

Mersey Campaigner Pack

**This pack explains what you can
do to help stop the proposed
Mersey tidal barrage**



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

What's happening?

The Liverpool Combined Authority intends to build a tidal barrage across the River Mersey. The planning process has been triggered and an application is expected in July 2026.



Where are we now?

We are here!

	Pre-application	In progress	July 2026
↓	Application accepted	Not started	August 2026
↓	Pre-examination	Not started	November 2026
↓	Examination	Not started	May 2027
↓	Recommendation	Not started	August 2027
↓	Decision	Not started	November 2027
↓	What happens after decision is made	Not started	December 2027

Why act now?

Studies have indicated that tidal barrages can be highly damaging to the natural environment. A similar proposal for the River Severn recently came under significant scrutiny from an independent commission which advised against constructing a barrage.

By comparison, it is worrying how little is known about a potential Mersey barrage. At present, there is very little information on the impacts to the sensitive habitats of the Mersey or the flood risk it poses to communities.

We need to make sure the right studies are taking place and that they are of a high standard. The more people that voice their concerns about the potential environmental impacts of the scheme, the more pressure there is on the developer to do these studies thoroughly.



The Mersey is Internationally Protected

It has three RAMSAR sites protected by UNESCO. These sites should NEVER be destroyed.

RAMSAR sites are:
"recognised as being of significant value not only for the country in which they are located, but for humanity as a whole"

A development of this size and scale is unprecedented in an environmentally designated area.



What's the problem with tidal barrages?

Expensive and environmentally damaging

Tidal barrages are not a new technology - only one exists in Europe and that was built in the 1960s! No others have been built because they are extremely expensive and environmentally damaging.

Destroying wetland habitats

A tidal barrage is a dam-like structure that completely alters a river's natural processes. They risk destroying sensitive wetland habitats that rely on the constant influence of the tides.

Degrades water quality

Some habitats may become permanently submerged while others will dry out as they are displaced from the tidal range. Water quality behind the barrage could deteriorate significantly.

Aquatic wildlife survival risk

Significant water quality deterioration would put aquatic wildlife at risk. The impacts are not just limited to the construction phase of the barrage but throughout its projected 120-year operational life and possibly well beyond.



Why are wetlands so important?

In their natural state, rivers create thriving wetland habitats. These wetland habitats are not just vital to wildlife but act like sponges, absorbing and filtering excess water during heavy rainfall.

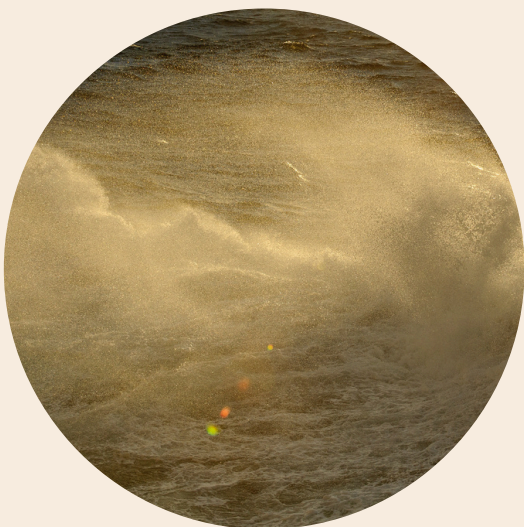
Despite these benefits, many of our rivers have had been altered, disconnecting them from their natural floodplains. Many of our wetlands have been lost and we can no longer count on our landscapes to provide these important benefits.

While tidal flooding may be artificially reduced in some areas, river-based flooding could increase elsewhere as the capacity to store water in wetlands is lost and changes in the river flow reduce drainage.



What do wetlands do for us ?

- Act as natural buffers against storms
- Vital habitats for wildlife
- Support fisheries and livelihoods
- Offer flood protection
- Improve water quality
- Promote nature connection
- Help with carbon storage and regulation



What wildlife calls the Mersey home?

Birds

The Mersey wetlands are part of a major migration route for birds around the world. In spring and autumn, birds from Europe, Canada, and Siberia flock to the estuary as they seek out their preferred climate. The exposed tidal areas provide a bounty of worms, molluscs, shellfish, and insects for them to feed on.

The Mersey is **internationally important** for these birds:

Dunlin



Historically the BEST site for Dunlin in the UK!

Redshank



The SECOND best site for Redshank in the UK!

Shelduck



The THIRD best site for Shelduck in the UK!

