

MUDEFORD SANDBANK – COASTAL PROTECTION REPAIRS 2021 – POTENTIAL IMPACT ON NESTING BIRDS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Repair works planned for the Mudeford Sandbank include repairs (replacement of displaced rocks) to groynes S10, S11, S12 and S13. In addition, groynes S2-S13 are to have the groyne markers at the seaward end replaced. Replacing the groyne markers will involve movement of existing rocks to enable new markers to be securely installed and the use of heavy machinery. In places it may be necessary to ramp up existing beach material over the upper parts of the groyne to enable machine access.

1.2 A small compound of approximately 9 x 25 metres will be required to support the works and this will be located close to groyne 13, adjacent to a part of the spit fenced off to encourage use by nesting and roosting birds.

1.3 The general character of the area is shown in the currently available Google aerial photos (Figs 1 and 2).



Fig 1 – Location of compound and groynes to be repaired (groynes S10-S13)

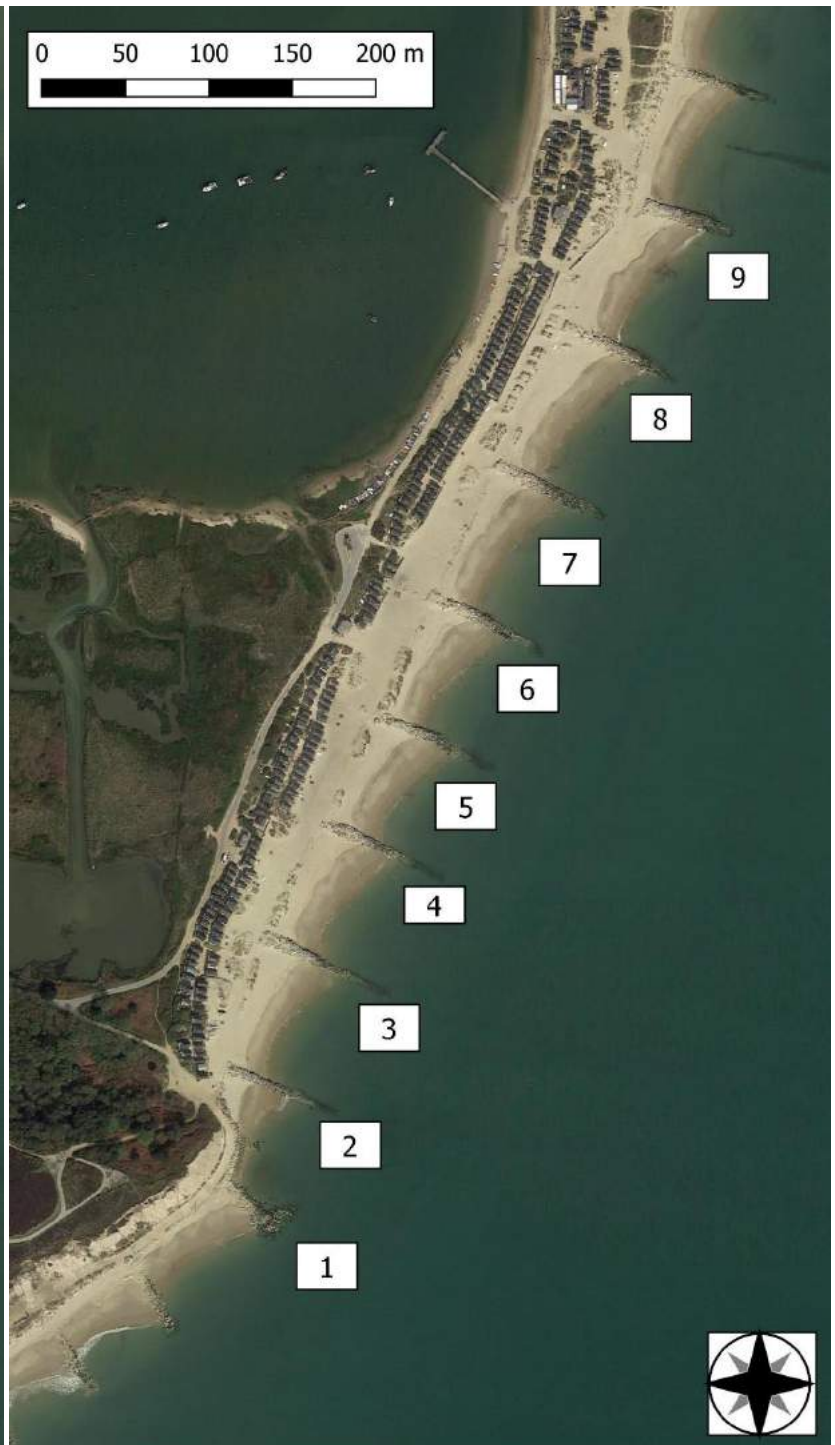


Fig 2 – Location of groyne markers to be replaced (groynes S1-S9)

2. POTENTIAL USE BY NESTING BIRDS

2.1 Fig 3 shows the intended compound area. This is an area of very short grass and bare sand just above high water mark with small clumps of slightly taller dune vegetation. The area is immediately to the south of the area fenced off and intended to be used for nesting and roosting birds. There is no scrub or other cover suitable for birds to conceal nests and the area is quite trampled and probably very disturbed by walkers (including dog walkers). It is unlikely that any ground nesting birds would use this area; the much larger fenced area to the north being far more suitable (it is believed a pair of Oystercatchers has attempted to nest within the fenced area in recent years).



Fig 3 – Proposed compound area



Fig 4 – Groyne S12

