

SEVERN ESTUARY STRATEGY

Spring 2017

2017-2027



Principle 1: Achieving a Sustainable Marine Economy

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Principle 2: Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

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Principle 3: Living within Environmental Limits

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Principle 4: Promoting Good Governance

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Principle 5: Using Sound Science Responsibly

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The Severn Estuary Partnership - promoting a holistic, estuary-wide perspective for the Severn Estuary



A birds-eye view of the Severn Estuary.

PREFACE

The Severn Estuary has provided a vast range of resources over the centuries to benefit communities and businesses both near and far. It covers a large area and contains many unique natural, cultural and geographical features that are recognised internationally.

In 1995 the Severn Estuary Partnership was formed to provide support to those who have responsibilities or interests in the estuary and to encourage working together to achieve a more integrated approach to the management of the estuary. The Severn Estuary Partnership is an independent, non-statutory organisation which relies on the support and active participation of its members, as well as a range of individuals and other organisations.

The first Severn Estuary Strategy, published in 2001, helped set a practical framework for collaborative working. It has been very successful in highlighting the challenges facing the estuary and taking action by sharing resources and expertise across the estuary.

In 2015/16 the Severn Estuary Partnership undertook a thorough, thoughtful and open review of the pressures on the estuary resources and evolving governmental policies and identified future opportunities that the estuary presents for communities and businesses.

The success of the new Strategy will be judged by how well it helps to facilitate collaborative working on the sustainable use of the estuary's resources to benefit future generations.

I do hope you find this document of practical use to you and look forward to your support and participation in its implementation.

John Harrison, Chairman of Severn Estuary Partnership

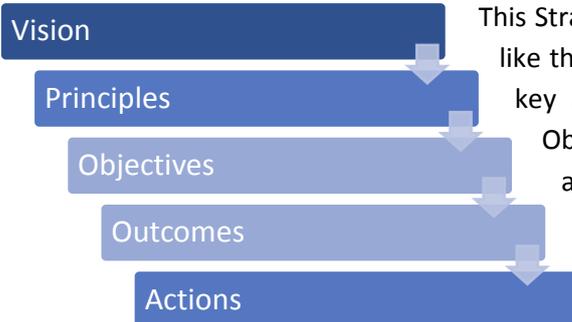
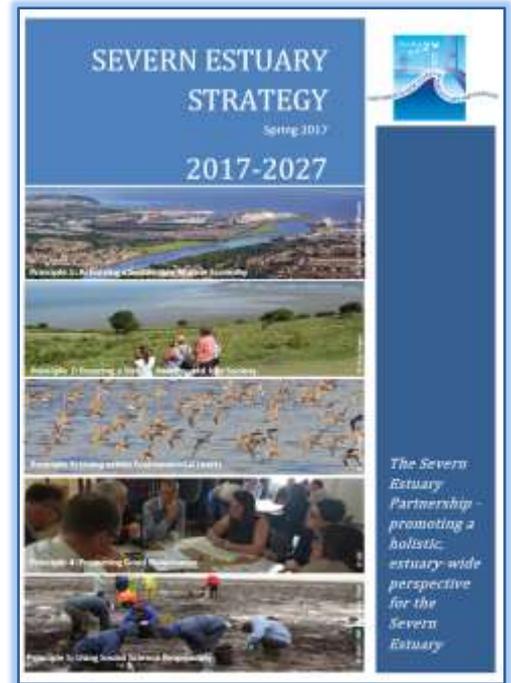
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 1995, the Severn Estuary Partnership is an independent, estuary-wide non-statutory initiative led by local authorities and statutory agencies. We work with all those involved in the management of the estuary, from planners to port authorities, fishermen to farmers and many more with an interest in the future of the estuary.

The Severn Estuary Strategy was first produced in 2001 and has now been revised in the context of new and emerging legislation, plans, policies and developments.

The 2017 Severn Estuary Strategy presents a new *Vision* and a series of *Principles, Objectives, Outcomes* and *Actions*. The aims of this Strategy are to:

- **update & streamline** the 2001 Severn Estuary Strategy;
- provide a **strategic policy framework** for the Severn Estuary;
- provide **context to inform and support decision-making**; and,
- **facilitate the Marine & Coastal Act (2009)** obligations related to cross-border integration, land-sea integration and taking an ecosystem-based approach to management.



This Strategy is guided by a *Vision*, which sets out what we (and you) would like the estuary to look like in the future. The document is split under five key *Principles* (outlined below), based on the UK High-Level Marine Objectives. Under each *Principle* are a series of *Objectives, Outcomes* and *Actions*. The Strategy will have a 10-year timeframe between 2017-2027, but will be flexible enough to change priorities in light of any new and emerging evidence.

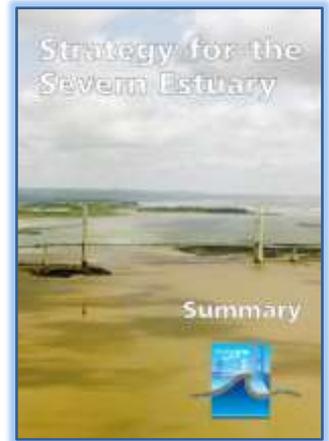


The Partnership has developed the Strategy over an 18-month period (April 2015 to Spring 2017), with significant input from a wide range of estuary stakeholders, SEP members and associates. It has taken account of the latest legislation, policies and plans from a local to international scale and has followed best practice from other UK Coastal Partnerships and cross-border institutions, such as the Gulf of Maine Council.

