

Issue 63 Autumn/Winter

# Exe Press

2022

Newsletter of the Exe Estuary Partnership

EXE



ESTUARY  
MANAGEMENT  
PARTNERSHIP



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Forum Chair and Vice Chair**

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## DAWLISH WARREN BEACH MANAGEMENT SCHEME POST-SCHEME REVIEW EXE STAKEHOLDER FORUM 6TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Thank you to all who were able to attend the Forum and feedback to the Environment Agency (EA) on the draft proposal for future management along Dawlish Warren spit. Change on site has been greater than predicted following the 2017 scheme. The purpose of the event was to share latest proposals for management going forward and receive feedback from the wider Exe Estuary community, prior to identifying a 'preferred' management approach.

Martin Davies, Coastal Advisor representing the EA, explained that that any recommendations for 'proposed management going forward' would be an attempt to find a balance and common-ground between flood and coastal erosion risk and environmental management. He highlighted some potential conflict between these and other drivers, issues and interests using a 'this is what we think, what do you think?' approach to help summarise information and facilitate feedback.

Some key messages were also highlighted to help provide context, including:

- the need for long-term sustainable management at Dawlish Warren spit
- the spit will continue to change with ongoing beach lowering and erosion

- that existing geotube, groyne and relic gabion defences are unsustainable, work against natural processes and need to be removed by 2050 to meet planning conditions
- that risk to the wider estuary will increase due to effects of climate change and the spit gradually losing its wave barrier function
- that Authorities and stakeholders need to be aware and plan for this eventuality

Following an excellent question and answer session, Forum attendees were invited to take part in table discussions about the proposals. The groups were asked to provide thoughts and feedback on the scheme in general and on four specific items of detail around which there are known differences of views. These were:

1. Groynes – reducing maintenance and removal?
2. Dune 'trials' – to actively remove sections of dune within Central section?
3. Geotube – to actively remove once exposed?
4. Relic gabions – to actively remove along the Distal section?

Returns from each table were captured within a questionnaire. A summary (based on an approximation of the number of responses from each table and individuals) is identified below (Fig 1).

Following further review and more detailed analysis of all the responses received, a summary report will be produced and circulated in readiness for the next Forum event in February.

## EXE STAKEHOLDER FORUM 2022



Presentations and the full Forum report can be found on the EEMP website at [www.exe-estuary.org/get-involved/forum](http://www.exe-estuary.org/get-involved/forum).

After nearly four years of representing the needs of estuary users through the Forum, Jeremy Rawlings is stepping down as Forum Chair. The Exe Estuary Management Partnership extends their sincere thanks to Jeremy for his time that he has committed to his role, ensuring that the views and concerns of local communities were brought to the Partnership Committee in a fair and balanced way. We are sorry to see Jeremy go.

Ted Draper, former Forum Vice Chair, has now been promoted to Chair. Gordon Betteridge has accepted the position of Forum Vice Chair. Information about the Forum representatives can be found on the EEMP website. Ted Draper commented

*“Together with Gordon, I will continue to gauge views of estuary users and take these to the Partnership Committee. The next forum will be held on 7th February, 7pm-9pm at County Hall. Please make a note in your diaries now.”*



Ted Draper  
Forum Chair



Gordon Betteridge  
Forum Vice Chair

The Summer Stakeholder Forum took place on 6th September at Ocean in Exmouth, overlooking the Exe Estuary. The event was chaired by Jeremy Rawlings as Forum Chair. The event was offered as a hybrid meeting, with 93 people attending in person and 14 people attending virtually.

Presentations included updates on activities driven by the Exe Estuary Management Plan, work of the Exeter Port Authority, planned maintenance work on the Exe Estuary Trail at Courtlands Boardwalk, wildlife refuge monitoring and the Dawlish Warren Beach Management Post-Scheme Review (details on page 3).

Feedback received from attendees were positive. 100% of feedback stated that the Forum was worth attending and is a key opportunity to learn more about the Exe Estuary, get involved and have views heard.

