

Building consensus through Partnership for the multi-use of an estuary, the Wash - UK

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Preventing and managing natural hazards and technological (human-made) hazards
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

That partnerships involving central and regional government, local authorities and relevant stakeholders can work together to draw up and implement management plans covering a range of, sometimes conflicting, issues.

4. Overview of the case

The Wash Estuary Strategy Group has worked together to develop an estuary management plan intended for use by professionals working in areas associated with planning, development, social issues, environmental management and education.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Wash estuary on the east coast of England is an embayment of open coastal water and, with its five main tributary estuaries, forms the largest estuary system in Britain. The surface area of the Wash is about 700 km² at high water and about 350 km² at low water on a spring tide. Five main rivers discharge into the Wash which has a catchment of 15,650 km², about 12% of the area of England. It is a proposed Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive for its intertidal and subtidal sand, mudflats and grey seals, and one area is proposed as a terrestrial SAC for its sand dune habitat. Local people also rely on the Wash and its hinterland for many of their economic and recreational activities, for fishing, port uses, sailing and wildfowling. However, sewage treatment works, agricultural discharges and trade effluent discharges affect the tributary estuaries and the Wash itself. There are sometimes conflicting, multi-sectoral use including agriculture and horticulture, development and supporting infrastructure, port and associated industrial uses, energy generation including gas powered stations and offshore wind turbines. Climate change also presents a direct threat to the cultural landscape in terms of sea level rise, ocean acidification and more storm events.

b) Objectives

A series of management objectives have been set covering a number of important parameters (e.g. flood defence, planning and development, landscape, marine conservation & fisheries, water quality, agriculture, saltmarsh & waterfowl conservation

and recreation). These were published in the Wash Estuary Management Plan in 1996 which is reviewed every ca. five years.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

The Wash is shared by two sub-regional local authorities, Lincolnshire and Norfolk. A broad-based partnership called the Wash Estuary Strategy Group has drawn up, by consensus, a management plan which is now being implemented. The partners represent national and regional government and local authorities together with relevant stakeholders. A Project Manager is implementing the plan, directed by the Lincolnshire local government.

b) ICZM tools

Estuary management partnerships are voluntary initiatives that aim to manage and co-ordinate the wide variety of human activities that occur in, and around, estuaries. This management and co-ordination guides the sustainable use of the estuary so that it can function effectively - physically, biologically and chemically.

The Wash Estuary Strategy Group was established in 1994. It is now a well-established partnership made up of the main statutory bodies and interest groups that are responsible for the environmental protection, commercial and social use of the Wash. It is a partnership of organisations with interests in the Wash and its hinterland (*denotes funding body) viz.

Central government: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Defence.

Government Agencies: English Heritage, Natural England*, Environment Agency.

Regional government: Lincolnshire County Council*, Norfolk County Council*

Local, and other, authorities: Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk*, Boston Borough Council*, East Lindsey District Council*, Lincolnshire Parish Councils, Norfolk Parish Councils, South Holland District Council*.

Other stakeholders: Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee, Internal Drainage Boards of the Wash, National Farmers' Union, Port Authorities of the Wash, The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site.

These organisations have different powers and responsibilities. They are all committed to exercising those responsibilities in ways that will ensure the Wash remains a special place for people and wildlife for generations to come. In striving towards the sustainable use of the Wash, the Strategy Group recognises that working in partnership adds value. The benefits of partnership working include: sharing technical skills; the rapid establishment of funding partnerships; better understanding of different statutory duties and cultural perspectives; the ability to commission joint research and positive conflict resolution. By working in partnership the Wash Estuary Strategy Group is able to collectively focus on what is best for the Wash, its hinterlands and communities. Occasionally the shared aspirations and policies for the Wash set out within this voluntary plan may deviate from wider priorities of the individual organisations that make up the Strategy Group. This may result in the need for a Strategy Group member to take a perspective that differs from that of the other partners. It is anticipated that this will only arise in exceptional circumstances and the Wash Estuary Strategy Group is committed to working collaboratively whenever possible. The Wash Estuary Strategy Group is engaged in a range of activities associated with the sustainable use of the Wash. The group drew up a detailed management plan in 1996 which was reviewed in 2004 and a new five to ten year management plan has been agreed. It forms the Group's central focus by setting out a series of agreed aspirations and policies. This plan is both guided by, and aims to inform, other management plans and schemes (which are in some cases statutory).

The Wash Estuary Strategy Group has also been actively involved in developing Lincolnshire's Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. This Group is supported by a secretariat who oversees the day-to-day work of the Project Officer.

Additionally, the Strategy Group is aided by advice supplied by working groups consisting of local stakeholders. At present there are three working groups focusing on agriculture, heritage conservation (natural, cultural and historic), and education and interpretation. As implementation of this management plan progresses it may become necessary to develop new working groups or existing ones may evolve.

7. Cost and resources

The Strategy Group's annual core budget from the original seven partner organisations is now £35,000 a year.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

The Wash Estuary Strategy Group is being put forward as a successful case study by central government, having met many of its original objectives. Partner organisations, some of which have competing priorities, have been more than willing to provide additional resources because the management plan directly contributed to other targets already set. The plan will further help identify existing networks and gaps and act as a catalyst to enable further resources to be secured to deliver change on the ground. The process has been successful enough so far to continue with a revised Management Plan. Generally, there is a strong sense of achievement felt at local level with some important breakthroughs that will focus action and delivery on important social outcomes. There is now better dialogue, joint planning and more holistic policies.

9. Success and Fail factors

The Wash Estuary Strategy Group is about partnership and partnerships that function successfully are made up of people who can empower and trust one another. The length of time it takes to develop a strong and functional partnership should never be underestimated. It is much easier to make an adjustment to the way that something is done, if one believes that the adjustment is worthwhile. The importance of ownership, training and the development of mutual understanding of different practices, values and beliefs is the key to success. The management plan is easy to understand and simple to use. Up-to-date administrative systems that function effectively have been shown to play a critical role in the successful implementation of the plan

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None so far.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- The Wash Estuary Management Plan (1996) The Wash Estuary Strategy Group.
- The Wash Estuary Management Plan, 2nd Revised Edition (2004). The Wash Estuary Strategy Group.



The Wash Estuary Management Plan (274.39 KB) 



The Wash Esturay Management Plan - 2nd revised edition (4.86 MB) 