



Turning the tide

Embracing change on England's coastlines

Ten years on
A look at the impact of
lottery funding

Partnership with the ports
England takes lead in sustainable
port development

Passionate about wildlife
Why we're wild for *WILDGuides*

English Nature is the statutory body which achieves, enables and promotes nature conservation in England.

We do so by working in partnership with individuals and a wide range of organisations including Government, representative bodies, agencies and voluntary organisations.

English Nature Magazine is published six times a year to promote nature conservation in England and make people aware of the latest developments. The views expressed in it by individuals are not necessarily those of English Nature.

For further information contact any of our offices. English Nature's National Office is: Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA. Tel: 01733 455000. Fax: 01733 568834

We operate a number of other offices across the country, from where our staff deal with local nature conservation issues.

Details of your nearest office can be obtained by phoning Northminster House, or by requesting a copy of English Nature Facts and Figures Information guide, free from the Enquiry Service at Northminster House, Tel 01733 455100.

You can also learn more about us via the Internet. Our address is: www.english-nature.org.uk



Awarded for excellence

Cover picture



Cover photographer: Mike Ireland

Porlock Bay, one of the first places where coastal processes were allowed to operate unhindered (see feature p 4-8)

brief update

New reptile guidelines for developers

Our native reptiles are all protected by law, but their habitats are still under significant threat from development. Because most of these creatures are found outside protected sites, development is a significant cause of habitat loss and fragmentation.

This threat has been addressed in a new English Nature leaflet. *Reptiles: guidelines for developers*, informs developers of their legal obligations where reptiles are present and features an overview of each species and associated wildlife legislation. Six species of reptile, three lizards and three snakes, are native to Britain.

The new leaflet identifies activities likely to threaten species and potentially break the law, such as laying pipelines, archaeological investigations and digging foundations. As well as guiding developers, it also offers advice to consultants and local authority planners. "We hope this leaflet will raise the profile of reptiles, which are often overlooked in planning and development," said Jim Foster, English Nature's reptile ecologist. "Early surveys will mean that reptiles can be more effectively conserved."

To obtain a copy of this leaflet call the English Nature's Enquiry Service on 01733 455 100.

First Manx shearwater chicks for fifty years

Manx shearwater chicks have been recorded on the island of Lundy for the first time for fifty years as part of the initial phase of the Seabird Recovery Project on the Bristol Channel island. A survey to count the declining birds found at least ten chicks in September.

The Seabird Recovery Project – run by English Nature, the Landmark Trust, the National Trust and the RSPB – has worked hard to give Manx Shearwaters every chance of breeding successfully, by eradicating rats and improving waste management.

Up close with Lundy sealife



Image from English Nature webcam

You can now get face-to-face with the diverse range of underwater sealife of Lundy Marine Nature Reserve via an underwater webcam on English Nature's website. Live images from the crystal clear waters around the island, which contain some of England's rarest and most spectacular marine plants, are beamed to the website (www.english-nature.org.uk/webcams), updating every 30 seconds.

Four of a kind make history in Yorkshire

The re-introduction of the red kite population in Yorkshire has received a boost with news that four healthy red kite chicks were fledged successfully there in early July. Four is an unusually high figure and this was the first such

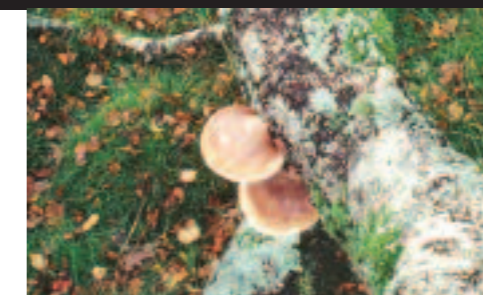
brood in Yorkshire since red kites were first re-introduced there in 1999. It is the only known brood of four in England this year. The average brood size is between one and two.



Four of a kind in Yorkshire

Now is the time for... fungi

A woodland walk in late autumn can offer up some stunning displays of fruiting fungi. But according to Dr Martyn Ainsworth, fungi specialist with English Nature, that's just one very – very – small part of the story.



Bracket fungi on a log

In the same way that postboxes, streetlights and drains are mere indications of much bigger, unseen networks and structures, so too are the fungi seen on trees and the ground at this time of year. These are just the fruit, the product of months' worth of energy, stored away for one single brief burst.

Hidden away in the tree itself or beneath leaves underfoot is the body of the fungus – the mycelium. A mass of tiny filaments, this can be very long lived – as much as 1,000 years or more. In such cases, it can also be extremely big – the largest having been compared in weight to that of a blue whale.

But it is the variety that never ceases to amaze – an afternoon's walking can offer 100 or more different species. These fall into one of two different types. The bearded tooth is one of the most beautiful, a cascade of ivory icicles found growing on beech trees. It is a recycler, breaking down dead and dying wood which then becomes new habitat for invertebrates. Pink waxcap is more of a mystery and occasionally appears on domestic lawns. Work is underway to find out if it is a recycler or mycorrhizal, exchanging nutrients directly with living plants, or maybe its diet lies somewhere in between.

