

Issue 56 Summer

Exe Press

2020

Newsletter of the Exe Estuary Partnership



ESTUARY
MANAGEMENT
PARTNERSHIP



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NEWS AND EVENTS PLEASE VISIT WWW.EXE-ESTUARY.ORG

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WELCOME - A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I'd like to open this edition of the Exe Press Newsletter on a very happy note. On behalf of all within EEMP, we would like to wish our Exe Estuary Officer - Steph Harper-Chung - and her husband congratulations on the birth of a bouncy boy named Kimi. We wish you, the new family, all the very best for the future.

Whilst Steph is away, we have an interim officer in post, Jay Boyle, who has been busy collecting and monitoring an invasive species of Oyster, known as 'Pacific Oyster' (see page 7). Welcome to the Partnership and I am sure you will be a very busy person and a valued member of the team.

I would like our readers to know that the Partnership called for, and received, written submissions of evidence relating to the shifting of the sands at Dawlish Warren in order for the EEMP to engage with the Environment Agency in establishing an appropriate way forward. Whilst EEMP does not have the power to enforce any action, we are able to help by sharing our collective knowledge of the estuary and ensuring that the Environment Agency is fully aware of the views and experiences of estuary users. See page 5 for more information.

I would also like to give a special thank you to our new Harbour Master and his crew who are doing a splendid job in and around the Exe. Their new vessel, funded by various groups, is moored up within the Exmouth Marina awaiting final dressing prior to operational use. Throughout the pandemic Grahame and crew have been busy catching craft set adrift by vandals and clearing the Exe of abandoned vessels (see page 8).

EEMP would also like to welcome a new commercial member to the Partnership, Mr Alec Carter of Exmouth Marina, who has offered his skills and expertise when required. Many thanks for your support and contribution to EEMP.



DCC Cllr Jeff Trail BEM
Chairman EEMP

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON THE EXE ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

COVID-19 has undoubtedly changed the way we go about our day to day lives and has somewhat put life on hold, yet the natural processes and wildlife of the estuary continue as normal, blissfully unaware of a global pandemic. In many cases this has allowed nature to thrive; however, it has also bestowed new and unfamiliar challenges, not only for nature, but for the society and economy of the estuary, particularly impacting the way individuals, organisations and businesses work and function.

Coronavirus has and will continue to present the Partnership with certain barriers to its ability to operate, such as key partners being furloughed, the closure of schools, cancellation of events, and social distancing measures. Therefore, it has been essential to conduct a thorough assessment of the Partnership's ability to meet the objectives in our Annual Delivery Plan and wider Management Plan.

This review revealed that the Partnership's objectives can largely be achieved with little or no change thanks to modern technology. For example, meetings have been conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams and we have been able to stay connected with our Partners and progress many areas of work. However, there are a number of plans that we had for the forthcoming year that have been, and will continue to be, significantly affected by COVID-19:

- Beach clean events – unfortunately we had to postpone our Spring beach clean and are currently reviewing how we may approach our Autumn beach clean (see page 6 for how you can still do your part).
- Education sessions – our summer education sessions are always a big part of our programme, but unfortunately due to school closures and social distancing we have postponed our sessions. However, we are looking into conducting virtual sessions so we can continue to educate the next generation on the wonders of the estuary.
- Stakeholder Forum – there is uncertainty on how our Stakeholder Forum will go ahead given the large number of attendees this event attracts. We are currently planning to stage this event virtually and further details will be publicised in good time.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic presents a level of uncertainty, with its everchanging and unpredictable status, the Partnership will continue to be innovative, adaptable and proactive in order to meet the needs of the estuary and people who enjoy it.





STATE OF THE EXE ESTUARY 'TOOLKIT' NOW ONLINE!

The latest information and data on the 'State of the Exe Estuary' is now publicly available through a new online 'toolkit'.

Thanks to generous funding from the locality budgets of Jeffrey Trail BEM, Su Aves, Marina Asvachin, Christine Channon, John Clatworthy, Percy Prowse, Richard Scott, Margaret Squires, and Carol Whitton, the Exe Estuary Management Partnership have been able to create this innovative online resource.

State of the Exe Estuary reports include a wide range of information on how the estuary is managed, its recreational and commercial use, history and archaeology, and wildlife, habitats and designations. However, unlike previous versions of the printed report, this approach offers interactive access to the most current sources of information and environmental data.

