

**PACCo**



Promoting Adaptation  
to Changing Coasts

Promouvoir l'Adaptation  
aux Changements Côtiers

**Interreg**



France ( Channel  
Manche ) England

European Regional Development Fund



**WINTER 2021-22**

# **PACCO NEWSLETTER**



# Welcome...

## ... To the first Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts newsletter.

We hope you find it informative about both our projects – the Lower Otter Restoration Project in Devon and the Basse Saâne 2050 project in Normandy.

This edition will provide you with an overview of each of our projects, what we hope to achieve and why.

We will also introduce you to some of the project team and take a closer look at topics relevant to both sites.

The newsletter will be published every six months

during the life of the project. You can find out more about what is happening at:

[www.pacco-interreg.com](http://www.pacco-interreg.com)

[www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk](http://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk)

[www.basse-saane-2050.com](http://www.basse-saane-2050.com)

Be part of the conversation by following our social media accounts using @Pacco.Interreg

If you would like to be added to our mailing list to receive all updates, please email:

[karen.baxter@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:karen.baxter@environment-agency.gov.uk)



# The PACCo project team

*The Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts project is managed by experts from across the project partner organisations.*



**The Environment Agency,**  
Lead Partner for PACCo



**Conservatoire du Littoral**  
The French agency which protects  
the country's coasts and lakes



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## **DEFRA**

Department for the Environment,  
Farming and Rural Affairs



**PEBBLEBED HEATHS**  
CONSERVATION TRUST

## **The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust**

A charity formed by the landowners to protect the  
Pebblebed Heaths and the lower Otter valley



**Terroir de Caux**  
Local authority in the Normandy region



**Commune de Quiberville**  
Local authority in which  
the project is happening



## **CLINTON DEVON ESTATES**

**Clinton Devon Estates**  
The landowners of the Lower Otter site



# Work started on £15m Lower Otter Restoration Project

KOR Communications

Work on the pioneering Lower Otter Restoration Project, which will see the river estuary adapted and enhanced in the face of a rapidly changing climate, got underway in the summer of 2021.

The £15m project is the English arm of a €25.7m Anglo-French venture, Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo), supported by Interreg France Channel England. Work is also going ahead on a similar “sister” project in the Saône estuary, Normandy.

The PACCo project is looking at how climate change threatens coastal areas and the adaptation work that will be needed to deal with the threats. Such adaptation will bring with it the possibility of long-term social, environmental and economic benefits, such as improved infrastructure and well-being for residents and visitors, and increased biodiversity including a greater variety of wetland birds inhabiting the area.

The main site compound and offices have been set up in a field alongside the junction of Granary Lane and South Farm Road. Materials needed to build a new embankment road have been brought in, some of which has been brought in from another local development site reducing transport and carbon impacts.

During August 2021 contractors, Kier, began excavating a new system of tidal creeks between Big Bank and South Farm Road. Parking restrictions have been introduced along South Farm Road to allow for work to progress safely.

Throughout the summer Kier also continued work on Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club’s pitch at their new site just off the B3178 East Budleigh Road. Both the senior and junior pitches have been created and grass-seeded. Once the new pitches have settled they will be ready for their first season in 2023.





During the autumn after the bird breeding season vegetation and tree clearance began. This important part of the project included fingertip searches by ecologists and will allow for the existing tip site to be capped to prevent pollution leaking out.

A liaison group has been set up including district and parish councillors, organisations with an interest in the Otter valley, and local residents along with members of the project team, to help keep everyone up-to-date with what is happening.



Project manager for the Environment Agency, Dan Boswell said: "This is an important project demonstrating how countries can work together to find solutions to help tackle climate change. I'm really pleased that the work is now underway. It will have huge benefits, not only through the way we adapt to meet the challenge of climate change, but to the people and wildlife that share this area."

The Lower Otter Restoration Project is being delivered by a partnership led by the Environment Agency and which also includes landowner Clinton Devon Estates and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust.

More information is available at:  
[www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk](http://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk)



# Soléa, the first construction site of the Saône 2050 project



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Its pet name is Soléa. Rather chic for a wastewater treatment plant, isn't it? It owes this nickname to its shape, which is like a flattened fish called sole in French (seen from the air), and to its scales made of photovoltaic solar panels. 90% of the energy produced will be used by the treatment plant.

When it is commissioned in the spring of 2023, Soléa will have to treat the wastewater of 4,300 "population equivalents". But to do this, the wastewater will have to be transported from where it is created to where will be treated.

Up to now, several of the municipalities that will be connected to Soléa in the future do not have a waste water collection network. It will therefore be necessary to lay more than 28.5 kilometres of pipes with 1500 householders connected to this new sewage network.

Soléa will allow homes that are not currently connected to the collective network and that use individual sanitation systems that are not very

efficient (septic tanks) to benefit from good quality treatment of their wastewater. But it will also replace a few small existing, obsolete stations, which will be removed. In Ouville-la-Rivière, for example, the small plant with a capacity of 500 population equivalents, which dates from the 1970s, suffers from numerous malfunctions.

