

Estuary Partnerships Review

Summary of Consultation Responses

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August 2008

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Introduction

The document “Devon Estuary Partnerships – A Review of Funding and Future Options” was produced by the Devon Maritime Forum and sent out for consultation in March 2008. It was sent to all organisations and partnerships with an interest in the management and status of the estuaries of Devon. This Review was commissioned by the Steering Group of the Devon Maritime Forum in response to increasingly uncertain funding arrangements for some of the estuary partnerships in the county.

The paper contained an assessment of the background of estuary partnerships in general, as well as a more in-depth look at the partnerships in Devon. It presented a number of different potential funding ‘scenarios’ as well as a critique of events that has led to the current funding impasse. It was written at a time of change for coastal management in the UK and this change needs to be considered during any future negotiations about funding agreements.

Defra have also been concerned about the funding of coastal (estuary) partnerships around the country for some time and commissioned a research paper titled “Financial Benefits of Working in Partnership at the Coast.” The research was undertaken by the Entec consultancy, and was aimed at identifying the cost benefits accrued by private-sector funders of coastal partnerships around the UK. A further element to the study was a more specific analysis of the benefits to public sector organisations “Profiting From Partnership – Putting a Price on Member Benefits”, which explores both hard (cash) and soft (social capital) benefits to partnership working on the coast.

Other changing paradigms that need to be considered are the forthcoming legislative requirements of the Marine Bill and the evolving role for coastal partnerships within this, as well as the needs for delivering the Water Framework Directive. European Policy Guidelines on coastal management, Local Area Agreements, the Boundary Committee Review and the Sub-National Review of Local Government will all have an impact on the format, function and future of coastal partnerships in Devon.

These issues, as well as those identified through this Review, will need to be explored in detail by all concerned, and consensus sought through attendance at an ‘**Estuary Partnerships Summit**’, which is being recommended by the Devon Maritime Forum as the most effective way of making progress and taking action for the future. It is proposed that the summit be hosted and funded by the Devon Maritime Forum, and invitations to this event will be sent out directly to the relevant bodies.

This summary will treat different elements of the consultation in turn. Full, detailed consultation responses can be found in the appendices at the back of the paper.

General Information

Consultation Responses:

The consultation took place over two stages. The responses from these two stages are combined here for ease of dissemination. There were **13** responses to the consultation in total. This included one combined response from the Devon Area Estuary Officers Group. Some estuary partnerships also submitted their own individual responses.

General Comments:

The consultation process has acted as a useful point for discussion but needs to point to a more definitive course of action. This can only be arrived at through the active involvement of all concerned in a consensus-building process. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) remains an essential part of the management of our coasts; estuary partnerships are the key local delivery and driver mechanisms for this integration. Recognition for the role of ICZM in the form of statutory duties to comply with this process would strengthen the position of estuary partnerships. Co-ordination of ICZM and estuary partnerships across the region may be beneficial in the long-term and would receive general support from the partnerships themselves.

There is general recognition for the need to engage more fully with the Local Area Agreement process, and to register more coastal issues with Strategic Partnerships and the ensuing Sustainable Community Strategy documents. This is seen as a key area for negotiating Service Level Agreements and sources of funding/statutory remits in the future. Estuary partnerships are also encouraged to engage with the Local Development Framework planning process, and one partnership (Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum –TECF) has demonstrated innovation and best practice in this area.

Estuary Officers in Devon are keen to have a more pro-active and closer working relationship with each other, with clear meeting agendas and focused discussion. This regional-level linking would help to access additional funding-sources, as well as help to link national policy initiatives to local management and delivery. Regional-level co-ordination would facilitate joint lobbying, collaborative action and a greater sphere of influence. This strategic outlook would need to reflect natural catchment areas and not be artificially constrained by county and administrative boundaries. The Estuary Officers also recognise that key national and regional bodies might find it easier to engage with the partnerships if they had a regional-level, rather than local-level, interface.

Current funders would welcome more stream-lining of effort and economies of scale where they are appropriate, and require a process that ensures a closer alignment between service need and delivery. There may be added value in the partnerships operating as a coherent network for certain priorities. Resources could be shared to provide common administration and support or to deliver common functions such as awareness-raising activities or co-ordinated action of tide-born litter. This stream-lining would only be appropriate where services could be maintained at a satisfactory level.

This is slightly at odds with the need for partnerships to remain local in nature and to reflect the aspirations of the communities they serve. This dilemma needs to be resolved.

Consultation Question Responses

1. **What do you see as being the key roles for estuary partnerships in the future?**
 - Focus on co-ordination and facilitation to secure an integrated and joined-up approach to sustainable management of an estuary and the coast
 - Developing an overall vision for the coasts and estuaries of Devon
 - Advocacy & influencing
 - Horizon-scanning
 - Community engagement
 - Highlighting local impacts and issues
 - Flow of information between partner organisations
 - Creation of shared understanding
 - Providing a locally applicable and relevant mechanism to deliver sustainable integrated management
 - To deliver a sustainably managed estuary and coast, ensuring resources are secured for the future
 - A critical role in delivering key emerging themes such as the Marine Bill, WFD, Marine Protected Areas, marine spatial planning

2. **What role/outputs from the estuary partnerships would your organisation be able to support financially in the future?**
 - Compliance with nature conservation and habitat directives
 - Funding may become restricted to priority sites (protected sites) to meet favourable condition targets
 - Natural England would like to commit to long-term funding of partnerships and is currently looking for ways to do this
 - At present NE can only fund certain aspects of estuary partnerships in the short-term
 - Work to deliver Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets
 - Activities to deliver aspects of AONB management plan objectives
 - Support for delivering Catchment Sensitive Farming
 - Environmental Stewardship
 - Increasing people's understanding and access to the countryside
 - Engaging in Shoreline Management Plans
 - Securing managed re-alignment
 - Adaptability to climate change
 - The Environment Agency states that if there are opportunities for mutually beneficial work under topic areas then they might be able to fund certain projects

3. **What changes would you like to see estuary partnerships put in place to meet your needs?**
 - To be on a secure financial footing
 - To be more aware of 'bigger-picture' policy and strategic issues in order to help plan for the future
 - Maximising opportunities for the local area
 - Joint working with other estuaries
 - Wider linked benefits appreciated by funders
 - Working together to define key priorities
 - Obtaining fully integrated coastal management
 - Providing information and advice
 - A better understanding of our role (EA) and the pressures they face
 - Reflection in the management of the partnerships for constant reflection and review of processes and outputs

4. Which are your 3 preferred funding options from the scenarios presented?

It should be noted that not all responses to the consultation indicated a preference for this question. Only 3 consultees indicated more than one level of preference

Scenario	Preference 1	Preference 2	Preference 3
1. Business			
2. Tiered levels of funding	2		1
3. Harbour Authorities			
4. Withdrawal of funding			
5. Officer within AONB	4	1	
6. Charitable Status		1	
7. Status Quo			
8. Voluntary Partnerships			
9. New sources of Core Funding	2	1	

5. What support would you be prepared to give a process whereby estuary partnerships work together in defining key priorities for the coast?

- The Devon Estuaries Officer Group could be re-formatted to become a more effective forum at the sub-regional or regional scale
- Include Partnership Chairs alongside those aimed at Officer collaboration
- NE would welcome a process whereby partnerships work collectively to define key priorities for action on the coast
- EA can give general support but cannot be specific
- Whilst issues at the coast need to greater emphasis, there is a need to ensure a link with the inland hinterland
- Would be happy to work with other estuary partnerships
- Would need to approve any new work streams through the relevant steering groups of each partnership

6. How do you think we can establish a value for the ‘soft’ benefits of estuary partnerships as defined by the paper?

- What price is there on conflict resolution?
- Maybe attribute a value to engagement work by estimating cost of procuring similar work as independent contacts for example the Entec study commissioned by Defra – only applicable to distinct and larger scale work
- Difficult for integrated processes over a long period of time
- Quantification of these aspects could be achieved by assessing participation of the members of the partnerships and the achievements of the partnerships
- Contact a university to carry out the study
- Wider membership should be able to explain some of the benefits
- Stakeholders themselves need to identify the benefits of estuary partnerships linked back to SMART targets
- Might be possible if there was a requirement to undertake stakeholder participation

7. What benefits would your organisation see in estuary partnerships developing a closer, more formal working relationship with each other, as facilitated by a sub-regional body?

- Sub-regional or regional co-ordination might provide a mechanism for individual partnerships to jointly obtain access to regional, national or European level funding
- Influencing and lobbying position could be stronger
- Enable a system of joint responses to national consultation processes, without the replication of each partnership but still enabling each partnership to respond with comments specific to their own local experience
- A clear and consistent route for two-way communication
- A consistent approach to dealing with designated sites
- Consistency in dealing with common issues that affect a variety of estuaries for which there is no clear path/guidelines
- Working together may generate economies of scale and effort, as well as generate new ways of working

- Such a function must not divert funding away from the front line
- Such a structure does not detract from the principle of subsidiarity
- Could be a useful role in pushing information up to the next tier of decision making
- Such a body does not need many resources - simply could involve Chairs of all the partnerships getting together twice a year

8. What economies of scale do you think estuary partnerships can achieve by working together?

- Production of templates for common issues such as Codes of Conduct, local Bylaws, LDD Core Strategy
- Buying outside services such as contractors to do a series of jobs in a co-ordinated way e.g. habitat maps
- Service Level Agreements negotiated with common funding agencies (e.g.DCC)
- Horizon scanning
- A louder voice for the estuaries of Devon
- An integrated approach to assessing impacts and implications of new regional issues
- Single point of contact for two-way information
- Clearer recognition of common aspirations of other organisations
- Knowledge sharing

9. What are the three key priorities for action on the coast, according to your organisation's remit?

- Developing and maintaining a robust locally derived and accountable system for coastal integration
- Sustainable development of the societal, environmental and economic resource offered by the area's estuaries and coastline
- Ensuring local estuarine and coastal issues are properly included in the formation of Local Area Agreements and regional policies
- Promoting the need to accept change and coastal evolution
- Working in partnership on long-term and sustainable development solutions to biodiversity, landscape, access, sense of place, recreation
- Maximise the contribution of a network of coastal protected areas provide for people and the natural environment
- Strategic management of flood and coastal erosion risk
- Coastal corridor initiative
- Adapting to longer-term climate change
- Safeguarding bathing waters/water quality
- Delivery of coastal planning
- Delivery of dredging protocols
- Investigation of the Marine Protected Areas outlined for one site

10. Any further comments, insights suggestions or overviews to be noted?

- Managing the estuarine environment can be broken down in to a series of projects with measurable objectives whether product or service related. Where these are shared economies of scale can be gained
- Estuary Management Plans need closer management and more robust review. Delivery contracts should be developed with appropriate agencies who are then held accountable
- The environment of change in coastal management will need careful consideration – such as the MMO, Marine Spatial Planning, tourism, restructuring of agencies
- A commitment to the maintenance of minimum levels of funding is required in the short-term
- Agendas between funders and service providers need to be more compatible
- Partnership delivery of actions can work well
- There needs to be clear linking of ‘soft’ benefits to hard, tangible outputs, and align these with funding organisation priorities
- Differing agendas between funding organisations can lead to inertia
- Action plans need to reflect strongly the core priorities of funding bodies
- The Boundary Committee Review will provide an opportunity to re-visit the provisions for estuary partnerships across the county
- When partnerships are linked together they are stronger in times of hardship (e.g. AONBs)
- NERC Act duty of regard may help case for ongoing support. If estuary management is wrapped up in the AONB plans then there may also be more hooks for securing funding
- Independent character of estuary partnerships needs to be retained
- Tourism and business sectors need better engagement
- Financial benefits of a functioning marine ecosystem need understanding
- The Taw Torridge Estuary Forum (TTEF) requires funding in order to employ a secretarial assistant at least
- Taw Torridge is of suitable significance to merit a new Estuary Management Plan along agreed aims
- Links with Shoreline Management Plans and WFD need to be clear
- Harbour Authorities should be concentrating on navigation and not taking on any further roles
- Current partnerships that are working must not be undermined by new structures
- Solution may require a combination of different scenarios presented

Conclusion

The changing shape of coastal management in Devon will become clearer over the next two years or so. Within this time, the Marine Bill – and associated roles of the Marine Management Organisation - the Boundary Committee Review, the Sub-National Review, the NERC Act, the Water Framework Directive and other initiatives such as Marine Protected Areas and Marine Spatial Planning will all be more advanced. It will be very difficult to obtain commitments from core funders during this time of change. Coastal issues could also have greater prominence in Local Area Agreements and Sustainable Community Strategies, as well as Local Development Frameworks.

