



# Managing our Natura sites – a local perspective

The Severn Estuary

# European sites within Somerset, Avon and Wiltshire



## 19 SACs including:

- Avon Gorge woodlands
- Bath and Bradford upon Avon bats
- Pewsey Downs
- River Avon
- Salisbury Plain
- Mendip Limestone Grasslands
- Severn Estuary



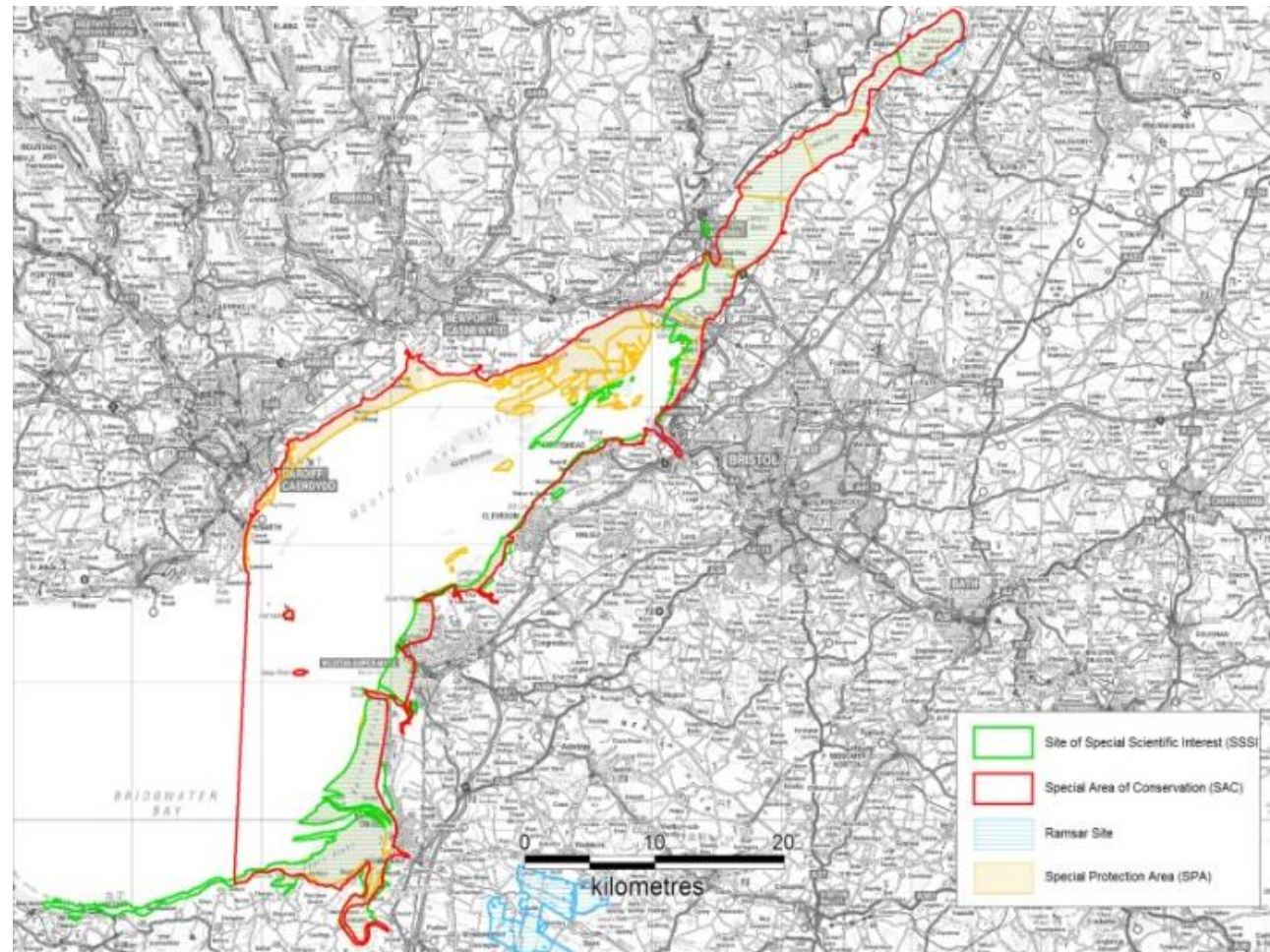
## 5 SPAs:

- Somerset Levels and Moors
- Salisbury Plain
- Chew Valley Lake
- Porton Down
- Severn Estuary



# Designations on the Severn Estuary

- Designated as a:
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Special Protection Area
  - Ramsar site
  - Underpinned by SSSIs



# The Severn Estuary – a special place



- Largest coastal plain estuary in the UK
- One of the largest estuaries in Europe: 73,678 ha
- 3<sup>rd</sup> largest tidal range in world: (12.3 m at Avonmouth)
- 2/3 subtidal and 1/3 intertidal (one of largest in UK)
- The Estuary and its coastal hinterland support a number of cities and major industry



Severn Bore



Bristol Port



Newport Wetlands

# Some of the Site features



# Human pressures



- Housing and growth
- Energy generation
- Businesses, employment and enterprise

And many more...



# The IPENS project



- The site improvement plan (SIP) for the Severn Estuary was developed jointly with National Resources Wales
- The SIP is available to download from our website:  
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4590676519944192>
- The Severn Estuary is such a large, complex site, that the underlying theme of the SIP was to seek common ground on the issues
- 14 issues have been identified and ranked in order of their perceived threat to site features

# Addressing the issues

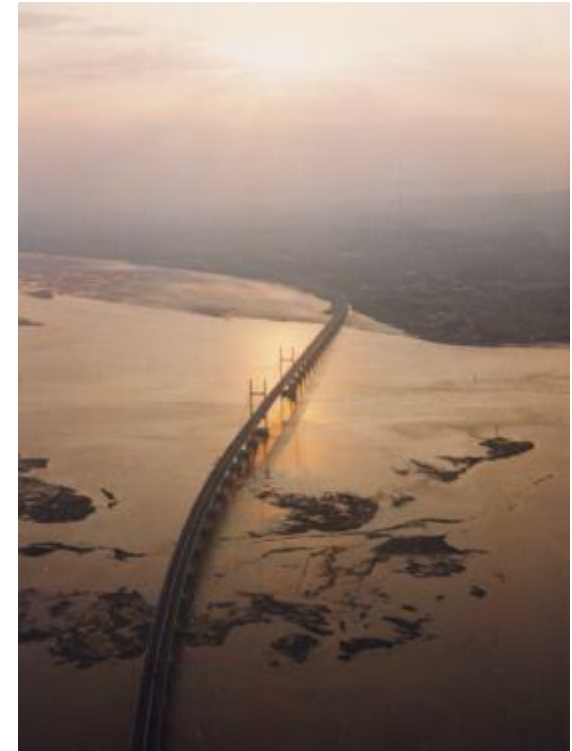


The top 4 issues are:

1. Public access/ disturbance
2. Physical modification of water courses
3. Impacts of development
4. Coastal Squeeze

**How are we addressing these issues?**

For each of these issues, the SIP has identified actions and partners that can help us deliver these actions





## E.g. issue 2: Physical modification



- Modification to water courses and barriers to migratory fish features in the tributary rivers are preventing completion of the life cycle and potentially altering the hydrodynamics of the site.
- This includes existing structures and operations (bridges, power station lagoons, jetties, dredging, flood alleviation) influencing the flow of water, sediments and therefore migration



Twaite shad



River Lamprey



Sea Lamprey

# Identified Actions- removing barriers to fish migration



**Action 2B:** Removal of known barriers (weirs in the Rivers Severn and Teme).

**Mechanism:** Flood Risk Maintenance Programme:  
Flood Risk Management schemes

**Lead organisation:** Environment Agency

**Partners:** Canal and River Trust, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Local Enterprise Partnership, Severn Rivers Trust

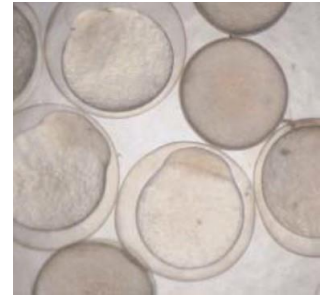
**Progress to date:** a LIFE bid is to be made in September 2015 for funding to remove 9 weirs in the Rivers Severn and Teme. NE has contributed to this bid through funding new evidence reports, staff time, reviewing the bid and some matched funding.



