

# **A Habitat Banking Process for the Tees Estuary**

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# SPA Review



Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast SPA & Ramsar site: designated for its internationally important overwintering waterbird assemblage of 20,000 birds



# Tees Estuary Partnership Vision

January 2017

*“Our shared vision for the Tees Estuary is to create an estuary that is an exemplar for nature conservation, with thriving habitats and populations of birds and animals, and which drives sustainable economic growth and business investment in the area.*

*All users of the estuary will have a common understanding of the environmental and socio-economic value of the Tees and the needs of other stakeholders. This promotes integrated planning and sustainable development of the estuary alongside improvement of the habitats and infrastructure.”*



HM Government

## A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

# 25 Year Environment Plan 2018

Seeks to “embed a ‘net environmental gain’ principle for development to deliver environmental improvements” .....”while ensuring economic growth and reducing costs, complexity and delays for developers”

# Key Work of the TEP: Tees MoU

- Enhanced outcomes for industry are realised through the 'Memorandum of Understanding for the Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast SPA', which was signed by the Environment Agency, the Marine Management Organisation and Natural England on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017.
- This aims for minimal effect from the 2018 pSPA designation upon current industrial operations. Based on in-depth discussions that INCA facilitated with industry to identify existing and aspirational industrial land-use.
- Details those operations that are not deemed to be disturbing to birds of the SPA, which therefore do not require consultation with Natural England (see [www.inca.uk.com](http://www.inca.uk.com)).
- Simplifies guidance for new projects (for which the potential impacts still need to be assessed).



# Enhanced Environmental Outcomes

- The second part of the TEP vision is about identifying wider environmental interests /ambitions.
- Work has taken place with a number of key landowners / occupiers along the estuary to define habitat creation and enhancement possibilities as part of a 'Habitat Framework', particularly in relation to SPA birds.
- Concept designs and feasibility reports were prepared at expression of interest level.
- This work fits within an overall 'Habitat Vision' for the Tees estuary.

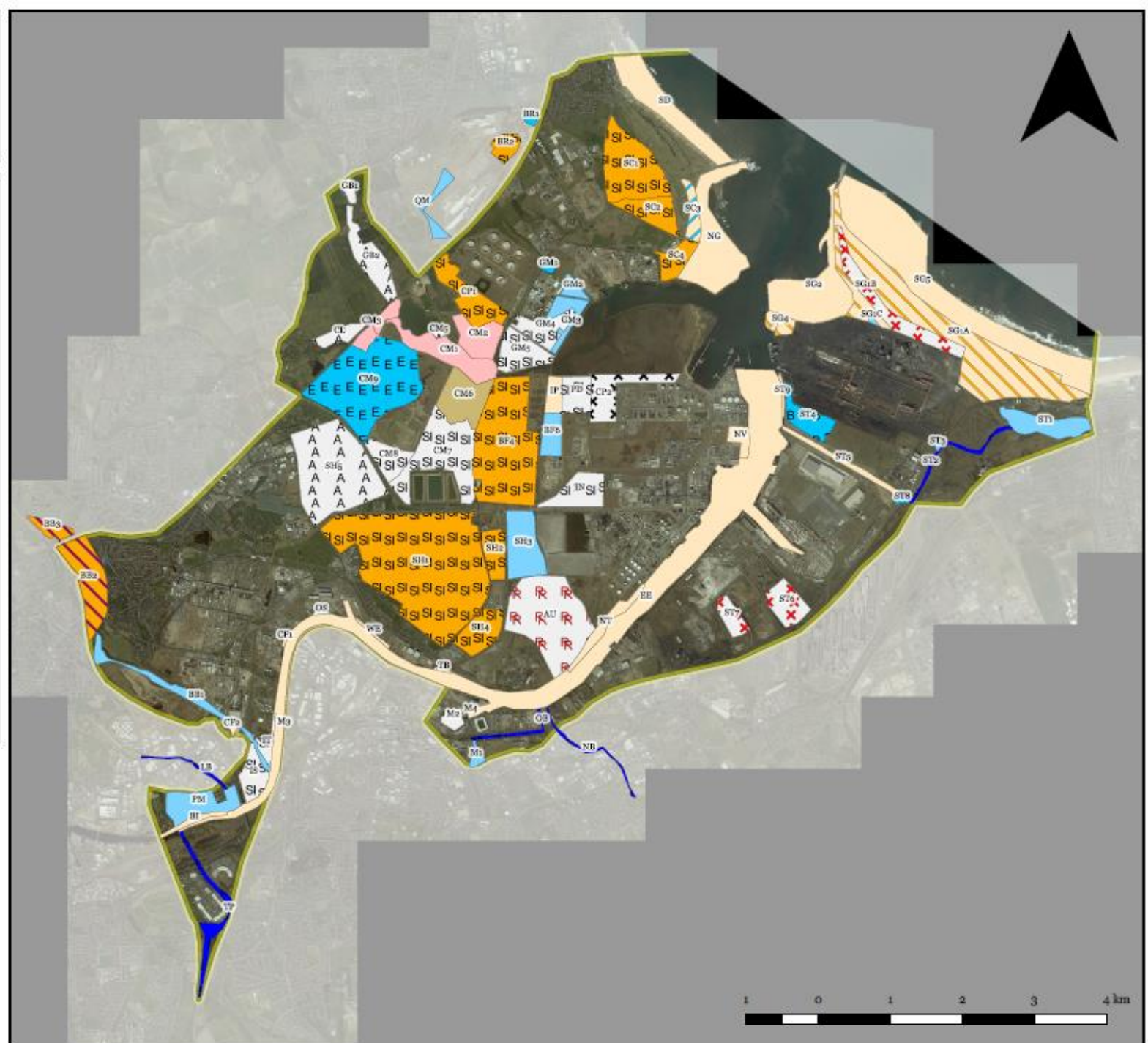


Figure 1:

# Habitat Vision

## Key: Phase 1 Habitats

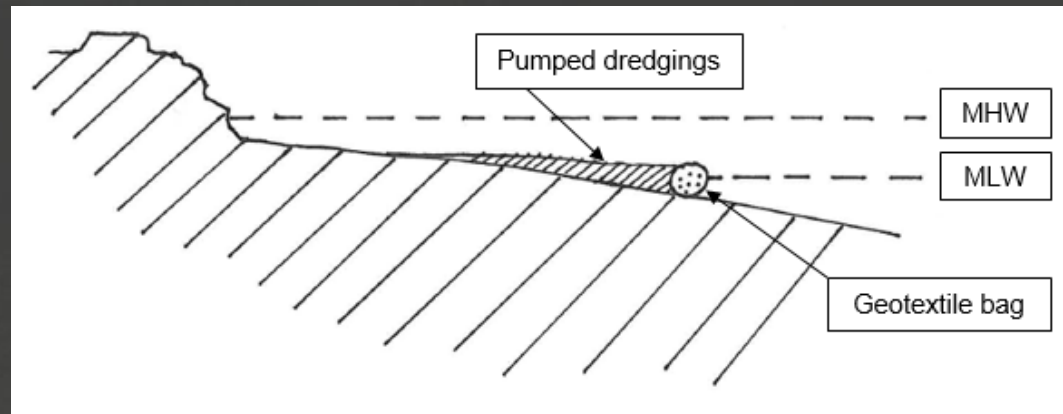
-  B2.2 - Neutral grassland - semi-improved
-  B5 - Marsh/marshy grassland
-  B6 - Poor semi-improved grassland
-  F1 - Swamp
-  G1.1 - Standing water - eutrophic
-  G1.6 - Standing water - brackish
-  G2.1 - Running water - eutrophic
-  G2.2 - Running water - mesotrophic
-  G2.6 - Running water - brackish
-  H1.1 - Intertidal - mud/sand
-  H1.2 - Intertidal - shingles/cobbles
-  H2.6 - Saltmarsh - dense/continuous
-  H6.4 - Dune slack
-  H6.5 - Dune grassland
-  I2.2 - Spoil
-  I2.4 - Refuse-tip
-  J1.1 - Cultivated/disturbed land - arable
-  J1.3 - Cultivated/disturbed land - ephemera
-  J5 - Other habitat
-  N/A



# Habitat Enhancement Possibility



Use of geotextile bags and dredged materials to enhance soft sediment intertidal components of the riverside frontage





# Implementation of the 'Habitat Vision'

- Some opportunities identified may be altruistically implemented or possibly through availability of funding from a range of grant schemes.
- Where land is owned by industrial organisations it is more likely that most of the larger schemes will be implemented as part of a new 'Habitat Banking' scheme.

# Habitat Banking

Very much 'work in progress' .....

The detail is currently being addressed by four 'theme' groups within the TEP, arising from a workshop-approach of ideas generation:

- Habitat banking process & governance
- Metrics
- Legal & finance
- Embedding into planning



# What will a functioning Tees Habitat Banking system look like?

- Developers will be able to purchase biodiversity credits to mitigate for habitat loss resulting from development (with a net gain, in line with the 25-year Environment Plan).
- Landowners, while still owning their land, will be able to feed it into the process to gain biodiversity credits to be used against their own developments in the future or to trade to developers who wish to pay for habitat enhancements as part of their own mitigation needs.
- There will be a network of habitat opportunities across the Tees estuary, covering a range of important habitats that will provide connectivity across the estuary area.

# What will a functioning Habitat Banking system look like?

## Mapping

All land within the habitat banking boundary will be digitally represented on a map and its biodiversity credit value clearly displayed.

Individual polygons will hyperlink to further information detailing land habitat characteristics and any creation / enhancement opportunities which are relevant to that land.



# Benefits of a Habitat Banking system

- Ideally habitat creation/enhancement would be secured in advance of development, giving more clarity and certainty to developers.
- Potential for landowners to benefit economically from the biodiversity value of their land by trading in biodiversity credits or to benefit via enhancement of land for their own future needs.
- Up-front clarity should lead to a simpler planning process. An effective Habitat Banking mechanism could make Teesside competitive in relation to other areas of the country.
- When up and running effectively there will be sufficient supply of land, with a range of ecological features, for developers to be able to purchase credits up front.



# Benefits of a Habitat Banking system

- Banked land stays in the landowner's possession. The developer pays for proposed enhancement works and ongoing management of the land for nature conservation, which discharges their responsibilities. The landowner is responsible for the ongoing management plan.
- Enhanced outcomes for nature conservation with a strategic network of sites with improved habitat connectivity.
- Retention of high quality existing habitat in addition to creation / enhancement opportunities.





# Summary

- Much greater certainty for business and potential developers.
- Opportunities for continued inward investment.
- Opportunities to deliver new and exciting conservation projects which really benefit wildlife and people.