

A full-page background image showing a sunset over the ocean. The sun is a large, bright yellow circle in the upper center, with its light reflecting on the water and creating a shimmering path down to the sandy beach in the foreground. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. In the middle ground, a person is seen from behind, riding a wave. The water is dark blue with white foam from the waves. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

A Guide to Recreational Activity

In the Berwickshire
Marine Reserve

Welcome to the Berwickshire Marine Reserve

Contents

Introduction	2
The local environmental designations and Marine Protected Areas	4
Berwickshire Marine Reserve	6
Berwickshire and North Northumberland Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	7
St Abbs Head to Fast Castle Special Protected Area (SPA)	8
St Abbs Head to Fast Castle Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	9
Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex Special Protected Area (SPA)	10
St Abbs Eyemouth Area Static Gear Reserve	11
Fast Castle Seal Haul out site	12
Berwickshire Coast Intertidal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	13
Reducing your disturbance to marine life	14
Code of Conduct	16
Responsible Boating	18
WiSe Training Scheme	20
Angling Recycling Bins	23
Safety	24
Useful Contacts	26

Introduction

Located between the historic fishing towns of Eyemouth and St Abbs, the Berwickshire Marine Reserve was established by the local community in 1984 to protect the habitats and species found here and to ensure that all users of the Reserve are responsible in their activities.' It was one of the first voluntary marine reserves to be set up in the UK and remains the only voluntary marine reserve in Scotland. The Reserve encompasses 8km of the Berwickshire coastline, and extends out to the 50 metre depth contour – covering a marine area of 10.3km².

A hotspot for recreational users, the BMR works to balance the conservation of the marine reserve, situated within the statutory network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), by working with local businesses and supporting the development of sustainable tourism.

This guide covers an overview of the local Marine Protected Areas and designations which help to reflect why the Berwickshire coast is both a nationally and internationally important area for wildlife. The guide also aims to provide information to recreational users on how to sustainably use and enjoy the Berwickshire Marine Reserve, helping to conserve its truly unique mix of marine life for generations to come.

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MPAs are defined geographical areas of the marine environment established and managed to achieve long-term nature conservation and sustainable use.



