

OUTSTRAYS TO SKEFFLING MANAGED REALIGNMENT SCHEME (OtSMRS)

March 2024

The final year of construction begins – Into the Breach

We are starting the final year of construction for the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme! Last month, JBA Bentley staff returned to begin opening up the site compound and have resumed work on the scheme. Their focus will be on carrying out enabling works for the breach to be installed later this year. However, as the last six months of 2023 were exceptionally wet, ground conditions may impede progress. According to the summary of weather conditions on the gov.uk website ([Yorkshire water situation: December 2023 summary – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/yorkshire-water-situation-december-2023-summary)), July to December last year has been the wettest six months for Yorkshire as a whole since records began in 1871! This didn't improve in January and February, with both months continuing to be extremely wet.

Last year we finished building most of the new flood embankment, except for the 'tie-in's' to the existing embankment at either end, and a section allowing access from the site compound. We also finished excavating the 'bowl' and creek system that will be inundated at high tides to create new saltmarsh and mudflats. The historic landfill site off Sheep Trod Lane was capped and thousands of metres of fencing installed along paths and around tree planting areas. Along the top of the embankment, hard surfaces were laid for the bridleway and grass seed sown on the slopes to establish cover over the winter. We are using drone footage from last September to create a short video showing these improvements; this will be placed on the project's website in the coming months.



Photo: View of the Weeton site compound, January 2024.

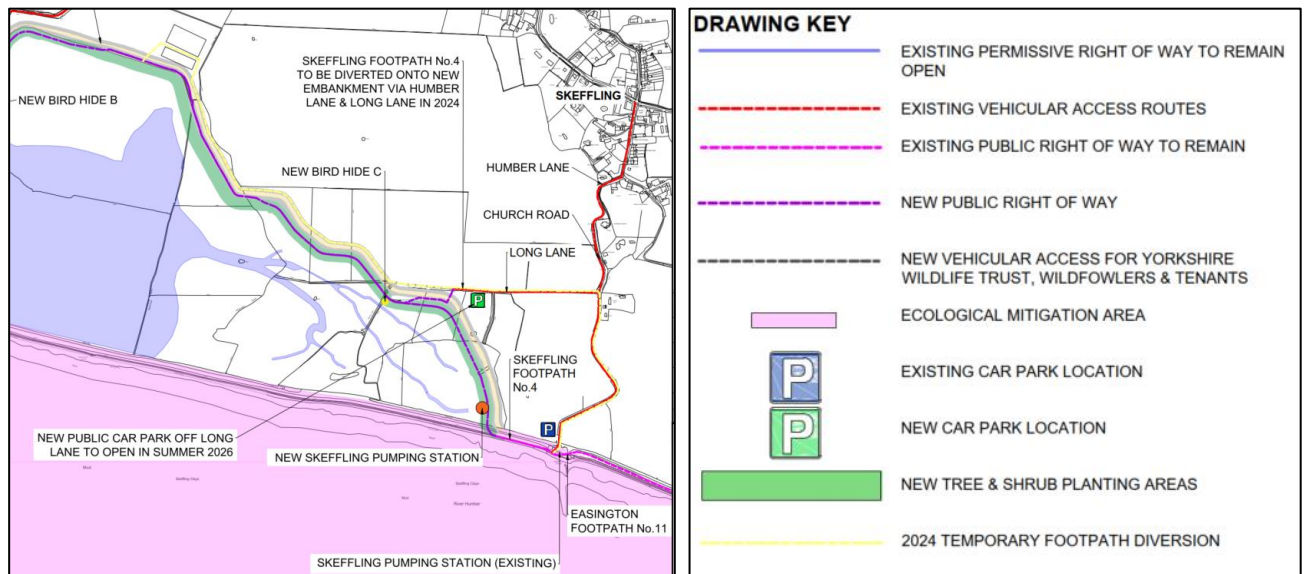
Planning applications for Skeffling and Winestead pumping stations

As part of the OtSMRS, we committed to replacing the ageing Skeffling pumping stations and alongside this, Winestead pumping station as well. Last year we submitted a planning application for a new pumping station at Skeffling to East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC). This was approved at the beginning of March and work on the scheme will start following the contractual and internal approval processes.