Black-tailed godwit



Ringed plover



Pink-footed goose



The Mersey is **nationally important** for these birds:

Lapwing



UK red-listed and globally near threatened

Teal



UK amber-listed

Curlew



UK red-listed and globally near threatened

Lesser Black-backed Gull



UK amber-listed



Cormorant

Otters, dolphins and much more...

Dolphin



The river supports marine mammals such as otters, dolphins, harbour porpoises, and seals.

Wild Atlantic Salmon



Globally near threatened

Returned to the river after a 100-year absence. The post-industrial clean-up of the Mersey led to drastic improvements in water quality.

European Eel



Globally critically endangered

There is an important populations of European Eels

CASE STUDY

The Severn Barrage

A tidal barrage across the River Severn has been a topic of debate for decades. The River Severn is the only place in the UK with a greater tidal range than the Mersey.

In 2025, the independent commission concluded that:

“at this stage the development of a large barrage should not be pursued.”

The impacts below were identified as part of the Severn Estuary Commission, and they could indicate the kind of risks we would face in the Mersey.



Flooding

- Reduced tidal flooding for 79,000 homes behind the barrage.
- Increased tidal flooding for 6,000 homes outside of the barrage
- Increased river-based flooding for 45,500 homes
- Tidal defences undermined by changing erosion patterns



Value of lost nature

- Best case scenario: £150.25 million
- Worst case scenario: £321.2 million

Bird population decline

- significant declines in 30 bird species



Intertidal habitat destroyed

- Between 20% and 50% of intertidal habitat lost
- 1/3 of all the saltmarsh

What can you do?

A successful campaign requires a range of actions from many people. Join the fight to save the Mersey by bringing your skills to the table! The more of us that take action, the more likely we are to succeed.

Here are some ideas:

Write

Write to newspapers

Is writing your thing? Why not write to the editor of a local newspaper and help keep the Mersey Barrage in the public eye. A few carefully placed letters can generate plenty of community discussion. Use [The Wildlife Trusts letter to the editor tool](#) to find the details of your local media.

Contact your local councillor

Your councillors are powerful local voices with the ability to raise issues on your behalf. Write to them about your concerns and ask for them to hold the developer to account. You could even try and set up a follow-up meeting to discuss the issue face to face.



Organise

Host a walk or talk

Bring people together to learn more about the Mersey, whether it's getting out to see the sights first hand or hearing about how amazing our river is. Involve local experts to share their knowledge. You could theme your event around local history, wildlife or something specific to your area.

Run a bioblitz

Name a time and a place and bring people together to record wildlife sightings on the Mersey. Download an app such as iNaturalist and have fun seeing what wildlife you can spot. Better still you'll be gathering importance evidence for scientific studies!

Create

Get crafty and creative

Could you create a piece of art or find a great way to express how important the Mersey is? Maybe you know a great space where you could create a mural or run a community exhibition. Your creativity can inspire others and raise awareness of our cause!

Try out photography

Use your camera skills to bring the Mersey to life. Whether it's a cutting-edge film or something you took from your smart phone, you can bring the Mersey to people through a lens. Give your video a theme and focus and show people why they should care!



Participate

Submit a question to your council

Did you know that you can go to council meetings and ask a question as a member of the public? Find out the date of the next meeting and submit a question in advance. Your council will then invite you to ask the question to council and respond.

Respond to consultations

Attend public consultations, be ready to offer your thoughts and feelings on the barrage. You don't have to be an expert in ecology or wildlife to make your voice heard, a concerned local resident is more than enough reason to speak up. Take a list of questions and be prepared to share your views.



Discuss

Set up a Town Hall or Hustings

Can you spark a discussion? Why not host a Town Hall and invite a panel of speakers to discuss questions from the public. If there's an upcoming election in your area, you could even organise a hustings for candidates.

Develop a stance

Are you a group member who wants your community to take a stance? Raise the issue in a local meeting and see where other members stand. You could invite speakers to help inform members and develop a position.



Keep us updated

We hope this guide has helped you better understand the Mersey barrage proposal, its potential impact, and what you can do to help ensure the scheme doesn't get the go-ahead without the supporting evidence and independent scrutiny that is desperately needed.

We'd love to know your thoughts and what actions you take, so keep us updated!

If you need help, we may be able to offer advice. Feel free to reach out to us via email: campaigns@cheshirewt.org.uk

For more information on campaigns, visit our website:

<https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/take-action/campaign-for-nature>

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