



**CORNWALL**  
**COUNCIL**  
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# Environmental Code of Practice

For the ports of Falmouth,  
Truro, Penryn and St Mawes.

Written by SAC Management Forum



**Fal & Helford**  
EUROPEAN MARINE SITE



[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

# Introduction

The Fal Estuary is full of contrasts, both in terms of its landscape and wildlife and the ways in which the estuary is used. It is the mixture of human activities and rich diverse wildlife that makes it such a unique and valuable place. The estuary has international importance as a Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area.

It is one of the busiest harbours in Cornwall, supporting a wide range of commercial and recreational activities. Between 8000-10,000 yachts pass through the Carrick Roads every year, each one sailing over some of Britain's most important marine life.

At King Harry passage, the sheltered waters of the Fal are not only home to wildfowl and wading birds but also to laid up ships taking advantage of the deep water channel.

This leaflet has been created by the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Management Forum and is intended to provide harbour users with information on the impacts their activities can have on the local environment and provide practical advice on how these can be minimised.

“ Our seas are home to some of the most biologically diverse habitats and species in Europe. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are one of the tools that can help up to protect the marine environment, whilst also enabling its sustainable use, ensuring it remains healthy and contributes to our society for generations to come. ”

JNCC

Cover photo: © Falmouth Harbour

## Fal and Helford Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The Fal and Helford river valleys, along with the open waters of Falmouth Bay, make up the Fal and Helford SAC. The site was selected in order to protect important wildlife habitats including saltmarshes, sandbanks and mudflats.

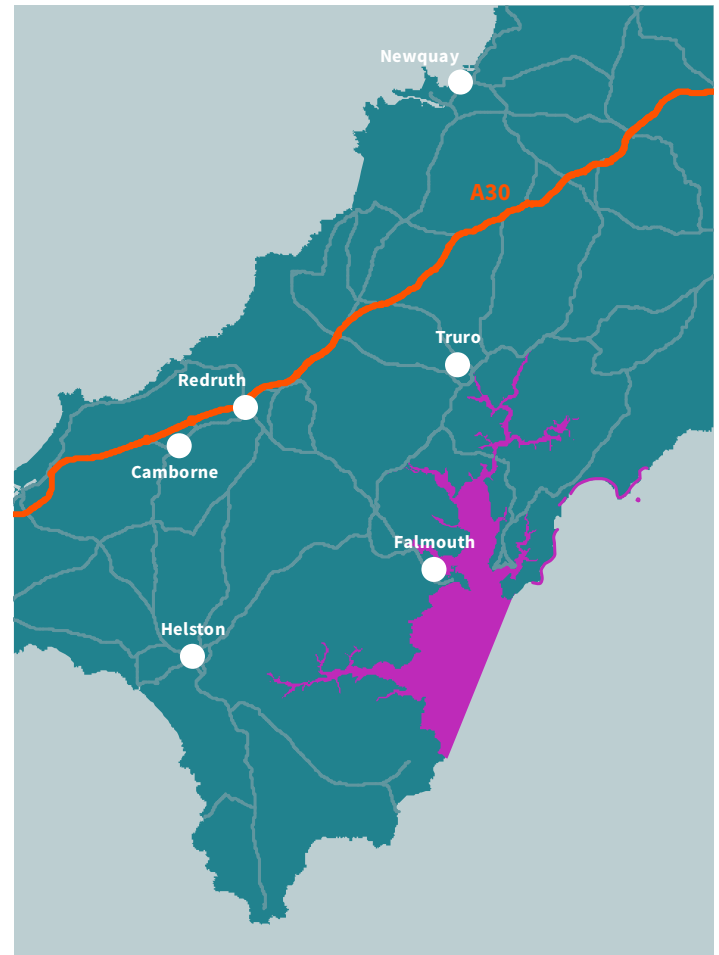


Harbour Crab on Maerl  
Photo: © Natural England

Seagrass beds form an important nursery ground for fish and cuttlefish, and provide shelter for seahorses and pipefish. Maerl, a form of calcified red seaweed, forms a

pink carpet across the seabed. The maerl beds in the Fal are the most south-westerly in Britain and the largest in England. They harbour a rich variety of species, including some that are rarely encountered anywhere else.

### Key



## Falmouth Bay to St Austell Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds

Three species of diving birds are protected by the Falmouth Bay to St Austell Bay SPA. These are the Black Throated Diver, Great Northern Diver and the Slavonian Grebe.

