



Castlehill Aquagreen (Flood Storage Area):

Report from the consultation

December 2020

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

Published by:

Environment Agency Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AH

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Executive summary

At the end of August 2020 we carried out a public consultation to find out the views of stakeholders on our proposals for an aquagreen (flood storage area) on a site known as Castlehill. The consultation period ran from 24th August to 28th September 2020;

Over 1,350 households on the eastern side of Hull were sent information about the proposals by post: this included two newsletters, a map and a feedback form. A 'Citizen Space' project website was also launched to provide information online and enable web based responses.

In total 119 responses were received: 83 postal and 36 online. Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill in the feedback form.

Findings:

The majority of respondents (80 of the 119) were supportive of the scheme whilst 30 were not. Of these, 21 were uncertain about it and only a small number (9) did not support it.

The most popular features in the proposed design included:

- New habitats created for wildlife (84%)
- Motorbike barriers along some paths (76%)
- More greenspace for recreation (73%)
- Improvements to the site of the Castle Hill monument (72%)
- A network of footpaths and bridleways around the site (71%)

The least popular feature was the new access point from the Bransholme estate (45%).

The main issues raised in connection with the scheme included:

- Illegal motorbikes and antisocial behaviour happening on the site already but potentially exacerbated by the scheme (45 consultees);
- The proposed new footbridge could potentially increase traffic and parking issues in the area and attract more antisocial behaviour (16 consultees)
- How the site will be maintained once built (10 consultees);
- Security issues for some residents if Sutton Cross Drain is filled in (10 consultees);
- Height of the new embankment resulting in loss of views and privacy (8 consultees).

In conclusion, it is clear from all the additional comments made by respondents that there is strong support for the scheme and considerable enthusiasm for the opportunity to create new greenspace on the site. Benefits to both wildlife and people are seen as good reasons for doing so. However, this is tempered by the awareness of existing problems, particularly those of illegal motorbikes and antisocial behaviour, the issue of future maintenance and the potential impact of a new access point to the site. A small number of consultees do not support the scheme and do not want it built for these reasons.

How we have used information from this consultation

We have reviewed all the information generated from the consultation and made the following decisions:

Motorbikes: We intend to restrict access for motorbikes at the main entrances to the site, using a variety of methods, and install additional barriers in certain key locations, including near to the Castle Hill monument.

Antisocial behaviour: We want to design the scheme to minimise opportunities for antisocial behaviour on the site. This includes keeping the number of access points to a minimum and relocating paths so that, where possible, they avoid the edges of the site, where these are near to houses. We won't include fencing, CCTV, wooden seating or other features that could be easily vandalised.

New footbridge: We will not install a new footbridge to the site from the Bransholme side; this suggestion was unpopular and would increase the number of access points to the site.

Sutton Cross Drain: This will remain in situ; we have no plans to remove it and it will not be filled in.

The new embankment: We are reviewing the design of the new embankment to reduce possible impacts on privacy and security for property owners living near to it. There won't be a footpath along the top of it, for the same reason.

Maintenance: We will make further changes to the design of the scheme to minimise the need for maintenance after it is built, but also to ensure the site can be adapted to include additional features as it develops over time. In addition, we are working with Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council to investigate possible funding sources for maintenance.

Parking and other facilities: We do not intend to provide additional parking or other facilities that would encourage more traffic in the area.

A more detailed list of decisions can be found on page 18 of this report.

We will continue to use information from this consultation to finalise our designs for the aquagreen. Once this is done, a planning application for this scheme will be submitted to Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council in early 2021.

Introduction

The aquagreen proposed for land at Castlehill is part of the Holderness Drain Flood Alleviation Scheme. This aims to reduce flood risk for homes and businesses in the Holderness Drain catchment, mainly in the North Carr and Sutton areas of Hull. It will involve building a new drain and low embankment on the site to create an area where excess water can be stored during a flood. It can then be released slowly back into the drainage system after the peak of the flood has passed. Under normal conditions the aquagreen will function as a greenspace, providing new habitats for wildlife and recreational space for people. Designs for the site include new areas of woodland, meadow, scrub and reedbeds, a network of footpaths, seating and ponds.

