

Wash and North Norfolk Coast European marine site: Case History

This case history describes the creation of the management scheme for the Wash and North Norfolk Coast European marine site. It has been produced in order to share the experience gained from the production of the scheme with those about to embark on a similar process.

A. General description and features of conservation importance

The Wash and North Norfolk European marine site includes a candidate Special Area of Conservation and several Special Protection Areas. These are described below.

The Wash and North Norfolk Coast cSAC has been proposed for the following Annex 1 habitats and Annex II species as listed in the EU Habitats Directive:

- Large shallow inlets and bays
- Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- Samphire (glasswort) *Salicornia* spp. And other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Atlantic saltmeadows
- Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs
- Biogenic reefs*
- Lagoons*
- Common seal
- Otter*

The Wash Special Protection Area has been classified under the EU Birds Directive for the following interests:

- Internationally important populations of common tern *Sterna hirundo* and little tern *S. albifrons*;
- Internationally important assemblages of non-breeding waterfowl including migratory species.

The North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area has been classified under the EU Birds Directive for the following interests:

- Internationally important populations of marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Montagu's harrier *C. pygargus*, avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis* common tern *S. hirundo* and little tern *S. albifrons*;
- Internationally important assemblages of non-breeding waterfowl including migratory species.

The Gibraltar Point Special Protection Area has been classified under the EU Birds Directive for the following interests:

- Internationally important populations of little tern *S. albifrons*;
- Internationally important assemblages of regularly occurring migratory species.

* - incorporated after moderation

The European marine site may be divided into two main features. Dominating the western side of the site, extending down from Gibraltar Point and across to the North Norfolk Coast at

Heacham is the Wash. The Wash is the largest marine embayment in Britain, with the second largest expanse of intertidal sediment flats in the country. The rest of the site extends along the north Norfolk coast to just past Weybourne. The north Norfolk coast provides the only classic British example of a barrier beach system.

The area is important for breeding and moulting of one of Europe's largest populations of common seal *Phoca vitulina*.

Figure 1 Area covered by the Wash and North Norfolk Coast European marine site



B Socio-economic characteristics

The geographical differences between the Wash and the north Norfolk coast are evident in the socio-economic structure of the site. The economy of the Wash is dominated by agriculture, the ports of Boston, Fosdyke, Sutton Bridge, Wisbech and King's Lynn, and fishing. Few settlements are found close to the seashore predominantly because of the significant areas of land claimed from the sea. There is a limited tourist trade around the Wash but tourism is very important to Skegness near Gibraltar Point. By contrast the north Norfolk coast has a far stronger tourism industry, with fishing and agriculture also being important to the area. There are many coastal villages along the north Norfolk coast which gives the area a different feel to that experienced on the Wash.

Traditional activities, including common rights, such as samphire gathering, bait digging and wildfowling are widely recognised by English Nature and the other relevant authorities as a particularly important aspect of the local culture and economy in the Wash and North Norfolk Coast European marine site. These activities are generally seasonal in nature, localised in their occurrence, employ traditional methods and place a strong emphasis on the principles of sustainability. Sound management of these activities over many years is considered to have contributed to the long-term maintenance of the site's condition. It is thought such activities, including the common rights on the north Norfolk coast between Holme and Holkham as currently and historically practised under common law, are compatible and linked with the principle aims of the site, i.e. the long term maintenance of the condition of the interest features.

C The relevant and competent authorities for the European marine site

The management group for the Wash and North Norfolk Coast European marine site is composed of:

- Boston Borough Council*
- Chairpersons from the Boston, King's Lynn and North Norfolk Coast Advisory Groups
- Crown Estates
- East Lindsey District Council*
- Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee*
- English Nature (Norfolk Team & East Midlands Teams)*
- Environment Agency (Anglian Region)*
- Fenland District Council*
- Internal Drainage Boards*
- King's Lynn Conservancy Board*
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council*
- Lincolnshire County Council*
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- Ministry of Defence (through Defence Estates)
- Norfolk Coast Project
- Norfolk County Council*
- North Norfolk Common Right Holders
- North Norfolk District Council*
- Port of Boston*
- South Holland District Council*
- Wash Estuary Strategy Group
- Wells Harbour Commissioners*

(Relevant authorities are marked by an asterisk)

In addition to its role as a relevant authority the Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee is currently the lead authority for the management group.

