

Gooseum Rhyne Reservoir Improvement Scheme

February 2023 - consultation report

Environment Agency



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Executive Summary

This report summarises feedback received on our current proposals for the Gooseum Rhyne Reservoir Improvement Scheme. This feedback was collected following a public drop-in event held at Old School Rooms in Congresbury on 15 February 2023 and a stakeholder workshop held at the Congresbury Youth Club Building on 8 February 2023. The report contains analysis of completed feedback forms and emails received up until 20 March 2023.

The public drop-in event had a good turnout, with nearly 100 people attending. To publicise the event, we sent a letter to 1,394 residents and businesses within Congresbury, including all properties surrounding the Millennium Green, put up promotional posters in information points within Congresbury and Yatton, emailed our stakeholder distribution list, and posted via our social media channels.

We received 22 completed feedback forms and five emails, with most people responding saying they'd heard about the event via a letter from the Environment Agency. From analysing the responses, we found that 26 per cent were in support of the proposals, 32 per cent were neutral, and 42 per cent were against, the key reason given in support was the improvement to the flood defences, the main reasons given against were the loss of trees, especially memorial ones, and not understanding why the scheme was needed, with people saying the current defences are doing their job.

This report lists all the themes identified across all feedback received. The themes have been sorted into areas of support, questions, concerns, and comments/suggestions.

Responses to each theme are provided in section 3 of the report. All feedback has been shared with the project team and many of the issues raised will be covered in detail in our planning application, which we expect to be registered by North Somerset Council towards the end of 2023.

1. The consultation

1.1. Project overview

The Gooseum Rhyne reservoir flood defence is located in Millennium Green, Congresbury. The reservoir is formed by the raised riverbanks of the Congresbury Yeo and embankments along its northern and eastern edges.

It is classified as a reservoir under the Reservoirs Act 1975 due to the volume of flood water it can hold above natural ground. Due to this classification, the Environment Agency has a legal responsibility to ensure the continued safety of the embankments and water control structures.

Currently, when water levels in the River Yeo rise enough to spill into the fields, the reservoir will begin to fill up. When water levels in the river drop, water will gradually flow back into the river through the culvert near the basketball court. The embankment around the edge of the Millennium Green protects properties on the northern side of the River Yeo from flooding.

The reservoir now needs to be brought up to modern maintenance standards to allow safe and reliable access for EA staff and equipment at all times. We're now in the process of designing the necessary changes. The solution legally needs to be built by September 2026.

1.2. The consultation

To present our current proposals and gather feedback, we held a public drop-in event at Old School Rooms in Congresbury on 15 February 2023 and a stakeholder workshop held at the Congresbury Youth Club Building on 8 February 2023. We intend to hold a further consultation towards the end of the summer.

1.3. Materials

To provide information on the proposals we produced the following material:

- Eleven display boards explaining our proposal and showing what the Green could look like once the work is complete.
- A four-page handout to summarise the proposals that people could take away with them.
- A two-sided feedback form for people to fill out at the event, or to take away with them.

1.4. Methods

We used a combination of channels to present our proposals and capture feedback, including:

- Continuing engagement with key stakeholders via email and face to face workshops
- One public drop-in session held at the Old School Rooms in Congresbury on Wednesday 15 August 2023.
- Responses to questions submitted via the phone and email.

1.5. Promotion

The consultation was promoted through:

- A letter sent to 1,394 residents and businesses within Congresbury, including all properties surrounding the Millennium Green.
- Email invitation to stakeholders.
- Posters located at various information points within Congresbury and Yatton.
- Social media activity.

1.6. How the consultation went

The public drop-in was a success, with nearly 100 people attending. We received 22 completed feedback forms and five emails. Of those that provided feedback, 26 per cent were in support of the proposals, 32 per cent were neutral, and 42 per cent were against, the key reasons given for those supporting the proposals was improvement to the flood defences, the main reason given to oppose the scheme were the loss of trees, and not understanding why the scheme was needed, with people saying the current defences are doing their job.

1.7. Key metrics

In total, we received:

- 27 items of feedback, including 22 feedback forms, and 5 emails.
- 96 attendees at the public drop-in session, and 4 at the stakeholder session. Of those that provided their postcode, 62 were from the local area (BS49), and one each from BS21 and BS25.

