



How will European marine sites be protected?

English Nature must provide information for the Humber Estuary European marine site. This explains why the site has been designated, what the nature conservation 'goals' are and provides information on activities that may cause deterioration or disturbance to the natural habitats or species.

Responsibilities are also placed on authorities and agencies with jurisdiction on or adjacent to European marine sites. These organisations are called relevant authorities. The relevant authorities are encouraged to work closely together to

safeguard the nature conservation interests for which European marine sites have been designated. On many sites around the UK, this has been achieved through the development of a management scheme.

The management scheme enables the relevant authorities to assess the way they manage activities which may impact on the European marine site, ensuring that the goals set out in English Nature's advice are achieved.



Sea defence at Saltend

Humber Management Scheme



On the Humber, the relevant authorities have been developing the Humber Management Scheme since Spring 2001. This scheme will allow them to work towards an integrated approach to the management of the Humber Estuary European marine site. The relevant authorities are regulators, water authorities, harbour and port authorities, local authorities, internal drainage boards and fisheries committees.

The relevant authorities also want to include a wide range of stakeholders in the process of developing their management scheme and so an independent advisory group has been established. Membership consists of representatives from education, industry, recreational groups and non-governmental organisations as well as enthusiastic local people.

What's next?

The relevant authorities and Humber Advisory Group have considered a number of activities taking place on and around the Humber Estuary European marine site and identified certain categories within which these activities can be reviewed.

Key Issues:

- Agriculture
- Fishing
- Flood Defence
- Industry
- Recreation
- Science & Education
- Shipping, Navigation & Transport
- Water & Waste Management

Now, they will consider how these activities affect the habitats and species of the site and determine if any changes in management need to be made.



Bird watching on the Humber

Getting involved

The management scheme is a wonderful opportunity for the owners, managers, regulators, users and stakeholders of the site to work together. The aim is to produce a long-term scheme that will protect the wildlife of the Humber Estuary for us and future generations to use and enjoy.

Please let us know if you have a particular expertise or interest in an activity, habitat or species on the estuary and would like to input into the management scheme.



Port of Goole

If you would like to receive future copies of this newsletter or want further information about the management scheme, please contact: Emma Giles, Humber Project Officer, c/o Grantham, Brundell and Farran, Pillar House, 20 South Parade, Doncaster, DN1 2DP. Tel: 01302 342055 e-mail: heems@lineone.net

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HUMBER MANAGEMENT SCHEME

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Humber Bridge

Introduction

Welcome to the Humber Management Scheme's first six-monthly newsletter. Inside we will explain the reasons the Humber has been recognised as one of the most important estuaries in Europe for wildlife and why areas have been designated as European marine sites. This newsletter will also give you an insight into how the Humber Estuary European marine site will be protected through the development of a management scheme.

How will the European marine site affect you?

The Humber Estuary is a busy commercial waterway with major ports and industrial complexes such as chemical works, oil refineries and power stations along its shores. It houses the largest shipping complex in the UK and is of great importance to the regional and national economy.

Alongside all this economic activity, the Estuary supports an astonishing variety of wildlife and natural habitats. Much of this can be protected without excluding existing human activities. Only where an activity has a damaging effect on the

features of the European marine site will management measures be implemented. These will usually be achieved through voluntary measures, such as codes of conduct.



Broughton Bridge, Cleethorpes



Humber at sunset

What is a European marine site?

Following the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, European countries launched the European Habitats Directive, which aims to protect the amazing biodiversity of Europe's wildlife.

One of the ways in which the UK is realising this aim, is to set up a network of protected areas to safeguard important habitats and species. These areas are called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

There are also Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are designated under the Birds Directive. These are areas that support significant numbers of wild birds and their habitats.

These sites are called European sites. Where they include sea or seashore they are called European marine sites.

Ramsar sites are selected for their representation of a wetland or for supporting important wetland species. The UK government has stated that Ramsar sites should also be treated as European sites.

The Humber Estuary - A Haven for Wildlife

Our marine heritage

The Humber Estuary is full of wildlife despite appearing muddy and lifeless. In fact, it has been proposed as a marine Special Area of Conservation for supporting the important habitats and species described below.



Spurn Point

Estuary - A busy place

The Humber is one of the largest and most complex estuaries in the UK, draining around 20% of the total land surface of England! It encompasses the outflow from the rivers Trent, Ouse and Hull and provides the largest single output of freshwater from Britain into the North Sea.