Three Advisory Groups have been established for this European marine site, composed of representatives from local interests, user and conservation groups and stakeholders. They are based at Boston, King's Lynn and Wells-next-the-Sea to cover the geographic area of the site.

D Management Structures

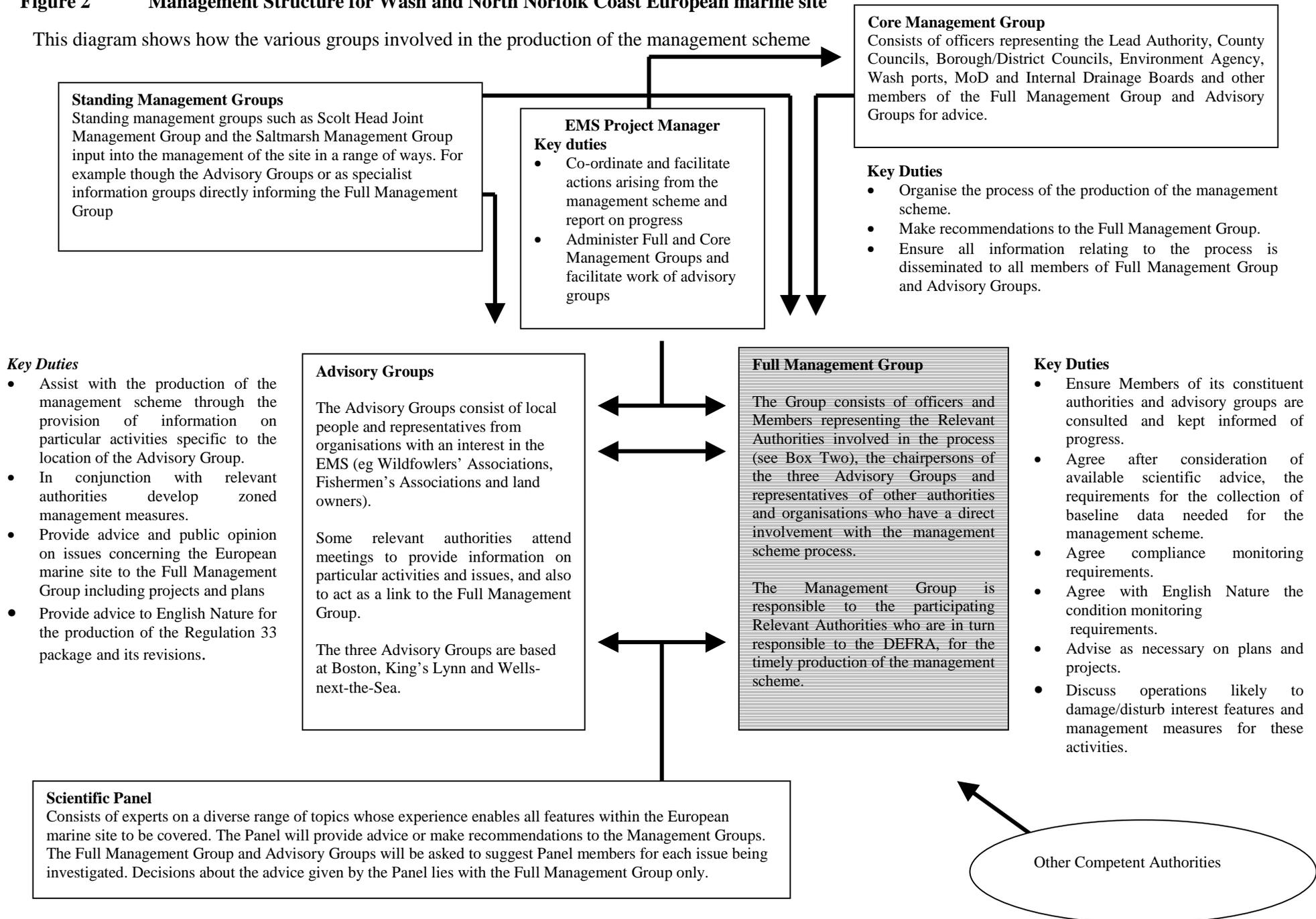
The production of the draft management scheme involved extensive consultation with relevant authorities, the advisory groups and other interests. The support received by these organisations and individuals was fundamental to the production of the document.