2.2 Fig 4 shows groyne S12, which is typical of the habitats found on the groynes due to be repaired (groynes S10-S13). The lower parts of these groynes are often under water at high tides and the beach levels are such that the height of the rock structure above the beach is relatively low, rising to the landward end where sand has accumulated over the groyne and sparse pioneer dune vegetation is present. The rocks forming the groynes are large and provide few secure potential nest sites. There is open public access and levels of disturbance by people and dogs is likely to be high. Whilst it is possible that birds could attempt to nest on the groynes it is thought unlikely that this would occur given the structure and character of the habitat.

2.3 Figs 5 and 6 show groyne S4. This is typical of groynes S1 -S9 which are due to have the markers at the seaward ends replaced.



Figs 5 and 6 – landward end of groyne S4

The sites for the groyne markers themselves are often submerged by the tides with no scope for birds to nest. Beach levels are also high here and with the groyne (and associated vegetation, when present) are relatively low. No scrub is present in these areas and cover is extremely limited. It is considered that there would be few potential nest sites

for birds. If it is necessary to ramp beach material over the landward end of the groynes this is unlikely to affect any nesting birds.

2.5 Although the potential for birds to nest on the groynes is very limited, there are areas of suitable habitat nearby, including areas of scrub generally above high tide levels on the landward side of the groynes and the fenced off area to the north of the proposed work compound. It also known that birds such as Oystercatcher and Rock Pipit (both relatively uncommon breeding birds in Dorset) have nested or attempted to nest along this area of coast in recent years. Whilst the nests of all bird species are protected, it was felt that additional survey visits should be made, to try to ensure that no nesting birds were present in the areas to be affected by the works.

3. BIRDS RECORDED ON SURVEY VISITS

3.1 Three survey visits were made (two in the early morning and one in the evening) and birds seen recorded, with particular emphasis on those on or close to the groynes or compound area, with notes taken of any behaviour that would suggest nesting. The results of these visits are shown in table 1. A further visit (by Jez Martin, the Council's Biodiversity Officer) is due to take place immediately before works are undertaken.