Editorial

In this issue of English Nature Magazine, we're celebrating the Heritage Lottery Fund's tenth birthday. Please turn to pages 10-13 to find out what a huge contribution all the £1s spent over the last ten years on National Lottery tickets have made towards our landscapes, countryside and wildlife.

From bats and basking shark surveys to recreating chalk downland in the Chilterns and wildlife-rich landscapes in Wiltshire, over £600 m has been spent on these projects.

Our coastlines are perhaps the most diverse and dynamic of any landscapes. *Turning the Tide* on pages 4 and 5 looks at the damage climate change and other pressures are causing our coastlines, and how sustainable solutions are the only way forward.

At Porlock Bay, (see page 8), the difficult decision not to intervene after huge storms had again breached the sea wall has been demonstrated now, eight years later, to have been the right one.

Similarly at Alkborough Flats (see page 7), on the Humber estuary, a carefully planned programme of managed re-alignment over the next 50 years will allow parts of the estuary to flood in tune with the tides, so that other parts remain protected.

This ability to accept and manage change around our coastlines is again the theme of *Partnership with the ports*, on pages 14 and 15. This looks at the sustainable management of English estuaries, and confirms that the integration of environmental goals within key economic sectors can and must become the norm.

As always, I enjoy hearing from you. Please get in touch.

Amanda Giles

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Although English Nature magazine does not have a regular letters page, I am always interested in receiving feedback about the magazine, or letters on subjects that may be of interest to our readers. If there is a subject that you feel would be relevant to our readership, please write to me or email me, and I will certainly consider publishing your letter in the magazine.

Contact me, Amanda Giles, at English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA, or at amanda.giles@english-nature.org.uk

If this copy of English Nature magazine is not your own, and you would like to go on our mailing list to receive the magazine regularly, please contact Alison Eley, IMT, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

Or you can email your details to alison.eley@english-nature.org.uk

Turning the tide



There are few natural habitats that you can see forming and re-forming before your eyes, but around our coasts there are plenty that are always on the move. Sand dunes that shift in the face of driving winds, soft cliffs that collapse with every winter storm and mudflats that move with the tide.

England's dynamic coastline is around 8,000km long and very diverse, from the imposing chalk cliffs of the Kent and Sussex coast to the windswept expanses of mud and marsh on the shores of the Irish Sea and East Anglia.

But what these very different habitats share is that many are suffering. English Nature's most recent stocktake, the Maritime State of Nature report, warned that coastal habitats are in a poor condition and some are being lost altogether.

Highlighting special areas of concern, the report confirmed that saltmarsh is being steadily destroyed. The UK is losing roughly 100 hectares of saltmarsh a year and in Essex alone annual loss is between 40 and 50ha. This happens when the salt marsh, spreading inland, is blocked by sea defences, while at the same time being squeezed by development activity along the coast.

Conserving coastal habitats and putting right damage done is vital. The key to a long-term, sustainable solution, argues English Nature Coast and Conservation Advisor, Sue Rees, is to free natural processes to do what they do best – making and re-making our coastline.

Under natural circumstances, erosion goes on in some areas while sand and silt is deposited in others. In this way a natural coast should have its own built-in checks and balances. But around our coast human activity has disrupted this balance.

To get the best out of dynamic coastal habitats we must learn to embrace change, says Sue. "Nature conservation conventionally has been about protecting things from change – usually negative changes like development or pollution.

Yet many of the coastal habitats actually rely on change to maintain their biological interest." All the

indications are that the coast is likely to come under much greater pressure over the coming decades. Thanks to the legacy of its geologically-recent past southern England is sinking ever so slowly into the sea and will carry on doing so.

At the same time climate change is predicted to deliver more extreme weather, making the storms that challenge sea defences a more regular occurrence. All these pressures make the need to find sustainable solutions to flood defence, coastal erosion and habitat protection much more urgent.

One solution that is bringing biodiversity benefits and helping to protect homes against flooding is a process called managed re-alignment, which involves flooding low-lying land and allowing new saltmarsh to regenerate naturally. "Saltmarsh is the natural first line of defence against the sea" says Tim Collins, English Nature's Head of Coastal Conservation.

But though managed re-alignment is seen as a very attractive option to the agencies involved, it can be understandably difficult to convince local people that breaching old sea walls is the way to better flood defence.

It can be understandably difficult to convince local people about the benefits of breaching old sea walls

Tim Collins says that the success of existing re-alignments is now winning people over to the new thinking. One of the earliest experimental re-alignments was undertaken in 1995 at Tollesbury on Essex's Blackwater Estuary, a joint project between English Nature and Defra's predecessor MAFF. English Nature bought 21ha of farmland previously reclaimed from saltmarsh. The sea wall was breached using industrial machinery and a new counter wall was constructed behind the site. The site is now made up roughly of one third saltmarsh, the remainder being mudflats. Wading birds such as golden plover, knot and dunlin are just a few of the species that have been attracted to the site.

For Tim Collins the message that new saltmarsh can become a resource for local people is a very important one. He said: "I think creating saltmarsh can be part of finding a sustainable future for our coasts. You only have to go to a popular area like North Norfolk, for example, to realise how big a role wildlife tourism can play in a local economy."

