

The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site Management Scheme

Annual Report 2012

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Background

In 1996, The Wash and North Norfolk Coast was designated a European Marine Site (EMS) under EU and UK law in recognition of its nationally and internationally important marine wildlife and habitats, in order to protect the biodiversity which makes it so special.

This designation placed new and stronger responsibilities on public authorities and agencies, working in partnership with user, advisory groups and stakeholders, to promote the sustainable use of a living working coast. The process of developing a Management Scheme began in 1996.

The objectives of the European Marine Site Management Scheme are to safeguard designated wildlife and habitats, while encouraging sustainable use, in order to meet statutory obligations to achieve favourable or improving condition. These statutory obligations are the responsibility of a number of relevant authorities, and the Management Scheme Project coordinates their efforts.



On 25th January 2002, The Wash and North Norfolk Coast EMS Management Scheme launched. Ten years later the management scheme has been recognised as an exemplar in the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) report '*A Review of Effectiveness of Management Schemes for European Marine Sites*'.

The management scheme continues to be the most cost effective way for individual Relevant Authorities to keep track of progress and to demonstrate that they are discharging their legal obligations in a complementary and effective way.

Conservation Objectives Achieved in 2012

In 2010, Natural England completed a condition assessment of the features for which The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site is designated. The outcome was positive, with 75% of features found to be in favourable condition; in comparison with 50% in 2008.

An action plan is utilised by the management scheme to ensure activities taking place within the European Marine Site are not having an adverse effect on the features for which the site is designated. Progress against the action plan is assessed annually. During 2012 the complex action plan was streamlined and incorporated into a new document called '*The Annual Management Plan*'.



During 2012, all but one of monitoring programs were completed by Relevant Authorities Due to financial availability, the exception was Military Aircraft Disturbance to Annex I bird species at Holbeach. The nine management plans and / or policies which form the basis of Relevant Authority management of the European Marine Site were all on track for 2012.

Following the amalgamation of the action plan into the 'The Annual Management Plan' 16 actions now exist. Of these nine were on track during 2012 with seven actions deemed to have a problem. These latter actions are linked to the Incident Reporting Process (IRP), of which management has fallen behind due to staff changes in 2012.

The next condition assessment is due to be conducted by Natural England in 2014. It is important that every attempt is made by the Relevant Authorities to increase actions on track during 2013 in order to achieve a higher percentage of features found to be in favourable condition.

Key Achievements of 2012

Throughout 2012 the administration of the management scheme saw some significant advances. These principally occurred as an outcome of the Project Review.

Project Review

The Memorandum of Agreement for 2012 – 2015 spurred the undertaking of the first review of the management scheme which was completed in March 2012. The objective of the review was to identify the position of the project and re-evaluate how it could meet the future requirements of its members. Participants were drawn from the Relevant Authorities, Advisory Groups, partners and potential partner organisations. They provided input particularly to three aspects:

- 1) Resources
- 2) Processes and Products
- 3) Partnership working

General feedback is that the project is very successful. The project has built up and sustained relationships with a wide range and number of individuals who are involved in and interested in the site, and who contribute to the management of the site.

The Advisory Groups are active and provide on the ground advice as to what is happening across the whole of the EMS. Much of the feedback was that partners want the project to continue in many of the same ways it has worked previously, but with some modifications or improvements in some specific areas.



Business Plan

Produced as a result of the Project Review, work on a three year Business Plan commenced in 2012 and is due for completion by April 2013. This aims to provide clarity for the project and to outline work that must be completed during the Memorandum of Agreement period 2012-15.

Incident Report Process

The information back log in the Incident Report Process (IRP) system was brought up to date during 2012. As a result of this evidence base gathering process a number of disturbance issues were investigated and stopped. A particular success was achieved by the Boston Advisory group members who reported bait digging at what appeared to be commercial level of activity. The culprit was tracked through a vehicle registration and sent a letter from Natural England outlining the legal consequences of his actions; consequently, the bait digger did not return.



During 2012, low flying was the main reported disturbance incident amounting to 48% of all IRP reports; predominantly these were from recreational aircraft. As such a review of the low flying incidence letter was carried out. This was sent out in several cases to inform offenders of the potential legal implications of their behaviour.

A noticeable success with a low flying disturbance issue involved military Apache helicopters at Blakeney Freshes. This incident was reported by site managers in May 2012. The two helicopters approached Blakeney harbour from the direction of Cley and hovered at about 15 metres for 15 minutes. Photographic evidence and a complaint were sent onto the MoD. As such, no further incidents of Apache activity were documented during 2012.

Advisory Groups

The three Advisory Groups geographically located at Boston, King's Lynn and Well-next-the-Sea comprise of local people, interest groups and organisations who bring vital experience and initiative to the management process.

Boston Advisory Group undertook a successful satellite event at the Wrangle Show on 1st July. The group presented display boards in the wildfowlers tent showing information about the various organisations and interest groups, what their function is and how their representation on the Advisory Group supports the work of the management scheme.



Members of the Kings Lynn Advisory Group (KLAG) spent the spring and summer months observing the second Lincolnshire Wind Farm cable landfall, which breached sea wall defences at Sutton Bridge in order to connect to the electricity sub-station at Walpole.

KLAGs involvement in monitoring the actions of the contractors during the operation has been greatly appreciated by the Wash & North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site management scheme.



It was a quiet year for the North Norfolk Coast Advisory Group who met just the once in May. Plans for a potential satellite event were postponed due to changes in staff in the Wash & North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site project. Nonetheless the group are looking forward to undertaking an event in 2013.

Management Scheme Members

Relevant Authorities for The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site are:

Boston Borough Council
East Lindsey District Council
Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Environment Agency
Fenland District Council
Internal Drainage Boards
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
King's Lynn Conservancy Board
Lincolnshire County Council
Marine Management Organisation
Ministry of Defence
Natural England
Norfolk County Council
Port of Boston
Port of Fosdyke
South Holland District Council
Wells Harbour Commissioners

The Management Group consists of representatives from the above and:

Crown Estate
Defra
Common Right Holders
Norfolk Coast Partnership
The Advisory Groups

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