More information about the proposals for the aquagreen, including a plan showing all the proposed features, can be found at:

https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/holderness-drain-castle-hillconsultation/

How we ran the consultation

Proposals for the Castlehill Aquagreen were developed over a period of time from late 2016, involving a series of discussions with strategic partners and many site visits. This included an initial on-site survey in October 2019 to seek the views of local site users before developing the content of the consultation. However, bad weather on the day deterred visitors and we were only able to speak to a small number of individuals. Nevertheless their feedback was helpful in developing the final design of the questionnaire used in the consultation.

Consultation took place over five weeks, from 24th August to 28th September 2020. Our usual approach to engaging with communities would include holding a 'drop-in' locally to facilitate face-to-face discussions. However, at this time this approach was made impossible by the government's COVID 19 restrictions. Adapting to this situation, we chose to conduct the consultation using both traditional (postal) and online methods of communication.

The consultation asked four key questions:

- What features do you like about the scheme?
- Are there any features you don't like?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the design?
- Do you support this proposal?

In early August 2020 information was posted to over 1,350 addresses in Bransholme and the surrounding area to provide a general introduction to the Holderness Drain Flood Alleviation scheme. This was followed by a second newsletter announcing the consultation

and giving a more detailed description of the Castlehill Aquagreen (Flood Storage Area – FSA) proposals along with a map of the site, a feedback form and prepaid envelope.

At the same time a webpage (<u>https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/holderness-drain-castle-hill-consultation/</u>) was opened, offering the alternative of giving feedback online.

In addition, a number of local organisations (listed in Appendix 1) were sent the newsletters by email, and posters were put up on site to inform 'passing users' such as dog walkers and others living outside the neighbourhood who may have an interest in the site. Information was also circulated electronically via Hull City Council's Area Co-ordinators' Twitter and Facebook pages, and an article was published in the Hull Daily Mail to alert a wider audience to the consultation.

Key findings

In total there were 121 respondents to this consultation, with 36 responses submitted online (via the project webpage) and 85 paper feedback forms returned in the post. However two responses were discounted as they were received after the consultation deadline. So 119 responses were analysed and all figures in the report refer to this total.

The popularity of postal responses indicates the importance of providing both traditional (paper) as well as web-based communication methods for this consultation. Although the project website was promoted in the newsletters as a means to respond, these results suggest that access to, and the ability to use, digital methods of communication was less common in Bransholme than anticipated. This indicates the importance of using a variety of methods of communication in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where a significant number of households may not have access to the internet at home.

Who responded

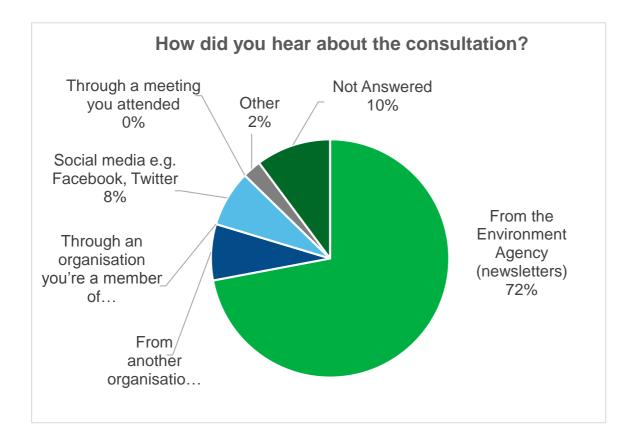
Most responses (111) came from individuals, with just three submitted from organisations: Castle Keep residential care home in Bransholme; East Riding and Hull Joint Local Access Forum; and the Yorkshire branch of the National Farmers' Union. Although not all respondents provided postal addresses, from the nature of their comments, it appears many of them live locally and so know the site very well.

Are you responding as an individual or representing an organization?	Total	Percent
Responding as an individual	111	93%
Responding on behalf of an organisation (Please specify below and include what type it is e.g. business, environmental group)	3	3%
Other	1	0.8%
Not Answered	4	3%

How did you hear about the consultation?

The table and pie chart below shows how people found out about the consultation. Most respondents (85 of 119) learnt about it from the Environment Agency's newsletters posted to stakeholders. This was by far the most effective method of communication. Other sources included communications from Hull City Council / East Riding of Yorkshire Council (9), social media (9), articles in the local press (3), posters placed on the site (2) and contractors working on site (1).

