Our approach to flood risk

Our region is low lying with some areas in the region vulnerable to flooding.

During our phase one consultation, you asked us about how we would manage the potential for flooding. You also wanted to know how we could build resilience and ensure the project does not contribute to increasing flood events in the future.

As the National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure[1] describes, the development of water resources infrastructure could affect, or be affected by, areas at risk of flooding during construction and operational phases. Reservoirs, in particular, offer opportunities to assist with local flood risk management by, for example, controlling abstraction or discharge volumes during critical flood risk periods.

We are committed to exploring opportunities for the reservoirs to assist with local flood risk management and to ensure they do not contribute to any increased risk to river flooding both now and in the future.

We are working closely with the flood risk management authorities who play a fundamental role in managing water and flood risk in the East of England, including the Environment Agency, local councils, and internal drainage boards. The Water Resources East regional plan explains there is an opportunity for the reservoir to be part of a much bigger system, enabling wider multi-sector benefits across the area. This includes exploring the opportunity for the reservoir to benefit the region by assisting with future flood risk management.

Alongside these broader aims, we are focussing on how the reservoirs themselves – including how water is transported to and from them – are designed to cause no wider change in flood risk, align with other flood risk management schemes, and explore opportunities to minimise flood risk to others.

Currently, water falling within the land area we've identified for the reservoir drains towards local communities. However, with the construction of the reservoir, all water falling within its footprint will be captured and carefully managed, potentially reducing the amount reaching local communities and existing channels.

This could help reduce the current risk of day to day local flooding.

As well as the management of water within the reservoir footprint itself, flood risk is also being considered in the designs for getting water to and from the reservoir. The reservoir will not be directly connected to any rivers. It would instead draw water from a range of sources through a combination of pipes and existing watercourses, and pumping stations would move water from sources into the reservoir. These pipes, watercourses and pumping stations would be designed to account for flood events.

Working with the relevant stakeholders, we will also consider if improvements to some of the existing channels feeding the reservoir are required, such as making them deeper or raising their banks. This could increase their capacity and assist with reducing their current risk of flooding, as well as potentially helping them respond to increased river and surface flood risk due to climate change.

Information on how flood risk management features in our proposals will continue to be shared at future consultations.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-water-resources-infrastructure