The best time to see them is between October and March. These birds can be very easily disturbed, please pay your part in reducing wildlife disturbance by keeping your distance, using binoculars, and keeping noise to a minimum.



**Great Northern Diver**  
Photo: © Adrian Langdon



# Minimising emissions

**One of the biggest environmental challenges is to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases.**

Your actions, however small, can make a difference:

- Regularly clean your hull and propeller to maximise fuel efficiency.
- Use low volatile organic compound (VOC) paints.
- Consider using paddle/wind power/electric to replace combustion engines where you can.
- Dispose of your waste making the most of the recycling options available.
- Regularly maintain machinery to ensure it runs as efficiently as possible.
- Further information on how to calculate, and reduce, your own carbon footprint is available from <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk>

Your actions, however small,  
can make a difference



# Code of Conduct

## No pollution

- Do not throw anything over the side, even biodegradable rubbish can collect on the shoreline.
- Ensure all pollution is avoided by carefully re-fuelling and using drip trays during maintenance operations.
- Do not pump your bilges directly into the estuary unless you can be sure the water is oil and chemical free.
- Dispose of waste oil, paints and thinners properly. They should not be disposed of in the general waste but be separated and disposed of either at a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) or to an appropriate site (see map for details).
- Use shoreside facilities as much as possible to reduce the input of sewage and grey water discharges from boats. Please see map for location of facilities.
- Don't pump out black water unless far enough offshore.
- When cleaning your hull collect all antifoul scrapings. Do not let them enter the water as they contain heavy metals that are harmful to marine animals.

## Do not disturb

Cornwall's coastal and marine wildlife is under pressure. It needs your help and respect.

- Keep your distance from marine mammals if sighted, they are easily disturbed, particularly seals.
- Take note of the sensitive wildlife areas identified on the map and avoid anchoring, mooring and where possible launching, in these areas.
- Water ski areas are defined to avoid the quieter creeks, and speed restrictions exist in the more sensitive areas to ensure minimum disturbance (please see map).



Grey seal

Photo: © Natural England

- Make sure dogs are kept well clear of birds and other animals, particularly when walking on coastal footpaths or areas of foreshore.
- Incidents of serious harassment of marine animals should be reported to the police immediately (Devon and Cornwall police wildlife crimes: **08705 777444**). Reports should be supported by pictures and videos if possible.
- Less serious incidents of disturbance can be reported using the 24 hour hotline **0345 201 2626**.
- Familiarise yourself with the Cornwall Marine Life Code and learn how to put wildlife first **www.cornwallmarinelifecode.org.uk**

## Report

- If you accidentally spill oil or fuel; please notify the nearest harbour office and / or Falmouth Coastguard on **0203 8172652**.
- Live stranding of whales or dolphins and seals should be immediately reported to British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) on **01825 756546** (24 hours).
- All sightings of dead animals can be reported to the Cornwall Marine Strandings Network on **0345 201 2626**.

Cornwall's coastal and marine wildlife is under pressure. It needs your help and respect.



Seaweeds on a rocky shore

Photo: © Natural England

# Waste management

**Running a boat and / or using the harbour inevitably produces waste. These wastes can be harmful to animals and plants in the marine environment if not properly controlled.**

The Fal Estuary is served by a number of household recycling centres (HWRC) that you can use for domestic waste disposal, including hazardous wastes such as bilge water contaminated with oil. If you cannot get to these HWRC, this map will show the waste facilities available in the area.

## Reduce / reuse

The best way to manage waste is to reduce it in the first place. There are a few hints below:

- Buy only what you need.
- Use reusable bottles, cups and cutlery.
- Use reusable nappies and sanitary products.
- Buy products without plastic packaging.

The refill scheme is in operation in Falmouth. For more information on how to access free drinking water please see: <https://refill.org.uk>

## Recycle

Many of the local harbour authorities / council offer designated recycling bins for cardboard, paper, recyclable plastics, metals and glass. See map for the locations of these facilities.

## Grey and black water

Designated amenity centres including washing machines, toilets, showers and chemical toilet waste disposal are provided throughout the estuary to encourage harbour users to avoid harmful discharges. Please see the map for further details.