Fig 1

	REMOVE	REMOVE IN PHASES	REMOVE RELIC GROYNES ONLY	RETAIN	UNSURE
<b>GROYNES</b>	0	10%	5%	60%	25%
<b>DUNE 'TRIALS'</b>	YES 0	NO 80%	UNSURE 20%		
<b>GEOTUBE REMOVAL</b>	YES 0	YES - but build revetment instead 20%	NO 50%	UNSURE 30%	
<b>RELIC GABION REMOVAL</b>	YES 15%	REPAIR / REPLACE 25%	NO 50%	UNSURE 10%	





## CLEAN, CRUISE, FISH & BLUES!

About 65 of our trusty volunteers gathered at Exmouth Local Nature Reserve on 24th September to clean the estuary of rubbish. Here's our Clean-Up event in pictures...

There is a definite decrease in the amount of litter that we find each year, which is a good sign that Clean-Ups like these are having a positive effect on the estuary.



Digging out rubbish



Getting the children involved...



...AND well-behaved doggies!



Putting the hard work in



Removing an old broken crab pot

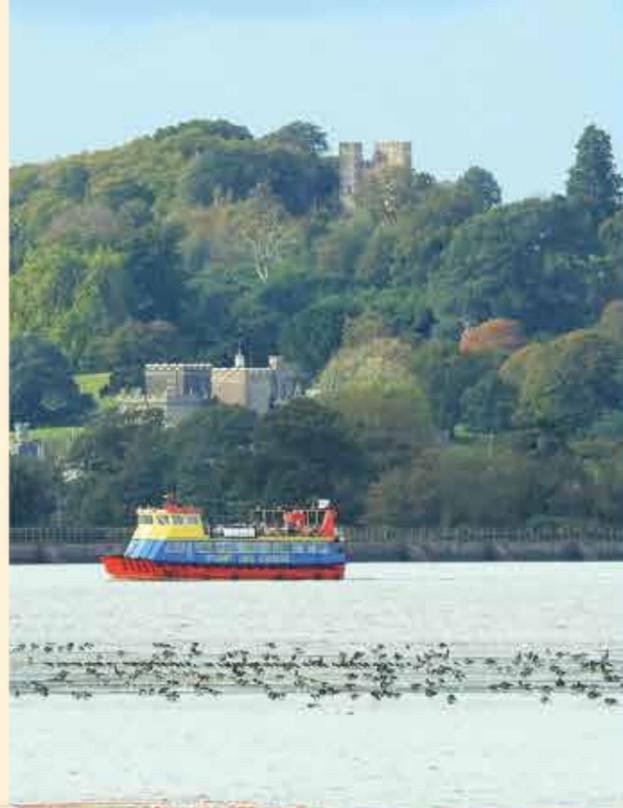


Delicious **Krispies Fish & Chips** kindly offered to all volunteers!



**Bicton Street Blues** playing aboard a fantastic free trip courtesy of **Stuart Line Cruises!**

A huge **THANK YOU** to all the amazing volunteers who helped out at our Autumn Clean-Up, and to the very generous sponsors who continue to offer free treats for our hard-working volunteers!



## STUART LINE CRUISES

Migrating birds cover thousands of miles in their annual journeys, often travelling the same course year after year with little deviation. Birds migrate to move from areas of low or decreasing resources to areas of high or increasing resources. The tidal mudflats on The Exe are home to a high quantity of various invertebrate species, making the estuary a rich biodiversity site and during the winter months The River Exe is transformed into a haven for thousands of wading and migrating birds who are sourcing the Exe for their vital food source.

Stuart Line Cruises are lucky enough as a company to be able to appreciate the natural beauty of the area with our Guided Bird Watching Cruises.

The Exe is one of the most important estuaries in Europe for wildlife, particularly for wintering waders and wildfowl. It is nationally renowned as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as an important habitat for these birds. Also, as a selected RAMSAR site, the wetlands are designated to be of international importance for its nature and wildlife.

The Exe is one of the most important estuaries in Europe for wildlife

The tranquil waters of The River Exe allows us to cruise throughout the winter months to see the wide range of wildlife and our knowledgeable Ornithologists Dave Smallshire and Derek Carter provide interesting live commentary throughout the cruise. Their commentary is suitable for novices and certainly beneficial to experts, learning and discovering about the local species, habitat, feeding methods and behaviours of the thousands of birds on the Exe Estuary and East Devon Coast. We are grateful to have them on board with us, their knowledge is truly invaluable.

