



# SeaView

South East Coastal and Marine Project

## Winter 2009

### Welcome

Welcome to the Winter edition of SeaView - the newsletter designed to keep you up to date with the work of Natural England's South East Coastal and Marine Project in our region's coast and seas.

We welcome your thoughts or questions about the project so please contact us by calling **Graham Horton** on **0300 0604851** or by emailing: [Graham.Horton@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Graham.Horton@naturalengland.org.uk).

## Inshore Fisheries Management is Changing

The passing of the Marine and Coastal Access Act will result in many changes to the way our marine environment is managed. One of these is the formation of 10 new Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) which will replace the 12 existing Sea Fisheries Committees. In the South East region there will be 3 IFCAs; Essex and Kent, Southern and Sussex.



The IFCAs will be responsible for managing inshore fisheries resources out to 6 nautical miles and will ensure that fish stocks are used in a sustainable way to ensure the protection of the marine environment. One representative from Natural England will sit on each IFCA along with representatives from the Environment Agency, the new Marine Management Organisation (MMO), county and local authorities and a range of marine stakeholders from the fishing, recreational, environmental and other sectors. Natural England is supportive of the creation of these new IFCAs and we see it as an important move towards the sustainable management of our marine environment.

The MMO are now inviting 10-14 local community members to apply to become an IFCA member, [www.ifcamembers.co.uk](http://www.ifcamembers.co.uk) has more information about the role and the work IFCAs.

# Managing Coastal Flood Risk



High profile floods in recent years have meant that the issue of flood defence has become a hot topic. This is also true for the coastline particularly given the rise in sea levels expected over the next century (up to 76 cm in the South East). One of the key tools to manage coastal erosion and flood risk is through a shoreline management plan (SMP).

An SMP is a document which provides guidance and recommendations for ways to manage the coastline, minimising the impacts of erosion and flooding. The plan will identify policy options for each stretch of coast, both the developed and the natural coastline, to reduce the risk to people. This strategic approach looks at coastal erosion and flood risk management over a wide area and over a long time cycle. There are seven SMPs covering our coast from the Thames round to the west Hampshire Coast and it is crucial for Natural England to be actively engaged in their development and consultation to secure the most sustainable outcomes for our natural environment.

An SMP is used to identify coastal defence policies for each section of the coastline within the plan area and there are four policies that can be recommended:

- 1) Hold the line
- 2) Advance the line
- 3) Managed realignment
- 4) No active intervention

The coastal defence policies from Selsey Bill in West Sussex to Hurst Spit in Hampshire are currently being consulted upon as part of the North Solent SMP review. The SMP covers a 386 km long stretch of coastline, setting the coastal policies for the next 100 years. The policies will be determined after examining the impacts of climate change, financial costs, environmental impacts and social aspects of each policy option. Natural England's Coastal and Marine staff have been contributing to the North Solent SMP to ensure that nature conservation objectives are taken into account at each stage of the process.

The North Solent SMP has recently gone out to public consultation and is open to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. If you are interested in sharing your views on the plan, please visit [www.northsolentsmp.co.uk](http://www.northsolentsmp.co.uk).

## Pathfinder Projects Point the Way

Our coastline is always changing and as the later example at Lymington shows, we need to be able to adapt to meet the challenge of rising sea levels. In December 2009, DEFRA announced that they would be funding 15 Pathfinder projects that will explore new ways of adapting to coastal change. Four of these projects are located in the South East and Natural England has a key role in each of them:



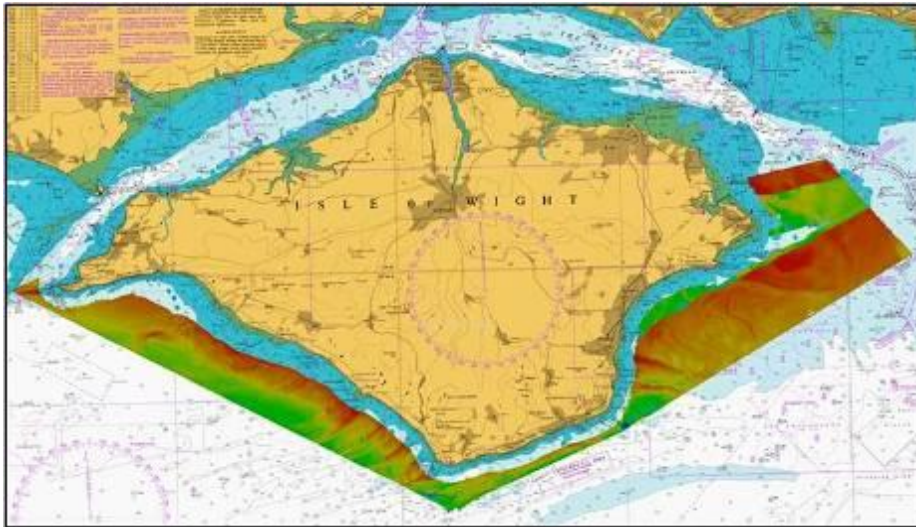
- **Hastings** - working with local authorities and the local fishing fleet to understand and explore the impacts of past, current and future coastal change.
- **Cuckmere** - engaging the local community to explore different adaptation options for the Cuckmere Estuary.
- **Selsey** - working to set up a community partnership project in Selsey to plan and manage for coastal adaptation.
- **Lepe** - develop a coastal adaptation plan for Lepe Country Park to deliver practical solutions to potential problems such as how to ensure continued access to beaches that were used as part of the preparations for the D-Day landings.

