

WINNER 2014

Medmerry Managed Realignment Working with the community and nature



Medmerry Managed Realignment is a groundbreaking project – the largest of its kind in Europe and the first in the UK.

It has created more than 183 hectares of intertidal wildlife habitat and is already attracting wildlife – compensating for the loss of conservation areas around the Solent. It protects the coastline properties, sewage works and the main Selsey Road serving over 5,000 residents, saved £300,000 pa on flood defence maintenance, created a fish nursery supporting the local fishing fleet, incorporates 10km of new access routes with associated economic growth opportunities and unlocks the potential to protect a further 25,000 properties across similar flood risk management projects.

Although there was considerable opposition to the scheme, strong relationships were built through a dedicated Medmerry Stakeholder Advisory Group. Members were selected by the communities themselves to liaise with the project team and represent local authorities and local interests. This enabled the community to take an active role – influencing aspects such as final footprint of flood banks, access routes (types) and details on habitat areas and for the team to recognise, include and deliver local development opportunities.

Medmerry will boost green tourism and is a catalyst for connecting communities through further green links. There is a network of paths and bridleways, with safe opportunities for cycling, riding and walking. New car parks and viewing points will ensure that a large number of people enjoy the nature reserve. Local holiday parks can now extend their opening periods, generating income and job security.

Innovative ecological mitigation techniques were documented and will inform the design of future realignment schemes, reducing cost and increasing viability. Medmerry is used as a case study at NCE, ICE and CIWEM conferences and appeared in publications as far as the American Society of Civil Engineers journal and US Climate Progress website.

The team worked with local voluntary groups and universities, involving students in long-term monitoring of the habitat and species establishment. Brighton University currently has masters and PhD students undertaking research at Medmerry.

The project has scored highly in Environment Agency 'Team Performance Measures' with the highest scores in project communications – achieving 'national significance' status.

Above all, the proactive multimedia communications convinced people that it is possible to complete ambitious realignment schemes by working with the community and nature to protect people and livelihoods.

The flood defences were completed in September 2013 and within months withstood the worst coastal storms seen for 20 years.

Judges' comments

It took courage to make this project happen. As the first man-made coastal realignment project in the UK, inevitably emotions were running high and the project encountered considerable opposition.

This team managed to get the community on board through real engagement with local people and through their innovative consultation strategy. Having achieved this, they continue to monitor the results and have been active in their dissemination of lessons learned, not only to stakeholders but also to international audiences.

FINALISTS

- Balfour Beatty Near Miss Reporting App: Balfour Beatty
- Capital Stretch Lifecycle Solution (CSLS): Prima Service Limited
- East Croydon Station Footbridge: Mott MacDonald
- Hammersmith Flyover Strengthening & Refurbishment Works: Costain
- Medmerry Managed Realignment: Team Van Oord
- Pirbright Institute DP1 and Team Pirbright: Shepherd and Team Pirbright
- Procure 21+ Partnership Group: Procure 21+ Partnership Group
- Relish Smartwire™: Relish, Worthing Homes

