

RYA East Region – Environment

The East Coast is one of the most dynamic in the British Isles. Forever changing, it also faces further challenges from coastal development and the growth of Offshore Electricity Generation Schemes (wind, wave and tidal). Strong tidal currents shift huge quantities of silt and shingle many miles, denuding one section of coastal foreshore only to recharge and silt up another. The sand banks of the Thames Estuary walk steadily north eastwards under this unremitting pressure from wind and tide.

This is not helped by the fact that the region is slowly sinking back into the seabed under Isostatic Pressure (the tilting of the British Isles downwards in the South as it recovers from the depression of the North under the ice of 10,000 years ago).

Into this environment now comes the long-term effect of the burning of carbon fuels, with resultant climate change and rising sea levels. Here in the East Region, with its extensive low lying land, the rising sea levels will result in erosion of low cliffs, a loss of saltmarsh and other habitats, and increased pressure on existing sea defences.

In an attempt to mitigate these changes, Government and NGOs - spurred on by European (EU) legislation - seek to manage activities on and off the waters of the coastal strip by introducing positive steps to create more habitat, particularly salt marsh, to set up Marine Conservation Zones and introduce Marine Planning that is linked to the existing onshore planning system. Some of these measures will undoubtedly impact on our freedom of navigation and boating facilities.

Our Aim is to achieve sustainable boating and to achieve a balance between the needs of conservation and our freedom of navigation. We also seek to raise awareness among recreational sailors of the issues and of the measures that can be taken to ensure that we operate sympathetically with the environment that is such an important part of our enjoyment.

Thus we co-operate with the responsible authorities to achieve a sensible balance, and ensure that the three aspects of sustainable development, Economic,

Environmental and Social, are ALL taken into account, as well as the technical feasibility of the proposals.

The principal environmental measures facing us are:

- Estuary and Coastal Management Schemes (EU Bird and Habitat Directives)
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- Flood and Coastal Flood Erosion Risk Management (FCERM)
- Marine Conservation Zones and Marine Planning (MCZ, MP)
- River Basin Management Plans (EU Water Framework Directive)
- Offshore Renewable Electricity Generation schemes

Shoreline Management Plans (SMP's) cover both the Estuary Management and Flood and Coastal Erosion issues. A new policy of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) considers ways of dealing with these issues and sharing the costs between Government, Local Authorities and individual landowners or groups of landowners.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) have been proposed and examined in detail over the past three to four years by groups of stakeholders (including the RYA, Fishermen, Conservationists, the Environment Agency and others). Ministers have now agreed to a number of MCZs around English coasts and to the protective measures to be applied. As of now none of these measures impact on recreational boating.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) set up a centralised system for the consideration and control of Marine Licence Applications (MLAs) to cover all work proposals, both for development and maintenance activities. This process is administered by a new body, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) which consults with stakeholders on each MLA before granting or refusing the Licence. The RYA is one of the consulted stakeholder organisations.

Marine Planning for both Inshore and Offshore zones has been and is being developed for the English and Welsh sea areas so that all proposals for new developments can be assessed by the MMO and stakeholders, against those agreed plans.

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) (which has been incorporated into UK Law) requires all water bodies (from small ponds and streams to major rivers and lakes) to be examined for the quality of the water in ecological terms and measures determined to achieve 'Good Ecological Status' or in some cases such as commercial harbours, to achieve 'Good Ecological Potential' by 2025. The first plans were primarily concerned with Water Companies and Agriculture and have virtually no impact on Recreational Boating. Again the RYA both Regionally and Centrally, has been involved in the development of these plans to ensure the protection measures are commensurate with a balanced minimum need.

Offshore Renewable Energy System (OREL) development has been closely followed by the RYA and we have been involved since the early 2000s in discussions with Government Departments, the MCA, Trinity House and Developers. We developed an RYA Position Paper, in which we set out our minimum requirements for safe navigation. The key issues were and still are:

- A minimum air clearance of 22 metres between the tips of rotor blades and MHWS to ensure that there would be safe masthead clearance for 97% of the UK yacht fleet.
- A minimum depth clearance of 4.0 metres to underwater obstructions.

These requirements and the associated Atlas of Cruising Routes and Sailing and Racing areas around the UK now form part of the contract requirements for the development of all UK Offshore Wind Farms. We also cover the development of Wave and Tidal Systems which are progressively emerging, though not so far off our East Region coast.

As from 1st April 2014 all dredging operations must be licensed through the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). There are however certain categories and quantities which will be exempt. More information is available on the [RYA web site](#).

The South East Marine Plan is being developed - and the East Team is part of the consultation that is making sure all stakeholders contribute to the development of the plan:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management->

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As ERPEC Bob Calver Reports to the East Regional Committee (ERC) and to the RYA Planning & Environmental team at RYA Headquarters.