

Dee Coastliners Project Summary



The Dee Coastliners Project is a sense of place initiative designed to inspire coastal communities on the Wirral and in Flintshire and Denbighshire about the natural heritage of the Dee Estuary. In doing so we want to create a new community of stewardship on the estuary which will take action to address the needs of that heritage.

It is a cross-border project working on both the English and Welsh sides of the estuary. Although sharing a common nature, the area is politically and socially divided. We hope to unite the communities across the estuary by reconnecting them to a common estuarine heritage. Our legacy will be a community attachment to place that will create a more resilience landscape and protect the livelihoods of those who depend upon it.

This is a partnership project being led by Cheshire Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Tidal Dee Catchment Partnership. It is a 5-year £900,000 project. We have been successful in receiving first round project development funding from the Heritage Lottery in December 2018. We are now developing the second round application which we hope to submit in summer 2020. The delivery stage will run from spring 2021 to summer 2024.

The Dee Coastliners project aims to:

- a) Create a nature-based sense of place around the Dee Estuary making it a greater part of more people's lives and a better place to live, work and play.
- b) Work with local communities, estuary users, visitors and other partners to ensure our natural heritage is better managed, better recorded, better interpreted and in better condition.
- c) Improve access gateways and opportunities, breaking down barriers and making it easier for local communities and visitors to spend time enjoying the Dee Estuary without putting the heritage at risk.
- d) Provide opportunities for lifelong learning and training, enabling more and a wider range of people to develop new skills and ensuring that the rich heritage of the area is better understood by all.
- e) Empower a diverse range of people from across the target audience area to become Dee Champions, reducing negative environmental impacts and engendering a culture of stewardship and a lasting legacy.

We will deliver this through four workstreams:

1. COASTLIVES

Bringing the Dee Estuary into people's lives through a programme of regular volunteering, citizen science and learning opportunities. This programme will be overseen by the Coastlives Officer who will coordinate opportunities available through the wider partnership and create new activities responding to heritage and community need identified during the development phase. Such opportunities might include:

- i) Practical volunteering and citizen science

Community-led reintroduction, restoration and recovery of natural heritage at the focus sites, including habitat management, wardening, monitoring and survey work. This will focus on sand dune, salt marsh and reedbed habitats as well as work at the Tern colonies and with Natterjack Toads.

ii) Skills and learning

We want to get people of all ages excited about the wildlife on their doorstep, from pre-schoolers to adults, with a particular focus on under-25s. Sub-projects could include:

- Beach Tots. An adaptation of the Beach Schools programme developed to encourage accompanied pre-school aged children to be safe and confident in a coastal environment.
- School Twinning. We will twin schools from England and Wales to discover, explore, conserve and share their common natural heritage. This will be done through fun outdoor activities including shoreline safaris, beach schools, litter picks, habitat management and guided wildlife watches.
- Birds without Borders. We will twin local schools with schools in the countries of origin/destination of the birds that visit the Dee Estuary on their long-distance migration. This will help pupils understand the international significance of the Dee Estuary and encourage them to become ambassadors for it.
- Dee Young Rangers. Young people (13-19 years) will learn new skills in practical conservation work, surveying, photography, filmmaking and communication, e.g. the use of social media to promote conservation. This can be used towards the John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or National Citizenship Programme.
- Acoustics Project. Young adults will record the sounds of the Dee Estuary – both above and below water - using microphones and hydrophones and work with a sound engineer to create the final edits of the soundscapes, learning new skills in the process. The final products will be hosted on the project website and played in gateways around the estuary.
- Dee Apprentices. Three apprentices (12-month placement) will be hosted in partnership with Coleg Cambria. Aimed at young adults or career changers, we will prioritise those living within the project area. Employed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust, the apprentices will work with experienced professionals from across the partnership, learning by doing with the aim of increasing their employability in the natural heritage sector at the end of their traineeship.
- Site Twinning. Mirroring the town twinning concept, this community-led sub-project adopts the Eurosite twinning concept (<https://www.eurosite.org/site-management/twinning/>) to seek out other similar Natura 2000 sites (SACs or SPAs) to share stories, photos and ideas on how to best celebrate the natural heritage.
- Training and learning programme. We will run a programme of training events to support volunteering and citizen science and to promote understanding of the natural heritage of the estuary. These will open the door to new people and build the skills of existing enthusiasts and practitioners.
- Dee Stories. This subproject will see older people work together with children and young adults on a creative filmmaking project around the past, present and future of the Dee Estuary. It will focus around people and place and include stories from people from both sides of the estuary in English and Welsh.

2. LOVE MY ESTUARY

This programme will tackle the issue of pollution on the Dee Estuary by engaging communities and businesses. Led by a dedicated Love My Estuary Officer it will have two focuses:

i) Water quality and pollution

The Love my Estuary Officer will engage businesses, farms and domestic properties to address pollution issues. The Officer will also work with Dee Champions to check their own homes for

misconnections and septic tank pollution and to encourage change within their local community. Dee Champions will be trained to engage with coastal cafés and shops to reduce single use plastics and polystyrene. Dee Champions will be trained to carry out beach litter surveys to investigate sources of litter and work to reduce inputs. The Officer will develop a Dee Business Champion accreditation for all businesses that make active changes to reduce or prevent pollution. This could include a sticker for their shop window or a logo for their website.

ii) Access to and enjoyment of the estuary

We want more and a wider range of people to enjoy the Dee Estuary without causing damage to the natural heritage. Types of activities could include:

- Access for all - Capital works to improve access for users of all abilities onto the England and Wales Coast Paths.
- Dee 2020 – We will celebrate the opening of the England Coast Path and the newly unlocked opportunity to walk the entire coast of the Dee Estuary by working with existing branding to build identity through interpretation, events and digital materials.
- Down to the sea – We will offer events and activities celebrating the coast and work with partners and other groups to get new audiences active on the coast.
- Responsible access – We will develop a Dee Estuary Recreational and Commercial Users Code of Conduct alongside awareness events and communications.

3. DEE CHAMPIONS

This is a cross-cutting workstream that seeks to create a community of leaders who live, work or play on the Dee Estuary to champion the project in their communities of place, interest or work. These volunteers will be trained and equipped with a relevant toolkit to create positive change within their respective communities and to inspire and empower others to become Dee Champions, creating a ripple effect. Dee Champions will also become our eyes and ears on the ground, reporting sightings or issues, e.g. flytipping, disturbance, etc. This work strand would be overseen by the Project Coordinator, working closely with the Coastlives Officer and Love my Estuary Officer to recruit the champions.

The overarching Dee Champions initiative would be supported by an annual celebration event, giving awards for Dee Champion of the Year and Dee Young Champion (under 19) of the Year. This would unite Dee Champions and their associated communities of place, interest and work, encouraging idea sharing and bringing people from across the estuary together to celebrate their shared heritage

4. DEE LEGACY

The Dee Legacy workstream will explore opportunities to increase the resilience of the natural heritage and the Partnership through improved governance and the involvement of local communities. There are many good examples of transborder estuary governance in the UK (e.g. the Severn Estuary Partnership, Solway Firth Partnership) and this project will review existing examples and work in consultation with local communities and statutory agencies to investigate a long-term governance structure for the natural heritage of the estuary once the project is complete.

If you would like to find out more about this project please contact Sarah Bennett, Dee Coastliners Development Manager, Email: sbennett@cheshirewt.org.uk Tel: 01948 820 728.