

# Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve



Don Moxom

The day-to-day management of Chesil Bank and the Fleet is carried out by a warden, employed by the Ilchester Estates, the owners of the majority of Chesil Bank and the Fleet sea-bed. The area concerned is known as Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve. The warden is based in the Reserve Office in the Chesil Beach Centre.

## Partners in management

Natural England, the statutory nature conservation body, the local authorities, (Dorset County Council, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council and West Dorset District Council), Southern Sea Fisheries Committee, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water, Portland Harbour and Ilchester Estates, form the Chesil and Fleet Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 'Steering Group'. This group is responsible for monitoring and maintaining the area's features of interest, and is assisted by an Advisory Group comprising local landowners, businesses, organizations and users.

## Today's approach to management

Every effort is made to highlight the area's nature conservation interests pro-actively. This is attempted in numerous ways – operating the glass bottom boat and the Chesil Multi-media Project (includes live video at the Chesil Centre), carrying out a programme of guided walks and children's activities, etc.. Traditional wardening is also, of course, carried out. It is inevitable that some undesirable incidents occur and to combat these, the warden, members of the Swannery staff and volunteers carry out patrols and readily respond to any reports.



## The role of the land owners

The Fleet and most of Chesil came into the ownership of the Ilchester Estates in the 16th century. The Estate's management and influence over the whole of this area for this long period of time has led to the retention of the high nature conservation interests, and the aesthetic and cultural qualities of the area. The Crown and National Trust, as neighbouring landowners of Chesil, and many farmers with land joining the Fleet, co-operate to safeguard the area.



## Special Projects

A range of projects are carried out with a variety of partners. Some are long term like the little tern recovery project partnership with the RSPB and Natural England, and 'Beachwatch' (litter collection and analysis) with the Marine Conservation Society. Others may be specific surveys or undertakings and carried out with the support of local authorities, other conservation bodies such as Dorset Wildlife Trust and scientific bodies including of course the Fleet Study Group!



## The role of the volunteer

Voluntary support is critical to the success of the reserve. Volunteers assist in:-  
**Administrative tasks in the Reserve Office and the adjoining visitors information room at the Chesil Beach Centre**  
wardening the Little tern colony  
**helping with the Fleet Observer glass bottom boat**  
organizing the events' programme and **leading walks**  
picking up litter  
**practical projects such as fencing and management of the semi-natural habitats adjacent to the Fleet**  
Important survey and research work