Derek Carter has been keeping us up to date with the current sightings on The River Exe and so far, he has spotted Redshanks, Dark Belly Brent Geese, Widgets, Oyster Catchers, Black Tailed Godwits, Spoonbills and has mentioned the Avocets have started to arrive.

Just recently our local resident seal has had a new addition with the arrival of a pup, and we are hoping our passengers will be treated this winter season to sightings - make sure to keep an eye on the sandbanks at low tide. If you are interested in following updates on sightings, you may like to follow our Twitter account **@Stuartlineexm**

We are excited for the start of our 2022/2023 bird watching season which starts in November and with each trip being so unique, you never know what wildlife you may be able to spot.

More information on our bird watching cruises can be found on **www.stuartlinecruises.co.uk**



# #WINTER WADERS

It's that time of year again when we are starting to see the return of our much-loved visiting winter waders to our Devon estuaries. From as early as September, Devon gets tens of thousands of birds visiting us on

their annual migration. These birds fly from colder parts of the world, typically from the north or east, to enjoy our milder climate and our rich estuary mud, full of nutritious food. Read on to find out about some of the stars of the show and see how many you can spot! We got some insight from Caius Constable-a Wildlife Warden (East Devon District Council) on the Exe Estuary.

## OYSTER CATCHERS



- Caius described them as “One of the most vocal waders with a distinctive call and a bright orange bill!”
- Unlike the name suggests, oystercatchers largely eat cockles and mussels in the UK.
- They eat their food (bivalves) by two main methods. 1) hammering the shell until it opens or 2) prising the two shells apart- typically seen by individuals with longer, pointier bills.
- They can live for up to 35 years!

## LAPWINGS



- The Lapwing's name describes their wavering flight, but they also have the nickname “peewit” due to the sound of their display calls, which you can hear across our estuaries.
- Lapwings are the only British wader that has a crest in all plumages and in both sexes.
- The 1928 Protection of Lapwings Act restricts the taking of the birds and their eggs for food.

## AVOCETS



- The Avocet diet is made up of aquatic insects and insect larvae, crustaceans (such as crabs), and worms.
- Their mating behaviour is an intricate dance, with strict rules that must be followed by the male!
- Avocets can be very territorial and have been known to aggressively defend their territory and chase away unwanted birds.

## DARK-BELLIED BRENT GEESE



- They are an unmistakable black goose, and strong efficient flyers
- Dark-bellied brent geese breed in northern Russia and then spend the winter in southern and eastern England feeding on eelgrass in estuaries and adjoining fields.
- Caius said “(they) can often be seen feeding bottoms up on eelgrass in the Exmouth Wildlife Refuge from mid-September through the winter”. And mentions that they “return from Siberia in family groups, Mum and Dad look after their young until it's time to return to Siberia at the beginning of the summer..”
- The word Brent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for burnt, reflecting the bird's plumage colour.

## WIGEON



- These dabbling ducks visit the UK over the winter, flying from Iceland, Scandinavia, and Russia.
- Wigeon's eat aquatic plants, grasses, and roots
- They are a medium-sized dabbling duck with a chestnut head and grey body (males) which arrive on the estuary in huge numbers over the winter.

## LITTLE EGRET



- They are a small white heron with attractive white plumes on back, chest, and crest with black legs and yellow feet
- Their long neck plumes were once more valuable than gold and were smuggled into Europe during the 19th century!
- The little egret first appeared in large numbers in the UK in 1989
- Although once a rare visitor from the Mediterranean, they can now be a common site in parts of the UK
- Caius describes them as “an elegant looking, slim white bird with a pointed black bill which can be seen all over the estuary from saltmarshes to mudflat”.

## SPOONBILLS



- Although not technically a migratory bird it is definitely something you should try and spot. As the name suggests the spoonbill has a long spatulate-(or spoon)like black bill.
- They fly in long diagonal lines with their neck and legs completely stretched out.
- Spoonbills feed on shrimp and other aquatic invertebrates which they catch while sweeping its large bill from side to side in the water- like a hammerhead shark!