The geographically zoned advisory groups allowed local stakeholders, interested individuals and other groups to freely participate in the development of the management scheme. The groups allowed informed comment and provided important local knowledge on all aspects of the management scheme. The Chairs of the advisory groups attended the full management group meetings. This enabled two-way communication between the advisory groups and the full management group and ensured the relevant authorities sought to address local issues.

Figure two below shows the relationships between the various groups involved in the development of the management scheme for the site. The figure outlines the key duties of each group in respect to the development and implementation of the scheme.

Figure 2 Management Structure for Wash and North Norfolk Coast European marine site

This diagram shows how the various groups involved in the production of the management scheme



E Key Events

Summer 1996

The site was designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation. Project Officer in post June of this year.

The Project Officer scoped the main issues for progressing the site management on a one-to-one basis with the relevant authorities and other representatives. Issues included:

- sensitively integrating the EMS with other nature conservation designations in the area, particularly the Wash Estuary Management Plan due to its voluntary nature;
- integrating voluntary and statutory approaches within the management scheme;
- progressing relationships with key stakeholders in the area eg wildfowlers.

The Project Officer decided to establish the following management structure for the site:

- a core management group comprising of representatives from different categories of the relevant authorities (eg county councils, local councils, harbour authorities);
- a full management group consisting of all the relevant authorities;
- three advisory groups consisting of key user groups and stakeholders in the area.

Autumn 1996

A strategy was developed outlining the potential management problems and survey work needed to address these.

Inaugural meeting of full management group. Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee took position as lead authority. Key players were enrolled from the Wash Estuary Management Plan process, particularly the local authorities, plus North Norfolk District Council. The Association of British Ports based at King's Lynn represented the port's interest. The Ministry of Defence, common right holders and the internal drainage boards joined the group later.

Winter 1997

Second full management group meeting. English Nature's national team presented to the relevant authorities their responsibilities under the Habitats Directive. The presentation was generally well received.

Third full management group meeting. Discussed the establishment of the advisory groups for the area. Due to the size of the site three advisory groups were formed. To ensure geographical coverage the advisory groups were based at Boston, King's Lynn and Wells-next-the-Sea.

GIS installed. Baseline studies for sub-littoral and inter-tidal areas of the Wash and north Norfolk coast complemented with mapping of the *Zostera* beds. Birds WEBS data collected.

Summer – Autumn 1997

Logo for the site developed. The launch of the EMS newsletter, 'Eastern Tides'. The newsletter was written by local interests and was to be used as a platform for local groups to give their own views on the site and its management.

Local community seminar held in King's Lynn (July). This sought to form the first of the advisory groups. Other meetings were held at Wells-next-the-Sea (October) and Boston

(October). Twenty to thirty participants attended the meetings. The participants were drawn from wide variety of interests in the area but, particularly included farmers and wildfowlers.

Winter 1998

Second edition of Eastern Tides published.

Full management group meeting. Presentations were given on the review of consents process and the conservation data gathered/requirements for the site to date.

