

Yealm Estuary Environmental Management Plan

An Environmental Action Programme for the Yealm Estuary

2007 - 2012

(Summary Version)

This is a summary version of the plan. A full copy of the plan can be downloaded from the South Devon AONB website www.southdevonaonb.org.uk; or paper copies can be obtained from the AONB office on request (65 pages).

Contact: South Devon AONB Unit, Follaton House, Totnes, TQ9 5NE

Email: info@southdevonaonb.org.uk Tel: 01803 861384

September 2007

Introduction

This plan is published by the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty office on behalf of the Yealm Estuary Management Group.

It sets out an updated programme of actions for 2007 to 2012. It supersedes those contained in the Yealm Estuary Management Plan published in 1998.

It provides a framework within which activities affecting the Yealm estuary environment can be managed. It refers to actions involving a range of different organisations.

The plan fulfils the requirements of the UK Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations (1994) for the Yealm estuary part of the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European marine site, as well as addressing wider estuary management issues.

This plan seeks to:

- Define management actions for the Yealm Estuary for 2007 to 2012;
- Provide a framework through which the requirements of the Habitats Regulations can be delivered for the Yealm estuary;
- Promote opportunities for co-ordinated action to ensure the sustainable management of the estuary and surrounding landscape;
- Protect and enhance those features and distinctive characteristics for which it has protective designations, and those which provide enjoyment and a sense of place to local people and visitors.

The text has been researched and drafted by environmental consultant **Vicky Tanner-Tremaine for the AONB office.**

Layout of the full version

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| Section 1: | Summary |
| Section 2: | Introduction |
| Section 3: | Guiding principles |
| Section 4: | Making it happen |
| Section 5: | How to use the action programme |
| Section 6: | Action themes |
| Section 7: | Bibliography |
| Section 8: | Appendices |
| Section 9: | Technical appendices |

This summary version contains material only from section 6 of the full version

Section 6.1 Management and Co-ordination

Guiding Principles:

To maintain effective, transparent and accountable management arrangements for the Yealm estuary

To contribute to developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the scheme of management for the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European marine site

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

- MC1 Secure commitment to the Management Plan and Management Group from relevant organisations**
 Action MC1a All “relevant” and “competent” authorities to endorse the Management Plan
 Action MC1b Develop and adopt new Terms of Reference and Constitution for the Management Group
- MC2 Co-ordinate actions of relevant authorities through the Yealm Estuary Management Group**
 Action MC2a Estuary Management Group and working group meetings to be held
- MC3 Monitor implementation of the European marine site Management Scheme for the Yealm area, providing annual reports**
 Action MC3a Appropriate organisations to liaise with statutory nature conservation agency on the co-ordination and collation of data in relation to compliance with the Habitats Directive
- MC4 Review the management plan every 5 years in line with European marine site reporting cycle**
 Action MC4a Review and update the Yealm Estuary Management Plan in 5 years
- MC5 Maintain regular liaison with Tamar Estuaries Consultative Group**
 Action MC5a Ensure regular communication and liaison with Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum
- MC6 Seek funding and support to achieve the aspirations set out in this plan**
 Action MC6a Seek opportunities for securing additional funding and support for actions
- MC7 Ensure co-ordination with other management initiatives**
 Action MC7a Increase collaborative working and projects with other management initiatives
- MC8 Influence the plans and projects of other organisations to gain positive benefits for the Yealm catchment**
 Action MC8a Yealm Estuary Management Group member organisations to participate as stakeholders in consultations by other organisations
- MC9 Ensure implications of new or amended UK and EU legislation and government initiatives are understood and accounted for by the relevant authorities**
 Action MC9a Natural England to provide advice to the Yealm Estuary Management Group on the implications of new legislation and initiatives

Section 6.2 Access, Recreation and Tourism

Guiding Principle:

To promote opportunities for quiet recreation which are sensitive to the need to conserve biodiversity and the natural beauty of the estuary and surrounding landscape

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

AR1 Promote awareness of the ferry service

Action AR1a Promote ferry service through advertising and information

AR2 Improve and enhance local access opportunities, with due regard to the environment