The Partnership will seek to address the *Actions* set out in this Strategy, collaborating with other organisations as appropriate, to provide an improved and integrated approach to the management of the Severn Estuary.

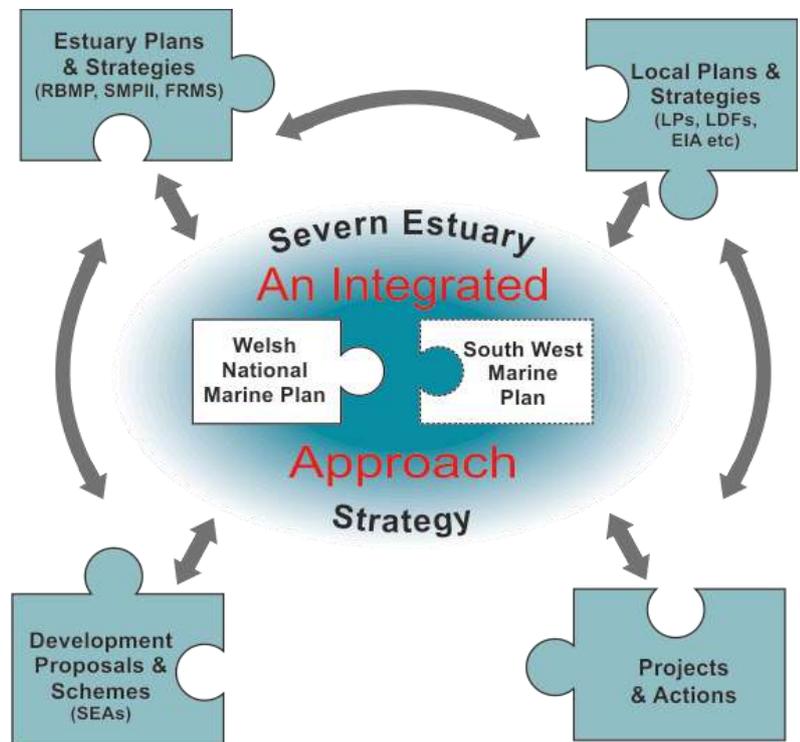
Introduction

The Partnership has reviewed and updated the 2001 Severn Estuary Strategy in the context of new and emerging policies and developments. The revised and streamlined 2017 Strategy will provide a framework to inform more coordinated policy development, practices and strategies for the Severn Estuary. As marine planning develops in both England and Wales, this Strategy document will help ensure a more integrated approach for the Severn Estuary, particularly at a time of uncertainty in European governance. This Strategy will also provide context to inform and support decision-making for a wide range of proposed estuary developments, including those related to maritime uses, minerals and marine renewable energy, alongside other drivers such as climate change. The area covered by this Strategy (see map on page 16) extends from just above Gloucester to Hurlstone Point near Minehead on the English coast and Nash Point on the Welsh coast*. It covers a 10-year period from 2017 to 2027, but will also provide a framework for long-term decision-making.



The revised 2017 Severn Estuary Strategy aims:

- To **update & streamline** the 2001 Severn Estuary Strategy
- To provide a **strategic policy framework** for the Severn Estuary
- To provide **context to inform and support decision-making**
- To **facilitate the Marine & Coastal Act (2009) obligations** related to:
 - Cross-border integration
 - Land-sea integration
 - Ecosystem-based approach to management



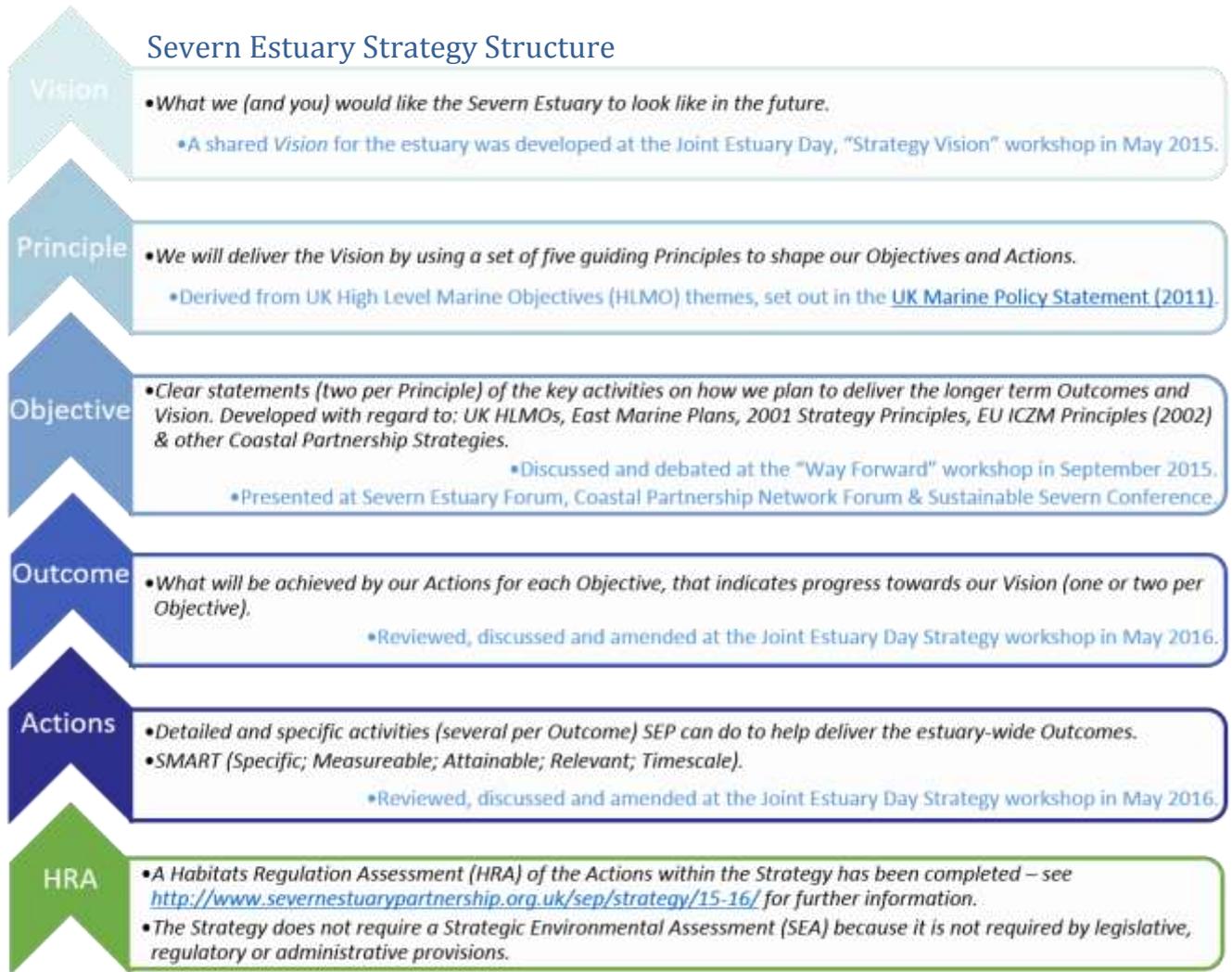
Why Do We Need a Severn Estuary Strategy?