Therefore, short-term interim funding packages may be required, derived through negotiation and discussion at local, regional and national levels if necessary, if estuary partnerships are to remain in a position to capitalise on these new developments as they occur. The Devon Maritime Forum feels that these negotiations need to consider the impacts the estuary partnerships can have when operating in optimum conditions; estuary partnerships in their broadest sense (Officers and funders together) are actually in a position to drive agendas, rather than respond to them.

In the first instance, a 'summit' is recommended in order to address the immediate issues facing all partnerships, and for both funders and Officers to gain consensus on a number of issues. It is hoped that a summit would contribute greatly to the 'direction-finding' so urgently required in these times of change, and that it could re-invigorate the commitment to partnerships working that exists within the county.

To this end, the Devon Maritime Forum is inviting representatives from each partnership, as well as key personnel in national strategic bodies (NE, EA, Government Office SW, Defra, SWRDA) to discuss their own positions, as well as those of the Partnership Officers and the communities they represent in order to arrive at decisions for the future.

The Devon Maritime Forum hopes that stronger, more influential, closer partnership working on the coast is the result of this consultation process. Partnerships have the potential to be the strongest institutions we have for driving through change, particularly when times are hard. Taking a long-term view of coastal management is now essential and needs to form the cornerstone of negotiations, balanced by a greater synergy between service need and delivery in the short term.

Appendix i

Detailed Consultation Responses

Natural England

Thank you for consulting Natural England about the above report Devon Maritime Forum produced. Natural England welcomes the review and considers it an important document especially in generating discussions about the future of estuary partnerships, not only in Devon but elsewhere around the country. Natural England also welcomes Devon County Council's initiative in contracting the study and congratulates the Maritime Forum Co-ordinator in carrying out such a comprehensive piece of work.

NE recognises estuaries as being of particular importance to Devon, we have more estuaries than any where else in the country (except Essex). Partnerships provide a potentially vital means of managing many of these estuaries and reflect the collective needs of stakeholders, as such making them key deliverers or facilitators in their management, however with so many of them funding has been difficult to secure.

Below are the combined responses from different members of staff in Natural England

1. What do you see being the key roles for estuary partnerships the future?

- A continuing focus on **coordination & facilitation to secure an integrated & joined up approach to sustainable management of an estuary & the coast**. This includes working to deliver sustainable development solutions where development is proposed. Facilitated by providing the hub & impetus to bring an appropriate range of partners & representatives together (including local authorities, user groups/organisations, regulators, industry, business reps, e.g. tourism, special interest groups such as WTs, land owners, community reps & so on), to develop & agree on an overall vision for the estuary supported by a management plan which will act as the framework & driver to work towards & for that vision. Implementation of actions, whether management activities, education/awareness raising activities & so on, will be useful secondary roles dependant on capacity, but limited dedicated staff resources means that delivering management plan objectives has mainly to be done by & through others, including via the Partnership members.
- **Advocacy** (at a local level predominantly - see comments about the proposed sub-regional organisation later) to ensure estuarine issues & needs are understood by those having an impact on the estuary and/or the ability to help secure appropriate management, & **Influencing** to ensure policies, strategies, activities are developed & implemented in ways that further the Estuary Partnership's aspirations.
- **'Horizon scanning'** - i.e. being aware of not just current but also future issues and changes that might impact on the estuary & ensuring the opportunities and constraints these may bring are understood and built into the strategic approach to its management.
- Seeking **mechanisms for continuity & security** of management - inc. ensuring sustainability of the Partnership itself - which means being innovative, adaptable & flexible, and being aware of and utilising funding potential sources.
- **Community engagement** & representation is critical. This helps prove the need and effectiveness of partnerships to authorities and can also provide a valuable voluntary resource.
- **Highlighting local impacts and issues** needing resolution to relevant authorities i.e. acting as 'eyes on the ground'.

2. What role/outputs from estuary partnerships would your organisation be able to support financially in the future?

Natural England would like to be able to commit to long-term core funding of estuary partnerships and is currently seeking different ways of funding estuary partnerships, since the English Nature 'Estuaries Initiative' has run its course. However, the current financial climate limits Natural England (NE) to funding only certain aspects of estuary partnership work on a year by year basis. These are, on the whole, restricted to priority sites i.e. protected or designated sites where the partnership will be involved in e.g. activities to meet SSSI favourable condition targets, management and monitoring of protected sites especially Natura 2000/European Marine Sites (EMSs).

Other aspects of partnership work that could be funded by NE would relate to biodiversity, access and landscape and could include: helping deliver BAP targets; where in an AONB, activities to help deliver the AONB Management Plan objectives; support in delivering Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) & Environmental Stewardship (ES); engagement in coastal access implementation if appropriate; increasing peoples understanding of & access to the natural environment; engaging in Shoreline Management Plans (SMP2) as appropriate; helping secure managed realignment/habitat creation opportunities; adaptability to climate change impacts etc.

3. What changes would you like to see estuary partnerships put in place to meet your needs?

NE would like to see estuary partnerships on a more secure financial footing to facilitate

management of these important sites. In hand with this there is a need to be more aware of the 'bigger picture' & strategic policies and issues in order to help plan for the future, engaging with and gaining support from the right people to maximise opportunities for the local area. As is being proposed, more joint working with other estuaries would be hugely beneficial. Examples from other Partnerships such as the SW AONBs see them securing funding & working on joint projects, with those wider & linked benefits being appreciated by funders. The proposal in question 5 of working together to define key priorities for action on the coast is to be welcomed. This may need to include other partnerships or organisations who might not be represented on the individual estuary partnerships to obtain fully integrated results. NE should certainly be a partner in these discussions, providing information & advice.

4. Which are your 3 preferred funding options from the scenarios presented? – please indicate these in order of preference

The AONB nesting idea is interesting, South Devon AONB are effectively trialling option 5 and it will be interesting to see what impacts/effects are. NE would like to see the partnership approach to managing estuaries maintained which excludes scenario 3. Scenarios 7 & 8 seem unsustainable in the long-term and are therefore not preferred options. Option 9 is something to be hoped for but maybe unrealistic. NE therefore prefers option 5, followed by 9.

5. What support would you prepared to give to a process whereby estuary partnerships together in defining key priorities for action on the coast?

NE would welcome a process where partnerships work collectively in defining key priorities for action on the coast. If sufficient notice was given to NE i.e. before the beginning of the financial year, project costs can be included in the budget for the following financial year (should a bid to the national office be successful). Success would depend on costs and actions being considered. However, as per above NE's current financial climate is unpredictable and should be treated as such.

6. How do you think we can establish a value for the 'soft' benefits of estuary partnerships defined by the paper?

As mentioned in the paper these benefits whilst of great value in a variety of ways are nebulous. In more solid but perhaps less accurate terms quantification of these aspects could be achieved by assessing participation of the members of the partnership and the achievements of the partnership (which in some ways reflects how effective these 'soft' benefits have been). It might be worth contacting a university to carry out a study into this aspect of partnerships.

7. What benefits would your organisation see in estuary partnerships developing a closer, more formal working relationship with each other, as facilitated by a sub-regional body?

One of the advantages would be a clear and consistent route for 2 way communications. A consistency of approach to dealing with designated sites and an understanding of responsibilities and duties of competent authorities as well as a consistency in dealing with common issues that affect a variety of estuaries for which there is no clear path/guidelines. See 8 for advantages relating to economies of scale.

When considering the sub-regional body proposed, a member of staff also suggested that it might be helpful to consider if this should in fact be a regional approach. An example of successful regional working is the South West Protected Landscapes Forum which brings together all of the regional AONB Partnerships & the two National Parks. Dave Dixon, the SWPLF coordinator might be a useful contact for the DMF co-ordinator to speak to. The coordinating role of the forum has for example given Protected Landscapes & their remit a much stronger voice in regional & subregional policy issues, raised the profile of PLs to all sorts of audiences, opened the door to new relationships with previously difficult to engage organisations, facilitated joint training & networking, ensured all PLs are aware of relevant national & regional policy issues, secured funding for regional & sub regional projects & research, & it provides an important mechanism for NE engagement on region wide issues & the opportunity to get messages/information out to all PLs effectively & consistently. It also provides a mechanism for organisations to ensure a consistent approach to their input & support across a wider area. The Devon AONBs (5) do additionally still meet & work together on more locally relevant issues.

This may be too much for this review to consider but in light of the recent news that Coastal Groups will be reconfigured into just 2 groups in the SW, it might be seen that national/regional agencies may be more likely to support integrated working at or through the regional or larger sub-regional level.

8. What economies of scale do you think estuary partnerships can achieve by working together?

This would achieve an integrated approach to assessing impacts and implications of new regional issues, especially in regards to 'horizon scanning' which would not need to be replicated by each partnership saving staff time and ensure consistency in response to issues and opportunities. Common issues faced locally could be addressed on a county/regional or even national basis in appropriate for a with a louder 'voice' so as to be heard.

9. What are the three key priorities for action on the coast, according to your organisation's remit?

Generic NE coastal priorities taken from our developing national policy:

- Promoting the need to **accept change** & coastal evolution. Being the location that will see climate change impacts most immediately & intensely, working in partnership on **long-term & sustainable management and development solutions** that allow the natural environment to adapt in ways that will maximise biodiversity, landscape, access & recreation benefits, maintaining environmental diversity & a 'sense of place'.
- Maximise the contribution and associated opportunities that the network of **coastal protected areas** (biodiversity & landscape designations) provide for people & the natural environment.
- **Strategic management of flood & coastal erosion risk** working with coastal physical processes, recognising the **value of coastal habitats** as natural coastal defences, promoting wider use of soft engineering techniques, and creating coasts & estuaries that are more resilient to future change.
- Securing environmental benefits and opportunities within the proposed coastal corridor of the **coastal access initiative**.

