

Harbour *Life* 2025



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**CHICHESTER
HARBOUR
CONSERVANCY**

Welcome to Chichester Harbour National Landscape

As a protected landscape, Chichester Harbour is amongst the areas in the UK at the forefront of the fight to reverse the decline of nature.

In setting our vision to 2050, Chichester Harbour Conservancy has placed nature recovery at the heart of what we do. Achieving the vision will rely on successful collaborative working with our partners and with local communities to tackle the many challenges facing Chichester Harbour, to restore the health of harbour habitats for the benefit of nature and people. A new Management Plan will be published in 2025, setting out how we will look after the National Landscape over the coming years.

In this edition of Harbour Life we share stories from our dedicated volunteers and partner organisations who support us and the projects that are creating positive changes around the harbour. Science is key to understanding the changing environment and enabling the development of initiatives to improve water quality and restore coastal habitats including native oysters, saltmarsh, seagrass and coastal bird colonies.

Chichester Harbour is very much a living, recreational and working place, with vibrant communities of residents, businesses and visitors. We share updates from custodians of the landscape including a local farmer and our own rangers who are working to manage the land for the benefit of nature and people.



Matt Briers
Chief Executive
Officer

Hear from people who love harbour sports, including opportunities for young sailors and the fast-growing movement for gig rowing. At Chichester Harbour Conservancy we are passionate about empowering future guardians of the harbour. Our Education Centre at Dell Quay introduces over 9,000 young people every year to the harbour on exciting field trips and education experiences like the Junior Conservancy debate.




I am also delighted to unveil a project to improve access and provide new facilities for all harbour users at our jetty in Itchenor. As well as providing great services for boat owners, the new jetty will become part of the King Charles III England Coast Path linking Itchenor to Bosham via the Itchenor ferry.

I hope these stories will inspire you and your loved ones to spend more time out and about in nature this year, experiencing your local National Landscape.

Contents

- 4** New Jetty at Itchenor
- 6** Let's Talk About Water Quality
- 8** BridgerTERN Season 2 Coming in 2025
- 10** Meet Our New Lead Ranger
- 12** Bringing Back the Native Oyster
- 14** Youth Sailing in Chichester Harbour
- 16** Going Rowing!
- 18** Chichester Harbour National Landscape
- 20** Volunteer Power
- 24** Junior Conservancy
- 28** Coastal Grazing Marsh
- 30** Seagrass Meadows
- 32** Family Fun
- 35** Junior Art Competition
- 36** Discover Chichester Harbour by Boat

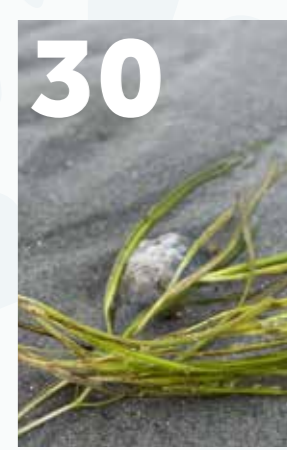
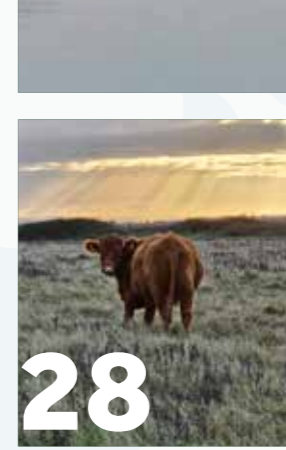
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New Jetty at Itchenor improves harbour access for all

New for the 2025 season, the jetty and facilities at the harbourside village of Itchenor have been extended and upgraded for local and visiting harbour users.

Chichester Harbour Conservancy has made significant improvements to the public jetty which now offers safer access for all, as well as forming a link for the new King Charles III England Coast Path.

The Chichester Harbour section of the official King Charles III England Coast Path will take walkers between Bosham Hoe and West Itchenor, crossing the harbour aboard the Itchenor Ferry. An arm of the new jetty is reserved for the ferry, providing a safer waiting experience for passengers away from busy boat movements on the rest of the jetty.

Access for All

The new jetty creates better access for all users including pedestrians, wheelchair users, pushchairs and cyclists. A new elevated access ramp is safely accessible at all states of tide, making it easier to board the Itchenor Ferry and Solar Heritage Harbour Tour Boat services.



There are also environmental benefits, with a facility to charge electric vessels and a state-of-the-art pump-out facility to manage sewage from vessel holding tanks.

Whether you are a sailor or boater, walker, cyclist, casual visitor or planning to take a trip on our solar-powered tour boat, the improvements to the jetty will improve your access within Chichester Harbour.



Benefits for boaters

New, convenient walk ashore landing and berthing offering great facilities, whether you are staying overnight or just stopping for lunch:

- Walk ashore overnight berthing for up to 16 vessels.
- Short-stay berthing for day visitors.
- Touch and go berthing for drop off and pick up.
- Washrooms with private toilets and showers.
- Fully serviced with electric hook up and charging facilities.
- Pump-out facilities – free to use.
- Wi-Fi for visiting vessels.

Let's talk about Water Quality...

Water quality is an emotive topic – both around Chichester Harbour and for waterways across the UK.

The green swathes of macroalgae weed across the harbour's mudflats in the summer are a visual representation of the excess nutrients in the water and reports of sewage discharges into rivers and seas have dominated news headlines in recent years.

Poor water quality has an impact on people, wildlife and the habitats and ecosystems of Chichester Harbour. But what are the sources of pollution affecting our water quality, and what can be done to address the issues?

Sewage discharges

The best known of the pollution sources is the release of untreated sewage into waterways. The UK's outdated wastewater infrastructure means that rainwater drains from buildings and roads into wastewater treatment works alongside our wastewater. During heavy rainfall the system becomes overwhelmed and untreated sewage is released into waterways via Combined Storm Overflows (CSOs).

Pressure has mounted on water companies, including Southern Water, to make meaningful infrastructure improvements and there is a programme of work underway. As individuals we can make small differences, using water butts and planting to reduce rain run-off from our properties and avoiding blocking the sewage system, with cooking fats, wipes and other items.

Agriculture

Farmers often use nitrates and phosphates as a fertiliser to grow crops. But not all the fertiliser applied to the land is taken up by plants and when it rains the excess leaches into the ground or is washed into watercourses. Although the catchment for the harbour is huge, many farmers around Chichester Harbour are working with the Farming in Protected Landscapes team at Chichester Harbour Conservancy to reduce their use of fertilisers and farm with a view to improving water quality.

Boating

Boating can impact on water quality, from the release of sewage from onboard toilets, to the "antifoul" chemicals used on vessel hulls. The heavy metals and biocides in most antifoul treatments are toxic to marine life and can leach into the water.

Antifoul chemicals often enter the water when scraped or removed without due care. Boaters can install holding tanks and use the free pump-out facilities at Itchenor to dispose of sewage, choose eco-friendly silicone-based antifoul like the one applied to our solar-powered tour boat and follow RYA environmental best practice guidelines for removing and replacing antifoul.