Date	5 th May 2021	10 th May 2021	19 th May 2021
Time onsite	06:45 – 10:00	17:00 – 19:00	06:20-09:30
Weather	Sunny but cool, wind SW 3, cloud 5/8, dry	Sunny but cool, wind SW 3-4, cloud 2/8, dry	Cloudy and cool becoming warm and sunny, wind SW 2, cloud 8/8 to 2/8, light rain then dry
Birds on/very near groynes	Pied Wagtail (presumed pair in fenced area N of compound, flew towards beach huts, House Sparrow large numbers in scrub behind beach and around beach huts, including calling and singing birds – suggesting breeding, singles or two birds seen to fly to dunes and forage around high tide mark and then return inland, Ringed Plover one perched on groyne S6 for short period and two on groyne S5, Rock Pipit – see para 3.2	Cormorant perched on groyne marker (groyne S1), Sanderling (2) on beach close to groyne, House Sparrow large numbers in scrub behind beach and around beach huts, including calling and singing birds – suggesting breeding, singles or two birds seen to fly to dunes and forage around high tide mark and then return inland;	Rock Pipit see para 3.2, House Sparrow 1-2 birds seen flying to several groynes apparently foraging, large numbers in scrub between beach huts and groynes, Turnstone (3+) party flying along shore, 1-3 briefly settled on various groynes, Dunlin (3) settled on groynes briefly, Sanderling (3) on beach near groynes, Common Sandpiper 1 flew from groyne S13 to groyne S12 Wheatear – 1 seen on various groynes (possibly same bird)
Other birds recorded (generally flying along or rearing on beach or flying over	Cormorant (2), Whimbrel (4), Turnstone (12), Starling , Woodpigeon , Carrion Crow , Sandwich Tern , Dunlin (18), Goldfinch , Greenfinch , Wheatear one in fenced off area north of compound, Mediterranean Gull	Sandwich Tern several moving along coast), Carrion Crow ; Whitethroat singing from scrub near south most beach hut	Sandwich Tern , Woodpigeon , Carrion Crow , Linnet , Greenfinch , Jackdaw , Oystercatcher (seen flying on harbour side of beach huts), Greater Black-backed Gull , Herring Gull , Black-headed Gull , Common Scoter (12 off-shore). Whitethroat (singing in scrub at beach huts), Sand Martin several including some visiting cliff nesting holes in Hengistbury Head.

Table 1 – results of survey visits

3.2 Although a number of birds were seen in or near the groynes, from the type of bird and their behaviour most were judged to be feeding or moving through. The only species for which territorial behaviour was observed was the Rock **Pipit**, for which the following records were made:

5th May 2021 –

1 heard (flight call) in vicinity of groyne S3 and one seen on the ground around groynes S1-S2

10th May 2021 –

Not recorded

19th May 2021 –

1 present on groyne S1 from 06:20 to 07:06. Initially this bird was resting on a large rock close to the groyne marker, the rock being within the splash zone though the tide was low at the time (see Fig 7), the bird subsequently moved to a lower part of the groyne and could be seen feeding amongst the green algae (Fig 8). It then sang briefly (also undertaking a song flight) and then flew towards the groynes to the south.

1 present on groyne S6 from 07:20 to 07:25 – initially perched on a rock midway along the groyne, a bird (possibly, but not definitely, the same bird) was heard to sing, the perched bird then flew off southwards to Hengistbury Head.



Fig 7 – Initial location of Rock pipit on groyne S1 (shown by red arrow) 19th May 2021



Fig 8 – Rock Pipit foraging on algae on groyne S1 19th May 2021

3.3 The behaviour of the Rock Pipit seen on 19th May 2021, suggests a bird holding territory, though there was no indication of nest building, an occupied nest or the bird feeding young. From the observations made in 2.2 and the structure of the groyne shown in Fig 7, it is felt unlikely that a nest is situated on groyne S1 itself (or on groynes 2-13, which are subject to the proposed works). It may be significant that both birds recorded on 19th May 2021 were seen to fly off southwards towards Hengistbury Head and it is possible that a nest is located in that area.

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4.1 The possible presence of nesting Rock Pipits was raised by the Christchurch Ornithological Group (CHOG). The latest published report (2019) of the group states that four pairs of Rock Pipit bred at Hengistbury Head, producing at least two juveniles, with five birds including juveniles being seen on the sand spit on 20th July 2019.

4.2 Whilst the survey visits were in progress a number of bird watchers were spoken to (including CHOG members) in order to gain any additional information on birds nesting in the area. The presence of Rock Pipits in the area (as well as previous nesting attempts by Oystercatcher near the spit) was noted in these conversations though no information was obtained suggesting any current nest sites on the groynes where work is to be carried out.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 No evidence was found of any birds nesting within the groynes or the compound area. Although it is not possible to state categorially that birds will not nest in these areas at a later date, the structure of the habitat and the level of disturbance means that this is unlikely. However, the territorial behaviour shown by the Rock Pipit seen on 19th May 2021 suggests that this bird may have a territory in this area (groynes S1-S6), though there was no evidence of a nest site on the groyne itself. Given this and the habitat preferences of this species, it is recommended that the additional survey visit planned to take place prior to the work being carried out should check this area in particular.

