

Totnes Flood Defence Improvements

Totnes is a large market-town at the head of the estuary of the River Dart in Devon, renowned for its history, close-knit-community and architecture. The town has suffered from significant flooding and whilst a flood defence scheme was built in the 1980s, land-use and climate change has led to increased flood-risk.



In 2018, the Environment Agency (EA) undertook major improvements to defences, reducing the risk of flooding to 400+ homes and businesses. The scheme was developed by the EA and delivered by BMMJV, a joint-venture between Mott MacDonald and BAM Nuttall as part of a Design-and-Build contract. The improvements were undertaken in three principal areas:

Broadmarsh Industrial Estate:

- 500m of defences increased in height
- 150m of new defences constructed.

Town Centre:

- Flood walls built between properties
- Flood gates and a slipway installed
- 150m of riverside wall raised.



Steamer Quay:

- 70m of quay wall supporting a flood defence and a failed section of flood wall replaced.

The challenge was to deliver the project in an environmentally, socially and economically conscious way. The project team was committed to delivering the EA's vision to "create better places for people and wildlife and support sustainable development."

The team worked holistically, emphasising community involvement, providing integrated solutions sympathetic to the built and natural environment. In implementing the project, the team met a range of challenges including:

- A significant proportion of the works needed to be undertaken inside and adjacent to private residences
- Works were to be undertaken within a Special Area of Conservation and other areas of environmental importance
- Many listed buildings had to be incorporated into the defence, without detrimentally affecting the status or the character of the town
- Potential for works to negatively impact on the local businesses and seasonal tourism trade that underpinned the local economy.

Site offices were located in Totnes centre to facilitate proactive engagement with local stakeholders. The positive feedback received showed that sustainable schemes can be developed by fostering positive partnerships between government, the private sector, and the community.