

Report by Liz Green, West Alvington Parish Council's representative on the Salcombe and Kingsbridge Estuary Conservation Forum – 31 March 2021

Parishioners are reminded to report any pollution identified in the estuary immediately to the Environment Agency's Emergency number:- 0800 807060.

South West Water's phone number for reporting blockages in a public sewer is 0344 346 2020.

Nigel Mortimer, Estuaries Officer of South Devon AONB Unit, is keen to learn of any interesting wildlife spotted within the estuary as well as the reappearance of the "red tides" spotted last summer. These "red tides", caused by a number of harmless blooming dinoflagellates, cause the water to take on a maroon colour. During 2020 they were especially prolific within the Bowcombe and Kingsbridge creeks. If either of these are spotted, please notify Nigel on 01803 229335 or e mail him at Nigel.Mortimer@SouthDevonAONB.org.uk.

A number of university students are keen to study the ecosystems of the dwarf seagrasses within the estuary. To this end, trials are underway to transplant clumps of seagrasses to other areas of the estuary in the hope that they will grow there. The dwarf seagrass beds do a tremendous job in capturing and locking in carbon.

The publishing of a report about the feral, invasive, non-native Pacific Oysters (aka Rock Oysters) within the estuary is still awaited. These oysters are having a concerning impact within the protected site of the estuary since they can significantly alter the ecosystem processes, partly through displacing the dwarf seagrasses. It is hoped that, once Covid restrictions can be further lifted, volunteers will be sought to assist in safely managing the numbers of these oysters.

There is quite a concern over the possible detrimental impact on wildlife and our landscape as a consequence of the high volume of visitors anticipated to our region during the forthcoming tourist season. The "Countryside Code" is currently being updated in order to encompass the vulnerability of the coastline. Identified overflowing litter bins etc can be reported to SHDC via <https://apps.southhams.gov.uk/webreportit>. Additionally, four new seasonal Locality Officers will, between them, be working seven days a week between 6am –8pm to keep an eye on litter control etc.

In their endeavour to deter and minimise criminal activity on and beside the estuary, Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club is seeking volunteers to join their Boatwatch rota. This involves a few hours per day over a two-week period. For insurance purposes, volunteers need to be members of KEBC, although family membership costs only £10 per year. If interested, please e mail Richard Benton at boatwatch@kebc.co.uk.

Local farmers are being sought to participate in Defra's pilot of their new "Sustainable Farming Incentive" which is part of their overall "Environmental Land Management Scheme". The Incentive scheme shall pay farmers to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way. Payment shall be made to those participating in the pilot scheme, and anyone interested should apply by 11 April 2021. Visit the Gov.UK website and search for "Environmental Land Management Scheme" for further details.

Anyone interested in the ecology of the local estuaries may like to look at the South Devon AONB Channel on You Tube, onto which recent virtual talks have been uploaded.

The next online Zoom meeting of the Estuary Forum's "Round-the-table" autumn session will be on Tuesday 2nd November 2021, by invitation.