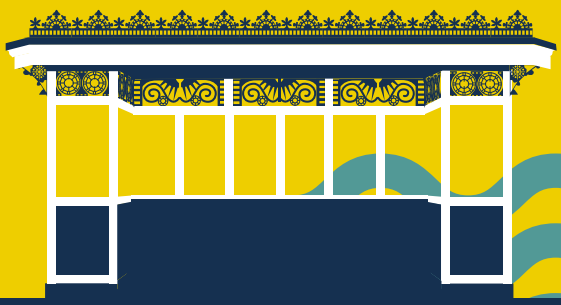
Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

southsea
COASTAL SCHEME



www.southseacoastalscheme.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

The multi-award-winning Southsea Coastal Scheme is the UK's largest local authority-led coastal defences project, worth more than £180M. This Portsmouth City Council-led project stretches for 4.5km along Southsea seafront, and will reduce the risk of coastal flooding to more than 10,000 homes and 700 businesses.

This scheme is a vital infrastructure project that looks to improve failing sea defence structures and protect the communities of Portsmouth for the next 100 years.

This project looks to regenerate this coastline and provide a world class seafront, safer from coastal flooding for future generations.

Long Curtain Moat (Frontage 1)
2020–2023

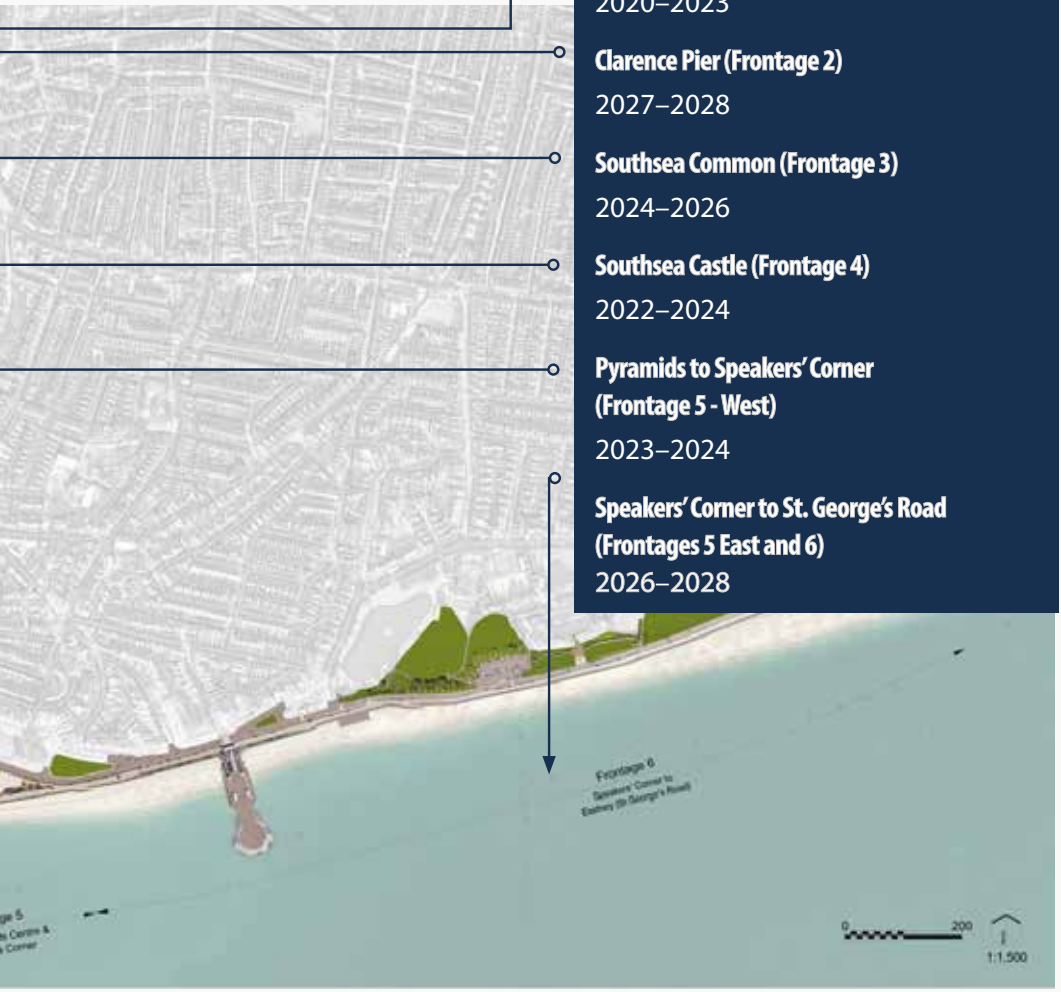
Clarence Pier (Frontage 2)
2027–2028

Southsea Common (Frontage 3)
2024–2026

Southsea Castle (Frontage 4)
2022–2024

Pyramids to Speakers' Corner (Frontage 5 - West)
2023–2024

Speakers' Corner to St. George's Road (Frontages 5 East and 6)
2026–2028



The scheme is broken down into separate frontages. This reflects the changing nature of the seafront and packages construction delivery into manageable sections.

The first frontage of the scheme at Long Curtain Moat (Frontage 1) opened in February 2023 and is very popular with the public, who are enjoying the way historic finds and original-look materials have been seamlessly integrated with the sea defences.

In May 2024, Southsea Castle (Frontage 4) opened. This popular area features a greatly enhanced promenade that has been dubbed the 'Theatre of the Sea' due to its split-level terraced seating and outstanding views across the Solent.

Pyramids to Speakers' Corner (Frontage 5 West) opened in December 2024.

In April 2026, Southsea Common (Frontage 3) opened, providing improved flood protection alongside enhanced public spaces and access to the seafront.

Construction is currently underway at Speakers' Corner to South Parade Pier (Frontage 5 East), with work expected to be completed in spring 2027.

Construction of South Parade Pier to St George's Road (Frontage 6) is expected to begin in spring 2027 and be completed in late summer 2028.

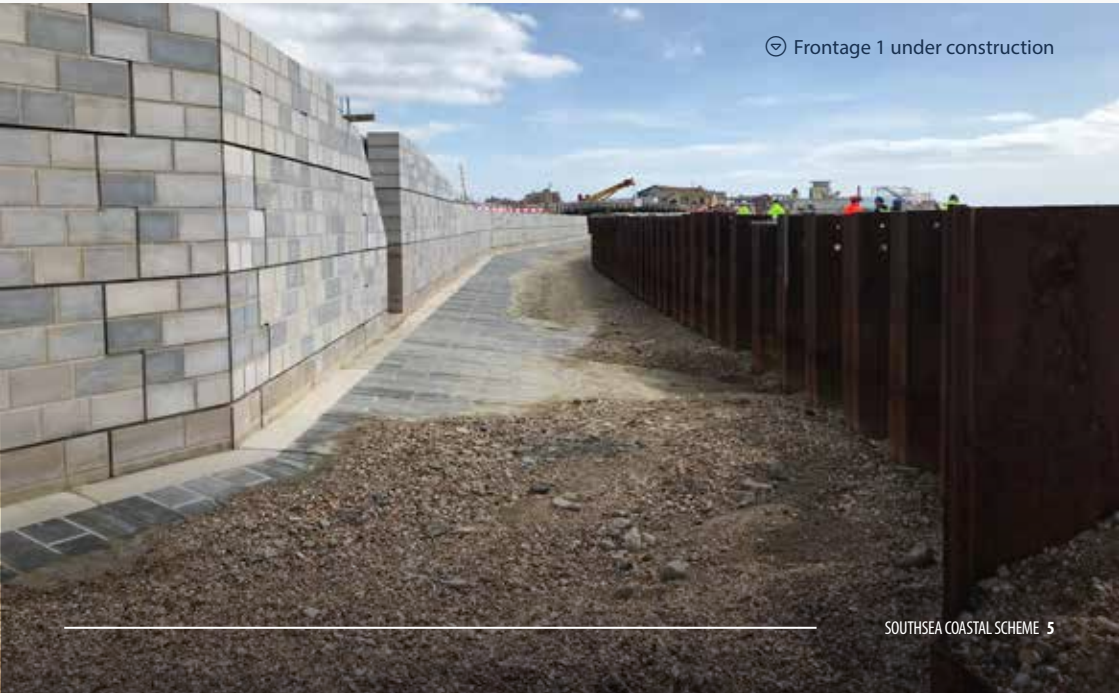
The final phase of the scheme, Clarence Pier (Frontage 2), is currently expected to begin in autumn 2027 and be completed in spring 2028.

The map below shows the area of Southsea that is at risk from a major flood event. Before work began, much of the city's sea defences had reached the end of their operational life and no longer provided adequate protection, with several sections experiencing structural failures. Once complete, a continuous line of modern flood defences will help safeguard Southsea for future generations in the face of climate change and rising sea levels.

Frontage 1 under construction

"The Southsea Coastal Scheme is crucial because, without raising and strengthening the existing defences, we could well see a future Portsmouth reverting to being a morass in the wake of climate change and other factors."

Former Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, **Cllr Hugh Mason**


Frontage 1 under construction

A bird's eye view of Frontage 1. *Credit Robert Mills Photography*

FRONTAGE 1

LONG CURTAIN MOAT

Frontage 1 was officially opened on 17 March 2023 by the (then) Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Cllr Hugh Mason. The area had a 'soft opening' in February, in time for the school holidays.

This complex frontage includes the historic Spur Redoubt and Kings Bastion.

Construction of the 345m long frontage began in September 2020. The frontage runs from the caponier at Saluting Platform to Clarence Pier and is the westernmost frontage of the scheme.

The unique frontage includes Long Curtain Moat, a historic castle battlement that protected Old Portsmouth. It is of both local and national importance. The engineering solution included a unique twin-wall system designed to protect the historic structures and recreate the previous character of the area.

Careful consideration was given to the design which simplified the promenade, making it wider, increasing routes and providing space to reflect on the historic elements on display.

The coastal defence is provided by steel sheet piles, rock revetment and concrete walls. The frontage includes 18 specially designed concrete tide pools to create habitats for marine life.

"During my time as Lord Mayor, this is truly the most visionary and important opening I have conducted due to the difference these defences will make to our city's future." Former Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, **Cllr Hugh Mason**

"The development provides great opportunities for future investment, keeping the seafront alive and active in a recreational but also a commercial sense." Portsmouth City Council Leader, **Cllr Steve Pitt**

BEFORE

AFTER

FRONTAGE 4

SOUTHSEA CASTLE

Frontage 4 of the Southsea Coastal Scheme is a spectacular section of seafront promenade in the area around Southsea Castle featuring new sea defences and vastly improved recreational spaces.

This 770m long section started construction in January 2022. As this coastline is more exposed than Frontage 1, a large-scale rock revetment provides the protection. These heavy-duty rocks weigh around 4 tonnes each and absorb the wave energy and dissipate waves.

The new defences here not only replaced the aging blockwork revetment but improved public realm. The new raised promenade features lighting, play areas and two unique swing benches. Special lighting enhances the castle area.

The jewel in the crown of this frontage is the new curved seating around the castle. The split-level promenade includes tiered wooden seating with stunning views of the Solent. It truly is a 'Theatre of the Sea.'

"The design of the area known as the 'Theatre of the Sea' is a tremendous improvement to the old pinch-point promenade around Southsea Castle and offers far greater accessibility to the area." Local Cabinet Member, **Councillor Hugh Mason**