Plastics

Plastics in the ocean are another well-known source of pollution, brought to widespread attention by David Attenborough's Blue Planet. Entering the water from litter, urban run-off, plastic boats, discarded fishing gear and more, a study has found microplastics within shellfish in Chichester Harbour.

Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals

A wide range of chemicals and pharmaceuticals, including forever chemicals that don't break down, are also found in the water. A 2023 study found more than 50 compounds in water samples collected by the Clean Harbours Partnership ranging from prescribed and illegal drugs to pesticides. Some pharmaceuticals impact on the behaviour, biological make-up and reproductive success of marine organisms including shellfish.

The Future

Chichester Harbour Conservancy is focussed on nature recovery within the harbour, including coastal habitats and water quality. We are working with partners and universities as well as applying pressure to organisations to better understand and improve the water quality situation.

Find out more about water quality at www.conservancy.co.uk.



Forget Bridgerton, Try BridgerTERN! Season 2 coming in 2025...

Netflix saw some stiff competition in 2024, with the launch of the hottest new TV series to hit screens in years – Tern TV! Live streaming straight from the Chichester Harbour tern rafts, it provided a unique insight into the lives and loves of these special seabirds.

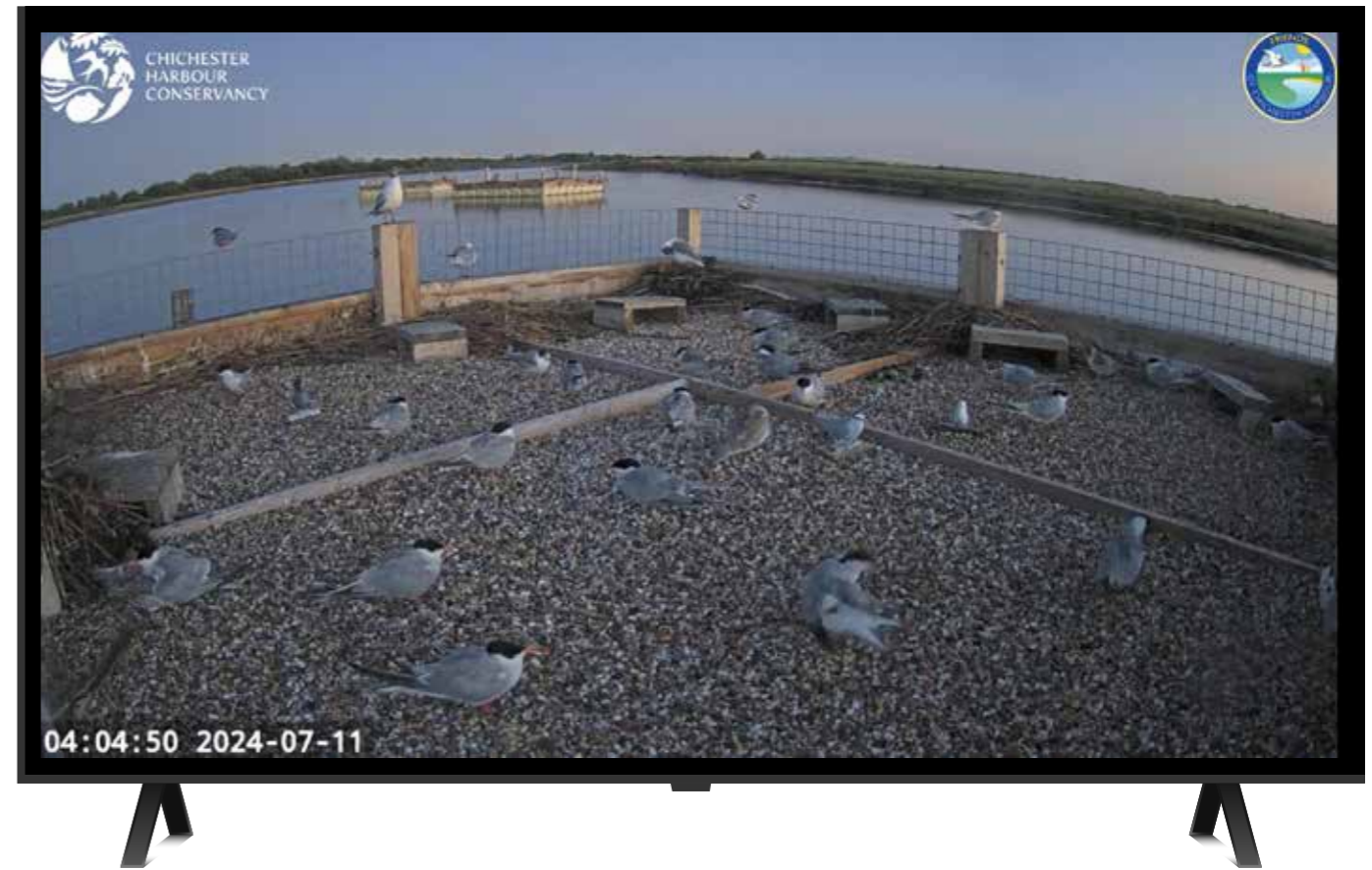
Sometimes known as the “swallows of the sea”, Common Terns fly thousands of miles each year to breed in Chichester Harbour. Once abundant across the region, their numbers declined significantly from the 1970s, with no chicks at all fledging in the harbour for a number of years. Nesting on shingle spits, beaches and islands, Terns are vulnerable to rising sea levels and storm surges washing out their nests, as well as predation and disturbance from people and dogs.

In 2019 Chichester Harbour Conservancy trialled new habitat for Common Terns in the form of tern rafts on Thorney Deeps. These shingle-covered rafts provide safe nesting areas for the terns, resulting in the first successful breeding attempts in years. In 2022 the National Lottery Heritage Fund together with the Friends of Chichester Harbour funded the Return of the Tern Project which saw the deployment of larger rafts, and further increased the number of Common Tern fledglings.





Tern TV provides an exciting window into the everyday lives of the Common Terns. Gregarious birds, their antics make compelling viewing. From “courtship feeding” (where males bring fish gifts to impress females) to the first hatching of their fluffy chicks, there are plenty of “ahhhh” moments. There’s plenty of high drama too as they squabble between themselves and their Black-Headed Gull neighbours – nature at its unedited best.

After the severe impact of avian flu on the colony in 2023 there was concern as to how the Common Terns would fare in 2024. But as the Tern TV drama unfolded, the news was good. Not only did several pairs return to the rafts, they successfully fledged between 39 and 48 chicks across the four rafts.

This represents a huge success story and really underlines the importance of habitat creation to ensure the long-term survivability of our threatened coastal birds.



Common Tern Facts

-  They typically live for 12 years, but the oldest bird recorded was over 33 years old!
-  They are monogamous and pair for life, although they don't spend the non-breeding season together. Instead they re-unite at their breeding ground each summer.
-  They lay between one and three eggs which are incredibly well camouflaged against shingle.
-  In the winter they fly thousands of miles south to the west coast of Africa.



Tern TV will be back for 2025; tune in to the action from late spring onwards.