2. The feedback

2.1. Multiple-choice questions

Responses to the multiple-choice questions have shown us that 68 per cent of people heard about the event via a letter from the Environment Agency, 64 per cent understood, or partly understood the scheme, 26 per cent are in support of the scheme and 42 per cent are currently against, 75 per cent feel that stone would be a better finish for the wall, and 77 per cent felt the information displayed at the event was clear and easy to understand.

Table 2.1: multiple-choice feedback on how people heard of the event.

Q1: How did you hear about this event? (Please tick all that apply)	
Response	Number
A letter from the EA	17
From another organisation	1
Through and organisation you're a member of	2
Social media	2
Through a meeting you attended	1
Poster/flyer	0
Other*	2
*Other ways people heard of the event included via the youth club, the WI, NWR, word of mouth, and an email from a friend.	

Table 2.2: multiple-choice feedback on how well people understand what we're trying to achieve

Q2: Following today's event, how well do you understand the need for improvement at the Gooseum Rhyne Reservoir, and what we're trying to achieve?	
Response	Number
Fully	7
Partly	7
Not sure	4
Don't understand	4

Table 2.3: multiple-choice feedback on how people feel about the scheme

Q3: What best describes your feelings towards our current plans?	
Response	Number
Support	5
Neutral	6
Against	8

Table 2.4: multiple-choice feedback on the preferred finish for the cladding of the retaining wall

Q5: What kind of finish would you prefer for the cladding of the retaining wall?	
Response	Number
Brick	1
Concrete	0
Stone	12
Timber	3

Table 2.5: multiple-choice feedback on whether the information displayed was clear

Q7: Was the information displayed at the event clear and easy to understand?	
Response	Number
Yes	13
No	4

2.2. Public feedback

The table below lists all topics that were identified via the feedback received under the headings support, questions, concerns, and comments/suggestions. We have responded to each of these topics in section 3 of this report. To avoid too much repetition, the topics in section 3 have been grouped together, and a response code has been provided below which will take you to the corresponding response. Areas of support for our proposals as they are, that don't require a specific action, have been listed as 'N/A'. These themes, along with all the feedback, have been shared with the project team.

Table 2.6: topics from public feedback

Support	Response code
We are happy with the proposals as long as you protect access and retain the youth club.	N/A
We are in support of any plans that are in place to help prevent homes being flooded.	N/A
We understand the need to strengthen the defences, and that it's a legal requirement.	N/A
We understand what you're trying to achieve.	N/A

Questions	Response code
What is the cost of the scheme?	3
Why is it considered high priority given the pressures on EA budgets to provide effective defences in high-risk areas?	3
What do you mean by the term 'modern maintenance standards'?	11
Will you be cutting down mature trees, which are of value to the community, to build the access track?	15
Would the trees you remove be made available to villagers for use?	17
What is the net effect on carbon footprint for the Parish Council and the EA?	9
Will the scheme have capacity to accommodate future possible changes to flood risk in the area?	8
Can you provide a schedule of repair of the southern bank where the anti-badger wire will be installed?	12
Please can you provide more information on the overtopping of the embankment downstream of the A370.	5
Have you looked at the issue of how to remove the water that collects on the Millennium Green? A solution could be to provide a syphon from the existing Rhyne at the back of the basketball court to discharge via a culvert west of the bridge. This could eliminate all the works that you are currently proposing.	14
Will you come back to the village to show us your revised plans following this consultation.	26
Concerns	Response code
This scheme isn't necessary, the current defences are working as they should, and other areas will flood anyway even if you go ahead. It feels a lot of work, and a lot of money for not much gain.	2
We don't believe flooding is an issue as Gooseham Mead is higher than the flood waters would go.	2
Your proposals mean too many trees are being lost, many of which are memorial ones and are of huge value to the community. You need to explore alternatives.	15