The Estuary supports an impressive array of habitats, from saltmarsh and samphire beds to subtidal sandbanks and extensive areas of intertidal mudflats and sandflats. Along its shores are sand dunes, reedbeds and important coastal saline lagoons. The Estuary also supports massive populations of birds, over 70 species of fish, a breeding colony of grey seals and rare and threatened invertebrate species.



Humber Estuary

Lamprey - Little suckers!

The endangered river and sea lamprey use the Humber Estuary as a migratory passage to and from their spawning and nursery grounds in the river Derwent and the Ouse system.

The lamprey is one of the most primitive of all vertebrate animals. It differs from all other fish in the British Isles as it has no lower jaw and its mouth is surrounded by a round sucker-like disc.

The UK is one of the strongholds of river and sea lamprey, which although rare and threatened in some European countries and extinct in others, are still fairly widespread in England and other parts of the UK.



Sea Lamprey

Intertidal mudflats and sandflats - Mud, glorious mud!

Thousands of tonnes of rich sediments wash in and out of the Humber Estuary with each tide, creating extensive areas of intertidal mudflats and sandflats.

These flats may seem lifeless, but beneath the surface they support immense populations of marine worms, molluscs and other invertebrates. These form the basis of a food chain which supports the huge flocks of migrating and overwintering waterfowl that visit the Humber during the winter months.

The intertidal flats around Spurn Peninsula support extensive dwarf eelgrass beds. Eelgrass beds are nationally rare and are an important habitat as they provide spawning, nursery and refuge areas for fish. They also help to stabilise sediments and are an important food source for waterfowl such as brent geese.



Wading birds feed on the Humber's extensive mudflats

Wet and wild!

Ramsar sites are designated to prevent further losses of important wetland habitats and species.

Parts of the Humber Estuary have been designated as a Ramsar site for supporting threatened invertebrate species such as the lagoon sand shrimp; a breeding colony of grey seals at Donna Nook and internationally important populations of migratory and overwintering birds.



Grey seals at Donna Nook



Cut-away section of a subtidal sandbank

Subtidal sandbanks - A dynamic environment

The submerged sandbanks of the Humber are highly mobile, constantly changing as the currents mould their size and shape.

Few species can live in this whirlpool of moving sand, so the communities are dominated by a few hardy species such as worms and shrimp-like animals.

The subtidal zone also provides an important breeding, spawning and nursery area for fish and invertebrates and is a migratory corridor for Atlantic salmon and sea trout.

Coastal saline lagoons - Curious creatures!

Saline lagoons are a rare and threatened habitat, which support a rich variety of unusual and unique wildlife.

The saline lagoons on the Humber Estuary and at Easington on the Holderness Coast, support rare and uncommon lagoon specialist species including the starlet sea anemone, spiral tasselweed, and the tentacled lagoon worm.

Humberston Fitties supports several of these lagoon specialist species and has been described as the third most important lagoon in Britain.

Saline lagoons also provide sheltered feeding, roosting and nesting sites for many uncommon waders and wildfowl including the little tern and avocet.



Avocet breed on the Humber's saline lagoons



Sanderling roost at Cleethorpes

A wealth of birds

The Humber is one of the 10 most important estuaries in Europe for birds, supporting over 175,000 waterfowl in winter! In summer it supports nationally important breeding populations of several scarce and declining species including the marsh harrier and little tern.

The Humber also provides vital feeding and roosting sites for migratory waterfowl species and rare and threatened birds such as bittern.

Parts of the Humber Estuary have been designated as a Special Protection Area for supporting these internationally important numbers of birds.



Large flocks of Golden Plover feed on the estuary



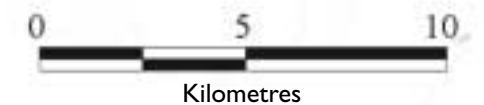
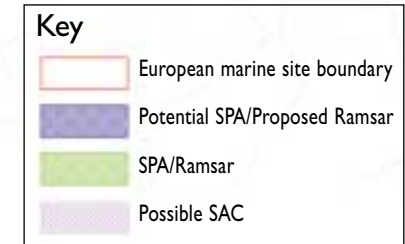
Saltmarsh in flower

Saltmarsh - A mosaic of plant life

The saltmarshes on the Humber support a wide range of wildlife, including several nationally scarce plants such as golden samphire.

Saltmarsh vegetation develops in a series of characteristic zones. Pioneer saltmarsh plants grow on the lower shore where they are frequently flooded by the tide. They are able to withstand the salty conditions by storing fresh water in their leaves. Behind the pioneer saltmarsh, where the tide floods less frequently and the sediment is more stable, Atlantic salt meadows develop.

The saltmarshes on the Humber also provide a valuable habitat for many invertebrate species and birds.



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