5.2 This survey only covered the Mudeford groynes (groynes S1-S13) as shown in Figs 1 and 2. Given that Rock Pipits are known to breed at Hengistbury Head itself, any work to the groynes or cliffs in that area would need to consider the possible impact on nesting birds.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.1 The information provided by CHOG in general, and by Leo Pike in particular is gratefully acknowledged.

HIGHCLIFFE AND STEAMER POINT - COASTAL PROTECTION REPAIRS 2021 – POTENTIAL IMPACT ON NESTING BIRDS

7. INTRODUCTION

7.1 Repairs to existing rock groynes, replacement of groyne markers and provision of additional rock armour to that previously installed at the Steamer Point footpath are planned for spring/summer 2021. In order to assess the potential impact of these works on nesting birds in the area between Chewton Bunny and Steamer Point, a 'walk-through' assessment of the potential of these structures was carried out on 30th April 2021.

7.2 The general character of these areas is shown in the currently available Google aerial photos (Figs 9 and 10).

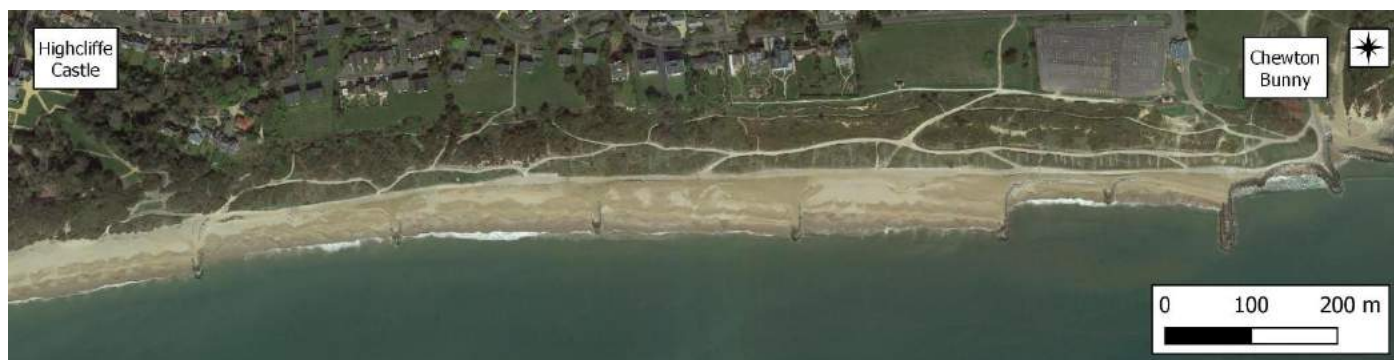


Fig 9 - current Google aerial photograph of groynes between Chewton Bunny and Highcliffe Castle.

