



The Lymington Society

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PRESS RELEASE

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Lymington Society Calls for Major Re-think of EA's Hurst-Lymington Coastal Strategy and Stronger Commitment to Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment (BUDS)

The Lymington Society has raised significant concerns about the Environment Agency's draft Hurst Spit to Lymington Coastal Strategy, urging a shift away from large-scale managed retreat options and towards practical, nature-based solutions such as the Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment (BUDS).

Strategy Fails to Address Key Risks

The Society believes the current proposals do not adequately address:

- The ongoing loss of large areas of existing saltmarsh which the strategy does nothing to protect.
- The increasing risk to the harbours of Lymington and Keyhaven by the loss of existing saltmarsh.
- The growing threat of easterly storms
- The vulnerability of Hurst Spit, whose failure would endanger Keyhaven, Lymington and the wider Solent
- The increasing risk of overtopping along the frontage
- The long delay before Lymington receives meaningful protection — currently proposed for 2062

Mackenzie added:

“The Strategy does not answer the fundamental problem of coastal and flood protection. The risks are increasing now, not in 40 years' time.”

Impact on Amenity, Economy and Existing Habitats

The Society warns that the EA's managed-retreat proposals would lead to:

- Loss of the existing sea wall and coastal path
- The loss of farm land and habitat from building huge new sea defences.
- Reduced amenity for residents and visitors
- Potential economic harm to Lymington's river and harbour
- Long delays caused by the need to create compensatory habitats before managed retreat can be carried out.

Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment - BUDS: A Practical, Deliverable Alternative

The Lymington Society strongly supports BUDS as a central part of the Strategy. Mackenzie argues that BUDS offers a realistic, cost-effective and environmentally positive way to:

- Repair and raise existing saltmarsh to match sea level rise
- Create new saltmarsh or shingle bunds to protect the existing sea wall from increasingly strong wave action due to climate change
- Strengthen natural coastal defences
- Reduce reliance on major engineered structures

He highlighted the proposed BUDS-based restoration scheme at Copperas Bay, Harwich, as evidence that similar approaches could be deployed successfully in the Solent.

“BUDS is vital. It should be used both to augment existing saltmarsh and to create new saltmarsh where needed. It is far more realistic than managed retreat and should be at the heart of the Strategy.”

A Call for a Strategy That Protects What We Already Have

Speaking about the Society’s response to the EA Strategy Chair Don Mackenzie said.

“Speaking as Chair of the Society, Don Mackenzie welcomed the EA’s recognition of the serious risks facing the coastline but warned that several elements of the Strategy are unrealistic, environmentally damaging, and too slow to protect local communities.

“We are grateful that the EA is taking the risks to the Hurst–Lymington coast seriously. But huge, expensive new managed-retreat sea defences are simply not practical. They are unlikely ever to secure planning or environmental approval, and they do not offer timely protection for Lymington. They are unlikely to even create anything like the area of saltmarshes currently being lost.

The unwillingness of the EA to consider measures to help retain the existing areas of saltmarsh which do so much to protect Lymington and Keyhaven, in favour of creating much smaller areas of saltmarsh by managed retreat and at great expense makes no sense at all.

The current work by the Lymington Harbour Commissioners to help stabilise the saltmarsh at Boiler Marsh to the east of the town has been a sensational success and shows what can be done if the EA can change their current playbook of always considering managed retreat as the first option for saltmarsh creation.

BUDS is vital. It should be used both to augment existing saltmarsh and to create new saltmarsh where needed. It is far more realistic than managed retreat and should be at the heart of the Strategy.

The Strategy must focus on preserving existing saltmarsh and creating new shingle and bunds to defend the sea defences we already have. BUDS offers a practical, deliverable, and environmentally beneficial way forward. It deserves far greater emphasis.

We hope that in the final draft the EA will turn away from their expensive and damaging managed retreat proposals and come up with a completely new strategy based on preserving and enhancing the saltmarsh we have rather than hoping that they can create a much smaller amount in many years' time by using managed retreat and new sea defences.

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