

## STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP OUTPUTS

## ESSEX COAST RAMS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP OUTPUTS (NORTH)

**Introduction**

The second stakeholder workshop was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 at Colchester Borough Council offices. The outcomes from the event are recorded here.

The workshop drew upon local and specialised knowledge from a wide range of organisations and individuals involved in the management of the Natura 2000 sites and with local expertise in relation to ecology, habitat management, visitor management and education/interpretation of visitors. Outputs from the workshop will be used to help inform the Strategy in terms of implementable measures for avoidance of impact and mitigation of impact.

The workshop results, as summarised here, are not complete record of mitigation work that is required, merely a record of information that will help shape the Strategy and that will provide a useful reference and starting point for defining particular mitigation measurements required for each site. The workshop focussed on the northern sites in Essex, with discussion groups covering the Stour and Orwell Estuaries, Hamford Water, Colne Estuary, Blackwater Estuary and the Dengie. The workshop was not limited to northern sites as some outputs for south Essex Natura 2000 sites were recorded.

**Attendees**

| <b>Name</b>           | <b>Organisation</b>   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sue Hooton            | Place Services        |
| Lois Crisp            | Place Services        |
| Hamish Jackson        | Place Services        |
| Jack Haynes           | Natural England       |
| Roy Read              | Natural England       |
| Chris Keeling         | Natural England       |
| Michael Parkin        | Natural England       |
| Heather Read          | Natural England       |
| Charlie Williams      | Natural England       |
| Zoe Ringwood          | Natural England       |
| Gavin Rowsell         | Farmer                |
| David Eagle           | Farmer                |
| Cllr Andrew St Joseph | Maldon DC             |
| Shirley Anglin        | Essex Highways – PROW |
| Mark Nowers           | RSPB                  |
| Beverley McClean      | Colchester BC         |

**Discussion 1: What information exists currently on visitor activities and disturbance at Natura 2000 sites?**

| <b>Information</b>   | <b>Includes</b>  | <b>Source</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| Assessments that have been conducted as part of the coast path work  | Documents for the Jaywick to Harwich stretch                       | Natural England<br><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-jaywick-to-harwich-comment-on-proposals">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-jaywick-to-harwich-comment-on-proposals</a>                   |
| Assessments that have been conducted as part of the coast path work. This includes all coast path documents so Essex specific information has to be selected separately. | Sensitive areas and small parking areas/access points to the coast | Natural England<br><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-burnham-on-crouch-to-maldon-comment-on-proposals">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-burnham-on-crouch-to-maldon-comment-on-proposals</a> |

**Discussion 2: What measures are currently in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance?**

**Stour and Orwell Estuaries**

- There is visual screening and a bird hide on the southern shore of the estuary. This ensures that an area looks more important for over wintering birds, with the aim of causing a better public attitude on how the area is used.

**Hamford Water**

- Bramble Island has no access and is a quiet area as it is a known area for sensitive wintering and breeding birds.

**Colne Estuary**

- None

**Blackwater Estuary**

- Old Hall Marshes has a Little Tern colony but is managed by restricted access by boat in the summer.

**Dengie**

- Not so much a mitigation measure but as access to the coast in the south-east Dengie area is poor it means that it is isolated and quiet with only occasional dog walkers, anglers and birdwatchers.

**All Natura 2000 sites**

- Stationary electronic people counters have been used by Essex County Council (Highways) to determine visitor numbers to areas in Essex e.g. Maldon. Could it be possible that this data could be used to determine possible impacts? Could people counters be a viable way of determining visitor numbers to sensitive areas?
- Essex Wildlife Trust has been training volunteers (Coastal Guardians) to promote visitor awareness by talks and management of signs.

### **Discussion 3: What further measures are required?**

#### **Stour and Orwell Estuaries**

- Saltmarsh is driven over and trampled at Jacques Bay (accessed via Shove Lane, Bradfield), possible reduction in access to avoid habitat erosion.
- Water skiing is common and speed limits are not kept to at Jacques Bay. This should be enforced to reduce disturbance.
- Unauthorised access along sea wall in front of screen should be managed; this could be through better screening or wardening.
- There are bait diggers at Jacques Bay which should be made seasonal and have location restrictions.
- Access along outer edge of saltmarsh to high tide roosts at Wall Lane causes disturbance as well as recreational water craft particularly kayakers and paddle boarders. Access and locations of activities should be restricted.
- There is easy access to the foreshore at Mistlely Walls which impacts the birds that sit close to the path. Possibly reduce the ease of access or divert access point elsewhere.