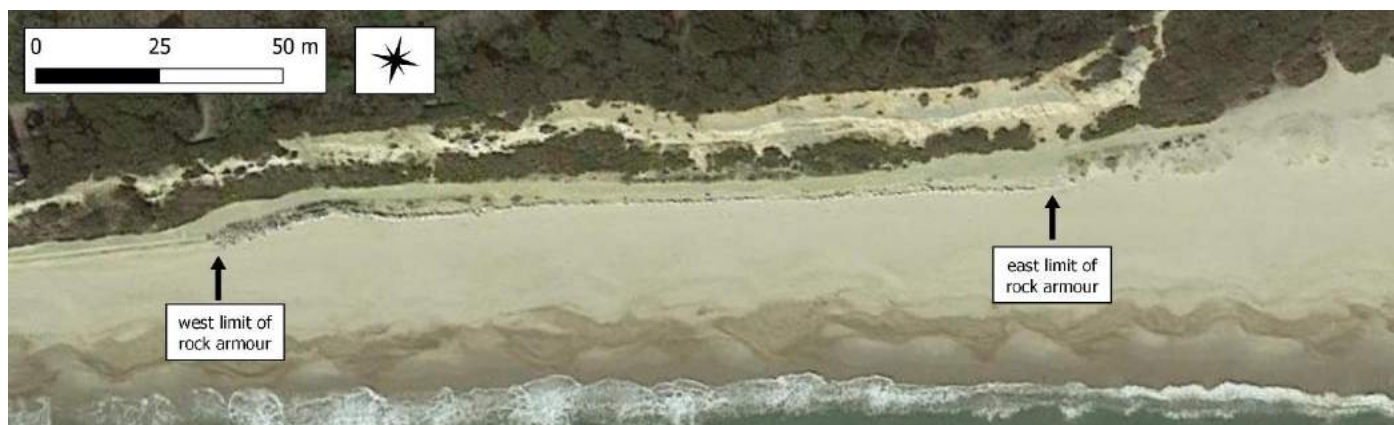


Fig 10 – Current Google aerial photograph of footpath at Steamer Point.

8. POTENTIAL USE BY NESTING BIRDS

8.1 Figs 11 / 12 and 13 / 14 show representative sections of the groynes and rock armour of the Steamer Point footpath respectively. It can be seen that the structures are composed of relatively large, irregularly shaped blocks of stone. Although there are crevices allowing access into the structures and almost certainly voids within them, the size of the rocks mean that these would not provide protection from predators. The structures are largely devoid of vegetation and are surrounded by shingle or sandy beach material with very little vegetation. Sea levels are such that the strand line and splash zone are quite high up the groyne (see Fig 9). The rock armour at the Steamer Point footpath is several pieces of stone high at the west end (Fig 13) but virtually at beach level at the east end and for much of its length (Fig 14).

8.2 The beach and footpath are likely to be heavily used by the public (including dog walkers) and many such users were seen on the visit. The level of access and lack of shelter means any birds attempting to nest on these structures would be subject to considerable disturbance. Nearby, immediately behind the path running along the top of the beach are extensive areas of scrub and woodland, providing many potential nest sites for song birds.

8.3 Birds recorded on the visit included pairs of Herring Gull (on the beach) and Great Black-backed Gull (on the sea), a single Cormorant (briefly on the sea) and passing Black-headed Gulls, Mediterranean Gulls and Sandwich Terns. However, none of these showed any particular interests in the groynes. The only birds seen on the groynes



Fig 11 – General structure of groynes



Fig 12 – Detailed structure of groyne



Fig 13 – Rock armour of Steamer Point footpath (west end)



Fig 14 – Rock armour of Steamer Point footpath (east end)

themselves were three Wheatear on groyne 8. The Wheatear is a rare breeding bird along the coast of Dorset and these birds were probably migrants; and unlikely to breed in this location for the reasons given in 8.1 and 8.2. The only other land birds observed on the groynes were House Sparrows, of which two single birds and two groups of two seen to make short visits to the groyne (and return to the scrub above the beach afterwards). Although, not observed directly these birds were thought to be foraging around the strand line. A single Feral Pigeon was also seen on the beach between the groynes. Although seen on or near the groynes, none of these birds showed any signs of song, display or other breeding behaviour. No birds were seen on the Steamer Point footpath or the adjacent rock armour.

8.4 In contrast the scrub and woodland, above the beach held a wide variety of birds including Blackbird, Robin, Greenfinch, House Sparrow, Chiffchaff, Dunnock, Woodpigeon, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Magpie and Stonechat. Many of these birds were in song, in apparent pairs or showed other signs of nesting.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Whilst it is not possible to categorically state that no birds will attempt to nest within the coastal protection structures in this area when works take place, it is felt that the likelihood of birds nesting is extremely low given the character of the area. Despite some birds being present when the inspection was made there was no indication that these birds were likely to nest on or in the immediate vicinity of the structures.

FRIARS CLIFF AND AVON BEACH – COASTAL PROTECTION REPAIRS – POTENTIAL IMPACT ON NESTING BIRDS

10. INTRODUCTION

10.1 Repairs to existing rock groynes and/or replacement of groyne markers at this location are planned for spring/summer 2021. These groynes are relatively small structures and for much of the time the lower parts of are covered by the tide. The area is also subject to heavy recreational use. For these reasons it was felt that the potential for birds to nest in these structures was relatively low. However, as a precaution, A 'walk-through' assessment of the area was carried out on 5th May 2021 to check for possible nesting birds.