How did you hear about the consultation?	Total	Percent
From the Environment Agency (newsletters)	85	72%
From another organisation	9	8%
Through an organisation you're a member of	0	0%
Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter	9	8%
Through a meeting you attended	0	0%
Other	3	2%
Not Answered	12	10%



Responses to questions about the scheme

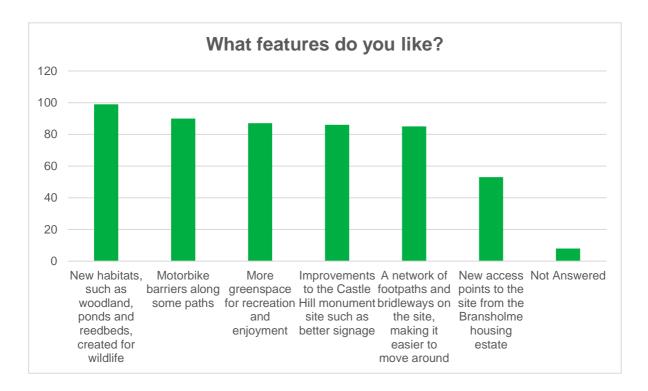
Results from the analysis of each question are presented below.

Question 1: What features do you like about the scheme?

This question offered consultees a list of options to consider. They were able to approve as many of these as they liked, without ranking them; the answer was a simple yes/no. However there was a small error resulting in a difference between the online and paper options; the online version included flood risk reduction as an option, whilst the paper version had instead the option of rocks and logs for seating. These two options are included at the bottom of the table below but not given as percentages as not all respondents saw them. The focus for the analysis is on the options listed in both online and paper versions. In total 111 consultees indicated what features they liked. The results shown below indicate a clear preference for the first five options listed, with more than 70% of respondents happy to have each of these features included in the design of the site. The least popular (of the options included in all forms) was the suggested new access point to the site from Bransholme, with only 45% supporting this.

What features do you like about the scheme?	Total	Percent
New habitats, such as woodland, ponds and reedbeds, created for wildlife	99	84%
Motorbike barriers along some paths	90	76%
More greenspace for recreation and enjoyment	87	73%
Improvements to the Castle Hill monument site such as better signage	86	72%
A network of footpaths and bridleways on the site, making it easier to move around	85	71%
New access points to the site from the Bransholme housing estate	53	45%
Not Answered	8	7%
Rocks and logs for seating (paper forms only)	48 (of 83)	
Reduced flood risk for homes and businesses in North Carr and Sutton (online only)	32 (of 36)	

Flood risk was seen as important by almost all of the consultees responding online (32 of 36), with several more mentioning it as a benefit in answers to other questions). Installing rocks and logs for seating was also viewed as a positive feature by just over half of those filling in a paper feedback form (48 of 83).



Is there anything else you like about the scheme?

There were 68 responses to this question. Of these, 41 respondents commented positively about the proposals in more detail. These can be categorised as:

- General comments (16), with some noting that the creation of the flood storage area will protect the site from future housing development.
- Appreciation of the creation of space for wildlife and people (7):
- Flood risk reduction benefits (5)
- Heritage: protecting the Castle Hill monument seen as important (3).
- Improved access, including support for wheelchair access (3)

In four cases, these comments were linked to expressions of concern about the damage caused on the site by illegal motorbikes and requests that this should be stopped. This was a recurring theme, with unhappiness about the current use of the site by motorbikes mentioned in answers to subsequent questions as well.

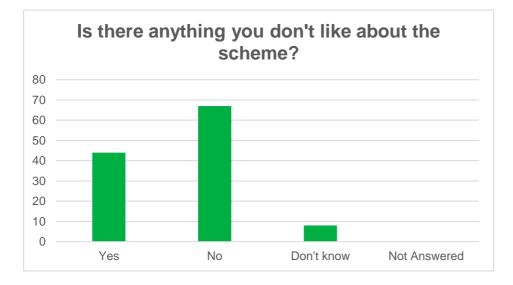
'I am happy you are improving the site for nature and stopping the bikes from ruining Castle Hill.'

