

Regular watercourse maintenance

Our regular main river maintenance work along the Lower Witham and its tributaries continues throughout the year. It is carried out at varying intervals depending on the watercourse. We carry out maintenance under our permissive powers to help reduce flood risk and ensure that accessible land is safe for everyone to enjoy the watercourse. Our field teams, partners and contractors help us to deliver an efficient maintenance programme.

Grass cutting: We cut the grass on raised defences (flood banks) to promote healthy grass cover which helps the integrity of the flood defence. Keeping the grass at manageable levels also helps our asset inspectors find any issues that could lead to deterioration. Grass cutting is carried out by either a powered tractor mower, a tractor with flail or by using remote controller mowers where slopes are steep or unsuitable for large machinery. We mow at regular intervals between the start of April through to the Autumn, the frequency of the cut depending on the nature of the watercourse. Any nesting birds are noted during the breeding season and left undisturbed. The grass will then be cut once they have finished.

Weed control: Weed within the channels of the tributaries is controlled using an excavator or weed boat to help cut and collect the weed and maintain river flow. Vegetation at the water's edge helps to reduce erosion and provides important habitats to wildlife, meaning that it has to be managed carefully. The frequency and regime of the weed control depends on the nature of the watercourse. We do not cut weed for navigation or fishing purposes, but these do, where applicable, benefit from our activities.

Vermin control: The raised defences are checked for vermin once a year, treated, and any damage repaired (such as holes which may lead to deterioration).

Bush and vegetation management: Bushes and trees are carefully maintained during the winter months to ensure river flow and access is maintained. These may be removed completely where they pose a flood or safety risk. Invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalyan Balsam, are treated carefully on a rolling programme to limit spread. If vegetation is posing a flood risk, we ask the riparian owner to manage in accordance with their riparian responsibilities, but will take action in the event of an immediate flood risk.

The River Witham and its tributaries: The River Witham is split into the 'Witham - Top Pond' which runs from Lincoln to Bardney, and then the 'Witham – Lower' from Bardney to Boston.

The River Witham and its tributaries are broken into smaller sections for management purposes which means maintenance can be scheduled efficiently.

All tributaries of the River Witham have their own maintenance programme schedule as they have unique characteristics.

To find out what maintenance is programmed for this year for any section of watercourse, this information is available through the Asset Management Interactive Map on the Gov.uk website: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/asset-management/index.html>

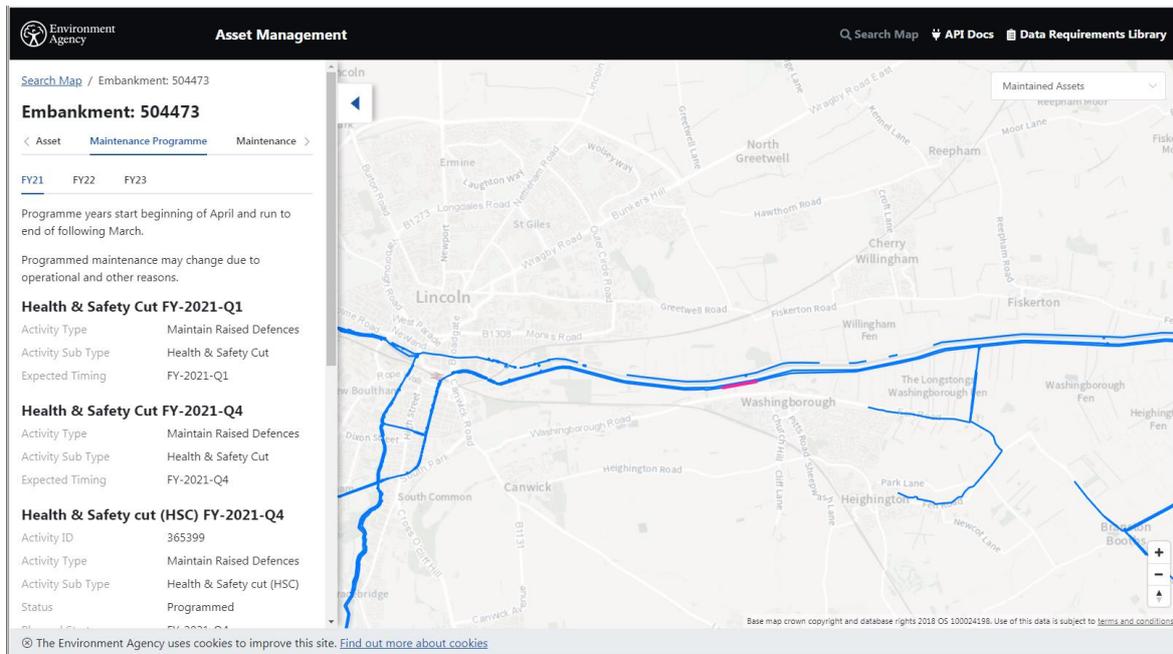


Figure 1: Example of the Asset Management Maintenance Programme interactive map

Programmed maintenance may change due to weather conditions, operational and other reasons.

If you see blockages in the channel which pose an immediate flood risk, please report it to our 24 hour Freephone incident hotline on **0800 80 70 60**.