10.2 The general character of this area is shown in the currently available Google aerial photos reproduced in Fig 15 below.

11. POTENTIAL USE BY NESTING BIRDS

11.1 Fig 16 shows a view along the beach and the general character of the groynes. Fig 17 shows the structure of one of the more substantial groynes. As anticipated, it is evident that much of the seaward end of the groynes are underwater at high tides. The higher parts of the groynes are composed of relatively large rocks but with very limited height overall height above current beach levels. Whilst there are gaps between the rocks and potentially voids within which birds could nest in, such sites would be very vulnerable to disturbance and predators. The groynes and adjacent areas are almost completely devoid of vegetation and there is little cover to conceal nests.

11.2 The beach is clearly heavily used for recreation with significant numbers of people present on the day, some of whom were dog walkers. Levels of disturbance are likely to be very high.

11.3 The only birds observed on the groyne or nearby beach were House Sparrows, Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls and a single Carrion Crow. The House Sparrows were foraging around the high-tide line on the groynes, whilst the Herring Gulls were feeding on a washed-up fish and the Black-headed Gull were close to people eating on the beach. None of these birds showed any evidence of nesting or territorial behaviour.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 Whilst it is not possible to categorically state that no birds will attempt to nest within the coastal protection structures in this area when works take place, it is felt that the likelihood of birds nesting is extremely low given the character of the area. Despite some birds being present when the inspection was made there was no indication that such birds were likely to nest on or in the immediate vicinity of the structures.



Fig 15 – Current Google aerial photograph of shoreline at Friars Cliff – Avon Beach



Fig 16 – general view of groynes at Avon Beach

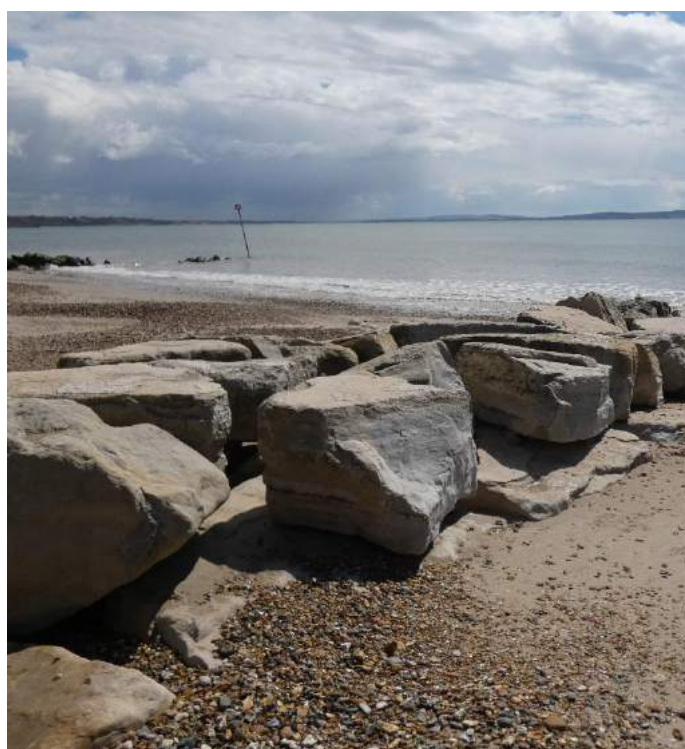


Fig 17 – detail of typical groyne at Avon Beach

This report is dated 20th May 2021

Final visit 26th May 2021

Following the completion of these surveys, a further check of the Mudeford site was carried out 26th May 2021. An Oystercatcher was observed in the fenced off area around 30m in, but was not confirmed as nesting. The proposed compound area is outside of the fenced off area and the size of the contractor's compound has been reduced to further mitigate against any effect this could have on birds within the area. There will be a look out for any change in bird sightings and/or behaviour during the course of the works.

For further information please contact: coastal@bcpcouncil.gov.uk