

L4L19 SV4 Summary Sheet:

Site Visit Title:

Natural Beauty and Natural Capital

Description:

A visit to Abberton reservoir to learn how infrastructure development can deliver natural capital benefits before moving to Abbots Hall Farm to explore the effects of a managed realignment scheme 17 years after delivery.

Delegates learned how the creation of the RSPB's flagship, Wallasea Island, came about from using material board from London's CrossRail programme before hearing from Essex Wildlife Trust and Suffolk Coast & Heaths about their respective experience of planning and implementing coastal projects to deliver benefits for nature.

Themes:

- Increasing demand for water & landscape change
- Biodiversity & ecosystem services net gain at Abberton
- Coastal zone management in response to climate change
- Natural capital approach and aspirations of net gain on the coast.
- Visual impact of coastal defences
- Partnership working

Outcomes and Outputs:

1: Understand how an increasing demand for water can result in the need for landscape change; and how this can present an opportunity to enhance natural beauty and special quality indicators.

2: Understand some of the issues involved in sustainable coastal management and their impacts on the landscape. Hear about one current coastal realignment project and visit one past realignment project to reflect on the lessons learnt.

3. Understand current work on the natural capital approach and aspirations of net gain in the coastal zone.

Lessons Learnt:

- Climate change is driving interest and support for projects that deliver environmental improvements alongside and increased resilience for people and place. This really comes from an acceptance that attempting to continue business as usual is not viable in the medium term.
- Current regulatory and consenting processes actually hinder projects attempting to deliver environmental net gain. It is possible to circumvent these to enable projects but the time and resource necessary to do is not insignificant.

- Partnership working is critical to deliver environmental improvements as working together uncovers mutually beneficial solutions that might otherwise be overlooked.
- Natural England are producing an 'eco-metric tool' (developed from the Defra biodiversity metric) to help people and projects understand the relative impact an intervention has on the provision and delivery of ecosystem services. This tool proved useful for Essex and Suffolk Water in evaluating their success.
- Attempting to engineer habitats for specific species isn't guaranteed to bring those species in!
- Some elements of delivering coastal realignment are predictable if conditions prevail, for example rapid growth of pioneering saltmarsh where levels are right. Mid to long term evolution of realignment sites is less certain, though benefits can come from unexpected developments.
- Funding models that help deliver environmental improvements can unfortunately impact ultimate performance. The necessity to define agricultural land required installing a fence at Abbots Halls that creates an artificial barrier impeding succession that need not exist for the purposes of on-site management.
- Nature-based solutions offer a panacea to visually intrusive infrastructure options in protected landscapes. The experience from a recent Suffolk Coast & Heaths Project, touching the tide demonstrated the additional public value such schemes can deliver in comparison too.

Photos:



Where to find more info:

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