## TOP TIPS FROM CAIUS

**Wading birds are best viewed at high tide when the rising water pushes them up onto the shore.**

**You will often see large groups of birds such as Oystercatchers, Curlew, and Redshank resting while the water is too high for them to feed.**

**At low tide when large areas of the mudflats are exposed you will see the same birds feeding, although they will be much more spread out and harder to spot!**

The Local Nature Partnership ran a **#WinterWader** webinar on 10th November for complete beginners to help spot some of these beautiful birds. A recording of the webinar is available on [www.devonlnp.org.uk](http://www.devonlnp.org.uk)

## SPIRIT OF PLACE EXHIBITION BY RAY BALKWILL IN THE STUDIO GALLERY, EXMOUTH



Ray Balkwill's artistic path has led him inexorably to capture what landscape painters call 'a sense of place'. For those familiar with Ray's work will know that it is his portrayal of the Exe Estuary, in all its moods, that has been his greatest passion.

Ray explained why: **"D.H. Lawrence once said 'the spirit of place is a great reality' and I certainly believe this to be true. I was born in Exeter and my love for my native county runs as deep as the red earth itself. I've always felt that the Exe was my spiritual home and the sense of belonging is very special."**

A few minutes' drive from his home in Exmouth is Camperdown Creek, one of his favourite painting locations on the estuary.

Ray says: **"It's a rustic, man-made creek with a long boat-building tradition and must have sketched and painted the boats and boatsheds here hundreds of times. Inevitably places change and the creek is no exception. Some of the boatsheds have now been pulled down and many of the old wooden boats broken up and burnt. Over the years I have also got to know many of the boatbuilders who have plied their trade here. Sadly, in the past couple of years, these too have passed on and I so miss their presence. Although much has changed, I feel pleased to have recorded for posterity, this unique place in my sketches and paintings."**

Although Ray's love of painting boats is evident, his interest in the subject is based firmly on dry land.

He added: **"I'm definitely not a swimmer or sailor. My love of boats is purely in their form, and of course, some of the interesting stories that these character boats have to tell"**.

But if the truth be known, his empathy with them is even far more deeply rooted than even he first thought.

Ray recounts his story: **"I few years back I went to a fascinating talk in Topsham by veteran diver Ron Howell. His talk on his many exciting and valuable finds included a humble house brick brought up from the sea bed off the South Devon coast. Remarkably this find ultimately revealed the remains of two Bronze age vessels, which potentially, were the oldest wreck sites in the world. Ron described how the Topsham based ketch 'Lord Napier' had sunk in 1911, whilst carrying a cargo of 22,00 bricks from Exmouth brickworks to Kingsbridge. Thankfully the crew were saved, but the bricks of course, went down with the boat. And the delivery address for the cargo of bricks - Balkwill & Co, Shipping Agents, The Quay, Kingsbridge."**

**'Spirit of Place'** is being held  
in the Studio Gallery, Thistledown,  
Marley Road, Exmouth

**Sat 3rd & Sun 4th December  
10am to 5pm**

Open at other times by appointment only.

Further details visit:  
[www.raybalkwill.co.uk](http://www.raybalkwill.co.uk)



## A BREW, A VIEW AND AN AVOCET OR TWO



The Lookout on Bowling Green Marsh is a cosy space to appreciate nature this winter. Up to 15,000 wildfowl and waders flock to the Estuary in winter. The high tide guarantees a large array of species coming to Bowling Green Marsh to feed on the billions of tiny creatures in the silt. With recent sightings of Avocet, Teal, Widgeon, Brent Geese, Black tailed Godwits and peregrine, a visit is not to be missed. The large windows, friendly, knowledgeable guides and comfortable sofas provide excellent viewing with free activities to keep the children entertained.

A range of hot and cold drinks and snacks are available from hot chocolate and cake to Rspb nature friendly coffee and ice creams.

Children can enjoy exploring items from the natural world through the microscope, draw pictures and engage in a variety of activities from 'Guess the skull' to 'match the feathers to the birds'. The Lookout Garden is a fantastic, safe spot for exploring too.



'Young visitors love going over the bridge in the garden, spotting bugs in the bug hotel and seeing wildlife up close with the binoculars and telescope, it's heartening to see that the experiences on offer here at the Lookout help to spark interest in the natural world. Visitors can drop in to the Lookout or book to join one of our many events from Winter Waders Cycle Tours, Nature Tots, Photography workshops to Guided Beginner bird watching walks'. Lindsey Henderson Visitor Experience Officer.

