

# CARMARTHENSIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

## MUDFLATS



Mudflat distribution in Carmarthen Bay



### Conservation objectives

- \* Maintain the extent and quality of this habitat in Carmarthenshire and enhance its condition through appropriate management.
- \* Ensure good estuarine water quality.

### What you can do to help:

- \* Follow existing codes of conduct for bait digging.
- \* If you own or manage this habitat – seek conservation advice from CCW.
- \* Help change the public image of mudflats – value them and encourage others to value them.

### Further information:

[www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk)  
[www.ccw.org.uk](http://www.ccw.org.uk)  
[www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

*There can be 10 million  
microscopic worms in a  
square metre of mud!!*



### What are mudflats?

Mudflats are those glistening expanses of mud uncovered by receding tides in estuaries, and are one of Wales' most wildlife-rich habitats. In Carmarthenshire they are internationally recognised for their wildlife – both the mudflat habitat itself and the bird populations that migrate here in huge numbers in the autumn, depending on the mud for food during the winter.

Mudflats are teeming with life. The constant supply of organic material from both the incoming tides and rivers flowing into estuaries provides food for the vast numbers of worms and shellfish that live there. These are food for birds and fish. Swathes of the only flowering marine plant, seagrass, are also found on mudflats in the Burry Inlet.

Mudflats help our local economy. Each year the Burry Inlet mudflats yield about 2000 tonnes of cockles, while bass and other fish species rely on estuarine mudflats for nursery or feeding grounds. Mudflats are also a natural form of coastal defence, reducing the energy of the waves before it reaches valuable grazing saltmarsh and low-lying agricultural land.

### Distribution in Carmarthenshire

Mudflats occur in the Taf, Tywi and Gwendraeth estuaries, and also on the Carmarthenshire side of the Burry Inlet – these are all included in the Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

### What are the threats?

- \* Loss through reclamation to agriculture and/or urban development.
- \* Navigational dredging.
- \* Coastal engineering, including coastal defence structures.
- \* Pollution from agricultural run-off and industrial/urban discharges.
- \* Shell fisheries and bait digging can have an adverse impact on marine life in sediment and sediment structure.
- \* Long-term rise in sea level resulting in loss of mudflat.
- \* Human disturbance to roosting and feeding birds.

### What is being done locally

- \* The Carmarthen Bay coast Shoreline Management Plan recognizes the environmental value of our estuaries and mudflats.
- \* The SAC designation requires formal consultation over any work which may affect Carmarthenshire's mudflats.
- \* Carmarthenshire's mudflats have recently been surveyed as part of CCW's intertidal survey of Wales.
- \* There are measures to reduce agricultural run-off and ongoing improvement of treatment of waste water and outfalls into the sea
- \* The *Wales Annual Mud Festival* takes place at the National Wetlands Centre Wales in Llanelli.
- \* The cockle industry in the Burry Inlet is credited with the Marine Stewardship Council environmental standard.

### Where you can see this habitat

From the Millennium Coastal Park and at the National Wetlands Centre, Wales at Penclacwydd.