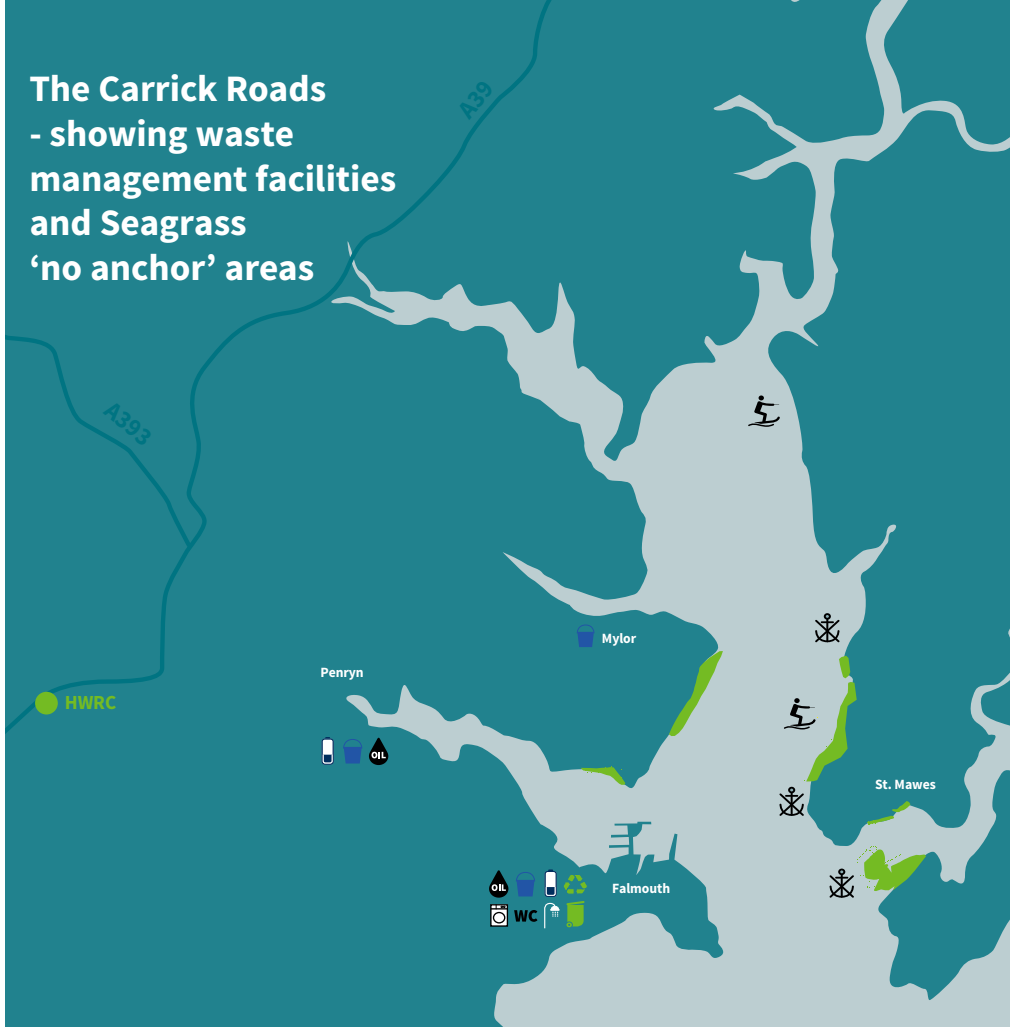
One flush from a boat contains the same amount of bacteria as 250,000 flushes through the sewage treatment process. Remember if you don't have a holding tank don't use the toilet on board unless you are at least 3 nautical miles offshore.

## Hazardous wastes


Batteries, pyrotechnics, paints and thinners, antifoul and biofouling scrapings removals are all hazardous to the environment and / or human health. They should be disposed of in a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC), or if necessary through a harbour authority should they offer these facilities.



## The Carrick Roads - showing waste management facilities and Seagrass 'no anchor' areas



### Key

-  Recycling facility
-  **HWRC** Household Waste Recycling centre
-  Battery disposal facility
-  Chemical sewage disposal
-  Waste disposal sites
-  General waste disposal sites
- WC** Toilet facilities
-  Shower facilities
-  Laundry facilities
-  Sensitive area for moorings and anchorages
-  Water ski area
-  Sea grass - avoid anchoring, launching and contact with motor or hull in these areas

The best way to manage waste is to reduce it in the first place.