- To ensure an **integrated approach for marine planning** in the Severn Estuary Region
- To provide context to **inform and support decision making** for a wide range of proposed estuary developments (e.g. maritime uses, minerals and marine renewable energy).

Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), there is a requirement to take an ecosystem-based approach to management of the sea and coast. The duty to cooperate is also outlined as a requirement for local planning authorities and public bodies under the Localism Act (2011), to ‘maximise the effectiveness of Local and Marine Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters’. In light of these statutory requirements, the Strategy will help to facilitate integration at the coast, between sectors and across administrative boundaries, ensuring that an ecosystem-based approach is taken for management of the Severn Estuary.

OUR 10 YEAR VISION FOR THE ESTUARY

The Severn Estuary Strategy champions an integrated approach to the sustainable use and enjoyment of the Severn Estuary



Stakeholder input provided direction and focus throughout the development of the Strategy.

Who is it for?

This Strategy is for the whole of the Severn Estuary region and for the members and associates of the Severn Estuary Partnership.

For the Strategy to be successful, all those with an interest in the estuary are encouraged to accept it as a strategic management framework to inform their approach/contribution to the future sustainable management of the estuary.

Through this commitment, the Strategy will ensure that a more integrated and joined-up approach to management of the Severn Estuary is taken.

Aims of the High-Level Objectives

- Incorporate strategies of Governments (EU, UK & Welsh) and all SEP partners.
- Light touch but robust enough to be used as a limit test and challenge proposals.
- Recognise action by others to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Focused projects to fill gaps in evidence and promote action.

PRINCIPLE 1: Achieving a Sustainable Marine Economy

The Severn Estuary and its coastal areas supports major cities including Cardiff, Bristol, Gloucester and Newport and its ports are gateways to the Atlantic. The significant industrial and commercial developments are all supported by excellent land and sea communications, including links to Britain’s motorway network and airports. This network has been influenced by the geography and topography of the region and it reflects both the historic and economic developments and requirements of the estuary over the years.

What is “Sustainable Development”?
 "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." [United Nations \(2017\)](#).

The estuary provides a multitude of resources for industries around its shores

What were the values of the estuary to you?
 (Workshop: May 2015)

- Successful port industries
- Transport integration: road, rail, water, air
- Sustainable coastal tourism and business
- Operational nature of estuary and its benefit to the local economy
- Fish nursery function: species of commercial importance in the Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea & species of recreational importance
- Sustaining ecosystem services
- Access, environment, habitat of the Levels and intertidal areas to be maintained as present

through transport, trade and materials, energy generation and much more. Ports, aggregates, chemical processing companies and power stations, as well as many others, all play a vital role in the economy and social structure of the area. The service industry is a major employment sector with tourism attracting several million visitors each year to a large and varied number of attractions, accommodation types and transport services, based in both the towns and countryside.

City regions and devolution agendas like [Great Western Cities](#) which, launched in 2015, involves Newport, Cardiff and Bristol, are emerging round the estuary. The [Cardiff Capital Region](#) is a partnership of 10 local authorities in south Wales, with an investment of £1.2 billion from 2016-2023, whose vision is to secure sustainable economic growth for future generations. There are three Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) on the English side of the estuary, [GFirst](#) (Gloucestershire), [West of England](#) and [Heart of the South West](#) (click for Strategic Economic Plans). The aim of the LEPs are to drive economic development and increase local employment. Enterprise Areas, such as the Severnside-Avonmouth and Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone, are key economic drivers for the South West region.