Tern TV was generously funded by the Friends of Chichester Harbour.

Meet our new Lead Ranger!

Rosie Ellis joined Chichester Harbour Conservancy as Lead Ranger in September 2024. We catch up with Rosie to find out what led her to this role and her priorities for the Chichester Harbour National Landscape.

What drew you to a career in the environment?

I have always loved the outdoors – as a child I was a real water baby and loved the beach – body-boarding, rock pooling and swimming. Mum was a geography teacher and Dad is a scientist, so every family holiday felt like a field trip. I studied Environmental Science at university, and it was on a marine biology field trip to Oban that I got that lightbulb moment.

How did you get started?

After my degree I volunteered for the National Trust in Cornwall for 9 months, working on footpath maintenance and running public “rockpool rambles”. My time there really cemented my love of being outside every day, even with freezing hands in sideways hail on a coast path!

After studying a Masters in Wildlife Management and Conservation I returned to Cornwall, working on sand dune habitat management and leading bushcraft and wildlife walks. I then worked on Lundy Island, before a job at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in Arundel.

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

Four years on Lundy Island including two as Warden was a really varied role including habitat management, access, wildlife survey work, public engagement and even being Station Officer for Lundy Island Coastguard and an Officer in Charge for the Fire Team. Highlights included seeing a population increase of threatened Manx Shearwater seabirds and working with the local fishing community to assess the impact of a marine protected zone. A particularly fun experience was taking the Blue Peter team on a snorkel safari and being awarded a Blue Peter badge!

What drew you to Chichester Harbour?

It's a very beautiful area and an important site for wildlife. The balance between nature

protection and recovery alongside ensuring people have quality access to enjoy and appreciate the harbour was a draw. I'm looking forward to the survey work and working with the volunteers to manage the precious habitats within the National Landscape.

We've heard you're no land lubber – rumour has it you sailed across the Atlantic – can you tell us about that?

Well, I had always loved the idea of sailing. I learned to sail as an adult, and between jobs I joined an all-female crew to sail the ARC Trans-Atlantic race. The wildlife was amazing, and I enjoyed pushing myself out of my comfort zone, particularly in dealing with the heat and thirst which I hadn't expected.

Do you sail here in Chichester Harbour?

Not yet but I'm keen to. I have recently bought a canoe to explore the harbour, and I've enjoyed getting to know the area by foot and cycling on the Saltern's Way.

The Chichester Harbour Quick Fire Round:

Favourite bird?

Gannet.

Favourite view?

*The view from the Harbour Office!
Always so much going on.*

Favourite activity?

Surfing. No sailing. Maybe both.

Favourite walk?

From Itchenor down to West Wittering. With a swim at the end.

Favourite ranger snack?

Pork pie!

Favourite marine animal?

Sea Slug.



Bringing back the native oyster

For hundreds of years, Chichester Harbour was famed for its oysters. Native Oysters (distinct from Pacific Oysters – a fairly recent invasive species to the harbour) supported a thriving fishing industry and Romans are believed to have fished for oysters here. During the 19th century it's estimated that over 3 million oysters a year came to market through Emsworth Harbour.

But native oyster populations have plummeted by 95% across Europe due to a number of factors including over-fishing, habitat loss, predation, pollution, and invasive non-native species. The Solent Seascape Project (in which Chichester Harbour Conservancy is a partner) hopes to address this decline, bringing back the Native Oyster across the Solent.

Why restore native oysters?

Oysters bring significant environmental benefits including for water quality – one oyster alone can filter up to 200 litres of water per day. They also remove nitrogen and sequester carbon. A productive oyster reef is a habitat for other marine life including crabs, seahorses, small fish, anemones and seaquirts.

The Solent Seascape Project has a target of restoring four hectares of oyster habitat across the Solent; new oyster reefs have already been created in the River Hamble and Langstone

Harbour, and 2024 saw the first scoping work towards creating new habitat here in Chichester Harbour.

"Oyster coupelles" were deployed here in the harbour - structures which sat on the seabed for the summer to catch oyster larvae. These were analysed by project scientists with the results providing an indication of the existing oyster population within Chichester Harbour – important baseline data for future habitat restoration work.

Get involved!

There are a number of volunteering opportunities through the Solent Seascape Project, including helping with oyster restoration. When a new oyster reef is created, thousands of oysters are brought in from elsewhere to populate the reef. These undergo rigorous biosecurity procedures at the University of Portsmouth – volunteers scrub them! Find out more about the Solent Seascape Project at www.solentseascape.com





Resilience, fun and friendship

Youth sailing in Chichester Harbour

Peter Hickson

Chichester Harbour is a world-class destination for dinghy sailing, and several Olympic sailors have honed their skills here over the years. Many of the harbour's sailing clubs have thriving junior sections and there's a vibrant junior race scene. Emsworth teenager, Amelia Kent talks to us about how sailing in Chichester Harbour has fuelled her ambitions for the sport.

Amelia's first taste of sailing was aged six, in sunnier climes. Living in Bermuda whilst her Dad worked for an America's Cup team, she sailed after school and loved capsizing in the balmy waters.

Moving back to the UK as winter approached, her first taste of a Chichester Harbour capsized was a bit of a shock. Rigging her boat in the chilly rain and wind at Hayling Island Sailing Club (HISC) she vividly remembers asking her mum: "Are they really going to make us go out in this?"

But Amelia is no fair-weather sailor. Now fifteen she laughs at this memory, and we talk about the value of experiencing challenging conditions. Sailing year-round, she's often chipped ice off her boat, and has even needed to defrost the mainsail

with hot water to furl it up the mast. Apparently it is still fun, even with two pairs of gloves, three pairs of socks and three hats. Type two fun we agree – committed young sailors are certainly resilient.

It's the fun that shines through as Amelia describes sailing in the many Youth Weeks across the harbour. Sailing with friends, exploring on the water, swimming, spotting seals; lifelong friendships are forged from summers in Chichester Harbour.

