

Unused brent geese refuge on Castle Field in Southsea is removed

A CITY refuge for endangered birds that went unused over the winter has been dismantled.

By Fiona Callingham

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The fences around Castle Field in [Southsea](#) that were set up as a sanctuary for migratory brent geese in October, have been taken down allowing residents to use the field again. And decoy geese that failed to attract the birds to the site have also been removed

It was planned returning geese would use the spot as a haven after nearby Clarence Playing Field - which the birds used to visit - was taken over by the Southsea sea defence scheme.

However, the birds never used the site and were instead spotted on other areas of Southsea Common as well as the Tenth Hole golf course and its neighbouring cricket field.

A Portsmouth City Council spokeswoman said: 'The decision to fence Castle Field was undertaken with Natural England and the location was selected as the best option from a range of sites.

'We were legally required to provide an area for the brent geese because a compound for the Southsea Coastal Scheme had been built on the Clarence Playing Field in Southsea - an area previously used by the overwintering birds.'

It was originally planned the refuge would be in place until March when the geese typically leave Portsmouth, and would be set up every winter until the sea defences are complete.

However, it will be reviewed before next winter.

The spokeswoman added: 'Discussions will be held with Natural England prior to the next season for the overwintering birds. A decision will then be made on our future use of Castle Field as a brent geese refuge.'



The Brent geese at the Tenth Hole Golf Course, Southsea, on Monday, November 30. Picture: Fiona Callingham

FAKE birds and a cordoned-off nesting ground have so far failed to attract migratory birds returning to Portsmouth as planned.

By Fiona Callingham

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A flock of protected Brent geese has taken up residence at the golf course and the cricket field in Southsea - ignoring Castle Field that was fenced off especially for them.

Decoy geese were also installed in the field by Portsmouth City Council in October to entice them to nest there.

It came as one of their previously used nesting grounds was needed as part of the Southsea Coastal Scheme project that started this autumn.

A Portsmouth City Council spokeswoman said: 'As part of the Southsea Coastal Scheme, we are using the MoD field as a compound area. This site was previously inhabited by Brent geese so we are legally obliged to provide an alternative site in the near vicinity.

'Castle Field was identified as the most appropriate site for the refuge area, in conjunction with Natural England.

'We monitor the Castle Field site weekly and will continue to do so throughout winter, sharing our findings with Natural England.

'We are aware of Brent geese on the cricket field, however it must be noted that they tend to move between several sites in Portsmouth and have used Castle Field previously.'

Bill Branson, the owner of the Tenth Hole cafe, said the geese have been returning to the golf course every year for at least the past 10 years.

The 36-year-old said: 'They probably arrived about two weeks ago.'

'They come here every year, and we've been here 10 years now. It doesn't cause too much of an issue except there's quite a lot of bird mess that gets walked through the tea rooms if customers have played golf and then come in.'

The Tenth Hole tea rooms and golf course is set to fully re-open this week following the second coronavirus lockdown.

Mr Branson added: 'The geese don't stop the golfers. If people are playing golf they generally fly onto the cricket pitch until the golf is finished.'

As reported, the site at Castle Field will be opened up as a public space

It is planned it will be used as a Brent geese refuge every winter until 2026.