The estuary offers a significant number of opportunities for a wide range of industries and businesses. By engaging with both industry and consumers and championing sustainable practice, we will help to play our part in maintaining a diverse, thriving and competitive economy in the Severn Estuary. The estuary is internationally important for its wildlife, and so its sensitive habitats need to be sustainably managed and looked after for future generations. One of the roles of the Partnership is to promote the globally agreed [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) within the estuary, by involving, communicating and bringing together all of those who have a stake in the development, management and use of the estuary.



Port, dredging and shipping activities are major contributors to the marine economy of the Severn Estuary.

PRINCIPLE 1

Achieving a Sustainable Marine Economy

OBJECTIVE 1.1

To embed and promote the principles of sustainable development as part of efforts to create and maintain a diverse, thriving and competitive economy, whilst respecting environmental limits.

OUTCOME 1.1

A thriving local economy with people, nature and industry in harmony.

**SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP
ACTIONS**

1.1.1: Engage with all relevant strategic partnerships in the estuary to share best practice and good sustainable development principles.

1.1.2: SEP members and associates to promote the [principles of sustainable development](#) within their own organisations (as appropriate) and as a group.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

To support prosperity and employment opportunities where businesses and consumers respect environmental limits and are socially responsible.

OUTCOME 1.2

Employers and citizens have a good understanding of and respect the natural resources and share environmental and social responsibilities.

**SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP
ACTIONS**

1.2.1: Recognise and champion businesses and consumers who show they embed sustainable development in practice, developing “Business Case Studies” where appropriate.

1.2.2: Engage with businesses and consumers to exchange information on how to be environmentally responsible.

1.2.3: Encourage businesses to measure their progress towards sustainable development through schemes such as [Community Footprint](#).

PRINCIPLE 2: Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015

“Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. It will expect them to:

- *work together better*
- *involve people reflecting the diversity of our communities*
- *look to the long term as well as focusing on now*
- *take action to try and stop problems getting worse - or even stop them happening in the first place.”*

The Severn Estuary has long been a focus of human activity, with people living and working around the estuary for millennia. Within the region, there are significant conurbations with populations in excess of 100,000 people, like Cardiff, Newport and Bristol. There are also many other smaller towns and rural settlements on the extensive coastal plains around the estuary.

The iconic Severn Estuary shores and seascape affect the quality of lives of all people who live near it, as well as others who visit or gain benefit from the use of its resources. The environment presents a unique sense of place due to its rich cultural and natural heritage. By informing communities about the value

How do you define Seascape?

*“An area of sea, coastline and land, as perceived by people, whose character results from the actions and interactions of land with sea, by natural and/or human factors”. *Natural England (2010).**

of our estuary and promoting the benefits of living and working alongside the estuary, communities will enjoy access to the coast whilst also appreciating the benefits they gain from supporting a sustainable estuary. Recent developments in legislation, such as the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#), support healthier, more resilient and environmentally responsible communities. Healthy communities are strong communities that are better prepared to adapt to future changes in our environment.

Locals and visitors can access the coast through the Wales Coast Path, Severn Way and England Coast Path; provision of the paths is supported under the [Marine and Coastal Access Act \(2009\)](#). There are a wide range of other recreational activities that occur alongside the estuary, including bird watching, boating, walking and angling. It is recognised that participation in recreational or sporting activities often serves to foster attitudes of environmental awareness and well-being. This can lead to increased support for conservation and sustainable use of the area.

The Severn Estuary presents a challenging environment for shoreline management. The tidal range is the one of the highest in the world and adverse weather conditions can raise water levels by over two metres above predicted levels. To become and remain resilient as our climate changes and the challenges related to flood risk and coastal erosion increase, our estuary communities need accurate, up-to-date and easily accessible information. The [Severn Estuary Coastal Group \(SECG\)](#) are responsible for implementing the Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) and promote a coordinated and sustainable approach to coastal risk management round the estuary.

What were the values of the estuary to you? (Workshop: May 2015)

- Sense of place: unique environment and unique livelihoods
- Landscape and seascape
- Communities that adjoin the estuary understand its value
- Appreciate and celebrate cultural heritage
- Tourism, recreation and access along the coast
- Sustainable flood and coastal defences in key communities and areas
- Freedom of access
- Flood resilience – negative and positive impacts of future developments



Coastal access plays an important role in well-being alongside the Severn Estuary.



The Severn Estuary presents a challenging environment for shoreline management.



The estuary is popular for many recreational activities including bird watching.



PRINCIPLE 2

Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society

OBJECTIVE 2.1

To actively promote responsible, equitable and safe access to the diverse natural environment and cultural heritage of the estuary.

OUTCOME 2.1

Communities enjoy access to the coast whilst appreciating the benefits they gain from supporting a sustainable estuary and iconic seascape.

SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

- 2.1.1: Promote the benefits of living and working alongside a sustainable estuary and iconic seascape and landscape, with a rich cultural heritage.
- 2.1.2: Ensure that information is shared as widely as possible, targeting its use where the estuary and communities could benefit most.
- 2.1.3: Explore opportunities for better engagement with hard to reach communities and individuals and promote the outputs.
- 2.1.4: Promote and support access to the estuary for local communities through the Wales Coast Path, Severn Way and England Coast Path.
- 2.1.5: Promote the understanding of the estuary as a shared resource and the potential implications of plans and activities on environmental, social and cultural services.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

To support vibrant and sustainable communities, contributing to health and well-being objectives, as well as ensuring that communities are resilient to flood risk and coastal erosion.

