



Environment and Community Panel
Tuesday, 27th February, 2024 at 4.30 pm
in the Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn

Reports marked to follow on the Agenda and/or Supplementary Documents

1. **Update from Freebridge Community Housing on future plans in relation to decarbonisation and sustainability (Pages 2 - 22)**
2. **RSPB Presentation on East Atlantic Flyway UNESCO shortlisting (Pages 23 - 43)**

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Environment & Community Panel

Freebridge Community Housing Update

Net Zero by 2050

As a country we have a commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, and as West Norfolk's largest housing provider Freebridge has a vital role to play in this. Not only in terms of how we run our business, but also in the decisions we make now which will impact our current and future generations.

Collectively, we have the opportunity to do things better than we have done before, and the decisions we make will be made with the consideration of the impact of reducing our carbon footprint.

As part of our journey towards 2050 and becoming a carbon neutral business we have committed to improving the EPC rating of our housing stock to a minimum EPC C by 2030

In order to achieve this target, we are building a retrofit strategy, with the first stage getting underway in 2023.

Research and Improvement

In the past year we have made considerable strides towards achieving our efficiency and sustainability goals.

In 2023 we introduced a new Research and Improvement team to create the strategies and innovations that will lead us towards our Net Zero 2050 target, demonstrating our commitment to long-term improvements and plans for the environment and our tenants' wellbeing.

4

The Research and Improvement team is dedicated to horizon scanning for opportunities that will aid us in these objectives.

This includes monitoring bills that are currently progressing through Parliament that may affect us and our tenants, the committees in which they're discussed, as well as constantly scanning for funding opportunities that will allow us to bring retrofit works to more of our properties.

Achieving Net Zero

Steps towards achieving Net Zero

01



Future Homes Standard

New build homes will meet future homes standards and wherever possible will be built with sustainable heating options moving away from fossil fuels as a form of heating.

Where this isn't possible, homes will be built with future proofing in mind in preparation for the transition away from fossil fuels.



Emissions

In addition to reducing our building emissions, we will also reduce the emissions and carbon impact from our fleet vehicles.

This will be achieved through our new scheduling systems and plans to transition from petrol and diesel vehicles to EV's.



Energy

Move the electricity contracts of our sheltered schemes, offices, communal and commercial spaces to suppliers who offer 100% Green renewable tariffs.

Achieving Net Zero

Steps towards achieving Net Zero



Decarbonising

Decarbonisation of our housing stock, office and commercial buildings. Replacing heating systems with low carbon technology while utilising renewable energy generation where possible.



Knowledge

Continuing to educate and train our colleagues giving them the knowledge and skills to make sustainable business decisions, raising their awareness of their own contributions on a personal basis to inform their behaviours and improve their individual carbon footprints.



Upskill

Upskilling our operative team to deliver property retrofit measures to reduce the reliance on specialist external contractors.



Procurement

We will also consider the social value and environmental impact when awarding contracts, working with suppliers to benefit our long-term sustainability strategy.

This further demonstrates our consideration of environmental impact in all our decisions in relation to our assets and resources.

Wave2

What's happened so far?

Having been successful in our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 fund application, this allowed Freebridge to take our first steps on our retrofit journey.

Our £2.7 million project, of which 48% is funded by SHDF will improve the energy efficiency of 99 homes between April 2023 and March 2025, reducing the environmental impact these properties have whilst creating warmer and more efficient homes for our tenants.

Taking a fabric first approach we are ensuring that the properties provide the correct levels of insulation prior to installing Low Carbon Heating technology in the form of ASHP's alongside renewable energy generation, Solar PV to reduce the running costs of the new heating systems.



**£2.7million
project, of
48% is
funded by
SHDF**

By the end of Y1

56

**Retrofit surveys will
have taken place**

6

35

**properties will have been
completed by 31st March**



**EPC's that are D & E's should
rise to EPC B's & C's.**

Feedback to far from tenants

10
“Previously I was only being able to afford to heat my living room, with electricity costs of around £8 per day. Since the upgrades I’m now heating my whole home to a constant temperature all day for less than it was previously costing me, my home is now a much more comfortable place to live.”