Representing Great Britain

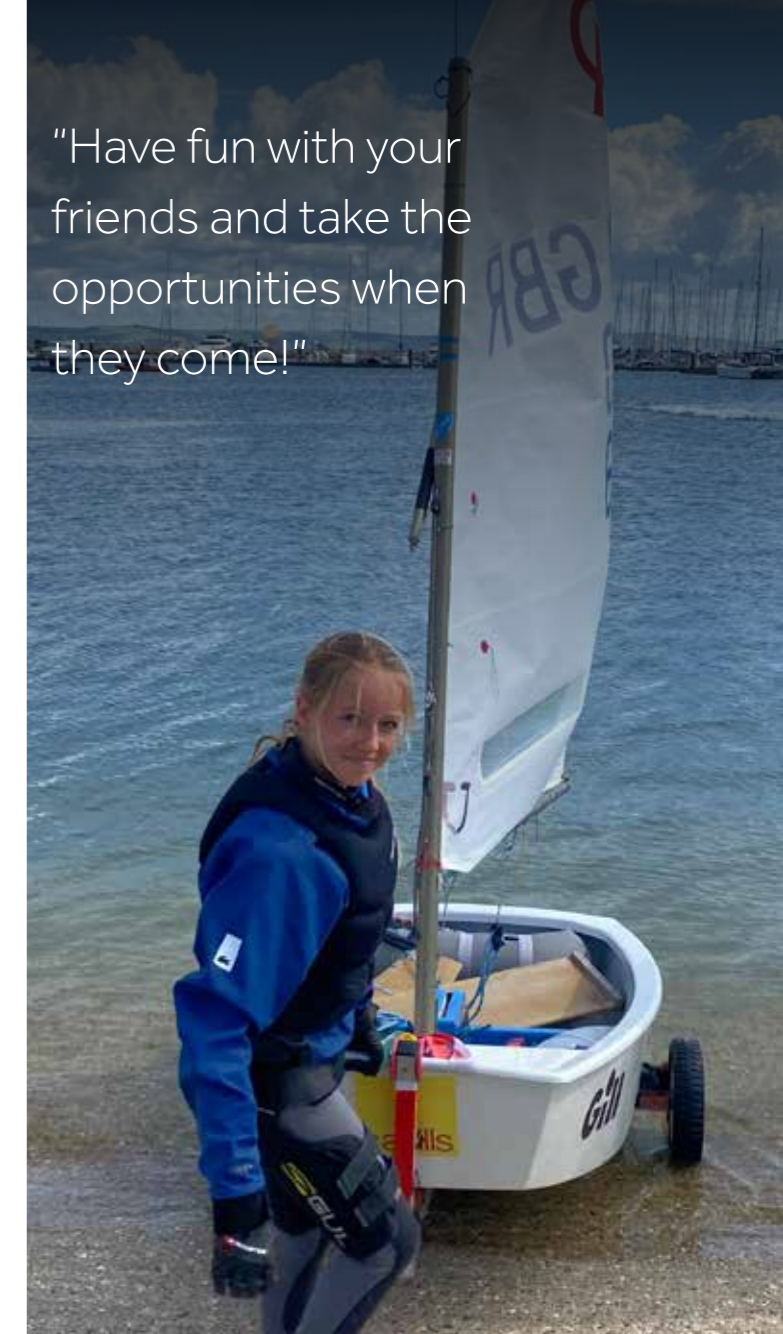
Amelia's sailing has progressed beyond the harbour entrance, after the challenges of lockdown she began travelling to regattas elsewhere with her "Opi" (Optimist dinghy).

Stacking up experience, building resilience through the tough times and hard races, in 2024 she was selected to represent Great Britain at the European Optimist Championships in Pisa, Italy.

"Wearing the GBR logo felt really cool, from the fun of the opening ceremony to the challenges of the races, being part of the team amongst sailors from all over Europe was an incredible experience."

Of the seven young people selected for the European Championships, three came from HISC, testament to the quality of coaching and sailing here in Chichester Harbour. What is it that makes Chichester Harbour such a good place to learn? Amelia says it's the best: there's access to all conditions, wind, weather, tide, space, channels. With so much to consider, strategy and reading the conditions are critical – it's like chess on the water. And it's beautiful!

"Have fun with your friends and take the opportunities when they come!"



Has her experience representing Great Britain given her a taste for more? It certainly has. Inspired by her uncle, Olympic sailor Ian Percy's gold and silver medals, Amelia's ambition is to sail at the Olympics too. Her commitment is impressive, juggling schoolwork with a busy training schedule – most weekends are spent sailing. She talks more of resilience, dealing with failures, taking the learning from when races don't go well and getting back out there anyway.

Has she got any advice for a young person thinking about getting into sailing? "Enjoy it, don't get too worried, have fun with your friends and take the opportunities when they come!"

Get into sailing

Find out more about the opportunities for children and young people to sail in Chichester Harbour by contacting your local sailing club.

All offer RYA-accredited training, and 2025 will see the role-out of new pathways for young people to get into racing.

Going Rowing!

It's social, fun and a great way to get outdoors and enjoy the beauty of the National Landscape. Rowing is fast becoming one of the most popular activities on the water in Chichester Harbour.

Mike Gilbert, from the Coastal Rowing Academy, based on Hayling Island suggests the growth in popularity is down to rowing's accessibility:

"Trying rowing for the first time is easy for anyone, whatever your age or experience. You can start with a taster session and progress from there. The calm, protected waters of Chichester Harbour are a great place to learn."

As the sport grows in popularity, seven of the Chichester Harbour Federation sailing clubs have added rowing to the offer for their members. Langstone, Bosham, Itchenor, Dell Quay, Chichester Yacht Club, Emsworth Slipper and Emsworth sailing clubs all offer coastal rowing as a member benefit.

There are four rowing clubs in Chichester Harbour; the oldest is the Langstone Cutters, joined by Langstone Pilot Gig Club, Dolphin RC and the Coastal Rowing Academy

& Club. Between them, these Clubs have more than 30 boats and over 300 members from across Hampshire and West Sussex.

Most clubs teach their members to row. Social rowing is very popular with groups planning routes that include a stop for coffee or even a visit to see the seals at low tide. Some club members choose to train for racing, from friendly 'local' races, up to higher level competitions across the UK.

For many rowers it is about taking time out on the water, enjoying the scenery, meeting new people and getting some exercise.

Helen started rowing in the harbour last year and enjoys being part of the rowing community and being out on the water. She says, "Everything else slips away, with nature and the beauty of the harbour taking over. Special times to row for me are early on a crisp sunny morning and summer evening rows, which can be spectacular."

Thinking of getting into rowing?

Contact your local sailing club, rowing club or find out about taster opportunities and courses with the Coastal Rowing Academy.

What boats do people row in Chichester Harbour?

In the harbour you will see rowers out on a range of boats, including:

- 5 fixed-seat classes
- Celtic Longboats (a 4-oared coxed boat)
- 6-oared Cornish Pilot Gigs
- 4-oared St Ayles Skiffs.



Rowing section membership has grown steadily with the sport proving particularly popular amongst women, who currently account for around 70% of rowing members.