The local environmental designations and Marine Protected Areas

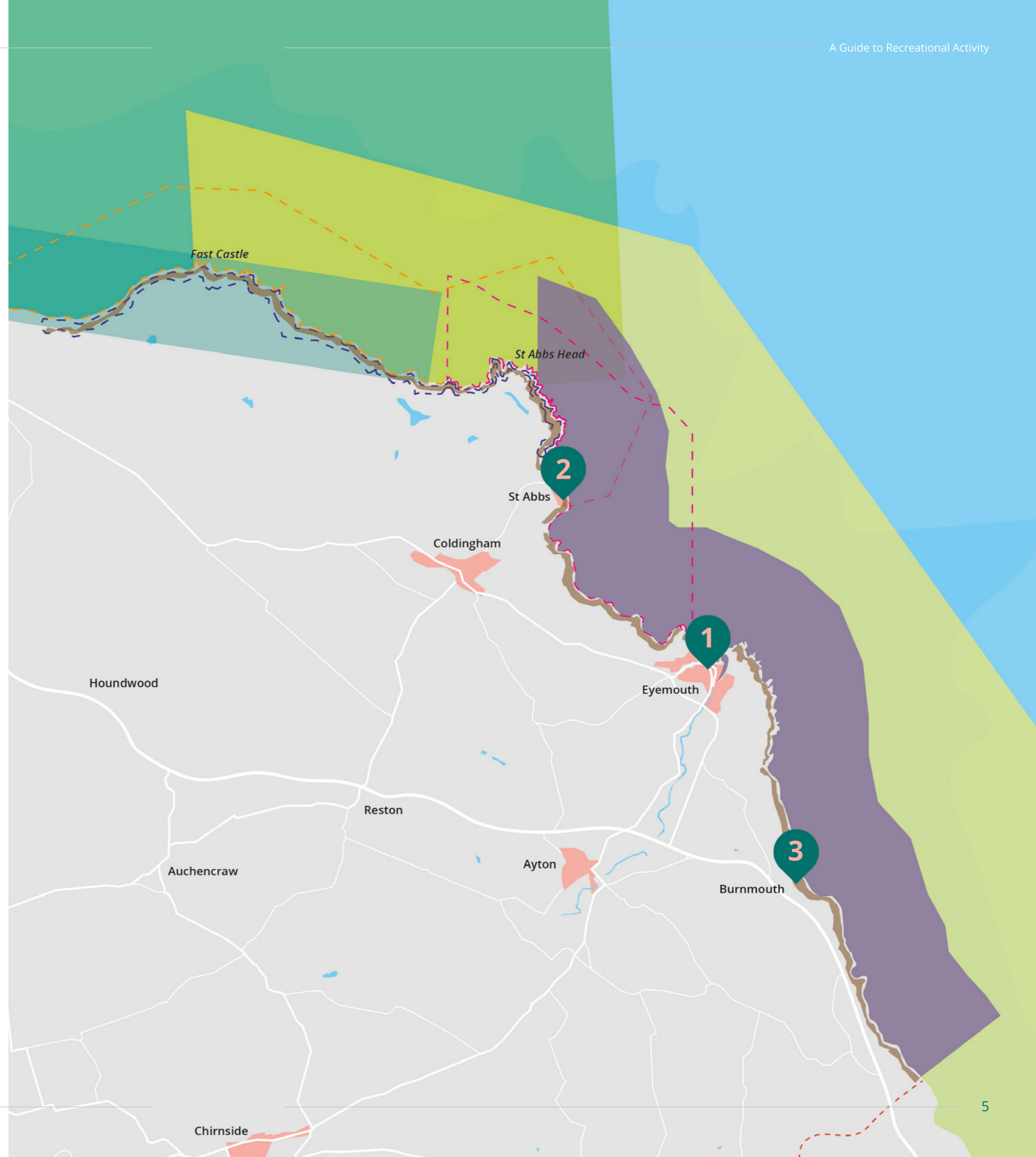
There are several Marine Protected Areas and environmental designations within the waters of the Berwickshire Coast, protecting a range of features from sea caves and underwater reefs through to grey seals and breeding sea birds.

MPAs and environmental designations:

1. Berwickshire Marine Reserve
2. Berwickshire and North Northumberland Special Area of Conservation
3. St Abbs Head to Fast Castle Special Protected Area
4. St Abbs Head to Fast Castle Special Area of Conservation
5. Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex Special Protected Area
6. St Abbs Eyemouth Area Static Gear Reserve
7. Fast Castle Seal Haul out site
8. Berwickshire Coast Intertidal Site of Special Scientific Interest

Local Harbours:

1. Eyemouth
2. St Abbs
3. Burnmouth



Berwickshire Marine Reserve

The Berwickshire Marine Reserve has been working to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of Berwickshire's unique coastal waters since 1984. Today it is still the only voluntary marine reserve in Scotland and is the second oldest marine reserve in the UK.

The BMR has three main aims in order to make sure the coastal waters are protected and remain so for years to come. They are to:

1. Conserve the biodiversity of the coastal waters.

2. Raise awareness of the marine environment through education and research.

3. Promote responsible recreational use alongside a sustainable fishery to the mutual benefit of all.

To help achieve these aims a Code of Conduct was established with the help from local users to promote sustainable, safe and enjoyable recreational use. Please adhere to these agreed codes to help conserve the marine and coastal life that make the BMR such a special place.



For more information on the Code of Conduct, please visit:



Berwickshire and North Northumberland Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The Berwickshire and North Northumberland coast is one of the most biologically diverse marine areas in Europe. It is designated for a range of intertidal and subtidal habitats, including reefs and sea caves, and for its internationally significant populations of grey seals.

Reefs are rocky marine habitats or biological structures that rise from the seabed. The subtidal reefs and their rich marine communities found here are the most diverse known on the North Sea coast.