Conversion to saltmarsh does not mean then that the land used is unproductive. As well as attracting visitors, marsh can be used for grazing or more exotic possibilities like oyster farming or growing marsh samphire, a saltmarsh species that's much sought after by chefs.

"The key to all our thinking about the future of the coast should be the need to make space for people and for wildlife," said Tim, "As a nation we cannot play ostrich. We have to make some tough decisions about the future of our coast and do it in a way that delivers for society as a whole and protects wildlife".

Key aims

English Nature's vision as stated in our Maritime Strategy is "Making space for people, industry and wildlife". We will achieve this vision through action in partnership with others under the following four aims:

- To conserve, recover and where appropriate restore the overall quality of our coast and seas, their natural processes, and associated geodiversity and biodiversity.
- To increase our understanding of the coastal and marine environments, their natural processes and the impact that human activities have upon them.
- To promote and encourage the use of natural resources in an environmentally sensitive manner to ensure long term social and economic benefits for all.
- To promote public understanding and appreciation of the value of the coastal and marine environments and seek wider involvement in adapting to change and in the development of new policies.

New up to date guidance on managed-realignment, part funded by English Nature was published in October. *Design Issues for Managed Re-alignment* is published by CIRIA. This manual tells you all you need to know about undertaking your own realignment scheme. See www.ciria.org/acatalog/C628.html for details.

To obtain a copy of the Maritime State of Nature report write to English Nature, PO Box 1995, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7XX

The Sea Watch Foundation aims to achieve better conservation of whales and dolphins in the seas around Britain and Ireland by involving the public in scientific monitoring of populations and the threats they face, and by the regular production of material to educate, inform and lobby for better environmental protection.

The Foundation is currently looking to recruit new members and trustees. If you would like to get involved, contact it for more information at info@seawatchfoundation.org.uk

The human dimension of coastal change



Sidestrans-Trimingham Cliffs, North Norfolk Coast SSSI

The dilemma of allowing our coasts to change in response to rising sea levels is at variance with the public expectation of coastal stability. This is why consultation has been at the heart of coastal management plans in Norfolk. The character of the coast of Norfolk from Sheringham to Great Yarmouth changes from soft, often dramatically high cliffs rich in evidence of the ice age to a low frontage often backed by sand dunes. It is a coast which has been eroding by about one metre a year for probably thousands of years.

The response over the last fifty years has been to build sea defences on long stretches of both the low lying coast and the cliffs. This has resulted in less material being eroded from the cliffs onto the beaches and therefore less sediment. However it is now clear that it is not possible to continue to protect coastal stretches in their current position without losing beaches and building increasingly higher levels of protection. This will get worse with rising sea levels over the next 100 years.

In an attempt to bring some overall strategy to the management of this coast, one of the first Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) was introduced here in the mid-nineties. This month sees the draft publication of a second generation plan going out for public consultation.

It presents a vision of the stretch of coast between Sheringham and Lowestoft for the next 100 years, seeking to balance the impacts of climate change with the local biodiversity, sea defences and human activity.

"It's essentially about where to hold the shore line and where to retreat it," said Gary Watson, a coastal geomorphologist at North Norfolk District Council. "We've been working closely with everyone from English Nature through to community representatives on this issue, but there are no easy answers. There's no point having a blanket policy of holding the line if in some places we can't."

The coast is dynamic and a defence policy that accepts the need to accommodate this change means that we

will see a range of habitats and transitions between the open coast and the terrestrial hinterland with benefits for the environment. However, there is an obvious social dimension to these decisions, particularly when there are implications for property owners.

"Not unnaturally, many people view this approach as a negative one, but unless the coast is managed in a more sustainable way we will lose our fine beaches and there will be even less sediment for areas elsewhere on the coast. This is not just about benefits to biodiversity but for people as well. Working with nature is the only sustainable option. However we are very aware that to implement this strategy, issues related to planning, consultation and social justice need to be addressed," added Peter Lambley, English Nature's Conservation Officer for the Norfolk Coast.

Exploring innovative ways of resolving these issues has been the focus of *Living With a Changing Coastline*, a study funded by English Nature, Defra, North Norfolk District Council and led by the Tyndall Centre for Climatic Change Research. Launched in February this year, it has been looking at the processes used by the SMP in how it develops coastal defence policy. This research has involved considering new approaches to deliver a sustainable future for the coast, with workshops involving communities, their representatives, other interested agencies and policy makers.

"The big issue is who trusts who," said Jessica Milligan, a research associate at the Tyndall Centre. "By bringing these people together we're acting as independent facilitators, enabling both sides to understand each other and use science in a way that accounts for issues real to people such as social justice, including compensation and land management."

For more information visit:

www.tyndall.ac.uk/research/theme4/theme4.shtml
or www.englishnature.org.uk/science/coasts_and_seas/default.asp

Managed re-alignment at Alkborough Flats

This new reserve will support and extend the existing internationally important wildlife of the Humber and contribute to aspirations in local and national Biodiversity Action Plans



Alkborough managed-re-alignment scheme

Halcrow Group on behalf of Environment Agency

Could sea level rise ever provide an opportunity for wildlife? Yes, if it is managed effectively and sustainably as at Alkborough Flats where a programme of managed re-alignment will create one of the largest areas of new intertidal habitat in the UK.