The Lookout is open **Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 - 4**. We would love to be able to open more and are actively recruiting for more Visitor Centre Welcome Volunteers. If you are passionate about nature, enjoy interacting with and meeting new people we would love to hear from you.

The Lookout is also available for private hire so please get in touch if you are looking for an alternative space for your meetings or events.  
[Lindsey.henderson@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Lindsey.henderson@rspb.org.uk)



**Join our volunteer team**  
[volunteer.rspb.org.uk/opportunities](http://volunteer.rspb.org.uk/opportunities)  
Check out our events page  
[events.rspb.org.uk/bowlinggreenmarsh](http://events.rspb.org.uk/bowlinggreenmarsh)  
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# EXETER PORT AUTHORITY MARINE SERVICES

We offer a range of professional marine services on the Exe Estuary, Exeter Canal and Quay:

- Mooring servicing, maintenance & installation
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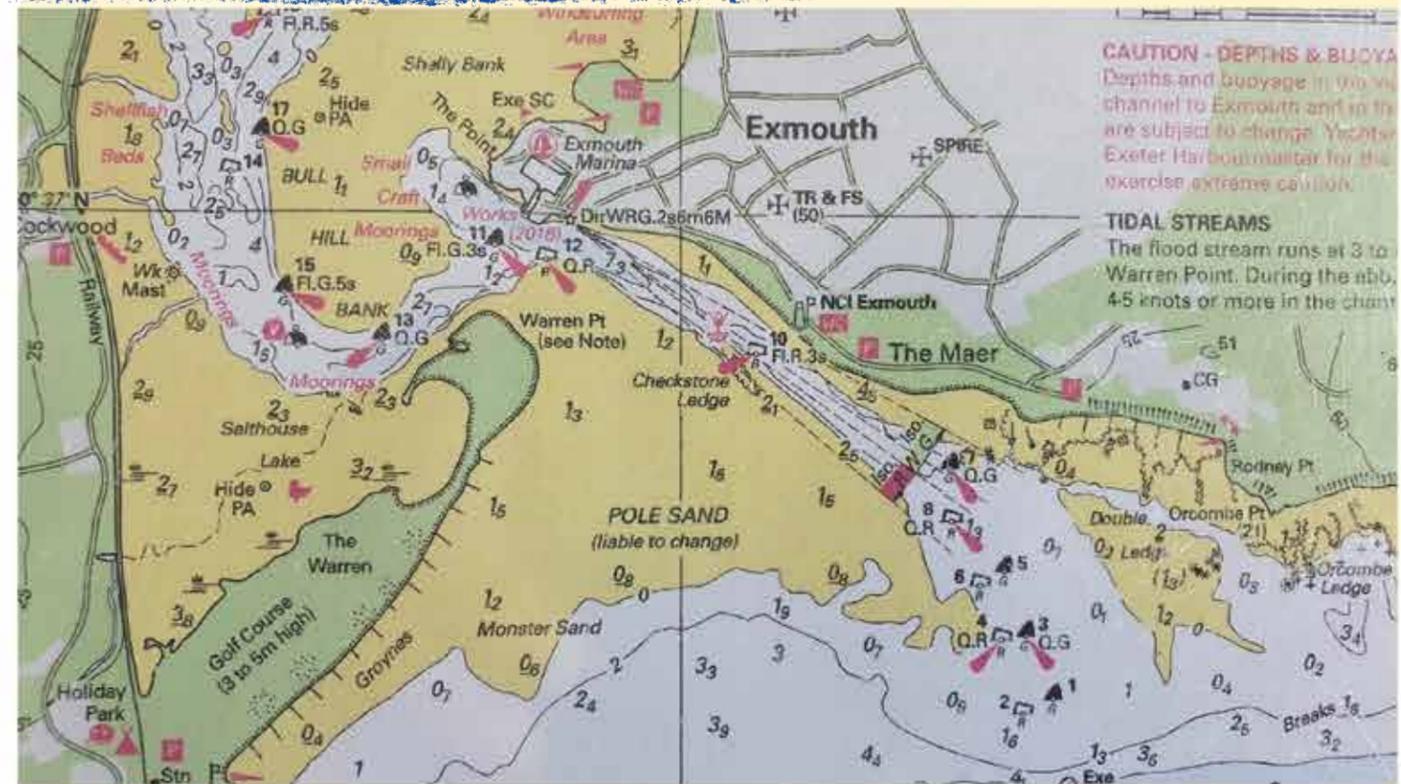