# Results of this action



- Opening up 200 km of new spawning habitat to the protected migratory fish features.
- Improve capability to monitor Twaite shad using the rivers
- Developing closer working relationships with our partners
- Development of associated community projects with the which will form the core of an associated Heritage Lottery fund bid after the LIFE bid
- Employment opportunities



# What next?



To develop partnerships to take forward each issue

To develop a more detailed strategy for each issue

Natural England's focus is to work with partners to secure funding streams and to raise the profile of the Severn Estuary







**West of England Nature Partnership**  
Joining up the dots for nature



*Our Vision:*

*"To create and coordinate a plan for the restoration of the natural environment within the West of England region and integrate that plan into strategies for spatial planning, economic development and public health"*

11.9 km

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
Image © 2013 The GeoInformation Group  
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Google earth

# The Partnership

NATURAL  
ENGLAND

Bath & North East  
Somerset Council



Avon



Bristol Natural  
History Consortium



# Working Groups

## Working Groups

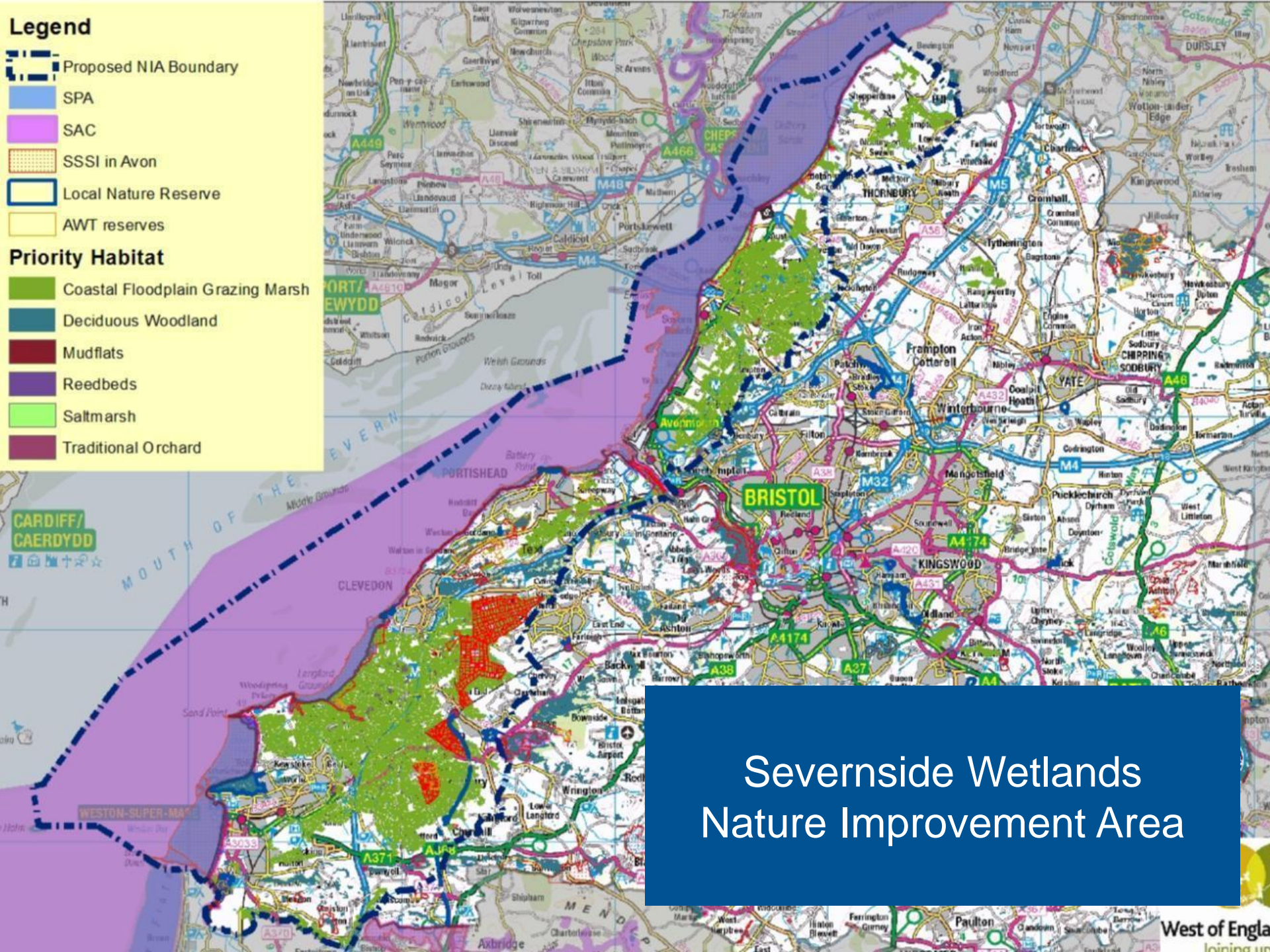


**Legend**

-  Proposed NIA Boundary
-  SPA
-  SAC
-  SSSI in Avon
-  Local Nature Reserve
-  AWT reserves

**Priority Habitat**

-  Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh
-  Deciduous Woodland
-  Mudflats
-  Reedbeds
-  Saltmarsh
-  Traditional Orchard




Severnside Wetlands  
Nature Improvement Area

# Severnside – why was it chosen



- Fulfils the Defra NIA criteria
- Includes Natura 2000 site (SPA, SAC, Ramsar, SSSI)
- The area has historically been overlooked compared to its neighbouring NCA areas (Somerset Levels and Severn Vale)
- Area that would benefit from a landscape scale approach
- Lack of acknowledgement of the estuarine and marine environment
- Brings together existing projects
