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Environment
Agency



The Moors at Arne Project, Stakeholder Liaison Group 24 February 2021, 17:00 – 18:30, Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Project Team

Simon Humphry – Environment Agency Project Manager
Catherine Farrugia - Environment Agency Advisor (Flood & Coast Risk Management)
Neil Watson – Environment Agency Coastal Engineer (Wessex)
Hayley Hills – Environment Agency Community Engagement Officer
Dante Munns – RSPB Area Manager
Peter Robertson – RSPB Senior Sites Manager, Dorset Reserves
Ian Alexander – Natural England
Greg Chuter – Senior Archaeologist Environment Agency

Chair – Neil Watson chaired this meeting.

Representative of Birds of Poole Harbour
Representative of Ridge Moors Action Group
Representative of Dorset Wildfowlers Association
Representative of Dorset Bird Club
Representative of Arne Parish Council
Representative of CPRE
Representative of Open Spaces Society
Representative of Dorset Council
Representative of the RYA
Representative of Ridge Wharf Yachting Centre
Representative of Redclyffe Yacht Club
Representative from East Dorset Antiquarian Society
Representative of Ridge Residents Association
Three Ridge and Arne Residents

Welcome

Welcome and introduction by the Chair.

Review of notes from last meeting

Notes from last time agreed-

Brief project update and discussion

The project team shared that Simon Humphry would be taking over the role of project manager for the project as Helen Morgan has left the Environment Agency to pursue another career.

The project team updated the group with the progress working towards the completion of the detailed design including updates on ecological surveys, ground investigations and archaeological trenching. Through the ground investigation work a decision on the embankment construction has been made to be able to build the embankment through site won material in order to be able to reduce the amount of material and construction traffic being brought onto site. The project team also updated the proposed public access route map for the group including routes that be most accessible for those with additional needs from the end of the Western embankment.

Further Archaeological trenching would be looking to commence in the next couple of months as ground conditions improve and a further Bathymetry survey has also been undertaken to continue to monitor the conditions of the Frome and Wareham channel. With the ongoing Covid restrictions the planning submission has had to postpone, this is currently being reviewed, an update will be shared with the group with a submission date when available.

Questions following the update:

- A question was ask to what the viewpoints would consist of? The detail are still being worked into the design, screening options and viewing heights are being considered to reduce the disturbance to the birds.

Archaeology

Greg Chuter, Environment Agency Senior Archaeologist presented the work undertaken within initial archaeological (heritage) trial trenching. This included the surveying undertaken on site and the context of the work in the wider archaeological story of the area. The presentation also outlined the further archeological works still to be undertaken on the site.

Questions following the presentation:

- A question was asked to when the Frome embankment wall was constructed and what the implications for breaching it would be and whether it would remain post construction? There is a recording of the embankment on Victorian maps and believe it to be that date as there is no evidence of it in earlier maps. When the breaches are cut through there will be archaeological recording undertaken and it may be more evidence of the date and construction of the embankments as there may be finds. The majority of the embankment will remain as there will be three controlled breaches through the embankment for the scheme with the water entering though the channels at the breaches. The embankments have remained in the same location with some repair where needed to the embankments to date. There may some wear and tear with some occasional overtopping of the embankment during a tidal event but we foresee them lasting as they are for some decades to come.
- A question was asked where the archaeological archive would be when the analysis had been completed. The intention would be for the archive to go to Wareham Museum, discussions have been started with Dorset museum service to date and they are in agreement that the archives would be best placed for the local community to enjoy.
- A question was asked around the breach of the chalk ridge between the Needles (Isle of Wight) and the Purbeck headlands and whether there was indication of this landscape change in the core sampling when this event took place? Within

the transects there does seem to be evidence of a former channel of the Frome as a deep scoured out area of fluvial (river) sands and in the Neolithic/potentially Mesolithic period changing to a reed marsh. This may be an indicator of the wider landscape changing.

- A further question was asked around the association of peat depositions in saltwater environments as the thought was they only happened in freshwater locations? On the site there would be mostly freshwater deposits but waiting for the environmental analysis to come back, it may be these would be a combination of there is evidence of a whole series of events and changing landscapes within the environment.

Open Forum

- A question was asked to whether the project team were aware of flood scheme projects in the Netherlands and the compensation that was awarded to landowners and neighbours to compensate for negative impacts to land. Has this had been considered in this project? The project team are aware of the work undertaken and are part of a group that does exchange visits for engineers. The flood risk assessment work is looking at the risk to the site and surrounding areas and the project wouldn't progress if there is a detrimental impact on the current flood risk within the area.
- A question was asked about the pathway across the field at Sunnyside farm and whether this was new feature of the design and whether there was also an indication of increased parking? There is no proposal to increase the parking. The proposal of the footpath is not an addition but there may be amendments, the path would be to provide access so that visitors using the Sunnyside carpark wouldn't have to walk along the Arne road. There would be a safe crossing point at the end of the pathway with good visibility to provide a crossing point onto the Arne Moors.
- A further question was asked whether this footpath would take away from the Sunnyside Farm and whether there would be a need to raise ground as it seems a wet area? The land is owned by Natural England who are working in partnership to undertake the work, this path would provide a safe walking route between the Sunnyside carpark and the Moors at Arne. The details of the access paths are being assessed based on the ground conditions.
- An additional question was asked, would the carpark be increased if the visitors were greater in the future, if the site had a greater appeal with a wildlife spectacle, and would it become a paid carpark? There is as potential for the carpark to have a suggested donation to users, however this wouldn't be manned as the size of the carpark doesn't require it. There are no intentions for the carpark to be increased in the future as the current size of the carpark is ample and allows for those times when more specialist birdwatchers that might visit the site when there is a specific wildlife spectacle.

Next Steps

The project team suggested March for the next meeting and a further meeting in May time to show the project as a whole prior to planning submission.