OUTCOME 2.2

The health, physical and mental well-being of communities is enhanced through better appreciation of the diversity of seascape, natural and cultural heritage of the Severn Estuary.

SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

- 2.2.1: Promote a consistent, estuary-wide approach and share best practice to respond to the challenges of coastal and climate change.
- 2.2.2: Explore and propose indicators to better encourage the measuring of well-being indicators, ensuring new approaches are shared and discussed across the estuary.
- 2.2.3: Support healthier communities through the promotion of recreational activities across the estuary.

PRINCIPLE 3: Living Within Environmental Limits

The Severn Estuary is a huge, diverse area with fascinating natural, cultural, geographical and geological features that support many ecosystem services. The estuary is fed by the catchments of five major rivers; including the River Severn, the longest river in Great Britain. It is Britain’s second largest estuary and has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world with a tidal regime that causes strong tidal streams, mobile sediments and the famous [Severn Bore](#). It contains a wide variety of landscapes and seascapes including saltmarshes, cliffs, islands and tidal flats, which are enjoyed by many for recreation and appreciation of the estuary’s wildlife and habitats. The estuary is an important migratory route for salmon and internationally rare fish species such as shad, as well as providing high tide roosts for internationally important wildfowl. It supports commercial fisheries, as well as being well-known for shore and boat-based recreational sea angling.

What are the landscape and nature conservation designations protecting the Severn Estuary?

- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*
- Special Protection Area (SPA)*
- Ramsar Site
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- National Nature Reserve (NNR)
- Heritage Coasts
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Nature Improvement Areas (NIA)



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The Severn Bore is one of Britain’s spectacular natural phenomena that attracts thousands of visitors every year.

The estuary is internationally recognised for its nature conservation interest features, having the status of Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the [EU Habitats*](#) and [Birds Directives*](#) and as a [Ramsar site](#). [The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities \(ASERA\)](#) has a membership of most of the statutory organisations around the Severn Estuary that collectively manage certain human activities that have the potential to impact upon protected features through a Management Scheme. ASERA has produced [Good Practice Guidelines](#), which will promote the responsible use of the estuary and its environment, whilst providing a safer environment for both local people and visitors to enjoy.

The area is well known for the wealth of nationally recognised archaeological and historic interest features, as well as its high quality historic landscape. Archaeological remains in and around the Severn Estuary are a finite resource, an irreplaceable record that contributes to our

understanding of the past and the present. The [Severn Estuary Levels Research Committee](#) promotes archaeological research and champions the estuary’s unique archaeology.

Improving water quality and ensuring the sustainability of water resource management is essential to avoid negative impacts on the aquatic environment, communities and the economy. Legislation such as the [EU Water Framework Directive*](#), [EU Bathing Water Directive*](#) and the [Flood and Water Management Act \(2010\)](#) set ambitious targets to help improve and protect the water environment for communities in the UK now, and in the face of climate change.

What were the values of the estuary to you?
(Workshop: May 2015)

- Wildlife species and habitats
- Nature conservation & the European Marine Site
- Water management
- Heritage value of the Severn fisheries
- Environmental sustainability
- Huge tide (height & flow) & Severn Bore
- Coastal habitats maintained
- Migratory fish routes
- Historic values and marine archaeology



© John Coleman

Our estuary supports nationally and internationally important habitats and species, and is a key migratory route for salmon and internationally rare fish species.

*The Strategy will be revised in light of significant government or legislative changes, where necessary.

PRINCIPLE 3

Living within Environmental Limits

OBJECTIVE 3.1

To protect, conserve and enhance the rich biodiversity and cultural heritage in order to achieve healthy, resilient and adaptable ecosystems.

OUTCOME 3.1

Communities and industry have a better understanding of the historic, aquatic and natural environment and the ecosystem services they provide, leading to more sustainable management.

**SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP
ACTIONS**

- 3.1.1: Promote and disseminate existing and emerging information to industry, communities and organisations on the wise use of water, prevention of litter and pollution and improvements to water quality across the estuary.
- 3.1.2: Promote research to achieve a strategic understanding of the estuary’s historic assets and aquatic and natural environment to determine impacts of development and coastal processes, and inform decision-making.
- 3.1.3: Engage with Relevant Authorities on the Management Scheme for the Severn Estuary European Marine Site, promoting the management of activities and actions to achieve and maintain “*favourable conservation status*”.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

To encourage renewable and sustainable resource use and to facilitate appropriate action on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

OUTCOME 3.2

- 3.2.1: Sustainable use and management of natural resources for the continued protection of a dynamic environment.
- 3.2.2: Implications of climate change are understood and discussed widely by both communities and industry throughout the estuary, to enable more informed responses and action.

**SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP
ACTIONS**

- 3.2.1: Encourage the sustainable use of finite resources through education and communication.
- 3.2.2: Continue to disseminate information regarding energy generation schemes.
- 3.2.3: Engage with industry, communities and visitors to exchange information on how to live within safe and changing environmental limits.
- 3.2.4: Create a platform for debate and discussion on the potential threats and impacts of climate change.
- 3.2.5: Promote educational materials on the various internationally important species and habitats associated with the Severn Estuary.