10. Any further comments, insights, suggestions or overviews you wish to be noted?

- The South Devon example (only just implemented) of the estuary officer being integrated into the AONB team may prove helpful in that via the CRoW Act, the local authorities have statutory duties, both to produce an AONB management plan, & the duty to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation in carrying out their functions. Therefore we have found that when LAs are assessing their support of Partnerships in times of financial constraints, they will consider their support of the AONB team & Partnership more favourably than some others linked to this statutory duty. NERC Act 'duty of regard' may also help case for ongoing support. If the estuary management objectives are wrapped up in the AONB management plan, there are also more hooks for securing funding.
- There will also be cost savings & efficiencies from sitting within a larger team, AONB or otherwise. It will also potentially support a more integrated & beneficial way of working. A downside can be that if that team is located within a local authority or a main funder for example, there may be a perception by other partners that the host authority/organisation has undue influence on the Partnership & Estuary officer & the 'independent' character of the partnership is compromised. It may also take the officer physically away from the estuary & reduce visibility of the estuary project.
- Again as in S Devon & also TECF, innovative examples of sourcing funding via visitor/user payback & development 106 agreements respectively. RYA are obviously doing some good environmental/recreation impact awareness raising amongst members - organisations like this may be useful partners if not already engaged/ potential sources of fund raising.
- In Devon & indeed whole of SW where tourism industry is fundamental to the economy, both businesses & visitors are potential sources of support. This area could be developed through raising the awareness of users of the marine environment to such an extent that, once the services the marine environment provides are understood, they would be willing to contribute financially to the partnership to effectively manage estuaries. Indeed, this would be the ideal scenario but it is likely that there is a lot of lobbying and education needed before businesses will accept this. However, case studies for this exist from Australia and other areas of the world.
- A (sub) regional coordinating organisation could do regional fund raising and also support local Partnerships with ideas & mechanisms for local efforts

Environment Agency

1. Key roles for estuary partnerships - flow of information down and up to other organisations/structures; helping to co-ordinate actions (e.g could help us achieve our coastal aims: manage flood risk, adapt to climate change, protect and enhance bathing water quality, improve or protect water quality)
2. Our budget is precarious so we cannot specify details. If there are opportunities for mutually beneficial work under the topic areas described above then we may be able to help fund projects.
3. Better understanding of our role/pressures we face.
4. My preferred options are:
 - a) Dedicated officer through AONB's. Early days but the South Devon model "feels right" to me.
 - b) Charitable status
 - c) Tiered funding.
- 5) We would support it and although the issues at the coast need greater emphasis (particularly those related to sea-scapes and below the surface) must not disengage from the link with the inland hinterland.
- 6) Not sure to be honest.
- 7) Great benefits: working together may generate economies of scale/effort and create new ways of working.
- 8) Single point of contact for both in and out information.
- 9) Dealing with flood risk today/tomorrow; adapting to longer-term climate change (flood risk and coastal erosion and our precious coastal habitats); safeguarding our bathing waters/water quality.
 - 10) More links perhaps to be made with Shoreline Management Plans and with Waterframework Directive.

The Environment Agency is currently undergoing a fundamental internal reorganisation as part of commitment to be more efficient in the way it uses its resources and deals with its customers. This process is being driven, to some degree, by the fact that central government has capped the Agency's Grant in Aid (GIA) allocation. With no annual increases, The Agency is having to absorb the cost of inflation within its budgets. Effectively, this means an annual decrease in these budgets.

At the same time, because of budget shortfalls elsewhere in DEFRA (the EA receives its GIA via DEFRA), the EA has had to return money to DEFRA to support other elements of this ministry. Accordingly the EA has had to review its commitment to non statutory work, withdrawing from a number of partnership projects to ensure that statutory work is properly supported. For these reasons, the EA has withdrawn from the Estuary Partnerships.

There are undoubted benefits for organisations involved in EPs, a high public profile being one. Conversely, there will be damage to the public image of the Agency as a result of its withdrawal from the EPs. Additionally, it is recognised within the EA that there are benefits to be gained from working together with other stakeholders and that teaching, advising and disseminating information is a cost-effective way of protecting the environment. Withdrawing to a purely statutory role generally precludes this partnership approach. However, these disbenefits are an expected but unfortunate consequence of the difficult decisions that have had to be made within the EA as a result of budget reductions.

The situation with the EA will change again in the New Year as the Water Framework Directive is due to begin being effectively translated and implemented across the country. This guiding EU legislation may well require similar actions and place statutory requirements and obligations on the Relevant Authorities without being necessarily accompanied by more money, putting even more pressure on existing, shrinking budgets. Following a course of action that has been shown to save money (partnership working) would in this case seem to make fiscal sense for an organisation with increasing responsibilities but no attendant increase in available funds. Building on the existing EPs would represent a good use of an initial investment and provide a sound, stable platform for the inevitable partnership working that will be required to deliver on this new piece of legislation.

Devon County Council

Summary

The County Council believes that:

- the concept of partnership delivery of actions on estuaries as part of its greener Devon aspiration can work well;
- co-ordination, strategic allocation of funding and collaborative working would give greater efficiency in service delivery;
- estuary partnerships and core funding organisations must make their agendas more compatible;
- charitable and voluntary partnership status and 'embedded' officers within AONBs all have important but limited roles to play and harbour authorities are key supporting partners.
- the LAA process should be investigated to see if it can provide funding and
- key organisations must meet to agree the required functions and funding of estuary partnerships at a County-wide scale.

Background

Devon County Council has been at the heart of estuary partnerships in the County and in neighbouring areas for over 15 years. The Council has supported partnerships on all of the larger estuaries and more recently on all south Devon estuaries. It has led the partnership on the Exe since its beginnings in 1993, providing employment and line management; it provided employment for the former Taw Torridge Estuary Officer and supports financially partnerships on the Tamar and Teign and formerly on the Dart. Following successive years of temporary funding for partnerships and the dissolution of the Dart Estuary Environmental Management (DEEM) partnership in 2007 concern grew that the current basis of funding was unsatisfactory. The County Council, as a core member of the Devon Maritime Forum, asked that an independent review was undertaken to look again at existing arrangements and to identify new opportunities.

Introduction

Devon County Council has long recognised that its estuaries are very important from the perspectives of environment, both natural and historic, economy, transportation, recreation and culture. By their nature they bring together a number of activities, all taking place in an environment that is biologically diverse; is often the location of archaeological interest and have great landscape value. Estuaries attract many people, who use them for recreation and who find them inviting places to live next to. They provide unique locations for certain maritime industries such as boat building and often incorporate working ports. The Tamar, Salcombe-Kingsbridge and Exe estuaries have recognition for their biodiversity and the Taw Torridge Estuary is part of the North Devon Biosphere Reserve. The complex nature of, often competing, activities on estuaries have resulted in the creation of a number of broad based partnerships that follow the principles of 'Integrated coastal Zone Management.' The support given by the County Council to estuary partnerships is recognition of its commitment to them. However, the transient nature of the funding of these partnerships, often renewed on an annual basis has given rise to instability within the partnerships and uncertainty as to their future. The review undertaken by the Devon Maritime Forum is seen as a new and positive step in resolving this uncertainty and the remainder of this report will examine the benefits of coastal partnerships on the various scenarios that have been put forward in the Forum's review and suggest a way forward for engagement of key partners.

Hidden Benefits and Challenges

Given the range of interest and responsibilities that local authorities (County, Unitary, District and Town/Parish) have there is a clear opportunity for the delivery of these to be enhanced by partnership working. The County Council's particular interests are based around an overall aspiration of making Devon England's greenest county. To achieve this, the County Council's priorities include 'improving Devon's environment, celebrating Devon's culture and strengthening Devon's economy.' The County Council has a duty to provide a community lead but also recognises the advantage of co-working with other organisations that support these priorities. Estuary partnerships can provide the vehicle for activity in these areas of interest. The 'hidden benefits' listed on page 24 of the Forum's review document are all recognised by the County Council. The tangible value of partnerships to the County Council however, is demonstrated when these potential benefits are linked to the delivery of the County Council's priorities and can be demonstrated as such. The County Council in turn would offer financial and political support. This issue is picked up well in the 'Summary of Challenges' section of the Review on page 25.

There is clearly a need to improve mechanisms for ensuring that the priorities of core funding organisations, such as the County Council, and the work undertaken by partnership officers is harmonised. The differing agendas of local authorities can often lead to inertia being built into delivery systems.

Future Scenarios for Estuary Partnerships

The conclusion within the Review that there is a need for more co-operation between the different partnerships is supported. Whilst it is recognised that a justifiable and necessary function of a partnership is to serve its local community, there may be added value in the partnerships operating as a coherent network for certain priorities. Resources could be shared to provide common administration and support or to deliver common functions such as awareness raising activities or co-ordinated action of tide-borne litter. The County

Council would see value in streamlining and joint delivery where service levels could be maintained at a satisfactory level.

Scenario 1 – Estuary partnerships as businesses

The advantages of efficiency gains through central control of funding allocation are clear with this option. It represents a fundamental change from current arrangements so would require investigation with all other organisation that fund partnerships currently. It may prove attractive to organisations that have an interest in all or many estuaries but may not have benefits for those with an interest in a single or limited number of estuaries. Care would have to be taken that the trust established with local stakeholders was not lost and that the estuary agenda became too homogeneous. Establishing a sub-regional body (if that were the Devon Maritime Forum) as a Limited Company to administer funding allocation would represent a major change in the function of the Forum so would need agreement by those organisations that support it currently. The County Council believes that the current stated functions of the Forum are valuable so would not see the evolution of it into a sub-regional estuary co-ordinator as desirable, at present. The Forum needs to consolidate its current position.

Scenario 2 – Tiered system of funding

This scenario of allocating funding according to an agreed hierarchy is seen as having significant benefit. A proportional response to allocating resources to the importance of the estuary would allow funding to follow agreed priority work areas. It would also allow resources to be re-assessed on a regular basis and re-allocated according to changing circumstances. If this scenario is to work a mechanism for determining the priority areas for work across the County would be required and this would need to include all funding organisations. A basic service level would be required for all estuaries so as to satisfy the investment from organisation such as individual harbour authorities that have a focussed area of interest.

Scenario 3 – Harbour Authorities take over estuary partnership funding

Harbour authorities are key partners, particularly on the Dart and Salcombe estuaries so any new arrangements must be sensitive to their needs. The willingness of harbour authorities across the County to lead estuary partnerships has not been universal, with the Exe and Taw Torridge (Bideford) being notable exceptions. The question of harbour authorities leading is more academic when they are local authority ports (e.g. Salcombe, Exeter and Bideford) as the budget is derived from the same source. Given the need to maintain a wide 'ICZM' agenda the County Council believes that harbour authorities should be seen as key partners rather than lead organisations.

Scenario 4 – Complete withdrawal of funding

This is not seen as a viable option. In the example given, AONB partnerships have their own resource challenges so the expectation that estuary management responsibilities could be added without additional resources is not seen as realistic.

Scenario 5 – Dedicated officer employed within AONBs

The option is being tested currently on the estuaries in south Devon. The benefit has been that an estuary management expertise has been maintained in the area but at the expense of the degree of engagement with local stakeholders on each estuary. This may provide a workable option in other locations but this should only follow an assessment of the success of the model in south Devon. The arrangements in south Devon include a separate steering group for the estuary function and this is seen as a strength.

Scenario 6 – Estuary partnerships apply for charitable status

This option has been seen to work for large estuaries such as the Thames but may not be feasible when there is a group of smaller estuaries in an area. The County Council would need to be convinced of the viability of the charitable funding base before supporting the establishment of partnerships using this model. The establishment of the charitable partnership would require some commitment from public bodies to contribute to them in the medium to long term and it is uncertain how viable this might be.

Scenario 7 – Status quo remains

The County Council is concerned that the current mechanism for supporting estuary partnerships is not sustainable. Its experience has been that the lead organisation may have to accept liabilities over and above its partners, particularly in the event of a partner not fulfilling their funding obligations or in the event of large incidental costs such as those associated with redundancy. The year on year funding round gives a lack of permanency to the estuary officer's post which does not help with morale or staff retention. Considerable resources also need to be expended in re-securing funding on an annual basis. Considerable 'social capital' was lost with the demise of the Dart Estuary Environmental Management initiative. Maintaining the status quo is not seen as a viable option.

Scenario 8 – Voluntary partnerships

The County Council supports the creation of community led voluntary partnerships on estuaries. It sees them as fulfilling an important function of community involvement and ownership with independence from local government or statutory agencies. Voluntary partnerships often do not have the resources available that more formalised partnerships do so they are limited in the delivery of certain functions such as preparing information leaflets or maintaining more complex web sites. The time available to dedicate to estuary related issues is also limited more so than on those partnerships supported financially by a group of larger organisations. The

voluntary formula is not seen as being viable for all estuaries if a high level of delivery is required. The strength and so the weakness is that such partnerships often rely on one motivated and committed individual to champion the cause.

Scenario 9 – Core funding from new sources such as Defra and the Local Area Agreement

Devon County Council does not envisage any new funding being available from Defra to support estuary partnerships as a result of the enactment of the Marine Bill. However, the effort made by the Devon Maritime Forum to pursue opportunities that the Local Area Agreement process may deliver is supported. There will need to be a short/medium term financial plan in place to cover the period from now until it becomes clearer whether the LAA process will result in more funding being available for estuary partnerships.