Inaugural meetings of the advisory groups took place, Boston (April), King's Lynn (May) and Wells-next-the-Sea (May). The terms of reference for the groups were discussed and agreed. The main role of the groups was to provide the full management group with information on activities and operations affecting the site. The groups were set up to be autonomous and to draw on local initiative.

Summer 1998

Meeting with English Nature's Maritime Team to discuss development of conservation objectives for the site. The issuing of guidance on conservation objectives was delayed due to concerns with national consistency.

Autumn 1998

Management group meeting. The relevant authorities were encouraged to examine their consents affecting the site so as to generate an understanding of the existing management measures.

Winter 1998

Regulation 33 package delayed. The draft conservation objectives were finally consulted on by the management group and the three advisory groups. These were then retracted as the conservation objectives guidance was substantially altered, in part due to English Nature's Common Standards document. The conservation objectives could not be developed until the SPA guidance was completed in September 1999.

Winter 1999

A series of workshops and meetings with relevant authorities and advisory groups were held. These were run by a facilitator with the aim of:

- identifying the distribution of activities and operations across the interest features present on the site. This supplied exposure and also sensitivity information to inform the operations advice component of the Regulation 33 package;
- raise awareness of the content and purpose of the Regulation 33 package with relevant authorities and advisory groups through an informal process, to assist in their response to the formal consultation.

Spring 2000

Formal public consultation (February to April) held on Regulation 33 Advice. Of a total of 280 external consultees, of which 69 were national organisations and 211 were local organisations and individuals, 36 written responses were received. The vast majority (33) were from local consultees.

A series of meetings and discussions were held with representatives of the Wells Area Advisory Group and common right holders during the formal consultation. These sought to find a solution to their major concerns that Regulation 33 would prevent them practising their activities. As a result of these discussions some additional text, agreed on by all parties, was added to the Regulation 33 package. It recognised the importance of traditional activities in the local culture and economy and also that as currently and historically practised these

activities were compatible with and linked to the long-term maintenance of the interest features of the site.

In order to maintain the transparency and openness of this process, a summary of all comments received during the formal consultation and the English Nature response was produced. (N.B the identity of those making the comments was kept anonymous).

Following the large numbers of comments received concerning the clarity and usefulness of the advice and in particular the tables, a commitment was made to produce a summary of the package.

Summer 2000

Regulation 33 advice revised and formally issued by English Nature. Because of the technical and legal nature of the Regulation 33 advice the management and advisory groups had requested a simplified version be issued. An informal summary to the advice was published in late summer by English Nature. This was warmly met by the groups involved in the process.

Relevant authorities and advisory groups were asked to contribute to the collection of information required for drafting the management scheme. The Project Officer co-ordinated the work of the advisory groups.

Winter 2000

Collation of information collected by relevant authorities and advisory groups into the first draft of the management scheme. The first draft was issued to all members of the advisory groups and full management group.

Spring 2001

Consultation by relevant authorities and advisory groups on first draft of management scheme. This first consultation sought to allow all interests to examine the draft management scheme before the issues it addressed were put out for public consultation. The Project Officer co-ordinated the responses and developed the draft management scheme for public consultation

Summer 2001

Public consultation on the draft management scheme. A flyer was produced to publicise the draft management scheme. This was distributed widely. Publicity was sought through the local media. The core management group discussed the comments received. These were fed into the production of the first edition of the management scheme.

F Budget and Resources

The costs associated with the development of the management scheme to date are given in the table below.

Category	£K
Information collation	61.6
Project Officer – salary and T&S	105*
Project Officer – overheads (accommodation, training)	4.4
Publicity and interpretation	13.3
Publication of management scheme	10.5
IT equipment	5.6
TOTAL	200.4

In addition to the above costs relevant and competent authorities have each contributed to the development of the scheme. The contributions have been predominantly staff time but have also included overhead costs of the project officer from May 2000-April 2001 and the costs of running the advisory groups.

