

# Devon maritime forum

Working towards a common vision for our coasts and seas

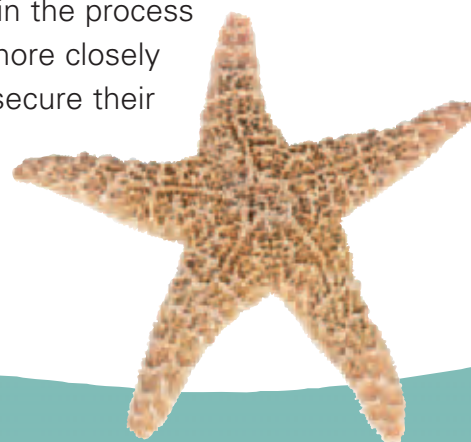
28th October 2005, 09.30 - 15.30 **the Met Office**



Our coasts and seas shape and define life for many people. They provide a livelihood for people, a beautiful place to live, visit and to holiday in and a rich and dynamic natural environment. Our coasts and seas are of immense value and it is the responsibility of us all to ensure their continued health, diversity and well being so they are there in the future for us all to share and use. Sadly, today there are serious concerns for the health of the maritime environment, particularly offshore, and its ability to provide for us in the future.

The Devon Maritime Forum has been formed to bring together those with a common vision for the coasts and seas around us. By first agreeing what is of greatest importance we can work together to achieve common goals.

In the first meeting of the Devon Maritime Forum those who share a vision for our coasts and seas will meet to begin the process of working more closely together to secure their long term future.





## Introduction

Today there are many challenges in our maritime Environment. Increased demands for its resources, use of it as a thoroughfare and use of it for waste disposal are all putting it under great stress. Many value our coasts as a place to live work and in which to spend leisure time but this brings its own pressures on the resource. With new direction coming from:

- the European Union, through the Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management;
- the forthcoming European Union Green Paper on maritime policy;
- the formulation of a coastal strategy at national level and
- the Marine Bill,

*... it is important that Devon has a voice.*

The importance of the maritime environment and the unquestionable benefits of collaborative working point to the need for a forum in which to discuss key opportunities and threats to our coasts and seas.

## Background

On the 20th October 2004, Devon County Council invited a number of people, who represented various interests for the maritime environment to a "Roundtable" event at County Hall in Exeter. Following a wide ranging discussion there was a general consensus that there was a lot that could be achieved in organising an inaugural meeting of a "Devon Maritime Forum".

With this strong mandate from key players on the coastal scene a small working group, drawn from Roundtable delegates, was set up with the task of delivering the first meeting.



## A Vision for the Maritime Environment

If we were to assemble 100 maritime experts in a room we could come up with 100 visions for coasts and seas! The following is proposed and members of the forum are asked to consider adopting it.

Our vision is:

*...to manage the rich and diverse resources of Devon's maritime environment for the benefit of all life.*



## Ownership and funding of the Forum

The key to a successful cooperative venture is to ensure that all those who participate feel that they have a share of the ownership of the whole. The first meeting will look at a variety of key themes and will also provide an opportunity for delegates to have their say as to what are the key issues of the day. It is in the hands of those present to shape the future of the Forum.

If a Devon Maritime Forum is to be established then it is inevitable that there will be costs associated with this, even if a very basic format is adopted. The first meeting of the Forum has been possible because a number of organisations have contributed staff time to planning the event. In addition Devon County Council and English Nature have contributed to a moderate working budget to help cover costs.