- Lots of opportunity to restore and reconnect priority habitats





*"To recognise the Severnside Wetlands NIA as a vibrant, nature rich landscape, where people, business and wildlife thrive"*

# Severnside – a unique area and opportunity



The Scrumping Project  
Picking Day  
Oldbury Orchard  
9th October 2010

# NIA potential partners ( and investors?)



# How does the NIA relate to the SIP



- Creates links between the marine and terrestrial
- Investment inland will help address threats and accomplish measures
- Working multi-laterally with business, enterprise, local government and NGOs to deliver change



# Severnside – the reality...



## Strengths

- designations - protected
- wildlife
- proximity to Bristol
- good transport links

## Weaknesses

- negative image
- overlooked for conservation
- designations don't cover land for the most part

## Opportunities

- innovative development e.g. PES
- form new partnerships
- attract people to the area (boost local economy)
- join up with the health agenda
- take a ecosystem service approach

## Threats

- development (Severnside Enterprise Area, JSPS)
- climate change
- changes in land management



# A vision for Severnside Wetlands NIA



To:

- work with business/landowners to explore the benefits of natural environment investment;
- take an ecosystem service approach – valuing the services the area provides for Bristol and beyond;
- bring attention to an underused/undervalued asset in the West of England;
- restore the natural environment on a landscape-scale (Lawton);
- create resilience through investing in the natural environment.



# Existing projects/opportunities



# Next steps...



Short term	Medium term	Long term
Engagement plan	State of Environment ecosystem service maps	Strategic funding opps
NIA strategy document	'A Forgotten Landscape' Heritage Lottery Funded project	Lasting partner engagement
Promotion	North Somerset Levels and Moors (AWT)	Local plans
Facilitation fund	Coastal path	Site Improvement Plan

Any questions



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