Two main types of reef are present along the Berwickshire coastline:

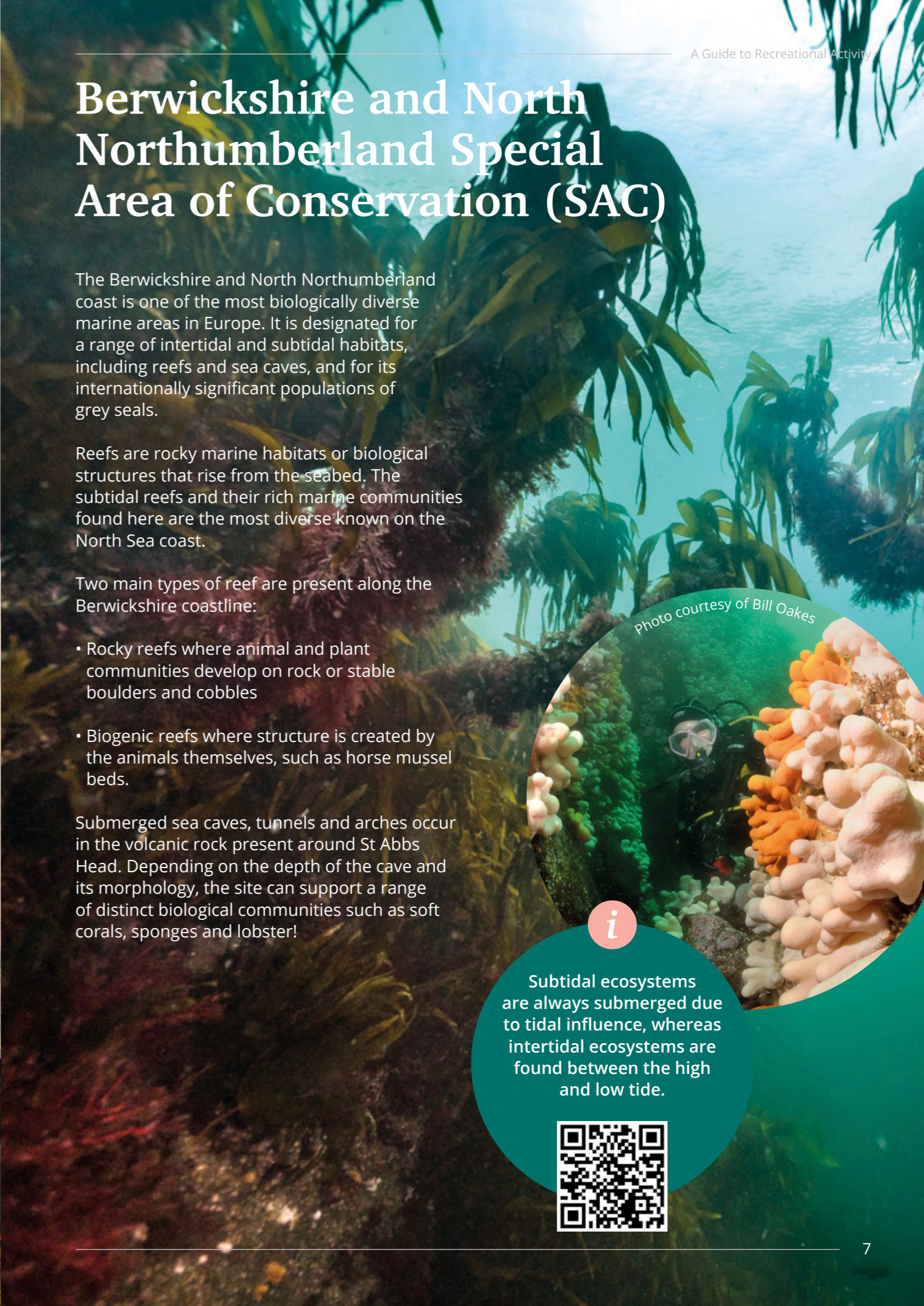
- Rocky reefs where animal and plant communities develop on rock or stable boulders and cobbles
- Biogenic reefs where structure is created by the animals themselves, such as horse mussel beds.

Submerged sea caves, tunnels and arches occur in the volcanic rock present around St Abbs Head. Depending on the depth of the cave and its morphology, the site can support a range of distinct biological communities such as soft corals, sponges and lobster!