Your proposals are too urban, they will destroy the character and country nature of the Millennium Green and spoil the visual landscape. A stone finish for the wall would be more appropriate.	18
Your proposals would make traffic from the A370 more prominent.	18
The maintenance track is too wide, we don't feel it's necessary to be this large, it also needs to be made more inviting.	7
The revised route of the footpath is unacceptable	4
The wide road onto the Green and the access road will create a variety of encroachment problems.	4
The construction period is far too long.	4
You should have publicised your plans earlier in the consultation.	25
It was too hard to read the information you provided at the public drop-in event as it wasn't sufficiently spread out and the maps and images were too small.	26
Staff didn't have a full understanding of the history and significance of the Millennium Green.	26
You should prioritise sorting out the pollution that you cause and stop discharging sewage into our rivers and streams.	13
Suggestions/comments	Response code
We'd like to understand the benefits of the scheme more, such as how it will improve the flood defence both north and south of the river, and who exactly it will benefit.	5
We'd like to understand why you're doing this, what are the risks that justify this, and what is the likelihood of the current defences failing?	2
The Sue Grant memorial and Fisherman's Seat need to be treated sensitively and honoured.	23
You need to rethink your plans, as it feels like there has been little thought of alternative solutions or the history of the Millennium Green. Suggestions include moving the basketball court so that the defence can follow its existing alignment, and temporarily relocating the Youth Club.	13

I'm not familiar enough with the north side of the Green to understand the changes.	N/A
We believe low level lining would be better than what you're currently proposing.	13
You need to ensure there is a gate at the main entrance by A370, to prevent unwanted vehicle entrance	20
You should install concrete steps by the outflow to aid river users	19
You should maintain access to the playground throughout construction. It is a vital resource for young children.	22
You should retain the wooden bridge crossing the Rhyne in the northwest corner of the Millennium Green, as it's used by many people, including the elderly, disabled, and those with young children.	21
You should maintain the Well Park entrance for as long as possible, as it is the safest entry for those people living north of the village.	22
You should check the flood risk from Yatton flood plain	10
Suggestions for improving our consultation include having a rolling video presentation; having more before and after images; have clearer messages on the need for the project to help people understand.	26
The staff were all very helpful and polite.	N/A

3. Our response to your feedback

Table 3.1 provides our response to the feedback received. To avoid repetition, we've not provided responses to individual questions, rather we've grouped similar questions/comments into themes and placed them under the following headings:

- The scheme
- Alternative solutions
- Loss of trees
- Visual impact
- Suggestions for inclusion in the design
- Construction impacts
- Impact to the Millennium Green
- Consultation

Many of these issues will be covered in detail in our planning application.

Table 3.1: Our responses to your questions and comments

The scheme		
Response Code	Theme	Our response
1	When was the area designated as a Reservoir and was the Environment Agency involved when the Millennium Green was created?	The Millennium Green was created for the Millennium in 2000, and the flood storage area including the Millennium Green was registered as a reservoir in 2005. The Environment Agency was therefore not involved when the Millennium Green was created.
2	The scheme is considered unnecessary as the flood risk is low	The reservoir was recently inspected by a specialist reservoir engineer (Panel Engineer), under the Reservoirs Act 1975, who determined that

	and the current defence already does its job – how likely is it that it will fail?	<p>the embankment along the northern edge of the reservoir required ‘Measures in the Interests Of Safety’, and these Measures must legally be carried out by the Environment Agency.</p> <p>The Measures address the concerns of the Panel Engineer that the embankment is too narrow and too steep to allow modern, safe methods of maintenance and needs to be made more resilient to extreme flood events.</p>
3	How much will this scheme cost and why is it considered high priority for public funding given the pressures on EA finances to provide effective flood defences in high-risk areas?	The current construction estimate is approximately £5m. Flood risk projects across the country are prioritised on their legal requirements and on the flood risk benefits they bring to the area. This project is legally required.
4	Please supply technical justification of the chosen option and explain how the proposed works will improve the flood defences.	<p>The objectives of the project are to maintain the current level of flood protection whilst making the reservoir embankment more resilient to extreme events and enabling safe maintenance of the embankment and structures.</p> <p>A sheet piled solution has been chosen to reduce settlement issues, as the ground underneath is extremely soft, and to minimise the volume of material to be imported. This will result in a reduced impact on traffic during the construction phase. The sheet piling works can also be carried out during the winter period leading to a reduced project timescale.</p>
5	Who will benefit from the proposed work, how will the work improve defences for those living south of the river and protect houses if the	The work is legally required under a statutory process and will bring the benefit of a reservoir with better resilience to extreme events and better able to be maintained safely.