The Humber Estuary forms an important link in a chain of wetlands stretching from the Arctic to the west coast of Africa. Here, the tidal mudflats, saltmarsh and sandbars provide feeding and roosting sites for 160,000 migratory waterfowl each year like dunlin and bar-tailed godwit. The reedbeds and freshwater marshes, meanwhile, are home to threatened native species like the bittern and marsh harrier. Newly designated as the third largest SSSI in England, this is a place of international wildlife value.

Yet the rising tides caused by climate change will eventually flood these habitats. While some will be pushed inland, others will be squeezed up against the hard concrete defences of the estuary. It is estimated that up to 800 hectares of valuable habitat will be lost in this way.

For this reason and the need to protect the homes and businesses of around 300,000 local residents from flooding, the Environment Agency, English Nature and many other partners have been working on a radical shoreline management plan. This promotes a programme of managed re-alignment over the next 50 years at up to a dozen sites around the estuary. These will act as a safety valve, flooding in tune with the tides and so reducing high water levels elsewhere. Altogether they will eventually form some 1,500

hectares of new intertidal habitat, more than enough to replace what is lost.

Currently 440 hectares of low-lying agricultural land at the foot of a Jurassic limestone escarpment, Alkborough Flats will be one of the first and largest of these sites. Once the embankment surrounding this area is breached in Autumn 2006, the flats will quickly become a huge flood storage device. They will also become a new National Nature Reserve, featuring wet and dry grassland, mudflats, saltmarsh, open water and reedbed.

"This new reserve will support and extend the existing internationally important wildlife of the Humber and contribute to aspirations in local and national Biodiversity Action Plans," said Jeff Lunn, Area Manager of English Nature's Humber and Pennines team.

"The local community understand why this needs to happen and has been consulted at every stage. We're also ensuring that there are major benefits in terms of new jobs in conservation, visitor management and green tourism.

"I think that all those playing a part in this should feel very proud. This is a test bed for government policy on adapting to coastal processes and I've no doubt that we will be able to apply the lessons from here to other projects around the country."

For more information visit:

www.english-nature.org.uk/about/teams/team_photo/alkborough.pdf

A sea change in attitudes

Porlock Bay

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Intervene or let nature take its course? This was the question facing conservation organisations and locals after a night of stormy weather in October 1996 had breached a protective shingle bank, allowing the sea to flood grazing land and important wildlife habitat.

Although breached at various times since the Ice Age, the four-kilometre shingle ridge across Porlock Bay in Somerset had for most of the last century formed a natural barrier against the sea.

On the landward side this had allowed a variety of coastal habitats and different land usage to flourish. The reedbeds, cut to thatch local estate housing, supported bittern. The improved grassland, meanwhile, provided grazing for livestock and nesting grounds for lapwing. Redshank and shelduck bred on the upper saltmarsh and the freshwater and saline ditches supported a variety of invertebrates. This diverse mix of habitats earned the area notification as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The 1996 storm ripped a massive hole in the ridge, flooding 65 ha of land overnight. The following morning the local inhabitants were left to ponder a mess of stinking mud and dying vegetation.

"This had happened six years earlier, albeit on a smaller scale," said English Nature Conservation Officer Mike Edgington. "Then the local water authority had duly repaired the breach."

Now locals, including farmers, had to consider the prospect of losing the land forever. Conservation agencies, meanwhile, weighed the merits and costs of trying to restore lost habitat with inheriting a new one.

Earlier, in 1990, the National Trust had made the first move by refusing a request to repair the breach with shingle taken from its land up the coast. It felt that coastal processes should be allowed to operate unhindered and the wisdom of this view was ultimately backed by English Nature and the other agencies involved. Nature was left to take its course.

"This was advance thinking for the time but now this attitude to coastal processes is the focus of Government policy," Mike added. "And it has been borne out at Porlock."

After eight years, the site is now a valuable example of lower saltmarsh, the largest of its kind bordering the Bristol Channel. Marsh samphire, sea blite and sea aster now cover much of the area and, although no longer a suitable site for breeding, the habitat is used by thousands of migratory waterfowl.

"It's unique to lose the major interest of an SSSI and then have to re-notify the same area, but for a different reason," Mike added. "And the landscape is still evolving. As sediment builds up, the botanical value of the land will eventually change yet again and with it the wildlife that depends on it."

LETTERS

Dear Editor

Dr Lambert (September) is right in reporting that scientific research shows that the 'management' of large wild herbivores by human intervention does not work, being more trigger-happy than discriminative.

Native (roe and red) deer require conservation like other wildlife instead of battling against their contribution to the ecosystem while paradoxically introducing domestic stock having similar but greater impact. In contrast, alien species (muntjac and sika) that we recklessly introduced damage our native flora and fauna (including roe and red deer) and invariably do need control.

An oft-repeated soundbite is that we must 'compensate' for previously destroying predators by now adopting their role in destroying prey. But it is a popular misconception that prey species are controlled by predators, whereas more often predator numbers are controlled by available prey. Similarly, deer are limited by the availability of food and other resources. Predators were too few to limit deer populations.