“I was happy with my existing heating, and it was working well, I wasn’t sure what was proposed would benefit me. I was worried about the disruption that would be caused from the works, all the workmen were kind, friendly and very tidy. My home is now warmer than it has ever been and it’s warm all day and is costing me less than before, thank you. I’m going to tell my neighbours how good the new heating is and they should go for it if they have any concerns.”

Feedback to far from tenants

11
“ I didn't want any work to be done on my home, I didn't see the need or want the disruption, I'm not great with technology and didn't understand how the proposed systems would work, it sounded like it could be very complicated. Freebridge sat with me explained everything in simple terms that were easy to understand as well as what would happen and when. They also allowed me to take my time and not make a final decision until neighbours had theirs installed so I could see how it all worked and how they found the new heating, I've only heard positive things and I'm now excited to be having mine completed in the next few weeks.”

“ My whole house is now much warmer than it was before and it is so much easier to keep the temperature consistent, with simple and easy to use controls. The warmer home has really helped with my arthritis which always gets worse when it is cold.”

Next...

Next...

1

↪ While this is the first stage of our retrofit plans we have been continuing to plan for future stages.

Over the past few months, we have been building relationships with external organisations to investigate how we can partner and work together to utilise funding opportunities to help on our retrofit journey.

2

We are hopeful that on top of the Wave 2.1 works, in 24-25 we will also be able to deliver on improving some of worst performing properties in our stock, part funded through the ECO 4 scheme, improving the quality of our stock.

We also continue to work closely with our planned works team to give consideration to how works can improve the efficiency and EPC rating of as many properties as possible through all available avenues.

3

It is anticipated that the SHDF Wave 3 scheme will be announced later this year, we will look to build on the work and learnings from our Wave 2.1 project in order to apply for Wave 3 funding to improve a far greater number of properties.

Works to identify properties likely to be included in an application will start taking place in the next few months.

As we progress towards 2035 we will look to increase the number of properties we retrofit and improve EPC ratings through a mixture of capital funded, grant funded and planned works funds.



Tenant's Homes

Following our full Stock Condition Survey, we will be working on our least energy efficient properties and In the year ahead, to make properties more energy efficient we will

- Delivering a component replacement programme
- Carrying out insulation, roof and heating works
- Fitting window and door replacements
- Ongoing support fund

Support Fund Issued. April 23 - to date (Energy and Food)

£69,285

Energy support during winter plan (1/12/23 - to date)

£18,511

PLUS - Scheme energy support

vouchers issued for food and energy

1322

Introducing Dairy Way



**21.87
acres**

18

3

**Between 1 & 3
hectares New
Wetland
Habitat**

5

**New Native Woodland
& Meadow Grassland
Planting**

**New Habitats
Diverse wildlife**

**Community Access
Access to Nature &
Education catchment,**

Benefits

Habitat and Biodiversity Enhancements Working for Nature & the Environment

At the heart of the strategy would be the creation of new managed native woodland and wetland habitats.

Existing and new landscape features would be incorporated that would benefit and encourage wildlife and strengthen the local ecological and biodiversity eco-systems.

Areas of rich meadow planting within the spaces would further increase biodiversity and encourage pollinators such as bees, beetles, butterflies and moths. There would also be the opportunity of installing bee hives and bird and bat boxes across the site

Connecting People with Nature Health & Wellbeing

Being outside is fun and having access to open spaces, nature and wildlife has major benefits for our physical and mental health and sense of wellbeing.

A new park would provide such a space, that can be enjoyed by the whole community. New footpath walks with interpretation boards will offer a direct connection to nature a space to walk, relax & educate. We would like to look at introducing a new 'natural play space' within the existing Queen Elizabeth Avenue Children's Play Area, and the introduction of a 'Trim Trail' along the existing cycle path encouraging and promoting active lifestyle choices and sense of wellbeing

Benefits

Community & Education Educating for our future

Although subject to planning, there is the potential to delivering a new Community and Education Hub building on the site.