Photo courtesy of Bill Oakes



Subtidal ecosystems are always submerged due to tidal influence, whereas intertidal ecosystems are found between the high and low tide.





St Abbs Head to Fast Castle Special Protected Area (SPA)

Recognised for its internationally important breeding seabird assemblage, the sheer cliffs, deep gullies and offshore stacks of the SPA provide the perfect habitat, safe from predators, for the seabirds that nest here from March to October each year.

The site regularly supports in excess of 70,000 individual seabirds, including populations of

Razorbill, Common guillemot, Black-legged kittiwake, Herring gull, Razorbills and Shags.

The cliffs also provide spectacular vantage points from which to watch these seabirds!

Nesting guillemots at St Abbs head. Photo courtesy Jack Lawis



St Abbs Head to Fast Castle Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

St Abbs Head to Fast Castle is a spectacular area of cliff coastline, comprising of high cliffed sections and rich vegetated areas in more sheltered localities. While some sections are dominated by large seabird colonies which restrict the vegetation in their vicinity, elsewhere extensive vegetated areas are found. A very high number of flowering plant species are present, reflecting the range of microhabitat conditions

present in the SAC. Look out for Sea Pinks, Rock Rose, Wild Thyme and Purple Milk Vetch!

Red campion (Silene dioica)

For more information on the SAC, please visit:

To plan your visit to St Abbs Head, please visit:

Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex Special Protected Area (SPA)

The Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex SPA covers an area of 272,068 hectares stretching between St Abbs Head and Abroath, with the majority of the site lying outside of the area covered by the Berwickshire coastline.

The SPA contains many sheltered areas, such as firths, inlets and sandy bays, used by seabirds and waterbirds to feed, moult, rest and roost. They lie close to the nesting sites of a large number of birds breeding in the area during the summer season. During this time, the SPA provides feeding grounds for thousands of Northern Gannets, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Atlantic Puffins and the largest concentration of Common Terns in Scotland.

The SPA is also an important refuge for birds which have migrated thousands of miles from their breeding grounds in northern Europe and western Siberia to spend the winter in the area. During this time of the year, the site supports more than 35% of the Common Eider and over 23% of the Velvet Scoter British wintering populations, along with the largest Scottish concentrations of Red-throated Diver and Little Gull.



Photo courtesy Jack Laws



St Abbs Eyemouth Area Static Gear Reserve

The Static Gear Reserve prohibits fishing using mobile or active gear such as bottom or pelagic trawls.

Instead, brown crab, lobsters and velvet swimming crabs are caught using pots (or creels), with this fishing method being less damaging than bottom trawling on marine life. There are strict rules about the size of the shellfish you can land, and those which are too small must be returned to the sea.

As well as statutory rules relating to the landing sizes of lobster, some local fishermen choose to employ a method known as 'V-notching' where notches are cut into the tail of female lobsters at peak breeding age. These lobsters cannot be caught until the notches have grown out, enabling mature females to successfully breed.

Local creel fisherman Ivan onboard his boat CZAR

For more information on landing sizes in the BMR, please visit:

For more information on the static gear reserve see item 31:

Fast Castle Seal Haul out site

This environmental designation covers the area spanning from the rocky coastline at the foot of the cliffs between Coldingham Loch and Cove Harbour.

A haul-out site is a location on land where seals come ashore to rest, to moult, to breed and have pups. Seals that are hauled out on land may be sensitive to too close an approach by humans from the land, sea or air and caution is required in such circumstances. However, seals will generally choose haul-out sites that are subject to minimal disturbance by humans.

In Berwickshire Grey Seals begin to pup in Autumn (October to January) at traditional breeding colonies and at this time adults and pups will stay ashore for several weeks.

Remember that seals are protected under The Protection of Seals (Designation of Seal haul-Out Sites) (Scotland) Order 2014, and that it is an offence to harass seals at any of the 194 designated seal haul-out sites around Scotland.



Photo courtesy Claran Hatsell



Berwickshire Coast Intertidal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

This is an intertidal site extending between mean high water springs and mean low water springs, including offshore intertidal rocks and islets, from Scruffy Hole at the north end of the site, to the national border in the south.