PRINCIPLE 4: Promoting Good Governance

It is widely accepted by coastal and marine practitioners that good governance is central to sustainable development. SEP identifies that good governance is based on a balance of the following key principles:

- **Transparency, openness, honesty, inclusion and accountability;**
- **Objectivity, clear vision and strong leadership, and the following of best practice;** and,
- Taking a **unified, streamlined, efficient and collaborative approach** that avoids duplication.

Much of new and emerging policy and legislation, like the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#) and the High-Level Marine Objectives that underpin the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), have the principles of sustainable development and management of natural resources at their core. These commitments are outlined in the UK implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

What were the values of the estuary to you?

(Workshop: May 2015)

- Governments (local & central) have a shared vision for this shared ecosystem
- The Strategy be accessible to all
- Best practice examples locally and globally
- Clear governance

What is an ecosystem-based approach?

“The Ecosystem Approach is a concept that integrates the management of land, water and living resources and aims to reach a balance between three objectives: conservation of biodiversity; its sustainable use; and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of natural resources.”

[Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(2014\).](#)

The cross-border nature and diverging agendas within the Severn Estuary poses challenges for taking an integrated, ecosystem-based approach to management, as there are many different organisations, plans and policies for both the English and Welsh sides of the estuary. The UN’s [Sustainable Development Goals](#) explain that “a successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.” Encouraging and stimulating partnership working between the public, private and voluntary sectors is a fundamental and critical role for SEP. It facilitates and stimulates discussion across the border and across sector, with the Strategy providing a framework for coordination and joined-up thinking. Some of the many activities that make the estuary so important to its users have potential to damage its long-term future. Striking a balance between these competing interests across the environment, economic and social sectors is crucial in order to achieve effective governance.



The Strategy will help provide a framework for coordination, joined-up thinking and a collaborative approach to decision-making.

Examples of catchment and estuary-wide management & planning

- [Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities \(ASERA\)](#) & the European Marine Site Management Scheme
- [Severn Estuary Coastal Group \(SECG\)](#) & the Severn Estuary Shoreline Management Plan 2
- Bristol Channel Standing Environment Group
- [Severn Vision](#) – a vision for nature in the estuary produced by NGOs representing wildlife and landscape interests
- Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary Energy Group
- [Severn River Basin Management Plan](#) – Environment Agency
- [Catchment-based Partnerships](#) - collaborative working at a river catchment scale

There have been many national, European and international attempts to build capacity and good governance through Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning, for example. Under national and international obligations such as the [Marine and Coastal Access Act \(2009\)](#), there will be two Marine Plans that cover the estuary, the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP), produced by Welsh Government, and the South West Marine Plan, produced by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). There is a commitment from Welsh Government and the MMO to ensure that the necessary cross-border liaison occurs and the Strategy’s overarching *Principles* and *Objectives* will help to guide this process.



PRINCIPLE 4

Promoting Good Governance

OBJECTIVE 4.1

To promote partnership working by involving all those who have an interest in decision-making processes affecting the estuary in order to deliver the highest standard of management.

OUTCOME 4.1

- 4.1.1 All coastal and marine practitioners and stakeholders have the opportunity to work together, contribute relevant data and influence decision-making processes at a catchment scale.
- 4.1.2 Estuary plans, strategies and projects take a sustainable development approach.

SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

- 4.1.1: Encourage public bodies responsible for estuary planning to work together on common issues and evidence in a coordinated and consistent manner.
- 4.1.2: Actively support relevant professional national networks to help shape the messages at a national level and ensure best practice is shared with estuary decision-makers.
- 4.1.3: Engage with initiatives and projects that have the potential to affect the estuary and its interests.
- 4.1.4: Promote information on and engage with the Brexit debate and its implications for the estuary.
- 4.1.5: Promote good practice on a catchment scale by developing links with existing Catchment-based Partnerships.

OBJECTIVE 4.2

To encourage integration between all estuary-related plans and governance structures, ensuring plan-led regulation and cross-sectoral and cross-boundary consistency whilst taking an ecosystem-based approach to management.

OUTCOME 4.2

Better access to other estuary and catchment plans, projects and strategies for all sectors and neighbouring geographical areas to facilitate consistent and inclusive decision-making.

SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

- 4.2.1: Produce a 'roadmap' to policies, plans and strategies relevant to the management of the Severn Estuary.
- 4.2.2: Actively engage with all relevant strategic plans and developments to promote our principles.
- 4.2.3: Continue to input into the marine planning process in the estuary and wider Bristol Channel.
- 4.2.4: Continue to support services to estuary groups and to provide opportunities for estuary groups' liaison (e.g. through the Joint Estuary Day)
- 4.2.5: Facilitate education, training and the exchange of information among estuary users, practitioners and decision-makers via the Severn Estuary Forum, SEP E-news, Severn Tidings and social media.

PRINCIPLE 5: Using Sound Science Responsibly

New scientific data, knowledge and evidence is constantly emerging from many different organisations and individuals around the estuary on a wide range of topics from archaeology to wildlife. Often this information is not immediately available or accessible to decision and policy-makers around the estuary, particularly given the fragmented and complex institutional and governance structure. The best available data should be utilised and shared by all to support the sustainable future management of the estuary. It is essential that decisions are made using sound evidence. [Local Environmental Record Centres](#) provide a valuable and important source of information on the natural environment. The [Southwest Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme](#) provides a consistent regional approach to the monitoring of coastal processes and provides information to inform Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) developments and the operational management of coastal protection.

What were the values of the estuary to you?