Action AR2a Liaise with landowners and Parish Paths Partnerships and Parish Councils to identify opportunities for suitable access

AR3 Ensure continued viability of the seasonal coast path ferry service in the estuary

Action AR3a Maintain financial support for the Yealm coast path ferry service

Actions that could be done only with additional resources:

AR4 Seek opportunities for off-road routes around the estuary

Action AR4a Take up opportunities to secure off-road walking routes as they arise, by agreement with landowners

Action AR4b Work up proposals for completion of the National Cycle Route in the area, subject to satisfactory management of environmental impacts

Section 6.3 Awareness and Communication

Guiding Principles:

To raise the level of awareness, understanding of and respect for the nature conservation importance of the area and empower people to play a part in the protection and enhancement of the estuary and surrounding landscape

To promote and encourage a co-ordinated approach to environmental interpretation around the estuary to maximise effectiveness of the messages

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

AC1 Disseminate information on the work of the Yealm Estuary Management Group to public and partner organisations

Action AC1a Produce annual report style articles and presentations for appropriate local magazines, organisations and forums

AC2 Provide local environmental information points for the estuary

Action AC2a Provide local environmental information and interpretation at appropriate venues

- AC3** **Increase awareness and understanding of the nature conservation and landscape features of importance in the Yealm estuary**
Action AC3a Continue to promote and highlight the special features of the estuary through locally relevant publications
- AC4** **Increase awareness amongst visitors and locals of legislation and byelaws relevant to protecting the estuarine environment**
Action AC4a Promote plain English explanations of relevant legislation and byelaws around the estuary
- AC5** **Increase public understanding of the marine environment and seek to promote considerate behaviour**
Action AC5a Identify relevant good examples of Codes of Conduct and Best Practice (e.g those developed by the UK Marine SACs LIFE Project) for estuary users and managers and promote appropriate ones
- AC6** **Encourage members of the public to report all suspected illegal fishing activity in the estuary**
Action AC6a Publicise the Environment Agency's 24 hr Hotline number
- AC7** **Increase awareness of local woodland habitats and woodland management**
Action AC7a Hold a talk or workshop on woodland management
Actions that could be done only with additional resources:
- AC8** **Encourage estuary users (anglers, sailors, canoeists etc.) to record wildlife**
Action AC8a Provide standard wildlife recording forms to local clubs

Section 6.4 Fisheries Management

Guiding Principle:

To protect and sustain viable, healthy fisheries within the estuary, in particular the Bass Nursery area

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

- FM1** **Reduce illegal fishing operations in the Yealm estuary through continued enforcement actions**
Action FM1a Carry out regular joint enforcement operations
Action FM1b Continue voluntary patrols in the Yealm estuary
- FM2** **Ensure protection of the Bass Nursery Area**
Action FM2a Monitor the nature and extent of illegal fishing of Bass and where necessary identify solutions
Action FM2b Voluntary monitoring of Bass numbers in the Yealm estuary
- FM3** **Ensure all commercial winkle picking activities comply with DSFC Byelaw number 10**
Action FM3a Monitor commercial winkle picking activities in the Yealm estuary
- FM4** **Provide an updated leaflet covering Rod and Line Fisheries Byelaws in the South West**
Action FM4a Review and update the Rod and Line Fisheries Legislation South West Region leaflet

Actions that could be done only with additional resources:**FM5 Increase understanding of the extent and potential implications of crab trapping**

Action FM5a Assess the nature, impact and extent of bait collection methods and areas

FM6 Seek to maintain and increase the salmon population of the Yealm

Action FM6a Initiate projects to maintain and increase the salmon population

FM7 Actively support the debate on “Marine Protected Areas”

Action FM7a Relevant organisations to participate in debate on the options and appropriateness of increased protection of local sea areas (related to Government’s proposed Marine Bill).