The site supports a complex of extensive and diverse littoral reef habitats of international importance associated with good examples of partly submerged sea caves. The varied nature of the reefs and caves is partly due to the wide range of physical features present along the coastline, especially wave exposure

from all directions, strong tidal currents, and a variety of rock types including Silurian shales, Old Red Sandstone, Devonian Andesites, Vent Agglomerates and Carboniferous Limestone, a relatively unusual marine substrate in Britain.

The littoral zone reefs support a diversity of marine biotopes in marked zonation, determined by structural aspects including near vertical cliffs, ridges, gullies and overhangs, grading to extensive rock pool systems, boulder and cobble shores, the majority being very species rich.

Reducing your disturbance to marine life



Remember that marine mammals and many birds are protected by law from reckless disturbance or harassment. More information about seals and disturbance is available here:



Any activity has the potential to cause disturbance to wildlife, if not conducted in a responsible and safe manner. To reduce disturbance to wildlife whilst on the water, we advise the following:

- **Slow down:** Respect other users of the BMR. If you see marine mammals and/or rafts of birds, reduce to a 'no-wake speed'.
- **Keep your distance:** Avoid enclosed spaces and keep a distance of at least 100m from the cliffs, nesting seabirds, and marine mammals.
- **Understand the signs of disturbance:** If an animals behaviour changes in response to your presence, move away quickly and quietly.

With increasing leisure use, our waters are becoming far busier, and this can place additional strains on wildlife already under pressure. It is in everyone's interest to reduce disturbance to marine wildlife. In the BMR nesting seabirds and pupping seals are at a higher risk of human disturbance due to their reliance on the cliffs and beaches. To minimise disturbance please adhere to our codes of

conduct and be aware of the nesting and pupping seasons.

Seabirds

Most vulnerable to disturbance while nesting (March - October). Keep a distance of 100m, travel at a no-wake speed and recognise the signs of disturbance.



Razorbills nesting on the cliffs at St Abbs



Seal pup at Petticowick. Photo courtesy Ciaran Hatsell

Seals

Most vulnerable to disturbance while pupping (October - January). Keep a distance of 100m, travel at a no-wake speed and recognise the signs of disturbance.

Cetaceans

Although harder to spot, whales, dolphins, porpoises and even basking sharks are present in the BMR! Remember, all are protected within



the law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and the new Countryside and Rights of Way Act. It is an offence to kill or injure them, and it is also an offence to recklessly or intentionally disturb them. If you see anyone behaving in a manner likely to cause this type of disturbance, please report them to the police.

Berwickshire MARINE RESERVE

Scotland's first voluntary marine reserve

Codes of Conduct

The Berwickshire Marine Reserve (BMR) has been working to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of Berwickshire's unique coastal waters since 1984. Today it is still the only voluntary marine reserve in Scotland and is the second oldest marine reserve in the UK.

We aim to:

1. Conserve the biodiversity of the coastal waters
2. Raise awareness of the marine environment through education and research
3. Promote responsible recreational use alongside a sustainable fishery to the mutual benefit of all

Working Together to Conserve the Reserve

A hotspot for recreational users, the BMR works to balance the conservation of the marine reserve, situated within the statutory network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), by working with local businesses and supporting the development of sustainable tourism.

Our codes of conduct were established with the help from local users to promote sustainable, safe and enjoyable recreational use. Please adhere to these agreed codes to help conserve the marine and coastal life that make the BMR such a special place.

For more information please visit www.berwickshiramarinereserve.org.uk

Contact Us: Tel: 01890 752509 Email: info@berwickshiramarinereserve.org.uk
www.berwickshiramarinereserve.org.uk

@berwickshiramarinereserve



Scottish Borders Local Action Group is part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community LEADER 2014-2020 Programme

Berwickshire MARINE RESERVE

Scotland's first voluntary marine reserve

Code of Conduct - General Code

The General Codes of Conduct apply to all recreational activities in the marine reserve. For more detailed information on recreational use, please see our 'recreational user guide' available at www.berwickshiramarinereserve.org.uk