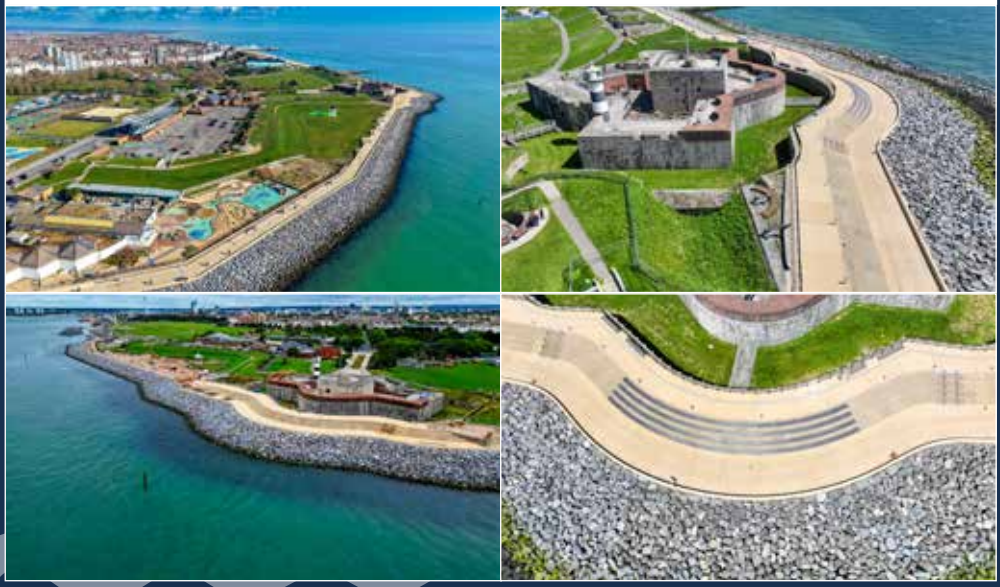
"The terraced design is ideal for showcasing the castle in its historic setting and is sure to become a real social hub for residents and visitors to sit and enjoy stunning views across the Solent." Project Director, **Guy Mason**.

Highlights include:

- 145 000 tonnes of rock imported and placed to make up the new sea defences.
- A 96m rock groyne constructed to reduce beach erosion.
- Split-level promenade known as the 'Theatre of the Sea.'
- 45 ECOncrete pools and 55 rock munched pools.
- Historic elements incorporated into the design with interpretation signage.
- Enhanced lighting and seating, including fully accessible seating.
- Refurbishment of the bandstand in Bandstand Field.
- A boulder garden for children to enjoy.
- Wildflower gardens and bee posts.

BEFORE

AFTER



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FRONTAGE 5 WEST

PYRAMIDS TO SPEAKERS' CORNER

Frontage 5 West of the Southsea Coastal Scheme between the Pyramids and Speakers' Corner opened on 19 December 2024.

Frontage 5 West marks the move from hard defences to more natural structures, as the coast is more protected from wave attack. The frontage has a new beach held in place by a large rock groyne. The new level promenade is over half a metre higher and has steps and ramps along its length to improve beach access. The scheme has refurbished three historic shelters, making them more prevalent and accessible. The Grade II listed light columns have been delicately refurbished, and new feature lighting and seating complete the promenade.

Highlights include:

- 24,000m^3 of shingle was initially added to recharge the beach, ahead of the larger beach-recharge operation between the Pyramids and Eastney.
- Construction of a new shelter and outdoor public art area called The Windbreaks.
- Refurbished Grade II listed lamp columns, complemented by new feature lighting to make the promenade safer and more welcoming.
- A new play area at Speakers' Corner featuring climbing frames to inspire adventure and rubber flooring for safer play.
- New trees, planting terraces and wildflower planting at Speakers' Corner and along the frontage.
- Enhanced seating, including fully accessible seating.
- A renewed skate-friendly area at Speakers' Corner.

Enhancements along the promenade at Frontage 5

FRONTAGE 3

SOUTHSEA COMMON

Southsea Common (Frontage 3) is more than 800 metres long and sits between Clarence Pier and Blue Reef Aquarium.

The frontage opened on 2 April 2026, providing improved flood protection alongside enhanced public spaces and access to the seafront.

The new defences combine rock armour with a wider beach, including 61,000m^3 of dredged shingle to help reduce wave impact. The promenade and road have been raised, with a landscaped earth embankment providing a secondary flood defence.