The Future of Estuary Partnerships in Devon

Devon County Councils supports the concept of partnerships on estuaries as delivery mechanisms for Integrated Coastal Zone Management, leading to sustainable management of estuaries. For partnerships to have greater confidence in their funding there is a need to ensure that the core priorities of organisations that fund partnerships are reflected more strongly in the action plans of the partnerships. This can only be achieved by developing new mechanisms for contact between the partnership and the organisations that provide funding. There is a duty on both parties to ensure this happens so that the partnership does not develop its own agenda regardless of its core supporters' priorities or that the partnership is deprived of clear information as to these priorities.

Key organisations such as the Environment Agency in the southwest have, due to Government funding pressures, found it impossible to support estuary partnerships on a regular annual basis. Whilst the causes of this are understood, the County Council would urge Defra and the Environment Agency to arrive at a position whereby they can re-join the core group of organisations that fund estuary partnerships. The absence of a key government agency from the list of estuary partnership core funding organisation is seen as unsatisfactory.

The Boundary Committee report has given a single Devon Unitary authority as the preferred option for local government in Devon. Should this be confirmed later in the year it will provide an opportunity to re-visit the provisions for estuary partnerships across the County. The County Council sees an opportunity to deliver a more co-ordinated approach, across the County for delivery of estuary management. An opportunity will exist to adopt some core objectives at a larger scale, whilst not losing the need to be sensitive to local issues. There is also the opportunity to make cost savings through the delivery of certain functions such as publicity, newsletter etc. through a single delivery mechanism co-ordinated centrally.

Devon County Council would like to examine, with its partners, the opportunities presented by a fundamental review of the activity of partnerships. There is a need to bring potential funding organisations and partnerships closer together. There may also be opportunities to rationalise and unify delivery so that common functions can be delivered centrally in a co-ordinated way, whilst still retaining local distinctiveness. There is a role for the Devon Maritime Forum to facilitate further discussion.

Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum

1) *What do you see being the key roles for estuary partnerships [in] the future?*

The key role for the Tamar Estuary Partnership (TECF) is to deliver a sustainably managed estuary and coast, ensuring that the resources of the area are there for everyone, both now and in the future. This is done by focussing on the key outcomes:

- Statutory compliance and best practice in the management of the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European Marine Site through the Tamar Estuaries Management Plan 2006-2012;
- Broad based partnership providing a focus for marine stakeholder engagement and management action at a local level bringing together the local authorities, government agencies, harbour authorities and associated organisations;
- Value for money with shared resources being used sensibly to tackle prioritised actions.
- In addition, the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum will be critical in delivering key emerging issues that include the Marine Bill expected during summer 2008, the Water Framework Directive, marine spatial planning and marine protected areas. Other major opportunities relate to securing funding through Planning Obligations within the Local Development Framework and ensuring a common approach amongst all the partners.

2) *What role/outputs from estuary partnerships would your organisation be able to support financially in the future?*

As an estuary partnership, TECF is focussed on delivering identified specific outputs relevant to the area. These are currently as follows:

- Compliance with the Habitats and Species Directive 92/43/EEC which directs that all the relevant authorities together should establish a joint management group that provides an integrated approach to coastal management to implement the management plan and conservation objectives.
- Compliance with the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 which translates the above to previous European Directive into national law.
- Compliance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act of 2006 which places a new duty on local authorities and other public bodies to "have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".

The Partnership proposed to do this by delivering the following activities:

- Maintenance of the partnership that manages the Tamar Estuaries;
- Provision of a dedicated officer to further the objectives of the partnership;
- The ongoing publication, review and monitoring of the Tamar Estuaries Management Plan 2006-11 (attached);
- Agreement and implementation of an annual action plan;
- Ensuring integration of all work with that of the three relevant Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Cornwall and West Devon World Heritage Site.

3) *What changes would you like to see estuary partnerships put in place to meet your needs?*

Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum is committed to delivering value for money and as such through the management structure is constantly reviewing and assessing its effectiveness. As emerging issues come to light, TECF constantly reviews its potential impact on the partners and actions are undertaken as appropriate in such a way as to reflect the interests of the partners.

4) *Which are your 3 preferred funding options from the scenarios presented? – please indicate in order of preference.*

For the Tamar Estuary with its multiplicity of roles: as a European Marine Site; as a busy commercial and military port; as an area with a strong development agenda and as an area with heavy leisure use, there is really only one option and that is Scenario 2; a tiered system of funding that reflects the needs of each individual estuary. Regarding the weaknesses, TECF considers that it would be perfectly possible to devise a method for categorising the estuaries in such a way that many of the 'weaknesses' could be overcome. Also, TECF considers that under this option there is no reason that partnerships could not continue to work together where it is beneficial to do so.

For completeness, a quick comment is given in the following of why the other scenarios are not preferred:

Scenario 1: Estuary partnerships as businesses

Unacceptable loss of subsidiarity with an unnecessary level of bureaucracy and high associated costs. Is also seen as high risk as there is no guarantee of funds.

Scenario 3: Harbour Authorities take over estuary partnership funding

Not considered appropriate for TECF where we have 4 harbour authorities, plus 6 local authorities.

Scenario 4: Complete withdrawal of funding

Not considered appropriate for TECF where we are in the process of confirming funding for the next 3 years.

Scenario 5: Dedicated Estuary Officer employed within AONBs (or other suitable partnership)

This would be problematic for the Tamar Estuary since there are 3 separate AONBs bordering it (Cornwall, Tamar Valley and South Hams) plus parts of the Cornwall and West Devon World Heritage Site. Besides which for the Tamar Estuaries, their priorities are all clearly defined to ensure they compliment each other rather than duplicate.

In addition, there is no guarantee that funding would be any more secure through under this scenario since the AONBs are also facing budget cuts in the future.

Scenario 6: Estuary Partnerships apply for charitable status

Not appropriate for the Tamar Estuaries since TECF provides the clear mechanism for ensuring all the relevant authorities comply with their statutory duties regarding the European Marine Site. The fact that all they are all partners means that co-ordination is ensured.

Scenario 7: Status quo remains

If additional resources are not forthcoming, then this may be the only viable option. However, that is not to say that all partners could not work together in a more efficient and productive way, with perhaps the development of an online discussion forum, with better use of the national coastal partnerships group and improved links say to the LGA Coastal group for lobbying.

Scenario 8: Voluntary partnerships

With such a complex site, it would be difficult to see how the Tamar Estuaries could be managed effectively without a dedicated officer; and it is likely that the relevant authorities would be neglecting their duties under the Habitats and Species Directive 92/43/EEC; the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act of 2006 if this were to occur.

Scenario 9: Core funding from new sources such as DEFRA and Local Area Agreements.

TECF believes that looking out for alternative and new funding streams should be going on anyway and should not form a scenario in isolation from the others.

One option that is currently being developed here is under the Local Development Framework to use Planning Obligations to levy a tariff on every new dwelling to help pay for the aspects of the management of the European Marine Site.

5) *What support would you [be] prepared to give to a process whereby estuary partnerships work together in defining key priorities for action on the coast?*

TECF would be happy to work with other estuary partnerships to define key priorities for action on the coast. If there is a subsequent change to the work programme for TECF, then this would need to be approved by the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum itself. Regarding resources, TECF would only be able to provide some staff time; it would not be able to provide any financial resources.

6) *How do you think we can establish a value for the 'soft' benefits of estuary partnerships as defined by the paper?*

It is important that the stakeholders themselves identify the benefits of estuary partnerships and this is sometimes easier when they are linked to SMART objectives that tie directly back to the strategic objectives of the stakeholder organisations themselves, particularly where they have a requirement to undertake stakeholder consultation.

7) *What benefits would your organisation see in estuary partnership developing a closer, more formal working relationship with each other, as facilitated by a sub-regional body?*

With resources in scant supply, value for money must be the key principle here so it will be important that such a function does not divert funding away from the front-line.

In terms of benefits, there must be visibly demonstrated additionality and this would have to be clearly identified at the start. It is important that such a structure does not detract from the principle of subsidiarity, whereby decisions are taken at the most local level possible. However, it could have a useful role in pushing information up to the next tier of decision making.

Such a body does not necessarily need many resources, and at its most basic could simply involve the chairs of all the partnerships getting together a couple of times a year as a simple information-sharing exercise.

8) What economies of scale do you think estuary partnerships can achieve by working together?

It is difficult to identify any economies of scale which could be achieved since TECF is already delivering the highest level of cost effectiveness.

9) What are the three key priorities for action on the coast, according to your organisations's remit?

The top three priorities for TECF for this current year are:

- Delivery of Coastal Planning Supplementary Planning Document
- Delivery of a dredging protocol for the Tamar Estuaries
- Investigation of Marine Protected Area in Tamar Estuary / Plymouth Sound.

10) Any further comments, insights, suggestions or overviews you wish to be noted?

Over the years a lot has been achieved by TECF in building awareness and understanding of the importance of the Tamar Estuaries, in getting a single vision for the management of this Natura 2000 site and for enabling stakeholders to work together to deliver this common vision through an established partnership. It is therefore vital that any new structure builds on this legacy rather than undermines it and adds value rather than reduces it.

By trying to identify a single approach to all estuaries across Devon, it is important that those partnerships that work must not be disadvantaged, i.e. not to throw the baby out with the bathwater whilst still trying to add value to what already exists through improved co-operation.

A good starting point is to understand the legislative requirements of the various stakeholders and to demonstrate how by working in partnership this can be delivered most effectively whilst maximising any new funding opportunities as they arise.

If these are the key criteria, then the solution may be a combination of the scenarios put forward. This might include:

- Recognition that not all estuaries require the same level of support, that there is the need for a tiered approach, and one size does not necessarily fit all;
- That any future models need to recognise that some estuaries need cooperation between other counties as well;
- That existing successful partnerships need to be nurtured and supported through longer-term funding;
- That the Local Development Framework can provide opportunities for embedding marine spatial planning and coastal issues into the local authorities;
- That any partnerships need to work to clear SMART objectives as identified by the key local stakeholders;
- That all potential opportunities need to be looked at for funding eg local tariffs applied through the local development framework, possibly by identifying stretch targets through the Local Area Agreement framework; and perhaps even through Multi Area Agreements.
- That a county or regional framework is developed that supports the partnerships on the ground whilst providing a conduit to the regional level.

This may result in some partnerships having to realign themselves to emerging agendas and may also result in some having to lose areas of work they have traditionally taken part in. For example a strategic withdrawal from say events and interpretation whilst expanding into more coastal spatial planning may be one option that might need to be considered by some partnerships.

In light of the current work being undertaken by DEFRA and Entec into the value of coastal partnerships, and the imminent publication of the draft Marine Bill, it may be prudent to wait a while before reaching any decision.

Regarding the Conclusions and Recommendations section at the end of the Report, TECF notes that partners are not being asked whether they support these findings as part of the consultation process. TECF would like to request that the following points are noted:

- a) TECF does not support the 4th paragraph on page 38 that starts "the estuary partnerships themselves – both partners and officers – failed to embed...". TECF has worked hard to do just this over the last few years as evidenced by the adoption of the management plan, by coastal issues being at the heart of Plymouth City Council's Local Development Framework, by the support of all 4 harbour masters, by TECF being at the forefront of using planning obligations to manage the increased pressures on the European marine site, of getting support and recognition from all 6 local authorities and of the continued support from SWW and NE.

- b) TECF does not support the section 'Estuary Partnerships' Responsibilities' since TECF considers that they have been addressing these very points over the last few years and has achieved much success in doing so.
- c) TECF would like to see clear 'next steps' identified which do not prejudge which scenario is adopted. These next steps should have timescales and parties identified.

Taw Torridge Estuaries Forum - (TTEF)

Further to the comments submitted as the Joint Devon Area Estuary Officer response to the above consultation, I would like to add further comments below on behalf of the Taw Torridge Estuary Forum.

