

The Save Mersea Harbour project is starting in November

Work to protect Mersea Harbour from erosion is due to start this November. The Harbour is protected by islands that have been washing away for many years due to the rise in sea levels and storm wave action, increasingly so in recent years.

The Save Mersea Harbour project, led by the Mersea Harbour Protection Trust, began back in 2014, has now been given final approvals after meeting marine, environmental, ecological and legal requirements.

The approved plan will see 98,000 m³ of dredged sand and gravel from Harwich Harbour 'recharged' to locations on Cobmarsh Island, Packing Marsh Island and Old Hall Point in Mersea Quarters as well as at Shinglehead Point at Tollesbury Wick.

The recharged materials will protect the islands to slow down the erosion ensuring the harbour can remain active and usable, important wildlife sites and oyster beds are protected and waterfront properties will not come under threat from increasing storm wave action. Brushwood fencing has been installed at two locations to ensure no material can move into any navigable channels.

Harwich Haven Authority, one of the UK's largest trust ports, is funding much of the recharge project, up to around £1M. The Environment Agency is contributing almost £300k towards the recharge costs as well as funding essential pre and post recharge monitoring, aspects of which are also being carried out at no cost by RSPB.

"We are currently undertaking a nationally significant project, costing approximately £120m, to deepen the Harwich approach channel and inner harbour to -16m Chart Datum," says Neil Glendinning, Chief Executive, Harwich Haven Authority.

"The recharge at Mersea Island is one of two beneficial placement projects we are supporting and funding as part of our larger channel deepening project in Harwich. The second project, working with the RSPB to recharge a Little Tern habitat in the Walton backwaters, has already commenced.

"We are delighted to be supporting the Mersea Harbour Protection Trust who have worked tirelessly to get this project off the ground to protect its harbour from further erosion."

Once the operations are complete the Trust will be working with RSPB and other bodies to monitor the long-term impacts of the project, as well as creating a legacy record of the project to inform others about this significant undertaking. It is hoped that the project will ensure that people are able to enjoy the wildlife, the beautiful creeks and all the activities that are based around them for many years to come.

In order to prepare the application for the necessary consents to carry out the Recharge, Mersea Harbour Protection Trust raised over £70,000 locally from donations and grants from Essex County Council, Essex Community Foundation, Colchester Borough Council, West Mersea Town Council, Mersea Island Society, Mersea Moorings Association and other local organisations and individuals.

More information is available at www.savemerseaharbour.org

IMAGE: Where is the material to be placed?



IMAGE: How is it to be placed?



Notes to editor

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Harwich Haven Authority is responsible for the placement of the recharged materials and have contracted dredging contractors Boskalis Westminster and Van Oord Dredging to carry out the operations from November 2021. More than 900 m3 of gravel will be taken to Mersea on every high tide, day and night, subject to weather conditions, and placed at specific locations by rainbow discharge or a floating pipeline using the specialist dredger 'Sospan Dau'.