Chichester Harbour National Landscape

29 sq miles

Chichester Harbour is the largest natural estuary in southeast England



41%

of the National Landscape is below the high water mark

International and National designations and protections

- A National Landscape
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Special Protection Area
- Special Area of Conservation
- Ramsar Site

5

5,069 dwellings



63 miles of footpaths including the King Charles III England Coast Path



14 sailing clubs

Internationally and Nationally important for

15 bird species



41

locally important wildlife sites



11.5 sq miles of water



Largest recreational boating harbour in Europe



2 species of Tern breed here



296 hectares of saltmarsh, but... Since 1946, **59%** of saltmarsh has been lost

59%



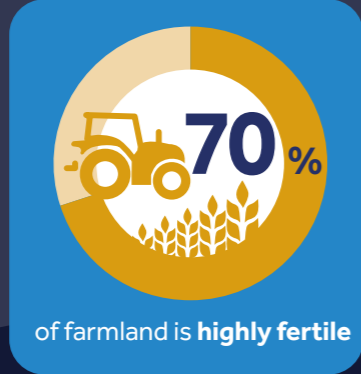
5 Nature Reserves



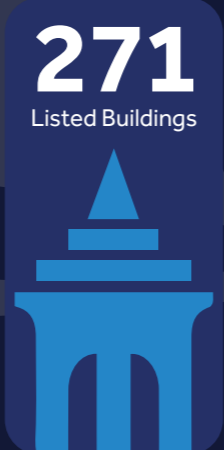
53 miles of shoreline, of which just **15** miles is natural



70% of farmland is highly fertile



271 Listed Buildings



160 hectares of trees



5,200 moorings and marina births

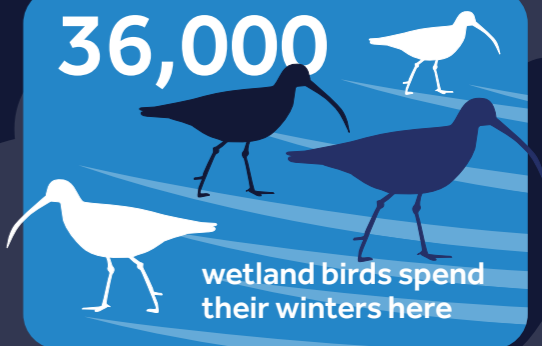


8,700 residents



36,000

wetland birds spend their winters here



7.5 miles off-road cycle path



60 Harbour Seals

20 Grey Seals



10

Conservation Areas



3

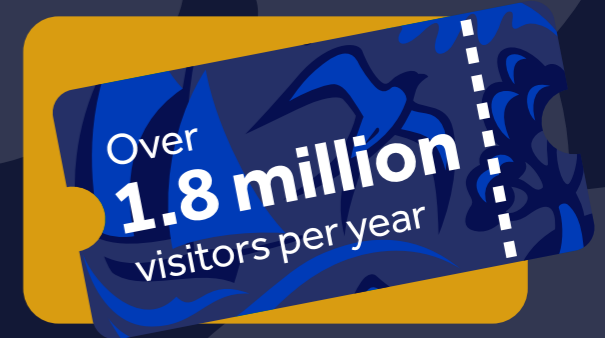
Dark Sky Discovery Sites



10,500 vessels



Over **1.8 million** visitors per year



CHICHESTER HARBOUR CONSERVANCY

Volunteer Power



We're lucky to have several volunteers supporting the work of Chichester Harbour Conservancy. Their roles vary from taking part in conservation work parties to supporting school children visiting our Education Centre. Kate L'Amie joins three of our volunteers to find out more...

Keeping Watch

"Harbour Watch" volunteers support the management of Chichester Harbour's 53 miles of shoreline, each covering a section of the harbour shore. Kate joins Shirley Rushmer to walk her patch between Fishbourne and Dell Quay and find out more about her Harbour Watch responsibilities.

I meet Shirley in Fishbourne early one chilly November morning. As we leave the car park, I start to understand Shirley's connection with the community and landscape as she greets a regular walker and his dog. Having walked this stretch of coastline for several years, she knows the "morning people", and shares a few words with many of these as we stroll towards Dell Quay.

It's that regularity that means Shirley notices things that the casual passer-by may miss. A gate starting to drop on its hinges, new damage to a sea wall, a path that needs clearing or a fence in need of repair... She reports these back to our rangers, who work closely with the Harbour Watch volunteers.

We pause at "Rubbish Corner", an area where litter often washes ashore. She litter-picks during many of her walks; as well as rubbish from the sea, she finds other debris along the coast and footpaths, from cans and bottles to shotgun wadding.

As we approach Dell Quay, Shirley whips out her secateurs to trim brambles overhanging the path, keen to ensure that walkers aren't tangled up. A hazard she doesn't deal with is the dog

mess, which she says has increased significantly over the last few years. We chat about the impact of dog faeces on wildlife, water quality and the ecology of the harbour's shores.

Returning towards Fishbourne we take in the view over the rising tide where the River Lavant meets the harbour. She points out Wigeon, Brent Geese, jumping Bass and a post that is a regular perch for her favourite bird, the Kingfisher.

Walking with Shirley, her sense of responsibility for the area radiates out. I ask about her favourite time of year, but she says that no two days are the same – the tide, the weather, the changing seasons making up the year-round beauty of the harbour which she loves so much.

People Power

Our National Landscape Rangers are supported by a small team of Volunteer Rangers set up in 2014. Steve Baldwin is one of the original team; ten years on Kate joins him and his dog Maddie to find out about his role.

Steve meets me at the Harbour Office and we set off along the coastal path from Itchenor with Maddie at our sides. In fact, it was a previous dog of Steve's that got him involved with Chichester Harbour several years ago when he met a staff member at dog agility classes.

More than 10 years later, he reflects on the range of tasks he has been involved with over the years. Fence building, footpath maintenance, scrub clearance and tree planting have been regular tasks, but as we look across the water towards Cobnor, Steve tells me of something that really sticks in his mind. The Volunteer Rangers played a key role in repairing the rock armour around the saltmarsh creation project at Cobnor Point – moving the heavy rocks was a memorable task!

They also play an important part in the regular work parties with the Friends of Chichester Harbour volunteers; a duty roster ensures there is always someone on hand to assist the rangers in managing the tasks and providing that extra pair of eyes and experience.

That relationship with the rangers is key for the National Landscape; Steve tells of how they are often called upon for specific tasks in addition to volunteer work parties like building boardwalks, assembling tern rafts, coppicing and wildflower meadow management, even repairing the landing platforms for the Itchenor Ferry.

Throughout our walk Maddie is close by, sniffing in the fallen leaves. Steve comments that autumn is his favourite season – not just the colours, he also enjoys the quieter season for walking. I ask Steve about his motivation as a Volunteer Ranger; it's a love of the harbour, as well as a strong desire to be part of protecting the landscape and ecosystems for all to enjoy.





Nature Recovery Needs People Join Us Now

Citizen Science – the Wetland Bird Surveys

Jenny Ullman takes part in the monthly UK-wide Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS counts) co-ordinated by the British Trust for Ornithology. Kate joins her for a spot of birdwatching to find out more.

With the winter sun low in the sky, Jenny and I don our binoculars and stroll down the west side of Thorney Island. The tide beginning to ebb, we are serenaded by the soft whistling of Wigeon and gentle honking of Brent Geese as we take the path along Wickor Bank.

Jenny is passionate about biodiversity and conservation and we chat about our shared love of birds; whilst I was born into a bird nerd family, Jenny came to birding as an adult. She enthuses about the accessibility and portability of the hobby, as well as the way that noticing birds, where they breed, where they feed, can unlock a deeper understanding of how a landscape functions.

We stop to watch a Marsh Harrier hunting over the reedbeds and I ask how she became involved as a WeBS counter in Chichester Harbour. When joining walks run by the Conservancy her birding skills were spotted; she was asked to cover one of the 14 WeBS sectors around Chichester Harbour.