Firstly, we would like to thank you for your work in producing this thought-provoking document, and for initiating a much needed debate into Estuary Partnerships.

Map 1. Page 10:

- The LNR at Fremington Pill should be included
- Also, although the map gives the location of estuaries and statutory nature designations in Devon, it would also be helpful to add the coastal AONBs, North Devon's Biosphere Reserve, the new Mining WHS and the Jurassic Coast to the map, all of which are of relevance to Devon's estuaries.

Text Box, bottom of Page 12:

- [the] North Devon's Biosphere Reserve

4. Other Funders: Page 18:

- Should not AONBs be added to the list of funders?

Funding Responsibilities: Page 18:

- The quote by Ray Humphreys that: **Estuary Partnerships are about a process, not a project** is one of the most significant statements made in the consultation document – we endorse this statement. The eighty per cent of Devon's population living around our estuaries, and paying their council taxes to their local authorities, have the right to expect day-to-day management of both the estuary/coastal environment and the terrestrial environment. To progress towards a system of only funding specific projects would be a retrograde step.

Scenario 9: Voluntary Partnerships: (TTEF)

• **Strengths:**

The strong stakeholder engagement in this form of partnership should be stressed, as should the value to the authorities and interested bodies of such a large, independent community group able to act as a consultee body and lobby group.

MEMBERS:

Ashford PC, Barnstaple TC, Bideford TC, Braunton PC, Fremington PC, Heanton PC, Instow PC, Northam TC, Tawstock PC, Westleigh PC, Northern Devon Coast & Countryside Service, Devon Wildlife Trust, English Nature, Devon Birdwatching & Preservation Society, Environment Agency, RSPB, MOD, Adventure Centres, North Devon Yacht Club, North Devon Waterski Club, Taw & Torridge Nets, Bideford Amateur Rowing Club, Taw & Torridge Wildfowling Club, North Devon Sea Anglers, North Devon Conservation & Civic Society, Campaign to protect Rural England, Braunton Marsh Inspectors, Chivenor Conservation Group, Maritime & Coastguard Agency, RMB Chivenor Water Resource and Training Centre, Braunton Countryside Centre, Gaia Trust, Rolle Canal Society, RNLI Appledore, North Devon Jet Ski and Personal Watercraft Club, ATTURM, Bideford Canoe Club, North Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Maritime Volunteer Service

• **Weaknesses:**

Bullet Point 6: Lack of official personnel

Bullet Point 7: Engagement with the partnership **is** a voluntary commitment

Bullet Point 8: Reduced [in]ability to influence

However, Scenario 9 is missing the **real** issue.

- As the only Voluntary Estuary Partnership in Devon, it is the fact that there is no dedicated Estuary Officer, not that the Partnership is voluntary, that is the real disadvantage to the Taw Torridge Estuary.
- The management responsibilities of Local Authorities towards an Estuary with a voluntary Estuary Partnership are no different from their responsibilities towards a funded partnership. However, the lack of a dedicated Estuary Officer to deliver this management results in an unsatisfactory 'ad hoc' arrangement where, at times, lines of responsibility and accountability are unclear and assistance is not forthcoming

Taking into account that:

- the Taw Torridge Estuary is the only estuary in the North of the county
- the Taw Torridge Estuary comprises the Core Area, the Buffer Zone and a small part of the Transition Zone of North Devon's Biosphere Reserve, two AONBs, and four SSSIs, one of which covers the majority of the Estuary
- Braunton Burrows is also a cSAC
- the combined lengths of both the Taw and the Torridge Estuaries and the estuary mouth encompass an estuary of significant size

- the Taw Torridge Estuary was also, until recently, the only major estuary in the whole of the county which did not have an Estuary Officer to manage the Estuary on a day-to-day basis.
- this situation is, therefore, denying to North Devon and Torridge District Council Tax payers their right to expect management of their estuary
- downstream from the Port of Bideford on the Torridge and in the Taw Estuary, there is no Harbour Authority or regulating body
- the Taw Torridge Estuary falls within the jurisdiction of two District Councils, with all of the attendant problems that split jurisdiction raises
- the implementation of local authority responsibilities under the forthcoming Marine Bill, and the spirit of local authority, stakeholder and community engagement already enshrined within ICZM, will require integrated management, planning and policies from the authorities in the near future

the Taw Torridge Estuary has, therefore, a strong case for the re-appointment of a dedicated Estuary Officer.

APPENDIX 1:

We are most concerned that the information given by the TTEF for this Current Status Overview has been rewritten without our knowledge, and that, in places, these alterations are manifestly incorrect:

Partnership Name:

- The Partnership Name is the **Taw Torridge Estuary Forum** – this name should be reinstated under this heading.
- For information, the Taw Torridge Estuary Project ceased to exist when the Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service was set up (1997/8?) and, in any event, there has been no Estuary Officer to run any such project since 1999.

Management Plan:

- Our original wording was: “Yes – 1998. Requires revision, but no-one to do it.” We note that this has now been altered to read: “Out of date, being updated through the BR Strategy.”
- The Glossary on page 38 of the Consultation Document states that Estuary Management Plans are: **“the documents by which Estuary Officers and their partnerships develop work programmes for each estuary”**
- As we have no Estuary Officer with whom to develop a work programme, and as no consultation on a work programme has taken place with the TTEF, it is quite clear that the Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan remains out of date, and that there is no-one to undertake its revision.
- We would also point out that the TTEF, as the Estuary Partnership, was more than surprised when reading the Consultation Document, to note the entry that our Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan was being updated through the Biosphere Reserve Strategy, despite having recently read and responded to the BR Strategy!
- We therefore require our original wording to be reinstated, to reflect the fact that our Estuary Management Plan is out of date, and that there is no Estuary Officer either to update it or to carry out the work.

Estuary Conservation Officer:

- The original wording: “None since 1999” should be reinstated. This wording registers the fact that we did have an Estuary Officer, and that this officer left in 1999 and was not replaced.

Steering Group:

- The TTEF itself has never had a Steering Group – we have a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Hon. Secretary. The full Forum meets four times a year, and sub-committees are raised as and when necessary.
- The Chairman of the TTEF did sit on the Taw Torridge Estuary Project Steering Group until this was discontinued (see under “Partnership Name” above).
- Ironically, a TTEF Steering Group is now planned for the first time in order to assist with a smooth transition upon the retirement of the present Chairman in January 2009 and the election of a successor. However, this Group is not yet in place.
- The entry “was Steering Group” should, therefore, be removed, and an accurate reflection of the structure of the TTEF substituted.

Funding Partners/amounts:

- We also note that the information about the TTEF’s income/funding has been removed. As members’ subscriptions are the TTEF’s only source of funding, this information is of considerable relevance to the debate and should be reinstated. The subscription rate for 2008 has now been set at £18.

MoA/Terms of Reference of Partnership:

- The Terms of Reference for the TTEF is the TTEF Constitution, which was written in 1980, and was amended in 2003. Reference to our TOR/Constitution has also been removed from the Current Status Overview and should be reinstated.

Designations:

- For some reason, our reference to Local Nature Reserves has been removed from the designations within the Taw Torridge Estuary. A LNR at Fremington Pill was established twelve months ago. “LNR” should, therefore, be reinstated in the list of designations.

General Comments on the Consultation Document:

- The consultation document requires further proof reading to eliminate small typos and spelling mistakes, and to smooth some uncomfortable syntax.
- The document also requires an Executive Summary before it is sent out for wider consultation. This will enable Estuary Officers and other organisations to send the Executive Summary out to their stakeholders and members
- It would be helpful if some targeted questions were included at the end of the consultation, which would assist consultees when submitting responses.

Thank you for including the TTEF in your consultation, and we look forward to receiving a summary of the consultation responses received in due course.

South Devon Estuaries

No. 1 – well done, this is a great catalyst for discussion.

Page 6 – summary

Ecologically, estuaries in general are not great hot spots of species richness and diversity, if anything they are everything but! (except at the microscopic trophic level). However, their biological productivity is phenomenal and the biomass and numbers of the species that thrive in estuaries astronomic! But to Jo Public, they can be muddy, smelly places, at best, bird feeding supermarkets and the preferred option for new airports and RAF bases – their perceived worth to the big picture was not great, and have in cases become the final reproductive habitat for supermarket trolleys and car tyres. Obviously their real worth to the global ecosystem is very great and the NCC's original push to bring estuaries into some form of conservation management has done much to raise a greater awareness of this.

We do slightly better in the south west, as our ria formed estuaries are steeper sided and generally more picturesque ... at least with the tide in. They still don't attract the attention and care that they deserve but estuary partnerships do their best and would suggest that our purpose is to 'encourage and manage' and help to raise greater awareness of their ecology and environmental worth, so that people might understand and respect them and be more inclined to be more proactive in caring for them ... or at least not adding to the carnage!

One important aspect of many estuary projects, particularly those that are used as ports, is that considering the even greater environmental worth of the sea and coast, estuaries are often the last place or gateway where people might receive some form of guidance towards the environment and how they might impact on it. Care for the estuaries and there is a better chance that the sea, where we have even less control or direct influence, will look after itself. Hence, why we ask people to care for their gardens where the rain falls and our estuaries really begin.

Page 7

But whenever has environmental sustainability equated to financial sustainability ... prevention is better than cure ... but not as easily costed or measured ...

Page 8

Estuary conservation management started in at least 1983 – the first EMP for the Eden estuary in Fife being prepared by the NCC ... I know, I was there! Many LA's took advantage of the pump priming grants available at the time but dropped them as the level of grants fell and not all practitioners are pump engineers or very good at selling their wares ... otherwise, we'd all be successful environmental consultants!

There does remain a deep misunderstand and mistrust of the long scale nature of conservation management plans in general. This probably comes from the trappings of rocket science being so precise and exact – ecology on the other hand (and here we should include human ecology and behaviour) is like the weather, dealing with so many variable natural parameters it is usually impossible to predict cause and affect with any certainty – it is affected by 'butterflies wings' and apparently based on entropy. Not only is estuarine conservation management therefore difficult to measure, apparent successes and failures may have nothing to do with the level of effort or expertise put in ... and people continue to complain about weather forecasting!

Page 9

The political and Political nature of estuary designations should not be forgotten and while all species are equal, those that walk on two legs are more equal than others! We also have 'typical' and undesignated estuaries that are hugely valued by a local community that is willing to get dirty to conserve it and we have highly designated jewels where we struggle to engage the community at all. Like fighting for a sympathetic recognition of estuarine mud, the black, smelly, sticky stuff, we often have to fight the corner for small obscure, wet and often slimy fauna and flora!

The only designation that ensures some form of loyalty is the SAC or SPA – others may struggle to bring organisations to the Forum table on a reliable basis, and some organisations falsely assume that the lack of a designation equates to a lack of worth of an estuary in the bigger picture. Undesignated estuaries are jealous of SSSI's, and SSSI's are jealous of SAC's.

The uniqueness of each estuary, its catchment and local community has to be recognised and valued but as suggested, this makes it difficult to give a 'level-playing field' one-size-fits-all solution which makes it equally difficult to find a one-size-fits-all management style and funding solution?! But that shouldn't stop us trying!

Page 11

Typo “Estuary Partnerships are [mostly] about managing people and activities; without human activities the environment would manage itself [through natural processes].”

Page 13

There is a degree of mistrust of ‘employing’ posts outside partnership organisations – they are not tied to the company mission statement and may be perceived as a slightly loose cannon. To retain the respect of the wider community, the post must be perceived to be independent of the partnership organisations, who should be prepared for occasions where there may be a conflict of interest – it is important that the management is strongly science based, even if that science is the supposedly soft science of ecology!

Page 14/15

One of the uncomfortable realities of the bottom up approach of estuary partnerships is that the further down and more local it goes, the more potentially ‘native’ the politics, misconceptions and beliefs. Sometimes we need to be prepared to educate the community about what they should want! For this reason, it is also not always possible to be a truly neutral broker ... if the original ethos of your EMP was for the estuary’s conservation or sustainable management.