- **Stay safe:** always check the tide and weather conditions, and inform someone of your location.
- **Be aware of other users** of the marine reserve.
- **Respect wildlife:** Leave wildlife where you find it, taking care not to damage fauna and flora.
- Be aware of the local protected area designations
- **Minimise Disturbance (seabirds):** seabirds are most sensitive to disturbance while nesting (March - October). Keep a distance of 100m, reduce your noise and recognise the signs of disturbance.
- **Minimise Disturbance (seals):** seals 'haul out' to pup (October - January). Keep a distance of 100m, reduce your noise and recognise the signs of disturbance. Remember that marine mammals and many birds are protected by law from reckless disturbance or harassment.
- **Be aware of local fishing activity** and don't interfere with buoys, pots, and pot markers. It is illegal and dangerous.
- **Take all rubbish away with you,** and use marine friendly equipment and products to avoid pollution.

www.berwickshiramarinereserve.org.uk

Responsible Boating

As a coastal community we enjoy getting out on the water and experiencing the beautiful environment around us. We therefore play an important role in helping to protect our marine and inland waters to safeguard the wildlife and habitats with which we share our boating environment. This section gives a brief overview to what you can do as a boater to help minimise your disturbance to the marine environment while in the BMR.

Sustainable boating activity can range from responsible anchoring and mooring to help protect seabed habitats to following a few simple protocols to help prevent the spread of invasive species.



The Green Blue have produced some fantastic resources on sustainable boating specific to varying activities.

For more information please visit:




STOP THE SPREAD

Invasive plants and animals can harm the marine environment and wildlife, damage boats, and foul hulls, pontoons, and other hard surfaces. They can be small and hard to spot so are easily spread on damp equipment and clothing.


Protect the marine environment and sport you enjoy by keeping your kit free of invasive plants and animals.

Remember to check these places

- CHECK** Check boats, equipment and clothing after leaving the water for fouling or plant material. Remove anything you find and put it in the bin. Reapply anti-fouling annually.
- CLEAN** Clean everything thoroughly with freshwater as soon as you can, paying attention to ropes, bilges, trailers, and areas that are damp and hard to access. Wash your anchor and chain before leaving an anchorage.
- DRY** Dry - drain water from every part of your trailer and boat, including the bilge, before leaving the site. Dry everything for as long as you can before using elsewhere.

Watch out for:

- SLIPPER LIMPET
- CARPET SEA SQUIRT
- WAKAME

THE GREEN BLUE
MAKING THE ENVIRONMENT SECOND NATURE

HOW GREEN IS YOUR YACHT?

GALLEY
Use eco-friendly cleaning products that do not contain pollutants such as microbeads, phosphate, chlorine or bleach. Check the ingredients label on products.

ENGINE
Ensure oil and fuel do not enter the water - check for oil before pumping your bilge and install an oil filter or put a bilge sock in to absorb spills.

HULL
Take care when applying and removing anti foul. Put a tarpaulin under your boat to capture and prevent paint drips, spills and scrapings entering the environment. Dispose of all paint debris and equipment in hazardous waste bins at a marina or local recycling centre.

AT THE HELM
Find out if the area you are sailing through is protected. Navigate with care when you see wildlife.
 • Keep a slow steady course: 5 knots or no-wake speed.
 • Ensure noise is minimal
 • Keep a distance of 100m or more