Eating venison is a valid reason for shooting deer; an obsession to 'manage' native deer is not. We fail to control our own population which expanded over 7,000 years from under 3,000 to over 40,000,000 adults in Britain, while our impact reduced native deer from two million to under one.

Such scientific evidence exposes another reckless repetition, concocted to justify our meddling, that "there are more deer in Britain than at any time since the last ice age", false even if we include some half million alien deer we should never have introduced.

It is we who invaded the countryside, to which other native species then had to adapt.

John K Fawcett

London's Birding

Pete Massini, English Nature Regional Policy Officer for London, enjoys some birdwatching on the Thames.

Setting up telescopes on the north bank of the Thames in central London, opposite Tate Modern, adjacent to the elegant Millennium bridge (the one with the wobble) and downstream of the hullabaloo of the Mayor's Thames Festival, might seem an unpromising activity, especially as the purpose was to show to Londoners the wildlife associated with the Thames.

We could see the gulls (black-headed and lesser black-backed) patrolling the ebb and flow of the river, foraging for tidal titbits (the incoming tide bringing sea-borne scraps, the outgoing tide less savoury morsels from other sources), but would we really be able to capture people's attention with gulls and pigeons?

Fortunately we were in luck – even before we'd pointed the 'scopes skyward we heard the distinctive call of a peregrine falcon.

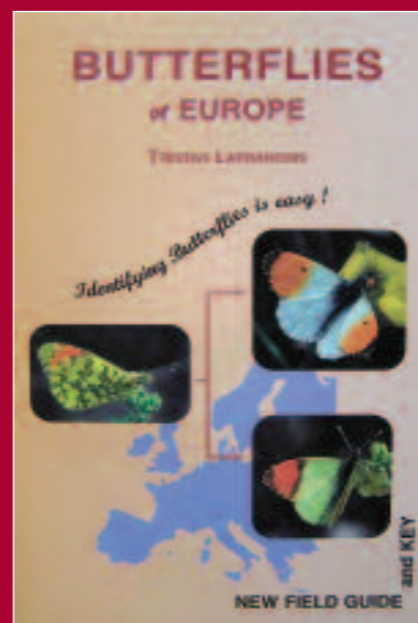
At least four pairs of peregrines now hold territory in London, two of which have bred. The dramatic tower of Tate Modern (the chimney stack of the former Bankside power station) is a favourite roost and hunting perch. Happily for us, one particular peregrine had decided that our optimism about establishing a 'Thames Festival Birdwatch' should be rewarded by maintaining a constant presence throughout the day, making sporadic wheeling flights and half-hearted stoops at nervous pigeons, as if it was aware of the enthralled audience across the river.

Initially, British reserve was in evidence, but taking our cue from curious glances and hesitant shuffles we urged passers-by to take a look – their amazed exclamations quickly drawing larger crowds. (Our first customer was a City of London policeman, instructed to check out some suspicious activity.)

The peregrine was undoubtedly the star turn, but for a few moments we were enchanted by the plaintive call of a chiffchaff which, having spent the night in a lollipop tree surrounded by brick and paving slab, took flight, continuing a journey south to warmer climes. Nature – ever present, marches to a different drum, even in the most unlikely places.

The Thames Festival Birdwatch is a London Biodiversity Partnership event supported by English Nature.

Book review



Butterflies of Europe

A new field guide and key by Tristan Lafranchis

Published in 2004 by Diatheo, 35 rue Broca, 75005 Paris, France

Price: £24, including p&p. Sterling cheques made out to 'Diatheo'.

A series of excellent photographs, most of them by British photographers, and a key to the diagnostic features of each butterfly make this book a must for anyone interested in identifying butterflies. In England we have

fewer than 60 species – compared to nearly 500 in Europe as a whole – but even here we sometimes struggle to name each one we see.

This field guide is ethically sound. Tristan Lafranchis claims that all butterflies can be identified in the field and alive. His wish is that the killing of butterflies for identification purposes – not only the commercial trade in specimens – will come to an end. Let's hope that the widespread use of his field guide will help to make this wish come true.

David Withrington

Lottery money safeguards our wildlife

While 70 per cent of the UK population now plays the National Lottery, most people are only vaguely aware of what the £1 they spent on their lottery ticket is being used to fund. High profile projects involving historic buildings may grab the headlines but less well known is the enormous contribution that lottery players are making towards the country's landscapes, countryside and wildlife.

Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage. Putting back the Wild Heart of Cornwall, a major HLF project

To put things into perspective, figures from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – which this year celebrates its tenth birthday – reveal that, in the past decade, National Lottery players have helped raise more than £600m for National Heritage through its parks, landscapes and wildlife funding. And of that, £200m has been spent on projects that directly benefit the UK's wildlife, ranging from bats and basking sharks to bluebells.

“The work we do for the natural environment is not as well-known as our work with historic buildings but it is just as important,” said Carole Souter, Director at HLF. “For instance, we are the most significant non-government source of funding

for biodiversity projects and HLF money helped to deliver 80 per cent of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets for lowland heathland conservation.”