Being able to readily access information and environmental data, such as water and air quality, has long been requested

by the public in order to help them understand the health of the Estuary. The online toolkit also acts as a 'one stop shop' allowing many environmental conditions of the Exe Estuary, and more, to be checked on a near 'real-time' basis through links to relevant pages.

This year is the first time the Exe Estuary Partnership has reviewed the 'State of the Exe' since the last paper report was produced in 2014. Regular reviewing the State of the Exe is an important procedure as it allows comparison between the present condition of the estuary with past reports (also available through the toolkit).

Switching to this online resource is a much more sustainable option by reducing paper waste and other associated printing materials. In the long term, it also reduces the amount of officer time required to keep the content up to date, allowing more time to be spent on other important areas of work. Most importantly, it helps shape the way that the Exe Estuary is managed, ensuring that this special environment can be enjoyed now and by future generations to come.

UPDATE ON THE DAWLISH WARREN BEACH MANAGEMENT SCHEME

Readers will be familiar with the works undertaken at Dawlish Warren, through which £12 million was spent on a scheme led by the Environment Agency in partnership with Teignbridge District Council to reduce the risk of flooding to communities and infrastructure around the Exe Estuary and improve the natural function of the designated dunes by removing the old gabion basket defences. The scheme included the movement of 250,000 cubic metres of sand from Pole Sands, the removal of old defences and the placement of a giant sand-filled geotextile barrier (known as a geotube) within the dunes adjoining the golf course.

Since the completion of this 'Beach Management Scheme' in October 2017, a sequence of storms has significantly lowered beach levels and eroded the dunes, so exposing part of the geotube buried there. Although it was expected that the dunes would roll back and the beach profile to lower and return to pre-scheme levels by 2030, the accelerated rate of erosion has resulted in significant public concern and raised questions about the future approach to the management of Dawlish Warren.

Responding to concerns raised by its members, the Exe Estuary Management Partnership (EEMP) undertook a brief review of the scheme by gathering the observations and experience of individuals and organisations with a close working knowledge of the area. These 15 written submissions included a number of common concerns:

- Sedimentation within the main estuary channel;
- Vulnerability of parts of Dawlish Warren;
- Smothering of estuarine substrates.



Credit: InspiredImages--57296

These results were shared with the Environment Agency and used to inform ongoing engagement relating to the scheme, including presentations to the Stakeholder Forum and Partnership Committee. This enabled the experience of EEMP members to be considered in the context of longer-term coastal processes and changes to Dawlish Warren and nearby areas, including Exmouth.

The most recent update provided by the Environment Agency in early June noted that:

- Beach levels are now relatively stable overall although it is still expected there will be significant localised changes to beach levels following storms;
- Some sections of the geotube remain exposed in front of the golf course, although the main risk is from malicious damage, rather than storms;
- Contingency plans have been drafted to manage this risk.

In terms of the way ahead, the Agency is currently planning a strategic study to investigate the local and wider impacts of the changes experienced at Dawlish Warren, to commence this autumn and informed by new monitoring data, including those gathered through a recent seabed survey undertaken in Lyme Bay.

#MINIBEACHCLEAN



As you know, we had to sadly postpone our Spring Beach Clean, but we know that many of you are still eager to do your part, and you still can, through the Surfers Against Sewage #MiniBeachClean campaign!

Follow this Surfers Against Sewage Guidance on 'How to #MiniBeachClean'

Be Safe. We believe that as long as you are respectful, stay safe and only remove plastic pollution (please use the Surfers Against Sewage - Safety-Guidelines) you shouldn't have to ask permission or fill out loads of forms to remove some litter from your favourite places.

Collect. The beauty of #MiniBeachClean is that it's up to you how you do it! Whether you kit up with some heavy-duty gloves, a wheelbarrow and a pack lunch to the farthest reaches of your favourite stretch of coastline or simply fill your hands with the plastics that you come across on a walk. The key is that YOU are doing something positive and representing YOUR beach!

Capture. Take a photo of your #MiniBeachClean haul or you could even try our #MiniBeachClean 'Shaka' with the item of litter that most enrages you!

Upload. Upload your #MiniBeachClean to social media - Make sure to tag SAS and EEMP please!