20 Designed to sit sympathetically within its landscape setting, the building could provide a multi-functional education space, that can be used by schools, local community groups and visitors to explain the background, purpose and environmental benefits of the park and how it is helping to address the challenges to our changing climate.

There is the opportunity of encouraging and involving the community in shaping the park and in the longer-term future management.

Freebridge Community Housing Towards NetZero

The site would provide Freebridge with a significant and diverse range of ways to deliver impact to 'Build Better Futures'.

The land has the right balance of location and criteria for woodland activities that can unlock impact in both carbon reduction, sustainability and community wellbeing. The site also creates a direct opportunity for carbon capture and carbon offsetting through new tree planting, wetland areas and biodiversity and habitat enhancement projects

Through collaboration between business investment into the wellbeing economy and the local community, this underutilised piece of land within the heart of the community provides a unique and exciting opportunity for us to deliver a project that could contribute towards real long-term environmental and community change and benefit.

The land purchase brings a wide range of carbon reduction and community benefits that align with the Freebridge objectives



Any questions?

East Coast Flyway (Humber to the Thames) Potential Natural World Heritage Site



East Coast Flyway

- Where is it?
- What is it?
- Why is it important?
- Why put it forward as a potential WHS?
- What does it mean in practice?
- What are the next steps?

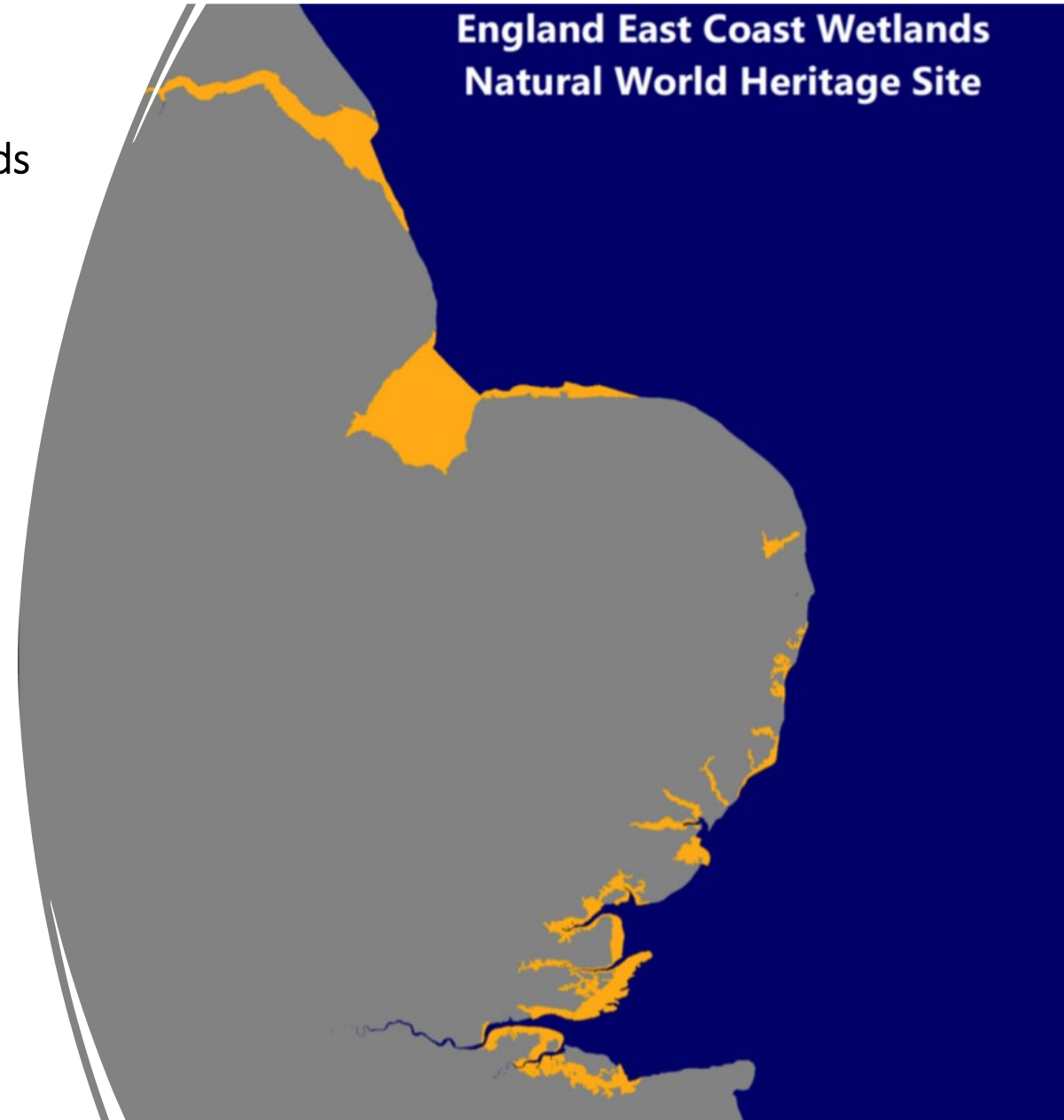
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East Atlantic Flyway : England East Coast Wetlands (Humber-Thames) c.170,000 hectares