Page 23

Matching needs of funders ... has any partnership ever had a complaint from funders that they weren’t matching their needs? There is much talk of alignment to funders needs within the document but whilst it might strengthen our position, has anyone ever said that there was a problem ... we need to know what to align to! If anything, we have aligned to the wishes of our estuary forum / community and any such realignment could weaken our position with them.

We are pretty good at shouting about estuarine issues and successes, as a vehicle to raise better awareness about them and now have the luxury of the media coming to us for stories. There is a delicate balance between this and advertising our ‘products and services’ or blowing our own trumpet and being criticised for supposedly chasing the limelight for our own personal egos! Again, if we were that good at being ‘bullish,’ some of us would be successful environmental consultants.

Page 24

Measured outputs need to be cheaply monitored science based and not subjective ... but remember entropy!

Working together has to be a way forward but somehow retaining the local identity of each partnership, reflecting the uniqueness of each estuary.

Page 29

I don’t like the sound of sub-regional networks ‘translating and distilling’ information – strategic overview and guidance maybe but we are qualified professionals!

Difficulty of putting a cost on the social capital enhancements.

Page 31

Tiered system – estuary status would need to be revisited and checked apolitically.

Huge difficulty already encountered where particularly strong communities feel uncomfortable and / or unfairly disadvantaged by their lesser designation, or ‘biodiversity’ hotspots miss their true worth because of their relatively small size.

Scenario 4 is just a complete no-goer – except for larger commercial ports who should have an environmental officer anyway, smaller ‘recreational’ ports just cannot afford the luxury on their own and there is the question of the posts independence. There is already some antagonism between a Harbour Office based estuary officer and mooring charges!!

Page 32+

Scenario 6 – better if it read, Dedicated Estuary Officer[s] within AONBs ... some AONBs have rather a lot of estuaries ... in fact I can think of one that has 5 of all shapes, sizes, geomorphology and political makeup! There is a rather large issue of effectiveness dilution and reprioritisation. Also rather dependent on where your local AONB office is ... upstairs from the Harbour Office (Chichester) or slightly remote to them (Totnes) ... not that I’m not very grateful to retain a job!

A big advantage is being part of a team of generally like-minded professionals, with excellent idea-bouncing potential! But through historic CoCo funding, AONBs don’t have a history of saltwater interest ... although this could be a strength of job security!

Are any of these comments helpful or constructive? Probably not. Are any of the scenarios a fit all possibility? Probably not ... sidling up to my local AONB unit is ok for me but not all estuaries fall within an AONB ... and if funding does ever reappear, is this the best place to stay? AONB unit funding is not very secure in itself and presently proposed estuary funding partnership is only being agreed for 3 years.

As was the case in the late 90's, chasing funding is a digression from the true work of why we're here and chasing some funds can lead to funding availability prioritising projects rather than their the estuary's needs ... but this is a fact of reality. Some business cases can also require a bigger estuary 'base' to cope with the extra auditing etc. requirements.

With a strong grounding in ecology, the whole problem of proposing meaningful tangible targets and measurable outputs has bothered me and better persons than I for years ... I have yet to see some that I can truly believe in.

Engaging with LAA process

Structure of the Devon Strategic Partnership – the '4th Block' is the most directly applicable but we might bear the others in mind to show the broad appeal of our work.

Indicator 189 – flood and coastal erosion risk management – this would not be my main preferred indicator to highlight the strengths of coastal / estuarine partnerships ... but then I'm not an engineer. Maybe that would make me a perfect honest broker or debate facilitator but whilst I might be able to give some advice on managed retreat, the steep sided nature of our rias does give much space for that – flooding and sea-level rise for us is more an issue within the towns, where historically we have had less impact.

The indicator with the biggest potential for me is no. 18 of the 25 shown ... much of estuary conservation being land management to protect the estuary.

I'm not sure that I'll be able to help no. 17 much, driving around my extended patch! (**NI 185 CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations** PSA 27) ... or for that matter encouraging others. Encouraging the boating public to use their engines less ... hmm, lead balloons?! But on the other hand, I shan't be fighting the end of red diesel for luxury gin palaces!

No. 19 ... depends on how these indicators are interpreted and that isn't at all clear.

I do try to have an impact on no. 11 in trying to lessen the nutrients reaching and passing through the Sewage Treatment Works – the majority of phosphates coming from households. I also try to encourage oil care and responsible garden chemical (fertilisers and pesticides) use ... and not dumping garden waste over the back fence and into the estuary! Plenty to say about personal boating waste!

No. 3 – again we could argue a reasonable involvement here – improving access and the quality of visitor enjoyment; water quality improvements, etc.

Unfortunately, our achievements in improving the health and wellbeing of our estuaries, might be counter productive to no. 12!

NI 188 Adapting to climate change PSA 27

NI 195 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting) Defra DSO

PSA 28 Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future

Defra DSO: Sustainable patterns of consumption and production

Defra DSO A healthy, resilient, productive and diverse natural environment

Another area that we might appeal to is the education sector, formal and informal education ... although money there rather tight too, and again this might appeal to some of us but not all ... and it might build on our general appeal but not our sustainability! In Scotland, Countryside Ranger services have gone through very similar funding issues to coastal / estuary partnerships here and Fife Ranger Service were housed within the community education part of their education department ... so nothing is impossible ... just unlikely!

DEVON AREA ESTUARY OFFICERS JOINT CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Strategic co-ordination of estuaries:

- The estuary officers agreed that a strategic tier of co-ordination, joint lobbying and influencing, and collaborative activity is required.
- The term “sub-regional” is used in the report but requires clarification. The Water Framework Directive, the Shoreline Management Plan, Defra and others are all now operating at a SW regional scale, and estuary management needs to be able to engage at that regional level as well as at a county level and local level.
- Each of these tiers of estuary management would have a different audience and a different stakeholder input.
- Strategic estuary co-ordination needs to reflect natural catchment boundaries and not be artificially constrained by county and administrative boundaries.
- Care must be taken to ensure that, when taking a strategic view, the special character and needs of Devon’s smaller estuaries are not overlooked.
- Regional and sub-regional co-ordination provides a more suitable route for obtaining access to regional-level funding, and will help link national policy initiatives to local management and delivery.
- Some key national and regional bodies, which have difficulty in attending the many local Estuary Partnerships, may find it easier to engage effectively with us at a **district**, county or regional level **rather** than at the local level.

The role of Devon County Council and Devon Maritime Forum:

- There is a need for estuary partnerships to deliver at a local level, while the County Council and Devon Maritime Forum could provide a more strategic role.
- The role of the Devon Maritime Forum requires clarification – is it within DMF’s remit to reflect the aspirations of estuary partnerships?
- There would be a benefit if the Forum is administered as an independent body, and shows leadership at a regional scale.
- The role of the DCC Coastal Officer and the DMF Co-ordinator need clarification, as they may be best placed to provide the regional and sub-regional co-ordination, rather than seeking to create a new post.
- ICZM will also require Local Authorities to engage with sub-regional and local stakeholder groups to deliver integrated coastal and estuary management.
- If the role of the Forum is yet to be defined will Estuary Partnerships be consulted so that we may give comment as to how it can best support and complement our work?

Devon Area Estuary Officers’ meetings:

- The meetings of the Devon Area Estuary Officers now need to progress beyond occasional information-exchange and networking and take on a more pro-active and focussed role.
- The meetings could also be used as an opportunity to involve the Chairmen of all of the Estuary Partnerships, thereby strengthening strategic awareness and involvement in LAAs and LSPs.

Local Area Agreements/Local Strategic Partnerships:

- There is a pressing need for estuary officers to be well linked to the Devon Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement process, and the Coastal Officer and DMF co-ordinator have a valuable role to play in facilitating this.
- Estuary Partnerships should also be involved in Local Strategic Partnerships.
- “Greenscape” Strategies should also include a “Bluescape” strategy for coastal and estuary issues
- The officer responsible for Local Area Agreements at DCC should be actively involved in a two-way exchange of views and information with all Devon Estuary Partnerships.
- Devon’s LAA does not currently appear to lend itself to the inclusion of estuary matters and this will need to be addressed.

Estuaries and the planning system

- Local Authorities will be “encouraged” by Defra, under the forthcoming Marine Bill, to engage in estuary spatial planning.
- Experience needs to be shared between Estuary Partnerships and local authorities. Estuary Partnerships need to be able to engage with planners and to ensure that planners reflect estuary issues.
- Planners need to be given details of all agencies, partnerships and fora involved in estuary management.

- All local authorities should be preparing Supplementary Planning Documents on coastal issues, and Estuary Partnerships should be involved in this process.

Benefits and outputs of estuary management:

- Much estuary management output falls under the heading of “social capital” or “soft benefits”, which makes measurement and evaluation using SMART targets particularly challenging.
- Estuary management is highly valued by the community and contributes towards wider social targets under the LAA for access, health, recreation, education, etc.
- The consultation report should contain information on what Estuary Partnerships are trying to achieve, and the critical success criteria for Estuary Partnerships.
- As stated in the consultation report, each Estuary Partnership is different – one size does not fit all. The difference between the various Estuary Partnerships reflects their differing communities, the common thread being the ability of Estuary Partnerships to engage local stakeholders. It is important to recognise the varying situations on Estuary Partnerships caused by designations and that some scenarios that work for EU designated sites may not work for non-designated sites. **Also, the importance of some estuaries may be elevated by their strategic position as gateways to coastal SACs and MPAs.**
- Eight out of ten people in Devon live around estuaries – they pay their Council Tax for the services that they require, many of which involve estuary management.

Scenario 7: Applying for charitable status:

- The key problem with applying for funding is that it must be done on a project by project basis causing the Officer to spend a considerable amount of time writing funding bids that conform to funding guidelines and not to the core aims of the partnership.

Scenario 9: Voluntary Partnerships:

- This scenario is not an option, as voluntary partnerships are unsustainable, too dependent upon individuals, and there is no funding for management.

Comments on the consultation report document:

- The consultation document does not have a well structured line of argument leading to clear conclusions. This lack of structure makes it difficult to summarise the report for stakeholders – an executive summary is required.
- It is not clear who the consultation document is aimed at.
- Any wider consultation should set out the questions that need to be answered.
- It would be better if preferred options are offered.
- The consultation document needs to contain clearer references to the Marine Bill, ICZM, the Water Framework Directive, Shoreline Management Plans, etc.
- It would be helpful if comments made in this response could be incorporated into any wider consultation exercise.
- The report does not give any indication of what will happen next; with the consultation responses or what the next step is for the report or how changes may be implemented. It states that it is ‘intended to act as a working document initially’ but what does this mean? Will it result in a more strategic document?
- How is the document to be used by organisations such as Devon County Council?

Timing of the consultation:

- It is difficult to undertake a consultation exercise now in isolation to the many other relevant changes currently taking place. This means that the issue of estuary management will need to be reconsidered again in the near future in order to take account of the following:
 - 1) Under the proposed Marine Bill, it is expected that the MMO will, in the near future, be putting out a Statement of Stakeholder Involvement to feed into the planning process.
 - 2) Estuaries are expected to be classified as High Activity Areas.
 - 3) The estuaries of the South West will be a pilot for a desk study to correlate all of various plans for the area.
 - 4) All regional strategies are being integrated and, with the demise of regional assemblies, the RDA is expected to take over this role.
 - 5) Defra has commissioned Entec to do a national consultation on the financial benefits of Estuary Partnerships. Upon completion, DMF may be able to refine the Entec results down to a sub-regional and a local level.

North Devon AONB

Hi Jim,

reflecting my email yesterday, time is pressing so my response to your thorough exploration of Estuary Issues will be very brief

My response is mine as I have had no time to talk this through with my Chairman and Partnership or the wider NDCCS.

There are a couple of areas where I am a little confused and for example a map of existing harbour authorities and AONB or similar partnerships who might be able to take on some element of delivery would be helpful . Scenarios 4 and 5 are a little confusing and for example for North Devon where there is no funding beyond the membership fee would the AONB or similar be expected to spread its existing budget more thinly.?

