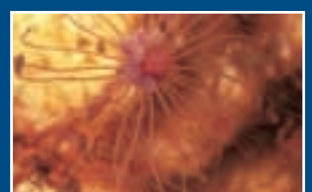
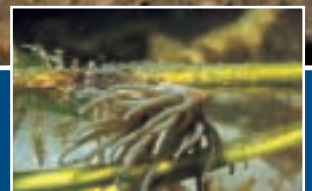
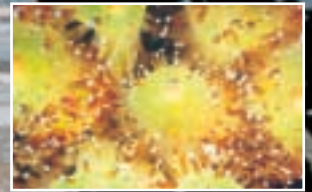


THE PLYMOUTH SOUND AND ESTUARIES EUROPEAN MARINE SITE



MANAGEMENT SCHEME 2001



CONTENTS

SECTION A

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Background to the European Union's Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations
- 1.2 The Habitats Regulations - statutory responsibilities

2 Reasons for designation as a European marine site

- 2.1 Brief description of site and interest features
- 2.2 Conservation objectives and advice on operations

Fig.1 SAC/SPA boundary map

3 Operations, current management and determination of management needs

- 3.1 Operations advice

Table 1. Operations that may cause deterioration or disturbance to the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European marine site

- 3.2 Current management

Table 2 Example of management actions required in light of advice on operations

- 3.3 Determining management needs

Fig.2 Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 1999

4 Key management issues for the European marine site

5 Linkages to existing management and other plans

6 Management scheme area

Fig. 3 Sectoral approach to management

7 Management structure for the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European marine site

8 Aims of the management scheme

9 Format of management actions

10 Monitoring and review

SECTION B

1 Management action plan

- 1.1 Tamar Estuaries
- 1.2 Wembury
- 1.3 Yealm Estuary

SECTION C

1 Biological and compliance monitoring programme

- 1.1 Format
- 1.2 Purpose

SECTION D

1 Appendices

- 1.1 Useful references
- 1.2 Abbreviations
- 1.3 Glossary
- 1.4 Relevant authorities and their responsibilities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Geographical context

Plymouth Sound and Estuaries is the largest estuarine system in southwest England, supporting some 400,000 people in the catchment, plus large numbers of tourists and visiting recreational users. The European marine site covers the Plymouth Sound area, as well as the estuarine reaches of the Tamar estuaries complex and the Yealm. The majority of the European marine site falls within the, Ministry of Defence run, Dockyard Port of Plymouth. There are also 3 commercial harbour authorities, 5 international marinas, 26 boat yards, 4 local authorities and 2 County Councils, as the site crosses the county lines of Devon and Cornwall. The site is therefore relatively complex, compared to some other sites in the UK, with a broad spectrum of stakeholders to be engaged and issues to be addressed.

History

The Ministry of Defence interest in the Dockyard and the complex management issues have led to a long history of liaison and consultation between local authorities and responsible bodies. A significant turning point came in 1992 when the Ministry of Defence were considering reducing their geographical area of responsibility, leaving a potential management vacuum, the local authorities commissioned an option appraisal study. The resulting civil water space management proposals and the public consultation that followed created great controversy and public opposition. It was concluded that the proposals would be costly, unwarranted and broadly unwelcome. It was therefore agreed that the management of the estuaries would be continued using existing powers, but with the increased involvement of other bodies, and in 1994 an Estuary Management Officer was employed. The subsequent development of an Estuary Management Plan revitalised and developed the management and advisory group structures into the current Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) and the Port of Plymouth Marine Liaison Committee (PPMLC).

European marine site management structure

The adoption of Plymouth Sound and Estuaries as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in 1996 saw the well-established management structure of TECF and PPMLC as being best placed to deliver the requirements of the Habitats Directive, and it was formally agreed that they would act as the management and advisory group of the European marine site. Locally this was seen as the best solution, to avoid the need to establish another forum, to avoid more meetings and reduce bureaucracy. It was also felt that the necessary knowledge and consultative mechanisms were already in place, particularly in light of the extensive consultations over the Estuary Management Plan.

Adopting the existing management structure had many benefits, but also resulted in an unusual, perhaps innovative approach to developing the management scheme. This involved using the Estuary Management Plan as the basis of the European marine site management scheme. This allowed for the use of all data that had already been collated about activities, usage and users aspirations for the site. It also needed to incorporate the Yealm Estuary that wasn't included within the existing management structure. As a fairly discrete management unit, and again in an attempt to deliver a management structure that was wanted by local users, it was decided that an Estuary Management Plan would be developed for the Yealm, to bring it in line with the rest of the site in terms of knowledge base and public involvement.

Format of management scheme

Using the Estuary Management Plans as a basis of the European marine site management scheme has made the process very inclusive, accelerated data collation, and has reflected the wishes of the local users and relevant authorities. However, it does mean that the management scheme goes beyond the strict requirements of the Habitats Regulations. This is reflected throughout the management action sections with the use of colour, to identify those actions that are a direct requirement of the Regulations, and those which fall under the wider umbrella of estuary management. The management actions themselves fall under the broad issues headings identified by interested parties and competent authorities during the consultation process.

Background information

Data collation has been facilitated by the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS), that includes data from the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Nature Conservation Review 1998, in addition to information on existing management and site usage. This information was generated, in part, through wide ranging consultations and a programme of one-to-one meetings with relevant authorities and stakeholders aimed at validating the GIS data and identifying management issues.

Because of the extensive consultative process and the well-documented site information, both the management and advisory groups were in favour of having a management scheme document that focused on the actions rather than significant background detail, which can be found elsewhere. Hence, the management scheme is a slim volume, and for those unfamiliar with the site it should be read in conjunction with:

- English Nature. 2000. Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European marine site. English Nature's advice given under Regulation 33(2) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. Devon: EN. (The management scheme draws heavily from this document and should be read in conjunction with it.)
- Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum. 1997. A Guidebook to the Tamar Estuaries. (This sets out many of the background issues relevant to the site.)
- Reay, P. 1998. The Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Nature Conservation Review. Report to English Nature & the Environment Agency. (This sets out the detailed nature conservation interests of the site.)

Management action

The GIS has been invaluable in identifying where the potential conflicts or gaps in management arise. However, it should be pointed out that the long history of management at this site means that many issues are already being more than adequately managed. The management scheme contains 49 actions, 32 of which were already taking place and 17 that are new actions that have been agreed as a direct consequence of the European marine site.

The significant management issues raised within the management scheme are:

- Anchoring within eelgrass beds
- Bait collection
- Contaminated sediment (TBT)
- Dredging
- Diffuse nutrient inputs

A living document

It is widely recognised by relevant authorities and stakeholders that the European marine site is a dynamic and evolving system. Similarly, the management scheme will need to evolve and be updated at regular intervals. This may be required due to developments in scientific knowledge, or for example following the European Union's moderation process, further interest features are added to this European marine site, the regulation 33 advice will be amended accordingly, and this management scheme will need to be revised to reflect such changes.

The future

The management scheme process has not only seen the development of useful future management tools such as the GIS, but has also fostered considerable commitment from relevant authorities and user groups, for ensuring the sustainable development of the site for future generations.