

EBB & FLOW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HUMBER MANAGEMENT SCHEME

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New research on Humber Estuary's Internationally Important Birds

The Humber Estuary is one of the ten most important estuaries in Europe for birds. Now the Humber Management Scheme has embarked on new research into the effects of recreation on these birds, which are protected through the Special Protection Area (SPA) Designation under the EU Wild Birds Directive.

The Humber is a complex estuary with a rich variety of habitats and species. The estuary is also extremely important for people. Numerous human activities take place on and around the Humber from shipping to recreational activities such as walking. Industrial activities which take place around the estuary are regulated and therefore there is a great deal of information available on the impact of such activities. In contrast, most recreational activities are unregulated and therefore little information is available on the impact of recreation on the Humber Estuary and its internationally protected birds.

Disturbance to birds is a complex issue as it can have a wide range of impacts. This is particularly complex on the Humber Estuary, which is a large system, where a variety of recreational activities take place.

Funded by the Humber Management Scheme, The Crown Estate Marine Stewardship Fund and the UK's largest shooting organisation, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, a preliminary report has been produced by consultants Footprint Ecology. The report addresses the impact of recreation on the estuary's internationally protected birds, by bringing together information on the types of activities that occur on and around the estuary. The report summarises the distribution and status of key bird species and a number of maps have been produced which show current distributions of the bird species. Access infrastructure such as car parks, marinas and slipways has also been mapped.



Information on recreational use was gathered from consultation with local experts and information has been obtained on 37 out of 39 sections of the Humber Estuary. The results show that a variety of recreational activities take place at varying levels. The busiest areas appear to be around large settlements and at particular features such as Spurn Head or Donna Nook.

The report makes provisional recommendations for managing access and proposes future work. Andrew Taylor, Chair of the Humber Estuary Relevant Authorities Group of the Humber Management Scheme said "We want to ensure that people can continue to enjoy the estuary for recreation, but that the internationally important birds can also be protected".

The Humber Management Scheme is now considering the next steps to take. To view the report, go to <http://www.humberems.co.uk/projects/recreation.php>

HUMBER



Management Scheme

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Progress on managed realignment

Realignment is one of the focuses of the 2010 Humber Conference. Here we update you on the development of realignment projects in the Humber Estuary

The artificial creation of intertidal habitats by deliberately flooding formally defended area, known as managed realignment, offers an opportunity to provide new intertidal habitats against a backdrop of declining intertidal habitat. A number of managed realignments have taken place throughout the Humber Estuary in recent years.



Environment Agency

Studies carried out on the Humber Estuary show that valuable intertidal habitat will be lost over the next 100 years as a result of sea level rise. The Environment Agency is managing the impact of sea level rise and the impact coastal management has on intertidal habitats in order to comply with the obligations under by the Habitats Regulations. The Agency's Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy makes provision for meeting all expected 'coastal squeeze' losses that result from maintaining flood defence embankments on their present alignments over the next 50 years.

Managed realignment is an increasingly preferred 'soft engineering' option in flood risk management as it is widely recognized as reducing the long-term costs of flood risk management as well as creating environmental benefits by providing valuable new habitat.

Paull Holme Strays was the first site created on the Humber Estuary creating approximately 80 hectares of new intertidal habitat by re-aligning flood defences on the north side of the Humber Estuary. The result is improved flood protection and new habitat for a range of internationally important species of wading birds and wildfowl. New freshwater habitat will help the local water vole population, whilst improved access has recreational and amenity benefits for the local community.

The Environment Agency will continue to deliver managed realignment within the Humber Estuary over the coming decades in order to meet their obligations with regard to coastal squeeze and the Habitat Regulations.

Associated British Ports (ABP)

ABP has already developed managed realignment sites for a different purpose; as compensation for development schemes – the Hull Riverside Container Terminal and the Immingham Outer Harbour. These are situated at Chowder Ness, Welwick and Doig's Creek (adjacent to the Royal Dock, Grimsby) and provide a mixture of mud flat, salt marsh and grassland.