G List of key documents

List of products supported by funds from EN or UK Marine SACs Project for the Wash and North Norfolk EMS:

- Broadscale mapping of habitats and biota of sublittoral seabed of the Wash. Final report of the 1996 Broadscale mapping Project Survey. English Nature Research Report 238. Foster-Smith, R. L, Sotheran, I & Walton, R. (Available free from English Nature, Peterborough)
- Mapping the intertidal habitat and species of selected marine Special Areas of Conservation. The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC. Dec 1996. A report to English Nature from Posford Duvivier Environment.
- A strategy for studies on Waterfowl and Human Interactions around the Wash. Consultation Draft 1997. Prepared for consultation by English Nature, RSPB and BTO.
- Biotope Survey of the littoral sediments of the North Norfolk Coast candidate SAC. ENRR 285. Feb 1998. Perrins, J & Bunker, F. (Available free from English Nature, Peterborough)
- Eastern Tides Issues 1, 2 & 3
- Health of the Wash Ecosystem: Shorebird population trends, food supplies and possible shellfisheries interactions in the Wash. 1972-1997 (Parts 1 & 2). Dare, P. J. (Forthcoming)
- Draft of the SPA Fisheries Report. (Forthcoming).
- Draft Management Scheme for public consultation June 2001
- Leaflet to promote public consultation on draft management scheme

In addition funds have been provided for the following:

- Survey of SPA features - no specific report produced
- Trialing of sediment monitoring techniques - contract currently to CEH

H REVIEW OF LEARNING

1 Information to support management schemes

Conservation objectives and operations advice. These were largely generic and provided by the English Nature Maritime Team. Once they were received some local input was included.

Local exposure and sensitivity information was collected by an independent facilitator through meetings and discussions with relevant authorities and the advisory groups. This was combined with the generic guidance provided by Maritime Team to produce the vulnerability

tables of the operations advice (and subsequently to identify key issues for the management scheme). The meetings with the Wells Area Advisory Group were not as successful as elsewhere due to the mistrust the common right holders had of English Nature and the Regulation 33 advice. Individuals were not willing to provide information on their own activities due to fears that they may be restricted by the advice. This mistrust had in part stemmed from earlier delays with issuing the conservation objectives. However the concerns of the Wells Area Advisory Group were tackled through a series of meetings and discussions during the formal consultation stage and their objections were resolved to everybody's satisfaction with the insertion of the additional text into the Regulation 33 package.

As such, difficulties with the Regulation 33 were overcome by a transparent and open process. This included inviting representatives of the advisory groups and common right holders onto the management group of the site, an informal consultation phase prior to the public consultation for the Regulation 33 package, publishing English Nature's responses to consultee comments, and throughout the process intensive meetings and discussions with relevant authorities and particularly the advisory groups. This approach was continued by the project officer in developing the management scheme.

Technical support. A number of projects have been undertaken and are currently in progress to provide baseline information on the interest features of the site, and also to monitor condition of the features. These included broad scale acoustic surveys of the sublittoral Wash and North Norfolk Coast, mapping of the biotopes of the north Norfolk Coast intertidal, a survey of the macrobenthos of the intertidal Wash, and monitoring of the extent and distribution of *Sabellaria spinulosa* reef. A continuing condition monitoring programme, based on these projects and the many existing projects and programmes underway in the site, will provide information to the Management Scheme on the success of management measures and identify the requirement for new measures. They will also provide advances in scientific knowledge and understanding which can be used to update the Regulation 33 advice and management scheme.

A research programme has already been initiated in anticipation of the management measure to take forward the restoration of mussel beds in the site.

2 Relevant authority and stakeholder structures

The membership of the full management group has evolved to ensure all key interests are involved in the decisions relating to the development of the management scheme. It was thought important to include the chairpersons of the advisory groups in the full management group to ensure the development process was open and easily translated to all parties involved. The need to be open over issues of development was extremely important to the production of the management scheme.

