

Multi-million pound project continues on Ouse Washes

The project to raise the Middle Level Barrier Bank and part of the South Level Barrier Bank will maintain the standard of protection provided to more than 2,000 properties and 67,000ha of agricultural land.

The work will be carried out in line with the government's coronavirus guidance with public footpaths along the crest of the Middle Level Barrier Bank diverted to keep the public and the workforce safe.

The Ouse Washes project is taking place over five years. Works started in 2017 at Welmore Lake Sluice and Sutton Gault.

This summer's works will take place at Welney and in areas between Earith and Mepal. It will see clay material imported from local quarries to raise the crest level of the Middle Level Barrier Bank.

Works started this week to repair damage that occurred over the winter and the main bank works will start on July 15.

In order to minimise the impact on the environment on and around the Washes, work has to be completed by 31 October.

As the Washes are an internationally-important habitat, the work will take place in the summer and early autumn to avoid disturbing breeding and over-wintering birds.

Following construction works there will be a further two years of maintenance works to establish a good grass cover which is important to ensure the stability of the banks.

Grass being cut along the Middle Level Barrier Bank last week.

The evolving design and material inconsistency on site has resulted in a change to the intended bank profile, increasing the footprint of the Middle Level Barrier Bank and the need to import more material.

This additional work, along with periods of wet weather, has resulted in the construction programme being extended.

Nicola Oldfield, Project Manager for the Environment Agency said:

"This vital reservoir work will maintain the level of protection to homes, businesses and agricultural land, which is why it will go ahead in line with the government's coronavirus guidance.

"All our staff, contractors and partners will practice social distancing and

follow PHE guidance for safe working.

“We’d like to thank the local community for their patience and understanding during this complex programme of work which will take longer than predicted at the outset.”

Demountable barrier

As part of the bank raising work to comply with the Reservoirs Act, a robust demountable flood barrier is needed at Welney where the wash road intersects the Middle Level Barrier Bank.

A demountable barrier option has been sourced that will provide the robust flood protection solution and will be bespoke to Welney.

The Environment Agency wants to hear from the community to help decide the best time period to undertake the work.

It is expected that the total construction time will be 14 weeks. During these 14 weeks, the road will need to be closed for approximately 4-6 weeks to install the concrete slab across the road.

The Environment Agency has published an online survey using the Ouse Washes Citizen Space information page, which people living in and around Welney and connecting communities can access following the link:

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

The survey has been extended and will remain open for a few more months.