

Dorset VIP Project Newsletter – Spring 2021

Before



After



Restoring the landscape: what the VIP project is all about

Well, what a year!

From extreme Dorset weather to Covid-19 I'm not sure any of us could have predicted recent events, but in spite of them all we are making fantastic progress – and we couldn't have done that without you, so thank you.

As we move to the next stage of this project, you'll be seeing some new faces on site and around the local area – including mine! I am the Lead Project Manager for the project and am pleased to join the team at such a key moment.

We have now reached the important stage of installing the new electricity cables. Once connected and 'energised', this will allow us to remove the 9km of pylons and overhead line.

The scale and complexity of engineering involved in this project is truly incredible. To give you a flavour of what's involved, we've focused a lot of this issue on our construction work.

There are also some more great finds from our archaeology team.

Lockdown, or not, keeping our team and the wider community safe and well is incredibly important to us. In 2020 this project had no reported cases of Covid-19 transmission and no lost time due to injury. That's quite an achievement and we're working hard to keep it that way.

As ever, if you have any feedback or comments about the project please get in touch using the contact details overleaf.



The road ahead:
Paul Hamnett on site

Paul Hamnett,
Lead Project Manager

Traffic update - what you need to know

The first phase of construction work is now complete, which means that most of the construction vehicles will now be able to use the haul road to get onto site. You might still see some of our vehicles on local roads, but we'll be doing everything we can to keep this to an absolute minimum.

Road closures and diversions are unfortunately not something we are able to avoid but we know from speaking to many of you that this has been a real source of frustration over the last year, and understandably so. Most temporary road closures and diversions are now complete. However, we've needed to close Friar Waddon Lane from 8 March for up to eight weeks and later this year we'll also need to close Coombe Road. We'll be in touch about all future planned closures and diversions, and further information will be shared on our project website.

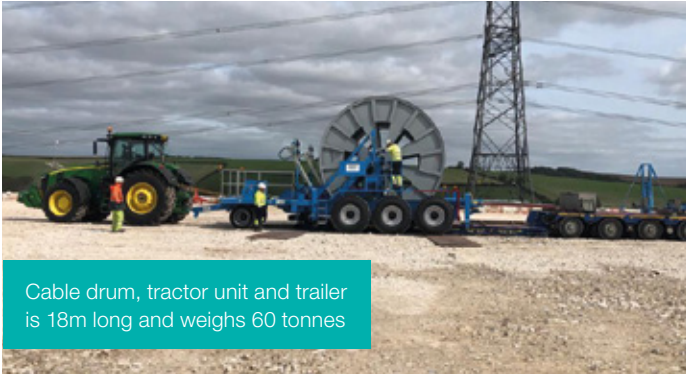
Thank you for bearing with us, we do appreciate it and will always welcome your thoughts and feedback on anything more we can do to keep you informed and ease the process a little.

We're looking to cut down on our use of paper and printing so from next issue, this newsletter will be available via email. If you'd like to keep receiving a paper copy, that's fine. If you'd prefer an electronic copy please let us know by emailing visualimpact@nationalgrid.com with "e-newsletter" as the email subject.

Cable going underground

Cable installation is one of the most important parts of this job, and we are using cutting-edge methods to keep things moving.

We've also had to be innovative given the challenging environment. The team is working with highly experienced and specialist experts from across the UK and Europe as we work with steep gradients, changeable weather conditions, and the famous chalk and rocky ground of the Jurassic Coast.



Cable drum, tractor unit and trailer is 18m long and weighs 60 tonnes



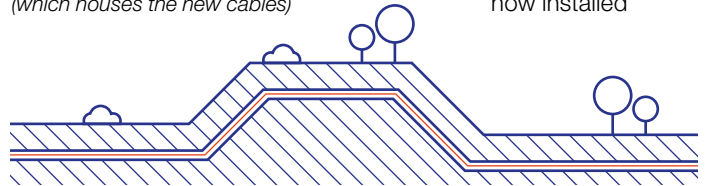
These will house 108km of cable underground



To date (March):

61,330m
of ducting installed
(which houses the new cables)

63.3%
of all ducting
now installed



Springing forwards

For many of us, Spring is a time of hope and new beginnings so it feels fitting that we will be starting work to restore the landscape to its outstanding beauty while we continue progressing with construction. This is what the project is all about – making the amazing rolling downs of Dorset the most beautiful they can be.

Weathering the storm

The heavy rain and storms that swept across the region last year caused widespread flooding, with significant silt run-off in areas surrounding the project site.

We've spoken to many of you that have been affected and have seen first-hand how upsetting and disruptive this is. We really are sorry for any disruption and want to do everything we can to help. We continue to actively manage this and are working closely with local partners and stakeholders including the Environment Agency to improve our onsite mitigation measures.

Onsite, we've dug new deeper ditches and channels to divert water away from sensitive areas. We've also put in place further flood defences, sandbags, and straw bales as well as additional new fencing, mats and netting to catch more of the silt run off.

Throughout the rest of the project, we will continue to monitor things closely and make further improvements if they are needed. We'd like to thank all of you who have spoken with us and shared where you think we needed to do more – we want to work with you to make sure that our project does not have a negative impact on you, our neighbours.

We're also going to start building the structures – known as sealing end compounds – which connect the new underground line to the remaining pylons. The specialist team are already working on our plans to disconnect the overhead wires so we can take down the pylons.