# Anchoring and launching

**Anchoring and Launching cause abrasion and disturbance to the seabed. In areas where slow growing and fragile species live this can have a devastating and lasting effect.**

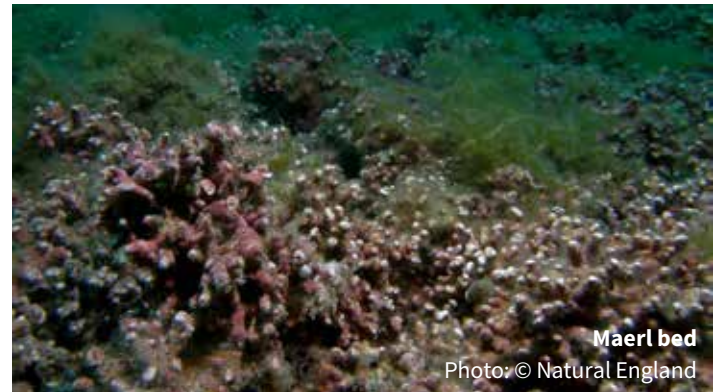
Areas sensitive to anchoring have been shown on the map within this document. In these areas we ask you to avoid anchoring.

When sensitive areas are close to the shore, launching kayaks and dinghies can also cause damage. Where possible please avoid launching in these areas.

Both seagrass and maerl provide important habitat for young fish to shelter in; they also both absorb carbon dioxide through photosynthesis, helping to reduce the impacts of human activities on the climate.

Please avoid the areas highlighted on the map for anchoring and launching, and demonstrate good practice at all times by avoiding contact from propellers and hulls.

## Sensitive organisms



# Surface water drainage

**There have been incidents of pollution from people disposing of environmentally hazardous substances incorrectly, such as down surface water drains.**

When it rains, water that is not absorbed into the ground, intercepted by vegetation, or evaporated, flows into surface waters such as rivers and coastal waters. This flow is called run off. As the run off flows over roads and land it picks up pollutants.

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**To minimise the pollutants getting into coastal waters please:**

Do not drop litter.

Do not allow your waste bins to overflow or be damaged.

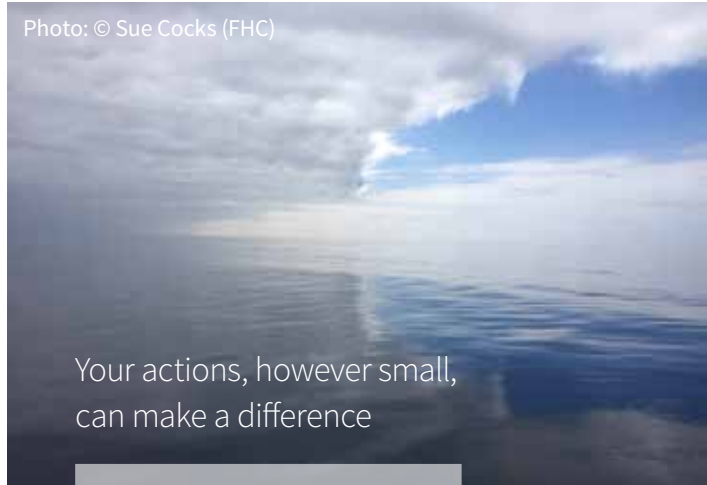
Don't pour anything but clean water down surface water drains.

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It is important to prevent spilt substances such as paint, oil, fuel, milk or fat from entering drainage systems. If a spillage occurs the spilt substance should be absorbed using an absorbent material like sand or earth. This should then be disposed of properly so that it does not continue to pose a pollution threat.

If a polluting substance enters a drain or water system please report this to the Environment Agency on **0800 80 70 60** and local harbour authority.

Photo: © Sue Cocks (FHC)



Your actions, however small,  
can make a difference

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# Invasive Non Native Species (INNS)

**Invasive Non Native Species can have a negative impact on local native species and change the local ecosystem often creating issues for marine life and for users of the marine environment.**

As a recreational boat / kayak / SUP user you can inadvertently help to spread these INNS as they may hitch a lift in damp kit, on the surface of vessels or in bilge water.

Some species of INNS are already in Falmouth. These can cause not only environmental issues, but problems associated with use of vessels i.e. fouling of engine water inlets.

## Invasive Non Native Species in Falmouth



**Top left:** Slipper Limpet

**Above:** Leathery Sea Squirt

Photos: © Keith Hiscock

**Left:** Pacific Oyster Photo: © Matt Slater

## Reduce your chance of transporting invasive species

Check your equipment and clothing for living organisms. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothes thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry>

If boats are kept in the water

- An appropriate antifouling coating system and good maintenance are the best way of preventing fouling.
- An annual lift out, scrape off and antifoul is recommended (please collect all scrapings).
- A regular wash down of the hull is beneficial; be aware though that the washings are harmful and should not be allowed back into the sea due to the concentrations of harmful antifoul and potential of INNS being released into the water.

