



Essex University probe looks at oysters as coastal defence

2 hrs ago



Coastal defence - could oysterman Tom Haward's oysters help to protect the coast?



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One project will look to reduce the harm from single-use plastics and the other will combat coastal erosion by re-using waste oyster shells generated by the catering industry.

The projects were developed following a successful Challenge Lab event, which the university facilitates to bring regional organisations together with researchers to discuss solutions to challenges they face.

To help drive down plastic waste in the town, a dedicated team will develop activities which raise awareness of plastic waste and the benefits of sustainable packaging, including a plastic holiday.



Project - the University of Essex

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The team will investigate the production of more sustainable and compostable packaging materials in Colchester, helping businesses with a cost-effective and environment-friendly alternative to single-use plastics.



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Collecting waste oyster shells from restaurants, the shell will be repurposed as a building material to improve coastal defences.

This work will help both the oyster fishers and the environment, the team says.

Dr Boroka Bo, the university's lead academic on the project, said: "While many of us knew our coast is home to the UK's largest protected area for native oysters, what most oyster consumers don't realise is oysters also protect our community from coastal erosion and floods.

"In addition to being ecosystem engineers by creating natural storm barriers, an adult oyster can filter almost 190 litres of water per day.

"By doing this, oysters remove pollutants from our water and protect us from harmful algal blooms."

The projects due to get underway are funded with £15,000 each from the University's Impact Acceleration Account.

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