



*Work in progress on the coastal site.*



*Work commences on the site for the pipeline.*



*A 'no-go area' was created to protect the nesting bird.*

An ecological survey of the largest minewater treatment project ever planned by the Authority, resulted in Operation Meadow Pipit, as work commenced on the coastal scheme at Dawdon, six miles south of Sunderland.



*View of the Meadow Pipit nest.*

# Operation Meadow Pipit

## As Coastal Scheme Takes Place

At the design stage, an ecological survey for newts and birds was planned, and because the scheme started in early summer, it involved an ecological walk over the site to look for nesting birds.

Carried out with the help of an ecologist from Northumbrian Wildlife Trust, the survey highlighted that meadow pipits and stonechats were nesting in the area. So before construction started, the Authority identified an area to protect nesting birds.

A meadow pipit was found nesting in an area being stripped of soil before pipework was installed to treat minewater from the former Dawdon Colliery at a treatment plant being built on an industrial estate 800 metres from the coastal outfall.

So a fence was erected to create a 20-metre 'no-go area' while the meadow pipit was nesting.

"Once the fledglings had flown the nest we were able to resume work in that area," says Alistair Byfield, Project Manager with the Authority's Environment Department.

Because of the high iron content in the water, the scheme is designed to protect drinking water supplied to households in the Sunderland area.

Designed to treat up to 150 litres of minewater a second, the scheme involves pumping water uphill through an underground pipe for treatment, after which the water will gravitate back to the coast.

An energy efficient aspect of this scheme is the way in which the water will gravitate out to sea along two pipes which are being constructed under the shore. The water will flow a distance of about 300 metres, 100 metres of which are under the sea.

"Whatever time of year we start a scheme there will usually be a wildlife situation to address," adds Alistair Byfield. "We were pleased that the meadow pipit successfully reared her young before we commenced excavation to install the pipework for this major scheme, which is due to come on stream in October 2008."

"There was also a stonechat nesting in the shaft compound. Even though it was not affected by the work, we also put a fence around that area to prevent any accidental disturbance."



*Left: Nose's Point, where the water gravitates towards the sea. Above: The Meadow Pipit.*