The new works will also address longstanding shortcomings in waste water treatment in Brachy, where existing lagoon purification does not comply with legal standards and Ambrumesnil where there are two under-performing sewage systems. In short, in the lower Saône valley, Soléa is eagerly awaited!

In planning the Solea scheme, costs were calculated over the operational life of the facility. This approach demonstrated that better value for the expenditure of public money was achieved through the use of higher quality equipment with a longer and reduced on-going maintenance costs.





Unlike the existing waste water facilities serving the area, Solea has been located outside of the floodplain in an area of low conservation value.

In addition, a hedge of native tree species will screen the site and provide valuable wildlife habitat. As for the organic waste from the site, its treatment will be the responsibility of the occupants of a specially built chicken coop.

In addition to its waste water treatment role, Soléa will also play an educational role in the valley. An observation platform will be used to support school visits to learn about the water cycle and all the wildlife that will be found on the site, which will be equipped with two connected beehives, three insect hotels, five to ten bird boxes, three hedgehog shelters, two red squirrel shelters, two bat boxes and four toad and frog shelters.

More information is available at:

[www.basse-saane-2050.com](http://www.basse-saane-2050.com)

# Changing landscape will see return of rare wading birds

With the increasing risk of serious flooding due to sea level rise and the the earth embankment, breaching catastrophically, the existing landscape of the Lower Otter valley is under threat. All of the existing habitats will die through repeated flooding by saline water.

There are only two scenarios for the future here. The first involves waiting for the sea to return in an unmanaged way or the alternative and preferred approach of the Lower Otter Restoration Project, where essential changes can be fully funded and the process planned, to achieve the best outcomes for society and nature.

Since the embankment was built, in the 1800s to increase available pasture, wildlife habitats have developed around the edges of this farmed landscape and a broad array of terrestrial plant and animal species are supported.



*Cetti's warbler, David R White*



*Blackcap, David R White*

Once the sea returns to the lower Otter valley after the embankment is breached in 2023, these habitats will be lost but as the wetland habitat develops they will be replaced by many of the original species that were once resident.

The saltmarsh and mudflats that will develop when the tide returns once again, are more natural for the



*Whitethroat, David R White*



location and amongst the nation's rarest and most threatened habitats. The existing landscape presently supports birdlife including warblers, among them the rare Cetti's warbler, whitethroat, blackcap and chiffchaff, while in winter, starlings also roost in the reedbeds in great numbers.

Before the embankment was constructed over 200 years ago, wading birds would have flocked to the estuary in very significant numbers during the winter months to feed on the rich estuarine habitats – as they still do on other local estuaries today.



*Black tailed godwit, David R White*



*Curlew, David R White*

These species would have included oystercatcher, lapwing, ringed plover, whimbrel, curlew, bar-tailed and black-tailed godwit, dunlin, common sandpiper, redshank, greenshank and Brent geese.

Although these species do visit the lower Otter valley today, they do so only in relatively few numbers, due to the limited area of mudflat and saltmarsh. Increasing the wetland habitat by 55 hectares as part of LORP will also see an increase in rarer wildlife species that favour a coastal landscape.



# Meet Mike Williams from the PACCo project team



Mike Williams is one of the driving forces behind changes currently happening on the Lower Otter. It's fair to say he saw the need to restore the estuary years ago and has worked tirelessly with other partners, including landowner Clinton Devon Estates, to see work come to fruition.

After more than 30 years working for the Environment Agency, and its predecessor the National Rivers Authority, Mike is now semi-retired, but is determined to see the Lower Otter Restoration Project through before he ends his professional involvement.

Originally leading the Conservation and Recreation team in Devon, his role began crossing over with flood risk management and he eventually moved into that team, where he also developed an interest in river restoration. Mike worked on estuary and habitat restoration programmes on the Exe and Clyst, where he worked on projects making best use of technology, such as a water level management system for the Exminster Marshes.

With the publication of a strategy for the Exe Estuary by the Environment Agency, addressing how flood risk to communities around the estuary could be managed in a co-ordinated way, taking account of its high conservation value, Mike began investigating areas which would provide compensatory habitat for that lost in the internationally designated site.

This eventually brought him to talking with Clinton Devon Estates' management team, who already had ambitious ideas for habitat restoration across their Estate.

Finding additional funding was key to successful delivery and, after an unsuccessful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Interreg's France Channel England programme looked like a good source. Working with existing contacts in France and pairing the Lower Otter project with a similar one in the Saône Valley in Normandy led to the development of the Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo) project.

Mike's role on PACCo is Senior User, which involves working across the different areas of the project to ensure that all the Environment Agency's requirements are met.

"This is an exciting and important project to work on and one that should help other coastal regions to deal with the challenges of climate change. After the project ends, I'm definitely retiring from work, but will still keep a close eye on how it develops over time!"





# Keep up to date with the Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts project

[www.pacco-interreg.com](http://www.pacco-interreg.com)

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There's more about the Lower Otter Restoration Project at:

[www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk](http://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk)

There's more about the Saône territorial project at:

[www.baase-saane-2050.com](http://www.baase-saane-2050.com)

To register for regular project updates, please email

[karen.baxter@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:karen.baxter@environment-agency.gov.uk)