#### **Hamford Water**

- Enforcement should be made to unauthorised quadbikes and motorbikes.
- A bridle path should be created at the western side of Hamford Water, this will draw horses away from the seawalls and give landowners income stream through stabling and grazing.
- Create shorter circular paths off coastal path with particular access from car parks.
- Promote alternative sites for wind surfers and canoeists away from The Naze such as St. Osyth Lake/Jaywick/end of Clacton beach.
- The Naze should have seasonal access rather than 365 day access.
- A main car park on public open space away from The Naze may encourage people to walk their dogs there instead of sensitive areas.
- Need to engage with developers especially national/big developers to see conservation areas as an attraction for selling houses and developers taking responsibility for conservation management.
- Post Brexit bring access habitat management into subsidy schemes for farmers.
- Consider ideas for the environment bank.
- Walking on the saltmarsh is disturbing birds on the south easterly side of Hamford Water.

#### **Colne Estuary**

- Habitat creation is needed bringing birds away from the coast.
- Keep shingle recharge out of spreading room at all times.
- Strandline/sand/shingle vegetation along the south side of Mersea and Cudmore Grove is currently being damaged by trampling and fires, mitigation is required to reduce impact. Current access levels at Cudmore Grove already cause some damage to veg and reducing breeding success for ringed plover.
- Power gliders currently take off from a field in Mersea which affects a large area, these occasionally fly low and fly over the Colne and Blackwater SPAs.
- Jet skis and canoes disturbing wader high tide roosts in main channel of the Colne Estuary and Strood Channel.
- Breeding ringed Plover and potentially Little Tern are heavily disturbed by the ferry passenger route from Mersea to Brightlingsea.

- Colne Point is by far the most important area for sand/shingle veg and breeding ringed plover so should be protected. Saltmarsh is vulnerable to increased visitor pressure from the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) and National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- Natwurst beach - dune vegetation badly damaged in places.
- The poplar beach by Point Clear commonly has kiteboarding which is disturbing terns and ringed plovers.
- The new play area at Cudmore Grove has increased visitor numbers significantly and in turn increased recreational disturbance, possibly look at ways of reducing numbers by creating large, high quality play areas away from the coast.

### **Blackwater Estuary**

- Maldon DC jet ski patrols should be supported.
- Keep Northey Island free of spreading room.
- Goldhanger had a former Little Tern colony.
- East Osea is a very popular picnic area which is un-authorised.
- Flying paramotors at Tollesbury.
- Keep shingle spit free from public access at Tollesbury Wick.

### **Dengie**

- Canoeists disturb high tide roosts on the River Blackwater.
- There is often illegal off-roading of motorcycles and quadbikes on the seawalls and saltmarsh beach by Bradwell PowerStation.
- The north east Dengie area is too disturbed for high tide roosts.
- Othona Community and St Peters Church area is known to have walkers cross the saltmarshes in all directions.

### **All Natura 2000 sites**

- Access can be reduced to some sites by ensuring that access to car parks, in known sensitive areas, is limited. In addition, car parks in non-sensitive areas could be created or promoted to increase visitors to these areas. Natural England would be able to supply a parking map to identify known car parks.
- Habitat Creation could be undertaken if a suitable site was considered appropriate. This should be considered if high visitor pressure to over wintering birds is determined and if managed retreat of saltmarshes or natural buffers to public would be possible. All stakeholders to be able undertake such a scheme would have to be considered.
- Traffic light systems of dog footprints on paths for dog walkers were raised as a possible mitigation option during the workshop. This would involve green (Dog off lead area), orange (Coming up to a dog on lead area) and red (Dog on lead area) footprints to inform dog walkers when they are in sensitive areas.
- Essex Highways highlight that permanent closing of walkways could also be an option if visitor pressure is particularly impacting to over wintering birds. Encouragement to use screening lower pathways during high tide could also be undertaken.

## Stakeholder Information Forms

The following table was filled out by attendees, as a means of capturing any additional issues/opinions that were not covered during discussions.