'I love the idea of creating a nature friendly space which can be used by locals in addition to reducing the flood risk.' 'It will be of enormous benefit to the whole area and a wonderful space to improve everyone's wellbeing.'

Several people suggested features they would like to see on the site, such as bird boxes, picnic tables, surfaced paths and connections to other green sites in the area.

Question 2: Are there any features you don't like?

Whilst more than half of respondents (67) were satisfied with the proposals, 44 had some concerns over aspects of the scheme and 8 answered 'don't know'. This question was often interpreted as referring to the current site rather than opinions about the proposals for the aquagreen.



Are there any features you don't like?	Total	Percent
Yes	44	37%
Νο	67	56%
Don't know	8	7%
Not Answered	0	0%

Please tell us about these in the box below:

In total 50 respondents gave detailed responses to this part of the question. Most of these had answered 'yes' to the question but a small number came from people who had answered 'no' and 'don't know'.

Amongst the 44 respondents who did not like features in the proposal, the main concern raised was antisocial behaviour and vandalism (20 comments), often mentioned in connection with illegal motorbikes abusing the site (16 comments). Several respondents suggested the creation of new accessible greenspace would further exacerbate these problems. However, most respondents (15) expressed their approval of the possibility of installing motorbike barriers. These two issues generated strong opinions, as indicated in the examples below.

The new footbridge into the site from Bransholme also attracted a lot of criticism (16 comments) with some respondents suggesting that this could result in increased car traffic, parking problems, litter, increased vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

[don't like] footbridge to the local estate likely to become an anti-social behaviour issue All of the paths need to be totally closed off to any motorbikes, otherwise the whole scheme will degenerate into a speedway track for joy riders.

Not keen on the idea of putting more green land around our area for recreational purposes as we already have a nature reserve on our door step on Noddle hill way and this area gets neglected and destroyed by young gangs who just use it to hang around on motor bikes do drugs and cause fires. Other issues raised in response to this question included:

- concerns over home security and privacy for those whose gardens backed on to Sutton Cross Drain (7);
- new seating could be vandalised (6) with some respondents stating that wooden benches would be burnt;
- parking problems resulting from more visitors coming to the area (4);
- access for construction vehicles not suitable or properly clarified (2);
- future maintenance of the site, with unfavourable comparisons drawn to Noddle Hill nature reserve (2);
- loss of views as a result of trees planted for the scheme (1).

Many of these concerns were repeated in question 3.

Question 3: Is there anything more you would like to tell us about the design?

There were 60 responses to this question. Of these, a minority (4) were totally negative about the scheme and did not want it to be built, 6 comments were positive and 50 raised concerns or made suggestions for improvements to the design of the site. Many responses mentioned more than one issue, often focusing on problems already affecting the site. These can be categorised as follows;

- antisocial behaviour, including illegal motorbikes (24 comments)
- concerns/questions about Sutton Cross Drain and the new embankment (13)
- issues around access to the site (11)
- concerns/questions about how the scheme will reduce flood risk (10)
- future maintenance of the site (8)
- comments on ecological aspects of the scheme, including improvements (6)
- miscellaneous (4)

Once again issues of illegal motorbikes and other forms of antisocial behaviour were raised by a significant number of respondents (18). Several expressed the view that bikes had to be kept off the site completely or else it would fail. The tone of many comments was one of frustration and distress at the damage caused by motorbike riders, particularly on the site of the Castle Hill monument, and also the danger they posed to others.

Other comments on the theme of antisocial behaviour mentioned gangs and vandalism on the site, litter and fly tipping as current issues that could be exacerbated by the scheme.

Seven respondents asked about Sutton Cross Drain, wanting to know if it was to be filled in; most did not want this to happen as they felt it provided a protective barrier, stopping intruders from entering their garden. Several other respondents were concerned about the new embankment, suggesting it would result in loss of views and privacy for properties on the edge of the site. No mention of parking even though this will clearly bring traffic issues.

Will the old drain remain? Will homeowners be consulted? I am sure many enjoy the natural barrier/protection this gives the rear of their properties.