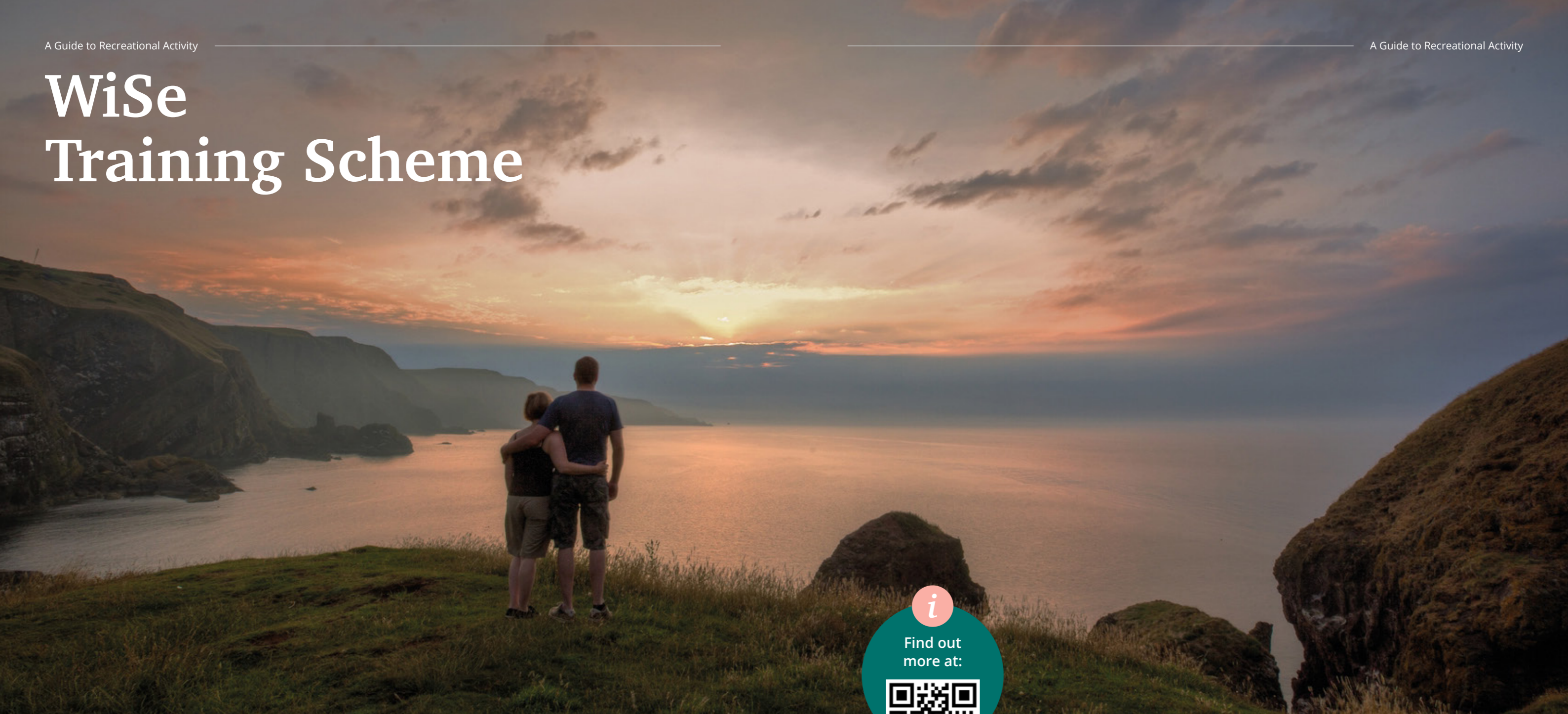
DECK
Ensure all items are secure on deck so nothing falls or blows overboard. Throw nothing overboard, even an orange peel can take 2 years to break down in salt water.

HEADS
Use shore based facilities and don't empty the heads in low tidal flushing areas. Keep raw sewage out of the water you sail in!

ANCHORING
Some of our most precious wildlife lives in or on the seabed. Check to see if the area is protected by law before you drop the hook!

RYA BRITISH MARINE
THEGREENBLUE.CO.UK

WiSe Training Scheme



The UK's national training scheme for minimising disturbance to marine wildlife. The WiSe Scheme is about watching marine wildlife the wildlife-safe way.

WiSe aims to promote responsible wildlife-watching, through training, accreditation and raising awareness. The WiSe Scheme is a simple modular training course aimed primarily at wildlife cruise operators, dive and service boats, yacht skippers and sea kayakers, plus people participating in coastering, stand-up paddle boarding and wild swimming. These groups of people are most likely to come into contact with marine wildlife, as they are likely out on



the water on a regular basis. WiSe also seek to educate the general public who are keen to minimise their impact whilst out on or near the water.

BMR have previously helped to train and accredit several local skippers and business owners in the Eyemouth and St Abbs area.

We would recommend booking with WiSe trained operators and supporters of BMRs conservation work to help keep use of the Marine Reserve sustainable for generations to come.



