



SUSTAINABILITY

HIGHLY COMMENDED 2014

Medmerry Managed Realignment Working with the community and nature

Medmerry is the largest managed realignment of the coast 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 saved £300,000 pa on flood defence maintenance, removed significant risks for operations staff, created a fish nursery supporting the local fishing fleet, incorporates 10km of new access routes with associated green tourism growth opportunities and maximises wildlife habitat opportunities.

A dedicated communications team ensured local concerns were taken into account when formulating the strategy, which has resulted in enhanced buy-in and increased community benefits.

The scheme is designed to be resilient to sea level rise for at least 100 years. Over 500 hectares in size, the project required 400,000 cubic metres of clay to build new flood banks. This was sourced from within the site, saving

over 40,000 lorry movements and probably 2-3 years in delivery time alone. The 'borrow pits' created by excavating the clay were incorporated into the final design, increasing the amount of intertidal habitat.

The carbon footprint of constructing the project was further minimised through the production of a 3D model linked to a detailed materials management plan, Realtime GPS data to optimise plant activities, 60,000 tonnes of rock delivered by sea, 20,000 tonnes of recycled aggregate used to construct access tracks, and 90% waste recycled. The new habitat will absorb carbon emissions, making a positive contribution to carbon reduction in the long term.

Rising sea levels and the economic challenges of maintaining coastal sea defences will make coastal realignment an increasingly important option. Medmerry is recognised locally, nationally and internationally as an exemplar and one of the most sustainable projects the Environment Agency has delivered.

Judges' comments

The sheer scale of this scheme makes the project team's achievements even more remarkable. They have seized every opportunity to deliver economic, environmental and social sustainability, resulting in a transformation. Not only of local opinion, but also of the Environment Agency's approach to this kind of challenge.



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