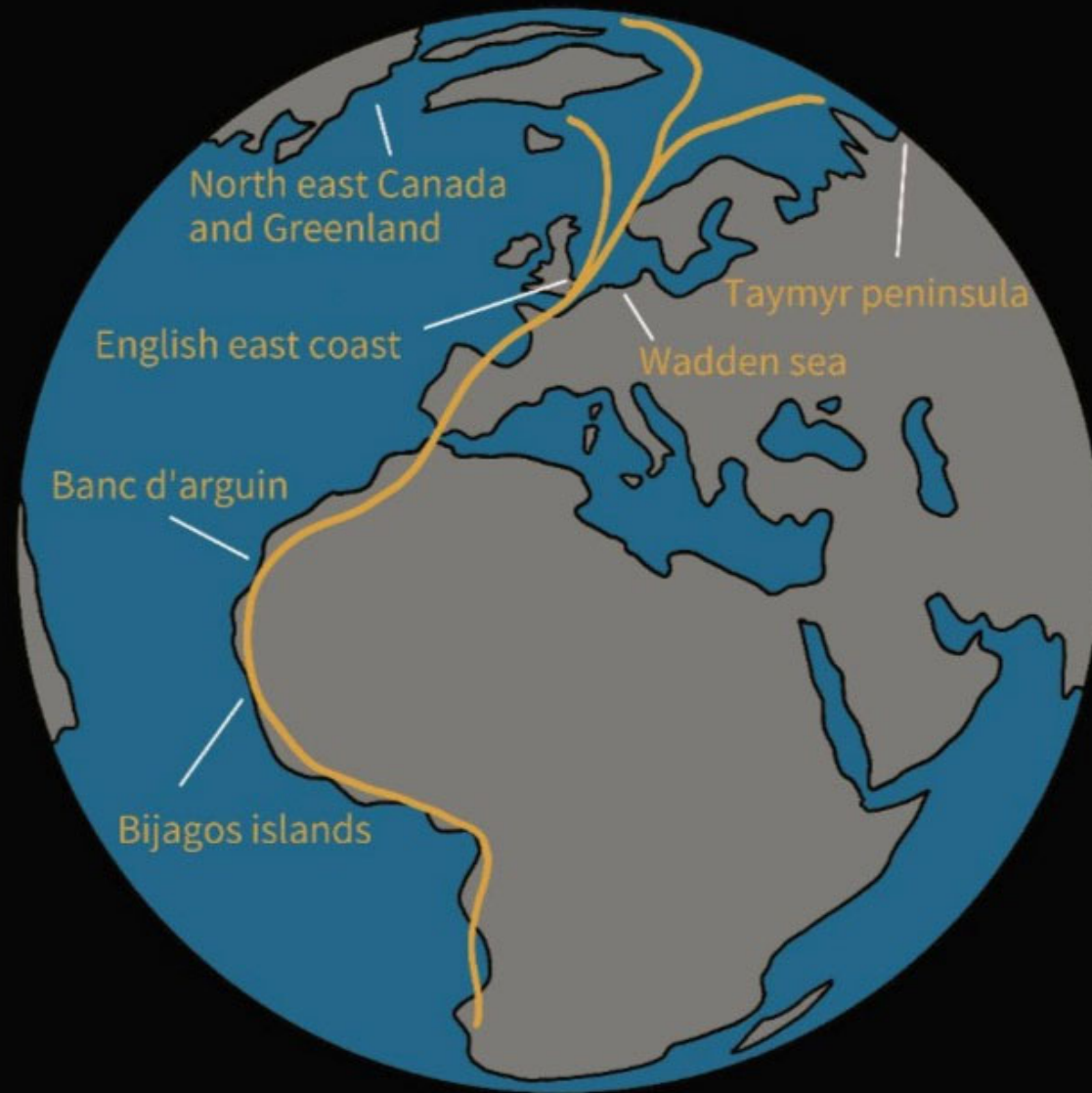
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- Added by Government to the UK Tentative List of Potential World Heritage Sites (April 2023) and UNESCO list (September 2023)
- Shortened name
“East Coast Flyway”





