



The Moors at Arne Project, Managing Coastal Change

Frequently asked questions

November 2018

General Questions

What are we doing?

The Environment Agency, RSPB and Natural England are working together to adapt approximately 150ha of The Moors at Arne into a diverse wetland habitat.

With the sea level rising, important habitat for wildlife along the coast will be lost over the next 30 years. Where rising waters press against essential fixed sea defences, called "coastal squeeze", this will mean a loss of inter-tidal features such as mudflats and salt marsh. New places for coastal wildlife will need to be created, particularly if the government is to realise its ambitious 25 year environment plan.

In Poole Harbour, the partners are working together to explore how The Moors at Arne can be converted to inter-tidal habitat to compensate for the anticipated losses.

The scheme will involve the construction of new tidal embankments further inland than the existing ones. Once in place, the land in front of the new embankments will be opened to the action of the tides and with this new salt marsh habitats will be created.

These new tidal embankments will be robust and the scheme will give greater flood resilience for local people and property. The partnership will not proceed with a scheme that causes houses to flood.

Why are we doing it?

Much of the Poole Harbour area has man-made, sea defences along the coastline. Currently, in front of many of these defences are saltmarshes and other salt water habitats. With sea level rise, and also due to increased storminess, these coastal habitats will become trapped between the hard sea defences and the rising waters and be lost. Without the man made defences, they would naturally move inland, this loss is termed coastal squeeze.

The Environment Agency is legally responsible, to Government, for providing alternative / compensatory locations for coastal habitat that is lost in front of man-made defences. This project will allow the Environment Agency and partners to continue to maintain defences so that we can protect properties from flooding. It is predicted up to 10,000 local properties could be at risk of flooding within 100 years.



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Will it smell?

We will take into consideration in the development of the project, the concern among the community that there should not be any increase in odour as a result of developing the site. On similar sites elsewhere existing vegetation has been kept short and hedgerows and trees removed prior to breaching. This reduces the short term risks of odour from rotting vegetation. The site is already located next to the estuary and the anoxic odour associated with sediment is generally only emitted when disturbed. Significant disturbance of the sediment is unlikely as we are not planning widespread access within the new intertidal area.

Will there be an increase in mosquitoes in the area?

Careful design and management of intertidal habitat sites can be done so that the risks are not increased. Advice from Public Health England on other similar sites indicates that this sort of habitat creation can be done without increased risk. We will be discussing this with Public Health England during the detailed design phase.

What are the legal reasons for the project?

We have taken a long term look at what flood and coastal erosion risk management activities are appropriate along the coast. Locally, this resulted in the publication of the Poole Bay, Poole Harbour and Wareham Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy published in December 2014, following public consultation. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/poole-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-draft-strategy>). Along with other requirements, this work must be compliant with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI no. 2010/490). This regulation recognises that there are occasions where habitats will be damaged but this is acceptable if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for this to happen. Compensation areas are then required to reduce the overall impact on the ecological integrity of the habitats as much as possible. This project is to provide the compensation habitat required for flood risk management activities within the Poole Harbour area.

Are we doing this to lower water levels within Poole Harbour?

The water level within Poole harbour rises as high as the tidal cycle will allow (driven by the moon and sun), plus or minus any impact from the prevailing weather (high or low pressure systems). Based on the very large volumes of tidal water entering the harbour, the relatively small additional area of storage provided by our proposals to realign the banks, is very unlikely to reduce the level of the tide in Poole Harbour as a whole.



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Why are we doing such a large scheme, could we not do a smaller scheme only on the eastern side of the site?

The EA are aiming to create at least 44 hectares of intertidal habitat as compensation for the habitat lost in front of man-made defences in the Poole Bay, Poole Harbour and Wareham banks area (The Strategy Area). The layout of the site, does not easily lend itself to only doing 44ha, therefore we are exploring options that are cost effective and are also in keeping with the RSPB's aspirations for the site.

The northwestern area of the site is designated as an SPA, the purpose of this designation is the conservation of particular species of birds. Within Poole Harbour SPA the area serves as a feeding and roosting site for the wildfowl and waders for which the SPA is designated. It is important because it can be used at high tide when intertidal mud is not available. The whole site is part of the Poole Harbour Ramsar site and we have to consider the impact that our proposals would have on the Ramsar designation.

The EA also have to consider likely future habitat requirements and it is likely that in the future more intertidal habitat will be required. If we can secure this now, cost effectively, then it would prevent the need for a future project, a considerable cost saving in design and planning permission costs alone.

How can the Environment Agency and Natural England provide independent review of this project as part of the approvals process and planning application when it is their project?

The Environment Agency and Natural England will provide relevant views to the local planning authority, who will need to decide if the project should go ahead. If they feel that the government agencies are unable to provide an impartial view they can commission an independent view from elsewhere.

This is the same for all flood risk management projects that the Environment Agency promote and we have a separation between our 'regulatory' and 'development' roles.