The management structure is fairly formalised with terms of reference being produced for the full and core management groups – through discussion with the full management group. Terms of reference have been produced for the advisory groups and these have been amended as new issues and possible mechanisms for involvement with the site have progressed.

To ensure existing management measures are sufficient to maintain or restore the favourable condition of the interest features and the management scheme's action plan is implemented, regular reporting on progress would be needed. To do this it is envisaged an annual report will be produced and delivered to the full management group and advisory groups. The report will outline each relevant authority's implementation of existing management measures and the new actions, and the progress made by the advisory groups in addressing issues of relevance to their interests. The report will also provide a platform from which to present new issues to be addressed in the following year.

3 Methods of relevant authority and stakeholder participation

Consultations

Flexible funding and in-kind benefits were identified as being important for involving stakeholders. For example, funding has been given to key stakeholders to develop scientific monitoring and mapping in return for data sets. This has built trust and increased ownership of the science underpinning the site.

Funding for the administration of the advisory groups and the T&S costs of the advisory group chairpersons is extremely important for the functioning of the advisory groups. This funding is provided by the local authorities within each area covered by the advisory groups and is either given in-kind (eg the local authority photocopies and posts agenda etc) or as cash.

Relevant authorities and advisory groups agreed to collect information on a range of activities identified as operating within or adjacent to the site. In some cases it was easy to decide which organisation would collect what information (eg Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee collected information on fishing activities). In other cases members of the management group agreed to collect information on other activities/operations which were not the responsibility of a single organisation (eg Norfolk County Council agreed to collect information on archaeology in the European marine site). The advisory groups agreed to collect information on traditional activities, the longshore economy and recreation and tourism (with assistance from Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk on tourism). The information was used to produce the first and public consultation drafts of the management scheme. This process was important for giving ownership to the management scheme by the relevant authorities and more importantly to the advisory groups.

The management scheme identified a number of issues (recreational and aerial activities) which cannot be tackled by a single relevant authority. The advisory groups have agreed to act as the focal point for addressing these issues. This is seen as important for the advisory groups as it enables them to develop management measures which are appropriate to their circumstances and over which they will be able to exert some influence.

Meetings

Face-to-face meetings with relevant authorities and stakeholders were held at the start of the process; these were very important in providing introductions to the EMS and building trust with the project officer.

The full management group met regularly to discuss how to progress the development of the management scheme. Core management group meetings were held on a more ad hoc basis. In particular the core management group met to discuss the future funding issues of the project. The core management group was charged by the full management group with assessing costs (eg salary, T&S, overheads etc) and a mechanism for securing these costs.

The advisory groups met to discuss the Regulation 33 advice and to make detailed comments. The involvement of the groups in the collection of information for the management scheme took place frequently in the second half of 2000. Dwindling participation at one advisory group led to the calling of an extraordinary meeting in December 2000. This sought to ensure those people who had become disengaged with the project were given a chance to catch-up on developments. In particular it sought to engage them with the process of responding to the first consultation on the draft management scheme.

Stakeholder participation – building approaches

At the start of the project a lack of trust existed between conservation bodies and some users of the site. For example there was a history of conflict between wildfowling and the Wash Estuary Management Plan. An RSPB warden was invaluable in working with the parties involved to gain trust and develop a constructive relationship between the interests.

Delays to the development of the conservation objectives linked to the Regulation 33 advice had a considerable impact on the management process. In late 1999 the Full Management Group felt unable to meet the European Commission's deadline for project completion. It was believed that working to the original timetable would compromise the quality of the site management objectives, the acceptance of the management scheme, and the relationships between those involved. To overcome these difficulties it was agreed to complete the Regulation 33 advice before working on the management scheme. It was felt this approach would enable a more robust management scheme to be developed as the conservation objectives would be fully understood. The extension of the deadline for the development of the management scheme gave considerable ownership to the project's stakeholders.