- Humber Estuary 37,630 ha
- Gibraltar Point 422ha
- The Wash 62,044 ha
- North Norfolk Coast 7,862 ha
- Breydon Water 1,206 ha
- Halvergate Marshes 1,433 ha
- Benacre to Eastern Barents 471 ha
- Minsmere to Walberswick 1,998 ha
- Alde-Ore Estuary 2,404 ha
- Deben Estuary 981 ha
- Stour and Orwell Estuaries 3,673 ha
- Hamford Water 3,533 ha
- Colne Estuary 2,720 ha
- Blackwater Estuary 4,403 ha
- Dengie 3,134 ha
- Crouch and Roach Estuaries 1,848 ha
- Foulness 10,942 ha
- Benfleet and Southend Marshes 2,284 ha
- Thames Estuary and Marshes 4,802 ha
- Medway Estuary and Marshes 4,686 ha
- The Swale 6,510 ha



East Atlantic Flyway

- Includes Waddensea and Banc d'Arguin 'Flyway' Natural World Heritage Sites

Why is the East Coast Flyway area important?

- World class complex of coastal wetlands supporting globally important migratory populations on the East Atlantic Flyway
- Mid-way location on the East Atlantic Flyway importance as a staging area as well as for wintering birds (more than 1 million)
- Internationally important for 29 waterbird populations
- Global exemplar in of coastal adaptation and nature conservation management in the face of climate change