How do we know our modelling work will be accurate?

Modelling like this has been used on numerous projects around the country. It has successfully shown the impact of the scheme and predicted the outcomes. It is common for monitoring to be put in place after the works are completed to confirm that the study area has changed as predicted. Our consultants, Jacobs and ABPmer have worked separately and together on at least 20 different projects with similar objectives to this project.

The software being used is internationally recognised, specialist software that is tested, maintained and subject to independent checks. Jacobs and ABPmer work to internationally recognised management systems for quality. The data used in the model build is validated and checked throughout the process, including using local level data and past flooding



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records. The Environment Agency also use internal specialists to check on the modelling work to make sure that the model has been built correctly and that the levels of accuracy achieved are appropriate.

Will it affect my house insurance premiums?

The proposal should have no impact on insurance cover as the present risk from rivers and the sea is outside of the developed area of Ridge, and we are seeking to sustain that position. However it is our practice in situations requiring clarification of flood risk status of a particular location, influenced by changes in our mapping of flood risk or the infrastructure in place, to provide a letter of evidence for householders to share with their insurance company, if requested.

How much disruption will there be during construction?

At this stage in the project, we don't know what construction traffic will be needed or what routes it will take. We will work with the appointed contractor to minimise disruption as much as possible. It is likely that the routes will be similar to those used for many years by the clay pit traffic. We are hoping to use as much material as possible from the site itself to minimise the amount of construction traffic.

How long will it take to complete the project?

We are still developing the project and it is hard to give specific dates when we don't yet know what our investigations might uncover. The Environment Agency are leading on the project and we have a comprehensive assurance process to follow that means we will have to pause the design work at key points to get approval to continue with the project. We are coming to the end of our outline design work which included ground investigations (boreholes to install water monitoring equipment and to obtain soil samples), topographic surveys, tidal modelling work and ecological and archaeological assessments. We will then start the detailed design. We will have to get planning permission for the work. At this stage, we anticipate that the construction work will take two to three years, although this is only indicative at this stage. We expect the majority of the work to be carried out in the summer and we will likely pause work over the winter.

Why are we talking to the public now?

We are keen to continue to involve the local community as much as possible throughout the project. Engaging early has helped us to identify local concerns and to address them at an early stage of the project. Your views are important to us. Wherever possible the project team will take account of the local needs and an open dialogue will be maintained.



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How are we engaging with stakeholders and local communities?

We are committed to sharing information and listening to feedback throughout this project. We held our first public exhibition on 3 October 2017 and the second on 28 November 2018. In addition to the public exhibitions, we have held several meetings with the local parish councils, groups and organisations. We have held meetings with local residents to share the results of the surface water and groundwater surveys. We have set up a Stakeholder Liaison Group and have held two meetings to date.

We will continue throughout the project to share our proposals with the local community and other agencies and organisations in order to seek feedback. In due course, we will be applying for planning permission for the project which will have its own statutory consultation procedure.

The project has a webpage:

<https://www.dorsetcoast.com/groups/the-moors-at-arne-coastal-change-project/>

where people can access the latest information on the project and a dedicated email address

TheMoorsatArne@environment-agency.gov.uk,

please contact us at any time with questions, queries and suggestions.

What happens if the project doesn't go ahead? Is doing nothing an option?

The Environment Agency have to create inter – tidal habitat to comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI no. 2010/490) due to the impacts of the Poole Bay, Poole Harbour and Wareham Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. After careful review of the whole strategy area and many discussions with local authorities, landowners, Natural England and other interested parties, The Moors at Arne site was chosen as the most suitable available site for adaptation to provide this habitat. It also meets the landowner, RSPB's aspirations for the site. If, for any reason the project cannot continue here, then the EA will have to find another site to create the inter-tidal habitat.

The existing tidal embankments are of similar construction to the other embankments along the River Frome and maintenance is becoming increasingly expensive, technically challenging and unsustainable for all these embankments. If this scheme does not go ahead then the tidal embankments of The Moors would likely be treated the same as the other River Frome embankments and the EA and RSPB would continue with minimum maintenance in the short term and in the medium to long term, they are likely to overtop more frequently. This will introduce saline water to the SAC, SPA and Ramsar designated freshwater habitats.



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Why are we creating the habitat near Ridge, have we looked at other sites?

In December 2014 the Poole Bay, Poole Harbour and Wareham Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy was published, following public consultation. This looked at the whole harbour area and assessed the likely losses of habitat due to the presence of flood and erosion defences and also considered the locations that could be suitable for creating the required habitat. This concluded that The Moors was the most suitable site. In developing this strategy, we looked at a large number of possible sites and carried out pre-feasibility work for three sites.

The 2011 Shoreline Management Plan for the wider Two Bays area from Durlston Head in the west to Hurst Spit to the east, (www.twobays.net/smp2.htm) identified that the area along the River Frome around Wareham, including The Moors, could be suitable for managed realignment. This project is part of implementing the Shoreline Management Plan.