

**Towards a more suitable name for the Welwick-Skeffling Humber Bank Set-back project.
More recently also called Outstrays to Skeffling Managed realignment scheme.**

Aug 28th 2023

From the Outstray Group

The Outstray Group is an informal group of naturalist/birdwatchers who originally met on site by accident and are interested in charting the evolution of the new nature reserve. They were formed in autumn 2021 and produced their first annual report at the end of 2022, a copy of which has been passed to the Environment Agency. We have circulated our regular members and all are happy with our proposals, which have also been sent to Spurn Bird Observatory, The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Bird Recording Section, and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust should they wish to express any views. To date only one comment has been received from those organisations relating to a detail regarding the position of Patrington Haven and a query about the use of the term 'strays'.

We favour '**The Outstrays' Nature Reserve, South Holderness** as the new overall name.

Why this title? The 'outstray' part is already a known name in the area. In this part of the world 'Strays' is a local name for salt-marshes which build out from a natural coastline (eg. YWT Welwick Strays as Welwick Salt-marsh used to be called). Such strays were often considered as common land until artificially protected by a bank. The owner of the bank then became the owner of the reclaimed land. So, when more salt-marshes are formed by further accretion beyond a protective bank built across a stray they become the 'outstrays'. Most of the salt-marshes beside the Humber Bank around Sunk Island and as far as Cherry Cob sands and Paull Holme Nature Reserve are called 'The Outstray' (ref: OS Explorer Maps 292 & 293.) as these have all developed after the previous strays have been protected. Interestingly it appears possible that outstray is a name unique to this area. Internet searches looking for other places which use the name have all been negative so far, but we are open to correction here. However, the term 'strays, is more widespread.

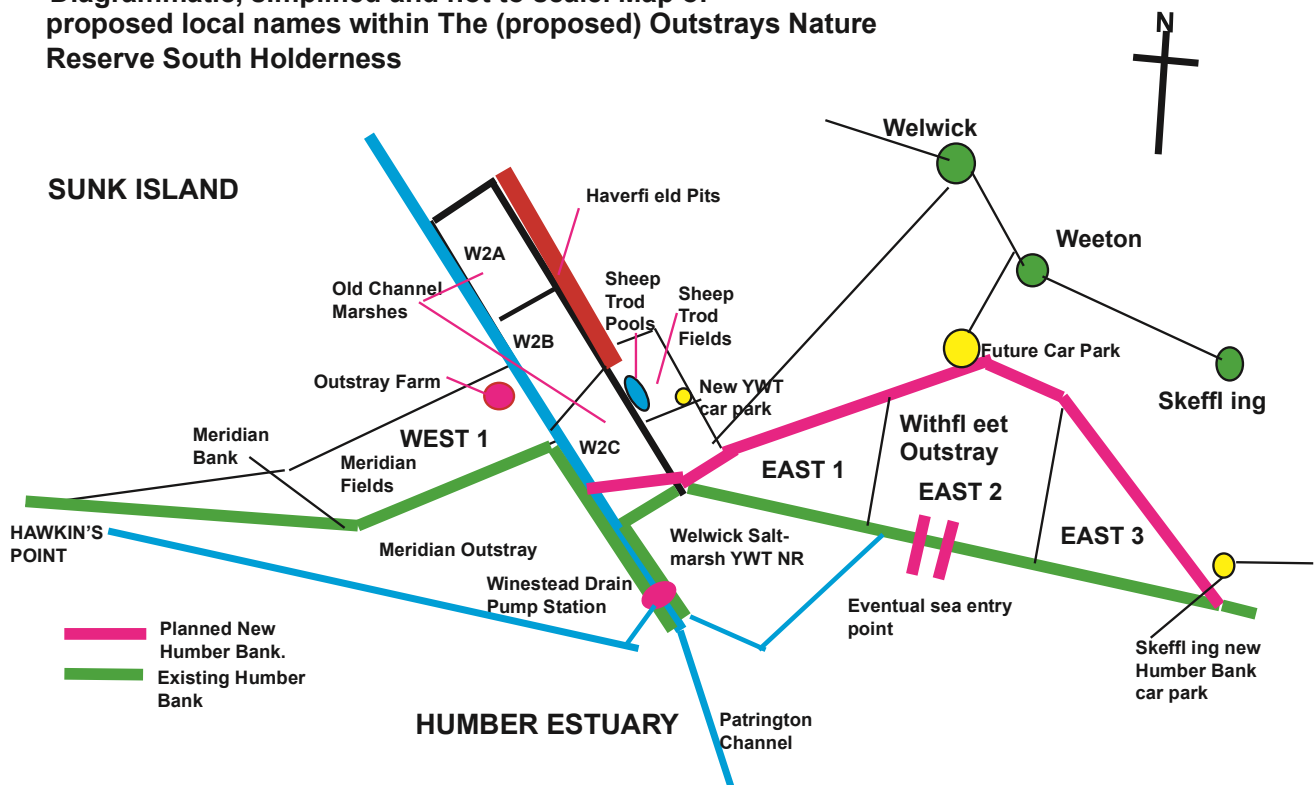
Would it be possible to also name the main parts of this reserve at this time? Wildlife recorders would benefit from memorable names so that they can report in which section of this rather large reserve they made their observations. We think these would also appeal to other visitors as well. So we would also like to suggest that the main parts of the reserve should be given names which are mapped on any noticeboards, and which are preferably names connected to either the history of the site or to known names and features. Otherwise regular visitors to the site, especially birdwatchers, may make up their own nick-names, with potential confusion in the future when several unofficial names are used for one part as has happened elsewhere. On nature reserves it is also usual to give names to hides.

