



*Cherishing, respecting and protecting the
wildlife and habitats of the Suffolk Coast*

Wildlife Wise
East Suffolk Council,
Riduna Park, Station Road,
Melton, Suffolk,
IP12 1RT
03/06/2026

FAO: Blythburgh with Bulcamp & Hinton Parish Council

Blyth Estuary Signage Updates

Dear Stakeholder,

I am writing to inform you of forthcoming works to replace and update a number of information signs along the Blyth Estuary.

As you will be aware, the Blyth Estuary is a site of considerable environmental importance, supporting a range of habitats and species of national and international significance. The estuary is subject to multiple conservation designations, including Special Protection Area (SPA) status, and is protected under legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. These designations reflect its value for rare and fragile wildlife, and it is essential that all users understand both the sensitivities of the site and their responsibilities when accessing it.

We have been made aware of some instances of misuse within the designated high-speed watercraft area. In particular, there have been occasions where users have continued at high speed beyond the defined zone and into the wider estuary and nature reserve. While these incidents appear to be limited, they highlight the need to ensure that the start and end points of this area are as clear as possible. Improving this clarity will help prevent wildlife disturbance and enhance safety for all users of the estuary.

In response, we will soon be installing updated signage at key locations along the river, with a particular focus on improving clarity around the high-speed watercraft area and reinforcing the importance of responsible use. This work is currently planned to take place in July.

I would like to emphasise that this work does not introduce any changes to existing byelaws, permissions, or access arrangements. There are no new restrictions being implemented. The purpose of the project is solely to replace ageing signage and improve the clarity, consistency, and prominence of messaging, helping to reinforce current regulations and better protect the estuary's sensitive features.

The signage has been developed in close collaboration with Natural England and the Southwold Harbour Masters to ensure accuracy, clarity, and suitability for the site.

No action is required on your part at this stage. We are sharing this information simply to ensure that you are aware of the upcoming changes and are not surprised by the new signage when it is installed. However, I would very much welcome any questions or comments you may have.

By improving signage, we aim to support safer navigation, minimise disturbance to wildlife, and help safeguard the habitats and species that make the Blyth Estuary so important.

For your reference, I have attached a copy of the new signage which has been sent for printing.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

Will Dowe

Wildlife Ranger – Wildlife Wise

Email: will.dowe@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Attachments: Examples of new signage

Large Panel – To replace existing ‘rules’ board near harbour office

High-Speed Watercraft Area

The high-speed watercraft area and much of the surrounding Blyth Estuary and marshland is managed by Natural England as part of the Suffolk Coast National Nature Reserve.

Natural England have worked with users of the river Blyth to provide an area for high-speed watercraft to use, please respect the speed limits outside of this area.

The areas shown in orange on the map are protected at national and international levels for their exceptional habitats and wildlife. The mudflats, saltmarsh and reedbeds support important breeding and wintering species such as avocet, redshank, marsh harrier, and curlew.

These habitats are fragile. Wash from watercraft can erode saltmarsh and may flood nest sites, drowning eggs and chicks. Birds here are also sensitive to visual and noise disturbance; repeated disturbance forces them to expend precious energy flying or running away, and can cause them to abandon vital feeding, resting or nesting areas.



How you can help:

-  Follow requests on signs.
-  Look out for birds; give them space and move further away if they become aware of you.
-  Avoid landing on marshland, or entering reedbeds and creeks.
-  Keep noise and wash to a minimum near creeks, marshland and reedbeds.

 





Rules for use:

Use of the area will be reviewed in response to misuse, incidents of disturbance and damage, or changes in legislation, regulations, policy and guidelines.

-  **High-Speed Watercraft Area Boundaries**
Watercraft travelling at high speed should keep strictly within the boundaries of the area as shown on the map above and on signage along the riverbanks.
-  **Tow Safety**
When towing a skier or inflatable, stay near the middle of the river. Other vessels should give way and follow inland navigation rules.
-  **Jetskis and Waterskis are Welcome**
If you are operating a different watercraft, please check with the Harbour Master if it is appropriate for use.
-  **Stick to Speed Limits and Watch Your Wash**
Keep speeds low and wash minimal when approaching or leaving the high-speed area.
-  **No Mooring, Overnight Camping, or Fires**
No mooring, overnight camping, or fires (including BBQs) allowed on the banks of the high speed area.
-  **Share the Area Fairly**
If more than one vessel wishes to use the area at high speed, you must take turns and share the space, even if you arrived first.
-  **Keep Other River Users Safe**
Slow speed watercraft will need to travel through this area. When multiple vessels of any kind are in the high-speed area, everyone needs to slow down and follow standard inland water navigation rules. **Please treat everyone with kindness and respect.**
-  **Check Conditions**
Review tide times, river conditions, the strength of the tide, underwater obstructions and bridge clearance before launching. Check with the Harbour Master if you are unsure.
-  **Parking**
This is a working harbour. Please make sure you are parked in designated areas and that you do not obstruct access for anyone else.

Learn while you roam
Scan me to find out more



See something unsafe?
Please report it to the Harbour Master: 01502 724712

Start/End signage – to be installed each end of the high-speed area

START

of high-speed watercraft area

END

of high-speed watercraft area

Nature Reserve signage – to be installed beyond end of high-speed area on approach to nature reserve

You are entering a National Nature Reserve

Dead Slow.
Watch your wash.