



News from The Moors at Arne



November 2024 edition



Winter is almost here and with it comes a pause in most of the works here at Arne Moors. The majority of the plant and machinery used over the summer months has now left site. We have also said goodbye to the temporary cabins which were positioned at the western end of site and used to provide welfare facilities during the construction of the western embankment and Furzebrook outfall structure.

Some of the cabins will return next year and there will be a smaller set up at the eastern end of site when the team embark on construction of the eastern embankment.

Thank you for your on-going interest in the project, we hope you enjoy this update. If you have any questions about the scheme or wish to share any feedback we'd love to hear from you.

Construction update

The site team have been busy installing two new flow control structures at the eastern end of site. The pre-cast headwalls were carefully lifted into position and the pipework is now being installed. A third structure will be added at a later date.

Work has also commenced on the causeway outfall structure which is situated at the western end of the site and will allow the existing boundary ditch to flow uninterrupted to Ridge Wharf sluice after the embankment is built over the top.



The embankment construction programme has now finished for 2024 and will start again in April 2025.

The western embankment is now at full height with the exception of a couple of sections which are required for access across site.

The hydroseeding which took place last month has been a success with a healthy covering of grass now established on the sides of the embankment as pictured to the left.

Hydroseeding uses a specialist machine to spray seed mixed with water and mulch over a large area.

The top of the embankments will be used for maintenance access once the scheme is complete and visitors will be able to access a range of walks alongside the embankments on new permissive footpaths. Several viewing screens will be created where visitors can stop off and enjoy the views out over the new intertidal area.

Archaeology



Credit: Wessex Archaeology

The archaeologists working on The Moors at Arne project were thrilled earlier this year when they uncovered a very special wooden tool in a ring gully.

Preliminary scientific dating of this astonishing find suggest it dates to the Bronze Age and is, therefore, one of the oldest wooden tools ever discovered in Britain.

Ed Treasure, from Wessex Archaeology who led the environmental analysis of the spade said: "The moment the spade started to be uncovered the team on site knew it was a very special object and now we're able to analyse it here in the laboratory, we're starting to reveal its story. It's made of oak and radiocarbon dating of the wood itself confirms it is c.3500-3400 years old, placing it firmly in the Middle Bronze Age. This is an incredibly exciting moment and we're looking forward to finding out more as the process unfolds."

It is extremely rare for wooden objects to survive in the ground for such a long time but it is thanks to the waterlogged conditions of the ground that the spade was found almost intact.

Greg Chuter, Environment Agency archaeologist said: "We're working across a vast landscape that is dominated by nature with very little to suggest to the naked eye that much human activity has taken place here. However, just beneath the surface we've uncovered evidence of the ways humans have cleverly adapted to the challenges presented by this particular environment for over 3000 years. The spade is a fascinating part of the story and as research continues we're looking forward to exploring the relationship between the spade and the ditch, and what else they can tell us about life here 3000 years ago."

Matt Phillips, the senior project manager at Kier, added:

“The current climate challenge poses increasingly severe risks for coastal ecosystems and coastal communities all around the globe. The archaeological story of The Moors at Arne gives us an incredible understanding of how people lived thousands of years ago and adapted to change. Working on complex environmental projects like this, gives us the opportunity to share fascinating insights into the past and explore what this means with communities today.”

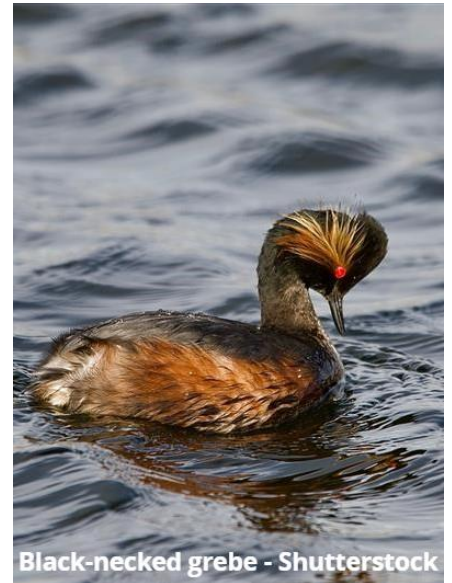


Water has been a dominating force in this part of the country for thousands of years. In the Middle Bronze Age, this land would have been at the mercy of the elements, prone to flooding in the winter months, and then drying out over summer. This would have provided the opportunity for past populations to make use of its rich natural resources. It could have been used as a place to cut and dry peat, as pasture for grazing animals or for hunting, fishing, gathering rushes for thatch and basket weaving and perhaps cultivating crops. The spade was found in a circular ditch that could have served several functions, including as a means of drying or protecting those useful resources.



Ecological surveys

The bird ecologists are currently monitoring any over-wintering birds which are feeding on site. Species recorded so far include little egret, snipe and common heron and the team have also spotted a hen harrier foraging across site. Some larger flocks of foraging birds have been recorded just outside site including curlew, teal and black-tailed godwit whilst five black-necked grebe, an uncommon winter visitor with striking gold feathers on their face, have also been recorded here. These particular surveys will continue until March when the breeding season will start once again.



Black-necked grebe - Shutterstock



You may remember that back in August, the ecologists were busy carrying out bat surveys. This work has continued to progress and involved climbing 86 trees to inspect for signs of potential bat habitation. Five active roosts were found with species identified as Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats. All active roosts have been protected and will not be disturbed. The surveys also assessed the amount of potential bat habitat available.

Some tree works have taken place and the team have ensured that there is no reduction in the amount of suitable potential bat roosting habitat by installing hand-made natural bat boxes made from sections of felled tree branches onto some of the trees on site.



Fish surveys have also been happening in recent weeks. This activity has provided important information about what sort of fish species are living in the ditches on site and how we can protect them ahead of infill works on some of the ditches.

The fish specialists found a mix of freshwater and saltwater species including eel, bass and flounder.

Meet the team



Caidyn White is a commercial assistant on the project and his job involves helping with contractual and financial aspects of the site including working with our sub-contractors and record keeping.

Caidyn described his favourite thing about working on the project:

"I've worked in roles where the work is very repetitive but with this project, you can see the progress and results and that's highly rewarding.

I look forward to one day bringing my kids to the site and being able to say I helped in some way with what they now see in front of them."

When he's not working, Caidyn finds time for adventure. He once flew a stunt plane at his uncle's flight school in California and described the odd sensation of looking up and seeing the ocean whilst doing a loop the loop.

What's next?

Construction of the embankments is now paused until April 2025. During the winter months, limited activities will continue out on site within the terms of the project's planning consent.

Winter works will include continued ecological surveys and vegetation management. The site offices will remain open with the core team working throughout the winter months planning for the next stage of works.



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/>