We suggest the following:

'New Marsh' This is currently our Group's nick-name for the relatively new salt-marsh which lies to the SW of Winestead Drain Pump Station on Sunk Island as it doesn't seem to have any other name indicated on available OS maps. It lies parallel to West 1 (the name currently used by EA and their contractors) and is separated by a new bank on which there is a monument to the fact that it is crossed by the 0° meridian. If our memories are correct, this earlier set-back was created in the 1990s, or perhaps slightly later. We think that **Meridian Outstray** would be a more distinctive name here.

West 1 is currently a group of a dozen fields lying parallel to and inland of the 'New Bank' (**Meridian Bank** perhaps?) which are currently either uncultivated, in clover leys, or being used as sheep pastures. These now attract quite large flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plover in autumn and winter and a flock of Curlew has been using them recently. Roe Deer often hide in the fallow fields. The sheep grazing should also create useful feeding grounds for wintering thrushes etc. EA has not yet published detailed plans for this area though initial plans mooted the possibility of turning it into marshland or even opening it to the sea and joining it with the New Marsh (or 'Meridian Outstray'). So initially we are thinking of referring to West 1 as **Meridian Fields**.

Welwick - Skeffling managed realignment scheme.
Diagrammatic, simplified and not to scale. Map of proposed local names within The (proposed) Outstrays Nature Reserve South Holderness



Winestead Outstrays Pump Station: We find it interesting that this full name seems to confirm that the nearby saltmarshes are indeed outstrays! Does that mean that the saltmarsh we refer to as New Marsh has actually been named Winestead Outstray? That would carry interesting connections. Another naming problem in this area is that the channel from the pump station out to the estuary is called **Pattrington Channel** by the Ordnance Survey, but birdwatchers often refer to this as Pattrington Haven! (Haven = harbour). This is very confusing when we still have a village carrying that name, which is 4km to the west as the crow flies. In fact according to Francis Robinson ('Pattrington the Queen's Town') the actual harbour was about half a mile south of the village and usually referred to as 'Havenside Quay'. It was already in being in the 1300s when large blocks of stone were delivered to build the striking St Patrick's Church we can see today in Pattrington itself. But that harbour silted up and ceased to be used around 1868/9. Unfortunately the village name has got into bird reports and from there into guide books! We are not sure what best to do here although our Group agree that it is confusing and would be better changed. It might be better to publicise the stream between the pump station and the estuary as **Pattrington Channel** as this seems to be an officially accepted name. It wouldn't actually harm if birdwatchers kept using 'Pattrington Haven' amongst themselves, but we suggest that the new reserve should keep to the OS map name. When the new pump station is completed further inland it will mean that Pattrington Channel becomes a lengthier and potentially more interesting feature. We also hope that the new pump station might continue to use the Outstrays in part of its name.