HLF money is often crucial in kick-starting nature and wildlife projects, acting as a catalyst to get projects off the ground and bring on-board other organisations. Money is often committed at an early stage, creating interest and providing the momentum for projects to develop.

Many people are surprised at the diversity of the projects funded by the HLF. Carole continued, “Not many people are aware that we have funded a basking sharks survey and are also doing work with red squirrels, dragonflies,

water voles and a vast range of other species.”

Habitat loss – the single most important danger to wildlife – is also an issue being addressed by HLF, which has spent £73m helping organisations buy and restore land covering an area almost three times the size of the Isle of Wight. Habitat creation projects include a project to create access facilities at Barnes Wild Reserve, a major reserve being established at the former Barn Elms Reservoir. This attracts a variety of birds including teal, pintail, goldeneye and water rail as well as breeding wildfowl species. This project will provide disabled access and interpretation facilities including a viewing tower, eight hides, descriptive boards and an

outdoor classroom, as well as a CCTV system for remote viewing.

Competition for HLF money is strong and deciding what to fund is not always easy. A key criterion when selecting projects, however, is the extent to which they engage people with nature and wildlife. “We look for projects that get as many people as possible involved in biodiversity and wildlife, whether they be volunteers, school children or other groups. We always encourage applicants to be as imaginative as possible with their applications and make sure they talk to the local community. Realistically, the future preservation and care for the natural environment really depends on the public at large standing up and playing their part,” said Carole.

Expansion at Aston Rowant NNR

English Nature staff leading a children's red kite day

Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve in the Chilterns is renowned as one of the best places in the country to view red kites. Boasting superb views and a range of other wildlife, it is situated within an hour's drive from London, Oxford, Reading and Milton Keynes. In 2000, support from Heritage Lottery Fund allowed English Nature to purchase nearly 250 acres of land at the site, of which 89 acres was previously farmed. Since then, a host of improvements and activities have been carried out to improve visitor enjoyment and attract greater numbers.

The land acquisition has allowed English Nature to open up areas that were previously poorly known by visitors. Easy access gates and improved paths have been put in place while figures have shown a steady increase in the number of visitors.

“The acquisition of areas of land around the reserve has allowed us to convert these back to natural chalk downland through natural re-colonisation,” said Site Manager Graham Steven. “This has had a hugely beneficial impact on the landscape and plants such as common spotted orchid and Chiltern gentian are already appearing in these areas.”

“The next step will be to take on a community liaison officer. Work is also being done to improve links with local schools, community groups and people from deprived parts of Oxford, High Wycombe, Reading and west London. The aim is to encourage and facilitate use of the reserve by people who might not otherwise be able to enjoy the countryside. For example, we are hoping to provide links to the site using community bus services for those without a car. A lot of regular visitors have said they have seen tremendous changes to Aston Rowant over the last few years and we now hope that we can attract a wider range of visitors from all parts of the community.”

Recently, Aston Rowant arranged for a coach full of people from Reading Hindu Temple to go along and join in a community fun day at the reserve. The group got involved in a range of activities and treated staff to an amazing range of regional delicacies for lunch.

Paul Glendell/English Nature



Vital support for grazing initiative

An innovative project has been set up to help bring together people with grazing stock and the owners of grazing sites in Wiltshire.



Cattle grazing at Savernake

David Hodd

Restoring our historical landscapes

If you close your eyes and think of the Yorkshire countryside, what springs to mind? It might be the dry stone walls and hay meadows of the Dales or the white horses and sky blue of a windy sea at Robin Hood's Bay.

Dawn on Vale of York heathland

Julian Small

The wildlife-rich landscapes of Wiltshire have been crafted by generations of farmers tending their grazing flocks and herds. Left alone, these downs and meadows soon become overgrown as rough grasses, brambles and thorn bushes spread. Plants such as southern marsh orchid and insects like the chalk hill butterfly and other wildlife cannot survive in such an environment.

Yet recent crises such as Foot and Mouth have hit farmers hard, meaning that graziers are finding it more difficult to make a living and maintain grazing traditions. To help counter this, an innovative project has been set up to help bring together people with grazing stock and the owners of grazing sites in Wiltshire.

The Wiltshire Interactive Grazing Initiative (WIGI), supported by a £50,000 Your Heritage grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, started in 2002. Its aim has been to get the local community involved in helping graziers keep their animals on wildlife-rich sites. Said Dave Burton, English Nature Site Manager, "It was found that most of the grazing animals were coming to Wiltshire from further afield. By getting local people involved and appealing to local graziers through our network, we've been able to start using breeds of livestock which have the right grazing traits to keep a variety of habitats in optimum condition."

WIGI appointed a project officer to set up a network to find volunteers who could keep an eye on grazing animals. "The project really gained impetus in the aftermath of the Foot and Mouth epidemic which was shown to be having a major impact on the number of grazing animals available to graze the downs and meadows," he added.

The project has been particularly successful at Savernake Forest, a well-known woodland and pasture site that had become heavily shaded through many years of undergrazing. WIGI linked up with Pat Holloway, a farmer who runs a herd of rare white park cattle, who was happy for them to graze at Savernake.

