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HABITAT COMPENSATION AND RESTORATION PROGRAMME (HCRP): 20+ YEARS OF MANAGED REALIGNMENT IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

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Intertidal and coastal habitat creation has been happening in the UK for decades! In England, the first managed realignments were created in the 1990's to create intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh habitat. Building on the early lessons learned, the Environment Agency's (EA) Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme (HCRP) (and its predecessor) has since worked with partners to deliver many of the large scale and high profile managed realignments across the country, since its establishment in the early 2000s (e.g., Medmerry, Steart Marshes, Jubilee Marsh (Wallasea Island), etc.). The legal driver for these schemes has been "compensation", for the predicted losses of designated sites due to the combination of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) activities, sea level rise (SLR) and resultant coastal squeeze. The HCRP has been a successful, strategic and cost effective delivery vehicle in ensuring legal compliance and delivering widely acclaimed habitat creation sites. However, the wider "land and sea scape" of legislation, policy and the environment itself, has changed dramatically. To address the associated challenges and opportunities, the HCRP has started the 2 year "Improving HCRP Delivery" project, which aims to cocreate the tools, guidance, data and governance needed to support and improve development, delivery and strategic oversight of the HCRP, to fulfil FCERM legal obligations for compensation and where possible, support wider estuarine and coastal ambitions for the EA and UK Government. This talk provides a past reflection and a forward look of the HCRP and its ongoing support of coastal adaptation for people and nature.