

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Briefing

Attenborough village flood alleviation



The Environment Agency has put forward proposals to construct new flood defences to protect homes and businesses in Attenborough village as part of the wider Left Bank Flood Alleviation Scheme. With a history of floods and the threat of increased flood risk to some 30,000 homes in Attenborough and downstream, the Environment Agency considers this scheme a high priority.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust also recognises the need for improved flood defences, but is seeking to minimise the impact of the scheme upon wildlife and the environment.

Any proposals for flood management in Attenborough are important to the Wildlife Trust as they will have an impact on the Attenborough Nature Reserve which is:

- Nationally important for its **wildlife**, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Wildlife Trust nature reserve
- A centre for **education**, being used by more than 3,000 school children each year
- Enjoyed by local people for **recreation** and amenity
- Important as an area of **flood storage** to reduce flood risk

Initial options considered for flood management by the Environment Agency all included some impact on the nature reserve. The Wildlife Trust has been negotiating with the Environment Agency for the most acceptable solution and believes that:

- Because of the danger to human life from flooding and the need for flood defences to protect local resident's homes, some **damage to the nature reserve will be unavoidable**
- Damage to the important habitats and species on the nature reserve **should be kept to a minimum**
- Any damage to the nature reserve **should be adequately compensated** for on or as close to the current site as possible

Key facts

- Attenborough Nature Reserve was established in 1966 and opened by Sir David Attenborough.
- The reserve covers 145 hectares and provides ideal habitats for a wide range of plants, birds and other wildlife
- The reserve is managed by the Wildlife Trust, in partnership with its owners, CEMEX, and with support from Broxtowe Borough Council
- During the construction of Attenborough Nature Centre, 15 times the area of habitat lost on the peninsula was recreated to ensure adequate compensation

"Everybody needs to have a lifeline to the natural world, and as our towns and villages become larger, they're becoming increasingly hard to find...the survival and flourishing of places like this demands continuous work and attention."

David Attenborough on opening the centre in 2005

Why is it important to minimise damage to the wildlife of the reserve?

Attenborough Nature Reserve represents one of the series of some 4,000 Sites of Special Scientific Interest across England. These are the jewels in the crown of our wildlife sites, and are subject to strict legal protection to ensure the long-term survival of our threatened habitats and species.

With the onset of climate change, it is important that we not only protect but buffer and extend these sites where possible, to increase their resilience to threats. SSSIs are protected from damage by development through the planning system.

Which proposal does the Wildlife Trust support?

Since the initial options were considered, the route along the Strand in Attenborough has been put forward as the preferred proposal. The Wildlife Trust believes this will provide the right flood management solution whilst inflicting the least damage on the reserve. The impact will still be significant, but because flooding poses a risk to human life, we have withdrawn our objection and reluctantly accept unavoidable damage to the reserve. Other options would have caused extensive damage and reduced the flood storage available.

A particular area of contention has been part of the SSSI known locally as the 'Old Fishermen's Car Park'. This area has been described as 'untended waste ground' by those opposed to the flood wall along the Strand.

However, it is in fact an important grassland area that is under restoration, and is one of the richest parts of the reserve for wild flowers, supporting a good population of orchids. Because of its value, this meadow is also used extensively by school children for educational activity. The adjacent brook-side habitat is home to many important species including more than 40 species of birds, such as kingfisher and reed bunting, as well as mammals such as weasels and scarce insects.

There has been some concern that constructing the flood wall along the Strand will mean the loss of hedgerow habitat. However, because the hedgerow is of variable quality for wildlife and this route provides the least damaging option for the SSSI overall, we support the Strand option.

How should any damage to the reserve be compensated?

To mitigate for the damage that the flood alleviation programme will still cause to the reserve, the Wildlife Trust has agreed a compensation package with the Environment Agency that includes the creation of 9.8 hectares of new habitat on-site and the establishment of a minimum of 10 and up to 30 hectares of habitat enhancement work off-site.

The Wildlife Trust will be working closely with the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure that appropriate habitat is established and monitored.

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For further information on Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust visit our website www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is the county's largest environmental charity run by local people for the benefit of local wildlife and wildlife habitats. Improving people's understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the natural world is fundamental to our work. We manage more than 60 nature reserves covering more than 2,000 acres, liaise with farmers and landowners to promote and encourage conservation stewardship, campaign for the protection of threatened species and habitats and work to influence government policy and decisions affecting the future of wildlife. Our efforts are part of a nationwide network of 47 local Wildlife Trusts working in partnership to protect our precious natural heritage.