Comments about access ranged from those which who felt the proposed new access point from Bransholme would bring problems (4) to others stating the importance of access for disabled and wheelchair users (3) and suggestions that there should be links from the site to other green spaces in the area (2). Parking and traffic was also raised as an issue (2), with fears expressed that the scheme would bring visitors from outside the area to the site and so generate more traffic, and that no provision had been made for visitor parking.

Several other respondents expressed scepticism over whether the scheme would be successful in reducing flood risk and made comments on this aspect of the design. One person felt it should be extended to include the area of East Carr. In contrast, another felt the site should be left undeveloped.

Eight people expressed concerns about how the site will be maintained in future, with several comparisons drawn to the lack of maintenance at Noddle Hill nature reserve and the impact this had on visitors' sense of safety. Two respondents commented on the Castle Hill monument, one stating that it badly needs protection and the other asking how the scheme would provide this.

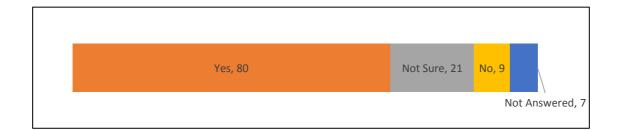
Who will maintain the paths and hedges once developed?

Other more positive comments included a suggestion to use the scheme to provide habitats for rarer birds such as willow tit and barn owl along with requests for litter bins, facilities for fishing in Holderness Drain and a plea for the site to be dog-friendly.

Question 4: Do you support this proposal?

A clear majority of respondents (two thirds) were positive about the scheme and supported our proposals, whilst 30 did not. Of these, only 9 (fewer than 8%) opposed it, while 21 were uncertain about it and 7 did not answer the question.

Do you support this proposal?	Total	Percent
Yes	80	67%
No	9	8%
Not Sure	21	18%
Not Answered	7	6%



Please tell us why

a) Yes, support the scheme

Of the 80 respondents who supported the scheme, 17 added comments explaining why they liked the proposals. Most of these (9) focused on the additional benefits of new greenspace for people to use and the creation of new habitats for wildlife. Six people also commented on the flood risk benefits resulting from the scheme and one person was keen to see the improvements to the Castle Hill monument. Seven respondents gave a qualified 'yes' for the proposals but three suggested that efforts must be made to control antisocial behaviour and one person supported the proposal only if the new access point was not included in the scheme.

b) No, don't support the scheme

Of those that answered 'no', a variety of reasons were given. Three people felt the site should not be developed and left alone 'for nature'. Two people referred to the issue of

illegal motorbikes as their reason for objecting (presumably on the grounds this will worsen once the scheme is built), another two mentioned antisocial behaviour and one was concerned that their privacy and security would be affected by the new embankment. Lack of provision for vehicle access was another reason for objecting to the scheme (2 responses). One person was unhappy that Castlehill Road was to be used as the main point of access to the site and another felt there were too many unanswered questions about how the scheme will affect their home.

c) Not sure

Of the 21 that answered 'not sure', 8 respondents provided an explanation for their viewpoint. This included issues already raised in answer to other questions, such as antisocial behaviour and problems with motorbikes, objection to the new access point from Bransholme, loss of views and privacy due to the new embankment being located close to their home. In addition two people wanted more information about the scheme before they felt able to make a decision on this, echoing earlier views that the map did not adequately show the location of the scheme in relation to existing housing.

Excellent to see natural flood alleviation being used that will protect homes but also create great new wildlife habitats so close to the city. The theory is good but long term may lead to more problems!

You have not provided a car park. You do not show where paths are in relation to the Castle Grange estate. How are you going to keep it longterm and prevent vandalism off the estate like at the nature reserve on Noddle Hill Way! This is left to rack and ruin, it is vandalised, it has regular arson fires and the deer get poached.

Next Steps

After the formal consultation period came to an end, we reviewed all the responses and used your comments to help us decide how the design of the scheme can be improved.

When considering the different comments made by consultees, we have taken account of the following:

- which issues have been mentioned most frequently as concerns or suggestions by consultees;
- the technical feasibility of any changes required;
- the cost implications of these;
- future maintenance requirements resulting from any changes and our partners' views on these.

Actions we will take

In the section, we consider some of the most common issues raised from this consultation and explain how we will respond to them. This includes, in some cases, making changes to the design of the scheme to incorporate ideas and suggestions made by consultees and also continuing to review our plans as these progress.