Section 6.5 Information Management

Guiding Principle:

To ensure the reliability and accessibility of best available data for decision making

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:**IM1 Ensure management of the Yealm remains compatible with the conservation objectives of the European marine site**

Action IM1a Develop a system to facilitate monitoring and reporting on compliance with the Habitats Regulations

IM2 Co-ordinate a research programme for the European marine site to meet data requirements for estuary management

Action IM2a Develop co-ordinated research programme for the European marine site

IM3 Create an integrated landscape assessment for the estuary corridor to assist decision makers

Action IM3a Use the Landscape Character Assessment of the South Hams and South Devon AONB

Section 6.6 Land Management

Guiding Principle

To support and encourage actions and initiatives to bring land into conservation management and proactive ownership

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:**LM1 Investigate and implement control measures to minimise the sources of diffuse pollution from agriculture within the catchment**

Action LM1a Identify and prioritise potential diffuse pollution sources within the catchment to target land management advice

LM2 Encourage farms in the Yealm catchment to adopt “environmentally friendly” farming practices

Action LM2a Encourage farms in the Yealm catchment to take up advice and actions through the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative and Environment Sensitive Farming

LM3 Support National Trust farms adjacent to the Yealm estuary in applying for the Higher Level Stewardship scheme

Action LM3a Submit applications for Higher Level Stewardship

Section 6.7 Nature Conservation

Guiding Principles

To ensure the nature conservation value of the estuary and surrounding landscape is maintained and enhanced, in particular the European marine site

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

NC1 Assess the condition of habitats within the Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest

Action NC1a Undertake condition assessments of site features for European marine site and Yealm Estuary SSSI

NC2 Relevant authorities to integrate conservation measures into their own projects or appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual plans

Action NC2a Relevant Authorities to integrate conservation measures during reviews of statutory, administrative or contractual plans and work

NC3 Ensure the nationally important area of “eelgrass” (a marine plant in the estuary) is maintained in favourable condition and afforded appropriate protection and management

Action NC3a Monitor extent, distribution and quality of the eelgrass beds

Action NC3b Natural England to advise on physical and human impacts on eelgrass and work with key partners to consider measures if damage is identified.

NC4 Achieve Favourable Conservation Status on National Trust SSSI woodland sites

Action NC4a Use appropriate management measures to ensure woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest reach and maintain “Favourable Conservation” status

NC5 Maintain and enhance the extent and diversity of woodlands surrounding the estuary

Action NC5a Enter Woodland Trust sites surrounding the Yealm into England Woodland Grant Schemes

NC6 Continue the Brookings Down Wood Project

Action NC6a Continue with local community involvement in the management of Brookings Down Wood

Actions that could be done only with additional resources:

NC7 Identify, survey and give conservation management advice for County Wildlife Sites to maintain and enhance the extent and diversity of woodlands surrounding the estuary

Action NC7a Continue to identify and survey potential County Wildlife Sites in the Yealm catchment

NC8 **Ensure birdlife using the upper estuary is protected***Action NC8a Continue to undertake bird counts in the estuary***Section 6.8 Navigation and Moorings**

Guiding Principle**To manage mooring and navigation activities in a sustainable manner which minimises disturbance to the estuary environment****Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:****NM1** **Minimise damage and disturbance to marine habitats and wildlife by managing the number of estuary moorings**

Action NM1a Review existing mooring consents in the Yealm estuary

Action NM1b Develop and adopt a policy for management of moorings, in consultation with stakeholders

NM2 **Agree an estuary wide approach to moorings**

Action NM2a Develop a brief summary position statement explaining the moorings approach for the whole estuary

Section 6.9 Oil Spill Contingency Planning

Guiding Principles**To ensure the reliability and appropriateness of contingency plans for oil spill emergencies taking account of the sensitivity and importance of the Yealm estuary for nature conservation****Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:****OS1** **Ensure relevant partners liaise to review, update and test appropriate plans and response mechanisms**

Action OS1a Undertake ongoing training programme for regular testing of response to pollution incidents

OS2 **Ensure that Emergency Planning Officers remain aware of the sensitivity of the Yealm**

Action OS2a Natural England to update Emergency Planning Officers

OS3 **Ensure relevant sections of “Good Practice Guidelines for Ports and Harbours, operating within or near UK Marine Sites” are in place for the Yealm**