Our contractors started working on the detailed design of Winestead pumping station in October last year and we were then able to submit a planning application to ERYC at the end of November. This was validated on the 7th February and the consultation period is still open. The reference number for anyone wanting to comment on this applications is 23/03745/STPLF; you can access the ERYC planning portal here: [Simple Search \(eastriding.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/simple-search). If approved, we hope to start building it later this summer, subject to contractual and internal approval processes.

Changes in public rights of way

This year we hope to complete a significant milestone for the project when the new embankment is connected to the existing one at both Welwick and Skeffling ends of the scheme. This will create an enclosed intertidal area. We can't give fixed dates for when this work will start or finish as it depends on weather and ground conditions, but it will be one of the first activities for this working season. Following these embankment tie-ins, work will start on lowering the existing embankment and creating the breach in the old embankment. At this point, the public right of way along the existing embankment will be permanently closed. An interim diversion route, shown on the map below, will be provided until the new Skeffling pumping station is built.



Following the closure of the existing public right of way, there will be two phases of temporary diversions before the full extent of the new public right of way (PROW) is opened. The first phase is whilst the managed realignment work is completed (approximately 6 months). The second phase is during the construction of the new Skeffling pumping station (likely to last until the end of 2025). Whilst this is happening, the section of the embankment passing the site of the new pumping station will remain closed off until this is built.

The new PROW has an approved Development Consent Order with the temporary diversions submitted to ERYC's Public Rights of Way officer. Signs will be placed on site to indicate the route. From Skeffling pumping station, walkers and horse riders will need to follow the diversion along Long Lane, leading to a path along the inner 'dry' side of the embankment. Further on, beyond the site compound, this will take visitors up onto the top of the embankment onto the new PROW which extends to the western end of the scheme.

Later on in the year we will lay the surface on the bridleway ramps, with a material called Flexipave which is suitable for all intended users, including equestrian. Access to the embankment during this period will be managed locally by the site team. Each ramp in turn will require to be shut for a period of 3 to 5 days as the specialist surfacing requires 24hrs to cure properly.

Once all work on the Skeffling pumping station is completed, our contractors are planning to lay a base surface on Long Lane and it will be tarmacked.

Coming in May this year; an archaeology exhibition in Hedon

In response to a request made last year for an exhibition of finds from the archaeological surveys of the site, we have been working with Hedon Museum and York Archaeology to arrange this.

“**Holderness Histories: a flight through time**” will be open to the public at Hedon Museum from 1st May until 22nd June this year, on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 10am and 4pm. Visitors can see Roman and medieval finds from the excavations and learn about the Roman oyster processing site and settlement that we discovered there. There will also be information about the medieval villages and Burstall Priory, all now lost to the Humber Estuary, and how the medieval features and artefacts found might be associated with them.



Photo: finds from the excavations, including Roman pottery

The exhibition will include a display on the World War Two anti-aircraft battery along with information about the wider defence of the Humber Estuary during the War. The battery originally had four 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns, a ‘magazine’ for storing ammunition and a Nissen hut with blast walls. The final part of the exhibition will focus on what the site might look like once construction finishes and what birds and animals you might see, as the new habitats mature. Everyone is welcome to visit it!

A new name for the site

Last summer we asked for suggestions for a name for the site, to use on all after construction ends and it becomes a nature reserve. Having researched the history of site names, the Outstray (Wildlife Recording) Group put forward ‘**The Outstrays’ Nature Reserve, South Holderness**’. This recognises the distinctive local character of the area, with ‘Strays’ used as a name for saltmarshes which build out from a natural coastline (for example Welwick Saltmarsh used to be called Welwick Strays). We would like to use this name for the site and incorporate it into the interpretation boards we are currently designing. If you have any thoughts about this, please get in touch with us.

The group also put forward names for other parts of the site to make it easier to navigate around it. A full description of their suggestions can be found on the project’s webpage at:

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

Interpretation boards for the site

Towards the end of the year, we will install some new interpretation boards for the site to help visitors navigate around it. You can see an outline of what's been planned so far on our website at the address given above. Before we take them any further, we'd like some feedback on our proposals. If you have any thoughts on these, please get in touch with us via the project's email address. If you want a paper copy of the proposals, please phone the National Customer Contact Centre (0370 850 6506) and ask for Nikky Wilson.