West 2 was previously part of the 'North Channel' when it separated Sunk Island from the mainland with Haverfield disused sand & gravel pits on its north-eastern side and Sunk Island along the south-western edge. It has recently been converted from agricultural land to 75ha of marshland and wildflower meadows and is already attracting breeding, Little Ringed Plovers, Oystercatchers and Avocets (up to 41 were onsite earlier in the year). So we think West 2 could become '**Old Channel Marshes**' which would help to remind visitors that this area once separated Sunk Island from the mainland. Also we currently refer to the Northeast islands, (the larger ones, in W2B) and the South-west islands in W2A. These might be too small a feature to include on your map?

Winestead Drain runs alongside the 'Old Channel Marshes' and is a remnant of that Channel. For a period after the North Channel was reclaimed, today's Drain was left open to the sea and therefore became Pattrington Fleet then later, Winestead Fleet. A fleet being a channel or stream which is tidal.

Haverfield: This is a name which already exists and we wouldn't want to change it. It is a remnant of a line of sand-dunes which originally stretched all the way from Spurn. Although its full name is Haverfield Sand & Gravel quarries (now disused), or more simply, Haverfield Pits, it is probably best just to use Haverfield as its name.

The Eastern Area - 'Welwick to Skeffling': In the past the northern bank of the Humber was quite a bit further to the north than today and of course sea-water levels were lower the further back in time you go. In the early Middle Ages the Parish of Welwick included an area of reclaimed land closer to the Humber shore and a hamlet developed in this area called **Orwithfleet** or just **Withfleet**. Little is known about it except that it disappeared, probably in a sea flood during the 1300s, although it could even have been caused not by a storm but by an undersea landslip off Norway which apparently caused a tsunami to surge round the British coast causing untold damage around this time. It is only a few years ago that evidence for this has been sifted out of historical records around the Severn Estuary, and was publicised in a BBC TV documentary.

Examining various modern maps we note that today there is a **Weeton Fleet**, a drainage stream which is probably now largely lost somewhere in the centre of the eastern part of the project. It seems a bit unusual that this still carries the name 'fleet' on modern OS maps rather than a drain like all the other local watercourses. Fleet has many meanings but usually refers to a natural stream as opposed to an artificial drain, and one which is, or was, open to the sea or a river and is tidal. It seems to be the only 'fleet' in South Holderness, although the existence of many others is preserved in local names west of Hull.

So could Withfleet as a name have evolved into Weeton Fleet? There may be no proof, but at least by using Withfleet it brings to life an ancient local name. Apparently, there is no record of where Withfleet actually was or how many people lived there. The Victoria History of the area mentions occasional river traffic to this hamlet in the 1300s, and it is likely the main trade of anyone living there would be concerned with fishing. However, it is pretty certain that it was sited either on or very near the new eastern area of the set-back. John Whitehead's book on Sunk Island includes a rough map of its guessed-at position which agrees with this.

So now **Withfleet Strays**, **Withfleet Outstray** or just **Withfleet Marshes** spring to mind as suitable names for the eastern marshes as this large area will be beyond the new bank and will slowly build up into a new saltmarsh. It is even possible that in the past there would have been a locally named Withfleet Outstray which never got mapped but could have been further to the north. According to the Victoria Local History, Withfleet is also a name of Scandinavian origin - so another link to the past, perhaps to Viking or even French settlers! (In the 1300s there was a Burstall Priory just south of Skeffling which was run by French monks.) If **Withfleet Outstray** was acceptable it would add to the argument for using **The Outstrays** as the overall name for this project

Sheep Trod Lane area: There is an area of fields between Welwick Bank, Welwick Bushes and Sheep Trod Lane which is also part of the new reserve where a series of small ponds have been created recently and new pathways are being developed. Sheep Trod Lane forms part of the northern boundary of the new reserve. This area could become **Sheep Trod Fields** and the newly created pools **Sheep Trod Pools**. In the distant past this was probably an area of saltmarsh and sheep pastures which began as another outstray.

Sources of information: Victoria County History for the East Riding of Yorkshire; 'An Historical Atlas of East Yorkshire' by Susan Neave and Stephen Ellis published by Hull University Press; 'Sunk Island - the land that rose from the Humber' by John Whitehead, pub. 1991; the full edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, 'Patrington - the Queen's Town' by Francis Robinson, plus internet searches.