

Frequently asked questions - Ouse Washes S10

Why doesn't the South Level Barrier Bank get the same level of consideration as the Middle Level Barrier Bank?

The purpose of the work on the Middle Level Barrier Bank is to satisfy the requirements of The Reservoirs Act 1975. The Middle Level Barrier Bank and Cradge Bank are considered to be the reservoir's dams, the South Barrier Bank is a river bank and therefore does not fall under the Reservoirs Act. We will however be undertaking some minor earthwork repairs to the South Barrier Bank whilst we are working on the Middle Level Barrier Bank.

What will the bank look like once the works are complete?

The work will comprise of material being placed onto the bank in areas where it has settled. Whilst the work is being undertaken you will notice a temporary difference in appearance as we strip the topsoil and place extra material before replacing the topsoil and then reseeding it. We expect the grass to re-establish within twelve months. Ultimately you will notice no change at all once the grass has grown back.

What is the recommended height for the Middle Level Barrier Bank, will we be raising it?

We will be raising the bank by around 800mm, although this will vary along its length. (See design criteria overleaf) It will be roughly the same as the 1996 design level plus an allowance for settlement.

Are there plans to raise the Welney or Sutton Gault causeway and/or the Old Bedford bridge?

There are no proposals as part of this project to carry out works to the causeway, any road improvements would be led by the local authority and not the Environment Agency.

Why and how long are we closing the public footpath along the crest of the bank?

The footpath is being diverted for as we need to work along the crest of the bank and also ensure that we keep the public safe. The footpath will be diverted until the grass has re established as the grass plays a major part in the bank stability, which may take up to a year.

Why can't the haul road be used as the diverted footpath whilst the public footpath is closed?

In the interest of public safety there is the need to separate the public from the construction traffic that will use the haul road for access to the works.

What standard of flood protection does the Middle Level Barrier Bank currently provide?

The existing bank protects surrounding areas from flood water stored in the reservoir. Our recent assessment of the bank height shows that flood water could overtop the bank at isolated locations in the equivalent of a 1% probability event. Overtopping could lead to erosion and subsequent collapse of the bank. Under the Reservoirs Act, the MLBB needs to be safe for a 0.1% probability event. Where communities are immediately adjacent to the bank, the MLBB needs to be safe for a 0.01% probability event.

Why are we designing to a 1:1000 year event given what's happening nationally?

The design is clearly set out in the Reservoirs Act 1975. All Reservoirs are designed using this guidance.

What are the cost and design criteria for the proposed works?

The proposed works will maintain the existing profile of the Middle Level Barrier Bank and raise the level to accommodate the 0.1% or 0.01% probability water level depending on the location.

An allowance for wave freeboard will be added.

A capital scheme was carried out in the 1990's and surveys have shown since then the MLBB has settled by approximately 300mm. Therefore, additional height will also be added to allow for future settlement.

We also have to ensure the bank slopes remain stable when we add more material to the crest and we are just finalising this assessment.

In total we expect to raise the existing bank crest by approximately 800mm, although this will vary along its length

We have allocated £10 million to the project within the East Anglia 6 year capital programme.