@sascampaigns / @surfersagainstsewage // @Exeestuary
#MiniBeachClean #IsolationBeachClean



Nurdles or 'Mermaids Tears', the pre-production building blocks for nearly all plastic goods. These were found during the 2019 Spring Clean Up and are a common occurrence on our shores. Steph Harper-Chung

Estuary Safety and Guidance:

- Please follow the current Government coronavirus and social distancing guidelines at all times.
- Remember that the estuary is ever-changing and can be a dangerous environment. Please make sure that you carry out your litter pick in a safe area, for example, the sandy beach instead of on the estuary mud and sandflats where soft sediment and tides can be a hazard. Make sure that you know the area well before heading out and plan around the tides.
- Focus on the Exe Estuary Trail - this area doesn't get covered during conventional beach cleans, yet it is equally as important to clean.

For more estuary litter pick guidance please visit: www.exe-estuary.org/news-and-events/events/clean-ups/

SHARE THIS SPACE

In these challenging times it's more important than ever to remain positive and cheerful. So next time you're out and about on one of Devon's beautiful shared paths, including the Exe Estuary Trail, say 'Hello', 'Excuse me' or 'Thanks' to people you pass. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the reaction you'll get - and it will make you feel good as well! There may be people of all ages walking, running, cycling, scooting, walking dogs and using mobility scooters and wheelchairs. With summer in full swing and with social distancing in mind its especially important to be extra considerate by giving plenty of space and letting others know you are there.

More information about using the estuary responsibly can be found in our various Exe Codes of Conduct at www.exe-estuary.org

Remember, the paths are for everyone so think about others' needs. Thank you and enjoy the trail!

Cycling? Running? Walking?
On Devon's lovely shared paths

Allow extra space and be considerate to others - you may be pleasantly surprised at the reaction you'll get!

#TakeExtraCareInDevon

Devon County Council

ALIENS ON THE EXE - PACIFIC OYSTERS

Pacific oysters, as their name suggests, are native to the Pacific Ocean, but they have been a familiar sight in the UK since the 60's. They were first introduced in hope of finding an alternative species to supplement the shellfish industry following the decline of our native oyster. When they were first introduced, they were not considered capable of proliferation as water temperatures in excess of 20°C are necessary for their reproduction. However, rising sea temperatures, warmer summers and milder winters, combined with their extremely fast growth and reproductive rates (up to 200 million eggs in a single spawning), has led to the establishment and spread of feral populations in the UK. Since then the Tamer and Yealm estuaries have become heavily inundated, with many other Devon estuaries heading that way.

But what's the problem? Well, Pacific oysters are considered an invasive non-native species. Their razor-sharp shells can ribbon-cut the unwary. Yet, it's when they cement together to form 'bio-reefs' that they become an even more serious problem. These bio-reefs can change the ecosystem entirely by smothering intertidal gravel and mudflats, making it difficult for birds and young fish to forage on these rich and important feeding grounds. They can also cause a serious obstruction to the shore affecting recreational activities such as dog walking, kayaking, boating and much more.

Following reports of Pacific oysters being present on the Exe our Acting Estuary Officer, Jay, along with volunteers, began to investigate their presence by conducting scoping visits and undertaking the early stages of mapping and quantifying the oysters. Initial findings brought to light the substantial numbers of feral Pacific oysters that have worryingly become established across much of the Exe Estuary. In fact the abundance survey, conducted near Cockwood Harbour, revealed that there are as many as 14 individuals per 0.25m². Perhaps more worryingly is this is likely to increase over the coming years due to climate change, warmer sea temperatures and the increased opportunity for larval settlement.

Fortunately the Exe is not yet (at least from initial findings) at the 'reef formation' stage. However, there is a significant sense of urgency to try and mitigate against this growing population before it becomes both environmentally undesirable and economically unfeasible to do so. Although the solutions are not straight forward or clear it is essential to continue surveying this invasive species, so the extent of their presence and impact on the estuary can be fully understood and hopefully minimised.

A report of initial findings is available on the Exe Estuary Management Partnership website.

If you have any questions or are interested in Pacific oysters on the Exe please get in touch with the Estuary Officer at exeestua@devon.gov.uk



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HARBOUR MASTER REPORT

The last few months have been extraordinary for the boating communities around the Exe, and just as the Covid crisis has affected the whole nation, the pandemic has impacted on all of our activities afloat and thankfully, now, we have started to relax some of the restrictions on water users. I know it has been hard for mariners to stand on shore looking at the water and not being able to get afloat in the marvellous weather we have had this spring, but I would like to thank everyone who abided by the notice that I issued to effectively close the Exe to all recreational activities in March. I hope that now the restrictions are starting to ease up that you will all be able to make the best of the season from now on. The Covid crisis planning is still continuing though, we are putting a plan together that should another lockdown be implemented we can quickly find room in the Ship Canal to take as many boat as we can to clear the moorings and keep vessels safe should we need to.

