



## Paths for Communities - Project summary sheet:

# Discover Mersea

Location:	Essex
Right of Way Created:	Bridleway
	Footpath 349 m
Improved existing rights:	143 m

Supporting local businesses:	3
Volunteer hours contributed:	193
Cost of project:	£22,230
Grant rate:	78%

West Mersea Town Council has an environment committee that works with the community, local environmental groups and volunteers to address issues concerning open spaces across West Mersea. Part of a wider project to direct visitors and residents to other walks, heritage and nature sites across Mersea Island, the committee developed a proposal aimed at improving access to a site where the heritage and environmental significance was not widely known.

The project lies within the internationally important Blackwater Estuary SSSI, Ramsar, SPA, and SAC so Natural England officers responsible for the favourable condition of the site were consulted to agree potential impacts, methodology and timing of works, as well as on materials to be used. The plan was to link two existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) with 332 metres of new footpath (made up of recycled plastic boardwalk where needed), plus an added 17 metres



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



The European Agricultural  
Fund for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas





of steps forming a link path from the Coast Road down a well-used but steep and muddy slope onto the new path. Access points were improved with handrails, passing points built

“The drawings on the information boards are really beautiful”

“I can sit and enjoy the view without worrying about blocking people’s way!” – local resident who uses a wheelchair

on an existing PROW as well as improvements to the heritage site of St Peter’s Well which supported the local fishing community for over a thousand years with a source of fresh water “never known to run dry”.

A key aim of the project was to provide access suitable for wheelchair users. The local Disability Access Adviser working for Colchester Borough Council, herself a wheelchair user, helped to explore opportunities to improve access at various locations within the site.

The scientific and historical interest features of the site were beautifully interpreted using information from Essex Wildlife Trust by local artist, Leafy Dumas at three locations along the new path. Leafy has also illustrated other

**Links**  
[West Mersea Town Council](#)  
[Essex County Council Rights of Way](#)  
[Essex Wildlife Trust](#)  
[Colchester Access For Everyone](#)



publications promoting West Mersea. The project had strong community support including: local schoolchildren, who drew pictures of their vision for the area and created leaflets to encourage visitors; user groups; Essex Local Access Forum (the secretary was also on hand to give advice on how to promote the area); local Police Community support officers and Zone Wardens, and a local Health Walks Leader. A strong volunteer group is keen to continue their work on the site, including reed bed management.

The new footpath was created by the landowner, West Mersea Town Council, using section 30 of the Highways Act 1980 and will be recorded on the Essex County Council Definitive Map and Statement.