(Workshop: May 2015)

- Science – policy integration
- Evidence-based knowledge to support decisions
- Science communication
- Public education facilities promoting greater awareness
- Best practice examples locally and globally

The Partnership is uniquely placed to receive and disseminate information on estuary-wide activities, developments and news. It offers the opportunity for partners and associates to publicise information about updates, developments and change in their field. In many cases, complex issues that arise across the estuary cannot be solved independently, requiring scientists and policy-makers to work together. Where possible and appropriate, the Partnership seeks to encourage and promote co-production between them. In the past, SEP has been involved in facilitating and coordinating science-policy topic groups, such as the [Severn Estuary Climate Change Advisory Group](#) and hopes to stimulate further similar initiatives in the future. The existing long-term partnership of the [Severn Estuary and Levels Research Committee](#) has successfully brought together academic and other archaeologists researching the archaeology and historic environment of the Severn Estuary.



Citizen science in action – CITIZAN has been working with volunteers at Brean Down to create a baseline to enable monitoring of rates of erosion.

What is citizen science?

“Citizen Science is about partnership- bringing together scientists, amateur recorders and local interest groups from a variety of backgrounds to observe and record the state of our environment.” *Wales Biodiversity Partnership (2015).*

Citizen science provides key data gathering opportunities to inform a wide range of ecological and environmental research. It is growing in popularity with the public and wider communities around the estuary, as well as nationally. It helps the public to develop a greater interest, understanding and connection to the natural environment, which supports the sustainable use and management of the coast. The Partnership supports and will promote various existing and developing citizen science schemes around the estuary. Some examples of citizen science groups are the [Gloucester Severn Estuary Stakeholders](#), the [Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust](#) and the [Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network \(CITIZAN\)](#).



PRINCIPLE 5

Using Sound Science Responsibly

OBJECTIVE 5.1

To signpost relevant data and evidence to improve evidence-based decision-making.

OUTCOME 5.1

Decisions, operations and advice relating to the Severn Estuary are underpinned by sound and quality-assured evidence, as well as being informed by the latest thinking.

SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

5.1.1: Facilitate an evidence sharing-workshop, which brings together academic institutions and other organisations to identify the latest thinking and evidence for decision-making.

5.1.2: Support the availability of relevant evidence and promote access to this through the sharing of information between all stakeholders.

5.1.3: Investigate a mechanism to maintain the long-term provision of sign-posting facilities to relevant evidence and current research.

5.1.4: Work with government bodies to support planning and policy development and encourage the use of the best available evidence base.

5.1.5: Support, facilitate and coordinate science-policy topic groups, where appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 5.2

To identify evidence gaps and improve the quality of data available.

OUTCOME 5.2

Widespread and improved understanding of the Severn Estuary is acquired through better disseminated scientific research and data.

SEVERN ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

5.2.1: Promote and support the development of citizen science schemes.

5.2.2: Promote the understanding of science relevant to the Severn Estuary and its stakeholders, such as impacts of climate change, adaptation measures and mitigation.

5.2.3: Communicate the results of the latest relevant research and thinking to stakeholders.

5.2.4: Ensure information produced by SEP is in a readily understandable and freely available format.

5.2.5: Support the engagement of scientists in topical Severn Estuary issues and encourage co-production between scientists and policy-makers.

Strategy Engagement & Consultation

The Partnership has hosted a series of workshops with a wide range of sectors to gain input into the Severn Estuary Strategy development process:

Workshop reports are available on the SEP website.

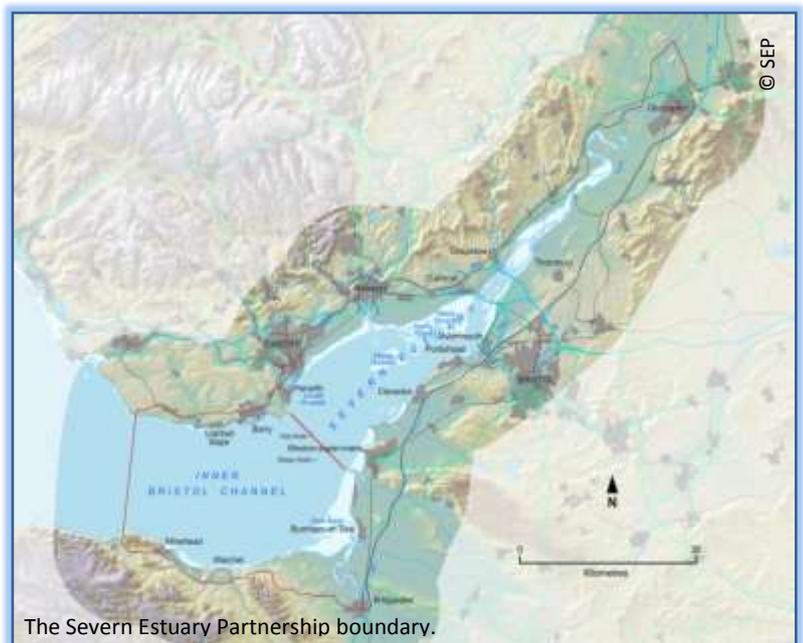
- **The Strategy Vision (May 2015):** This workshop not only highlighted the values, important and key concerns within the Severn Estuary, but also gained consensus, support and debate on the role of a revised Strategy for the Severn Estuary.
- **The Way Forward (September 2015):** This workshop discussed the way forward for the Strategy. A set of high-level *Objectives* were introduced and debated and these were then cross-referenced against the values of the estuary identified during the May 2015 workshop. The workshop also included a stocktake of existing policies, plans and strategies relevant to the management of the estuary to provide context for the development process.
- **The Strategy Outcomes and Actions (May 2016):** Delegates attending the workshop assessed the *Outcomes* and *Actions* related to each *Objective* and provided guidance on whether these were appropriate, achievable, measurable and clearly written.