[www.exeter.gov.uk/epa](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/epa)



## NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTION EXMOUTH

EXMOUTH NCI CONTRIBUTES TO THE SAFETY OF THE EXE ESTUARY BY WATCHING 365/ "DAYLIGHT HOURS"



**NCI Exmouth was established in 1998 and is part of the region's search and rescue capability. Reporting directly to HM Coastguard (MCA)**

NCI watchkeepers keep a sharp lookout for vulnerable craft and people, such as open boats, yachts, fishing vessels, divers, walkers and sea anglers. Their aim is to minimise the time it takes to get help to anyone in trouble by passing up-to-date information to HM Coastguard who co-ordinate search and rescue. The station is equipped with VHF radios to monitor emergency channels, telescopes, telephones, AIS and CCTV and Up-To-Date charts.

The watchkeepers, male and female, come from all walks of life and are fully trained to meet the high standards required by the NCI and the Maritime Coastguard Agency.

Since 1998 Exmouth NCI has grown in strength and now has a fully trained team of 60 or so volunteers who turn out in all conditions to keep the station open 365 days a year.

Watchkeepers maintain a watch over the waters immediately in front of the station and with CCTV can monitor an area from Orcombe Point to Topsham on the tidal river Exe and beyond, logging all identifiable craft passing the station. All incidents are immediately reported to HM Coastguard. HM Coastguard can take a live feed from our CCTV to see and understand the nature of the incident. The watchkeepers also monitor VHF radio channels for distress and urgency calls and record weather conditions for the benefit of local seafarers.

The station is responsible for raising its own funds to provide equipment, maintain the building and train its watchkeepers. NCI receives no government funding and, to maintain the watch, the station relies on the generosity of the public and the fund-raising efforts of its active local support group.

# CYCLING MYTHS DEBUNKED!

Misinformation and myths can shape how some people view and treat vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians. The following cycling myths will hopefully explain some commonly held theories!

## MYTH 1: CYCLISTS DON'T PAY ROAD TAX

**FACT:** Well, that's true, but then no one does either, because it doesn't exist. Road tax was abolished in 1937.

Motorists pay vehicle tax based on emissions. Everybody pays for roads through other forms of taxation. Therefore, all road users such as people walking, cycling and horse riders have as much right to use the road as motorists.

Many motorists believe that 'cyclists don't pay road tax' and allude to a notion that cyclists have no right to use the road.

Drivers and cyclists have more in common than is often realised. With 80% of cyclists holding a driving licence, and 1 in 5 drivers cycling at least once a month, they are often the same people.

## MYTH 2: CYCLISTS SHOULDN'T BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

**FACT:** They are often safer there and the Highway Code recommends this Primary position in certain situations.

There is updated guidance in The Highway Code for people cycling about positioning themselves which includes riding in the centre of their lane on quiet roads, in slower-moving traffic and at the approach to junctions or road narrowings. Secondary position is a third of the way into the lane or about an arms length away from the kerb.

**The Highway Code:** 8 changes you need to know from 29 January 2022 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))



## MYTH 3: CYCLISTS ALWAYS GO THROUGH RED LIGHTS

**FACT:** Some may and that it isn't right. And drivers do it too. No one should go through red lights.

The new rule H1 in the Highway Code states *"those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to take care and reduce the danger they pose to others. This principle applies most strongly to drivers of large goods and passenger vehicles, vans/minibuses, cars/taxis and motorcycles."*

The consequence of a driver of a car, weighing approx 1.5 tonnes travelling at 30mph, being involved in a collision, is obviously much worse than a person cycling.

Again, no one should go through red lights.

## MYTH 4: IF THERE IS A BIKE LANE, PEOPLE ON BIKES SHOULD GET OFF THE ROAD.

**FACT:** People cycling can choose to ride on the road or a cycle or shared path (and often choose to do a bit of both).

Some cycle trips are quicker, easier and more direct on the road. Drivers must expect to see people in or near the flow of traffic and definitely not in the gutter. They are traffic; the same as people driving. People may prefer to cycle on the road as some off-road paths cross other junction which could increase the chances of a collision or conflict.

