

# Inclusive Collaboration Evolves into a Strategic Partnership to Deliver Saltmarsh Restoration in the Dart Estuary

---

News provided by

[Bioregional Learning Centre](#), South Devon

SOUTH DEVON, UK, July 29, 2024

---

Bioregional Learning Centre (BLC), The Duchy of Cornwall, Dart Harbour & Navigation Authority (DHNA) and the Environment Agency (EA) today announced a joint partnership to enable fast track delivery of restoration and enhancement work in and around key saltmarsh habitats in the upper Dart Estuary.

The announcement accompanies the launch of the delivery phase of '**Living Dart: The Saltmarsh Project**', funded through the EA's Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF), which falls under the Restoring Meadow Marsh and Reef Programme (ReMeMaRe)–£3m nationally specifically supporting 11 projects on intertidal habitat creation. To this, match funding from the Duchy has been added.

Planning is now underway for surveying, restoration works, monitoring, volunteering, site visits and progress updates for local people who are now following with interest the potential and benefits inherent in making it possible for the Dart's saltmarshes to further establish. This comes after two years of successful collaboration that included South Devon National Landscape (SDNL), Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC), FiveRivers and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, field work and community involvement funded by the Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) programme.

“The significance of this partnership for us is that it elevates the role of a place-based Community Interest Company in restoring a constellation of saltmarsh clusters to health” said Jane Brady, BLC co-founder. “As a small but mighty CIC, we have been managing the activities of well-respected ecological organisations. This, in time, has developed into a delivery-focused strategic partnership. This places value on our mission, which is to collectively create the conditions for bioregional vitality. For us, the Project is a shared process of learning about this largely invisible habitat–by ecologists, scientists, artists, designers, dog walkers, birdwatchers, land managers, boat owners,

visitors, swimmers—we are building capacity, together, to see and value our bioregion differently, transforming our relationship to place”.

“Dart Harbour is happy to continue our involvement as the Project moves from investigative phases to actually getting spades in the mud” said Paul Britton, Harbour Master. “As stewards of this stunning estuary, we are very pleased to be playing our part in restoring these vital habitats. The Harbour Authority will be leading the practical side of this project, providing our staff, boats and equipment to work alongside scientists and local volunteers on these fragile ecosystems”.

The Dart estuary is a Ria or “drowned river valley”, created as sea levels rose after the last ice age. The long, winding estuary and tributaries have steep sided woody banks. Ria saltmarshes are unique to Northwest Europe, and within that, the marshes on the Dart are a unique landscape feature.

Addressing climate change and the challenges that our estuaries are facing, Emma Magee, EA South Devon Catchment Coordinator says "Nationally we have lost more than 85% of our saltmarshes in recent centuries. Through this project we have the opportunity to restore and revive saltmarsh in the Dart Estuary through a collaborative delivery model. We are very excited to support this project and partnership".

Research findings published by The Conversation in May 2024 suggest that recent estimates of carbon stored by saltmarshes in the UK and north-west Europe “should lead to a policy shift, since the climate benefits of the new carbon accumulation in saltmarshes are tiny compared to the benefits of protecting the marshes (and their already-stored carbon) in the first place. Creating new areas of saltmarsh can also protect the coast from erosion and provide new habitat for plants and animals. But a greater emphasis must be placed on preserving existing saltmarshes from threats like rising seas or coastal defences being built to protect farmland. Given the size of the existing stock of carbon and the slower rate at which this increases, we emphasise the vital and urgent need to protect the carbon already locked in saltmarsh soils. The development of policy and management strategies to protect and preserve this carbon must now be a priority.”

"We are delighted to provide support for this partnership and its work" said Tom Stratton, Land Steward for the Duchy of Cornwall in Devon. “We have a strong interest in the sustainability and resilience of all our natural systems and this project provides an early example of saltmarsh restoration in the South West which we hope will protect this valuable resource for years to come whilst storing carbon and providing unique habitat.”

*End*

## **Contact**

Tracy Ebbrell, BLC Project Manager for The Saltmarsh Project

[tracy.ebbrell@bioregion.org.uk](mailto:tracy.ebbrell@bioregion.org.uk)

## Visit

<https://bioregion.org.uk>

<https://www.dartharbour.org/>

<https://defraenvironment.blog.gov.uk/author/emma-magee/>

<https://duchyofcornwall.org/>

## Related links

### WEIF:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-fund-180-local-projects-to-boost-water-quality>

### ReMeMaRe

<https://ecsa.international/rememare/restoring-meadow-marsh-and-reef-rememare>

### 3Cs

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ea-chair-says-collaboration-needed-to-protect-local-economies-and-nature-on-the-coast>

### Academic research

<https://theconversation.com/saltmarshes-do-store-carbon-but-their-climate-impact-may-have-been-overestimated-230352>

### State of the Environment report

In January 2023 the EA launched its latest 'State of the Environment: Coast and Marine' report '[State of the Environment: Coast and Marine' report](#) produced by the EA's Chief Scientist's Group, which draws attention to the many consequences of climate change, stating that '85% of England's salt marshes—which store the carbon equivalent of nearly 40 million people's annual domestic emissions—estimated to have been lost since the 1800s, as well as up to 50% of seagrass meadows and 95% of our native oyster population. Meanwhile over 100,000 people are estimated to be at risk from significant coastal flooding—a figure likely to increase by 300% this century, even if global warming is kept to 2 degrees'.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1130743/State\\_of\\_the\\_environment\\_-\\_the\\_coastal\\_and\\_marine\\_environment\\_-\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1130743/State_of_the_environment_-_the_coastal_and_marine_environment_-_report.pdf)