Jenny covers the sector from Emsworth to Langstone, where she counts every single wetland bird she sees, from flocks of 1000s of wading birds, to solitary ducks on the water. The counts take place monthly, on dates set to coincide with the high tide when the mudflats are covered

and the wading birds are resting and easier to spot. Every month she is struck by the enormity of the nationwide WeBS counts – across the UK there will be more than 3000 volunteers counting wetland birds at the same time.

It is an enormous feat of citizen science, with data spanning decades giving accurate insights into changing wetland bird populations. As Jenny talks about how important this data is in driving conservation and protection for declining species, we spot a Curlew – a species that has declined by 49% since 1995.

We look through the telescope at a Greenshank and some passers-by stop for a chat about the birds – a regular occurrence says Jenny; people are always interested in the power of citizen science! And that science is truly powerful here in Chichester Harbour; with over 35,000 waders and wildfowl overwintering here, the data from WeBS counts has driven the designations to ensure the area is protected for the future.

Keen to volunteer in Chichester Harbour?

Keep an eye on volunteer opportunities on our website:

www.conservancy.co.uk/about-chichester-harbour-conservancy/volunteering/



Paul Adams



Scan to join today



www.friendsch.org



Should Dogs Be Banned from Chichester Harbour? The Children Decide!

As part of our Junior Conservancy programme, children from primary schools around Chichester Harbour get the opportunity to take part in a lively debate on the question: Should dogs be banned from the harbour? This exciting and unusual field trip allows pupils to debate real environmental issues in an educational experience like no other...

Created by the Chichester Harbour Conservancy Education Service, Junior Conservancy is a unique day-long workshop that mixes outdoor learning with the chance to hone speaking and listening skills. Thanks to funding support from the Friends of Chichester Harbour, we offer the experience for free to schools in Hampshire and West Sussex.

The goal? To get children thinking critically about real-world environmental issues while increasing self-confidence and having fun in the harbour environment.

The day kicks off at the Education Centre in Dell Quay, where students dive into engaging activities designed to teach them all about the harbour's delicate ecosystem. From the

wildlife that calls it home to the people who work and play there, the children quickly learn that Chichester Harbour is more than just a beautiful landscape - it's a place where nature, animals, and humans coexist, and sometimes, their needs clash.

Exploring different viewpoints

As they become familiar with the topic, the children are assigned different roles to play in the debate. One might be a farmer worried about livestock, while another could be a bird expert advocating for wildlife protection.

Of course, there's always someone to champion the rights of dog walkers too! Working in small groups, the pupils get



the chance to prepare their arguments, building up their confidence and working as a team.

After lunch things get really exciting; the students head over to the Council Debating Chambers at County Hall (Chichester) or Havant Plaza. Yes, you read that right! With special permission from the councils, they get to stand in the very spot where local government decisions are made and present their case to their peers.

A teacher's perspective

Kingsham Primary School's KS2 and English Lead, Paris Kyriakides, is a huge fan of the Junior Conservancy experience and brings her pupils every year. "Our children absolutely loved visiting County Hall," she said. "The chance to speak in such a formal setting was amazing - especially for the quieter kids who might not usually shine in front of their peers. By the end of the day, they were confident, engaged, and excited to have their voices heard."

For many of the students, debating in front of their classmates in the Council Chamber was the highlight of the trip. "It was great to see the children standing up for what they believed in, all while respecting each other's viewpoints," Paris added. "It really helped develop their speaking and listening skills, and every single child, no matter their background or abilities,

Pupil comments from children who attended in 2024

"I absolutely LOVED IT!!"

"It was so fun, can we do it again soon?"

"I absolutely loved the debating, the best part of it."

"I was really excited, and it made me think about what I want to do in the future."

"The day was amazing and was one of the best days I have ever had. It was a one-of-a-kind experience."

"The debate built up my confidence and I loved watching the birds."

Find out more about the Junior Conservancy or school trips at www.conservancy.co.uk/education/

had something to say. They all walked away with a sense of accomplishment."

Education in action

Jane Latawski, Education Centre Lead, shares that the Junior Conservancy events are just as enjoyable for the staff as they are for the children. "It's always a pleasure guiding each group through the day," she said. "We love seeing the pupils take their newfound knowledge of the harbour and confidently exchange ideas in the debating chamber. The energy in the room is fantastic!"

So, what was the outcome of this hotly contested debate? As always, the students came up with thoughtful and creative compromise solutions, carefully balancing the needs of nature, humans, and their pets. It turns out, when you give children the opportunity to engage in real-world problems, they come up with some pretty impressive ideas!

In the end, the Junior Conservancy isn't just about learning the facts - it's about empowering young people to think critically, speak passionately, and become advocates for the world around them. Judging by the energy and enthusiasm of these budding environmentalists, Chichester Harbour is in very good hands indeed.

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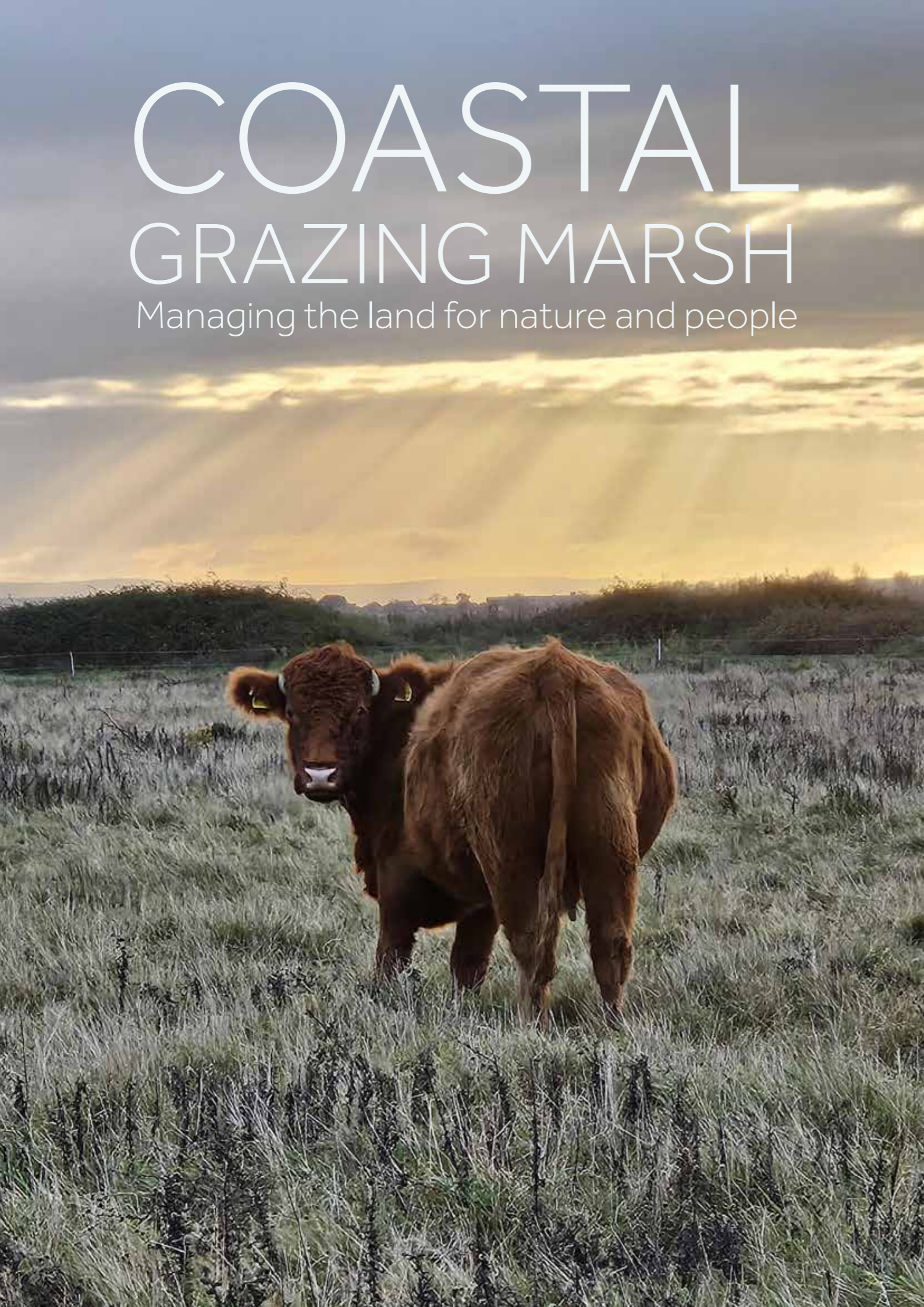
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COASTAL GRAZING MARSH

