

The sea has impacted our lives on all levels. It has served as a gateway for centuries of migration and immigration, creating a thriving multicultural society in Britain. Our Island status has provided a defensive barrier, thwarting invasions since 1066. This barrier has also challenged those within it. Conquering this has required innovation and changes in our technology, thinking and way of life. Growth in trade, both local and international, and industrial developments were secured through exploitation of the sea. It has provided us with a variety of resources including fish, salt and aggregates for building. A global empire was created and sustained by developing a relationship with the sea.

OASIS is part of a major project co-ordinated by the Wildlife Trusts' South East Marine Programme. The project, entitled 'Conserving marine sand and gravel biotopes in South East England', is supported by English Nature, through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. The partnership aims to address issues associated with the conservation of marine life in South East England, particularly the potential threat from extraction of sand and gravel from the sea bed.

With this thriving activity our surrounding ocean has become a graveyard and monument to our development as a nation. It has preserved our past whilst providing new homes for an array of sea creatures. In the waters to the west of the Isle of Wight archaeological sites span back to prehistoric times, many of which lie on or in aggregate beds. These sites attract a diversity of marine life which otherwise may not populate aggregate areas.

Through careful planning of aggregate extraction zones these valuable and unique sites can be protected from potential threats.



Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)
Image courtesy of Paul Naylor



Common Starfish (*Asterias rubens*)
Image courtesy of Paul Naylor



Common Cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*)
Image courtesy of Paul Naylor



Snakelocks anemone (*Anemonia viridis*)
Image courtesy of Paul Naylor

Beneath the seas of South East England lies an array of natural landscapes every bit as varied and beautiful as those we find on land, from rocky reefs to massive shingle banks and vast sandy plains. These habitats are home to a fascinating variety of marine life, including familiar species such as plaice and scallop alongside creatures such as the lightbulb seasquirt, peacock worm and sea mouse

The marine habitats and wildlife of the South East are under pressure from a number of human activities including extraction of sand and gravel from the sea bed, fishing, waste disposal and recreation.

Aggregates (sand, gravel and crushed rock) are a vital resource for the construction industry and for the replenishment of eroding beaches. Sand and gravel dredged from the sea bed currently make up around a third of the supply in South East England. Extraction of marine aggregates has the potential to damage sensitive habitats and wildlife.

The Wildlife Trusts' South East Marine Programme aims to promote marine conservation across South East England by working with Government, local authorities, industry and the public.

www.southeastmarine.org.uk

The Aggregates Levy is a tax on the production of primary aggregates. The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, aims to address the environmental and social cost of aggregate extraction. English Nature is one of a number of organisations selected by Defra to award Sustainability Fund Grants which specifically target biodiversity, geological conservation and education and local community issues.

English Nature champions the conservation of wildlife, geology and wild places in England. Further information about English Nature's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund Grants Scheme can be found on www.english-nature.org.uk.

The Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology is researching the biodiversity of wreck sites off the west coast of the Isle of Wight.

Further information is available from:

www.hwtma.org.uk

or

HWTMA

Room W1/95

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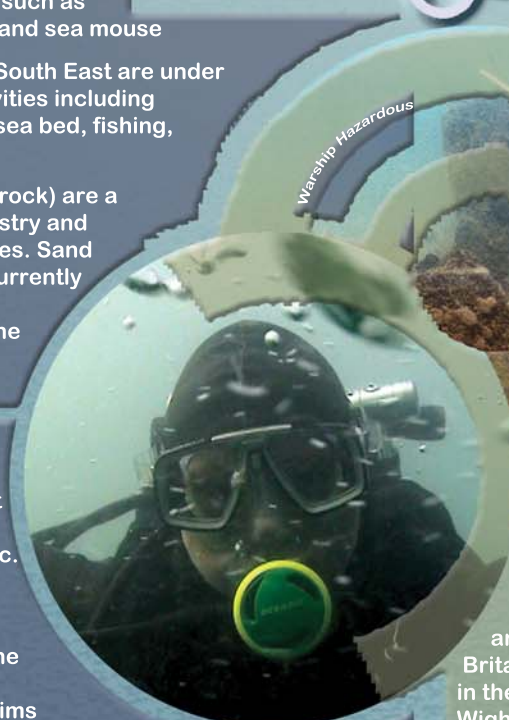
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OASIS
Offshore Aggregates & Species
Inhabiting historic Shipwrecks



Warship Hazardous



Hawseholes at the Alum Bay wreck site

The Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology promotes interest, research and knowledge of maritime archaeology and heritage in Great Britain with core activities concentrated in the counties of Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and the adjacent South Coast areas. It runs a programme of research led fieldwork involving professional archaeologists, volunteers and students. The results of this work are disseminated widely through our education and outreach programme including lectures, activity days, displays and publications. As part of the OASIS project the HWTMA aims to promote the awareness of wreck sites near aggregate beds. It also seeks to highlight the oasis of marine life around the artificial reef that a shipwreck becomes.