"We were then faced with the problem of how we were going to get this stock into the woodlands and keep them there," said Dave. "We worked with the Forestry Enterprise to put fencing with access points around the site and get water to it before bringing the cattle in. From the local community, we managed to find some lookers – people who we trained to keep an eye on grazing animals."



Cattle released to graze as part of WIGI

David Hodd



Longhorn cattle at Skipworth Common

Julian Small

Vale of York Project Officer. "The other big problem is the purple moor grass which grows in large tussocks, swamping heather and other native heathland plants. We've introduced Hebridean sheep, longhorn cattle and Exmoor ponies to graze and keep this under control."

The project has already attracted a huge number of volunteers from the local community who've been involved in everything from clearing birch trees to recording vegetation. Extensive work is also being done to improve footpaths and inform the public about the value of the commons as a place for informal recreation.

What makes the heathlands in the Vale of York so special then? Julian explained, "They support a wonderful variety of wildlife and plants including woodlark, nightjar, green woodpeckers, marsh gentians, adders, grass snakes and lizards. And because the heathland has never been ploughed, it effectively provides us with a historically intact landscape. The heathland wildlife you see and hear now is the same as that experienced by people standing in the same spot thousands of years ago."

Work to recreate heathery areas in places where they have been lost is being carried out by the Forestry Commission by removing conifer plantations, in the process opening up the original heathland floor and allowing vegetation to reform. 35 hectares have already been cleared, with the target over five years being 50 hectares. The project is also halfway through its aim of restoring 250 hectares of existing heathland.

Partners in the Vale of York Heathland Project include MOD Defence Estates, the Forestry Commission, the Escrick Park Estate, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and English Nature.

"Looking to the future we want to look at what opportunities exist for creating more heathlands using agri-environmental schemes," added Julian.

What will probably not come to mind is a sandy track winding its way across a low, flat, marshy heath, maybe with striking yellow flowers and the coconut smell of gorse. People associate heathland with Thomas Hardy's Dorset, perhaps with Surrey or the New Forest but not usually anywhere further north than Sherwood Forest. Yet Yorkshire does have lowland heathland. The purple flowers of heather and summer snow of cotton-grass once covered much of the Vale of York. Yet hundreds of years of drainage and ploughing have left just fragments of this ancient landscape.

The remaining heathlands of the Vale of York are now being saved thanks to an exciting five-year project supported by a £347,000 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant. The five-year Restoring the Heaths of the Vale of York project has been set up to restore surviving heathlands and recreate them where they have been lost. The project will also promote greater public enjoyment of the commons through nature trails, guided walks and events.

"The actual restoration process involves removing birch scrub," said Julian Small, Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage

Partnership with the ports



Port activity at Immingham

ABP



Vessels at Felixstowe

Dr Chris Gibson



Artists impression of Immingham Outer Harbour

ABP

There are no realistic alternatives, as transshipment from continental ports would increase import costs and increase pressure on these ports to expand – again, often into habitat designated under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

With experience in finding solutions to these conflicts, England has some of the best skills in assessing the impact of port development on nature conservation. These skills have helped England's ports build a considerable body of knowledge and expertise in this area. ABP Marine Environmental Research (ABPmer) has recognised the need to share knowledge between EU member states and it was with this in mind that it joined the INTERREG IIIB – funded North-West Europe Delta Project.

This project is a consortium of consultancies, ports and academic institutions. Led by the Province of South Holland, the project also includes the Port of Rotterdam, the Institute for Infrastructure, Environment and Innovation (IMI), Agence de l'Eau Seine-Normandie and the Delft University of Technology. ABPmer is leading on a theme to produce guidance on the evaluation of impact of port activities on the marine environment.

Economic growth in the UK means we are importing more goods than ever. Many come from China and the Far East, making it necessary for British ports, especially those in southern and eastern England, to build new facilities to absorb increased demand. With shippers commissioning ships that are too large for existing facilities, ports are also being forced to provide new infrastructure and, in their expansion, are putting important coastal habitats in the UK at risk.

The project aims to promote sustainable development in North West European coastal and port areas by producing guidance on the management of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives respectively. It will also look at other issues such as indicators of ecological health, methods of creating new – or restoring existing – habitat, and sustainable dredging strategies.

“We are very excited about this opportunity to show what has been learnt over the years,” said ABPmer Project Manager, Tim Wells. “We have worked with English Nature on a variety of

projects and were keen to involve them in this from the start.”

It is hoped the project will also involve other UK consultancies in the groundbreaking work being carried out at a number of English ports. “We are delighted to participate in this project,” said Roger Morris, Head of Estuaries Conservation with English Nature. “We have felt for a long time that the approach taken in England was at the cutting edge of sustainable development and that this experience should be captured and shared with others in Europe.”

A good example of the best practice being demonstrated on these shores is the trialling in English ports of a new process for

evaluating the impact of maintenance dredging. This was developed jointly with English Nature, Defra, the Department for Transport and the Cabinet Office. The procedure involves documenting all dredging activity, understanding impacts and developing measures that offset negative impacts.