	embankment downstream of the A370 bridge overtops?	The Flood Risk Assessment (that will be submitted with the planning application) shows that the project will maintain the current balance of flood risk between the north and south sides of the river.
6	Can you explain what you're doing to the land behind the northern embankment as it also floods.	The ditches that currently flow under the embankment will be maintained by the project with new culverts and new trash screens that can be cleaned more easily. This will keep the drainage routes flowing better.
7	Why does the maintenance access track have to be so wide, if it will only be used once or twice a year?	The 4m wide maintenance track is the minimum needed for the machines that will undertake both regular maintenance (cleaning the trash screens and cutting the grass) as well as less frequent but more significant maintenance.
8	Will the scheme have capacity to accommodate future possible changes to flood risk in the area?	Yes, the proposed scheme could be altered in the future to accommodate future possible changes to flood risk in the area, if and when required.
9	What is the net effect on the carbon footprint for the Parish Council and the Environment Agency?	The works are legally required and therefore the construction activities that generate carbon are also required. The Environment Agency aims to minimise the carbon impact of all its activities by making low carbon choices wherever feasible. The project will make an estimate of its carbon impact and will document its carbon saving choices.
10	Have you looked at the flood risk from Yatton flood plain?	This project is required to maintain the current level of flood protection whilst making the reservoir embankment more resilient to extreme events and enabling safe maintenance of the embankment and structures. Consideration of any flood risk in the Yatton area does not form part of this statutory reservoir project.

11	What do you mean by 'modern maintenance standards'?	<p>The Environment Agency is obliged to consider the health, safety, and welfare of all its staff, and the safety of its operations, including regular maintenance works. There are many safety standards used by the Environment Agency originating in Health and Safety legislation and enhanced by industry best practice.</p> <p>The overall effect at Gooseum Reservoir is to ensure that all the maintenance activities can be carried out without putting staff at risk. This includes embankment slopes that are safe for grass cutting, an access track that is wide enough for machines and vehicles to travel along with margins of safety to guard against overturning risks, machine access to clear trash screens to minimise manual handling and safe access to inspect culverts for blockages.</p>
12	Can you provide a schedule for repairing the southern bank where anti-badger wire will be installed?	<p>This work does not form part of the Gooseum Reservoir project but is being led by the Environment Agency's Area teams. Enquiries should be made via the National Customer Contact Centre email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk or telephone 03708 506 506.</p>
Alternative solutions		
Response code	You said	Our response
13	What other options were considered and why were they discarded? Have you thought about moving the basketball court and temporarily	<p>The option of directly impacting the Youth Club and basketball court was looked at in depth. The Youth Club has many unique characteristics in its location and in the service it provides to the youth of the area. There is no other location available locally that would</p>

	<p>relocating the Youth Club, so the bank could then follow its current line and you wouldn't need to cut down so many trees?</p>	<p>provide an acceptable alternative, either in the short-term during construction or in the long term.</p> <p>As the Youth Club is an asset to the community, a direct impact would have been an issue for our planning application. The proposed design is the best balance of minimising impacts to the amount of open space in the Millennium Green and the avoidance of impacts to the Youth Club and basketball court.</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Have you looked at the issue of how to remove the water that collects on the Millennium Green? A solution could be to provide a syphon from the existing Rhyne at the back of the basketball court to discharge via a culvert west of the bridge. This could eliminate all the works that you are currently proposing.</p>	<p>The objectives of this project are solely to meet the Measures in the Interests Of Safety and do not extend to consideration of changing the operation of the reservoir. The measures that we need to undertake are set out in the statutory inspection by the Reservoirs Panel Engineer.</p> <p>The water that collects on the Millennium Green discharges to the Congresbury Yeo through the outlet culvert. Any alternative outlet pathway would require detailed flood risk modelling downstream of the bridge and would require other, significant, engineering works. Even if such measures were assessed and eventually installed, this would not change the required statutory measures which are the objectives of this current project.</p>

Loss of trees		
Response code	You said	Our response
15	There are too many trees being cut down, including memorial trees. Do you also plan to cut down mature trees so you can build a 4-metre-wide maintenance access track?	<p>Every effort has been made to ensure we retain as many of the existing trees as possible; however, the footprint of the works together with the construction access will unfortunately mean that trees will need to be removed. Our detailed design process will review each tree in detail to determine if it needs to be affected or whether it can be left alone.</p> <p>We plan to hold further discussions with the community to find out which of the trees are memorial or commemorative trees. Following this, should any of these trees be affected by the scheme, we will discuss the best options with the affected parties, including relocating the trees if at all technically feasible.</p> <p>Tree and scrub removal will be required to facilitate the required width of the maintenance access track; however, landscape proposals include mitigating against these losses with new replacement tree and scrub planting.</p>
16	What are your plans to mitigate for the loss of trees? The loss can't be compensated by replanting as this would take decades to be effective.	<p>We are reviewing our proposals to ensure we mitigate any losses with suitable new tree planting.</p> <p>For every tree removed, replacement tree planting is proposed. Subject to discussions with the local tree officer, our intention is to meet the Local Planning Authority's policy for replacement tree planting ratios. Trees replanted will be a mix of sizes with the largest species being planted as extra heavy standard stock and semi mature stock. The</p>

