

York Flood Alleviation Scheme

Update on the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme

November 2021

Introduction

This briefing note gives an update on the work the Environment Agency has started on the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme. As part of the York Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS), we are investing £21 million of government funding on improving flood defences in the Clifton and Rawcliffe area. This will provide a high standard of protection against future flooding, benefitting 135 homes and protecting local businesses as well. It will also reduce the risk of flood water spilling on to Shipton Road, keeping an important transport route into the city open.

What's happening on site - Phase One (Autumn/Winter 2021)

Work started last month on setting up a site compound for our contractors, BAM Nuttall. The first stage has been to create an entrance to the cornfield off Shipton Road and then surface the area to allow heavy vehicles to use it. The compound will remain in place until the scheme is completed in late 2023. After this, the cornfield will be reinstated and the topsoil that was stripped off it before work began will be put back in place.



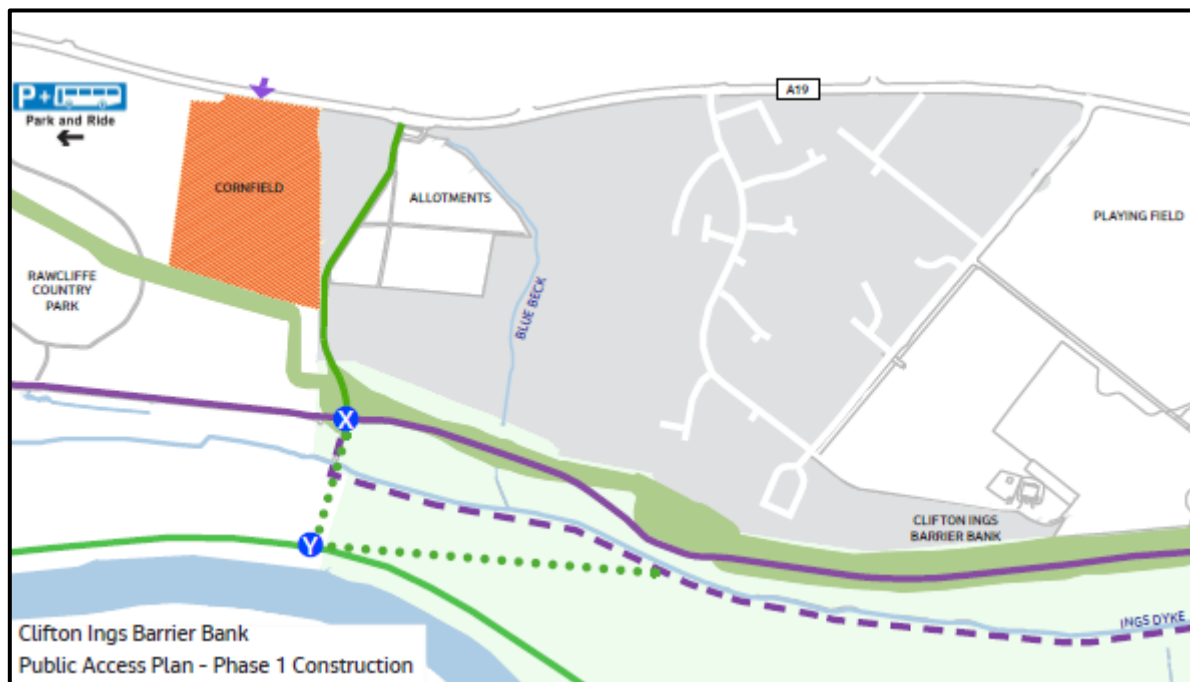
Surfacing work in the cornfield and tarmacking the compound entrance off Shipton Road

If you have visited the Ings recently, you may have noticed some temporary cabins providing facilities for staff at the bottom of the track leading from Shipton Road past the allotments, where it crosses the Sustrans route. These will be moved into the site compound once all the surfacing work there is finished. A short diversion around this area will then be put in place in the first week of November, to create separate access routes to the Ings for pedestrians and construction vehicles. This means that the track from Shipton Road past the allotments onto the Ings can be kept open until next year.



Changes in Access and Footpath Closures

The next stage of the scheme, starting in early November, is to begin building an alternative section of the Sustrans cycle track, the purple dotted line shown on the map below. We intend to complete this work by April next year. The new path will run alongside Ings Dyke, giving visitors access to the length of the Ings throughout the construction period. Once the alternative route is ready, anyone using the Sustrans route will be diverted onto this new path. The old route into Rawcliffe Meadows (solid purple line, to the right of point X) will then be closed next year before work begins on raising the height of the embankment there.



