal partnerships & ICZM

Both the Marine Stewardship Report (May 2002) and 'Seas of Change' (November 2002) documents identify the Government's approach to ICZM delivery, specifically in relation to coastal partnerships: In the Strategic document 'Safeguarding Our Seas', the Government states that it is "encouraging local partnerships to deliver local solutions and develop

opportunities within the Government's framework of national policies"

In January 2005, the Environment Minister Elliot Morley, indicated DEFRA's commitment to pursue a Marine Bill. As a result, the future role of coastal/estuary Partnerships is likely to be considered in some detail over the next few years.

### Policy Developments

An elaborate system of terrestrial management has evolved (e.g. National Parks, AONBs), to provide services to manage competing interests on land. There is comparatively little formal management of coasts and estuaries, although the importance of our marine and coastal environment is now receiving greater attention. A UK Marine Act may provide the framework for future designation of marine/coastal national parks or a statutory basis to integrated estuary management. National NGOs are campaigning for the Marine Bill to go through Parliament (possibly Autumn or Winter 2005/6).

In addition, the EC Recommendation on ICZM (2002) places requirements on the UK Government to report on the state of the UK's coastline and devise a strategy for its future management. Member States should set up national strategies for ICZM by March 2006.

## Planning Ahead: Oil and the Exe

Although there are plans in place for responding to oil spills from shipping in Lyme Bay, there is currently no contingency plan for a pollution incident occurring within the Exe Estuary. Smaller, more localised spills of diesel and fuel oils are much more likely to affect the Exe than a large, offshore spill, but in the event of a fuel spill or chemical leak, required emergency response may be delayed due to the lack of a clear-cut reporting and response procedure. This could lead to disastrous consequences for the wildlife on the estuary. At a recent meeting Exeter City Council agreed to take the lead in co-ordinating the preparation of a contingency plan for spills within the estuary. They will receive assistance from Teignbridge and East Devon District Councils, Devon County Council, the Exe Estuary Partnership and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. A draft plan will be prepared for consultation in summer 2005.

**Update:** Ship to ship transfers of heavy fuel oil have now ceased in Lyme Bay as a result of talks between Exe Estuary Partnership representatives, Devon County Council, the Department for Transport, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The ship to ship operations were transferred from Lyme Bay to Northern Scotland, so laden tankers from the Baltic no longer needed to pass through the English Channel, diverting the risk of pollution from the North Sea and the English Channel, as well as Lyme Bay.

However, Falmouth Harbour Authorities are currently inviting transfers of Russian blend crude oil in Carrick Roads. This would be a very lucrative business proposition for the Falmouth area, and would be strictly controlled, but it encourages tanker traffic to resume voyages past Lyme Bay increasing the risk of a pollution event in this highly sensitive area.



## ICZM and the Exe

**Coastal and estuary partnerships have received national recognition as an effective tool to deliver ICZM at the local level.**

However, stronger mechanisms are needed to support their role. At present, Estuary Partnerships are voluntary (non-statutory) initiatives which exist from year to year on ad-hoc funding. Whilst many are working to secure longer term commitment from partners, some estuary partnership initiatives have faltered and continue to struggle to fulfil their potential.

The Exe Estuary Management Partnership has been advocating integrated management as an effective

tool for achieving sustainable development since the early 1990s, and the Partnership is now looking to fund an external study into options for future management of the Exe Estuary and ICZM. This research aims to demonstrate how coastal and estuary partnerships are helping to ensure communities have a say in local decision-making, and to identify the extent to which Partnerships contribute to delivering sustainable development. Examples of ICZM in practice on the Exe could then be used to inform development of the UK Coastal/Marine Strategy and implementation of the EC Recommendation on ICZM.

# The Muscle to Protect the Mussels

**Since the signing of the Magna Carter it has been every English person's right to gather shellfish from the shore for their own personal consumption.** For over a hundred years the mussel beds on the Exe have been under the management of the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee (SFC) and have remained open to members of the public to gather shellfish when they wanted. Over the years there have been areas that are privately owned and operated by shellfish



growers where the public have not been able to gather shellfish, and at times it has been necessary to close mussel beds to prevent over fishing by less scrupulous shellfish operators. But on the whole the mussel stocks on the Exe have remained fairly stable. But, times are changing and the demand for mussels from the UK and European market is growing at a fast rate. Demand is outstripping supply and there is a healthy market for the type of high quality mussels that grow in the Exe.

