

York Flood Alleviation Scheme

Update on the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme

April 2022

Introduction

This briefing note gives an update on the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme. As part of the York Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS), the Environment Agency is investing £21 million of government funding to improve 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.

Update on the scheme: phase two starting this spring



In spite of some delays during February when the Ings operated as a flood storage area, phase one of the scheme has progressed well and is scheduled to finish just before Easter. The new section of Sustrans track through Clifton Ings will open just at the point when we need to close access to Rawcliffe Meadows. This means that public access along the length of the site is maintained. Visitors to the Ings will still be able to travel from Rawcliffe Country Park to Water End, using the diversion onto the new Sustrans track, so avoiding the route through Rawcliffe Meadows.

Preparations are already underway for the second phase of construction, starting this month. This involves working on the middle section of the existing embankment, from the allotments end of Rawcliffe Meadows through to Homestead Park. We intend to raise the height of the embankment along this stretch, extend it at the south eastern end in Homestead Park and build a new, fully automated pumping station for Blue Beck.

Photo: Clifton Ings storage area in operation in late February, viewed from the top of the embankment

Path closures from April

From the 19th April 2022 until the end of November 2023, we need to restrict access to the site as follows:

- **The full length of the public footpath from Shipton Road** past the allotments onto Clifton Ings will be closed;
- **All points of entry to Rawcliffe Meadows** from several informal paths on the Shipton Road side will be blocked (but the paths leading to them will remain open);
- **The northern entrance through Rawcliffe Meadows** will be closed although access at the southern end will remain open until summer 2022, allowing visitors into this area until work starts on that end of the embankment.



We have included a map showing these changes on the last page of this newsletter. You can also find it on noticeboards at several locations on the Ings or you can access the Clifton Ings page of the York Flood Alleviation Scheme website:

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

In addition we have produced a special **Frequently Asked Questions** document, focusing on access changes, which can also be downloaded from the website.

Reasons for these path closures



These path closures are being made to keep people safe. Rather than closing the whole site, we are restricting access only in areas where construction is taking place. This ensures that visitors are still able to use most of the Ings safely and at the same time enables our contractors to progress with their work without interruption or posing a danger to the public.

Path closures are required where paths meet or cross the 'working area' needed by our contractors, where large vehicles will be delivering clay for the embankment. Unfortunately, given the nature of this working area – a long narrow strip of land - it is not possible to put diversions in place or cut across it; the only crossing points are at either end, outside the working area. This means we must close the allotment track and all informal access points into Rawcliffe Meadows between the allotment track and Homestead Park.

Photo: The new Sustrans route in construction. Once finished, the fencing will be removed.

We recognise that these restrictions will make it more difficult for people to access the middle section of the site over the next two years and apologise if this causes you inconvenience. However, they are absolutely necessary so that we can complete essential flood defence work without putting the public at risk.

Whilst developing plans for this phase, we considered many different options for access, including temporary restrictions along the allotment track (such as closing it only during working hours every day). However, given the large number of vehicle movements on the site during the main period of construction and restrictions on where we could install a road for heavy vehicles, the only safe and viable option has been to close all access points in this area for the full construction period.

All path closures will have signs in place and diversions pointed out where these are possible. Please follow these instructions and respect any path closures you encounter; they have been put in place to keep visitors safe.

Reducing the environmental impact of our work on the Ings

Building a project of this size obviously has significant environmental impacts on the site. After we gained planning consent for the scheme, we set up an Advisory Group to review the work planned and consider how we might reduce damage to the site. Members of the group include Natural England, City of York Council's ecologist, our Wildlife Conservation Contractor and the Floodplain Meadows Partnership. They meet regularly to offer guidance during construction. This can include

How we're reducing
the risk of flooding
for York



 yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk

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

 @YorkFAS

 @EnvAgencyYNE

advice on the best location to install drainage grips on the Ings, when to spread green hay for the maximum benefits, or identifying plant species to introduce in habitat restoration areas.

Most recently, we have been working closely with the Advisory Group to identify the best location for translocated turves (grass sods) in Rawcliffe Ings. This involves studying LiDAR data alongside information we've collected on the site's hydrology, to ensure that the turves are placed in the most suitable location for MG4 grassland (the combination of floodplain meadow grass species that we want to protect). We have used this information to identify the best sites for applying a range of restoration techniques, including green hay spreading, brush harvesting and plug planting.

During the first phase of work on site, we have taken many different actions to reduce the impact of our work. Examples of these include carrying out ecological surveys for wildlife and plants and implementing stringent mitigation and monitoring plans for the site. Recently, before stripping the topsoil from the cornfield, ecologists carried out a 'fingertip' survey of the ground to find any frogs, newts, toads or other forms of wildlife and move them to a safer part on the Ings. This work was also undertaken in conjunction with archaeologists to ensure that any potential buried archaeology is identified, recorded and protected. We have also left in place a large pile of brushwood near the embankment in York Sports Club. This was produced from our tree felling work and was found to have birds nesting in it. It will only be removed after the bird nesting season ends and any nestlings had fully fledged.

