

Southlake Moor Reservoir

Winter 2024

What are we doing and why?

Southlake Moor Reservoir is classified as a 'large raised' reservoir under the Reservoirs Act 1975. As a designated reservoir structure, it is maintained by the Environment Agency.

We play a major role in managing flood risk which includes ensuring continued safe operation and maintenance of reservoirs. The reservoir was inspected by the appointed All Reservoirs Panel Engineer who has identified several Measures in the Interest of Safety (MIOS) which must be completed by the Environment Agency before specified deadlines as part of its legal obligations under the Reservoirs Act.

Only Safety, No Change

We are doing this work only to ensure safe and continued working of the reservoir.

The work will also ensure the continued operation of the wider water level management system and the flood risk management it provides to both the local communities and downstream towns.

Flood water enters the reservoir by overtopping the low spots of the River Parrett and the River Sowy embankments. In addition, when conditions in the River Parrett are suitable, Southlake Moor is deliberately flooded in winter by the Internal Drainage Board (IDB), by opening the Sowy inlet gate.

The IDB manages water levels inside the reservoir within the rhyne system following a Water Level Management Plan.

When our work is finished, the reservoir is intended to function in the same way as it does now with the same water level management in place. The frequency the reservoir is flooded with water, and the volume and depth of water in the reservoir during these periods will not change after construction. Management of land within the reservoir will also not change after the work.

What have we done in 2024?

Southern embankment

Parrett right bank

We have completed this section including top soiling, as planned. We planted grass seeds and are monitoring the growth.

Northern embankment

We filled in six rhynes to allow construction and maintenance access. We worked closely with our trained fish rescue team who ensured they were protected and rescued safely. The team checked each rhyn and used a variety of methods such as nets and electrofishing to safely capture the fish. They placed any organisms found in buckets before gently moving them behind the steel dam. Once the rhynes were empty of fish they were drained.

Eastern embankment

Sowy left bank and spillway

We completed all the planned work on this section:

- Earthworks at either end of the spillway and around the inlet and outlet structures.
- Raising and adjusting the gates.
- Levelling sections of the Sowy spillway by using topsoil.

We added topsoil and planted grass at both the spillway and newly constructed bank which is now growing.

Contact Us

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A detection dog helping conduct surveys

Water vole surveys and relocation

Working with our licensed ecologists we moved some water voles out of our working areas, to ensure they were not harmed.

In addition to annual water vole survey between 2021 and 2024, in July and September of this year, we also carried out surveys using a detection dog who is specially trained to search for evidence of water voles. The survey results are being used to inform mitigation measures including the creation of two new rhynes which have been designed to provide optimal habitat for water voles. The ongoing surveys have already shown a considerable increase in water vole numbers with numerous occupied burrows.

Winter closure and return to work

This year, the wet weather and flooding meant we had to stop work and close our work sites a bit early, at the beginning of October. We are unable to work during the winter both because the reservoir will be needed to help prevent flooding and also because of Natural England SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) constraints.

A final walkover confirmed that the sites are safe to leave for the winter shutdown period and that there will not be an increased risk of the flood protection failing. We will occasionally be on site for monitoring and maintenance but will not carry out any construction work.

We have sufficient clay in the stockpile at Olivers Road for the majority of the 2025 works. So, we do not expect any further deliveries.

We will be back on site in spring 2025 and will be in touch with you early next year with our planned work before starting on site.