

Ouse Washes

Middle Level & South Level Barrier Bank works

Background

The Middle Level Barrier Bank is the bank of the Ouse Washes reservoir extending from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice. We need to do some works under Section 10 of the Reservoirs Act 1975 to maintain the safety of the bank.

We started raising the bank in 2017. We have completed sections on the Middle Level Barrier Bank between Welmore Lake Sluice and Welney, between Earith and Manea and on the South Level Barrier Bank between Sutton Gault and Chain Corner.

Due to environmental constraints on the Ouse Washes, we can only work between 15 July and 31 October. However, we have agreed with Natural England an extended working window for this year from 1 June. We will use this time to do winter repairs and haul road work before we start the main bank works in July.

What are we doing?

We are importing clay material from local quarries to raise the crest level of the Middle Level Barrier Bank between Earith and Welmore Lake Sluice.

We have been busy over the winter finalising the detailed design for the demountable flood barrier and planning the next phase of works on the Middle Level Barrier Bank. We've been doing inspections, environmental surveys, maintenance, and vegetation clearance ready for the construction works to start.

What's happening in year 4?

We will start winter damage repairs, caused by the wet weather, and access road works from 1 June ready for the main bank works to start on the 15 July. You will start to see activity on the banks along with site traffic and deliveries to and from the site.

Welney to railway bridge

- Full grass cut.
- Access road tidy and preparation works.
- Repair winter damage caused by the wet weather.
- Earthworks will start from 15 July.

Mepal to Welches Dam

- Access road tidy and preparation works.
- Repair winter damage
- Complete 1.2km section by the A142.

Railway bridge to Welches Dam

- Closing the public right of way.
- Full grass cut.
- Remove bird hides.
- Earthworks will start from 15 July.

RSPB Reserve bird hides

We will need to remove the bird hides to the north of Welches Dam this summer, so that we can raise the bank. We will install the new bird hides once the bank works are complete and they will be ready for use in winter 2021.

We will need to close the bird hides to the South of Welches dam from 15 July to allow us to repair some winter damage and finish the bank works in this section. The Hides will be open again from November 2020.

Sutton Gault to Mepal

We will be finishing off some bank works on the Mepal (Three Fishes) side of the road to regrade the bank around the existing wall.

- Access road tidy.
- Winter damage repair works.
- Earthworks will start from 15 July.

Earith

- Repair winter damage to newly planted trees.
- Complete bridleway improvements and reseed.
- Repair unauthorised access damage and reseed.

We had hoped to re-open the bank at Earith for public use this summer. However, after an inspection in March there was little grass cover on the crest due to evidence of unauthorised access by pedestrians and motorised vehicles, which has resulted in damage to the soil and grass.

The reservoir engineer inspected the bank during May and will not accept the current condition of grass cover on the crest and needs us to repair the damage caused.

The reason we closed the public footpath was to allow the grass to grow, unfortunately the footpath has been accessed and the bank needs to be repaired so that it meets the reservoir design.

Once we have repaired the damage to the crest we will open the footpath as soon as it is safe to do so.

Public footpath diversions

The public footpath closure for the Middle Level Barrier Bank will need to be extended into 2022. Our contractor will only enforce closures on areas where we are working and will try to provide a diversion wherever possible. When we complete sections of the bank, the public footpath will remain closed until there is sufficient grass coverage. We will continue to do monthly inspections to monitor the grass growth.

The grass is very important on the reservoir bank. As the grass grows, the roots help to stabilise the bank and reduce erosion and we cannot open the public right of way until it is safe to do so.

The public footpath and bridleway arrangements:

Middle Level Barrier Bank

Welney – Railway Bridge

The diversion will be in place along Low Bank until summer 2021.

Railway Bridge – Welches Dam

The footpath will close with no access to the RSPB bird hides until November 2020.

Welches Dam to Mepal

The diversion will be in place until summer 2021.

Sutton Gault to Mepal

The closure will stay in place until the inspection in summer 2020. We can then decide when to re-open.

Earith

The closure between Short Drove and Earith Sluice will remain closed for further bridleway improvements and damage repairs.

South Level Barrier Bank

Sutton Gault to Chain Corner

The footpath will open in June 2020 once the grass cuts have been completed.

All diversions are clearly sign posted and you can find details on our noticeboards.

Our Public Liaison Officer (contact details below), will keep you and the public informed of when the footpaths will reopen and liaise directly with Parish Councils.

Flood barrier at Welney construction

As part of the bank raising work we are doing to comply with the Reservoirs Act we need to provide a robust flood barrier on the Welney wash road (A1101) where it intersects the Middle Level Barrier Bank. We have sourced a demountable flood barrier option that will provide this solution and will be bespoke to Welney.

We want to collect the communities' opinions on timings to help us decide the best period to do the work. We expect that the total construction time will be 14 weeks. During these 14 weeks, we will need to close the road for approximately 4-6 weeks to install

the concrete slab across the road. Construction works will start in 2021. **We have published an online survey on our [Ouse Washes Citizen Space information page](#)**

Coronavirus

Coronavirus is causing concern across the country for everyone, both personally and professionally.

Our key priorities are to protect the health, safety and well-being of our own staff, the public and the businesses and partners we work with; to prevent loss of life and serious harm to the environment; and to keep our critical operations running.

We are doing this by following the Government guidelines on reducing the risk of Coronavirus; by seeking to act quickly, decisively and proportionately; and by responding flexibly as the situation develops.

In line with Government guidelines on reducing the risk of Coronavirus, we have put in place arrangements where staff and contractors are:

- Continuing to work on site at the Ouse Washes Section 10 project with social distancing working and communicating via 2-way radios.
- Working from home and making virtual meetings where possible.
- Increased welfare and onsite office space for essential site staff.

How to find out more

We will use our Ouse Washes Citizen Space information page to keep you up to date with progress. **Follow the link [Ouse Washes Section 10 works](#)**

We will not be hosting any public drop-in events or surgery sessions until COVID 19 restrictions are lifted.

Our Public Liaison Officer will remain available to you and will continue to issue updates via email.

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

Working in partnership

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



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www.gov.uk/environment-agency