The Port Authority is continuing with business as normally as we can, we have completed the acquisition of the moorings servicing work and by the time you read this report we hope to have finished all the moorings servicing that we have been asked to do. We are then going to start work on creating a maintenance plan for the navigation marks all the way in from the 'safe water' mark in the approaches to the Exe, all the way up to Topsham and beyond. We will have a rolling two year cycle where the marks will be lifted, inspected and painted with a check on the lights to make sure that all are working. We will also start our summer patrolling in our new patrol craft.

One of the key reasons why we will be patrolling the Exe is to try to keep people safe. The patrol craft will be tasked to keep an eye on vessels keeping to the speed limit in the river (10 knots) and looking out for antisocial behaviour on the water. The Exe is an exceptional environment for nature as well as recreational and commercial activities, it is the responsibility of all to make sure that we all stay within the boundaries of speed, navigate safely around other craft and not be have in a way that has a detrimental effect on others or the environment.

The Exeter Ship Canal remains as tranquil as ever, a beautiful stretch of water that runs all the way into the city centre. The team that look after the canal work hard to maintain the banks, clear weed and to control the growth of foliage alongside the edges. We are looking bring more vessels into the canal not only for recreational use, but also to make use of the storage facility over the winter period both ashore and afloat in fresh water.



The Harbour Master office is now established at the Buoy Store, Camperdown Terrace in Exmouth, always happy to see customers by appointment there with prior notice for social distancing measures etc. so please, if you have anything that you would like to discuss, get in touch either by telephone or email.

Finally, I hope that you all keep safe, enjoy the remainder of the season afloat and I hope to see you on the water soon.

Best regards,

Grahame Forshaw MBE MNI

Harbour Master, Exeter Port Authority

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D&S IFCA manages inshore fisheries within its District. It has a duty to do so as set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. In meeting these duties, D&S IFCA's core work involves developing the management of fisheries (Byelaws), enforcing fisheries legislation and conducting research work. D&S IFCA works in partnership with other organisations including the Exe Estuary Management Partnership.



Update on the Exe 2020 Public Mussel Stocks

Annual surveys by D&S IFCA of the public beds within the Exe have confirmed that mussel populations within these beds have not recovered to their pre-2014 levels.

The Exe Estuary is designated as a SPA, SSSI and Ramsar site, with wading and over wintering birds forming a significant proportion of the protected species within the estuary. It is currently one of the estuaries (the other is the Teign) subject to a ban, introduced by D&S IFCA, prohibiting the removal of mussels from defined public beds.

The Temporary Closure of Shellfish Beds Byelaw was used to introduce the restriction on the 1st May 2019. The closure recognises the severe decline of many of the estuary's beds following large storms in the winter of 2013-14 and subsequent but unrelated harmful algal bloom events.

The temporary closure applies to all persons. For more information on the restrictions imposed by the Byelaw in the Exe (and the Teign) please visit:

www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Enforcement-Legislation/Temporary-Closure-of-Shellfish-Beds

