

What are we telling you about?

Our routine programme of cutting grass and scrub on Essex seawalls.

When does this work happen?

Each year we cut the vegetation on 391 km of seawall in Essex, out of a total seawall length of 450 km. This is done from the third week of July onwards to avoid the “peak” bird nesting period. However, there is an 11 km length of seawall in Canvey Island where we cut between 4 and 6 times throughout the year. This “amenity” cutting is undertaken to maintain a suitable surface where there is a very high amount of foot traffic.

How do we do this work?

Our seawall mowing regime has to balance the needs of wildlife whilst maintaining the seawalls as flood defences.

We use a variety of methods to cut the grass and scrub that is present. The equipment used varies from hand-operated mowers and brush cutters, through to tractors with flails and specialised all-terrain mowers designed to operate on steep slopes.

The majority of seawalls receive an annual summer/autumn cut of only the crest, landward slope, and typically a 4m wide track on the folding (flat area between the landward toe of the bank and borrowdyke).

Once every 4 years the seaward slope and a wider strip of the folding are cut (where the folding width is greater than 7m then a 6m, rather than 4m, strip of grass is cut). This should leave adequate habitat un-mown every year for flowering plants, invertebrates, nesting birds and reptiles to use as a refuge. Flowering clovers and trefoils can still provide forage after a summer cut.

An area of over 50km of seawall is cut differently to the normal annual cutting regime. This is to prevent interference with protected or rare species such as the Fisher’s Estuarine Moth in Hamford Water or Shril Carder Bee on Canvey Island.

Why are we doing the work?

Grass coverage, height and thickness plays an important role in the integrity of tidal defences during a flood. Seawalls also form an important habitat for many plants and animals.

Our grass cutting programme helps to prevent scrub growth on seawalls. This will ensure a balance between providing the best level of maintenance whilst being considerate to the unique grassland habitat the embankment provides for wildlife, and allowing us to maintain the walls at the optimum condition to protect people and property against flooding.

Contact

Please contact us if you would like to discuss this in more detail.

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