Drivers need to give people cycling (and those walking or horse riders) space - only overtake if you can do safely and try give 2 metres of space as you pass slowly.

Some cycle trips, especially leisure trips or when there is no hurry, are often better on a cycle path or shared path. Cyclists can choose; in the same way as drivers can often choose which type of roads to make their journeys on.

## MYTH 5. THERE ISN'T THE CYCLE PROFICIENCY TEST ANYMORE

**FACT:** Bikeability started in 2007 and it's like cycling proficiency, but better!

From basic skills to advanced journeys Bikeability has it covered. Nearly 4 million children have been trained in England and in Devon the '100,000th child trained' landmark is approaching.

**Bikeability training is free for children and adults in Devon.**

## MYTH 6. CYCLISTS DON'T RING THEIR BELLS

**FACT:** Many do! However, it is not black and white.

Highway Code Rule 63 says people cycling should let others know of their presence, and slow down where necessary on shared paths by ringing their bell or calling out politely.

Some people feel it is a command to move - it isn't. Others say that the sound of a bell ringing makes them "jump out of their skin". Often a combination of both is needed as is a good degree of common sense and looking out for each other.

Read more about the Council's Share this Space project [www.traveldevon.info/cycle/safe-cycling/share-this-space/](http://www.traveldevon.info/cycle/safe-cycling/share-this-space/)



[www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/safe-travel/road-safety/](http://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/safe-travel/road-safety/)



## MYTH 7. IT IS OK FOR DOGS TO BE OFF THEIR LEADS ON SHARED PATHS

**FACT:** Not really!

Highway Code Rule 56 says Do not let a dog out on the road on its own. Keep it on a short lead when walking on the pavement, road or path shared with cyclists or horse riders.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-about-animals-47-to-58](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-about-animals-47-to-58)

Some people are very wary and nervous of dogs too.

**Devon County Council encourages all road users to Be alert, be patient and be nice! This will help create a pleasant environment for everyone and hopefully reduce potential conflict or collisions.**



Competitively priced deep water moorings with good access from Starcross available on annual licence from Powderham Estate.

All enquiries and bookings for moorings to be made via Powderham Estate Office.

**Tel: 01626 890243.**

# PLASTIC FREE EXMOUTH

Plastic Free Exmouth (PFE) are delighted to announce that Exmouth has joined a network of communities across the UK who have been awarded Plastic Free Community status by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) in recognition of the work we have done to start reducing the impact of single-use plastic on the environment.

PFE was formed in 2019 when the campaign for a Plastic Free Community began. Since then the group has gone from strength to strength thanks to the increasing number of fantastic volunteers.

The objectives include; setting up a community led steering group, instigating the SAS Plastic Free Schools education programme, getting local council commitment and working with local businesses, organisations and community groups to spread the word and minimise the amount of disposable plastics they use.

As a Plastic Free Champion, businesses such as Pelosi Creative and Two Drifters Distillery have removed/replaced at least 3 single-use items. PFE have over 28 Plastic Free Champions and this number is continuing

to increase. PFE also have 30 Community Allies ranging from Exmouth Library, Exmouth Community College & local charity shop Sea Adora plus a large number of others. These are groups, businesses or individuals who have pledged to support the work of PFE and are themselves working hard to reduce single-use plastic.

PFE hold weekly beach cleans at 8.30am on a Sunday starting at each end of Exmouth beach. We hold an annual Plastic Free Festival and have attended a number of other 'eco' events. In addition to this we have given talks at a number of events including visiting a number of local schools.

PFE are very excited to continue and strengthen everything we have achieved so far.



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Exe Estuary Management Partnership,**  
c/o Devon County Council, Room 120,  
County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD  
email: [exeestua@devon.gov.uk](mailto:exeestua@devon.gov.uk)



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Would you like to receive information about? Forum  Clean-Up

**Interests:** Local Community  Nature Conservation & Environmental Quality  Harbour Services   
Fisheries & Crab Collecting  Agriculture and Rural Land Use  Heritage  Coastal Management   
Land Based Recreation  Water Based Recreation  Transport  Tourism & Economy  Codes of Conduct

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# FOR PEOPLE, FOR WILDLIFE, FOR THE FUTURE