In addition to the workshops, the Partnership has presented on the Strategy at several events including the Severn Estuary Forum (Sept 2015 & 2016), the Celtic Seas Partnership (Nov 2015), the Coastal Partnership Network (Nov 2015 & 2016), the Sustainable Severn Conference (Dec 2015), the West of England Nature Partnership Iconic Wildlife & Landscape meeting (Sept 2016), and to the South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (Dec 2016).

About the Partnership

Context

Set up in 1995, the Severn Estuary Partnership is an independent, estuary-wide non-statutory initiative led by local authorities and statutory agencies. We work with all those involved in the management of the estuary, from planners to port authorities, fishermen to farmers and many more with an interest in the future of the estuary. It provides support to many organisations who have responsibilities or interests in the estuary, including bringing together local authorities and statutory agencies together on a regular basis. The area covered by SEP is shown on the map (opposite)- from just above Gloucester to Hurlstone Point near Minehead on the English coast and Nash Point (west of Barry) on the Welsh coast.



The Partnership brings people together to resolve problems and realise opportunities. Our key aims:

1. **Facilitate effective communication** across and between organisations and individuals
2. Establish and embed a set of **'common principles' for sustainable estuary use** via Partners' strategies, policies and action plans

3. Act as a **co-ordinating body** to assist the effective and **efficient delivery** of agreed estuary-wide actions
4. **Promote and publicise the estuary** at local, national and international level
5. **Add value and fill gaps** in effective estuary management, providing extra capacity when required

Knowledge Exchange & Communication

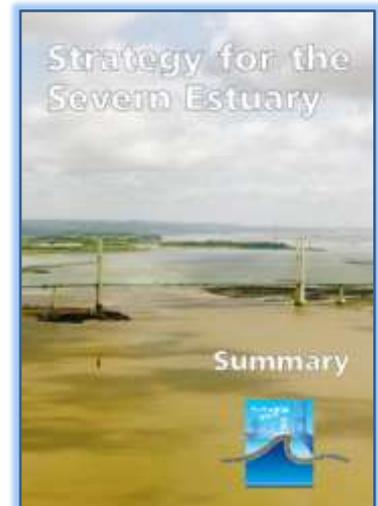
The Partnership is uniquely placed to receive and disseminate information on estuary-wide activities, developments and news. Our communication platforms:

- Organisation of the annual **Severn Estuary Forum** for an update on the events, lively debate and a “meet the neighbours opportunity”.
- **Joint Estuary Day**, which brings together estuary-wide groups on an annual basis.
- Up-to-date information and news via **SEP social media**- [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#).
- Monthly **SEP E-News**- updates of the latest Severn Estuary and wider UK coastal news, consultations and events.
- Distribution and promotion of the **Severn Tidings Newsletters**.
- Development of the **SEP, Severn Estuary Gateway** and other associated websites.
- Maintenance of an estuary-wide **contacts database** of individuals and organisations.

2001 Severn Estuary Strategy

The Strategy for the Severn Estuary was launched in 2001 after several years of work developing consensus and agreement. It aimed to *“bring together all those involved in the development, management and use of the estuary within a framework which encourages the integration of their interests and responsibilities to achieve common objective”*. The 2001 Strategy has been used to inform local plans and policy by local planning authorities and nature conservation agencies around the Severn Estuary.

The Strategy covered a wide range of issues and opportunities and was developed to provide detailed justification for an integrated and co-operative approach to action on the Severn Estuary. It aimed to involve all the users (across sector, both statutory and non-statutory bodies and commercial organisations) around the estuary in its future management. It also promoted a series of ‘policies’ to encourage more sustainable management practice on the estuary and to address the challenge of realistically and sustainably managing competing demands. To help illustrate how the policies could be acted upon, the Strategy listed ‘proposals for action’ for partner organisations.



To view the 2001 Severn Estuary Strategy, visit the [SEP website](http://www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/sep/strategy/15-16).

Taking the Strategy Forwards

The *Actions* outlined in this Strategy will be taken forward and incorporated in to the new SEP Business Plan (2017-2022). The Strategy consultation process has informed the priorities for SEP to focus on over the next 5-year period. The timeline for publishing the SEP Business Plan is Spring 2017 and will be available on the SEP website. The Partnership will seek to address the *Actions* set out in this Strategy, collaborating with other organisations as appropriate, to provide an integrated approach to the management of the Severn Estuary.

Many organisations and individuals, reflecting a wide range of interests, have contributed to the process that has resulted in the production of this Strategy document. Through attending meetings, participating in workshops and providing comments on various aspects of the Strategy, organisations and individuals have influenced its content. Many thanks to all of those who have contributed throughout its development and to the Strategy sub-group of the SEP Management Group for overseeing this process.

If you have any queries on the Strategy or would like to get involved in a specific Principle or Action, please email the Partnership at Severn@cardiff.ac.uk



Environment
Agency



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL



Core funding partners of the Severn Estuary Partnership



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Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales



Forest of Dean
DISTRICT COUNCIL