Chowder Ness foreshore, in Barton-upon-Humber and Welwick foreshore, in East Riding, provide over 60 hectares of brand-new habitat to replace the 22 hectares of habitat lost to new developments at the Ports of Immingham and Hull. ABP spent more than £3.5 million in turning 66 hectares of farmland at the identified sites into the compensation areas, where over the last year or so, the natural movement and patterns of the sea and tides has created mudflat and salt marsh. One very important aspect of this work is that, at both sites, ABP has also constructed flood defences behind the new habitats to ensure local people and farmland receive improved protection from flooding from the sea. In the achievement of this project, ABP has worked with many organisations, including Natural England, the Environment Agency, the RSPB, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and will continue this consultation process in the future, in order to ensure their activities protect and improve this globally important environment.

Delivering managed realignment in partnership

Working in partnership, the Environment Agency, North Lincolnshire Council, Natural England and ABP, developed the Alkborough managed realignment site on the south bank of the Humber Estuary. The land at Alkborough has been reclaimed from the estuary over many years and the project was designed to reverse this trend and allow the land to be re-connected to the estuary. Alkborough, having a total area of 440 hectares is currently the second largest estuary habitat creation scheme in Europe.

Water enters the site through a 20 metre breach in the former defence on approximately 500 tides per year. This regular inundation of the site will create and maintain a large area of open water and intertidal mud. By allowing water to flood the Alkborough site there is expected to be an up to 150mm reduction in extreme water levels over a large area of the upper Humber and the main tidal rivers.

Overall the scheme at Alkborough has cost £10.2 million funded by a combination of Defra Grant aid, contributions from the Regional Development Agency, grants from Heritage Lottery Fund and EU funding via the Interreg programme.



Would you like a copy of the Codes of Conduct?

Last year the Humber Advisory Group updated the Humber Estuary European Marine Site Codes of Conduct. The Codes promote the responsible use of the estuary whilst providing safety advice to ensure both local people and visitors can

continue to enjoy the estuary for recreation. If you would like a copy for yourself, your group or organisation, please contact the Humber Management Scheme at info@humberems.co.uk or 01652 631520.

Humber Management Scheme review

The Humber Management Scheme was officially launched in 2006. Over the next year everyone involved will be undertaking a review of activities which take place in and around Humber Estuary European Marine Site to ensure that the Scheme's management plan and priorities are up to date. Please get in touch if you would like to get involved; the Humber Advisory Group is a voluntary group representing a wide range of people, sectors and interests and has open membership for anyone with expertise or an interest in the estuary.

For further information on the review please visit the website www.humberems.co.uk/projects/review.php

Adoption of the East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Action Plan

The East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (ERYBAP) has recently been adopted by East Riding of Yorkshire Council and partners. The plan, developed by the East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Partnership, outlines the way in which the Council and its partners will prioritise and coordinate action on conserving and enhancing local wildlife and habitats. The ERYBAP highlights the international importance of the Humber Estuary; many of the habitats and species which it supports are UK Biodiversity Action Plan priorities.

A lot of work has gone into producing this document which has been consulted on with local specialists, naturalists and with the public. As a partnership document its success will be down to the participation

and enthusiasm of the people involved. The role of the Biodiversity Partnership is now moving forwards to focus on the development of habitat and species action plans and the delivery of local biodiversity projects.



This year has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations and during October officials from 192 countries and the European Union met in Nagoya, Japan for the 2010 Convention on Biological Diversity. They

will work together to agree how to tackle biodiversity loss, set new targets for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for the next ten years, and develop a vision for 2050.

In 2002 these countries promised to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010 and although there have been many success stories, this has largely failed! As a result of human activity the world is losing biodiversity at an ever-increasing rate. The ERYBAP provides guidance and focus for the Council and partners to deliver the conservation of biodiversity in the East Riding so that we can do our bit towards these bigger goals.

For the latest information please see the East Riding of Yorkshire Council website at: www.eastriding.gov.uk/biodiversity.

The South Humber Gateway

World Class Environment – World Class Economy

The South Humber Gateway (SHG) is 1000 ha of development land on the south bank of the Humber Estuary stretching from the outskirts of Grimsby to the East Halton Skitter. Major investments under way or planned are estimated to be worth almost £2billion and if all goes to plan, upwards of 15,000 new quality jobs will be created over the next 10 years.

