**EIA Quality Mark Case Study**

**Forton, Seafield and Alverstoke FCERM Scoping Report**

**Key Issues:**

The River Hamble to Porchester Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy estimates that 257 residential properties in the Gosport area are currently at risk from flooding. Forecasts estimate that this figure will more than double to 541 properties at risk by 2060 without further intervention.

The project falls within an area of high nature conservation importance. The three frontages (Forton, Seafield and Alverstoke) which comprise the scheme are located within designated sites of national and European importance for nature conservation, namely Portsmouth Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ramsar site and Special Area of Protection (SPA).

The key challenge of this project is to balance improving the standard of defences whilst maintaining the setting of the historic built environment, delivering wider benefits and avoiding damage to the valuable habitats and species located in the adjacent intertidal and estuarine areas. Furthermore, the seafront in Gosport is highly constrained, with limited opportunities for setting back or realigning defences due to the proximity of residential properties, footpaths and services.

**Purpose of the project:**

The purpose of the project is to develop a flood defence scheme which protects people, property, businesses and key infrastructure in Gosport, South Hampshire, from coastal flooding and erosion. The aim of this phase of the project is to prepare an Outline Business Case (OBC) to secure further funding for design and construction. The scheme is being delivered by the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership (ESCP) in partnership with local stakeholders.

**Description of the project:**

An Environmental Scoping Report (ESR) has been prepared to support the submission of the OBC. ESCP’s and Royal HaskoningDHV’s Environment Teams have worked together to integrate environmental considerations (constraints and opportunities) into the options appraisal and outline design process.

The outline design comprises flood risk improvements (e.g. encasement) to approximately 1.5km of coastal defences. The project team has engaged with stakeholders, local communities and landscape architects, LDA Design, to develop a vision for the scheme, centred around place making, and delivering multiple-benefits (e.g. access, ecological enhancements, amenity etc.).

*Top: picture courtesy of LDA Design*
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:

**Early Pre-Application Engagement**
Despite efforts to minimise encroachment into protected sites, some encroachment is necessary. To inform the options appraisal process, and to ensure compliance with the Habitat Regulations, the project team undertook extensive pre-application consultation with Natural England, including an interactive (two way discussion over options drawings) walkover to discuss issues on site. This has been invaluable in terms of influencing design decisions, maximising opportunities for environmental gain, and minimising project risks.

**Delivering Multiple Benefits**
Designing a scheme with multiple frontages as a single project has maximised the opportunity for creating multiple benefits. Improving access routes and amenity opportunities are all being designed into the scheme which allows us to achieve multi-functional benefits.

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Lessons learnt continued:

**Establishing a Landscape Vision and Integrated Landscape Design**
Royal HaskoningDHV engaged with landscape architects, LDA Design early in the EIA Scoping/Design process to provide a high level landscape vision for the three frontages to explore the potential for delivering not just essential coastal defences but maximising public realm, landscape and environmental improvements.

This approach has ensured the design of infrastructure considers social and environmental issues, not purely a technical response to a problem. A workshop was held at the outset of the project to ascertain the specific issues and opportunities for each frontage in order to arrive at a strong vision and proposals for the flood defence in the context of the neighbourhoods affected.

Following establishment of the vision, Royal HaskoningDHV’s engineering and environmental consultants worked in partnership with LDA Design and the wider project team to develop an integrated design solution which complements and enhances the existing setting. Importantly, this enabled the EIA scoping process to recognise and capture the many benefits of the scheme, in addition to some of the potentially adverse impacts requiring mitigation.

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