

# Ouse Washes

## Middle Level Barrier Bank works

 December 2019

### What's happening?

We are now at the end of the third year of construction. This year we have been working between Welney and the railway bridge and between Welches Dam and the A142 (Mepal). We have also been completing a short length of bank at Earith as we have completed the Earith Sluice refurbishment works. Issues we have encountered include:

- Evolving design and material inconsistency: we have come across areas of the bank that need more material - resulting in a change to the intended bank profile, increasing the footprint of the Middle Level Barrier Bank and the need to import more material.
- Long periods of wet weather: 30 days have been lost to wet weather. This is due to the nature of the material. Once it rains we must stop work as the clay becomes very slippery and dangerous for machinery and staff to work with. The rain has saturated and flooded the haul roads making it difficult to work on the dry days. We have tried to utilise pumps which have been in operation daily to try and remove the water from the haul roads.
- Unplanned roadworks along the A10 and the A142 which has resulted in delivery delays.
- Space constraint: The increased footprint has reduced the space to carry out the work at Welches Dam. This reduced space means that smaller plant will need to be used resulting in importing smaller amounts of material which will increase the time to complete this section.



All the issues above have resulted in the construction programme being extended. Work will start again summer 2020.

### Welmore Lake Sluice – Welney

We have completed the bank raising and haul road reinstatement in this area and the footpath was opened to the public in September. There will be restricted public access of the section between the road and the sluice when we build the Welney barrier.

### Welney to Railway Bridge

We will need to return next year to complete the bank works between Welney and the railway bridge.

We were planning to start construction of the Welney barrier walls in 2020. We conducted



road investigations and found service pipes and cables located within the area where we need to build the barrier foundation. Our work start date for the barrier currently depends on the timescales that the utility companies (Anglian Water and Open Reach) may require to complete any works ahead of our construction start date.

We are liaising with the companies to arrange a site visit with their representatives to discuss the solution in detail.

The footpath diversion will be in place along the Low Bank and Bedford Bank West until summer 2021.

### Railway Bridge to Welches Dam

We have completed the haul road widening ready for next year's work to start.

We re-opened the footpath and the access to the bird hides north of Welches Dam in November 2019. We will close these again in summer 2020, ready for the bank works to start.

### Mepal to Welches Dam

We have almost completed the bank raising in this section and we have grass seeded the finished areas. We will need to return in 2020 to complete a 1km section by the A142.

We have replaced 2 bird hides to the south of Welches Dam which will open to the public, with access along the boardwalk only, at the end of

November. This will close again in summer 2020 for the bank works to be completed.

Please note that the footpath along the top of the bank will remain closed until summer 2021 for the grass to establish.

The footpath diversion remains in place and diverted to the Low Bank until summer 2021.

#### Earith

We have finished works to the tie in and grass seeded. We will be planting shrubs and trees that were removed at Earith Bridge during November 2019.

The public footpath/bridleway from Earith Sluice to Short Drove, Earith will remain closed until summer 2021. This is due to the wet weather preventing completion of the works to this area this year.

We have re-opened a section of the public footpath/bridleway from Short Drove, Earith towards Sutton Gault in November 2019. There will be no through route to Sutton Gault, restricting access to one way, as the bank raising at Sutton Gault needs time for the grass to establish.

#### Sutton Gault

We have completed the wall and surrounding bank work at Sutton Gault. Public footpath in this section will remain closed until September 2020.

#### Sutton Gault to Mepal (A142)

The footpath closure will stay in place until September 2021. The bank raising work is to be finished in 2020 but time is required to allow the grass to establish.

#### Sutton Gault to Chain Corner

We have completed the access road improvement works and inspected the bank, this section has been re-opened.

### Our current programme:

#### Year 4 construction works: July – October 2020

Complete bank raising from Welney to the railway bridge, Welches Dam to Mepal (A142) and from Mepal to Sutton Gault. Start bank raising from Welches Dam to the railway bridge.

#### Year 5 construction works: July – October 2021

Continue the works to raise the embankment between Welches Dam and the railway bridge. Construct the Welney Barrier works.

#### Year 6 construction works: July – October 2022

Complete Welches Dam and the railway bridge by the placing of the armour lock in this section.

### Public footpath diversions

The grass is important on the reservoir bank. As the grass grows, the roots help to stabilise the bank and reduce erosion. We use a mixture of different seeds to get a variety of different grass species.

The grass is growing and the footpath diversions will stay in place until there is sufficient cover to the bank.

We will post diversions and closures on the local site noticeboards. Details of where these are located can be found below.

### Drop-in events

The drop-in events and surgeries that we held in Earith and Welney this year were well received with many people attending. These events are always useful for providing first-hand information, allaying individual concerns and to understand local issues. We will hold more events early next year. Ideally we would have liked to hold these events as the working season ends; however, due to the general election on the 12 December we are in a pre-election period of sensitivity and our public engagement activities are restricted.

### How to find out more

We have notice boards on the bank near Earith Sluice, in the Anchor Inn car park at Sutton Gault, at Welches Dam on the RSPB Reserve and near the Old Parish Hall at Welney.

If you have any questions or comments about the project, please contact our Public Liaison Officer Monica Stonham on 07534 457348

Email: [ousewashesprojectEA@gmail.com](mailto:ousewashesprojectEA@gmail.com)



### Thank you & Merry Christmas

We would like to thank you for your patience and understanding whilst we have been carrying out this important work.

The team wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

### Working in partnership

The project is being carried out by JacksonHyder on behalf of the Environment Agency with support from:

