

# Consultation summary report

## Demountable Flood Barrier construction timings at Welney Wash Road

### Background

We are the authority responsible for the safety of the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir.

A qualified civil engineer completed an inspection of the Ouse Washes in 2013 and recommended a number of Measures in the Interests of Safety under Section 10 (6) of the Act. These resulted in a project to raise the Middle Level Barrier Bank to address changes to the bank crest level caused by settlement.

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.

When the Washes is flooded and the water level in the river Delph at Welney reaches a predetermined level (2.4mAOD) Norfolk County Council highways team closes the road. When the water level rises to a higher, preset level (when River Delph level at Welney expected to exceed 4.5m AOD) we have to build a temporary flood barrier across the road to stop the water spilling into Welney village.

As part of the bank works we are doing within the Reservoirs Act we need to provide a more robust barrier on the Welney Wash Road, when needed. We have sourced a demountable barrier option that will provide the robust flood protection solution and will be bespoke to Welney.

We asked for local residents and stakeholders their views on when to close the road in 2021 to build a concrete foundation slab across the Welney Wash Road. This will allow us to install the demountable flood barrier, when needed, to help protect the communities from any water spilling from the Ouse Washes.

Closing the Welney Wash Road, even for a few weeks, will have considerable impact to the local community. We are trying to do our best to reduce that impact as much as possible by asking their views on the best time of year to close the road and by keeping them informed on the works progress.

There are times when we are strictly unable to carry out this work, due to bird overwintering and breeding on the Washes (November to March).

### Consultation

We ran the consultation for 29 weeks from the 12 March to the 30 September 2020. We publicised the consultation and information page on Ouse Washes Section 10 Works through a press release, newsletters, stakeholder briefings, and on our social media including our own East Anglia Twitter feed. We were not able to hold drop-in events due to Covid-19 restrictions coinciding with the consultation period.

We asked the communities for their preferred option on the best time to complete the demountable flood barrier works at Welney Wash Road.

We gave communities the options of three separate time periods within the time window that we are allowed to do the work. We asked them to nominate the most preferred (1), second best (2) and least preferred option (3):

The time periods are April to June 2021, June to August 2021 and August to October 2021.

## Results

We received 101 responses to the consultation and 93% responded as individuals and 7% on behalf of an organisation or group.

The majority of respondents (53%) chose June to August 2021 as their preferred period for closing the Welney Wash Road for a few weeks based on school holidays. Comments provided on the survey support these results, making it clear that the preferred option is when the schools of the area are closed. Closing the road impacts motorists especially families that drive children to school.

As a second option with 34% is the April to June 2021 period and the third with 11% is the August to October 2021 period.

2% of respondents chose not to reply to the above question.

	April, May, June	June, July, August	August, September, October	No preferred period
%	34%	53%	11%	2%

## Comments

- We received 40 comments or questions and you can view them online along with our response.
- We have added these questions into the existing frequently asked questions document attached to the consultation page – see appendix A.

## Response to the results

We thank the people who took time to respond and put their suggestions forward on the preferred timing to close the road in order to complete the essential flood barrier works.

We consider the majority preferred option to be the ideal time to conduct these works too because of the increased probability of dry and fair weather that would allow us to do all the necessary work.

## Issues with completing last year's works

The weather last year had not been kind to the project as we lost several weeks due to wet weather conditions. 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 had saturated and flooded the haul roads making it difficult to work on the dry days. We used pumps to try remove some of the water from the haul roads.

Another factor that caused us to stop work early was that the Ouse Washes flood storage reservoir started to fill earlier than usual, and the water level against the bank became too high to continue working safely.

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

We would have liked to comply with the majority of opinions canvassed on this consultation but here's what we have to take into consideration:

- We will need to complete banks works that we had to stop due to the weather conditions before we can start the barrier foundation work
- We will be delivering clay for the bank raising works using the Welney access so we can't do the bank works and the barrier works at the same time.
- This means we won't be able to do the barrier works during the preferred period of working (June to August 2021).

## Conclusion and next steps

In conclusion we have decided to postpone and reschedule the demountable flood barrier works to:

**Summer 2022 - to allow time for us to complete the bank works that we hadn't been able to do in 2020.**

**This enables us to remain on track to complete construction works by the end of 2022 and to do the barrier works within the preferred time period (June to August) identified in the consultation, with the temporary road closure during school holidays.**

We have updated the relevant MPs so they are informed of the complexity of timings and constraints we encountered.

Next steps will be to issue a stakeholder briefing, a community newsletter and organise a virtual drop-in in May 2021 to showcase the project so far, the plans in relation to the demountable flood barrier at Welney Wash Road, provide a visual representation of the Ouse Washes and respond to any enquiries.