		heights will range from 4.0m tall to 6.0m tall (at time of planting), dependant on the species proposed.
17	Can any trees that need to be removed, which aren't being relocated, be cut up and made available to villagers for seasoning and use as wood burner fuel?	We are proposing that all trees earmarked for removal (excepting memorial trees which will have agreed bespoke arrangements) will be used for the enhancement of biodiversity as far as possible. Such measures could be, for example, creating log piles and hibernacula (underground chambers that amphibians and reptiles use throughout the winter to protect themselves from the cold).
Visual impact		
Response code	You said	Our response
18	Your current proposals look far too urban for the area, is there scope to soften the overall look and feel?	<p>We would like to choose finishes that are as much in keeping with the surroundings as possible and we are happy to incorporate feedback received from public consultation. However, we will need to balance the desired use of soft materials against the engineering requirements of the reservoir maintenance.</p> <p>The maintenance track is currently proposed to be overseeded with grass and therefore, in time, this will appear green and blend better into the landscape. Blocks of native thicket scrub and tree planting will also help to mitigate any visual impacts of the wall and development. Our proposals will be further developed through the detailed design stage.</p>

Suggestions for inclusion in the design		
Response code	You said	Our response
19	Can you provide community benefits such as concrete steps by the outflow to facilitate river users?	The remit of the project is to provide the Measures in the Interest Of Safety for the reservoir as explained above. Where the design has impacts to existing community elements such as access to the river, our aim would be to provide new elements on a like-for-like basis and as agreed with the landowner, the Millennium Green Trust.
20	There should be a gate at the main entrance by the A370 road bridge to prevent unwanted vehicle access, will this form part of our proposals?	We will replace the main entrance gate from the A370 road bridge end on a like-for-like basis.
21	We feel it's important that the wooden bridge over the Rhyne be maintained.	<p>Unfortunately, the wooden access bridge over the Rhyne is not able to be reinstated. The current bridge abutments sit below the flood defence level, but a new bridge would have to be sited much higher to allow maintenance machinery to pass underneath. A much higher bridge would impact the privacy of adjacent residents and would also have much longer on and off ramps to allow for disabled and buggy access.</p> <p>It is hoped that the current access route behind the Youth Club can be retained, and a new short footpath created alongside the maintenance access track for pedestrians to cross the Rhyne at the main outlet culvert.</p>

Construction impacts		
Response code	You said	Our response
22	The construction period is so long, can access from Well Park and use of the playground be maintained?	<p>We will allow access to the playground as much as possible; however, we need to consider the safety of all users as well as of our construction staff. This will mean that the playground will be closed when construction activities mean it would be unsafe for it to remain open.</p> <p>It is intended the equipment will be carefully removed, stored, and reinstalled post construction.</p>
Impact to the Millennium Green		
Response code	You said	Our response
23	What thought has been given to honouring the Sue Grant memorial and the 'Fisherman's Seat'?	We are proposing to carefully remove and store the memorial features during the construction phase and relocate them on site. Our aim is to do this in consultation with the affected stakeholders.
24	Has any thought been given to the historic background and the reasons why the Millennium Green was designed and constructed?	<p>Heritage and archaeological specialists have provided input into the Environmental Impact Statement which will support the planning application. They have recommended further assessment of the site and will review any mitigation requirements against the impact to the heritage assets in and around the site, as well as any buried archaeology.</p> <p>The historic background to the site is being considered and will inform this assessment.</p>

Consultation		
Response code	You said	Our response
25	You should have provided details earlier, and please make sure you come back with any revised proposals.	We are planning to hold another public open event prior to submitting our planning application. We will continue to engage with directly affected residents and stakeholders, including the Parish Council during the development of our detailed design.
26	The display information at the event was hard to see, can it be more spread out and the visuals made bigger? Other suggestions for improving the display information were also provided.	We'd like to thank everyone who provided feedback and we take this on board. We will review the layout of the information for our next public event with this feedback in mind.

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