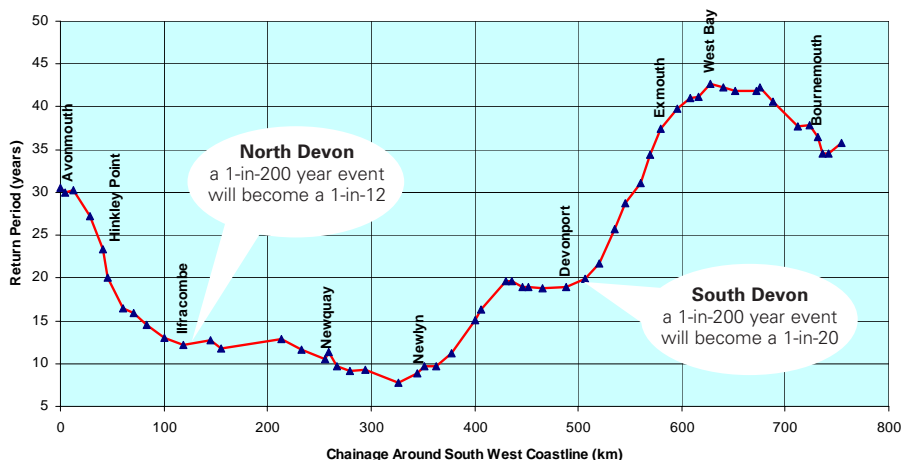
It is essential that costs are identified, agreed and appropriately shared amongst all those who wish to participate. One way is to make a moderate charge for attendance at Forum meetings (£20) and to ask those organisations who commit themselves to working together to pay an annual membership fee (£200). A group of organisations will be invited to form a steering

group and take on a greater responsibility for core funding and a contribution of £5,000 has been considered.

Two models are proposed for the Forum:

- A Forum which takes the form of an annual conference to spread information to a wide audience on the current work taking place in the maritime environment. This option would cost about £1,500 per annum and would need an organisation to take on the role of organiser.
- A Forum that could deliver a network for interested groups, a capacity to deliver work and useful tools for all with an interest in the maritime environment to use. These could include a person power to do the work of the Forum, a web site, a maritime data base, an annual conference; news, through web-based and printed newsletters on current developments and issues, the organisation of a research programme and the monitoring of change in the maritime environment to identify trends. It would have at its disposal a small team to undertake its work. This option would cost in the region of £50,000 per annum and would need a "host" organisation and an agreement would be put in place to establish the Forum for up to five years.

Reduction of the 200 year return period in the 2080s due to rising sea levels





## Purpose of the Forum

The Forum must have a clear and defined purpose. The list below is achievable and could be added to as the Forum matures.

- 1 The most important purpose is seen as providing a simple yet important product: the opportunity for those with knowledge, understanding, experience and commitment to the maritime environment to come together in open discussion. Exchange of knowledge and understanding of the complex needs of coasts and seas and an exchange of views by a diverse and representative audience can only be beneficial. Such discussion may make connections not previously made; may enhance the knowledge of forum members and provide an opportunity to arrive at a common understanding or consensus. Open discussion can also help to avoid misunderstanding which can be a very negative force.
- 2 A second purpose, strongly linked to the first, is to provide an information storehouse that is accessible to a wide audience. To be useful it must be current so a way of keeping it up to date must exist. It must complement other data bases.
- 3 Many of the problems that we all deal with on a day to day basis stem from the fact that the maritime environment is not appreciated. A third purpose could be for the Forum to act as a champion for coasts and seas.
- 4 We believe but often cannot prove that change is taking place. The Forum would develop and use indicators of change (many already exist) that would help inform management decisions.
- 5 We sometimes find that the information we need is not available, just because it has not been possible to find funds or coordinate effort. The Forum could agree and commission its own research and then make the results available for all to use.

- 6 Often the difficulty involved with getting things done comes down to "...OK but who's going to do it?" The Forum will deliver an agreed annual action plan, which may include employing its own jointly funded team to undertake its work. The Forum would deliver:

- the role of champion for the coasts and seas of Devon;
- a contact network for its members;
- at least two Forum meetings on key topics each year;
- a well constructed, informative and up to date web site;
- a Forum newsletter;
- an accessible and useful store of key information;
- information on forthcoming events;
- updates on EU, Government and other policy statements;
- the commissioning research and
- a regular conference to inform members of current initiatives, research etc.

## Objectives for the First Meeting

At the first meeting we aim to achieve:

- the adoption a common vision;
- agreement of the purpose of the Maritime Forum and its terms of reference;
- a productive and positive start to the process of defining priorities;
- an agreement to hold a second Forum meeting.