In addition, we're keen to hear from any local artists interested in supplying us with artwork for the interpretation boards. We haven't yet confirmed what exactly is needed but it is likely to be photos or images of some of the wildlife found on site. If you want to know more about this opportunity, then please email us at WelwickSkeffling@environment-agency.gov.uk by the end of March. We will need to finalise designs for the interpretation boards in the summer so that they will be ready for installation in the autumn, just before construction finishes on site.

Ecological update: surveys and tree planting



: JBA Bentley staff planting trees on site

With construction about to restart on the site, a number of ecological checks and surveys are planned to ensure that the impacts from this on protected species and habitats in the area are minimised. This includes nesting bird checks to ensure that nests are not damaged, surveys for water voles in drains affected by the work and monitoring the local marsh harrier population regularly throughout the construction season. Where nests are found, buffer zones will be placed around them until the chicks have fledged.

We will also take action to ensure populations of common lizard and grass snake on the site are not affected by work on the existing embankment. This will involve cutting the top layer of turf into sections and translocating it (moving it to another location) to maintain good quality habitats. A series of rock and log piles will also be installed to provide refuges for reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.

part of the landscaping plan for the site. Laura Thomas, ecologist from JBA Bentley, organised a volunteer planting day for JBA Bentley staff. They came on a cold but sunny morning to plant several hundred whips (leafless seedlings) of hawthorn, oak, blackthorn and other native species. When these trees mature, they will provide shelter and food for some of the more terrestrial bird species we want to encourage on site, such as chaffinch, blue tit, long-tailed tit, linnets, corn bunting and yellowhammer.

Signs of spring are starting to appear on the site. We received reports from a local naturalist that two avocets have been spotted in the western area a couple of weeks ago; the first for this year. They are behaving as a pair, keeping close together, so hopefully visitors will be able to see avocet chicks in the next few months.

Last December thousands of trees and hedgerow seedlings were planted as



An update from project partners ABP and spotlight on their work

Associated British Ports is delighted that 2024 should see the completion of construction works at the site. We are particularly looking forward to the breach happening this summer so that tidal waters can enter the newly formed basin and start creating intertidal habitats. We bought the land and entered into partnership with the EA to create the tidal basin so that we could future-proof our future development and growth options in the Humber. Ports have to constantly adapt and reinvent themselves to respond to changing market forces, and, as the UK economy embarks upon its decarbonisation journey, ports are yet again a key element in this economic transition.

The Humber's prominence as a trading gateway is more important now than ever, and as shippers invest in larger vessels, and as those cargoes increasingly require greener solutions in their supply chain, our Humber ports will need to continue to invest. Ports can also provide very real solutions to help mitigate the effects of climate change, such as the proposed new Green Energy Terminal at Immingham which will import ammonia as part of a green hydrogen distribution process and carbon dioxide for geological sequestration in the North Sea. This project – and a nearby new ferry terminal which is proposed on the eastern frontage of the port – are both drawing on habitat created at OtSMR to ensure environmental compliance against legislation, so the OtSMR project is already supporting significant economic investment and it isn't even finished yet.

ABP still has significant development proposals under consideration, many of which will continue to underpin efforts to achieve net-zero and we fully anticipate that the OtSMR project will help us to grow our business – and continue to create employment opportunities - for many years into the future.

Gate theft

Sadly, we have to report that thieves stole nine access gates from the site last month. It is understood these were taken in the early hours of 10th February. All of them were fully installed and padlocked. These gates were necessary to control access to parts of the site which will become new saltmarsh and mudflat habitats for protected bird species, where we want to minimise disturbance to wildlife. We'd like to offer our sincere thanks to several local residents who brought this theft to our attention.

Anyone who has any information which may lead to the recovery of the stolen gates should contact the police by ringing 101. The crime reference number is PC 24000018886.

Another recent unfortunate event has been that a barn at Outstrays Farm caught fire. The emergency services attended the scene very quickly and dealt with it. No animals or humans were hurt in the incident, but members of the public are being asked to keep away from the farm buildings area until it is made safe.

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/>

JBA Bentley

For enquiries about the work on site, contact Paul Craig, the site manager on **07837 454048**.