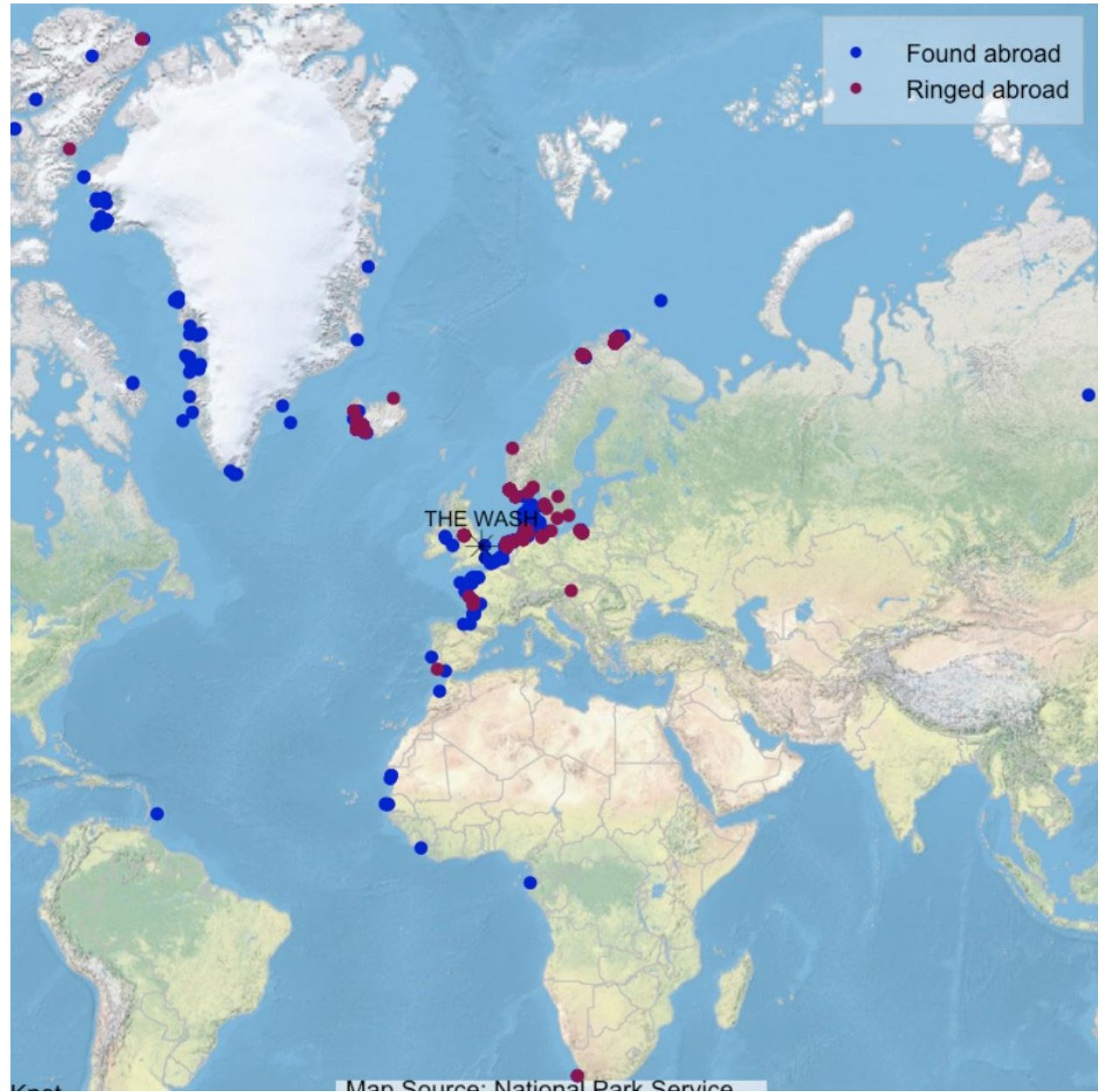




Red knot

- East Coast Flyway
- Supports : 207,000 (average mid winter count 2015-2019)
- Globally important : 63% 'islandica' race

Wash Ringed Knot movements





Bar-tailed Godwit
Autumn 2023 tagging
programme

The story of Clive



**A journey of 2000+ miles in 4.5 days
(Snettisham-Birmingham-Ireland- Bay of
Biscay-France-Thames-Snettisham)**

Global Conservation of Tidal mudflats

- UK stopped all land claim for agriculture in the 1980s
- Large scale land claim continued on the East Asia-Australasian Flyway in China and South Korea until c2015 with decision to protect the best remaining areas and recognise as World Heritage Sites
- In South Korea protection through the Tidal Flats Act (2019) with Getbol Korea Tidal Flats WHS (2021)
- Strategic question : With other key Flyway sites inscribed as World Heritage Sites 'What are we doing in the UK?'