Angling Recycling Bins

The Berwickshire Marine Reserve is supporting the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme (ANLR) which aims to remove as much fishing line from the UK coast as possible and investigate how to recycle angling equipment. Since starting up in 2016 almost 10 million meters of angling line has been collected around the UK.

There are currently four bins up and in use in the BMR located in St Abbs and Eyemouth harbours, one at Coldingham Bay and another at Weasel Loch. Each time our staff or volunteers empty the bins the litter is sorted and shipped to the team at ANLR. As of 2023 BMR have collected 2.5kg of line which equates to about 22,300 meters.

Please do **NOT** use these bins for general litter or dog poo!

Bin Locations:



Eyemouth



St Abbs



Coldingham



Weasel Loch



Find out more:



Safety

The geography and coastal conditions of the BMR lend itself to a wide range of recreational activities. From swimming in the relative safety of Eyemouth or Coldingham Bay, to kayaking around the dramatic cliffs of St Abbs head, there is something for everyone.

Whatever activity you choose and no matter how experienced you are, taking a few minutes today to understand the risks could save your life. If you are not a regular or experienced user of the marine reserve we would always recommend using a local guide the first time.

On Land

- Check local weather conditions and tide times.
- Dress appropriately.
- Pack a mobile phone with the RYA SafeTrx app. (or a marine VHF radio).
- Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Check signs for any activity zones, byelaws, and beach safety information.
- Make sure you have the skill and ability to handle your craft.
- To prevent collisions, familiarise yourself with marine navigation regulations.
- Anyone heading out onto the water using a self propelled craft should be aware of tidal effects especially if you plan to leave the relative safety of either Coldingham, St Abbs or Eyemouth bays.

At Sea

- Use the "buddy" system. Venture out in pairs or with a group!
- Use a sea-worthy craft, capable of coping with the conditions.
- Keep your craft well maintained.
- Ensure you are carrying the necessary safety equipment.
- Always wear a life jacket/buoyancy aid where appropriate.

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For more safety advice specific to your recreational activity, visit:



Useful Contacts

Reporting Problems

Emergency service
Marine Mammal strandings - BDMLR
Pollution spills: Coastguard or SEPA
Other: Berwickshire Marine Reserve

dial 999 for coastguard
01825 765546
(0800 80 70 60)
01890 752509

Statutory Conservation Bodies

Nature Scot
SEPA
Marine Scotland

www.nature.scot
www.sepa.org.uk
www.marine.gov.scot

Local operators and supporters of BMR

Active 4 Seasons
Aquamarine Charters *w*
Dive St Abbs
Divestay *w*
Eyemouth Rib Trips *w*
Marine Quest
Riptide
Snorkel Wild *w*
St Abbs Charters *w*
St Abbs Diving *w*
St Abbs Lifeboat
St Vedas Surf Shop
w - local operators who are WiSe trained

www.active4seasons.co.uk
www.aquamarine-charters.com
www.divestabbs.com
www.divestay.co.uk
www.eyemouthribtrips.co.uk
www.marinequest.co.uk
www.ribridesstabbs.co.uk
www.snorkelwild.com
www.stabbscharters.com
www.st.abbsdiving.com
www.stabbslifeboat.org.uk
www.stvedas.co.uk

Visiting Yachts and Vessels

Eyemouth Harbour Trust
St Abbs Harbour Trust

www.eyemouth-harbour.co.uk

Visitor Services

Visit Berwickshire Coast
St Abbs Visitor Centre
Eyemouth Tourist Information Centre
National Trust St Abbs Head

www.visitberwickshirecoast.co.uk
www.stabbsvisitorcentre.co.uk
www.eyemouthmuseum.co.uk
www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/st-abbs-head

Marine and Coastal Partnerships

Berwickshire & Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership
Coastal Communities Network

www.xbordercurrents.co.uk
www.communitiesforseas.scot

Tourist Information

Visit Berwickshire Coast
St Abbs Visitor Centre
Eyemouth Tourist Information Centre

www.visitberwickshirecoast.co.uk
www.stabbsvisitorcentre.co.uk
www.eyemouthmuseum.co.uk



The Berwickshire Marine Reserve would like to thank the members who contributed to the production of this guide.

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