



Saline Solution

Reeds That Are Worth their Salt

It was a case of survival of the fittest when a reeds trial was held in the Wansbeck Estuary to discover which varieties would thrive in salt water, and could be the most suitable for planting at future coastal minewater treatment schemes.

minewater pollution. The water has a relatively high salinity due to the underground salt deposits located close to the former mine workings.

Reeds, which are worth their salt, were selected following a study run by the Authority in partnership with the Hydrogeochemical Engineering and Outreach Unit of the Institute for Research on the Environment and Sustainability at Newcastle University.

Now, more than 27,000 reeds, known to thrive in both iron rich water and a saline environment, are being planted at the Bates scheme.

"We are hoping that the experience at Bates will help us address similar conditions at other coastal schemes," says Stuart Rolley, Head of Minewater Development with the Authority.

After more than 20 different types of reeds, known to grow naturally in a saline environment, were monitored, two hardy types were chosen for widespread planting in wetlands built to treat polluted minewater pumped out of the former Bates Colliery on the Northumberland coast.

The Bates minewater treatment scheme has an important role to play in both controlling minewater levels in the area and in protecting the River Blyth and Wansbeck Estuary from



Sludge Appeal

The Authority's passive minewater treatment schemes help improve the environment but each year generate around 50,000 tonnes of ochre sludge which collects in the lagoons and reed beds. The Authority aims to stimulate potential commercial interest in the sludge by investigating possible commercial markets and after uses for a waste product which would otherwise go to landfill.



Reed beds at the Wansbeck estuary scheme.