Check your equipment and clothing for living organisms. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to inspect.



# Bait digging

**Bait digging is covered under harbour byelaws and commercial bait digging is not allowed within the areas that are Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI).**

Commercial bait digging can lead to loss of habitat and food source for many species and disturbance is caused to overwintering birds that feed on the mudflats.

All bait diggers are encouraged to follow the code of conduct produced by the Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers which requests everyone to:

- Backfill all diggings and put rocks back as you find them.
- Do not dig too close to boat moorings, piers, piles and quays etc.
- Do not dig in the upper shore areas as this is where lug worms generally breed.
- Do not take more worms that you can use.
- Leave undersized worms, 5” for lug and 6” for king rag. These are your future supply of bait.



**Bait digging**

Photo: © Helford MCG Volunteer



**King Ragworm**

Photo: © www.aphotomarine.com

# Recreational fishing

A number of fishing vessels of different types are based within the estuary, it is also a popular recreational fishing area. The estuary is designated as a bass nursery area.

This means that the waters are closed to the following activities in the shaded areas of the map from 1st May – 31st December.

- No bass to be retained when fishing from a boat.
- No sand eels to be used as bait when fishing from a boat.

In all other waters shown on the map from 1st October – 31st December people shall not retain more than 1 specimen each per day. The minimum size is 42cm.

Sea Bass regulations for recreational and commercial fishing (applied to ensure conservation of stocks) are subject to change. Please check the latest guidance available on the MMO website at [www.gov.uk/MMO](http://www.gov.uk/MMO)



## Key



**1st May – 31st December**

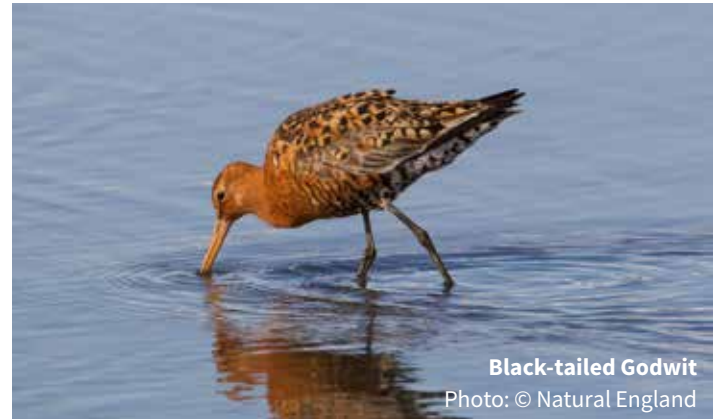
No bass to be retained when fishing from a boat;  
No sand eels to be used as bait when fishing from a boat.

# Wildfowl and shellfish

**The Fal Estuary is of national importance for the waders and wildfowl which overwinter in its sheltered creeks.** Populations of black-tailed godwit in the Truro River reach nationally important numbers, and several other species including Curlew, Dunlin and Redshank are of regional importance. The tidal mudflats of the Fal, especially around Malpas, Ruan and Restronguet Creek offer particularly good feeding grounds.

The Fal also supports an oyster fishery based on natural stocks of the native European flat oyster. The oyster fishery is managed sustainably as it is carried out by sailing boast and haul-tow punts. Mussel rafts are present in the upper reached near the King Harry Ferry, where they are farmed commercially. Shellfish beds around the estuary are monitored for health purposes.

“ The Fal Estuary is of national importance for the waders and wildfowl which overwinter in its sheltered creeks. ”



**Black-tailed Godwit**

Photo: © Natural England



**Eurasian Curlew**

Photo: © Natural England



# Cornwall's coastal code

**Cornwall's marine and coastal wildlife, so essential to our economy, is under pressure. It needs our help and respect! The Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code helps you to understand how to act responsibly during encounters with marine life. Minimising your impact makes your marine and coastal encounter great for you and marine life!**

## Key messages:

- **Learn:** find out first. Learn as much as you can about what wildlife you might see, where and know the best way to act around it. This will help you improve your chances of great sightings.
- **See:** be alert whilst out and about.
- **Respect:** act responsibly and aim to leave wildlife as you found it. Understand that our marine life has numerous encounters with people every day.