Managing the land for nature and people



The land in the Chichester Harbour National Landscape has been farmed for generations to grow crops and raise livestock. We join local farmer Angus Sprackling at Eames Farm to find out about the livestock he grazes on the shores of Chichester Harbour, and the importance of coastal grazing habitat.

The small herd of Luing calves are inquisitive and rush over to greet us. These cute, brown and white calves are the first arrivals to a new herd, introduced by Angus. They have an important role to play; coastal grazing marsh is under threat and in decline.

These cattle will graze the coastal marshland on Thorney Island, as part of the Eames Farm focus on regenerative farming. This approach to farming allows the land, soil, water and nutrients to regenerate themselves, as opposed to conventional approaches to farming that can deplete these natural resources requiring significant fertiliser inputs.

Angus explains that the resilience and adaptability of the Luing breed make them well-suited to coastal grazing. The habitat can be wet, marshy and inaccessible for tractors, but the cattle are able to graze across the roughest areas, navigate the ditches filled with brackish water and eat the tough grass and vegetation.

Helping manage the landscape

These hardy cows are powerhouses for managing the landscape for nature. They help to retain open grassland, boost diversity in the landscape and regenerate the soil, creating the right conditions for wildlife to flourish. Coastal grazing marsh supports populations of wintering and breeding birds, many of which are internationally threatened. The area is a haven for birds, from flocks of overwintering Brent Geese to waders including Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit. The abundance of small mammals including mice and voles attracts birds of prey including Short-eared Owls, Kestrels and Marsh Harriers.

Angus' farm has received support from the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) scheme to enhance coastal grazing management. The projects include movable electric fencing for strip grazing, portable water troughs, and no-fence geo tags for cattle, enabling grazing in areas of the farm that are otherwise challenging to manage.

Grassland that could not otherwise be used for farming provides high-quality lean beef; coastal grazing like this supports nature, wildlife and the future health of the harbour.

Supporting Farming in a Protected Landscape

Since 2021 Chichester Harbour Conservancy has worked with local farmers through the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) scheme. The DEFRA-funded programme offers grants to farmers and landowners for environmental projects which include supporting nature recovery and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Highlights of the FiPL scheme



Working with **19 farmers** and landowners across **5100 hectares** of farmland.



Soil health improvement projects covering over **4000 hectares**.



Over **1000m new hedgerows** planted.



More than **20 initiatives** have been launched to promote regenerative farming and improve water quality, including the adoption of **precision GPS machinery** that applies fertiliser tailored to the specific needs of plants. This technology helps **minimise nutrient runoff** into harbour waters.

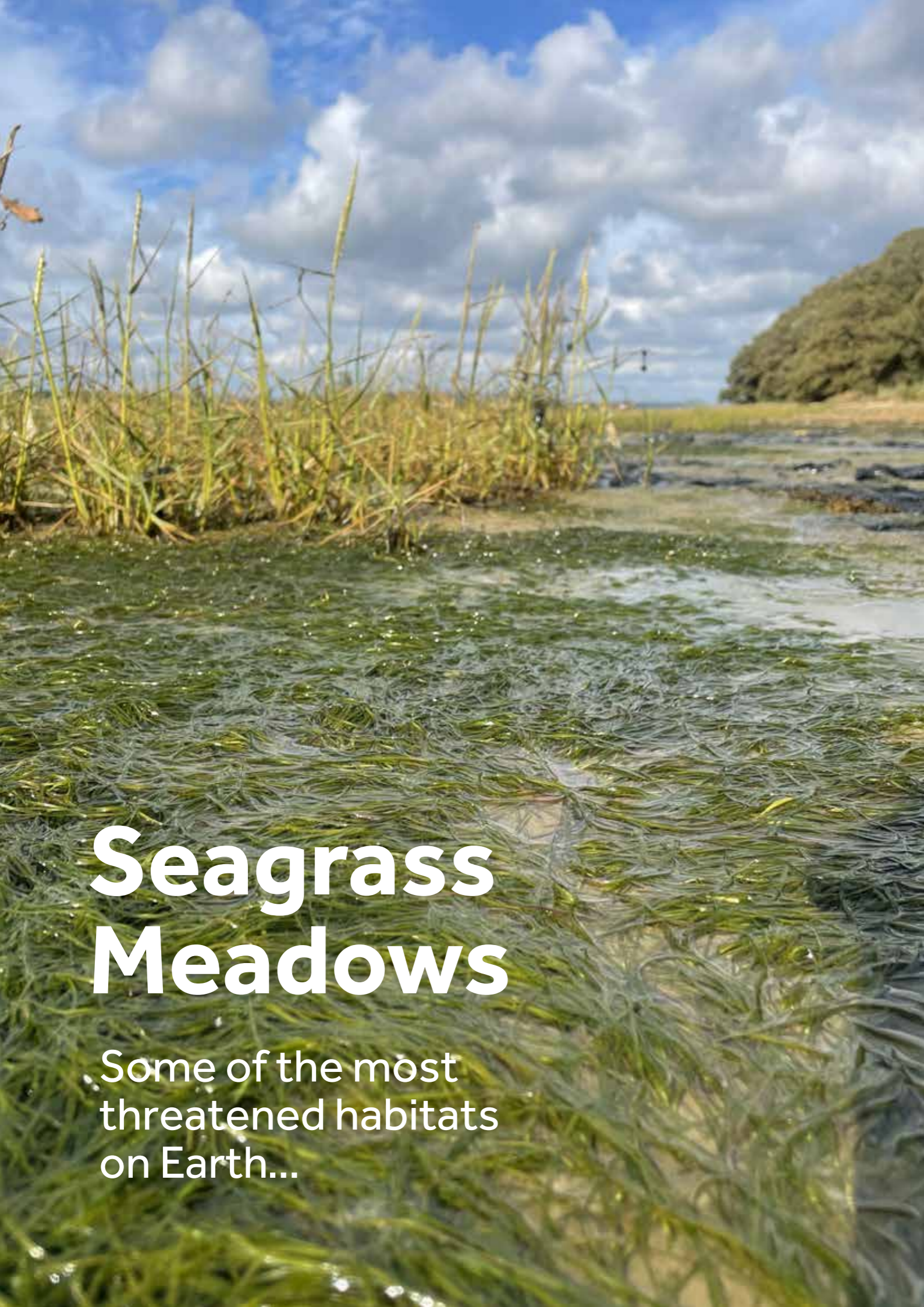


Support for the formation of two farming cluster groups – to allow farmers to better work together for the **environment at a landscape scale**.

