



Nalón Estuary (ES)

Scale
XL/S

REVITALIZING AN UNDEREXPLOITED PORT INFRASTRUCTURE



Team representative: Architect/Landscape designer.

Location: San Esteban (Muros de Nalón) and L'Arena (Soto del Barco), Principality of Asturias.

Population: Territorial area 6,243 inhabitants, reflection area: 1,845 inhabitants.

Reflection site: 150,73 ha.

Project site: Site A. Dike and esplanade of Puerto Chico: 6.65 ha. / Site B. La Xunquera and La Llama beach: 26,56 ha. / Site C: La Xunquera shipyard and L'Arena docks 0,41 ha.

Site proposed by: Regional Ministry of Rural Affairs and Territorial Cohesion of the Principality of Asturias.

Actors involved: Soto del Barco and Muros de Nalón City Councils. Institute for Economic Development in the Principality of Asturias.

Owner(s) of the site: Public.

Commission after competition: Site A: Project for the renaturation of the dike and esplanade of Puerto Chico and management of the works. / Site B: Project for the environmental recovery of La Xunquera and La Llama beach; management of the works / Site C: Drafting of an urban development plan for the surroundings La Xunquera shipyard and the L'Arena docks.



INHABITED MILIEUS CHALLENGES

The Nalón estuary is a complex and unique territorial system, which combines high environmental, landscape and cultural values, and which faces significant ecological, climatic and economic diversification challenges as an alternative to the decline of port and fishing activity. According to the European 17 theme, the three sites of the Nalón Estuary encompass such interrelated natural and cultural dimensions that the whole study area can be understood as an ecotone, that is, a transitional space between rural, urban and natural landscapes: 1- It stands out for its environmental and ecological values, which is why it is included in a Special Protection Area for Birds, a Site of Community Importance and a Special Area of Conservation within the Natura 2000 Network. 2- One hundred years of intense port activity have resulted in a valuable industrial heritage, including a shipyard, docks, loading bays and other infrastructure, as well as welded steel-framed cranes and railway equipment. 3- Although its role as a modal transport interchanger has diminished significantly, the port itself is an ecotone between the marine and terrestrial environments.

On the other hand, the lower course of the river Nalón presents a high level of flood risk, which will increase due to the foreseeable impacts of climate change. It should also be considered that the area is located on the western boundary of the Central Metropolitan Area of Asturias, a multi-polar urban conurbation with 850,000 inhabitants and 85% of the regional GDP. It is therefore destined to become a key element in the metropolitan system of open spaces.

All the land is publicly owned and all the public actors concerned are involved in the proposal: at the regional level, the departments of Infrastructures, Fishing, Biodiversity and Territorial Planning; and at the local level, Muros de Nalón and Soto del Barco City Councils.

How to transform an underexploited port infrastructure into a provider of ecosystem services for the Central Metropolitan Area of Asturias? ?



What strategies can be designed to conciliate the conservation of the natural, cultural and landscape heritage with the economic reactivation and employment generation in the estuary ?



QUESTIONS TO THE COMPETITORS:

The port infrastructure of the Nalón Estuary was designed and dimensioned at the beginning of the 20th century as the main embarkation and transport point for all the coal production from the Asturian mines to the steel plants in the Basque Country; it is therefore part of the collective imaginary and collective identity of the region. The decline of mining brought with it the gradual abandonment of the activity, so it is necessary to reinvent the port area to accommodate new activities, to: 1. Renaturalise and contribute to the adaptation to climate change in the whole the estuary, 2. Preserve and consider the valuable local industrial heritage, and 3. Foster the production of ecosystem-based supply, regulation and cultural services.

Matters to be considered by the applicants:

- Adaptation to climate change. The estuary suffers from significant river flooding, which particularly affects the agricultural sector. According to climate projections available for the region, the average sea level will rise significantly and extreme weather events will become more intense and frequent, thus increasing the risk of flooding.
- Ecosystem improvement. After decades of industrial activity, mainly focused on coal port traffic, several restoration projects have significantly improved the environmental conditions of the estuary; however, much remains to be done to regenerate the diverse and valuable ecosystems, including beaches, marshes and swamps.
- Cohabitation between economic and environmental transitions. The environmental and landscape quality is an appeal for new recreational activities typical of coastal areas; therefore the challenge that the estuary faces is to compatibilise the protection of biodiversity, the production of ecosystem services and economic diversification.

