

# Ouse Washes Section 10 Works

April 2020

## Middle Level Barrier Bank

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Coronavirus is causing concern across the country for everyone, both personally and professionally. Our key priorities are to protect the health, safety and well-being of our own staff, the public and the businesses and partners we work with; to prevent loss of life and serious harm to the environment; and to keep our critical operations running.

We are doing this by following the Government guidelines on reducing the risk of Coronavirus; by seeking to act quickly, decisively and proportionately; and by responding flexibly as the situation develops.

In line with Government guidelines on reducing the risk of Coronavirus, we have put in place arrangements where staff and contractors are:

- Working from home and making virtual meetings where possible.
- Working in shifts or staggered work patterns to minimise social contact.
- Continuing to work on site at the Ouse Washes Section 10 project as long as staff are 2 metres apart and communicating via 2-way radios.

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We have been busy over the winter finalising the detailed design for the temporary demountable flood barrier and planning the next phase of works on the Middle Level Barrier Bank. We are still planning to start this year's bank works in June for repairs.

Due to environmental constraints, our construction works can only take place between 15 July and 31 October. However, the project team is in discussions with Natural England to try to agree on an extended working window for this year. We would use this time to do some winter repair work on the bank and haul road before we start the main bank works in July.

Over the next few weeks you will start to see movement on the banks where our ecologists will be undertaking surveys and the grass cutting will be getting underway ready for the works to start. We will be working in a number of areas as detailed below:

### Welney to Railway Bridge

We will return this year to complete the bank works between Welney and the Railway Bridge. We are planning to start construction of the Welney Barrier walls and foundations in 2021, subject to results from the online consultation on the time period preferred by respondents.

### Railway Bridge to Welches Dam

We have completed the haul road widening ready for this year's bank work to start later this year. We will start in this area by removing the bird hides to be able to undertake the bank works. These will be replaced by new hides once the bank work is complete.

### Welches Dam to Mepal A142

We will need to return here to complete a 1.2km section of bank by the A142.

## Earith

We had hoped that the grass might have established enough here, and we could agree to re-open the bank for public use. However, having seen the condition of the crest and shoulders, it is unlikely that we can.

We closed the public footpath to allow the grass to grow, unfortunately the footpath has been accessed and the bank needs to be repaired so that it meets the criteria set out by the Reservoirs Act 1975.

There is little to no grass cover on the crest due to unauthorised access which has resulted in damage to the soil and grass on the crest. There is evidence of vehicle tracks, pedestrian tracks and cycle tracks.

We will access the area as early as possible in the working window, which opens on 15 July, to rectify the damage and reseed. The team are looking at ways to see if or how we can protect the crest while the grass grows allowing us to consider opening the public footpath earlier.

Ultimately it is the reservoir engineer's decision whether the grass cover is acceptable. He is due to visit the first week of June (depending on the Coronavirus). He will not accept the current state of grass cover on the crest and bank and will expect us to do more work to improve it.

**The grass growth plays an important role in the bank stability and we cannot open the public right of way until it is safe to do so.** We are disappointed that the bank has been accessed and damaged. Once the damage is repaired the bank will need to remain closed with further measures put in place to try and keep the public off the bank.

## Sutton Gault Wall

We will be finishing off some bank works on the Mepal side (Three Fishes) of the road to regrade the bank around the existing wall. Access to the haul will be required by staff at various times.

## Public footpaths

We have been granted public footpath closures for the whole length of the works. Our contractor will only enforce closures on areas where they are working and will endeavour to provide a diversion wherever possible. Once sections of the bank have been completed, the public footpath will remain closed until sufficient grass coverage has been established. Regular inspections are undertaken monthly to monitor the grass growth.

We have reopened two areas of the public footpath. Welney Bridge to Welmore Lake Sluice was re-opened in September 2019 and will remain open until we construct the temporary demountable barrier walls in 2021. We will need to close it temporarily as the pedestrian and haul road access will be within the works area and there is no other safe area to gain access. Closures and diversions are clearly signposted.

Our Public Liaison Officer (contact details below), will keep you and the public informed of when the footpaths will reopen and liaise directly with Parish Councils.

## To find out more and give your views

customer service line  
03708 506 506

incident hotline  
0800 80 70 60

floodline  
0345 988 1188

[www.gov.uk.environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk.environment-agency)

Once we get back to normal business we will host a drop-in and consultation event to present the Welney Barrier plans to you in person.

In the meantime, to find out more about the project visit our [Ouse Washes Section 10 works page](#). To give us your preferred time to do these essential works complete our online survey on [https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/welney-wash-road-barrier-work-timings/consult\\_view](https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/welney-wash-road-barrier-work-timings/consult_view)

Due to the current national situation with Coronavirus, the programme could change. We will keep you updated.

We have noticeboards displaying project information and contact details. These are located on the bank near Earith Sluice, in the Anchor Inn car park at Sutton Gault, at Welches Dam RSPB Reserve and near the old parish hall at Welney.

If you would like to know more about the project don't hesitate to contact our Public Liaison Officer, Monica Stonham, at [ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com](mailto:ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com) or on 07534 457348