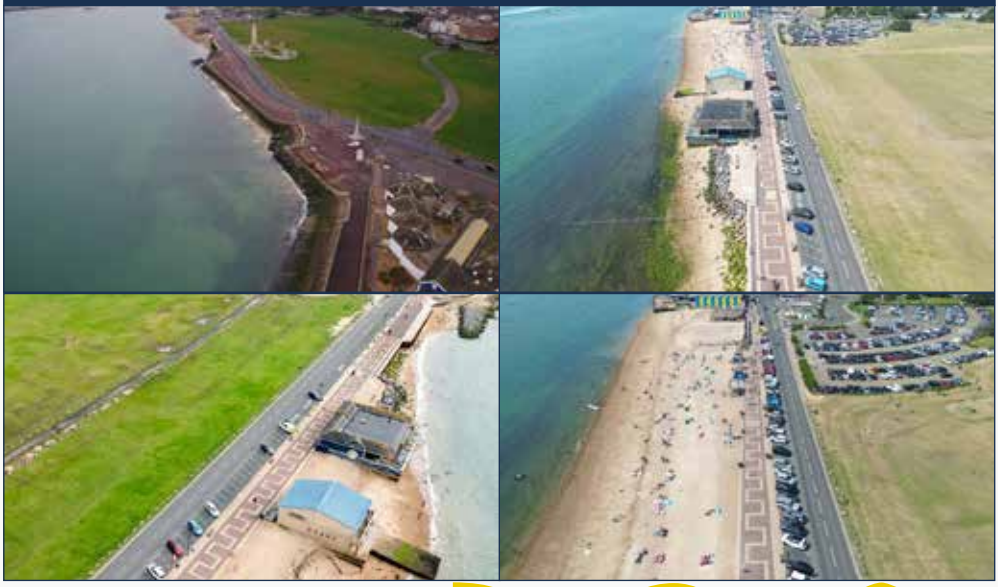
The scheme has improved walking and cycling connections and sensitively incorporated the Grade I listed Naval War Memorial. Historic monuments have been restored and reinstated, while a new public space at Centenary Place provides seating, lighting and space to enjoy the seafront.

The coastal team worked hard to ensure that access around the area was as smooth as possible and, in particular, putting measures in place at the Naval War Memorial."
Council Leader **Cllr Steve Pitt**

Highlights include:

- 61,000m^3 of shingle used to recharge the beach.
- 5,000 tonnes of recycled crushed concrete used as carriageway fill.
- A one-way westbound road with a 20mph speed limit.
- A 3m-wide two-way cycle lane.
- Historic monuments restored and reinstated.
- Coastal planting, play areas, lighting and seating.
- 20 ECOncrete pools and 118 rock-munched pools.

BEFORE



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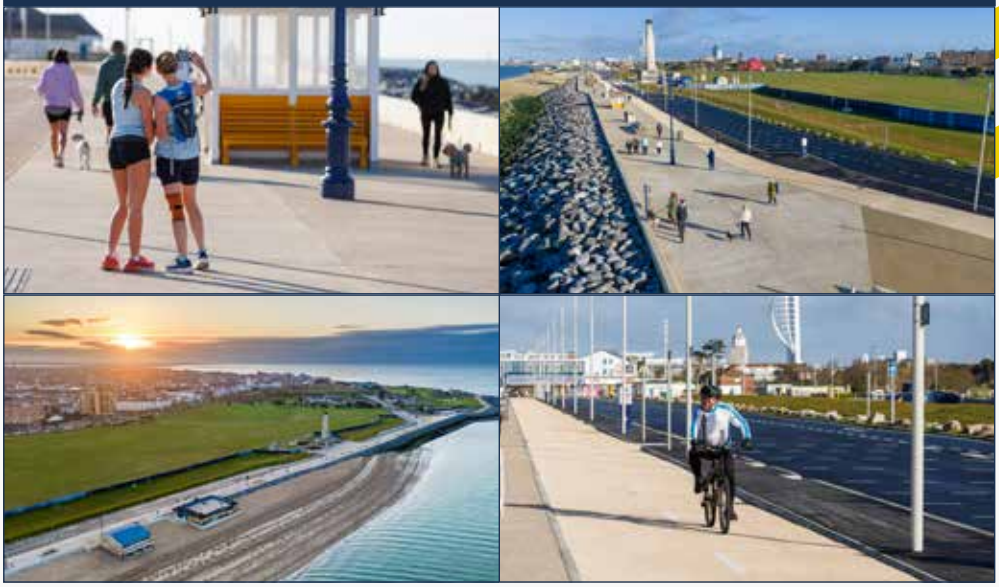

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FRONTAGES 5 EAST & 6

SPEAKERS' CORNER TO ST. GEORGE'S ROAD

④ Artist's impressions

A significantly wider shingle beach was created in 2025 between Speakers' Corner and Eastney. The beach forms the primary sea defence for this section of the seafront and helps reduce the impact of waves during storms.