In order to build the alternative track, our contractors will need to bring large vehicles carrying materials onto Clifton Ings. To do this safely, we must temporarily close the public footpath from Rawcliffe Meadows into Clifton Ings (between points X and Y on the map), starting from the 9th of November until the end of March next year. In addition two control gates, operated by a member of staff, will be installed on the Sustrans route at point X on the map. These will be closed only when vehicles are crossing and re-opened as soon as they have passed. This means that visitors to the Ings will still be able to walk, run or cycle from one end of the site to the other; they might have a short wait at the junction if a vehicle is passing and the gates are closed but otherwise will be able to use most of the site freely.

If you are in the vicinity, please look out for warning signs on site as you approach this point and be prepared to stop for a few minutes. Outside working hours (evenings and weekends), the gates will be left open and will not cause any obstruction to visitors. We are installing notice boards in several locations on the Ings to provide information to visitors about these closures.

The only other changes happening during this time are as follows:

- the existing path along Ings Dyke (dotted purple line) will be fenced off and will not be accessible;
- the path from the Ouse foreshore across to Ings Dyke (dotted green line) will be closed.

These closures are only temporary and access to the paths will be restored once the new length of Sustrans route is in place next year. The track from Shipton Road past the allotments will remain open during this phase of work.



Minimising environmental impacts of our work during the first phase

We recognise that Clifton Ings is an important green space in the city, providing valuable habitats for rare and protected species. So we have taken action to minimise or mitigate the impacts of construction on the Ings before the first phase of work started. This has included creating a protected area in Rawcliffe Country Park for feeding overwintering birds that would otherwise have used the cornfield (where the site compound is now located). This will remain in place for the duration of the scheme, with food placed there regularly over the winter months.

Before starting work in the cornfield, a team of ecologists carried out a comprehensive survey to check for and remove any great crested newts found on site. We also installed a stretch of green plastic fencing around the Blue Beck basin to contain the newts in a safe, undisturbed area; the fencing slopes gently into the basin, meaning that any newts inside it cannot get out but newts on the other side (where construction vehicles will be passing) can climb up the fence posts and escape into the basin. This will also be kept in place until construction is finished.



Newt fencing along the edge of the Blue Beck basin

From early next year we will start preparing for the translocation of rare meadow species – known as MG4 grassland - found in Rawcliffe Meadows and Clifton Ings. This must be done before work begins on the embankment and so needs careful planning and co-ordination. It involves lifting and moving individual plants to a new site on Rawcliffe Ings. We are also planning to use other floodplain meadow restoration techniques to increase the species richness of the grassland areas, including implementing floodplain meadow management, spreading green hay and using hand collected seed to propagate individual plants.

Whilst carrying out work on the site, we intend to make several immediate improvements where opportunities arise. We want to improve the drainage system along Ings Dyke to enhance the quality of the habitat for rare meadow grassland species and have been working closely with the Internal Drainage Board and Natural England to organise this work. Once the drains have been excavated, you might notice piles of material along the edges; these are not abandoned but will be left deliberately for several weeks to allow wildlife living in them to return to the dyke. We also intend to cut back overgrown vegetation along the Sustrans route this winter so that it is not obstructing the path and gives more room for cyclists and pedestrians.



As part of a longer term programme of improvements, we have created a new management plan for the areas which are not part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This will involve creating some new ponds for great crested newts, installing and managing bird, bat and owl boxes in different locations, and creating new habitat for tansy plants (which are the preferred home of the tansy beetle). It also specifies regular managing and monitoring of the site.

Tansy in flower by the side of the River Ouse

To find out more about our plans to minimise impacts on the environment, you can download the **Clifton Ings Barrier Bank Mitigation Strategy** from the Clifton and Rawcliffe page in the York Flood Alleviation Scheme website at:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/yorkfas/>

Find out more

To find out more about the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme or the York Flood Alleviation Scheme in general, you can:

Contact us by email us at: yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk

Check out our website: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/yorkfas/>

Phone us via the Environment Agency's National Customer Contact Centre: 03708 506 506.

Remember to ask to speak to a member of the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme team.

If you want to receive briefings about the scheme or the general York FAS newsletter by email, please contact us on the email address above to make this request.

Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme in a nutshell

Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme is divided into three construction phases:

Phase one: Autumn/Winter 2021

Initial enabling works and building an alternative Sustrans cycle track.

Phase two: Spring to Autumn 2022

Raising the height of the existing embankment, extending it at the south eastern end, near Homestead Park, and building a new pumping station for Blue Beck.

Phase three: Spring to Autumn 2023


Completing the raising of the existing embankment, building the northern extension of it in Rawcliffe Country Park and carrying out habitat restoration work.

How we're reducing
the risk of flooding
for York



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 consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/yorkfas/

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