|   | <b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include measures in place/ planned which may help to avoid/mitigate disturbance)</b> | <b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b>  | <b>Other comments</b>   |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 |  | <p><b>Governance</b><br/>We understand that the Solent RAMS has a Project Board, Steering Group and a number of Task/Finish Groups (covering ranger, dog issues etc). We would recommend that governance of this kind is followed in Essex.</p> <p><b>SANGS</b><br/>SANGS – whilst we welcome this concept as part of the solution to alleviate pressure on coastal sites, it does have to be recognised that the coast is a draw to people in itself and SANGS within developments or elsewhere away from the coast will, by their very nature, not have the same draw as the coast itself.</p> <p>Parking at SANGS – we understand charging for parking at SANGS has been a contentious issue and lead to a lack of take up. This should be taken in to consideration in Essex.</p> <p><b>Rangers</b><br/>These need to be full-time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) because the presence of designated features of the SPAs around the Essex coast overlap: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>breeding [March to September]: Ringed Plover, Little Tern, Avocet</li> <li>non-breeding [July to May]: Redshank, Black-tailed Godwits (autumn), through to May for Dark-bellied Brent Geese</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) due to the difficulty of retaining seasonal staff and the knock on effect of repeated</li> </ul> | <p><b>Visitor surveys</b><br/>we would appreciate early sight of the results from the visitor surveys and a better understanding that the information gathered is robust and will stand up to scrutiny from developers/other parties.</p> |

|  | <p><b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include measures in place/planned which may help to avoid/mitigate disturbance)</b></p> | <p><b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b></p>   | <p><b>Other comments</b></p> |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
|  |  | <p>training/skilling up</p> <p>c) The pre-requisite of ranger recruitment should be the ability to develop a quick, friendly rapport with people, <b>not</b> bird ID skills</p> <p><b>Branding</b><br/>The Solent strategy has evolved since its inception and now has a <i>BirdAware</i> brand. It would be sensible if all strategies of this scale aligned to ensure consistent messaging. If someone visited Bradwell one week, then a beach on the south coast the next, the positive messages would be the same and hopefully resonate accordingly. It could also recognise the fact that certain birds will be using a number of sites around our coast much as we do.</p> <p><b>Monitoring</b><br/>It is important that surveys continue through the programme period to monitor effectiveness and behaviour change</p> <p><b>Signage</b><br/>Develop a programme of seasonal signage which is site specific and put in place/removed as appropriate.</p> |                              |

## ESSEX COAST RAMS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP OUTPUTS (SOUTH)

### Introduction

The first stakeholder workshop was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at Wat Tyler Country Park. The outcomes from the event are recorded here.

The workshop drew upon local and specialised knowledge from a wide range of organisations and individuals involved in the management of the Natura 2000 sites and with local expertise in relation to ecology, habitat management, visitor management and education/interpretation of visitors. Outputs from the workshop will be used to help inform the Strategy in terms of implementable measures for avoidance of impact and mitigation of impact.

The workshop results, as summarised here, are not complete record of mitigation work that is required, merely a record of information that will help shape the Strategy and that will provide a useful reference and starting point for defining particular mitigation measurements required for each site. The workshop focussed on the southern sites in Essex, with four discussion groups covering the Crouch and Roach Estuaries, Foulness Estuary, Southend and Benfleet Marshes and Thames Estuary and Marshes. The workshop was not limited to southern sites as some outputs for north Essex Natura 2000 sites were recorded.

### Attendees

| Name             | Organisation             |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Mark Summer      | MOD / DIO                |
| Jamie Melvin     | Natural England          |
| James Stack      | QinetiQ                  |
| Charlie Williams | Natural England          |
| Phil Sturges     | Natural England          |
| Paul Woodford    | Farmer                   |
| Lynne Main       | Basildon Borough Council |
| Annie Gordon     | Essex Wildlife Trust     |
| Rachel Langley   | Essex Wildlife Trust     |
| Claire Stuckey   | Chelmsford City Council  |
| Mike Sharp       | Motor Cruising Club      |
| Steve Plumb      | Thurrock Council         |
| Mark Nowers      | RSPB                     |
| Josey Travell    | Southend Borough Council |
| Paul Jenkinson   | Southend Borough Council |
| Jack Haynes      | Natural England          |
| Amanda Parrott   | Basildon Borough Council |
| Sue Hooton       | Place Services           |
| Lois Crisp       | Place Services           |
| Luke Pidgeon     | Place Services           |
| Maria Hennessy   | Place Services           |

**Discussion 1: What information exists currently on visitor activities and disturbance at Natura 2000 sites?**

| <b>Information</b>  | <b>Includes</b>  | <b>Source</b>                    |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| Footprint Ecology Report ‘Distribution of key bird species and access infrastructure along the Essex coast SPAs’ May 2016 Unpublished report for Natural England. | Summary information on roost sites, breeding locations ‘access to water’ locations, housing density etc for Essex coast. | Natural England (Jack Haynes)    |
| BTO Webs Low Tide Count Map.  |  | BTO Webs data on B TO website.   |
| Sensitive bird data   | Key roosts and feeding locations for all SPAS.   | RSPB                             |
| Harwich Area Sailing Association (HASA)   | Marinas throughout Essex   | HASA Brenda Read via Mark Nowers |

**Discussion 2: What measures are currently in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance?**

Crouch and Roach Estuaries

- Chelmsford Parks such as Fenn washland and Saltcoats Park are alleviating pressures on Natura 2000 sites. These provide good facilities such as dog walking, car parking, sports facilities, good access points and no access to the sea wall.
- Currently there is signage on the sea walls and public rights of way (PROW).