While it is recognised that a large proportion of the planned developments on the SHG could contribute positively to the climate change and sustainability agenda through the development of carbon capture, biomass and wind energy, the SHG area also provides important roosting habitat for many of the birds which feed on the estuary's mudflats. A strategic approach is being developed by North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, Natural England, Humber INCA, RSPB, Environment Agency and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust on how a balance can be achieved in a way which is good for both the environment and development.

Information on the ecological requirements of the birds is being used to plan the mitigation for SHG. This has resulted in an understanding that if a series of 'stepping stones' could be established, there would be a safe haven for birds to roost within the developed area which could then link with a further area of roost outside the SHG.

A Delivery Plan has been prepared by the partners, with assistance from Peter Barham Environment Ltd, which identifies all of the actions which are required to ensure mitigation for the birds within the SHG. This will ensure developers are clear on what mitigation they are required to deliver. Significantly, the Delivery Plan works towards a strategic approach across two councils instead of an *ad hoc* site-by-site approach which is better for both conservation and development.

A lot of work underway on the Delivery Plan and everyone is in agreement that the outcome from the SHG will see the development of a new approach to industry – one that is good for the economy and the environment, creating a special place for people and for birds.



South Humber Gateway, courtesy of North Lincolnshire Council

Tidal River Development



The TIDE (Tidal River Development) project is funded through the EU Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme. Programme partners are from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK, with the lead partner being Hamburg Port Authority.

The project is based around the management of four northern European macro-tidal estuaries which are used as shipping channels and which face other additional management issues such as rising sea-level, sediment transport, loss of habitat, and development pressure. The project brings together scientific expertise and management experience from the Elbe, Scheldt, Weser and Humber estuaries.

The focus of the project is the development of a management framework to allow the maintenance and protection of ecological services in such estuaries, whilst at the same time allowing economic services to be delivered, this against a background of a series of external increasing pressures such as sea level rise and climate change.

To achieve these aims, the project will utilise the appropriate natural and social sciences to provide guidance for the understanding and management of critical ecological processes, whilst also providing a 'toolbox' for sustainable economic development within the system.

The project team will therefore need to look at three main topic areas:

- Ecosystem functioning within estuaries, linkages between processes and states and any knowledge gaps;
- Existing stakeholders within the system, how their activities are managed, gaps in the management and the potential for improved integration;

- Existing management measures and tools, best practice and potential future development of a management 'toolbox'.

Ultimately, it is expected that the TIDE project will deliver an integrated management approach to estuaries, covering ecological, economic and societal needs, through the use of both best practice techniques and the development of new approaches where gaps currently exist.

The update of the Humber Management Scheme allows the TIDE partners for the Humber Estuary to gain a valuable perspective on current stakeholder management practices, but also on potential future approaches for their development and increased integration.



The Humber TIDE partners are the Environment Agency and the Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies (IECS) at the University of Hull, with additional expertise from the ports sector and other managers. For further information contact IECS (iecs@hull.ac.uk) or visit the TIDE website www.tide-project.eu

Donna Nook grey seal visitor guidelines

For much of the year, grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) at the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trusts' Donna Nook National Nature Reserve are at sea or hauled out on distant sandbanks. Every November and December, the seals give birth to their pups near the sand dunes: a wildlife spectacle which attracts visitors from across the UK.

The viewing area at the foot of the sand dunes reduces disturbance to the seals and ensures the safety of visitors. From this location the full spectacle can be witnessed from seal pups and interactions between mother and pup to the powerful and brutal fights between the males.

For your own safety and to reduce disturbance to the seals, please follow these guidelines:

- Stay within the viewing area behind the fence.
- Strictly observe all red flag and other bombing range warnings.
- Don't get too close to the seals.
- Never feed or pet the seals.
- No unaccompanied children.
- No dogs.
- Please be considerate when visiting: park only in designated areas.
- If possible, visit during the week. At weekends, the narrow lanes and car park get very congested.

For more information contact the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Headquarters on 01507 526667, email info@lincstrust.co.uk.



Visitors viewing grey seals, Donna Nook
Courtesy of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

If you would like further information about the Humber Management Scheme, please contact; Humber Project Manager, Humber Management Scheme, Waters' Edge Visitors Centre, Maltkiln Road, Barton upon Humber, North Lincolnshire, DN18 5JR

Tel: 01652 631520 E-mail: info@humberems.co.uk Website: www.humberems.co.uk

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