

## NEWS

## Essex academics invited to showcase research to The King and The Queen Consort

Date  
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University of Essex academics will tomorrow meet Their Majesties The King and The Queen Consort during their visit to Colchester to celebrate its recently-awarded city status.

[Dr Boróka Bó](#), from our [Department of Sociology](#), and [Dr Michael Steinke](#), from our [School of Life Sciences](#), have been invited to meet the Royal couple at Colchester Castle to speak about the University's key role in research to mitigate climate change and adapting to the effects of sea-level rise. In particular, the researchers will outline the innovative project they are currently working on with Colchester City Council and the [Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative \(ENORI\)](#), where they are looking into the viability of using natural resources in coastal defence development in the face of climate change.

The project 'Building with nature for ecosystem-based coastal defence and economic resiliency' has already gained global interest with one of the research team - Dr Maged Ali, from Essex Business School - showcasing the project at the COP27 UN climate talks at Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt in November.

Rising sea levels and the knock-on effect of coastal erosion due to climate change are major threats to coastal communities such as Essex and the project is looking into whether natural resources could be used to build up oyster reefs, which have been replaced in the last century by mudflats. This would create hard, natural sea defences which would be protected and be able to repair themselves.

As oysters naturally filter water, they would also remove pollutants, protecting the coast from harmful algal blooms.

Dr Steinke said: "We are delighted that we are able to showcase our research to His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort. We know they are interested in the future of farming and the importance of sustainability. We are proud of our project which is looking at how to work with nature, rather than against it, to look for an environmentally-friendly solution to coastal erosion."

Dr Bó added: "We are overjoyed to know that His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort are interested in learning more about our local coastal defence efforts. Our coast is home to the UK's largest protected area for native oysters - the same oysters that have historically guarded our shores from erosion. It is truly a privilege to work with nature for ecosystem defence and community economic empowerment, while also celebrating Colchester's rich oyster-farming heritage."

ENORI is a collaboration between oystermen, nature conservation organisations, academia and the UK Government. It is the largest marine restoration project by area in the UK and works to recover native oysters in estuaries around Essex, aiming to repopulate their numbers to historic levels. Native oyster fishing and cultivation has long been at the heart of coastal communities in Essex.