Action OS3a Identify and implement relevant practices

OS4 **Ensure River Yealm Harbour Authority has necessary resources to deal with minor spills**

Action OS4a Maintain necessary equipment to deal with a Tier 1 spill within the estuary

Section 6.10 Planning and Development

Guiding Principle

To ensure the character and quality of the estuary and its designations for nature conservation, natural beauty and heritage are not compromised by inappropriate development

To encourage the adoption and implementation of best practice design for development effecting the estuary

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

PD1 Ensure plans or projects likely to affect the Special Area of Conservation are assessed under the Habitats Regulations

Action PD1a Undertake an “appropriate assessment” under the Habitats Regulations of plans and projects whenever applicable

PD2 Ensure Local Development Framework incorporates measures to take account of the impacts of climate change on estuary foreshore and surrounding habitats

Action PD2a Core policies to take account of climate change impacts (such as ‘coastal squeeze’) on the estuary

PD3 Ensure the proposed estuary National Cycle Network route is subject to suitable environmental assessment

Action PD3a Undertake an assessment of environmental impacts of the proposed cycle path sections along the estuary margins

Actions that could be done only with additional resources:

PD4 Develop a Design Guide to ensure that construction of coast defence (e.g. gabions) and other shoreline structures (slipways, quays and jetties etc.) is carried out in the most environmentally sensitive way possible

Action PD4a Produce a Design Guide for shoreline structures

Section 6.11 Water Quality

Guiding Principle

To improve the consistency of water quality that maintains a healthy estuarine ecosystem and supports sustainable fisheries

Actions that could be achieved within existing resources:

WQ1 Assist with the implementation of any requirements originating from the Review of Consents Project

Action WQ1a Implement requirements resulting from Review of Consents carried out by Environment Agency and Natural England

- WQ2** **Monitor sources of Tributyltin (TBT) in the River Yealm and monitor their impacts and consider methods to control and reduce continued inputs of TBT from direct discharge and floating rafts**
- Action WQ2a Continue monitoring of TBT levels within the estuary and implement appropriate methods to control and reduce continued inputs of TBT in the estuary environment
- WQ3** **Identify and address sewage treatment issues**
- Action WQ3a Identify and rectify connection problems in urban areas upriver
- Action WQ3b Continue to enforce consents and implement improvements at relevant sewage treatment works
- WQ4** **Set up a Local Action Group to meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency Long Term Classification of Shellfish beds**
- Action WQ4a Establish a Local Action Group to develop a collaborative Local Action Plan for the Yealm shellfisheries
- WQ5** **Produce a Catchment Abstraction Management Scheme for the Yealm**
- Action WQ5a Develop a strategy for managing water abstraction in the Yealm catchment
- WQ6** **Ensure River Basin Management Plan adequately addresses Yealm issues, in particular in relation to the European marine site**
- Action WQ6a Consult on the River Basin Management Plan for the Yealm (Water Framework Directive)
- WQ7** **All slipways maintained (cleaned etc.) in an environmentally sensitive manner**
- Action WQ7a Promote use of environmentally sensitive cleaning chemicals
- Actions that could be done only with additional resources:***
- WQ8** **Reduce the discharge of sewage from boats**
- Action WQ8a Continue to promote the voluntary code of conduct for boat owners to use public facilities and pump-out facilities near the Harbour Office
- WQ9** **Reduce the occurrence of insensitive or inappropriate boat maintenance practices in the estuary**
- Action WQ9a Disseminate best practice guidance on environmentally friendly boat maintenance activities (anti-fouling scrapings etc)
- WQ10** **Reduce marine litter in the estuary, and use litter composition data to target litter prevention measures**
- Action WQ10a Continue to support River Yealm and District Association (RYDA) with organising and undertaking annual harbour clean up
- WQ11** **Encourage best practice for maintenance of septic tanks, soakaways and cesspits by owners**
- Action WQ11a Assess occurrence of septic tanks, soakaways and cesspits in the Yealm catchment
- Action WQ11b Scoping study to assess the potential for properties identified with private sewerage systems to join public sewerage system