Speakers' Corner to South Parade Pier (Frontage 5 East) is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in spring 2027. Changes include:

- Raising the promenade and constructing a setback secondary defence wall.
- Enhancing the promenade, including a two-way cycle route.
- Improving accessibility and connections through upgraded public spaces and access points.

South Parade Pier to St George's Road (Frontage 6) is expected to begin in spring 2027 and be completed in late summer 2028. Changes include:

- Building a new setback secondary defence wall along the frontage.
- Raising the promenade and installing a stepped revetment between the Pier and Canoe Lake.
- Enhancing the promenade and public spaces while maintaining access along the seafront, with improved lighting and the restoration of the Grade II listed lamp columns.
- Improving walking, cycling and accessibility.

FRONTAGE 2

CLARENCE PIER

Clarence Pier (Frontage 2) is the final phase of the Southsea Coastal Scheme and is expected to begin in autumn 2027, subject to the necessary approvals and agreements.

The council has a design for this section of the frontage which has planning permission and funding in place. However, we believe there is an opportunity to achieve a better outcome for the city and, working closely with local businesses, landowners and other stakeholders, we are exploring alternative alignments for the flood defences.

Alongside this, we are looking at how the landscaping and public realm themes delivered elsewhere along the seafront can be extended through this area.

We look forward to sharing more as these options are developed.

Swing bench at Southsea

PUBLIC REALM

ART AND ENHANCEMENTS

Creating place and improving how people use the seafront has been at the projects core and incorporated into the design early. Spaces have been created that cater for all, whether it's the unique swing benches, well-placed seating to gaze out to sea or community space to spark up a conversation. Incidental play areas, skateboard-friendly sites and new trees soften the landscape. The project is more than just a flood defence.

"It was very important for us to work sensitively within the historic environment to enhance these structures while maintaining their original look." Project Director **Guy Mason.**

"The intricate work to refurbish and reinstate every Grade II listed shelter and lamp column is keeping Southsea's historic character alive while delivering new facilities for the public to enjoy." Portsmouth City Council Leader, **Cllr Steve Pitt**

Near Southsea Castle a poem written by the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage entitled 'Theatre of the Sea' was installed on the sea wall as part of Portsmouth's 2025 literacy commitments.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS AND WORKING SUSTAINABLY

The Southsea Coastal Scheme aims to be a zero waste project and has set up a materials processing site where old materials are recycled to provide fill matter for new sea defences and road raising. Below are some impressive statistics on savings to be gained from the materials processing site:

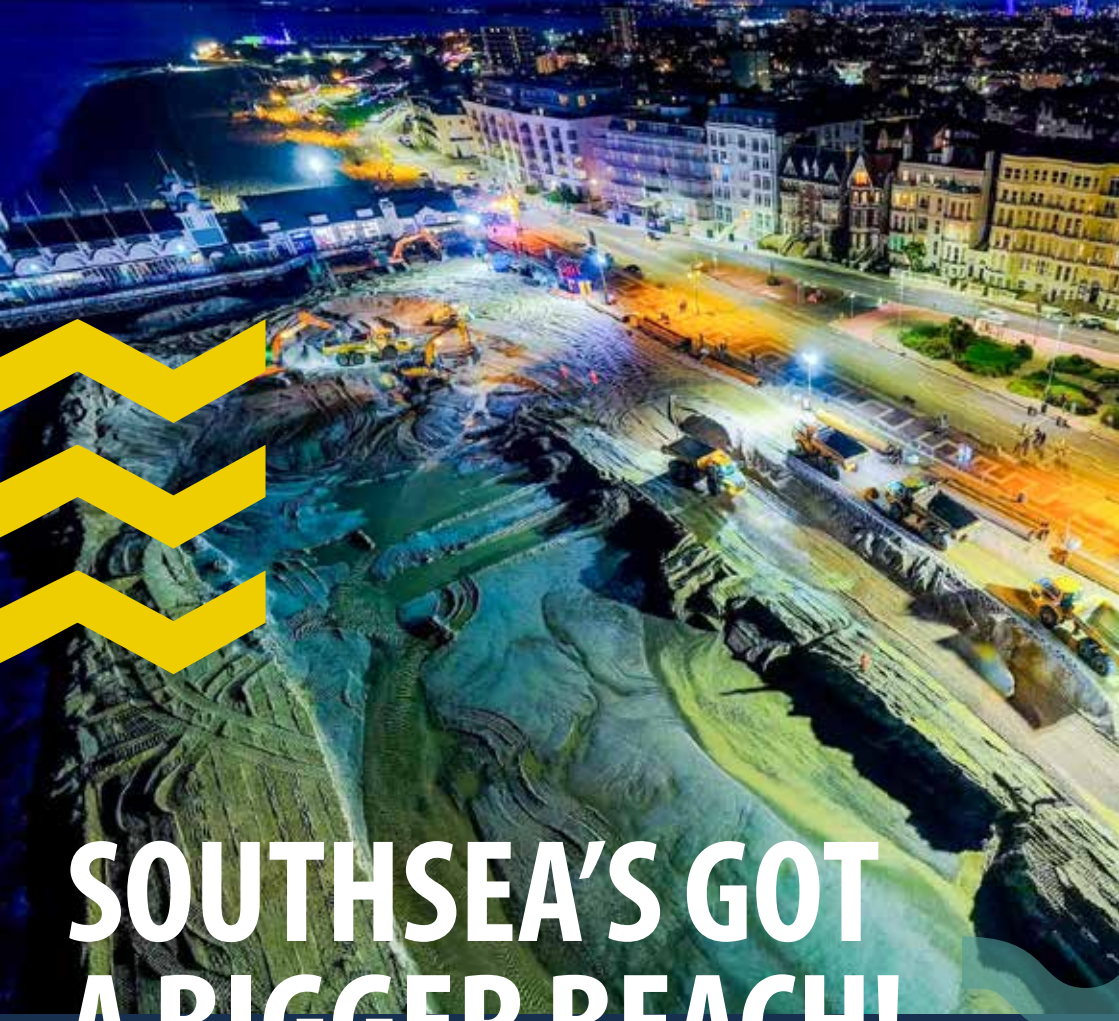
Recycling yard

Across the Southsea Coastal Scheme, 83 ECOncrete tide pools and 173 rock munched pools have been installed to enhance marine life along the seafront.

ECOncrete pools are designed to create ecosystems that mimic natural rock pools found on rocky coastlines, while rock munched pools are hollowed out rocks, with the same purpose of retaining water and encouraging colonisation of marine species.

In 2024, an independent survey of the ECOncrete and rock munched pools at Frontage 4 (Southsea Castle) showed that 'the ecological enhancements incorporated into the Southsea Coastal Scheme have increased the number of species and diversity of marine life on the rock revetment, which is likely to develop over the next 5+ years.

ECOncrete tide pools



SOUTHSEA'S GOT A BIGGER BEACH!

THE BEACH BETWEEN THE PYRAMIDS AND THE COFFEE CUP CAFÉ IN EASTNEY WAS REBUILT BETWEEN OCTOBER 2025 AND MARCH 2026.

During this time, 1 million tonnes of beach material were imported to create a wider, more resilient beach that will help reduce the risk of coastal flooding.

The beach material was dredged locally from licensed zones in the Solent near the Isle of Wight, selected to avoid sensitive habitats, and deposited onto the beach via a pipeline from the dredger. The new material doubled the width of the beach in areas to the east and west of South Parade Pier.

The new beach between the Pyramids and Eastney is performing as expected and continues to be monitored. By absorbing wave energy before it reaches the sea defences, it helps reduce the impact of storms and protect the promenade and road from flooding and shingle overtopping.

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Frontage 4 of the Southsea Coastal Scheme. Photo credit: Marcin Jedrysiak

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COASTAL SCHEME

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For more information on the Southsea Coastal Scheme visit
www.southseacoastalscheme.org.uk

You can request this information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by emailing southseacoastalscheme@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

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