Foulness Estuary

- Currently 31 SSSI areas that are not touched, so will cause little disturbance.
- No public access at MD land in Shoebury and roughly 3km east of Sutton has no public access to the coastline.
- Foulness Island is roughly 8km long, if a zone of influence (ZOI) of 13km was imposed this would mean little contributions from developers as there is little to no residential development on the MOD land.

Thames Estuary and Marshes

- Thameside Nature Park is set to extend further.
- East Tilbury Quarry is anticipated to restore biodiversity and provide recreational facilities/areas away from the coast.
- Lower Thames Crossing and adjacent Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPS) could close the most southerly part of the coast for a few years. This will encourage more people north from Coalhouse Fort to Thameside Nature Park or other areas that may not be on the coast.

**Discussion 3: What further measures are required?**

Crouch and Roach Estuaries

- Use the foreshore department to enforce byelaws and speed limits for water sports such as jet skis. If this is an option journey times to the coast will need to be considered.



- Encourage more people to use Chelmsford Parks for their recreational activities.
- Increase signage to inform the public.

#### Foulness Estuary

- Currently there is access to jet skis in the north of Shoebury, this causes disturbance. Possible restrictions to be put in place.

#### Southend and Benfleet Marshes

- Jet skiers and kite surfers north of Gunners Park are supposed to be ¼ mile out of coast but it is common that they are not. Enforcement should be considered to ensure they stay within their boundary.

### **Stakeholder Information Forms**

The following table was filled out by attendees, as a means of capturing any additional issues/opinions that were not covered during discussions.

|   | <b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include any measures in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance)</b> | <b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b>   | <b>Other comments</b> |
|---|---|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | Chelmsford Parks does not have visitor numbers for its sites in South Woodham Ferrers.  | There are several former landfill sites being restored at present eg. Thameside Nature Park, East Tilbury Quarry and Pitsea. Most have schemes involving restoration of wildlife and recreation. Review and make sure they address today's recreation issues.<br><br>Use CCC open space and EWT reserves to try and develop alternative routes to keep people away from seawall in South Woodham Ferrers. Use new development to north of town as a way to encourage people in land. |                       |
| 2 |   | <b>Jet skis</b> – harbour officer enforcement to avoid sensitive areas and observe local speed limits.<br><b>Dog off lead</b> – local wardening and provision of specific “dogs welcome” provision (green space and water)<br><br>Interpretation (avoid / mitigate) at   |                       |

|   | <p><b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include any measures in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance)</b></p> | <p><b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b></p>   | <p><b>Other comments</b></p>  |
|---|--|---|---|
|   |  | <p>key car parks / visitor attractions (eg. Southend).</p> <p>Wardening at Nature Reserves can help people feel better informed over less damaging activities.</p> <p><b>Positive message critical</b> – people will respond more sympathetically if told why there is a restriction in place and where they can go.</p> <p><b>Trampling of saltmarsh</b> – many people are unaware of damaging footfall and hidden dangers (deep mud, rising tide, creeks)</p> |   |
| 3 |  | <p>Wardens could help by speaking to both landowners and the public about wildlife issues. The only person that tries to control dogs off lead are farmers. This causes conflict, but a warden may be listened to.</p> <p>Boating, skiing and wash from big/high hulls cause erosion and disturbance to salt marsh and wildlife. Speed limits could help as well as time limits to help roosting birds.</p>   | <p>Perhaps farmers could be considered as partners.</p>                     |
| 4 |  | <p>Identify key stakeholders we have specialised site or partners who have existing sites that could be further developed to off-set impacts eg. MOD via Defence Infrastructure Organisation and NB.</p> <p>Identify areas that are sacrificial for recreational use by the public.</p> <p>Possible ULS and TLS Agri-scheme enhancements for farmers in affected areas.</p>   | <p>Please pass on details for all future elements to Sarah Jupp of DIO.</p> |

