



Rye Harbour Farm

Habitat creation project

No 3 February 2011

Recreating the lost habitats of Rye Harbour continues this spring...

Phase 2 of the habitat creation project is beginning this month with the construction of an outfall near Lime Kiln Cottage which will allow the tide to flow on and off approximately 17 hectares of Rye Harbour Farm creating saltmarsh and mudflats.

A lot of great work has already been completed including the creation of more than 50 ponds in fields near Winchelsea Beach.

These ponds will be of enormous benefit to a wide variety of wildlife as they vary in depth, shape and salinity. The diversity of plants and animals is going to be huge!

Flocks of over-wintering birds in the fields include curlew, redshank and grey plover. These haven't been seen in these fields for over 25 years since before the fields were converted to arable.



Oystercatcher

We have also restored large areas of shingle ridges by stripping off the topsoil. With specialist care over the next few years, we hope to re-establish wild flower habitats on them.

We have marked out the route of the creeks ready for the intertidal habitat to be created close to Lime Kiln Cottage. The primary creek is about 6 metres wide, which should give visitors an idea of the scale.

What's happening next?

Construction of the culverts and outfall structure will take approximately four months. Unfortunately this means we will need to put some temporary diversions in place around the construction areas. We apologise for the inconvenience to visitors and will do our best to keep disruption to a minimum. Access to the beach will remain throughout, so that everyone can still enjoy the nature reserve.

Footpaths disrupted by the project since August have now been reinstated and we have improved one of them to give a better standard of access to the reserve. From them you can see the ponds and other areas of restored habitats.



Footpath improvements



Ponds & reptile hibernacula



Restored shingle ridge

The importance of salt marsh

Salt marsh and intertidal mud flats are a natural part of any river estuary. The Romney Marsh and Rye Bay area has lost the majority of this habitat as marshes have been slowly reclaimed for agriculture over hundreds of years.

The last areas of saltmarsh lost from Rye Bay were here at Rye Harbour Farm, when the fields were gradually infilled about 50 years ago. This project will increase this habitat on the Rother Estuary by almost 40%!

Salt marshes are important because they provide feeding areas for many resident and over-wintering bird species and we hope to attract and increase numbers at Rye Harbour as a result of the project.

The intertidal habitat created at Rye Harbour Farm will help to mitigate for other areas of this habitat that will be slowly lost through coastal squeeze. This valuable habitat needs the wet and dry periods that the tides provide, but with sea levels rising, this valuable habitat is being 'squeezed' against man made defences.

Much of this habitat is designated under European law and we are legally required to compensate for losses which happen as a result of our flood defence work. These new habitats at Rye Harbour are an important environmental improvement which will help to ensure future coastal protection schemes around Rye Bay are able to take place.



Glasswort

Who can I contact about the project?

Peter Richardson	Project Manager	01903 832099
Ian Nunn	Project Executive	01903 832609
Tom Cook	Technical Officer, Fisheries, Recreation & Biodiversity	01732 222912

We are keen to hear your feedback about the Rye Harbour Farm habitat creation project.

Please help us to improve our communications by emailing or writing to us with your comments:

Do you find these newsletters informative/useful?

Have you any suggestions as to how we could improve them?

Have you accessed our website? If so, did you find the information you were looking for?

Would you prefer to receive updates on the Rye Harbour Farm project in a different format? If so, what format would you like?

Please send feedback to Tom Cook, Environment Agency, Rivers House, Sturry Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1DT or email tom.cook@environment-agency.gov.uk

The next Rye Harbour Farm habitat creation project newsletter will be in May 2011

customer service line

08708 506 506

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline

0800 80 70 60

floodline

0845 988 1188