UK Context : World Heritage Sites

- **33 World Heritage Sites**

- 28 Cultural
- 4 Natural
- 1 Mixed

- **2 Natural Sites (UK Mainland):**

- The Jurassic Coast (Dorset /Devon) (2001)
- Giants Causeway (Northern Ireland) (1986)

- **2 Natural Sites (UKOTs)**

- Gough and Inaccessible Islands (1995)
- Henderson Island (1988)

- **1 Mixed Site**

- St Kilda (1986)



RSPB, WWT and NT

East Atlantic Flyway – England East Coast Wetlands: Potential Natural World Heritage Site

Proposal summary to inform stakeholder consultations and support application for placement on the UK's tentative list

June 2022



Innovative Thinking - Sustainable Solutions



Steps in the Tentative List Application

- Collation of information to base a justification

Review of UNESCO World Heritage Site Criteria

Cultural

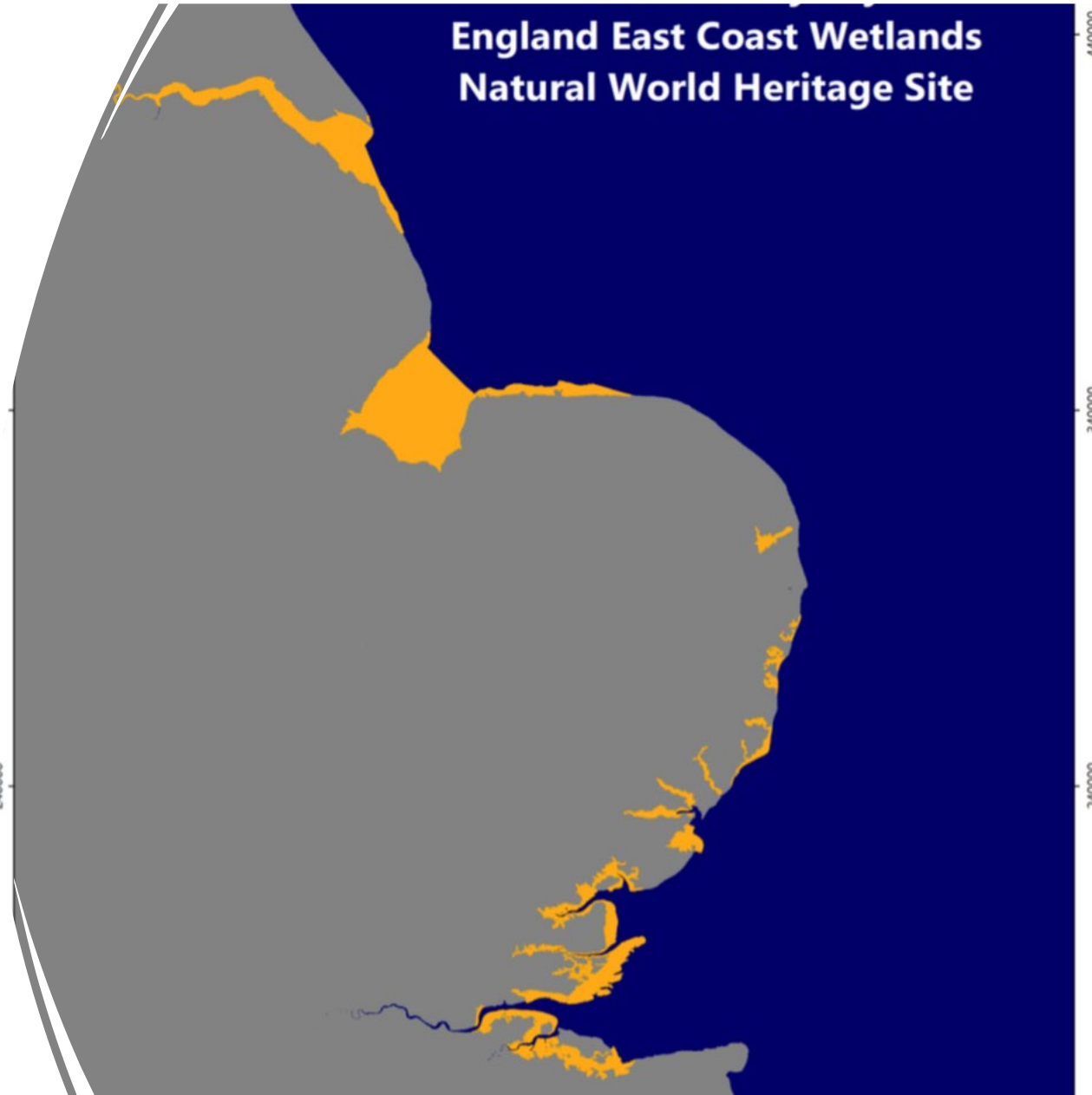
- (i)**
to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- (ii)**
to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- (iii)**
to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- (iv)**
to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- (v)**
to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- (vi)**
to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

