

Ouse Washes Section 10 works

Stakeholder update

November 2023

Middle Level Barrier Bank raising maintenance works

The Middle Level Barrier Bank is the bank of the Ouse Washes reservoir extending from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice. We completed the bank raising work to comply with recommendations made by the Reservoir Inspecting Engineer under the Reservoirs Act 1975 in 2022.

We continue to carry out regular inspections of the bank to check the grass growth and identify damage that may happen over the winter months. This also includes regular grass cuts, ecological surveys, and repairs.

The inspections found damage to the haul road caused by the winter flooding and the haul road needs raising further to stop this from happening.

In the autumn and winter the haul road floods, which limits access for maintenance vehicles. We need access to the haul road in all weathers to carry out maintenance and access in emergency events. This work will provide better access along the Middle Level Barrier Bank haul road.

This year, our contractor Jackson Civil Engineering carried out the haul road raising works and essential maintenance works along the Middle Level barrier bank.

In 2022 we installed a new interlocking paving system for grass and ground reinforcement at the access points in Welney. This system has worked well where the grass did not establish due to heavy pedestrian or vehicle use.

During this year's work we have installed the new system at every access gate and ramp along the Middle Level barrier bank.

Work we have done and where

- raised the haul road between Welney bridge and the railway bridge.
- raised a 500m section of the haul road between the A142 at Mepal and Sutton Gault.
- installed a new access ramp and handrail leading to the new bird hide at the RSPB reserve at Welches Dam.
- installed new gates on the haul road to stop livestock accessing the boardwalk.
- installed the reinforcement interlocking paving system at every access gate and ramp along the Middle Level barrier bank.
- repaired and reinforced the topsoil slips resulting from the winter weather.

The Reservoir Inspecting Engineer carried out an inspection of the Middle Level barrier bank in September. The engineer found topsoil cracks along the crest of the bank.

Topsoil and clay can dry out and crack during long dry spells (typically during summers). This is common on embankments and most of the cracks are self-healing once the moisture content increases in the Autumn and Winter. These works have been completed and ongoing maintenance may be required following long periods of hot dry weather. This is typically achieved by topsoiling and re-seeding.

Next steps

We are currently carrying out regular monitoring and assessments to establish the detail of any further improvement and maintenance work that will need carrying out next year along the Middle Level barrier bank.

The 2-year maintenance period following project completion in 2022 will end in autumn 2024.

Throughout the maintenance period our contractor, Jackson Civil Engineering, has been carrying out this work. We will resume responsibility for the maintenance of the Ouse Washes Middle Level Barrier Bank from autumn 2024.

Public footpath

The public footpath that runs along the crest of the Middle Level Barrier Bank will remain open. Our contractor will divert members of the public around any localised works.

Please continue to be careful when accessing and walking on the bank and stay away from the patches of grass that haven't grown fully yet.

The reservoir bank remains in operation as normal.

Keeping your community up to date

We will continue to keep you up to date with any maintenance works or further improvements that may take place next year.

We would like to thank you for your co-operation and patience whilst we carry out this important work, and we will continue to work with you and the community to minimise disruption.

Our Public Liaison Officers Monica Stonham and Yazmin Parry will continue to keep you updated during the maintenance period of the project.

If you would like to find out more about the project please use this link to our information page <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anqlia-c-e/ouse-washes-section-10-works/>

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Public Liaison team on 07534 457348 or email ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com