



## A3.8 Skinflats Managed Realignment

### Project Overview:

The inter-tidal habitats of the Inner Forth are spectacular places for nature, recognised by designations both at a national (SSSI) and international (SPA) level. These habitats are, however, under pressure. Historic land claim for agriculture and industry has led to the loss of roughly half of the inter-tidal habitats over the past 300 years. These pressures are only set to increase as climate change induced sea level rise and further development continues to erode these habitats, meaning there will be less space for nature in this human landscape. In response to these pressures, RSPB Skinflats was identified as a key site where new inter-tidal habitat could be created and where other land managers could see the resultant managed realignment being demonstrated.

In 2009, RSPB Scotland installed a regulated tidal exchange scheme at the reserve that allowed for inundation of part of the reserve at high tide, enabling the establishment of some inter-tidal habitat and colonisation of saltmarsh plants. However, infrastructure used to bring water onto the site did not function as planned and this has resulted in the sluice being kept largely closed meaning that the site does not have the regular inundation required to allow the continued establishment of saltmarsh vegetation.

With options for the site re-visited, a managed realignment was identified as the best option for delivering high quality and sustainable inter-tidal habitat. The project involved creating a 25m breach in the old sea wall to allow water to flow into the site at most high tides, acting as a replacement for the existing regulated tidal exchange system and resulting in the creation of 10 ha of new inter-tidal habitat. A new island will be enhanced by adding shingle on the top, with the aim of attracting breeding terns and ringed plover and feeding and roosting bird species associated with the Firth of Forth SPA and SSSI.

During the delivery of this project, a number of key activities took place:

- Consultants were commissioned to produce technical drawings for the managed realignment design. This included computer modelling for a 1 in 200 year flood event; to undertake an Environmental Appraisal Report, condition assessment of the embankments and associated studies and reports.
- Engagement with stakeholders, including local residents and communities about the project, through community drop-in sessions, letters and a briefing note.
- A planning application was submitted including supporting documents to Falkirk Council for consideration as a major development. The project did receive planning permission.
- Other necessary licenses and consents were applied for and secured from other agencies.
- Appointed an external contract project manager, who then secured a suitable contractor to undertake the groundworks and produced final designs for the work.

- To build up sections of embankment and breach the sea wall at RSPB Skinflats reserve to create a managed realigned area.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:	RSPB Scotland ABPmer, ARUP, Fairhurst, AMD Contracting Ltd, Aird Geomatics, RPS, Echoes Ecology, SKF Ltd, Wessex Archaeology, Crown Estate, Falkirk Council
Project Location:	RSPB Skinflats Reserve, Falkirk NS921861
Project dates	April 2017 to September 2018. Year 4 quarter 1 to Year 5 quarter 2.

### ***Project Outputs***

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Delivered</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Creation of new inter-tidal habitat</i>	10 ha	10 ha	

### ***What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of the Inner Forth?***

New inter-tidal habitat has been created as a result of this project, thereby enhancing the Firth of Forth SPA and SSSI inter-tidal area. We have added shingle to the top of a new island, which is rare within the Forth Estuary, with the aim of attracting breeding terns and waders. By continuing to sensitively manage access, the site has potential to become an important relatively undisturbed high tide roosting area. This project forms part of a network of wetland habitats throughout the Inner Forth area, that have been managed and enhanced for birds associated with the SPA and other wetland wildlife.

It is hoped that once the work has bedded in, the site can be used to demonstrate wetland habitat management techniques and that volunteers will assist RSPB staff in management and monitoring.

### ***What difference has this project made to people?***

RSPB Skinflats Reserve is not currently promoted to visitors but those responsible for the Reserve aim to improve the wildlife spectacle through ongoing management works, and improve visitor facilities (through the C4.5 Skinflats Classroom project) in a sustainable way and gradually increase the numbers of invited visitors and visits from the local community. Managing the suite of habitats on the site to improve them for birds and introducing sensitive access improvements will create a bird spectacle that can be enjoyed by visitors without disturbing the birds.

### ***Useful Links***

There is a page for this project on the IFLI website:

<http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/conserving-restoring/skinflats-managed-realignment>

## ***Future Plans***

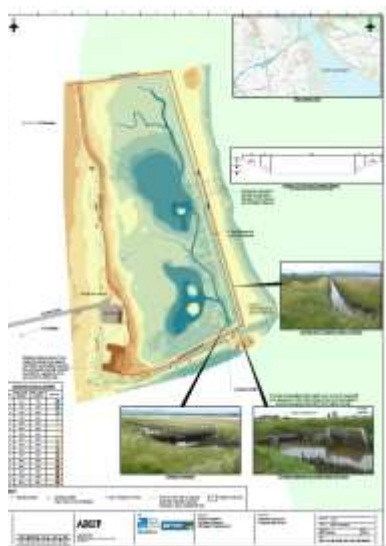
RSPB will take responsibility of any maintenance associated with this project but this will be minimal because the design of the managed realignment requires little intervention. There will be ongoing condition assessments and settlement monitoring of the of the embankments.

## ***Lessons Learned***

This project was a relatively last-minute addition to the IFLI suite of projects and was going to be demanding within the remaining timescale, but we completed it on the 3 October. This wouldn't have been possible without the consultants, engineers and the contractors buying into the project and committing to getting it delivered. Falkirk Council understood the timeframe and the implications of losing the funding but it was a struggle at times to get timely responses, but pulled out all the stops when required. The public consultation events were a good opportunity to tell people about what we are doing and for them to ask questions. These were also some of the most difficult things we had to do. Allow more time to do something similar again, being very aware of critical dates for internal and external deadlines, and minimise the amount time creep at every stage, but things always take longer than you think, so be realistic.

## ***Photographic Evidence***

*Example of mapping undertaken to inform project.*



*View of Reserve from south east corner of sea wall, 2016.*



## Inner Forth Landscape Initiative End of Project Report

*Managed Realignment works in progress*



*After*



*Photos courtesy of RSPB.*

### ***Funding Partners***

**Funding raised by  
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