Natural

- (vii)**
to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii)**
to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix)**
to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x)**
to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Determining an 'indicative' boundary

- 21 Special Protection Areas (these include 21 Ramsar wetlands and 19 Special Areas of Conservation)
- Major Habitat Restorations (incl Freiston Shore, Wallasea Island)
- 23 managed realignment projects within this area)
- No buffer zone identified



Application to DCMS – RSPB, NT and WWT

- 37
- Supportive emails from :
 - Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent County Councils
 - Coastal Partnership East (North Norfolk, Great Yarmouth, and East Suffolk Councils)
 - Babergh District Council
 - The Crown Estate



Independent Panel Feedback

- *...very interesting and ambitious natural heritage proposal*
- *... makes a clear and convincing case for the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value.*
- *...an interesting example for how natural heritage sites and their Outstanding Universal Value will need to adapt to climate change.*
- *...provides an opportunity for the UK to develop and demonstrate best practice for coastal adaptation in a changing environment.*
- *...noted the significant efforts that had gone into obtaining council and stakeholder support and were enthused about the potential and ambition of this application, and confident that support would be provided for this process.*
- *...the focus should be on 'realigning' and 'adapting' rather than 'protecting' wetland areas*
- *...suggested that the consideration of Criterion ix could improve the nomination bid.*
- *...Outstanding Universal Value could be refined in relation to other World Heritage site flyways and wetlands.*
- *...consideration as to whether a buffer zone should be included or not.*





39

What does NWHS status mean in practice?



- Bringing people together regulators, stakeholders and communities with a common purpose
- Framework for collaborative working across 21 interconnected internationally important wetlands as part of a single globally important site
- Placing the Outstanding Universal Value at the heart of decision making
- Creating a lever for investment in people, eco-tourism and infrastructure



- More legal protection



Since Tentative Listing

- Reaching out to all 28 Local Authorities, 32 MPs, stakeholders and coastal forums
- Establishing lead contacts in Natural England, Environment Agency and Marine Management Organisation
- Commissioning further work to determine best approach to completing the nomination dossier (and indicative cost) to provide a basis for firming up partnership and funding
- Building contact with the Waddensea Secretariat and the Getbol Korean Tidal Flats (World Heritage Site Promotion Team, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, KOEM, Local Authorities, Eco-Horizon Institute)

Nomination Timetable

- 41
- Nomination Dossier preparation :
2024 –
 - UNESCO Preliminary Assessment
: September 2026 (as
recommended by DCMS)
 - Nomination and Inscription :
2029



Nomination Preparation : Core work

- Describing why the East Coast Flyway is of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
 - Describing site's integrity (i.e. how the whole area links together),
 - Comparing the site with other NWHs and similar locations globally;
 - Setting out the plans for ongoing management and monitoring
 - Communication and consultation
- 42
- **Supported by studies:**
 - Mapping and data management work to underpin all reviews;
 - Reviewing the history, ecology, geomorphology and evolution of the coastline;
 - Describing the value of the site for migratory birds in regional and global context;
 - Detailing the need for and value of coastal adaptation using case examples along the coast;
 - Valuing the natural capital and societal benefits provided by this site;
 - Examining the productivity and social value of the coastline's benthos and fisheries; and
 - Explaining in more detail how the site will be managed and monitored



Nomination Preparation : Governance

- 43
- A lead partnership of organisations;
 - A project co-ordinator;
 - A technical group; and
 - Advisory stakeholder groups.