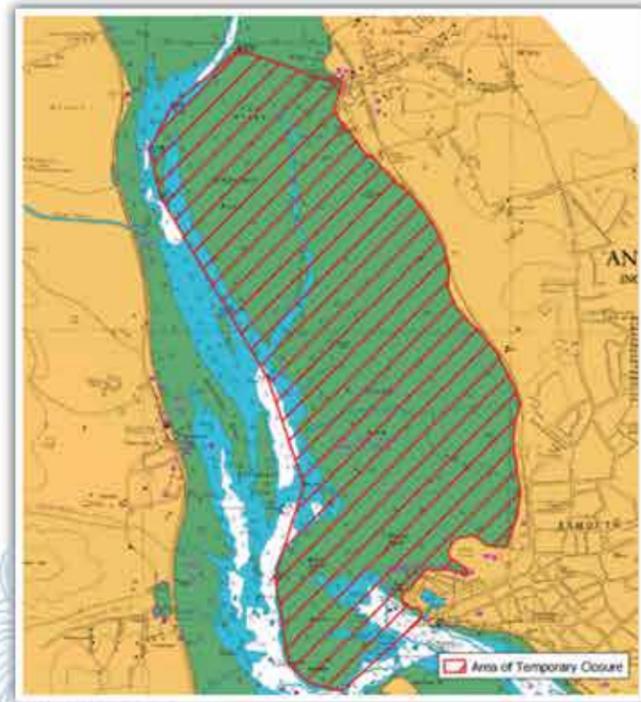


Fig1. Exe area of Temporary closure

Survey Work and the Results

Annual surveys by D&S IFCA of the public beds within the Exe have confirmed that mussel populations within these beds have not recovered to their pre-2014 levels. The beds in their pre-2014 extent formed dense reefs which covered much of the intertidal parts of the estuary, notably on Bull Hill Bank, Starcross, and at Lympstone weighing a combined estimate of around 2000 tonnes. This dropped sharply in 2014 to less than 100 tonnes and is currently (as of autumn 2019) estimated at less than one tonne (fig 2). Though presence of live mussels can still be observed across the public beds, these mussels are sparsely distributed and not in reefing formations. Recovery of the 2014 era beds may take a considerable amount of time, even with the temporary shellfish closure. To see the results of our latest report in more detail please visit:

www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Resource-library/H-Environment-and-Research/Mollusca/Mussels/Exe-Estuary/Exe-Estuary-Mussel-Stock-Assessment-2019

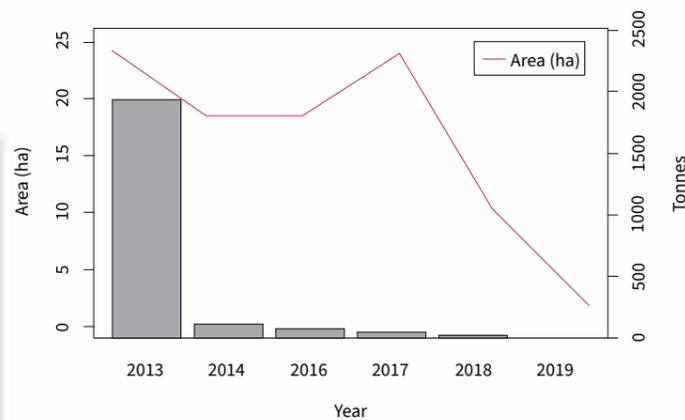


Fig 2. Survey area containing live mussel and tonnage of mussel plotted annually.

Survey work to assess stock levels is planned for 2020. In addition, D&S IFCA is in the process of developing a new Hand Working Permit Byelaw. It is envisaged that, regardless of any temporary closure that is imposed, this Byelaw will introduce restrictions on the amount of sea fisheries resources that can be removed from different areas. Restrictions will apply to both commercial and recreational fishers. More consultation will be undertaken in 2020 to inform the development of the Byelaw.

If you want to follow the work of D&S IFCA visit their website www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk. You can contact them and they will add you to their mailing list. You will then receive the free quarterly D&S IFCA e-newsletter "Inshore Insights" and be directly notified of any of their consultations.

EXMOUTH NCI RESTARTS WATCHES

Image Credit: Nigel Bovey
The 'red flag' sign on display outside Coastwatch House, Queen's Drive, Exmouth.



Exmouth National Coastwatch Institution (NCI) is back in operation, following an enforced eight-week shutdown due to Covid-19. As one of the first of the institution's 56 stations to return to duty, volunteer watchkeepers at the Queen's Drive lookout are being kept busy.

Resuming seven-day-a-week watches on 16 May, up to the second week of June, watchkeepers – working in single-person shifts – logged an average of 74 vessel movements a day. Despite restrictions, and with many boats still winter-berthed in the Exe's sailing clubs, the late May Bank Holiday weekend saw a near-normal number of vessels on the seafront – just 48 fewer than in 2019.

Since the resumption of duties, Exmouth NCI has been involved in 11 incidents, three of which involved people drifting out to sea on inflatables.

In the enforced absence of RNLI Lifeguards, Exmouth NCI erected a 'red-flag' sign on the slipway beside Coastwatch House to warn would-be swimmers of the hazardous waters nearby.

'Exmouth NCI is the UK's fourth-busiest station,' says Station Manager Ivor Jones. 'Nevertheless, given the restrictions we are particularly surprised at how busy we are. While we understand the excitement at being on the water, we urge all users to exercise care.'



Image Credit: Nigel Bovey
Siobhan Dobbs is the first watchkeeper back on duty after the enforced station closure.