The production of the management scheme involved extensive consultation with relevant authorities, the advisory groups and other interests. The support received by these organisations and individuals was fundamental to the production of the document. The geographically zoned advisory groups have allowed local stakeholders, interested individuals and groups to freely participate in the development and implementation of the management scheme. The groups allowed informed comment and provided important local knowledge on all aspects of the management scheme. The Chairs of the groups attend the full management group meetings. This enables two-way communication between the advisory groups and the full management group and ensures the relevant authorities address local issues.

Role of the project officer

The project officer has acted as a facilitator to the process by working with the relevant authorities, advisory groups and English Nature. The project officer has sought to ensure the development of the management scheme is open, transparent and inclusive.

To be open it is important to share all information with the interests involved. For example by ensuring all meeting notes from the core and full management groups are distributed to the advisory group members

Transparency has been gained by working with the groups involved and encouraging them to write the sections of the management scheme to which they would like ownership.

Transparency has also been gained by acknowledging to the advisory groups and relevant authorities that the development of the management scheme was not clear cut and significant amendments would be required to the drafts to reflect actual situations.

The project has sought to be inclusive. However, it has not been possible to involve every group or interest in the process at all stages. This has occurred because the interests have insufficient time to attend or may not realise the important contribution they can make to the process. Therefore the project is aware that it cannot be fully inclusive and has to accept there may be other issues which are yet to be tackled by the management scheme and might in future require attention.

4. Process and content of the management scheme document

To development of the management scheme proceeded through the following steps:

- a list of activities and operations taking place throughout the site was prepared and put forward to the Full Management Group and advisory groups. They were asked to comment on the list and to amend it, removing and adding activities as appropriate;
- representatives from the relevant authorities and the advisory groups agreed to collect information on the identified activities. The information was used to produce a first draft of the management scheme;
- the first draft provided an opportunity for all members of the management group and advisory groups to see and comment on the information supplied on all the activities. The information collected on each activity was produced as annexes to the first draft;
- the first draft of the management scheme and the annexes formed the first consultation on a proposed management scheme for the site;
- a ten week consultation period between the relevant authorities and the advisory groups on the first draft started in February and finished in April 2001. The review sought to assess whether sufficient management measures were in place, to develop the action plan for the delivery of management measures, and to designate organisations to lead on implementation of actions identified where possible;
- comments received on the first draft from the advisory groups and relevant authorities were incorporated into a draft management scheme for public consultation;
- a public consultation phase began in June and finished in August 2001. This sought to ensure all activities and management measures had been included in the scheme. This second phase also enabled the advisory groups and relevant authorities to see how their comments had been incorporated into the first draft and to reflect on other changes as a result of the first consultation phase;
- comments received from the public consultation were incorporated into the management scheme and the first edition of the management scheme was produced in October 2001.

5 Interpretation and publicity

At the beginning of the project three issues of a newsletter (Eastern Tides) was produced. This reinforced the identity of the project and was useful in keeping stakeholders and relevant authorities informed of progress. The multi-authorship of the newsletter allowed a variety of stakeholders to voice their views on the area.

A slide set of the wildlife of the area was produced, including background information on the species. The set of slides has been extremely valuable for presentations to stakeholders.

A flyer promoting the public consultation on the management scheme was widely distributed and added to the consultation process. A second flyer is to be produced explaining the importance of the site and the role of the management scheme. This will include sections written by advisory group and relevant authority members. In addition to this, a display board on the European marine site is included at the Green Quay interpretation centre (concerned with the wildlife of the Wash) in King's Lynn.

Community seminars were held at three locations around the site. These enabled the establishment of the advisory groups. Local media (BBC Radio Norfolk and Radio Lincolnshire and local papers) were involved in the launch of the public consultation on the draft management scheme.