



News from The Moors at Arne



September 2024 edition



Autumn is definitely here and the project team are making great progress as we approach the final stages of this year's main works.

The archaeologists have now concluded their dig at Arne Moors and are busy processing some of the finds. We hope to share some further updates on their discoveries in the future.

The focus this month is still on the construction of the western and lagoon embankments and creation of the western freshwater area. Despite some very wet days things are still moving forwards with lots happening on site and we hope you enjoy reading this update.

A busy month on site

The embankments are coming along nicely. Once each section of embankment is built to full height the team add a layer of top soil to the banks as shown to the right. The next stage is to plant seed so that vegetation can establish ahead of the breaches being made in 2026.



The Furzebrook outfall structure has continued to progress since last month. As the structure will sit within the western embankment the pipes have now been covered ready for a section of the embankment to be built over the top. The structure will be linked into the realigned Furzebrook stream in due course.



The main construction of this feature is now complete and the sheet piles which formed the working area around it have now been removed.

During September, a process called 'turf translocation' is being carried out on site. This large scale process involves taking sections of turf from an area of site which will eventually become part of the intertidal zone, and relocating them into the new western freshwater area. Around eight hectares of turf will be laid in this area.



Whilst normal lawn turves are thin and can be rolled up, this is macro turfing and each slab of turf is around 300mm deep. Over the course of the turf translocation a whopping 20,000 tonnes of turf will be moved into place making this one of the largest turf translocations in the UK.

The reason for doing it this way rather than bringing in standard turf or seed is all to do with protecting the special ecology on site. The turf is taken from a part of site where the specific type of grassland is quite rare. This 'donor' area will eventually become part of the intertidal area whilst the 'receptor area' within the new freshwater habitat area will be protected by the western embankment.

The turf translocation process is being carried out by local sub-contractor Alaska ecological contracting. Will Bond from Alaska explains; 'Using turf is more predictable than seeding, and preserves not just the plant community visible to us above ground, but also the soil community of worms, beetles, insects, fungi and all the interconnected parts below ground that is so important to the ecology.'



Bird survey highlights – part one



The Moors at Arne is already home to many plants and animals including some rare protected species. A team of qualified ecologists are on hand to ensure that we safeguard nature during the construction phase. One of the team is Dr Matt Clarke, Principal

Ecologist who specialises in birds and bats. Over the bird nesting season, Matt and the team have carried out regular surveys recording all sightings of birds visiting or nesting within the site boundary.

I asked Matt some questions about this important work and the bigger picture for birds at Arne Moors. Here's the first instalment, part two will follow in the October newsletter.

How many different species have you recorded this year and were there any unexpected visitors?

We have recorded 135 species of birds on site or flying over the site which is fantastic. It was excellent to see three spoonbill, a very rare breeding bird in the UK, flying over the site. We were lucky enough to spy a peregrine falcon hunting across the top of the reeds on site early in the year in March and surprised when our targeted evening survey for Nightjar – Operation Nightjar – rewarded us with a pair of birds on site on the very first survey we undertook in June. It had just reached twilight when the Nightjar came to inspect us and flew around us for a good 20 minutes.



A rare late breeding success on site was a teal which hatched nine ducklings in a very wet field in late June. This species is a regular winter visitor to the wetlands along the south coast but usually breeds in the moors and mires in the north of England.

How long does a survey take and what sort of things are you checking for?

The length of the bird survey varies according to the weather, time of year and how many birds we see and hear. The survey starts within half an hour of sunrise and is generally concluded by mid-morning, as bird activity for most species tends to tail off by then. During the survey we are looking and listening for birds and recording where they occur on site and what they are doing. We keep a log of the general diversity of birds on site but also record breeding behaviour – initially male birds calling on territory, defending breeding habitat, but later on birds exhibiting nesting behaviour such as nest building and feeding of young.

What has been your favourite birding moment at Arne Moors so far?

That's a very difficult question to answer – there have been many special birding moments here at Arne Moors! However, it has to be the magical sight we were treated to at 7:00am on a sunny Easter Bank Holiday Monday in April when we had the site to ourselves for the bird survey – a flock of 85 curlew, our largest wading bird in the UK filled the Freshwater Area probing the ground for food, carpeting the ground and performing a magnificent symphony of haunting, piping music – it was beautiful! Suddenly they noticed us and took to the air – the vision was simply stunning! Although being mobbed by a White-tailed eagle at close quarters, and nearly falling over backwards in surprise, has to come a close second – it was huge!



What does the survey data mean for the project?

Recording the bird species is important for monitoring the potential impacts of the realignment scheme here and keeping the whole site team informed on this important issue. The bird survey has ensured the scheme avoided direct impacts upon bird species during a very important time of year for them, the nesting period. The work has informed the erection of buffer zones on site for nesting birds and then supported ongoing checks by the ecology team to inform the works programme and to enable work to proceed once the young birds had fledged. The data will also enable comparisons of the bird species and numbers present pre and post construction on site and potentially inform similar projects elsewhere in future.

Look out for part two in the next edition of the newsletter!

Community updates

The next Stakeholder Liaison Group meeting will take place at 6pm on Thursday the 10th of October at Stoborough Village Hall. Existing and new members are all very welcome. If you would like to join the group and attend please email TheMoorsAtArne@environment-agency.gov.uk so we can add you to the invite. The group meet three times a year for a project update and open forum.



What's happening next?



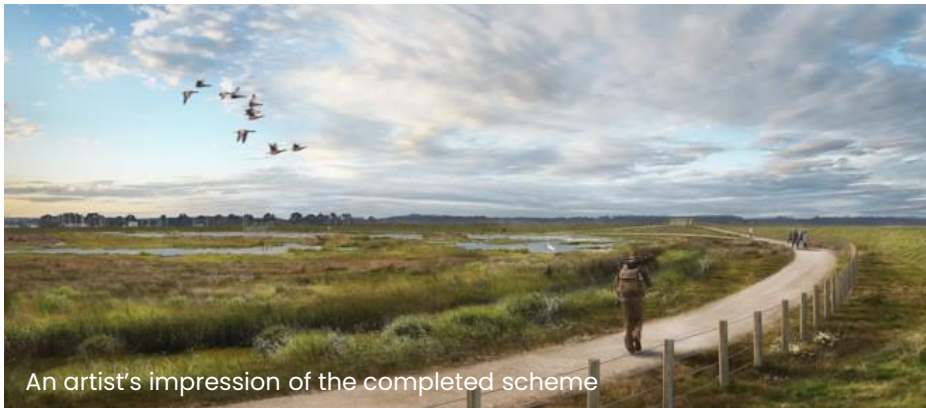
Excavations for the three eastern embankment freshwater flapped drainage structures are just getting underway and there should be more to update on in the next issue.

Over the next few weeks we will be relocating some water voles as part of a mitigation strategy under licence from Natural England.

About the project

The Moors at Arne project is adapting over 150 hectares of land into a diverse wetland habitat. This type of habitat is being lost in other areas of Poole Harbour due to 'coastal squeeze'. This is a term used to describe the effect of rising sea levels pressing against man-made structures such as flood defences resulting in a loss of intertidal habitat such as mud flats and salt marsh.

Kier is the contractor delivering this project on behalf of the Environment Agency and their project partners, RSPB and Natural England.



An artist's impression of the completed scheme

Keeping in touch

We welcome your feedback and are here to answer any questions you may have about the project. Please email arne@kier.co.uk

For more information about the project please visit our web pages <https://www.dorsetcoast.com/project/moors-at-arne-coastal-change-project/>

