



Project

Avonmouth Foreshore
(Habitat Compensation Area)

Client

The Bristol Port Company

Background

To compensate for the impending loss to land reclamation of a small area of cord-grass dominated saltmarsh and associated mudflats lying adjacent to the Severn Estuary SSSI, Landmark was commissioned to examine the feasibility of creating a habitat compensation area nearby. Prior to reclamation works

commencing, Landmark had to evaluate the existing wildlife interest of the locality before identifying a suitable area on which new wetlands and bird- loafing banks could be created. Following English Nature approval Landmark was contracted to design and supervise the construction of the new habitats.

Description

The design for the compensation area included a series of linear hollows, wetlands and 'shingle' banks created on a site in a former tipped foreshore area of low wildlife interest. The 'shingle' banks were to be constructed of clean, graded demolition rubble with the aim of attracting roosting waders, and the hollows were to be sufficiently deep to hold saline water for at least eight months of the year. A series of pipes laid through the seaward 'shingle' banks fitted with tidal flaps would facilitate inundation of the excavated wetland and would provide suitable conditions for saltmarsh plants. Once engineering works were completed the compensation area, although monitored, was left to vegetate naturally.

Within two years aquatic species colonised the pools and small areas of saltmarsh began to develop around the margins. The banks of the hollows have since become vegetated with grassland and ruderal vegetation similar to that of the saltmarsh lost to reclamation. Initial monitoring shows that waders have not yet been attracted in significant numbers to the high tide roost 'shingle' banks, but ducks and gulls are regular visitors. Swallows feed over the pools, areas of scrub support whitethroat, and skylark now breed on the site. Within one year the tall ruderal vegetation provided cover for a pheasant to rear chicks.

Client benefits

Flexibility for development achieved by imaginative and cost-effective mitigation measures.