



Images courtesy of Mike Hodgson

National Trust: Sutton Hoo

The National Trust and its project manager AECOM required a contractor able to conduct the major refurbishment of its Sutton Hoo visitor centre – a key site that showcases an Anglo-Saxon royal burial ground and artefacts that date back to the sixth century.

The solution

The £2.5m 47-week contract was awarded to Building Solutions (the specialist building and refurbishment arm of VINCI Facilities), due to it having previously delivered exemplary projects for both the National Trust and AECOM.

Now complete, the following was vital to the project's success:

Delivering value

As the National Trust had an ambitious scope of works with a limited budget, Building Solutions worked hard to create cost savings of £1.2m. For example:

- » In the exhibition hall, air conditioning units were installed rather than radiators, reducing both installation and running costs.
- » Roof-lights were fitted with light-reducing film rather than blinds, creating reductions in both cost and maintenance.
- » A concrete slab in the courtyard was formed using a metal shutter system rather than traditional timber shuttering, resulting in significant time savings.

Community support

Building Solutions managed 16 supply chain partners. A policy of sourcing local firms whenever possible ensured that more than £1m was injected into the local economy.

Flexibility

The project required a flexible approach from Building Solutions, as c.35 significant variations were received mid-project, leading to four months of additional works. While the facility was closed throughout the original time frame, it was required to be open to customers throughout the four-month extension. Therefore, Building Solutions adjusted its programme to ensure that essential areas, such as the welcome centre, were prioritised and completed in readiness for visitors arriving, while works elsewhere continued.

With doors open to c.1,000 visitors a day, safety was of paramount importance. To minimise risk, Building Solutions developed rigorous traffic management plans and erected secure hoarding to prevent access to work areas.

Efficient logistics

A key aspect of the works saw the erection of a 20m-high observation tower half a mile away from the visitor centre, designed to provide stunning views over the royal burial grounds. As the tower's location required HGVs to traverse farmland that contained badger sets, there was risk of land collapsing under the weight of the vehicles. However, by utilising a structural engineer and conducting ground penetrating radar surveys, Building Solutions was able to efficiently assess the risk and ensure the safe movement of all vehicles.

SCOPE OF WORKS

- » Conversion and extension of existing buildings to create a new welcome centre.
- » Refurbishment works to visitor shop and café.
- » Upgrades to the exhibition hall, including the installation of alarms and humidity controls designed to safeguard priceless artefacts.
- » Installation of exhibitions, showcases and audiovisuals across the site.
- » Design, manufacture and installation of a 27m-long sculpture representing the famous Anglo-Saxon burial ship, made of rusted steel and concrete.
- » Erection of a 20m-high observation tower, made of galvanised steel with metal and timber cladding.
- » Minor demolition works.
- » Remodelling of main courtyard.
- » Improvements to car park, paths and landscaping.

KEY RESULTS

- » Delivered on budget and within an agreed time frame extension.
- » Zero accidents and environmental incidents.
- » Cost savings of £1.2m delivered to the client.



BUILDING SOLUTIONS



National Trust

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