

Ouse Washes Middle Level Barrier Bank raising works

October 2022

The Middle Level Barrier Bank is the bank of the Ouse Washes reservoir extending from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice. The work we are doing is to comply with recommendations made by the Reservoir Inspecting Engineer to complete the works under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Progress

The weather has been kind this year and the project is progressing successfully towards completion at the end of October 2022.

Bank raising and haul road work

The bank raising work is now complete. During September we raised the haul road between the railway bridge and Welches Dam, and we are carrying out a general tidy of all the work areas. Works to install new fencing and gates along the Middle Level Barrier Bank started in September and will be completed in October.

RSPB Ouse Washes Reserve

In August we started the construction of the final bird hide at the RSPB. We are also constructing new steps to the hide and improving the public footpath. This work will be completed in October.

Access to the bird hides will remain closed during construction. Please follow the RSPB webpage link for up-to-date closure/re-opening information: [RSPB Ouse Washes](#)

Welney demountable flood barrier

The main construction work for the demountable barrier is complete and the A1101 road was re-opened on 25 August. The embankment works around the abutment walls are complete and we have also carried out some work to reinforce the public footpath in this area. During October we will install the new fencing and gates.

We are currently carrying out some work to the first ramp on the embankment south of Welney Bridge. To carry out this work the traffic lights will need to stay in place until 14 October 2022.

The public footpath along the Middle Level Barrier Bank of the Ouse Washes will re-open on 1 November 2022.

Commissioning and testing of the Welney demountable flood barrier

Once the construction is complete, we will need to commission and test that the demountable barrier works. To do this we will need to close the road. Norfolk County Council have approved an off-peak road closure on **14 October 2022**. We cannot test and trial the barrier without closing the road.

During the closure we will also carry out a training session for the Area Operations team who will need to install the barrier when needed. The road closure will be between 9am and 4pm.

Welches Dam - vegetation work

To help the grass to grow we will be carrying out some vegetation clearance work during October. This work will take approximately 5 days to complete. We will carry this work out within the normal site working hours, which will be no earlier than 7.30am and finish at 6pm each day.



Award for excellence

We are pleased to announce that our contractor Jackson Civil Engineering has achieved the highest score from the Considerate Constructors Scheme in recognition of our community engagement and exemplar management of safety, health, and environmental risk.

The scheme aims to encourage best practice beyond statutory requirements and show the industry to be considerate. Find out more about the scheme here: <https://www.ccscheme.org.uk>



Contact us

Stay up to date and visit our information page for the most up to date information using the link below.

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/ouse-washes-section-10-works/>

If you have any questions or concerns about this project or would like to be added to our mailing list for regular updates, please contact our Public Liaison Officers:

Monica Stonham or Yazmin Parry via email ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com

or call Monica 07534 457348 / Yazmin 07496 760446

The project is being carried out by JacksonHyder on behalf of the Environment Agency



Exciting environmental news

The Ouse washes are home to a plethora of stunning UK wildlife species which have continued to blossom throughout the bank upgrade. Some of these species are found at very few sites outside the Ouse washes, so it has been of the utmost importance to minimise disturbance to their lifecycles and ecology throughout the length of this project.

Over this past week, the successes of our efforts to reduce interference with the wildlife here has been especially evident. On a few occasions common cranes have been seen on or near the site during the working day. This is significant as Cranes were made locally extinct in Britain over 400 years ago due to hunting and habitat loss caused by the draining of the marshlands. They were absent from Britain until three birds were blown off course during their migration in 1979 and ended up in Norfolk. Since then, there has been a huge conservation effort to help them re-establish in the British landscape, including reintroductions and large-scale habitat restoration. This has not been an overnight transformation, but more of a slow and steady increase. As of 2021, the population reached 200 cranes for the first time since their extinction in Britain. These glorious and elegant giants of the bird world have been seen displaying to one another and loafing around foraging in the grazing marshes either side of the River Delph. Currently the highest number of cranes observed near to the site has been whopping 45! Numbers are building, as the Ouse Washes are a favoured location for the cranes to flock during the autumn and winter months. Highest peak in the area has been 60 birds which is approximately 30% of the entire UK population!

Another star species of the area are Hobbies. No, not 5-a-side footy or whittling, but one of nature's speediest and most agile hunters, a smaller relative of the Peregrine – nature's fastest animal. This smart-looking falcon is characterised by its dashing flight and rusty-red trousers. It's a relatively scarce bird in Britain, with around 2,000 pairs migrating from southern Africa each year. They follow their prey on the migration, because who doesn't like a snack when they've got a long journey! least two territories have been found around the works, both high up in willow trees near-by the drains and riverbanks. A perfect nesting spot to be close to hatching dragonflies, one of their other favourite foods. These aerial beauties have been seen on numerous occasions flying near the heavy plant without any signs of disturbance, which is a big win.

But it is not just the large, super-rare and beautiful birds that the project has adapted to protect. Three small warbler species; Cetti's, Sedge and Reed warblers have nested around the works, in, as their names would suggest, the surrounding sedge-lined riverbanks, reedbeds and willow scrub. All three are small brownish birds which to the untrained eye might look quite similar. When they sing however, it all changes. The noises these birds produce don't sound entirely out of place in a work yard, with clicks, whistles and metallic 'dinks' all featuring in the songs of these wonderful warblers. Where nests have been found, or suspected, the areas of vegetation have been left undisturbed until the birds have finished nesting and moved on, many of which have already started their journey to Africa for the winter. We wish them all the best of luck!