I suspect there is no single Devon answer to estuary partnerships.

Clearly in North Devon the Estuary Partnership and its voluntary nature is valued but since the demise of a dedicated Estuary officer TTEF is largely re-active (although its foray into development work - the Braunton Marsh Study was an exemplar for other similar bodies). Whilst the Biosphere Strategy deals with Catchment/water quality, and biodiversity and marine issues, like the AONB there is sufficient complexity and importance to the Estuary in terms of its environmental, economic health and social assets and issues to warrant a renewed 10 year management strategy and vision and action plan taking into account 21st century agendas, something that is beyond the resources of TTEF, especially when Rose retires as chairman

On the basis of your document, I feel that there should be sufficient funds for TTEF to have a secretariat: some-one equivalent to a Parish Clerk, who can deal with minutes, agendas, subscriptions, support for bid writing, compiling a newsletter etc. This could be paid for via grant aid from organisations such as those with logos on your report, or through a large increase in membership fees from statutory and large organisations with a tiered lower rate. This would keep the current level of activity ticking over.

If there is to be a more strategic future then in North Devon I feel there is some urgency to refresh the estuary management strategy in accordance with your table on page 16 and to refocus TTEF on agreed core aims.

Once this is done TTEF and other organisation should then have the opportunity to bid for a 3 year SLA or specific projects from key partners or other funding streams to develop areas of work and to use this money to commission others to deliver on their behalf e.g in North Devon it could be AONB, Biosphere Reserve, North Devon + or external consultancy. Alternatively these organisations could bid directly to the same pot to deliver estuary actions.

The key thing is that estuaries should be recognised as being important and that key stakeholders such as LA's be prepared to put cash into them.

Hope this helps

Linda

Severn Estuary Partnership

Thank you very much for inviting me to comment on this consultation document which I have read with much interest. I have been acknowledged as an interviewee, but have not directly contributed to date (except through the 2 papers cited) – these are my 1st contributions to this review.

Overall comments

As a discussion document, the review provides useful and thought provoking material. The report reads well and is nicely illustrated. I am not sure who the eventual target audience is for the report – as it stands it is a useful discussion document.

There is little reference to how the Marine Bill & ICZM Strategies could resolve the funding weaknesses being faced by CPs in Devon. The report is quite a reactive picture of the future rather than proactive approach to the best solution...can it be developed into a more positive statement of 'this is what Devon Estuary Officers believe is the best way forwards...and they are supported by their funding partners'....therefore offering a scenario which provides a solution for Devon and other areas. Based on the principles of ICZM and need for stronger delivery, is it possible to advocate that ICZM needs to gain recognition as part of a statutory process within the terrestrial (as AONBs have through statutory plans) and marine spatial planning systems? If due weight is given to ICZM in policy terms, the existing role of CPs will inherently be strengthened, without the need to consider all kinds of different scenarios for provision of their services, many which risk weakening the work of partnerships to date. In the absence of any stronger direction coming from a national approach to ICZM delivery, the best local solution will be locally specific and building on the diversities of support that have evolved for each estuary to date – together with more (sub-)regional collaboration (if affordable), target setting, transparency between partners and estuaries, and long term commitment from funders involved in more than one partnership.

It may help to recognise/discuss some element of coastal partnerships delivering democracy at the local level, at the forefront of demonstrating more bottom-up approaches to decision-making...this is fundamental to how the services are provided and how the tiers of management support are provided. [I have recently written a paper on this for the Geographical Journal which can be provided on request – currently under peer review].

Detailed comments are offered in the following format:

- 10pt font - text from the report with **bold** for proposed amendment;
- 11pt *italics* - my observations.

Acknowledgements, p 3

Severn Estuary Partnership Manager, School of Earth, Ocean and Planetary Science, Cardiff **University**

The Forum, p.3

The Forum is hosted by Devon County Council and can be contacted at the address below.

Many Estuary Partnerships and Projects were established in response to the *EU Habitats and Birds Directives Regulation 33* requirement. Originally established under English Nature's *Estuaries Initiative*

The Role of Coastal (and Estuary) Partnerships, p.14

The role of Coastal Partnerships was defined and developed by the Coastal Partnerships

Working Group Forum in Leeds, 2004. (after Barker, N 2005).

[*Note: CoastNet ran the Forum in Leeds with the financial support of Defra. CPWG was not formed until the 2006 Forum.*]

Estuary Partnerships in Devon, p.21

More info could be included on the origins of specific Estuary Partnerships. As the text reads now, it looks like they all arose from a top-down perspective which I don't think is the case. You could quote a local EO/DCC person here or someone involved in the early stages of Devon Estuary Partnerships. The need for Exe & Teign management plans dated back to late 70s/early 80s (Richard Butler, DCC retiree could provide further detail). Even if the need was first recognised by a local authority (e.g. DCC) it was in response to local pressures and potential conflicts, which the communities have then taken ownership for (e.g. Exe as documented in the 'Exe Estuary Study' report 1979 and issues continually championed by individuals e.g. through the Exe Estuary Users Group).

Benefits of Estuary Partnerships, p.22

It is worth recognising the need to present more tangible benefits in monetary terms; the motivation for Defra to fund the 'Financial Benefit Assessment of Coastal Partnerships Project'. This will be a starting point to promoting the real value of investing in CPs, to partners where real financial values need to be discussed (maybe more relevant to private sector/business partners than government sectors which are more critical to Devon estuaries).

Valuable points about soft benefits and social capital ..also refer to environmental capital? (you often refer to designated nature conservation sites offering a valuable lever for funding; but many local communities value their estuarine environment regardless of its designated status).

Summary of Hidden Benefits, p.22

Note 'Unique Selling Points' of CPs in the 'Working Together' paper (Barker, 2005) and subsequent CPWG paper by Hewett & Barker for Coastal Futures, 2007. The benefits listed can result in tangible outputs (e.g. Resolution of conflicts through brokering role - Exe Kitesurfers' Code).

One or two local examples in a text box with a picture would strengthen this section.

Summary of Challenges, p23

- Estuaries without statutory designations are more vulnerable as they do not attract similar funds to large, more strategic estuaries.

Two issues in one here. This is a common perception that is not well researched. The Teign has received consistent funding support (small, no designation except LNR) due to the commitment of one LA, the Exe is larger with all the designations and hasn't received consistent funding. Compare to the Severn Estuary which only receives £1000-£5000 from each LA, much less than LAs contribute in Devon. WFD applies equally, so this statement only refers to SPA & SAC sites. A key point here should be that larger more strategic estuaries often have a wider range of sectoral interests including private sector/ industrial activity with more opportunities to balance public sector funding with private sector partners income – although the main private sector income in Devon is likely to be through tourism.

- Partnerships that cease to operate risk losing many years of investment in time, personnel and money, resulting in partners being less willing to engage with partnership working in the future
- Partnerships that fold will lose social capital

These are two really important points (which the EA should be encouraged to recognise urgently, particularly in relation to the Dart at this time).

Another related point: EC funding can skew the development of local partnerships; resources are rapidly increased and attention maybe diverted from fostering relationships with local partners; when EC funding finishes the stability of the Partnership can be less good than pre-EC funding. This has happened to some extent on the Exe and Dart through the Cycleau project (and Severn through the Coastatlantic project). Expectations are raised which cannot be sustained. The Dart had a higher level of activity invested by Devon Wildlife Trust (through Cycleau) to help deliver a catchment approach advocating WFD. This may have exacerbated the situation even further. Much better business planning is needed, with agreement from local partners involved in the CP, before signing up to attractive (large) externally funded projects which can divert limited staff resources into projects (away from core services).

- Replacing experienced staff present for 5 days a week with a new officer available for only 1½ days a week does not represent a good investment for partners if they are being asked to maintain previous levels of funding

There are parts of the report which allude to particular cases - this sounds like one - where it would be better to make more general points together with (if possible) specific cases to give the report more local relevance.

- Estuary Partnerships need to show hard outputs in order to engage with communities and show that they are delivering a 'product'

A common criticism, but your info in Appendix 2 demonstrates areas of hard outputs – it's as much about raising awareness of what is delivered than feeling CPs aren't delivering hard outputs.

- Estuary Partnerships need to define their terms of reference more clearly in order to generate work programmes that deliver specified products and services

Yes, absolutely – worth recognising that this is a young evolving field of work and most CPs are moving in this direction now.

Diagram 4

*In line with CPWG response to the Marine Bill consultation – ICZM Delivery Framework includes 'Local Delivery Units' (e.g. an estuary) nested within Regional/Sub-National ICZM Delivery Units and National Policy level. **Copy attached to email.***

Recognise the advantages of the bottom-up approach to governance for stakeholder engagement and encouraging sustainable resource use.

Scenario 1, Diagram 5

Reference to the roles of the Wales Coastal & Maritime Partnership and the Scottish Coastal Forum in delivering some of these networking services could be referred to.

- A recognition of the need for Estuary Partnerships to remain focused on local delivery
Agree, there is a need to ensure that the existence of sub-regional networks will not lead to diversion of funds away from local delivery units (individual estuary partnerships) to the regional level network. This appears to

have happened already within Devon: EA & DCC funds have been removed/reduced from some Estuary Partnerships whilst they are giving funding commitment to the Devon Maritime Forum?

- A perception of the sub-regional partnership undermining or replacing Estuary Partnerships
This is the biggest weakness/risk in Scenario 1. Is perception or risk the right word?

- A potential for competition amongst Estuary Partnerships as a reflection of their size and status
Healthy competition is not a bad thing; but lack of transparency between funding partners on why there are differences in funding levels to different CPs does lead to less healthy working relationships – I don't think size/status has much to do with it – personalities and priorities of the day are a bigger influence. The issue could be resolved by much more open communication from funding bodies on funding criteria and levels to each partnership, with longer timescales for funding e.g. through collaboration agreements. The info on funding contributions (and their differences) in Appendix 1 is a good starting point in this direction.

Consider the services/activities of the Local Delivery Units and Sub-Regional ICZM Units illustrated in the CPWG response to the Marine Bill. **Copy attached to email.**

Scenario 2

A necessary line of thinking which would benefit from further in-depth assessment on how it could work. There is not enough detail presented for proper consideration of this scenario (compared to scenario 1). Discussion of scale is important – you refer to a central pot, do you mean national pot? Is Devon the most appropriate scale for this or should it be north & south Devon/ Devon & Cornwall/ SW? Managed in the right way, there could be merit in a sub-regional charity/company approach – this is a route undertaken by some (Thames, Morecombe) which has shown to be very time-consuming and carries additional administrative burdens. However, the benefits (e.g. attracting grants) may make it worthwhile if the legal and administrative 'home' could be centralised. It wouldn't necessarily have to compromise local autonomy. Presented in the way it has been, I agree it appears to 'undermine', but further exploration and evidence gathering is needed – this could offer some positive solutions.

Scenario 3

The 3 types of estuaries and which you put in each category should be further explained in the 'scale' section earlier in the report – it makes more sense seeing this level of detail.

Large commerce heavy, (p.23)

Not a phrase which reminds me of the Exe!

A break point would come if there was no officer provision.

What does this mean?

Elements of this scenario could work, if managed with flexibility and retaining local accountability. It would help to address the concerns I highlighted above about lack of transparency between funding partners. However, overall I don't think it should be necessary to categorise different estuaries into 3 groups – recognise their different characteristics as factors within funding criteria. Are you familiar with the model proposed (at one time) for the Exe that the Harbour Authority would be funded through LA contributions? The argument was that funding for estuaries that have very little commercial activity (most Devon estuaries) should be based on population (linked to Council Tax contributions); this factor determines the level of use and therefore the need for a partnership service to advocate sustainable management.

