

Press release: Project to help protect coastal defences and the environment

The partnership project between the Environment Agency and Essex Wildlife Trust has involved placing coir rolls in the Colne estuary to act as structures, which allow the sediment in the water to settle in the right place so that the saltmarsh can flourish.

The saltmarsh is gradually eroding due to climate change and the coastal squeeze, as it lies between the sea wall and the estuary channel. It currently acts as a buffer between the estuary and the sea defences so if it erodes, it means the defences are not as protected. It is also an important habitat for nesting birds and young fish.

Officers from the Environment Agency spent two days installing 21 structures, using 75 coir rolls, which have been held in place by wooden stakes and hessian rope.

This is the first time coir rolls have been used by the Environment Agency in East Anglia to restore saltmarsh and the results of this experiment will be assessed over the next year.

Becky Mason and Kirk Markham, priority catchment officers for the Colne, said:

We identified this site as the Colne estuary is ecologically significant and the eroding channel was right in front of the sea wall.

We are delighted with the progress of the installation phase of the project. In partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust, we are looking forward to monitoring the impact the structures have, and to what extent, in protecting and restoring the saltmarsh over the coming months and years.

The Colne has been chosen as one of four priority catchments in East Anglia, as part of a pilot project to focus on environmental outcomes across the area.