

Thank you for taking part in **CarbonQuest**. With your help, we're going to paint a detailed picture of saltmarsh carbon storage across Great Britain!

What's in the pack?

- 1 × **protocol** describing what you'll need to do before, during and after a survey
- 1 × **risk assessment** noting the types of hazards on the marsh and how to avoid them
- 5 × **plungers and syringes** with the ends cut off
- 5 × numbered **Ziplock bags**
- 1 × length of **string**
- 1 × sticker with **return address and stamp**
- 1 × **padded envelope** used to send the survey kit to you (keep hold of this so you can return the samples to us!)
- There may also be a **consent form** that would need to be signed by the landowner and forwarded to your local consenting office if the marsh falls under statutory protection (details below under 'consent and access')

Consent and access

Saltmarshes are among the most valuable and vulnerable ecosystems we have on our coast. Consequently, a lot of marshes across Britain have some form of protection enshrined in law* in order to conserve the unique plants and animals that inhabit them. Marshes are also the property of **landowners** who may use the marsh for grazing, recreation, or conservation. It is necessary that both the **government** body responsible for managing the environment and the landowners give their consent for the *CarbonQuest* surveys to be carried out.

Landowners

We kindly ask that you approach the landowner(s) before going onto the marsh, and ask for their consent to complete a survey. If you are unsure who the landowner is, contact us at cside@bangor.ac.uk and we can try and help identify them for you.

Government

If your target marsh has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), then the government needs to know that work is being carried out on the site. We have requested that consent be granted for all *CarbonQuest* volunteers who are visiting SSSI sites. If the government bodies (Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, or Natural Resources Wales) recommend that steps be taken to minimise impact on a particular site, we will write to you with the guidance recommended by them.

If your marsh is part of a reserve (such as those managed by Local Council, National Trust, and RSBP), we recommend that you take guidance from reserve managers on how to minimise the impact of your visit (such as avoiding bird roosts). If you are unsure whether the marsh is part of a reserve, contact us at cside@bangor.ac.uk and we can help identify the manager for you.

*There are several designations, though the most widely used are Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), National and Local Nature Reserves, and RAMSAR. Marshes can have more than one designation.

Health and safety

Salt marshes make for dramatic landscapes. They can also be dangerous if proper care isn't taken. In this survey pack is a **risk assessment**, which summarises the main hazards associated with marshes and how to avoid them. Please read the risk assessment before you visit your target marsh.

Perhaps the most important thing when visiting the marsh is that you know the times of high and low tide along that stretch of coast, and whether it is a Spring or Neap tide. Salt marshes are tidal environments, and can become completely inundated during Spring high tides. Even during Neap high tides, saltmarsh creeks fill up and could cut you off from the mainland if you're not careful. There are several websites that provide local tide times. Our favourite is the [BBC Tide Tables](http://bbc.co.uk/weather/coast_and_sea/tide_tables) (bbc.co.uk/weather/coast_and_sea/tide_tables). Simply select your region to the left of the UK map and find a nearby harbour which has tide time information. Note that you can't get tidal predictions for every location along the coast – use the nearest harbour to your marsh. Aim to visit the marsh 1 hour after high tide to give yourself enough time to complete a survey before the next flood.

We also recommend that you visit the marsh in a small group of 2-3 people. Make sure to tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back. Pack a fully-charged mobile phone as well in case your plans change.

When you're on the marsh, be wary of sinking mud and avoid having to cross large creeks. Always make certain you have an easy route off the marsh. Be aware that there's very little shelter from wind and rain, so bringing the right clothing and enough food and water is important. Check the weather forecast before you go to make sure your survey is a dry one!

Local knowledge

Having some idea about the use and history of a salt marsh helps us to understand why differences in carbon content or plant assemblages might exist between marshes. We wanted to invite you to write to us at cside@bangor.ac.uk and share your knowledge about your local marsh. The sorts of things you could comment on include:

- Have you noticed whether the marsh is eroding or expanding?
- Were parts of the marsh damaged, reclaimed, or restored?
- Has the marsh ever been ditched, polluted or damaged in any way?
- Was the marsh being grazed by sheep, cattle, horses, or geese?
- Has the marsh been used for fishing, samphire picking, or wildfowl shooting?

It's entirely up to you if you'd like to share any information about the site, please don't feel obliged to.

Thanks again for being so willing to help, and good luck in your survey. We look forward to receiving some samples from you soon!

Yours sincerely,

Cai Ladd (on behalf of the C-SIDE project)