There is also the Designation of the Exe as a Special Protection Area for birds, which requires that over wintering species have sufficient food resources and are not unduly disturbed by activities in the area. The Devon SFC have in the past used local byelaws, drafted by the Committee, to help manage the shellfish of the Exe, but the changing nature of the fishery and the need to be flexible in the harvesting of this valuable resource means that the inflexibility of a byelaw makes the work of the Devon SFC increasingly difficult.

With this in mind, and the need to implement improved management of the shellfishery and protect wildlife interests within the River Exe, the Devon SFC is applying to DEFRA for a Regulating Order.

The Regulating Order removes the Right of Public Fishery for Molluscan Shellfish, including shore crab. It will allow the Devon SFC to have effective management over the shellfishery (including protected areas), size and type of fishing vessel, method of fishing, closed seasons and minimum landing sizes. The fishery will be managed through

the granting of licences to individuals. Allowances will still be set to allow members of the public to gather shellfish for their own consumption as only commercial operators will be governed by the Order. The aims for the Order are that the commercial exploitation of the shellfish stocks is managed in a sustainable way that allows local firms to thrive, but also makes sure that sufficient stocks remain within the area for wildlife and that the fishery is not detrimental to the River Exe as a whole.

The proposed Order has the support of the land owners around the Exe, as well as English Nature and the commercial shellfish operators. The Exe Estuary Partnership's Joint Advisory Committee has also been kept informed of progress.

At present the Order has been drafted and circulated to the regulatory authorities for their comments. It will then be sent to DEFRA for its approval. Once this has been achieved the Order will be advertised in the local press so that all interested parties can view the proposals and make comments. If the consultation process throws up no major issues, the Order will go before Parliament to be signed by the Minister.

With the granting of the Order to the Devon SFC it will be possible to issue licences to the commercial operators and to set the management tools in place to protect the shellfish on the Exe for the future.

For further information please contact the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee on 01803 854648.

# Bringing the Estuary to Life

**In the last two years the Exe Estuary has provided an outdoor classroom for hundreds of school children, with the Local Nature Reserve playing host to school visits with the Education Ranger.** The initial Wildspace funding has now come to an end and the service is being continued, with the Council taking on the role of the Ranger permanently. The estuary provides a particularly special habitat for discovery, as it has a magical quality that children and adults alike find enchanting. At first glance of the uninitiated, the estuary looks a bit empty. Especially in the summer months, a single black-headed gull floating overhead and a couple of egrets mooching about in the gut is an average view. However, all that is about to change.

Often the opening gambit of a school visit is a challenge – find the smallest shell on the beach. There then follows tens of variations on a theme of cockle shells. Big, small, incomplete, all dismissed as far too big. And then, often one observant child will notice the grit on the surface of the beach all looks the same, and the first hydrobia is produced. From then on in all are captivated. The estuary brings itself to life as soon as you've shown them all what scale to look at. Shrimps, sand gobys, shore crabs, tellins and tiny flatfish all appear from the water, as if by magic. The estuary may look a little dull and unassuming to the children that arrive – but the children that leave know what secrets it hides.

For more information on the Education Ranger service available free of charge from East Devon District Council, ring James Chubb on 07734 568985.

## Incredible Hulks

**Students from Britain, Ireland, the United States and Canada have carried out a survey of the hulks (abandoned boats) on the Exe Estuary.** The eight students are studying for their in Masters Degree in Maritime Archaeology and History at the University of Bristol, led by Martin Read from the University of Plymouth.

The students spent five days on the Exe Estuary in the first week of April walking much of the edge of the estuary and talking to local people, museums and officials looking after the estuary. The aim was to locate all of the remains of boats in the intertidal zone, identify them and try to find out some of their history. Basic descriptions and measurements were made of those safely accessible and they fully

surveyed four of the most interesting hulks opposite Topsham Quay.

The students found over 20 hulks, including the largest collection of Brixham trawlers in the South West. The results of the survey will be added to the local Sites and Monuments Register, kept by the Historic Environment Section of Devon County Council, and will be used to help manage the estuary.