Concerns about motorbikes accessing the Castlehill site

In response to the views expressed in this consultation, we intend to do the following to reduce opportunities for motorbikes to access the site and discourage riders from doing so:

- install motorbike barriers and other deterrents at the main access points and at other appropriate locations on the site;
- avoid increasing the number of access points into and out of the site;
- include additional anti motorcycle gates to restrict access to the Castle Hill monument and seek permission from Historic England to install these whilst building the scheme;
- incorporate other suggestions from Humberside Police's Designing Out Crime team to discourage motorbikes from using the site.

Antisocial behaviour on the site

This was another frequently mentioned issue, concerning many consultees. In recognition of this, we propose to do the following:

• avoid increasing the number of access points into and out of the site. This decision also follows advice from the police to restrict the number of access points to the site.

- ensure all seating is fireproof; we won't use logs as many people suggested these would be burned;
- instead of fencing the site (as this can be easily vandalised), we will use existing ditches and thorny 'hostile' scrub such Hawthorne and Blackthorn to discourage access in certain areas.

A new footbridge into the site from Bransholme

This feature was the least popular of all those proposed so we have decided to remove it from the design of the scheme.

Future maintenance of the site

We have noted the concerns expressed by many consultees that a failure to maintain the site would attract more antisocial behaviour and vandalism and intend to:

- design the site in such a way as to minimise maintenance needs. This can be done through careful placing of plants and trees and choice of materials for path surfaces;
- design the site so that it can be easily adapted after it is built to incorporate additional features, responding to the needs of site users;
- work with our partners, Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council (who own the site) to find a way to provide a basic level of maintenance;
- explore alternative sources of funding for the maintenance of the site.

Building a new embankment and changes to Sutton Cross Drain

In response to concerns about the potential loss of privacy, security and views for households with gardens near to the site, we propose to:

- we are reviewing the design of the new embankment to reduce possible impacts on privacy and security for property owners living near to it. There won't be a footpath along the top of it, for the same reason.
- move the route of the footpath on the western edge of the site so that it no longer runs along the top of the new embankment and is positioned at least 30 metres from Sutton Cross Drain
- keep the existing Sutton Cross Drain; it will remain in situ and will not be filled in, maintaining a protective barrier for homes with gardens bordering onto it.
- Where feasible, we intend to avoid planting trees close to the western edge of the site. Instead we propose using low growing hedgerow and scrub species in that area so that they have minimal impact on the views for residents living nearby.

Facilities for visitors to the site

This site is primarily intended to provide greenspace for people living nearby. We have therefore decided:

- there will be no additional car parking facilities built near the site that might attract more traffic to the area;
- paths on the site will be surfaced in line with their intended use. Paths providing access for people with disabilities will have a higher standard of finish, but the materials have not yet been specified. We will decide these bearing in mind the need to provide facilities which can be easily maintained;
- there will be no lighting on the site; this could disturb wildlife and so is not desirable as well as being expensive to maintain;
- there will not be CCTV on site; this is prone to vandalism and expensive to replace;
- ponds have been designed for habitat creation rather than fishing; they won't be suitable for fishing as they will not be deep enough for fish to live in them;
- due to issues around their longer term maintenance, we won't be installing picnic tables, litter bins, bird hides or other facilities when the scheme is first built. However, as the site becomes established, it may be possible to add them at a later stage.

What happens next

Following this consultation, we will finalise our designs for the scheme and then submit a planning application to both Hull City Council and East Riding of York Council in early 2021. This will offer another chance for residents and other stakeholders to view and comment on the proposals, via the local authorities' online planning portals. We also intend to hold a virtual public meeting in the first quarter of 2021 using Zoom and will update the Castlehill aquagreen webpage to provide information about this.

If you want to contact us or receive newsletters about the project, you can email us at:

HoldernessdrainFAS@environment-agency.gov.uk

Appendix 1: List of organisations contacted

Hull City Council East Riding of Yorkshire Council Highways England Humber Local Enterprise Partnership Historic England Natural England Yorkshire Water Beverley and North Holderness Internal Drainage Board Sustrans Yorkshire Wildlife Trust RSPB Humber Nature Partnership Hull Neighbourhood Network

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