“This should greatly improve our confidence that the impacts of dredging are understood and managed holistically,” said Roger Morris. “It should also mean that the Habitats Directive is applied consistently to all dredging activities. This novel and groundbreaking approach addresses an issue that has yet to be tackled elsewhere in Europe.”

Readers may recall the work of English Nature magazine and ABP to deliver sustainable development solutions that was reported in English Nature magazine July 2003 (*A Safe Port of Call*). They may also recall that English Nature and ABPmer collaborated previously on the development of guidance for ports on the implementation of the Habitats Directive during the hugely successful European Marine Sites LIFE project between 1997 and 2000. This new project represents an important further stage in the development of a practical approach to the sustainable management of English estuaries and the furthering of mutually beneficial relations between English Nature, the ports industry and relevant consultancies.

Immingham Outer Harbour

Immingham Outer Harbour lies within the Humber Estuary proposed Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site and proposed Special Area of Conservation. Its construction will involve the removal of 22 hectares of inter-tidal habitat to create berths for the new generation of roll-on roll-off ferries that can no longer navigate the lock gates at Immingham because they are too large. The main impact will be the loss of feeding habitat for a range of migratory birds, including black-tailed godwits. The project was agreed on grounds of over-riding public interest and was only possible after close working between ABP and English Nature to secure a package of compensatory habitat creation for this and a separate ABP development at Hull (Quay 2005). This package will involve managed re-alignment at two sites: one at Welwick – almost opposite Immingham – and the other at Chowderness, near Barton on Humber. A total of around 60ha of new inter-tidal habitat will be created, which is designed specifically to support the birds that will be displaced by the port developments.

Harwich Haven Capital Dredge

This project went ahead because of over-riding public interest. The size of container ships had grown so much that they could not get into the ports of Harwich and Felixstowe. Channel deepening and widening meant that there would have been increased erosion of inter-tidal habitat and a small, but measurable reduction in the amount of inter-tidal habitat exposed over a tidal cycle. 16.5 hectares of compensatory habitat was created at nearby Trimley. In addition, a programme of sediment feeding (effectively assisting sediment to by-pass the port) was introduced to avoid accelerated erosion in the estuary. These packages have been monitored by Harwich Haven Authority, the organisation responsible for the commissioning of the dredge and which manages the maintenance of the dredged channel.

Wild for WILDGuides

Like all the best ideas, it started with people who are genuinely passionate about what they do. "We were all committed to trying to do something positive for nature conservation, using our own keenly acquired and wide-ranging skills and experience," said Rob Still, one of the founders of WILDGuides.

Thus WILDGuides was born as a publisher of innovative natural history books. In 2003, it teamed up with English Nature and together they are now producing a series of simple-to-use yet definitive photographic guides to wildlife. Each publication supports a relevant charity. Thus money from sales of *Britain's Butterflies* goes to Butterfly Conservation, while the British Dragonfly Society is the beneficiary from *Britain's Dragonflies*. "To date, we have been able to donate over £10,000 to various charities to help support conservation," explained Rob.

The guides are presented in an innovative, highly original way. For instance, use of photomontage techniques and the manipulation of digital imagery enables species to be depicted perfectly to scale on the page. "WILDGuides is a marvellous series of books that use new technology to present images in ways not seen before. With the dragonfly guide, for example, you can readily identify insects whether you are an expert or just want to know more about what you see in your back garden," said Richard Leafe, Regional Director East, English Nature.



ENGLISH NATURE READER OFFER

English Nature and WILDGuides are offering a number of WILDGuides titles – ideal for Christmas presents – at specially discounted prices as a special offer to readers of English Nature magazine. Titles include:

Arable Plants – a field guide £12.50 (RRP £15)

Britain's Orchids £12.50 (RRP £15)

Britain's Dragonflies £12.50 (RRP £15)

Britain's Butterflies £12.50 (RRP £15)

Whales and Dolphins of the European Atlantic £6 (RRP £8)

As part of this offer, all titles include FREE postage and packaging and can be ordered by calling the English Nature orderline on 0870 121 4177 and quoting English Nature magazine reader offer. *For more information on WILDGuides visit www.wildguides.co.uk*

WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

DECEMBER

DEC
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Xmas Tree Task

10.30, A495 Fenn's Bank lay-by, Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, Shropshire

This event will be led by Ian Cheeseborough, and is being held to celebrate International Volunteers Day.

Booking is required.



Contact:

Joan Daniels

on 01948 880362

DEC
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Green Christmas – Children's Session

10.00, Oakerside Dene Lodge, Castle Eden Dene NNR, County Durham

Craftswoman Maid Marion will show you how to make quality Christmas decorations using easily obtained natural materials.

Booking is required.



Contact:

Nick Haigh

or Steve Metcalfe

on 0191 5182403

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Thorne Moor National Nature Reserve

10.00, Recreation Ground at Moor Ends, Thorne Moor, Humberhead Peatlands NNR, South Yorkshire

A guided walk around this nature reserve which boasts thousands of wildlife species. Booking is required.



Contact:

Janet Canning

on 01405 818804

For information on more events, visit:
www.english-nature.org.uk/events.asp