Keeping the roadway clear

Snaking around

Camouflage champion,
the Dorset adder



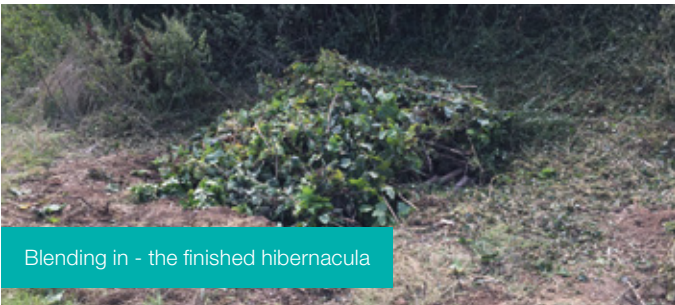
Over the summer, the team on site were joined by some adders along one stretch of the route, with evidence of grass snakes too. Guy Stanley (RSK ADAS) found the snakes while working on vegetation clearance, making it a red letter day for the whole team.

A snake expert taught our onsite environment specialists (including Liz Greenaway, who appeared in our last newsletter) how to build two alternative homes or 'hibernacula', not a standard day at work!

In agreement with the local landowner, we found an area which would be suitable for a permanent snake home. Using sticks and logs from a nearby hedge (which was cut to create the entrance to the site), the hibernacula have lots of crevices and holes for the snakes to breed and sleep in, which is particularly important over the colder months.



Building the hibernacula



Blending in - the finished hibernacula



Community cheer

There was a twinkle of light and hope in Winterbourne Abbas and Winterbourne Steepleton this Christmas in the form of the Christmas tree we donated. We hope it helped put a smile on some faces and light up these darker months. Spring is now thankfully afoot so look out for the hampers at Chesil Bank and Martinstown Parish Council spring raffles which will be packed with exciting goodies.

Community Grant Fund - are you ready to apply?

This year has shown us how critical charity is to supporting our keyworkers, looking after our most vulnerable and maintaining outdoor spaces that have, in recent months, proved more important than ever before. We're proud of our ongoing fantastic Community Grant Programme which aims to support the local communities in which we work through providing funding for projects run by local charities and community groups.

If you have a project that meets our criteria, we'd love to hear from you. We'll be re-opening for applications in April. If you'd like to learn more about the Community Grant Programme, then please visit:

www.nationalgrid.com/responsibility/community/community-grant-programme

If you have any questions about the Community Grant Fund, then please call the number on the website.

A Day in the Life

Aimee Tavana is a Project Engineer the Dorset VIP project. After starting her career in Event Management, Aimee then qualified in Project Management and started work with National Grid in February 2020. She has supported a variety of projects in the South region prior to joining the Dorset VIP team.

It has been an interesting few months since joining National Grid, with plenty to learn and people to meet, and a national lockdown to navigate! I am really enjoying being involved in a project like Dorset VIP, which is so different from anything I've done before.

The most exciting part of this project is that you can see the changes the project is making. Every day, there are transformations made across the 8.8km route which nudge us closer to our end goal. It is amazing to be able to physically see the difference that's happening around you.

Outside of work, I enjoy yoga, baking, and ice-cream making. Recent favourites have been chocolate brownie, apple crumble, and tahini-and-walnut flavours, but I'm always open to suggestions!



The Romans in Dorset

Over the last six months we have focused our excavations primarily on a small Roman settlement located on an exposed hillside. The site was identified back in 2018 and we believed it to comprise small enclosures of late Roman date, a corn drier and several large millstones indicating crop processing. We have now identified eight rectangular stone-built structures and a whole overlapping series of quarry pits, far exceeding our expectations. In addition to the previously identified corn-drier, two large malting ovens have been exposed. The size of the millstones would require either cattle, water or perhaps even slave-power to operate, indicating a relatively sizable production output.

Other archaeological updates

We have also uncovered evidence of the people who occupied these structures in the form of 34 burials encompassing all age ranges from neonates to adults. Pottery from the graves has been dated to the late Iron Age / early Roman period, suggesting the activity within the site spanned from the late Iron Age (1st century BC) through to the late Roman period (4th century AD), approximately 500 years.



Burial excavation within a Roman building

- 34 late Iron Age and Roman burials
- Activity spans approximately 500 years
- Excavation of late Iron Age and Roman settlement comprising 8 stone buildings



Corn drying oven



Bead from bracelet



Bone textile comb

Please check our website dorset.nationalgrid.co.uk for more information about what we have found on site.

All photos on this page provided by Oxford Archaeology

A word from Morgan Sindall Infrastructure

**MORGAN
SINDALL**
INFRASTRUCTURE

Our delivery partner, Morgan Sindall Infrastructure, is working hard to restore the beautiful Dorset landscape.

"It's great to be working on this project to restore the natural beauty of the Dorset AONB. The complexity of the engineering to put 9km of overhead cables underground means we're always having to innovate to deliver the benefits that this project will bring to the local community and visitors to this area.

Thinking outside the box and working with international experts makes this project really special.

"This project has had its challenges, and we've seen the hard work our team has consistently put in. As we move into a busier period over the Spring and Summer, we continue to progress with work on site – in accordance with government guidance – and our programme is on track." **Ian Maddison, operations director at Morgan Sindall Infrastructure**



Get in touch

We're always keen to hear from you. Please get in touch by calling **0330 134 0051**, or by sending an email to visualimpact@nationalgrid.com. If you'd like to learn more about the project, please visit dorset.nationalgrid.co.uk.