

OUTSTRAYS TO SKEFFLING MANAGED REALIGNMENT SCHEME (OtSMRS) NEWSLETTER

July 2023

Work resumes on site

In March this year our contractors, JBA Bentley, returned for a third season of construction. They reopened the main site compound (off the road between Welwick and Weeton) and began working on the new embankment on the eastern side of the scheme. They also started excavating the creek network and bowl in the centre of the site, along with building a wave bund (a smaller embankment built on the wet side of the embankment to give protection against erosion). Wet conditions in March and April slowed work down but since then good progress has been made, thanks to the drier weather during May and June. By the middle of July, we anticipate that the entire length of the embankment will have been built, topsoiled and trimmed, (apart from the two ends which need to link to existing embankment; this will happen just before the breach next year, so that we don't have a fully enclosed area). This is a significant milestone reached in the scheme.

Work also resumed on the smaller habitat area near the western end of Sheep Trod Lane to connect the pond areas and install access ramps across them. This will deliver a series of small ponds and lagoons linked together and an area of wet grassland, providing new habitats for wildlife. In addition, work started on the 'finishes' and future access arrangements for the site, including new car parks, pedestrian access routes (ramps up to and on top of the bund), and the capping of the former landfill site along Sheep Trod Lane.

JBA Bentley are currently considering whether to instigate working on Saturdays over the rest of the summer, if the weather continues to be good. This could potentially reduce the risk of extending the programme of work in the final year when the breach needs to be put in place. This is unlikely to generate any additional traffic or create other significant impacts. If this goes ahead, we will put a notice on the scheme's website.



Photo showing machinery placing and compacting the clay core for the new flood embankment

Access

Thank you to everyone who has been adhering to diversions and path closures whilst visiting the area around the construction site. Please continue to follow any signs or instructions in connection with this, as diversion routes sometimes change. If there is anywhere where there are restrictions on access that you think would benefit from a sign to guide visitors, please do email us to let us know. If you are walking a dog near the site, please keep it on a lead to avoid disturbing birds, particularly at this time of year when they may be nesting. If you have children who might go near the construction area in the summer holidays, please remind them to avoid the site.

Introducing Marie-Claire

The OtSMRS has a new project manager, Marie-Claire Spicer. She joined the Environment Agency in March this year. She replaces Andrew Gee, having previously worked for a local authority managing flood defence construction projects.

Marie-Claire said “I’m thrilled to have joined such a significant project that has been so long in the making and is now at the exciting stage of construction, as the benefits come to fruition. The site is a beautiful place to be, with its views across the estuary and the wildlife that lives in and around it and the new habitats that have been created. I look forward to coming back once the scheme is complete, with my little dog Larry (kept securely on his lead – he loves a chase – so not an appropriate place for me to let him off) to enjoy the walks and the sights.”



Photo: Marie-Claire with Larry

A new pumping station at Skeffling

Although not included in the designs for the managed realignment scheme, our intention, assuming funding is available, has been to replace both Winestead and Skeffling pumping stations. At the end of June we submitted a planning application to East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) for a new pumping station at Skeffling. It will be located just to the west of the current pumping station. This will replace the old pumping station with a new and more efficient Archimedes screw pump to manage the local watercourses and drainage on the eastern side of the scheme. It will also reduce the risk of flooding for homes in the area. The application is still to be validated so it has not yet been uploaded to ERYC’s planning portal. Once this has been done, we will update our website to show the planning reference number, should you wish to view the designs or comment on this application.

Separate plans for the Winestead pumping station are still under development. They are currently in the Environment Agency’s assurance process.

Report from the public meeting in March

Thank you to everyone who attended the public meeting in Welwick Parish Hall at the end of March. Starting with a presentation on the archaeological investigations we have carried out, we then held a discussion about how best to share the findings generated from this work. Suggestions included a booklet documenting the history of the area and an exhibition of found objects in a local venue, before these are finally deposited in the Treasure House Museum in Beverley. We are pleased to be able to report back that we hope to publish the findings in the online journal 'Internet Archaeology' and also produce a printed booklet. In addition, Hedon Museum has agreed to host an exhibition of the finds in May and June 2024. More details will follow closer to the time.

Bird hide design

Final designs for new bird hides are currently being developed. We have worked with Third Year students from Bishop Burton College to create a bespoke design for the main bird hide. This will be located within easy walking distance (350 metres) from the new car park. Three more hides will be placed on the site. The initial positioning of these hides has been determined after consultation with local organisations, taking account of the direction the hides are facing and their proximity to access points. A couple of other areas of the embankment have been widened which could facilitate alternative positions for the bird hides in future years.

Another name for OtSMRS?

We've recently begun planning some interpretation boards for the site, to be installed once all the construction work is finished. This raised the question: what place name should we put on the interpretation boards for this site? Rather than use the existing formal name for the scheme, we'd like to have something shorter (ours is a bit of a mouthful!) and more locally relevant. Do you have any ideas for a name for the site? If so, please email them to us at Welwick.Skeffling@environment-agency.gov.uk by the end of August. We'll compile a list and then share this with you to help us choose the best one.

Ecological surveys and environmental improvements

We continue to monitor the site regularly for wildlife that could be affected or disturbed by our work, particularly when moving into new areas. On the western side of the site, we have delayed finishing off work to the wet grassland area due to the presence of nesting birds. We will return in August, once the nests are empty, to complete this work.

Work will begin next month to install deer proof fencing and rabbit proof mesh to protect areas identified as suitable for tree planting. Over the coming winter nearly 10,000 trees will be planted in key locations outside the embankment. We have consulted with several environmental organisations on the locations and species composition and using this information, landscape plans are currently being finalised.

Contact Us

Environment Agency

For enquiries, you can contact us by email: Welwick.Skeffling@environment-agency.gov.uk. Or by phone on **03708 506506** and ask for Marie-Claire Spicer, Project Manager, or Nikky Wilson, Engagement Specialist.

For more information, you can visit the scheme's webpage at:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/outstrays-to-skeffling-managed-realignment-scheme/>