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EXMOUTH TIDAL DEFENCE SCHEME



Great progress continues to be made with the £12 million tidal defences at Exmouth along the sea front and estuary. The partnership project between the Environment Agency and East Devon District Council will reduce the risk of tidal flooding to over 1400 homes and 400 business in the town when it is complete.

The work is focussed on three areas of Exmouth:

- **Area A** – Royal Avenue alongside the estuary, where new flood walls and embankments have been completed between the Withycombe Brook outfall to Imperial Recreation Ground. A large area of the nature reserve was levelled to create a continuous height barrier, then topsoiled and re-seeded.

- **Area B** – Camperdown Creek, where flood defences have been raised between the recreation ground and Camperdown Terrace. New gabions, large metal baskets filled with stone, have been fixed into place to protect the creek from wave damage. Sheet piles clad with recycled hardwood timber are now in place from the Sea Cadets building towards the estuary.
- **Area C** – The Esplanade, where the existing sea wall is being strengthened with improved drainage and a new flood defence wall built along Morton Crescent.

Construction will stop over the summer holiday period to minimise disruption for residents and visitors. When the contractor's team return to site later in the year they will start at Alexandra Terrace Junction with associated highways improvements, floodgate installation, landscaping and planting. The whole project is due for completion in spring 2021.


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Natalie Holt



Steve Edmonds



Jon Pike

The spring has brought not only our spring migrant arrivals but new faces to the team. There has been significant change in the past six months or so and we are largely a bunch of new faces at the Exe Estuary and North Devon reserves.

I (Natalie) write this article as a new the new Site Manager. I started in February and bring over 10 years of experience of managing RSPB nature reserves and countryside sites. We also recently welcomed Steve Edmonds, Warden, into the team in March and Jon Pike, Visitor Operations Manager, in November. Both these chaps bring great experience in their respective fields and are looking to move our nature reserves and visitor offer from strength to strength.

The arrival of coronavirus has somewhat changed our world, and we are currently undertaking essential work only, for health and safety and legal compliance and to deliver work attached to grant-funded agreements.

We are also working hard to make our nature reserves safe and ready for visitors. As we're sure you can appreciate,

when you next visit the experience won't be the same as before. We are busy re-routing paths, making one-way systems and building passing places where necessary, so that social distancing guidelines can be followed as easily as possible. We've also taken the difficult decision not to open any hides for the time being. While this will be disappointing, it's important we remain focused on keeping our nature reserves safe for people and wildlife. For now, this means staying in the great outdoors. The latest information on the status of our nature reserves will be regularly updated on the RSPB website. To avoid any disappointment, please check our website before visiting.

We are pleased we have been able to get our arable crops in for cirl buntings at Powderham Marsh. Cirl buntings are very rare nationally but we are lucky to have a hotspot of them around the Exe and Teign, largely thanks to hard work by RSPB colleagues and amazing farmers over the past 30 years. Keep your eyes peeled for cirl buntings at Exminster and Labrador Bay if you visit! We have also recently purchased another field at our Ashill nature reserve near Bishopsteignton which is great news for the cirl bunting, and through careful management should allow the population there to grow by another two or three pairs.





Image credit: Andrew Thatcher

TIDELINES

Tidelines is a new project working with citizens of the Exe estuary and bringing together arts, science, local knowledge and academic research in creative ways to learn more about our estuary home, how it works, what makes it unique and how it is changing.

Tidelines is asking:

- What do we want and need to know about our Exe estuary and coast (past, present, future)?
- How can we celebrate and learn more together about our unique location?
- How can we be active in responding to changes to our environment and climate at a time of climate and ecological crisis?