|   | <b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include any measures in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance)</b>   | <b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b>  | <b>Other comments</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Need to understand the potential scale / scope there will be from the occupants of the 180,000 homes for waiting to access the coast to jet ski / paddleboard / microlight / drone-fly / bait dig / paraglide – those impact activities may fall outside traditional monitoring / management. | River baliffs – look at Maldon’s model particularly with reference to jet skis. Speak to Matt Wilson (Maldon DC).<br>Monitoring – explore behaviour change models to ensure what mitigation put forward is effective. Wardening!!<br>Comms plan for getting positive behaviours advertised, promoting codes of conduct.<br>Ensure Essex tourism is entwined / made aware of the RAMS to ensure inappropriate ventures are not put forward.<br>SANGS – make it attractive and high quality and maintain it. If it is close to home it will get used. | Keep functionally linked in the equation.   |
| 6 | No comments further to those already supplied on the maps.  | I am involved in site management so others are better placed to advise.   | Is Holehaven Creek (considered functionally linked land) being considered? I would advise that it ought to be. There may be other no designated sites that I am unaware of that are of similar value. Whilst HRA concerns need to be addressed separately the NPPF requires that developments and plans seek net gain. Opportunities to provide this should not be ignored if they emerge doing this project and a net gain strategy could be delivered |

|   | <b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include any measures in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance)</b>   | <b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b>   | <b>Other comments</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   |   |  | alongside the mitigation strategy underpinned by the Local Plan. |
|   | <p>Foulness Island / Shoeburyness / Fingringhoe are subject to military Byelaws that restrict access across the site.</p> <p>MOD provide access information panels on sites, predominately around Colchester – to advise on access available and restrictions.</p> <p>MOD provide leaflets for dog walkers on military land advising on dangers they may encounter – steers away from general Countryside Code and relates specifically to MOD land and military training.</p> <p>There is a Byelaw review across the country to look at existing Byelaws and whether updates / renewal or revoking of Byelaw is required. Long term process over 20 years+.</p> <p>Routing of coastal path away from coastline on line firing sites.</p> | <p>Avoiding pushing visitors to MOD land as part of mitigation strategy. New home owner packs attached to website.</p> <p>Local dog walking group ____ - Peer monitoring.</p> <p>Consider how new developments promote themselves ie. living in ‘this’ community or ‘new home’ offers access and undisturbed walks to the coast etc.</p> |  |
| 7 | <p>Responsible dog owners campaign throughout Borough, but limited results.</p> <p>Pier foreshore inspectors – focusing more on anti-social</p>   | <p>Gunners Park and Two Tree Island are probably main hotspot areas for wildlife mitigation.</p> <p>A huge issue is illegal oyster diggers.</p>  |  |

|   | <p><b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include any measures in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance)</b></p>   | <p><b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b></p>   | <p><b>Other comments</b></p> |
|---|--|---|------------------------------|
|   | <p>behaviour, focuses in tourist area.</p> <p>Dog-free beaches – albeit in summer months only.</p> <p>Most measures currently in place focus more on people rather than wildlife and wildlife measures are generally very diluted.</p> | <p><b>Wish List</b></p> <p>Warden to cover area between Two Tree Island and Gunners and to provide support to existing EWT wardens.</p> <p>Some interpretation to visitors within the area regarding wildlife use of structures to have wildlife / use of structures to have wildlife info to show how important area is to wildlife.</p> <p>Support to our responsible dogs campaign and increasing its reach. Working with water-sport activities and clubs to see no. of members and users and seeing if this is a sustainable level or if not a policing use with sea wardens?</p> <p>Advice on cats? Their affect on ground-nesting birds.</p> |                              |
| 8 |  | <p>Wardening is key as it is one of the effective measures.</p> <p>Integrated hides – indicate that an area is important / sensitive for wildlife if effectively located can have a big impact in changing behaviours. In a lot of instances the disturbance comes from ignorance of the issue rather than the deliberately of causing it.</p> <p>Dog owner behaviour – ie. Dorset dogs – linked apps? Self-policing.</p> <p>Signage – QR codes for more info = interaction.</p>  |                              |
| 9 |  | <p>Complete coastal path between Benfleet and Leigh – clear</p>   |                              |

|  | <b>Currently available information on visitor activities and disturbance (include any measures in place or planned which may help to avoid or mitigate disturbance)</b> | <b>Suggestions for any future measures required, including management and mitigation</b>   | <b>Other comments</b> |
|--|---|--|-----------------------|
|  |   | <p>distinction as to where people should (and should not) be – preventing wider trampling.</p> <p>Restoration of landfill and Pitsea (use by wildlife or is an alternative for recreation) – H&amp;S consideration.</p> <p>Kite surfing restrictions – seasonal (speed, low depth – not just at high tide)</p> |                       |