



Restoring the Solent's Seascape: for people, nature and climate

Project Information Sheet

Location: Solent

Long term aim: To reconnect the Solent into a functioning seascape by improving the condition, extent and connectivity of key marine and coastal habitats, using protection and restoration initiatives.

The Solent Seascape Project is a multi-million-pound, long-term initiative to restore multiple habitats across the Solent strait - a diverse estuarine system between the Isle of Wight and mainland England. In partnership with ten organisations, we are actively restoring and reconnecting critical coastal habitats and working collectively with local communities to co-develop an ambitious recovery plan for the Solent, to create a thriving seascape for all.



Project vision

The Solent Seascape Project will be the first of its kind in the UK to initiate seascape scale nature recovery. While this initial project funding period is for five years (2022 - 2027), our long-term vision is to restore the Solent's seascape, tipping the balance from a degraded state to a naturally expanding, connected and productive ecosystem. By restoring and connecting the seascape, we will provide nature-based solutions to many of the issues currently affecting it and the people who depend on it, as well as helping to fight the impacts of climate change.

Project activities

To achieve this vision, we are:

- Collaborating with local stakeholders and communities to develop and co-create a long-term seascape recovery plan, that supports better management of existing Solent marine and coastal habitats.
- Actively restoring saltmarsh, seagrass meadows, native oyster reefs, and breeding seabird nesting sites across the Solent to increase habitat extent and catalyse recovery across the wider seascape, improving ecological connectivity.
- Assessing ecosystem service benefits (such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity uplift, nitrate remediation) to create an evidence base of the wider benefits of seascape restoration.
- Developing key interventions and financial mechanisms to upscale the potential for seascape restoration in the longer term by working with government and regulators.
- Empowering local communities and building capacity to ignite and improve understanding of seascape processes, catalyse behavioural change and increase involvement in seascape recovery.

Project overview

The project covers over 522 sq km of coastal and marine habitats in the Solent, one of the most heavily used waterways in Europe. The Solent is home to a complex network of harbours, ports, estuaries and sandbanks and an astounding array of habitats, such as seagrass meadows, saltmarshes, oyster reefs and globally renowned seabird nesting sites. In turn these habitats are home to an amazing array of wildlife, with seahorses, seals, Sandwich terns and critically endangered European eels all finding sanctuary in the Solent. The Solent supports not only a diversity of marine life but is rich in maritime heritage and has provided for coastal communities for generations.



However, across the Solent important habitats are being lost and the biodiversity they support is declining. The Solent continues to face severe threats from coastal development, poor water quality and sea level rise. Sadly, this has resulted in the Solent's internationally important marine and coastal habitats becoming diminished, degraded and fragmented. Over 50 per cent of the area's saltmarsh has been lost, equivalent to an estimated carbon fixing potential of around 5,000 tonnes per year. Oyster populations have declined by 95 per cent causing the collapse of the fishery, and all 715 hectares of seagrass beds are in poor condition.



As we progress through the UN Ocean Decade and Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, Blue Marine Foundation and partners are bringing together diverse Solent restoration efforts to deliver an ambitious programme of ecosystem restoration to catalyse large seascape scale recovery across the Solent.

We are restoring key habitats to revive a functioning, thriving and abundant coastline. Marine habitats such as saltmarsh and seagrass act as important carbon stores, help to reduce the impacts of climate change, provide nursery grounds for commercially important fish, protect coastal homes from erosion and sea level rise, enhance water quality and improve wellbeing by providing areas for local people and tourists to explore nature.

Together, we are working towards a dynamic network of interconnected marine and coastal habitats - known as a seascape-scale approach to marine and coastal restoration - to benefit people, nature and climate. To ensure that the long-term benefits of seascape restoration are realised, we are also co-developing our Seascape Recovery Plan with the local community to ensure the longevity of restoration efforts and management activities.

About Blue Marine Foundation

Blue Marine Foundation exists to protect and restore the ocean. Using a combination of top-down interventions to improve ocean governance and bottom-up project delivery that empowers small-scale fishers and local communities, our mission is to see at least 30 per cent of the world's ocean under effective protection by 2030 and the other 70 per cent managed responsibly.

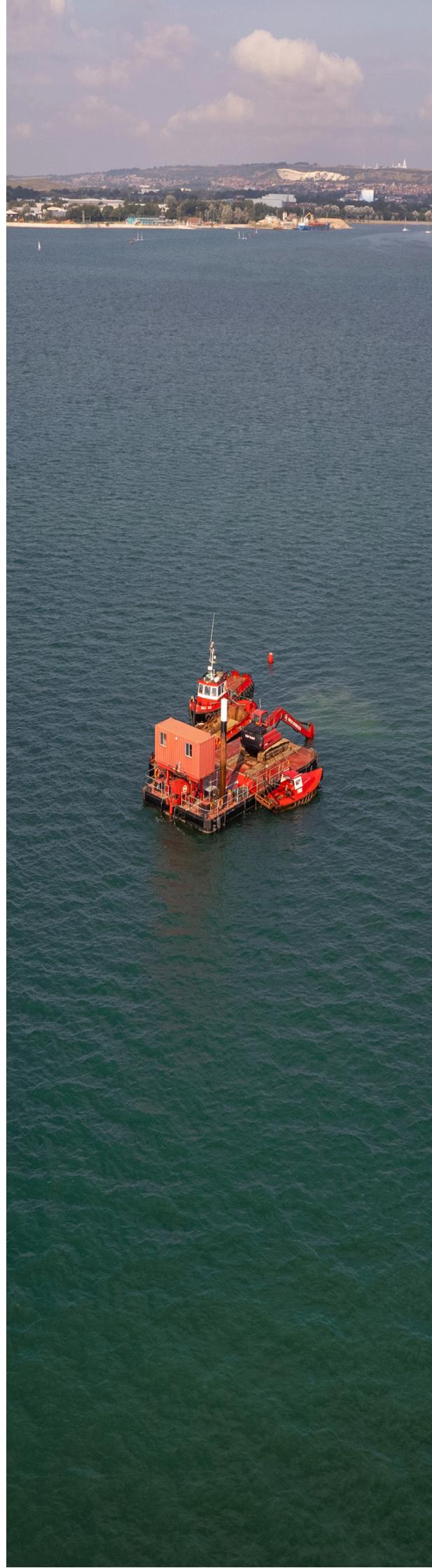


**Endangered
Landscapes
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**2021
2030**

United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development



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HARBOUR**
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OF NATURE



giving
nature
a home



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**UNIVERSITY OF
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Isle of Wight**
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PROJECT SEAGRASS



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