

York Flood Alleviation Scheme

Update on the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme

April 2023

Introduction

This briefing note gives an update on the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme. As part of the York Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS), the Environment Agency is investing £21 million of government funding to improve flood defences in the Clifton and Rawcliffe area. This will provide a high standard of protection against future flooding, benefitting 135 homes and protecting local businesses as well. It will also reduce the risk of flood water spilling on to Shipton Road, keeping an important transport route into the city open.

Update on work carried out over the winter

During the winter months our contractors, BAM, have continued working on the site, although at a slower pace due to periods of high water levels restricting working in the Ings. They have made progress with several ongoing tasks including:

- work to complete the extension of the embankment in Rawcliffe Country Park;
- installation of drainage channels and outfalls along the length of the embankment;
- installing a kiosk for the electricity supply for the new pumping station for Blue Beck;
- creating an access route into Homestead Country Park where the existing embankment will be extended and laying a concrete base in one part of the site for a section of flood wall.



Photo: Raising the height of the embankment near Homestead Park (October 2022)

How we're reducing
the risk of flooding
for York



 yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk

 consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/yorkfas/

 @YorkFAS

 @EnvAgencyYNE

Plans for the next phase of work

As spring returns and the weather improves, the pace of work will increase. Metal sheet piling will be installed in Blue Beck and around the pumping station. Work in Homestead Park will continue with the installation of a short length of flood wall where we can't enlarge the embankment. We will then start constructing new sections of the embankment from Homestead Park through York Sports Club and then sections in Rawcliffe Meadow.

Access restrictions

We appreciate how access restrictions to the Ings have made it harder for people to use this greenspace over the last year. However, we do not put these in place without good reason; construction sites are dangerous places where heavy machinery is moving around daily and the ground can be very rough underfoot. So it is essential that visitors are separated from them. Where we have been able to exercise flexibility, such as organising a temporary crossing onto the Sustrans track at the beginning of construction, we have done so. However, the shape of the site – long and relatively narrow – makes it impossible to open other parts of the site during the main construction period.

When the scheme comes to an end, we must also allow time for grass cover to be restored on the new embankment. This is a necessary requirement to ensure the embankment slopes are protected from erosion and retain their structural integrity. It means that any areas of resown grass will need to be protected for a whole growing season (spring and summer) to allow the grass seed to germinate and develop a dense network of roots.

As well as the embankment itself, we also need to restore grass cover along the length of the haul road in the Site of Special Scientific Interest in Rawcliffe Meadows. The soil here has been compacted as a result of heavy vehicles using it to move materials around the site and so it will need careful cultivation and reseeding with green hay. This is a condition of our planning application approval from City of York Council. It will take some time to achieve, requiring us to restrict access in this area for longer than anywhere else on the site. If exposed too early to large amounts of trampling from people walking over them, seed can fail to germinate and seedlings can be crushed. So we have to allow additional time in this area to let the new grass cover grow undisturbed into an established carpet of grass.

At present all points of entry to the site remain closed, apart from those at either end in Rawcliffe Country Park and in Homestead Park. The first area to reopen will be in Rawcliffe Country Park where the embankment has been extended. We plan to open part of this in the summer this year, once construction finishes. Although an area around the new embankment will be seeded with grass and fenced off, we will put a ramp over a critical part of it, to create a circular walking route.

Unfortunately other paths on the Ings will remain closed for a considerably longer period of time, to allow construction to be finished and newly sown grass cover to establish. The timetable for further openings is as follows:

- the allotment track: this will reopen in autumn 2024
- Rawcliffe Meadows, and all the entry points onto it: we envisage reopening in the autumn of 2025.

We will look at opportunities to open up the area earlier but this will be subject to successful restoration of the grass taking place. We apologise for the inconvenience caused by the extension of these closures.



A big thank you to all volunteers

In November last year we organised two days of 'plug planting', inviting volunteers to help us create a new area of meadow grassland on the Ings. We got an amazing response to this request and so would like to thank everyone who took part. Over 40 volunteers braved cold and wintry weather to come out and plant around 4,000 'plugs' (seedlings) of rare meadow grassland species such as Great Burnett, Ragged Robin and Common Bistort. Once established, these will add flashes of colour to the meadows and restore 12 hectares of meadow grass land habitat. Special thanks are also due to the experts from the Floodplain Meadows Partnership who advised us on the process, Brunswick Nursery for growing the thousands of plants from seed (and for bringing delicious cakes), and to Friends of St Nick's for leading the activity on the day.



Photo: volunteers planting 'plugs' to create new areas of meadow grassland habitat.

Find out more

To find out more about the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme, you can:

Contact us by email us at: yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk

Check out our website: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/yorkfas/>

Phone us via the Environment Agency's National Customer Contact Centre: 03708 506 506. Remember to ask to speak to a member of the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme team.

If you want to receive briefings about the scheme by email, please use the email address on this newsletter to contact us.

Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme in a nutshell

Construction phase one: Autumn/Winter 2021

Initial enabling works and building an alternative Sustrans cycle track.

Construction phase two: Spring 2022 to Autumn 2024

Raising the height of the existing embankment, extending it at the south eastern end in Homestead Park, constructing the northern extension into Rawcliffe Country Park, building a new pumping station for Blue Beck.


Embankment & Habitat restoration: access restrictions in place until autumn 2025.

How we're reducing
the risk of flooding
for York



 yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk

 consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/yorkfas/

 @YorkFAS

 @EnvAgencyYNE