# Interpretation Centre Progress

**Issue 9 of Exe-Press carried a brief outline of the proposals for an internationally-important Exe Estuary Wildlife and Jurassic Coast Interpretation Centre to be established on Exmouth's**

**estuarieside.** Since its inception in October 2004, Exmouth's Project Promotion Group has worked very hard to drive the project forward. The Project Promotion Group includes representatives from County, District and Town Councils, local residents, the Exe Estuary Management Partnership, local schools and colleges, education specialists, the RSPB, the World Heritage Site team, Devon Wildlife Trust, an internationally renowned wildlife presenter and naturalist, SW RDA, local legal experts, the Met Office and Clinton Devon Estate.

Public meetings have taken place, and this hugely exciting project is being supported with great interest and enthusiasm. Valuable support has been received from an encouragingly wide range of organisations, all of whom see this proposed combined Centre / Visitor Experience as the ideal way to bring people together with the incredible natural wonders found at the confluence of the two internationally-designated sites. In this way we can celebrate, safeguard and conserve this bio and geo-diversity with no adverse impact on either people or our environment.

The next positive step was the appointment of Locum Destination Consulting by the Project Feasibility Study Management Group to undertake a very thorough and comprehensive Feasibility Study which will test the viability of the proposed Centre in Exmouth. The Feasibility Study report is due out in July 2005. To discuss any aspect of this project, please contact Captain David Conway, Project Promotion Group Chair, Tel: 01395 264520 E-mail: david@jconway2.freemove.co.uk

[www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org)

If you haven't taken a look at the Exe Estuary website recently, you've missed out! It is full of up-to-date information about the Estuary and its management, including details of events, local clubs, and useful services. There are also minutes from the Partnership's meetings, and leaflets and maps to download.

With approximately 1000 hits a day, this could be your opportunity to advertise details of your club, organisation or events to a wide and varied audience for free. If you would like to add your details to our website, please contact us at [exeestua@devon.gov.uk](mailto:exeestua@devon.gov.uk)

And it just got better... In April the Exe Estuary Partnership launched a new 'Photo Gallery' page where there are photos of different aspects of the Estuary. There are images of the estuary wildlife, users, landscape and much much more so go to [www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org) and have a look or download them for your own use.

## Diary Dates

Look out for details of the Autumn Exe Estuary Forum – an annual public event, out on the Exe Estuary. For more information please go to the Partnership's website [www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org) or call us on 01392 382236.

The Wardens at Dawlish Warren have a full programme of guided walks and children's events throughout the summer. Call them on 01626 215754 or e-mail [abuckley@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:abuckley@teignbridge.gov.uk) to find out more.

In August East Devon District Council will be organising a Rockpooling Roadshow, travelling across the District on all popular beaches and the Exe Estuary, to show people the life of the seashore. Dates and venues will be confirmed nearer the time, but for more information please contact James Chubb on 07734 568985.

Sunday 12th June 10am – 4pm  
Meadow Management Volunteer Day  
Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve  
Tel: 01626 215754

Wednesday 15th June 10am – 1pm  
Guided Walk of Exminster Marshes  
Exe Nature Walks (£3.50)  
Tel: 01392 211247

Saturday 9th July 10am – 4pm  
Meadow Management Volunteer Day  
Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve  
Tel: 01626 215754

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th July  
Exe Regatta  
Exe Sailing Club  
[www.exe-sailing-club.org](http://www.exe-sailing-club.org)

Wednesday 27th July 10am – 1pm  
Dawlish to Dawlish Warren & Back Guided Walk  
Exe Nature Walks (£3.50)  
Tel: 01392 211247

Thursday 18th August 2pm – 5pm  
Guided Nature Walk of Topsham  
Exe Nature Walks (£3.50)  
Tel: 01392 211247

Saturday 20th August 10am – 4pm  
Pond Management Volunteer Day  
Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve  
Tel: 01626 215754

Tuesday 23rd August 9am  
Guided Walk at Bowling Green Marsh  
RSPB  
Tel: 01626 821344

Saturday 10th September 9am  
Guided Walk at Dawlish Warren  
RSPB  
Tel: 01626 821344

Tuesday 13th September 7.30pm  
'The Wild Coast' -  
Illustrated Talk by David Boag  
RSPB – Exeter Local Group  
Tel: 01626 821344



If you are interested in contributing to the EXE-Press newsletter or would like information about any aspect of the Partnership's work, please contact the Exe Estuary Officer

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