Scenario 4

A blanket approach to this would not be appropriate everywhere. The main risk should be cited; loss of neutral platform provided by partnerships to date (one of our key strengths). The main driver for CPs since EN 'pump-primed' their formation has come from the LAs. Clear mechanisms would need to be agreed to ensure the partnership maintained strong links with the LAs. Experience from Fowey, Dart, Tamar and Poole Harbour assessed? When Severn EMS officer was based at ABP he was very isolated. My feeling is that this would only work if it was part of a national move within the Marine Bill delivery (e.g. alongside local MMO base/Sea Fisheries officers) or under the direction of Ports Division to gain the respect needed to make it work at the regional/local level. A good opportunity to trial it with the proposed new harbour authority for the Exe, for which the Harbour Revision Order is currently being considered by Ports Division.

Scenario 5

Limiting, as it would only be appropriate where AONB extends into estuary – officially they stop at MHWM. Also some loss of a neutral platform as AONB is based on heritage & landscape: haven't we moved away from partnerships being fundamentally environmental initiatives? There are some excellent examples of AONBs doing good work on the coast around the country – AONBs have strengthened since their power was increased under the CROW Act making their plans a statutory requirement. Estuary Partnerships should be on an equal footing, not subsumed by AONB units - they provide a good demonstration of how coastal partnerships can proceed. CPWG received a very useful presentation from the Defra AONB expert which illustrated how CPs could develop in the same way as AONB. As a short term 'rescue' service (i.e. for the Dart) this maybe useful, but it's not a preferred long term solution further afield in my view.

Scenario 6

Ditto above. AONBs are more focused on the land-side issues. The coastal zone must be seen as the focus. Use of the term **local estuary projects** risks us going backwards – a lot of work has been invested in establishing independent estuary partnerships that are working for the longer term, not just task & finish projects.

I don't agree with the list of strengths but strongly agree with your list of weaknesses (especially the last one).

Scenario 7

Estuary Partnerships would apply for charitable status (**and/or to** become limited companies). It is not essential, but typical to become both.

The weaknesses do not need to happen or weaken work to date if managed correctly – more evidence needed? The biggest risk: time involved in setting up individual charities/companies for each estuary. A significant opportunity is attracting individual funding contributions (e.g. 'Friends of the Exe') and getting recognised in people's wills etc, reinforcing the sense of local ownership.

Scenario 8

Is this under-estimating the ability of individual Estuary Officers to succeed within their local areas? We have come a long way so far with no regional co-ordination. The paper explores EOs developing closer relationships with AONBs and HAs, but there are other options which could support individual partnerships which have not been explored e.g. LAs hosting arrangements for EOs; EAs role isn't explored in any depth (in relation to WFD delivery and previous close working over LEAPs, EOs hosted with the new MMO delivery units) and supporting delivery of LAA/MAA & LSP.

- No new futures would be explored and discussed
- Parties would remain at odds with each other and little co-operation would...

This wording is rather extreme.

• No time or resources would need to be invested in investigating new solutions ...at what scale – Devon? Again, this maybe too alarmist as the field is evolving nationally. It also depends on what timescale you are considering in this report.

Scenario 9

Some of these strengths could be harnessed through establishing a charity/company, building on the independence of a partnership, whilst minimising the weaknesses listed here. Good charities harness volunteers whilst also providing an employed secretariat. Good charities can also have a significant influence on policy (e.g. RSPB).

This is a very important statement that it not given enough prominence:

ICZM is about making informed decisions and integrating sectors in a spirit of co-operation. Without financial investment, there is little intention to engage fully with the process. If a partnership was run virtually, with a secretariat supplied by one particular agency – such as a harbour authority or AONB, then by its very nature this also ceases to be ICZM as it does not rely on, or encourage, partnership working and instead becomes the policy of one organisation.

Nice conclusion but wordy last sentence.

To not clearly define this, or assist the partnerships through a period of transition appears **has to have** been one of the major causes of concern.

Funding Partners Responsibilities

Agree

Estuary Partnerships Responsibilities

OK, but recognise that there has been limited leadership/training, particularly at the regional/national level.

What about responsibilities of central Government to demonstrate and support the delivery of ICZM?

Recommendations

The following look good:

All parties to **meet** in person in order to discuss the findings of this report in a neutral, facilitated workshop context

Estuary Partnerships to **remain funded** in (at least) the short term to existing levels in order to facilitate a period of transition as new strategies and approaches to funding are put in place where necessary

Estuary Partnerships to be placed at the **heart of ICZM** in Devon through a constitutional framework/network that allows them to effectively and efficiently communicate and share best practice

Is this the basis for DCC supporting the Devon Maritime Forum? Better to be clearer.

Estuary Partnerships to **retain their independence**, autonomy and local action in order to remain effective on the ground

Estuary Partnerships to be **supported in the long-term** in order for them to attain a level of security whereby they can effectively **maintain core services and** apply for project-based funding and concentrate on delivery on the ground

Estuary Partnerships to **recognise the value** of working with a sub-regional network in order to present a strategic and unified voice for marine and maritime issues in Devon

There is no discussion on how you propose to link into the regional context (e.g. SWRA, GOSW) and national developments (e.g. CPWG activities, the role of an English Coastal Forum?).

Meetings to define the **formal/informal** nature of links between Estuary Partnerships and a sub-regional forum

Estuary Partnerships to **identify areas of commonality** between themselves

Funders to **identify their approaches** to partnership working

Funding bodies and Estuary Partnerships to discuss the format by which specific **products/services** can be matched against the core business of the funders

All parties work together in order to **clearly identify the links** that may exist between the outputs of Estuary Partnerships and the forthcoming Water Framework Directive, Local Strategic Partnerships (the LAA), project funding opportunities and the evolution of the Marine Management Organisation

All parties work together to **communicate and 'sell'** these links to a wider audience as a means of further publicising the work of coastal partnerships and also embedding marine issues in the Local Area Agreement process

All parties to work together to **communicate with decision-makers** and policy makers at as high a level as possible

All parties undertake a **'Health Check'** for their partnership(s) (see Appendix IX)

All of the above are about improving communication and are intangible; are there areas of the Devon Maritime Forum's role which are (or could be directed towards) providing tangible outputs which demonstrate successes of Estuary Partnerships to existing and new partners?

What about more specific guidance on how Partnerships can be run to meet the requirements of funding partners, e.g. by ensuring there are annual work programmes (with key targets to deliver core services) and periodic business plans. Is this an opportunity for EOs to identify what they need to strengthen local delivery and what kind of support they need from a sub-regional co-ordinator? Specifics are not mentioned in this context and would be easy to develop as part of this report providing a proactive solution.

Could the recommendations include practical steps for the Maritime Forum to take to promote and strengthen the role of EOs e.g.

- *producing a promotional brochure based on the info in Appendix 2;*
- *the Maritime Forum officer regularly meeting funding partners at the regional/national level to raise the profile of funding issues and campaign for greater support in the Marine Bill etc. (why has SW EA pulled out when other regions of the EA haven't?) – urgent investigation & resolution!*
- *how could Devon Maritime Forum promote engagement of wider (private) sectors to support partnership funds;*
- *DMF Officer investigate and provide guidance on ways forward to EPOs such as what's involved in establishing charity/company status*
- *DMF Officer to offer templates for business planning, marketing strategies etc. and access to examples of best practice from within and outside the county.*

Appendix 1

Exe: Tor/MoA

No – Currently being **drafted** for signing in October 2007

updated (there were ToR relating to the previous management structure) - see Exe Estuary Annual Report & Action Plan 2005-06.

Appendix 2

Could this info be transformed into some kind of marketing brochure for Coastal (Estuary) Partnerships in Devon/the South-West? It is a nice overview of achievements which is not widely known.

Glossary of Terms

Coastal Partnership: A partnership of different agencies and interested bodies with a stake in the coast/sea. The partnership works together to ensure that the decision-making process of each partner takes in to account the actions and activities of others so delivering more sustainable and equitable solutions. The partnerships may also confer a cost benefit to the partners themselves.

I'm interested in the source of this definition.

EMPs: Estuary Management Plans – the documents by which Estuary Officers and their partnerships develop work programmes for each estuary.

Stuart Watts – Aune Conservation Association

Thanks for sending me the hard copy version of the Maritime Forum's consultation draft on Estuary Partnerships.

These partnerships serve a vitally important function and I have included a few thoughts about how they might operate below. I hope this may be of some interest.

The Estuary Partnerships should function on behalf of the communities they serve with a clear management remit in the form of an agreed Estuary Management Plan. Funding needs to be aligned with this objective and, therefore, be delivered through local government. Lines of responsibility and accountability should be established back up to local government e.g. via the AONB unit.

Estuary partnerships may be about managing a process rather than a project but that process of managing the estuarine environment (physical and natural) can be broken down into a series of projects with measurable objectives, whether product- or service-related. Many of these processes will be shared by similar estuaries (e.g. those in the South Hams) and the appointment of a common Estuary Officer makes a lot of economic sense.

The objectives described in Estuary Management Plans and agreed as part of the partnership arrangement need closer management and more robust review. At the moment, many objectives are really only wishful thinking, vaguely enshrined in print e.g. better signage of byelaws; the objectives need to be driven forward by an Estuary Officer. Delivery contracts should be developed with appropriate agencies and these service or product providers should be held accountable in a way that does not happen demonstrably at present e.g. for maintaining water quality to required standards or ensuring sufficient water availability for salmon spawning. Many of these so-called estuary partners (EA, SWW, NE) seem not to take Estuary Forums very seriously if their poor attendance record is used as an indicator.

In short, I favour Scenario 5 whatever its shortcomings!

Ian Cowe

Jim - I'm rather tied up at the moment, but I have scanned your paper very quickly. I am particularly interested in the option that harbour authorities might take on the role of managing and funding estuary partnerships. This would not be appropriate for the Exe, where new harbour authority arrangements are currently being put in place. One of the key factors for the Exe's proposals, currently being considered by the DfT, is that the harbour authority should be focussed solely on managing navigation and it should not take on any peripheral functions. I agree with the Weaknesses you have stated for the option, which are realistic and which I presume will preclude this option going ahead, and I would point out that mooring fees on the Exe do not accrue to the harbour authority. The current cost of the harbour authority is borne by Exeter City Council (who would certainly not want to take on additional responsibilities as harbour authority) and under the new arrangements the boat owners will pay harbour dues - a new charge on the Exe. They will not be pleased if they are expected to pay for non-boating functions too.

I'll try to look at the document, which looks very interesting, in more detail if I can.

Paul Fronteras Port Volunteer Officer

I was sorry not to see in your review how the Maritime Volunteer Service might have been able to help in Devon, more so as there are three Units in Devon.

Appendix II

Estuary Partnerships Summit – agenda (draft)

Summit Agenda (draft)

Location: Coaver Club, County Hall, Exeter

Date: 02.10.08

Time: 10.30 – 16.30

Tea and Coffee

Introduction – Devon Maritime Forum

Marine Bill developments – (Defra)

Workshops – reaching agreement on core services and needs

These initial workshops offer an opportunity for all concerned to meet with their own sector to define their priorities and commitments to different aspects of coastal management for the future

- Funders (existing funders)
- Officers (partnership Officers and assistants)
- Communities (chairs from partnerships)
- Government frameworks (Defra and others – implications of Marine Bill, WFD, Boundary Committee Review, Sub-national Review)

Share Findings – exchanging views

This section allows all present to present their points of view from their own discussions

Lunch

Question and answer session – direction finding for the future

This session will allow all present to discuss their concerns and ideas for working together for the future, and what obstacles need to be overcome – detailed discussion of the implications of different legislative and framework changes

Workshops – reaching consensus on future partnership working

Three workshops (facilitated) incorporating a mixture of the different delegates present will discuss the issues and topics raised in the first half of the day, taking each topic in turn. Each workshop will be the same, providing opportunities for problem-solving in smaller groups

Tea and Coffee

Sharing ideas –

This session allows each group to share their ideas for how each problem can be addressed

Solutions discussed as a whole meeting

Taking action

Taking note and account of any points of action or commitment that are needed in order to cement the findings from the day