

CARMARTHENSHIRE LBAP MARINE HABITATS AND SPECIES GROUPED ACTION PLAN

Introduction

This group habitat includes intertidal boulder communities, intertidal mudflats, seagrass beds, peat and clay exposures, subtidal sand and gravels and blue mussel beds.

Our entire coastline is of significant importance for its wildlife. The Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Site (EMS) extends from Tenby in the west almost to Oxwich Point in the east and includes the Burry Inlet/Loughor Estuary and the Taf–Tywi–Gwendraeth (Three Rivers) estuaries. The habitats making up the EMS include all the marine BAP habitats featured in our LBAP and the habitats of the coastal BAP waders and sea birds that occur around our coast.



This EMS encompasses three European designated sites:

Carmarthen Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – this was designated for having excellent European examples of six of the habitat and five of the species conservation features of interest listed in the European Union Habitats & Species Directive, e.g. mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide (aka mudflats), Atlantic saltmeadow (aka saltmarsh), estuaries and shad, otter and lampreys

Carmarthen Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) – designated under the EU Birds Directive for the common scoter sea duck, *Melanitta nigra*, a BAP species.

Burry Inlet SPA and Ramsar site – regularly supports internationally important numbers of overwintering wildfowl and waders that feed in the saltmarshes and on the intertidal areas.

A working draft management scheme for the EMS was completed in 2013.

Sandbanks within Carmarthen Bay support a range of species (including bivalves, amphipods and worms), many of which spend most of their time wholly or partly buried in the sediment. Our coastline provides an example of a large estuarine site on the south coast of Wales, made up by the estuaries of the Rivers Loughor, Tâf, Tywi and the Gwendraeth. These estuaries support a range of subtidal and intertidal sediments that range from sand at the mouth to mudflats in the upper estuary. Extensive areas of intertidal mudflats and sandflats are dominated by bivalves, including cocklebeds. There are also beds of the nationally scarce dwarf eelgrass *Zostera noltei*.

The statutory authorities with responsibilities in the EMS, identified in the Habitats Regulations as ‘relevant authorities’ and which includes Carmarthenshire County Council, work collectively to develop and implement a management scheme for these sites as a key way of meeting their responsibilities arising from the Habitats Regulations.

The whole of the inter-tidal shoreline and inshore waters from Loughor Bridge in the east, to the county boundary west of Pendine, sustains an economically locally important fishing industry and provides employment for a few local people.

Fin fish landings each year are relatively small, but there are two substantial shellfish fisheries in the Burry Inlet and at the Three Rivers estuary which has produced between 3000 and 10,000 tonnes of cockles annually. Some of the shellfish is processed locally at Burry Port or at Penclawdd (in the City and County of Swansea's area), but the vast majority of the cockles collected from Carmarthenshire beaches are exported to European fish markets and processing plants.

The Carmarthenshire marine and coast is one of the defining landscapes of the county, contributing significantly to its overall character and if of importance for our local economy drawing visitors and inward investment.

Natural benefits

As well as the inherent value of these habitats and the species they support they provide us with a number of natural benefits:

- Food – via fishing and aquaculture
- Tourism and recreation
- Nutrient recycling and waste breakdown
- Carbon storage
- Weather creation and regulation
- Cultural heritage
- Coastal defences – mudflats

Why are marine habitats changing (from the *State of Nature* report: www.rspb.org.uk/stateofnature)?

- Habitat loss.
- Habitat degradation.
- Overexploitation.
- Pollution and nutrient enrichment.
- Climate change.
- Invasive species.

Vision statement and objectives

The overall vision for this plan is to maintain and enhance these habitats in our coastal environment and the BAP species associated with them, especially within the context of our marine environment being an internationally recognised ecosystem. Raising awareness about the importance of our coastal habitats is integral to the vision for this plan through provision of information for the public and education opportunities. Any action should seek to meet one or more of the following objectives:

MAR1 Activities are being managed such that there is no loss in extent and quality of priority or range of marine habitats and so that increases in habitat extent and quality are possible.

MAR2 Activities are being managed such that they do not result in further population decline, or hindrance of population recovery or BAP/S42 marine species

MAR3 To identify and record priority BAP areas of marine and coastal habitats and associated species.

MAR4 To raise awareness of marine/coastal species, the key pressures and threats affecting them and the benefits they bring us

Associated BAP/S42 species (NB this may not be an exhaustive list):

Birds - arctic skua, common scoter

Mammals - harbour porpoise, bottlenosed dolphin, Risso`s dolphin, common dolphin

Reptiles - loggerhead turtle, leatherback turtle

Fish - basking shark, herring, cod, tope shark, lesser sandeel, porbeagle shark, monkfish, whiting, ling, plaice, blue shark, undulate ray, thornback ray, blond ray, mackerel, sole, spiny dogfish, angel shark/monkfish, horse mackerel.

Molluscs - fan mussel (historical record), oceanic quahog/icelandic cyprine.

Summary of action achieved by LBAP Partners (for more information contact the biodiversity officer – Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) or visit the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System - <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk>:

2010-12

- Directory of CCC work areas that may impact on marine env. and guidance notes produced – CBE EMS RAG* MAR4
- Two marine biodiversity days organised at Burry Port harbour MAR4
- Beach clean ups organised- KWT/CCC MAR4
- Marine environmental education session with Pembrey and Burry Port schools – CCC‡ MAR4
- Marine Conservation Soc’s Cool Seas Roadshow visited 5 schools – CCC MAR4
- Management plan for Carms Bay & Estuaries European Marine Site produced – CBE EMS RAG

2013

- Marine display at the Discovery Centre for Wales Bio Week 2013 - CCC MAR4
- Coastal activities recording project – Student volunteer has been trialling recording in the field – CCC/ CBE RAG MAR2/4
- Contribution to EMS features monitoring – CCC/Vols MAR4
- Guidance notes for LAs produced - CBE RAG MAR1/2

Proposed future action

- Promote the Marine Conservation Society initiative for turtle sightings/strandings – CCC MAR4
- Promote Shark Trust reporting scheme for skate and ray egg cases - CCC MAR4
- Raise awareness of the adverse effect of balloons and lanterns on marine turtle populations – CCC MAR4
- Arrange workshop for county tourism and leisure groups on marine/coastal env so they can consider impacts of activities here – CCC MAR4
- Promotion of litter clearance via “Fishing for litter” project MAR4
- Promotion of recording and reporting INNS MAR4

- Promoting codes of behaviour (e.g. for boating activity) MAR2/4
- Promoting best practice (e.g. for disposal of boat antifouling paint scrapings/washings) MAR2/4

* CBE RAG – Carmarthen Bay & Estuaries European Marine Sites Relevant Authorities Group.

Useful links:

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/Marine

www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/habitats/marine

www.cbeems.org.uk



Partneriaeth **Bioamrywiaeth** Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire **Biodiversity** Partnership

www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk

The [Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (CBP) is made up of the following organisations: [Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (CCC), [Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales](#) (WTSWW), [Natural Resources Wales](#) (NRW), [RSPB](#), [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) (WWT), [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#) (CBC), [National Botanic Gardens Wales](#) (NBGW), [Butterfly Conservation](#) (BC), [Carmarthenshire Rivers Trust](#) (CRT), [National Trust](#) (NT), [Botanical Society of the British Isles](#) (BSBI), [Llanelli Naturalists](#) (LN), [Bat Conservation Trust](#) (BCT), [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre](#) (WWBIC), [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#) (ARC)