## What YOU can do to help:

- Give the animals SPACE and TIME.
- Check for sensitive wildlife sites using our online map.
- Expect the unexpected – be alert and get prepared.
- Observe from a distance – use binoculars if you can.

- Look for signs you have been spotted by wildlife and avoid actions that scare, startle or panic them.
- Large groups, hauled seals and mothers with young are best avoided completely.
- If you decide to move closer, approach side on make sure the animal(s) have a clear escape route.
- Be patient and wait downwind, move predictably, steadily and slowly.
- Be calm and quiet while you enjoy your encounter.
- Be considerate, back off and move on to keep your encounter brief.
- Leave wildlife and the environment as you found it.
- Report sightings **www.ORKS.org.uk** or disturbance incidents to the hotline **0345 201 2626**.

Ensure disturbance of marine life doesn't threaten our shared economic future. For more information when planning an outing take a look at the Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code group website:

**[www.cornwallmarinelifecode.org.uk](http://www.cornwallmarinelifecode.org.uk)**

# Useful contacts

If you have any questions or would like further information on any of the information in this leaflet you can contact the relevant organisations below.

**Eagle Virginia in Falmouth Bay**

Photo: © Tom Redgrave (FHC)



Organisation	How they can help	Contact details
<b>Marine Management Organisation (MMO)</b>	Licenses, regulates and plans marine activities in the seas around England.	t: 0300 123 1032 e: <a href="mailto:info@marinemangement.org.uk">info@marinemangement.org.uk</a>
<b>Environment Agency</b>	Protects and improves the environment in England. Manages pollution events and works to minimise the impact of flooding.	t: 0800 80 70 60 (24hr hour Pollution Hotline) t: 0370 850 6506 e: <a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a>
<b>Natural England</b>	The government's adviser for the natural environment in England.	t: 0300 060 3900 e: <a href="mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk">enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk</a>
<b>Cornwall IFCA</b>	Manage fisheries and the marine environment around Cornwall's coast.	t: 01736 336 842 e: <a href="mailto:enquiries@cornwall-ifca.gov.uk">enquiries@cornwall-ifca.gov.uk</a>
<b>Cornwall Wildlife Trust</b>	Protects Cornwall's wildlife and wild places on land and in our seas.	t: 01872 273 939 e: <a href="mailto:info@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk">info@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk</a>
<b>SAC Advisory Group</b>	Represents local groups interested in marine conservation in the SAC	e: <a href="mailto:advisorygroupsecretary@hotmail.co.uk">advisorygroupsecretary@hotmail.co.uk</a>



**Common Dolphins**

Photo: © Natural England

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>How they can help</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
<b>Cornwall Council</b>	Information on council services and Cornwall	t: 0300 123 4202 w: <a href="http://www.cornwall.gov.uk">www.cornwall.gov.uk</a>
<b>Truro and Penryn Harbour Authority</b>	Provide further information on Truro and Penryn Harbours	t: 01872 224231 e: <a href="mailto:harbouroffice@cornwall.gov.uk">harbouroffice@cornwall.gov.uk</a>
<b>St Mawes Harbour</b>	Provide further information on St. Mawes Harbour	t: 01326 270553 e: <a href="mailto:stmawesharbour@btconnect.com">stmawesharbour@btconnect.com</a>
<b>Falmouth Harbour Commissioners</b>	Provide further information on Falmouth Harbour	t: 01326 213 537 e: <a href="mailto:info@falmouthharbour.co.uk">info@falmouthharbour.co.uk</a>
<b>A&amp;P (Falmouth Docks)</b>	Provide information on Falmouth Dock operations and cruise ship facilities	t: 01326 212 100 w: <a href="http://www.ap-group.co.uk">www.ap-group.co.uk</a>
<b>Estuary Officer</b>	Encouraging sustainable marine recreation practice and infrastructure in the Fal and Helford.	t: 01872 326436 ext: 496436 mobile: 07483 359413 e: <a href="mailto:susan.1.scott@cornwall.gov.uk">susan.1.scott@cornwall.gov.uk</a>

For more information on reducing your environmental impact when on the water visit the RYA and British Marine initiative The Green Blue - website [www.thegreenblue.org.uk/](http://www.thegreenblue.org.uk/)

This information has been provided by the Fal and Helford SAC Management Forum



**If you would like this information in another format or language please contact:**

Cornwall Council, County Hall,  
Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY

e: [equality@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:equality@cornwall.gov.uk)  
t: 0300 1234 100