The Pathfinder projects will act as good examples to help authorities engage with local communities and plan for future adaptation. SE Coastal and Marine staff will be contributing to each of these Pathfinder projects to ensure that conservation of the natural environment and sustainability is taken into account.

## Echoes from the Deep

Natural England is surveying the waters off the southern coast of the Isle of Wight. It will be surveyed for the first time using a multibeam echo sounder. Analysis of the data will detail the reefs, gullies and boulders that make up this dynamic environment and important marine habitat. This information, together with video and diver records, will be used to determine the different communities that thrive in these tide swept environments, a technique known as habitat mapping.

The waters off South Wight are an internationally recognised marine habitat, and represent a transition zone between the warmer south-western and colder North Sea water bodies. The area is designated as an SAC for its intertidal and subtidal chalk, limestone and boulder reefs. They support a diverse range of marine species from colourful sponges and crustaceans to soft corals which carpet the walls of the numerous deep gullies and surfaces of spectacularly large boulders. Extensive populations of red algae, including species which are rarely found in Britain, also lie amongst encrusting turfs of plant-like animals known as hydroids and moss-like bryozoans. Without this important survey data, few would know about this underwater rain forest.



Our region's Coastal and Marine Staff are working with a number of partners including The Channel Coastal Observatory who are collecting other forms of marine data. This project will help provide Natural England with an updated baseline for our European site, and enable us to plan for more targeted surveys in the future. It will also help to assess the implications of activities and developments within this important site.

## Letting the Tide Back In

For many years, the Lyminster River Reedbeds SSSI has been one of Hampshire's most important reedbed sites. Recently however, the challenge of maintaining this freshwater habitat in a favourable condition in the face of climate change and rising sea levels has become greater.

Natural England, the EA and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have been working together, with the local community through the Lyminster Reedbed Water Level Management Plan (WLMP), to determine the best way to manage this site in the future. The solution: to restore this once tidal stretch of upper estuary back to tidal conditions.



The water flow out of the mouth of the river is currently controlled by a one-way tidal sluice and the plan is to replace this with a controllable sluice that can be left open for longer periods. The project will initially begin with a 30 day pre-trial where the effects upon the reedbeds and the river will be monitored, followed by a 2 year trial phase. During this time it is expected that the saltwater inundation will allow a diverse transition of habitats including saltmarsh, mudflats and reedbeds to develop. Once the trial is over, a decision regarding the management of the sluice and the future of the site will be made. It is crucial that this transition is carefully managed and that local communities are fully engaged in the process.

It is estimated that this project will recreate 21 hectares of new intertidal habitat helping to bring the SSSI into a recovering condition. Crucially, it will begin to restore this important conservation site into a more natural, diverse and ultimately sustainable environment. This is a good example of where our region is actively working with partners and communities to help our environment adapt to climate change.

# A Closer Look at Vegetated Shingle



This regular feature will look at different South East coastal or marine habitats and help explain why they are so important in our region.

Vegetated shingle is listed as a priority habitat in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan and is mainly found in North-West Europe, Japan and New Zealand.



There are around 5800 hectares of vegetated shingle in the UK; over 60% of England's habitat is located in the South East. The country's two largest sites are found in the South East: Dungeness (1742 ha) and Orfordness (412 ha).

Vegetated shingle plants are the colonisers of this extreme environment and therefore provide an important precursor to more stable vegetation. It is also rare in its own right as so much has been lost around our coasts over the years.



Shingle plants are highly specialised and have adapted to live in harsh conditions. Frequent coastal storms, a lack of fresh water and the risk of burial and disturbance make life on shingle too difficult for most plant species.

Sea Kale (commonly known as sea cabbage) uses a system of strong thickened stems and roots to secure itself. If it is separated from the beach, Sea Kale is buoyant and can float to new areas and begin to re-colonise.



Many vegetated shingle plants produce an extremely high number of seeds. A mature Sea Kale can produce around 10,000 seeds each year!

The main threats to vegetated shingle habitats include coastal squeeze, trampling and aggregate removal. SE Coastal and Marine staff are working hard to protect this fragile and scarce habitat through SMPs, coastal defence schemes and recreation management.

## Coming up next time.....



The Spring edition of SeaView will be a fisheries special, we will be looking at how Natural England in the South East have been working with the fishing industry to protect the environment and ensure an ecologically sustainable future.