



## Medmerry Managed Realignment – August 2013

### Looking forward to the new flood defences and habitats

The Environment Agency is building a major flood defence scheme along the coast between Selsey and Bracklesham. We are building new defences inland from the coast and allowing a new intertidal area to form seaward of these new defences. When finished, it will include fantastic wildlife areas and improved footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways.

The work to construct the flood bank is expected to be finished by early August. The other remaining construction work will be complete by autumn 2013.

#### Summary timescales:

- **July-August 2013:** Construction work on flood bank. Beach between Medmerry rock revetments closed from mid August (see map). Site closed except existing public rights of way.
- **August-September 2013:** Breach made in seawall – Medmerry becomes an intertidal area. Beach between Medmerry rock revetments closed (see map). Site closed bar public rights of way; Footpaths 70 and 75 will be permanently re-routed behind the new floodbank (see map).
- **September-November 2013:** Landscape planting, construction continues on access tracks and visitor features. Site closed bar public rights of way.
- **November 2013:** New public rights of way and car parks are planned to be open around Medmerry.
- **Spring 2014:** Permissive rights of way open on top of floodbanks.

#### How will the sea be introduced into the new intertidal area?

The work to introduce the seawater ('the breach') will take place over a number of weeks, starting towards the end of August. **What is most important** is that the site and especially the beach will **not be safe** for untrained personnel and the *public* to visit during this period. The site includes the area seaward of the new floodbanks. Large construction plant will be in operation throughout this period.

To make the breach we will lower the level of the beach over a 100m width. We don't know exactly when this will occur; it will depend on sea conditions and how the work progresses. When water does start to enter the realigned area it will be a slow process on a relatively low tide.

We will be providing updates and photos of this work on our website and we will let you know when the beach is reopened.

**When will the footpaths open?**

We are expecting the footpaths, bridleways, viewpoints and car parks to be complete and ready to use by November. In the meantime it is essential that everyone continues to obey all signage, which will explain which public rights of way are open. We are expecting to open the permissive footpath route on top of the floodbank in Spring 2014 once the grass has seeded.

**How will the existing beach between the Medmerry rock revetments develop once the seawater enters the site?**

The scheme is designed to allow the existing beach to roll back and reduce in height. It will no longer have a flood defence function and we won't need to work on it each winter.

It is possible that two small spurs of shingle will form seawards of the breach point either side of the new channel. This feature is known as an "ebb tide delta". This ebb tide delta is predicted to only form close to the breach and will be relatively small. Longshore drift of beach material towards Bracklesham will continue, including past the ebb tide delta.

**Will seawater entering Medmerry transport mud and silt out into the sea?**

This may happen in the short term, as a result of the breach works. However, in the longer term, more sediment is likely to be carried into Medmerry than out of it. Occasionally more sediment may be washed out in stormy weather but at such times sediment levels will be elevated in coastal waters anyway. Any occasional increases in sediment will be temporary and very local to the breach itself. Any sediment released during the breach works or in the future should not impact on sensitive marine areas.

**What will the site look like during the first few months after the breach?**

Initially the site will look very muddy, and much of the existing vegetation is expected to die off once the water in the site changes from freshwater to saline. There will be a period of transition as new habitat and vegetation types start to develop. It will be exciting to watch this transition over the coming years.

**How long will it take for the habitats to form in the new intertidal area?**

We expect some muddy habitats to form within the new tidal area very quickly, which could prove excellent for wildlife within just a couple of years. Experience from other realignment schemes suggest that it will take maybe ten years for other habitats such as saltmarsh to form and mature.

**What will happen to the animals already living at the site?**

Since early 2011 we have been creating new areas of habitat for species such as reptiles, water voles and badgers, and many animals have already been moved to these areas. We have left areas of high ground and vegetation cover within the site to act as 'corridors' to these new habitat areas for any remaining animals. The aim is to let the sea into the site on a low tide to begin with to make sure that the displacement of animals is a gentle process.

**Who will be managing Medmerry once construction is complete?**

As well as being a flood defence, the scheme will replace internationally important wildlife habitats that are being lost in the Solent. The RSPB will be leasing the site from the Environment Agency and will be responsible for the majority of habitat and access management on the site.

The Environment Agency will retain the responsibility for the larger drainage ditches and the four outfall structures through the floodbank. They will also be responsible for the maintaining the flood bank.

The RSPB have developed a management plan for the site in collaboration with the Environment Agency and local stakeholders.

**What activities will be permitted at Medmerry?**

There will be fantastic new footpaths, bridleways and viewpoints to enjoy, which will be an asset for the local community and local tourism.

- No motorised vehicles will be permitted, other than those required for management
- There will be no access from the new floodbank into the seaward side of the scheme.

**For more information please visit the project website or email us:**

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk/medmerry](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/medmerry)

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