

Ouse Washes

Habitat Creation Project Update

December 2013

The Ouse Washes are a vital part of the defences that protect the Fens from flooding. They are also of great importance for wildlife. However, in recent decades the numbers of certain bird species using the Washes has reduced. This habitat creation project has been set up to reverse the decline, while allowing us to continue operating the Washes for flood defence.



Coveney planning permission

We highlighted, in our last newsletter during the summer, that the planning application for the Coveney habitat creation scheme had been submitted to East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC). The application comprised the works within the 206 hectare (509 acre) site north of Wardy Hill, largely between Old Lynn Drove and the Ouse Washes, where we plan to create wet grassland. It also included the creation of the new water storage lake and associate landscaping of the excavated material. Following public consultation by ECDC the application was considered at the Planning Committee meeting in September and granted permission.

The planning permission is subject to a number of conditions that we are required to meet when implementing the scheme. The conditions include measures intended to minimise possible disturbance to neighbours of the site during construction as well as other issues such as archaeology.

Appointment of contractors

Having secured planning permission, invitations have recently been sent out for bids to construct the first phase of the Coveney scheme. This work comprises the southern two-thirds of the site including the water storage lake. We are seeking bids from a range of experienced civil engineering contractors who have a proven track record of good practice. We have asked for submissions to be made in the New Year and following an assessment of these we expect to appoint our chosen construction contractor in February or March.

We have also started the process of selecting an organisation to undertake the long-term management of the Coveney site on our behalf. Having advertised for expressions of interest we are now inviting bids from candidate organisations that show they have the appropriate abilities to manage the site, which includes working with the local community, and also represent good value for money.



Looking forward

Once appointed, the construction contractor will begin planning in detail how they intend to undertake the work and how long it will take.

Construction work is expected to start on site during the spring of next year. However, before then, a number of details will still need to be submitted to and approved by ECDC and the Internal Drainage Board. Preparation for construction will also involve activities on site to ensure that protected species, such as water voles, will not be harmed during the works.

We plan to meet with local residents before construction starts, including holding a further drop-in event at Wardy Hill to give people the opportunity to speak with the construction team and discuss how the work will be done. We will circulate information about this event nearer the time, most likely to be sometime during March.

Further information or comments

Please contact the project using the email address: OWHCP@environment-agency.gov.uk

Alternatively write to: Peter Doktor (Project Manager), Environment Agency, Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich NR3 1UB or telephone 01473 706578.

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