We're very conscious of deer living in the local area and roaming around on the Ings. We have instructed our contractors to brief all staff on what to do if they encounter deer whilst working; they must stop and wait until the deer move away, or back away from them to give these beautiful creatures space to take another route. We have also made sure that the works compound is well fenced so that they can't get onto Shipton Road from this site.

We will continue to take action throughout the scheme to ensure we minimise our impacts as much as possible.

Supporting learning in local schools



Photo: school children on a field trip to the Ings in March

In March this year Environment Agency staff visited the Year 5 class at Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School for a classroom session on the topic of rivers and flooding. We then accompanied them on a field trip to Clifton Ings to look at the construction work taking place there and what we're doing to minimise damage to wildlife and plants on site. After the visit, children were asked to produce drawings to inspire some wooden sculptures for the Ings. These will be made using some of the larger logs from trees felled in March. We will commission an artist to produce them and then place them on site after the scheme is built.



Find out more

To find out more about the Clifton Ings Flood Alleviation Scheme, 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

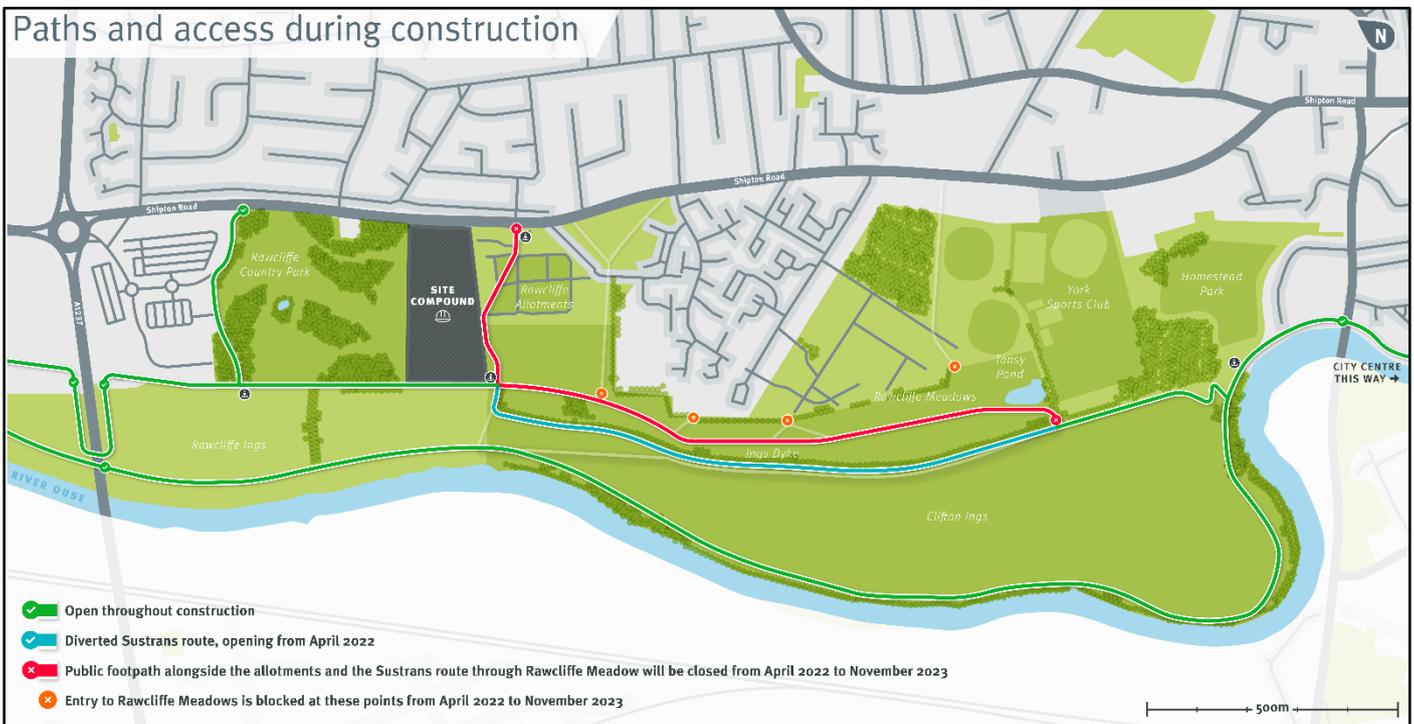
Initial enabling works and building an alternative Sustrans cycle track.

Phase two: Spring to Autumn 2022

Raising the height of the existing embankment, extending it at the south eastern end in 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



yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk

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

[@YorkFAS](https://www.facebook.com/YorkFAS)

[@EnvAgencyYNE](https://twitter.com/EnvAgencyYNE)