

Statement on behalf of ASEA project (SGC, EA & BCC)

South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the Environment Agency are working together to improve flood defences and create new habitats for important wildlife species.

The Avonmouth Severnside Ecological Mitigation & Flood Defence Project will reduce the risk of flooding whilst also improving the ecological value of the area.

We are working alongside ecological experts to ensure that a thriving environment will be established in the area for people and wildlife to last the rest of this century and beyond.

From an ecological perspective, we are creating at least 80 hectares of new wetland habitat to help protect the internationally important bird species that live on the Severn Estuary.

In some places, because it is not possible to locate the flood defence works within the internationally protected salt marsh estuary habitat, the raising and widening of the existing flood banks needs to take place further inland. A seaward alignment would mean a loss of saltmarsh forming part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest both of which are protected in law. An in-land alignment to avoid the trees would run through a landfill site as well as expose the trees to saltwater at high tides. As a consequence, regrettably, a number of poplars (with short remaining lifespans) and some hedgerows will need to be removed to facilitate the new defence. However we are proposing to compensate the loss of these trees with an equivalent area of native mixed broadleaf woodland and hedgerows.

In summary, the project will:

- * Deliver flood defences that will protect communities and help to encourage businesses to invest in the Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area, helping to support the creation of 12,000 new jobs by 2026.
- * Reduce flood risk to 2,500 homes and businesses, now and into the future by taking into account climate change.

We will use the economic benefits resulting from this project to continue to provide the best ecological future for the estuary.

For further information visit www.insouthglos.co.uk/enterprise/avonmouth/flood-ecology

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Notes to Editor

The creation of this important habitat is being funded by the West of England Combined Authority.

Coastal wetland habitat is one of the most valuable natural habitats for the UK as it is under threat from rising sea levels due to climate change. The creation of these habitats was promoted by local ecologists and Natural England.