Glossary

Coastal Grazing Marsh: Low lying pasture by the coast, sometimes covered by fresh or brackish water. It is used to graze cattle.

Regenerative Farming: A method that aims to restore the land, soils, water nutrients and other natural resources rather than depleting them.



Seagrass Meadows

Some of the most threatened habitats on Earth...



Chichester Harbour is home to many precious and threatened coastal habitats, including seagrass meadows. Like saltmarshes and oyster reefs, seagrass meadows are a hero habitat...

The only flowering plant in the sea, seagrass stores carbon and stabilises sediment. It is also a haven of biodiversity – providing a nursery to young fish, a home for seahorses, crabs, anemones, molluscs and more. At low tide it provides a feeding ground for overwintering birds like Brent Geese and Wigeon.

But seagrass meadows are under threat. Once common across the Solent, estimates suggest the UK has lost 92% of our seagrass meadows over the last century.

There are two types of seagrass within Chichester Harbour – *Zostera marina* (Eelgrass) and *Zostera noltei* (Dwarf eelgrass). The Dwarf eelgrass inhabits the intertidal zone, uncovered at low tide – it looks a lot like grass clippings.

Chichester Harbour Conservancy is focussed on the protection and restoration of our unique coastal habitats, including seagrass meadows. But until last year we didn't have an accurate picture of exactly where the seagrass habitats are. In 2024, through the Solent Seascape Project we commissioned intertidal seagrass surveys to understand exactly where the seagrass is, and what condition it is in.

The surveys were carried out using a hovercraft, operated by Ocean Ecology. An unusual sight in Chichester Harbour, the

hovercraft provided a safe way to access intertidal seagrass meadows with minimal disturbance.

The data from the surveys along with surveys carried out by the Environment Agency will be used to inform the next steps in protecting the intertidal seagrass meadows, as well as establishing any need for active restoration of the habitat. Protecting seagrass can include measures to reduce pressure, from ensuring fishing and hand gathering activities take place outside seagrass meadows, to working with the boating community to reduce habitat disturbance.

What can you do?

You can get involved as a Seagrass Champion with the Solent Seascape Project – taking part in collecting seagrass and transplanting it out at restoration sites across the Solent. Visit www.solentseascape.com to find out more.

Avoid trampling or disturbing seagrass beds.

If you are a boater or sailor:

- Stick to designated anchorages and avoid anchoring on seabed vegetation – look for bare seabed.
- Flake out the correct amount of chain or chain and warp for your vessel to minimise additional chain abrasion on the seabed.



The Solent Seascape Project is funded by The Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme and East Head Impact.

Family fun

Explore the secrets of Chichester Harbour

Get creative!

Next time you visit the beach or walk along a footpath, make a collection as you go and turn it into a work of art. Sticks, pebbles, leaves, drift wood and acorns can all be turned into models and are fun reminders of your walk.

Top tip: Get together with friends and create one big art project.



Make a home for a crab

After crabbing, craft a cozy shelter for the crabs as you release them. Arrange stones and seaweed to build a safe haven for each one. Be gentle when handling each crab.

Top tip: Dell Quay, Sandy Point on Hayling Island and Emsworth shorelines are good locations for finding crabs.



Take a welly walk

Don't let rain stop you having fun outside. Pull on your wellies, find a muddy coastal path and go jumping in puddles! Fun at any age!

Top tip: Wash off your wellies afterwards with a paddle.



Listen to the birds

Take time to listen to the harbour songbirds in the spring and summer. Early mornings and evenings are often the best time to hear them. How many different calls can you hear?

Top tip: Download an app on your phone like Merlin Bird ID, to identify the calls of the birds around you.



Embark on a water adventure

Hop aboard our solar-powered boat at Emsworth or Itchenor for a harbour tour. A great activity for school holidays, especially in summer, where you can spot Terns, Curlews, and even Cormorants diving for their lunch!

Top tip: Bring a notebook or camera to capture the wildlife you see.

Hold a shoreline scavenger hunt

What can you find on the shoreline? Look out for fossils (echinoids), flints, pebbles, fossil sponges, sea glass, or even fragments of Roman tile. Challenge yourself to find as many different things as you can.

Top tip: Choose a long word such as 'shoreline' and see if you can find things that begin with each letter of the word.



Explore the secret life of a saltmarsh

Find out why saltmarshes are so special! These squelchy wetlands are like nature's superheroes – they capture carbon and are home to loads of amazing creatures. See if you can spot crabs, wading birds, or tiny fish hiding in the shallows. Be sure to keep out of the sticky mud!

Top tip: Spot saltmarsh plants – they're tough enough to live in salty water! Can you find samphire or sea lavender?



Count the boats

Set sail on a spotting adventure! Head to the viewing platform at Itchenor, where boats of all shapes and sizes pass by. From speedy motorboats to elegant sailing yachts, how many different types you can spot?



Top tip: Bring a pair of binoculars for a closer look and see if you can spy the name of each boat.



Take a sunrise or sunset photo walk

Light for taking photographs is often best in the early mornings or evenings. Grab your camera or phone and take a walk to capture stunning shots.

Top tip: Remember to position the sun behind you to get the best pictures.



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Could you be our Junior Artist of the Month?

Share your harbour-inspired art work to win our monthly prize.
Are you under 15 and do you love Chichester Harbour – the views, the wildlife, the boats? Paintings, drawing, collages, models and more are all welcome in our monthly competition.

The Prize:
Each month the winner will receive a family ticket for a boat trip on our solar-powered tour boat. You and your family can book a Harbour Discovery tour or family special event trips anytime in 2025.

How to take part:
To enter please take a clear photograph of your artwork and email it to us at: competitions@conservancy.co.uk. Please include the title of your artwork and the artist's first name and age.

- Terms and Conditions:**
- The competition is open to junior artists aged 15 or under.
 - You can enter as many times as you like.
 - The competition will run monthly until the end of 2025.
 - By entering, you agree that your image will be shared on our social media if you win.
 - All art forms are welcome, with the exception of photography.

For full competition details and terms and conditions visit www.conservancy.co.uk/competition



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