

Be inspired: resilience in the face of climate change

East Haven Together protect their natural heritage by creating climate resilience

“Coastal adaptation remains a key focus for East Haven Together. All communities, be they inland or coastal, have a need to manage negative impacts from a changing climate.”
Wendy Murray, East Haven Together

This case study was created as part of the work of Our Heritage, Our Future which looks at the impacts that climate change is having on our natural, built and cultural heritage; showcasing the fantastic work our Climate and Nature Friendly Communities Network groups are doing to protect heritage and mitigate climatic impacts.

East Haven, a small coastal village in Angus, has been taking part in Beautiful Scotland since 2014, led by the East Haven Together group. In 2022, they were joint winners of our top Beautiful Scotland Award, the Rosebowl, and represented Scotland in the 2023 UK RHS Britain in Bloom Final where they were recognised with a Gold medal certificate and were joint winners of the UK Best Coastal Award. Additionally, the community in East Haven has been recognised through the Scottish Beach Awards, an award that celebrates clean, well-managed and sustainable beaches.

East Haven’s natural heritage assets and rich traditions play a key part in its identity. It is the earliest recorded fishing community in Scotland, and the group have embraced their fishing heritage by creating a community garden featuring a rescued fishing boat, wave beds with native coastal plants, and curved dry-stone walls. They also celebrate their fishing heritage through various artwork and sculptures around the village.



What are the issues experienced because of climate change?

The group have noticed a loss of up to 10 metres of sand dunes in areas along East Haven's coastline since October 2023, due to a succession of strong storms and rising sea levels because of climate change.

Erosion is a widespread issue which constantly creates new challenges and risks for the group; impacting habitats, risk to critical infrastructure, flooding risks to domestic properties, erosion of landfill sites causing items to be released into the sea, and the potential risk to East Haven's coastal path and railway line.



How have East Haven Together managed these issues?

East Haven Together created a coastal adaptation project in 2019, when the community noticed higher visitor traffic to East Haven's beach. The project involved restoring areas of eroded dunes using machinery.



Before (January 2023) and After (June 2023) - planting Lyme and Marram grass and creating a footpath corridor through the sand dunes to protect them from footfall.

East Haven Together involved schools with growing Lyme and Marram grass from seed and transplanting them to East Haven's dunes. The group also translocated these species from local sources to ensure a greater chance of grass survival. They removed non-native species and garden escapees from vulnerable sand dune areas, to make way for native species growth. Since 1993 the group has measured the dunes on their coast annually, to monitor dune erosion.

Two native grasses: Marram and Lyme grasses were planted along East Haven's coastline as natural coastal protection because their long root systems stabilise sand dunes. Sand dunes play an important role in reducing and absorbing wave energy, so ensuring they are strong enough to withstand erosion is critical for creating climate resilience.



Have there been any setbacks?



Wendy from East Haven Together standing where kidney vetch enriched sand dunes once stood.

The community had attracted and sustained the Small Blue butterfly by planting its only food source: kidney vetch, from the Barry Buddon coastline to Elliot. The 2023 October storm-related dune erosion caused the loss of this important food corridor.

The group discussed the issue with Butterfly Conservation Scotland, with everybody in agreement that more kidney vetch should be planted, but in areas further inland. Kidney vetch is best suited in areas with sand and gravel substrates, so finding suitable and sustainable habitats are East Haven Together's next steps.

What resources have East Haven Together found helpful in their climate adaptation work?

The group have used information on the removal of non-natives from NatureScot's dune management report in 2000 and learned to measure dunes at fixed points from the consultant HR Wallingford in 1993. Recently, the group have asked NatureScot for more up-to-date guidance on mitigating coastal erosion.

Using their own initiative, with little information available on climate adaptation and mitigation, the group have paved their own way in striving for climate resilience through their Sustainability Strategy. In this plan, the group set their actions towards working with other organisations and individuals to improve and sustain life on earth.

*"Acting locally and thinking globally" - East Haven Together:
Sustainability Strategy Action
Plan 2024-2026*

If you would like to learn more about East Haven Together, please click [here](#).

If you would like to learn more about Beautiful Scotland and how to take part, please visit: www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/beautifulscotland.

If you would like to learn more about Our Heritage, Our Future, please visit: www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/community-and-place/our-heritage-our-future/.