

Introduction

The Middle Level Barrier Bank is the dam of the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir extending from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice. We are working under Section 10 of the Reservoirs Act 1975 to maintain the safety of the dam and protect communities from the risk of flooding. We started bank raising in 2017 and the work will take 5 years. We are importing clay material from local quarries to raise the crest level of the Middle Level Barrier Bank. As part of the bank raising work we also need to provide a more robust flood barrier on the Welney Wash Road where it intersects the Middle Level Barrier Bank.

Progress

Bank raising work

The bank works are progressing at Welney, Mepal and Welches Dam. We have experienced some wet weather during August and September which resulted in the bank works being halted as it is unsafe for the machinery to work on wet clay. Our contractor is working hard to mitigate any delay that this may have caused.

Ouse Washes RSPB Reserve

We will be installing new bird hides to the north of the reserve once the bank works are complete and they will be ready for use in winter 2021. The bird hides to the south will re-open in November 2020.

Once we complete sections of the bank, the public footpath needs to remain closed until a good grass growth is established.

Material deliveries

We are continuing to work with our contractor JacksonHyder, Cambridgeshire County Highways and Parish Councils to limit disruption on the alternative route we are now using to deliver material to site at Welney.

We know that there have been some lorry drivers that have not been following the preferred route or not adhering to the reduced speed limits. We are working with JacksonHyder and Mick George to re brief on site staff and drivers to stop this from happening. Where we can identify drivers, warnings are given.

We would like to apologise for any disruption that this may cause you whilst we carry out these vital works.

Public footpath and bridleway at Earith

We still have a full footpath closure of the Middle Level Barrier Bank in place with Cambridgeshire County Council.

The reason for the footpath closure is to allow for the grass to grow undisturbed. Grass growth is very important to the stability of the reservoir bank and walking or driving over the newly seeded grass will prevent it from growing.

Unfortunately, the grass hasn't grown as well as expected between the Sluice and Short Drove and the bank needs to be re-seeded this year, which will mean this section of the bank will stay closed until autumn 2021.

We will open sections of the bank once the Inspecting Reservoir Engineer, appointed by law, has inspected and considered the bank's condition as satisfactory.

The section between the Sluice and Short Drove has not been considered satisfactory due to insufficient grass growth.

The section from Short Drove to Sutton Gault has been considered satisfactory and is open to the public.

We understand it is frustrating and we are working with the contractor to implement more robust fencing to keep the public out and will be putting signs up to explain.

The grass plays an important role in the stability of the bank and there must be good grass root growth before we can open sections of the bank back to the public.

We have had a few enquiries from members of the public in Earith who are frustrated that they cannot use the bank. We hope that this explains why you can't see any work taking place, as we are waiting for grass to grow.

The public footpath closure for the Middle Level Barrier Bank will be extended into 2022. This will allow areas worked on this and next year to fully grow. Our contractor will provide a signposted diversion for the public wherever possible.

Why do we need a demountable barrier at Welney?

The purpose of the Reservoirs Act is to make provision against escapes of water from large reservoirs.

The Middle Level Barrier Bank of the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir is a reservoir dam and not just a bank along the river that stops flooding, it's much more than that and is governed by an Act of Parliament.

The Welney Wash Road crosses the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir and creates a low point in the Middle Level Barrier Bank. This low point increases the flood risk to the local community and the chance of a breach in the bank if water levels were to overtop it.

The construction of a robust demountable flood barrier is an important part of our bank raising works. It will stop water from the reservoir overflowing into Welney when the water level in the Washes is very high.

If we don't have the barrier, water could flow across the road and bridge and start to erode the bank either side of the road, eventually causing the bank to fail. This would be a very dangerous situation for local residents. We will only install the barrier when water levels of this height happen and only after the road has already been closed to traffic.

We are required to do this work under an Act of Parliament (the Reservoirs Act 1975) and as such we have to design for much higher water levels than we do for 'ordinary' flood defence banks.

We will start construction of these flood defence works in 2021. In preparation we will need to conduct a full survey of the existing road before construction starts.

This road survey will take place in **early November 2020** and we will need to set out 2-way traffic lights for **one day** during non-peak hours between **9.30am and 3.30pm**. We will continue to liaise with local stakeholders and Parish Councils.

Welney Flood Barrier consultation closes – final call



Artist impression of the Welney flood barrier

Welney Wash Road closure 2021

As part of the bank raising work we are doing to comply with the Reservoirs Act 1975 we need to provide a robust flood barrier on the Welney Wash road where it intersects the Middle Level Barrier Bank.

We have been asking stakeholders and communities of the Ouse Washes their views on when to close the road in 2021 to construct the flood barrier's concrete foundations and walls.

The online survey was published in March 2020 via the Citizen Space information page on the

[Ouse Washes Citizen Space information page](https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/welney-wash-road-barrier-work-timings)
<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/welney-wash-road-barrier-work-timings>

Make sure you have your say, the survey will close on 30 September 2020.

We are still unable to hold our usual public drop in and surgery events for the foreseeable future. We still have our notice boards near the Earith Sluice, in the Anchor Inn car park at Sutton Gault, at Welches Dam RSPB Reserve and near the Old Parish Hall in Welney.

Our Public Liaison Officer remains available to you and will continue to issue updates by email.

Thank you for your support of this crucial work to maintain your flood risk protection to a high level.

Contact us

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