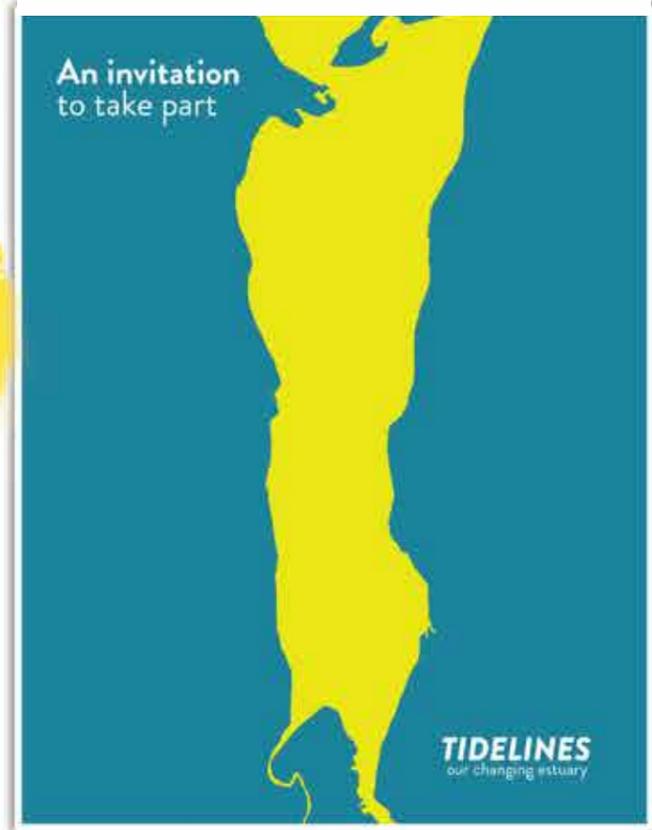
Working with Exeter University and other partners in the region, local residents Anne-Marie Culhane and Jo Salter are designing a series of events which inform and inspire through talks, walks, discussions and participatory activities - creating spaces where researchers and members of the public can meet and work together, to generate or co-develop research questions.

In our pilot year, and in response to social distancing, we are inviting people to take part in activities to explore what people are really interested in and concerned about and to inform future activity.

People can participate via the Things to do now page of tidelines.uk. These offer a number of invitations for people



Section of a map by Jim Shapter



to share ideas, thoughts, questions and knowledge with the wider community and are suitable for all ages. Whether you are a dog walker, a fisherman, a kite surfer, a climate scientist, someone who can't get outdoors or someone who just loves the Estuary you will be able to take part in these activities. We are reaching out to groups and individuals who may not normally participate in these kinds of activities and also have activity kits we can send out.

If you see a link between what we are exploring and what you are interested in or working on please get in touch and of course we invite you all to take part now!

"Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand" - Confucius

Tidelines' co-ordinators Anne-Marie and Jo both have expertise in working in collaboration with communities, academics and researchers. Tidelines is partnering with the University of Exeter as part of the Socially Engaged Universities Project funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union. And we are grateful for advice and support from the Exe Estuary Partnership, Transition Exmouth, Wild East Devon and Kaleider.

For more information visit tidelines.uk or email info@tidelines.uk.

LOWER OTTER RESTORATION PROJECT

Provided below is an update on the Lower Otter Restoration Project, through which ecological linkage will be created between the Otter and Exe Estuaries.

Proposals to restore the Otter Estuary to a more natural condition, closer to that which existed two hundred years ago, will be submitted to East Devon District councillors later this year following the approval of a major funding bid.

The Lower Otter Restoration Project has been awarded around £8.5 million as part of Project PACCco - Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts. The funding will support the Lower Otter Restoration Project's aims of climate change adaptation by working with natural processes to provide benefits for people and wildlife. Sea defences at the mouth of the River Otter, built 200 years ago to claim fresh farmland from the sea, along with other man-made alterations to the river over the centuries, mean the Otter is no longer as naturally connected with its floodplain as it once was.

Funding for the £12 million Lower Otter Restoration Project is also being provided by landowners Clinton Devon Estates and the Environment Agency. One of the primary reasons for the Environment Agency leadership in this project is the requirement to provide compensatory habitat to make up for that lost to climate change and flood defence works in the Exe Estuary.

Dr Sam Bridgewater, head of Wildlife and Conservation at Clinton Devon Estates, said:

"The European funding approval is a major milestone for the project, and we are on the verge of another as we are submitting our final planning application to East Devon District Council for consideration."

We will host a virtual exhibition on the project website www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk once the planning application documents are ready.

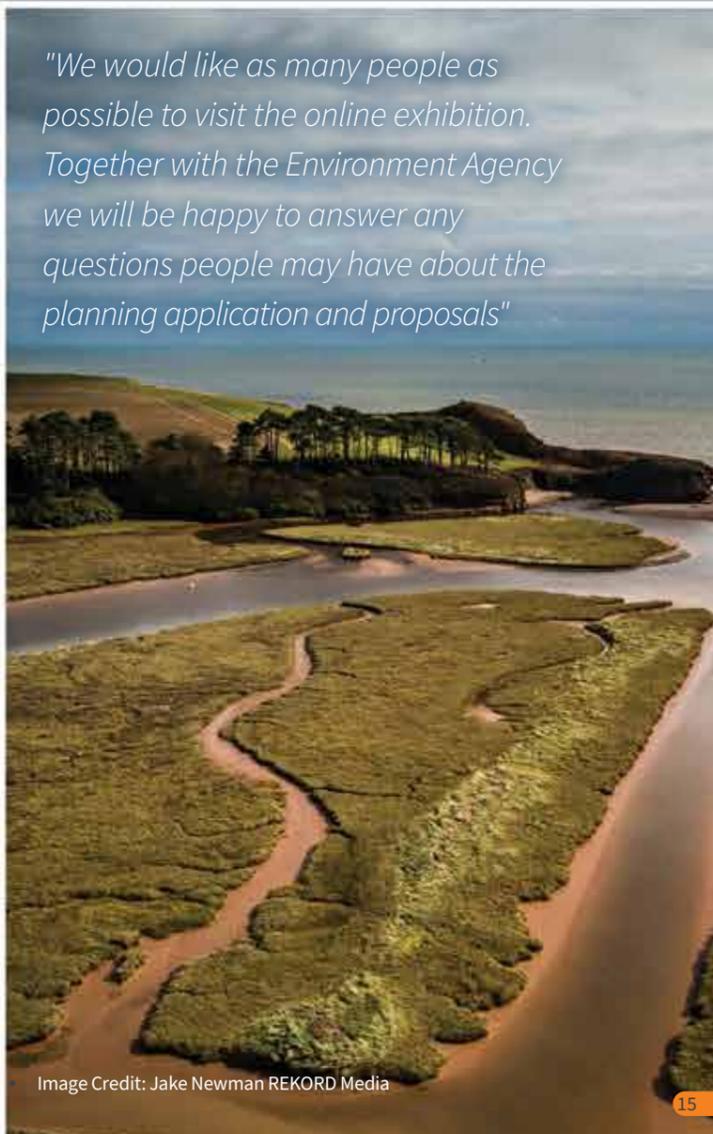
We would like as many people as possible to visit the online exhibition. Together with the Environment Agency we will be happy to answer any questions people may have about the planning application and proposals.

If the council approves the proposals, we will be able to give a clearer idea of when the construction would be likely to start and finish - at the moment we think it would take about two years."



Some of the benefits of the project include:

- A more ecologically healthy estuary by reconnecting the river to its floodplain
- Creates ecological linkage between the Otter and Exe Estuaries.
- The creation of approximately 60 hectares of rare inter-tidal and wetland habitat would attract a wide range of wildlife.
- Improved public access, including securing the future of the South West Coast Path along its current route
- Preventing potential pollution from a former landfill tip through erosion
- Securing access for nearby residents and businesses, particularly along South Farm Road



"We would like as many people as possible to visit the online exhibition. Together with the Environment Agency we will be happy to answer any questions people may have about the planning application and proposals"

Image Credit: Jake Newman REKORD Media

A HISTORY OF STAR CROSS YACHT CLUB



Starcross Yacht Club, situated on the West bank of the River Exe in the grounds of Powderham Castle, will celebrate 250 years of existence in 2022. Founded by Lord Courtenay in 1772 with others of the nobility, the 'Starcross Club' as it was known, organised sailing activities called 'Fêtes Marines' or regattas which were regularly documented in the "Exeter Flying Post" for more than two centuries. Starcross Yacht Club was the first sailing club to be founded in England and resided in the Courtenay Arms in Starcross for many years until moving to its current location at Powderham Point, site of the estate's watermen's cottages, in 1957. Today SYC flourishes, even in these changed times, with nearly 600 members including the present Earl, Charlie Courtenay, Patron and keen family sailor. Activities include varied aspects of boating: dinghy racing with many Class boats, racing catamarans with the largest Hurricane fleet in the country, dinghy cruising, canoeing, windsurfing and paddle boarding are all popular activities. The larger cruising boats, of which there are about 20 moored off the foreshore in summer, regularly sail the South Coast and to the Channel Islands, often in the company of other boats.



Starcross Yacht Club today not only offers racing and pleasure sailing for its members but also Royal Yachting Association sail training courses for juniors and adults. In addition, the all-important power boat training for its safety boat crews and those of other clubs on the river is organised and run from the Club's premises.

Members come from a wide area of Devon to enjoy the events and camaraderie at SYC. New members are always welcome.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

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email: exeestua@devon.gov.uk



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