

The aims and objectives of the in-river works are to enhance and improve river morphology and maintain the natural environment for recreation. Disturbance and vegetative clearance would therefore be kept to a minimum. Modifications to the riverbed structure would, in turn, create more favourable habitat for a number of aquatic species.

As only sapling trees are to be removed and vegetation is to be cleared in small areas for access only, there would be no loss of habitat for protected species such as birds and bats. Disturbance from water works related activities would be brief and temporary. Careful working practices are to be used throughout the period of in-water works with measures put in place to protect tree roots.

COMMENTS ON THE SCHEME

The Environmental Statement will be available for inspection to allow the public and interested environmental bodies the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

Department of Development Services
Harrogate Borough Council
Knapping Mount
West Grove Road
Harrogate
HG1 2AE

Alternatively it can be inspected at the following address, during business hours (with 24 hour notification):

Charles Hawkesworth
Red Brae Farm
Bewerley
Harrogate
HG3 5JE

Copies of this Non-Technical Summary are available separately as a free leaflet. Comments on the Environmental Statement should be sent to Harrogate Borough Council at the above address.



Washburn In-River Works, Blubberhouses

Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement



BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME

The River Washburn is a dam-release river located near Blubberhouses in the Harrogate Borough. Yorkshire Water releases water via the Thruscross Reservoir, over weekends and occasional evenings. Around half of these releases support a number of canoeing competitions and events including national slalom and wildwater racing competitions, freestyle competitions, training and recreational paddling.

The area around the Scheme is also used for other activities such as walking / rambling, mountain biking, adventure racing and triathlons. There are a number of Public Rights of Way within the area.

Access to the River Washburn is via the Thruscross Reservoir Dam Car Park located beneath the dam, and egress is at Yorkshire Water's car park at Fewston Reservoir. Canoeists are currently shuttled from the egress point back up to the dam via the access tracks to the west of the River Washburn, which involves crossing the A59. Informal egress and access points are also used, which are hazardous and unnecessarily dangerous on the rough banks, and involves canoeists returning to the dam on foot.



Location Plan



DETAILS OF THE SCHEME

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) summarises the main findings of the Environmental Statement for the proposed in-river works within the River Washburn near Blubberhouses, to the west of Harrogate (hereinafter referred to as the Scheme). The aims of the Scheme are:

- to improve access to the River Washburn for canoeing and rafting; and
- to enhance the rapids on the river to increase the rivers attractiveness to canoeing, following floods in June 2005 which destroyed much of the previous work undertaken.

The Scheme would include an improved and less hazardous access and egress arrangement for canoeists and rafters, and improvements to access to the river in the form of enhanced / reinstated tracks. The location of the Scheme is shown above.

Access Tracks

The enhanced / reinstated access track to be implemented as part of the Scheme would originate from the proposed pick up point at the southern end of the river (adjacent to the A59) and would continue along the eastern side of the river along an existing access track (designated as a Public Right of Way), crossing the river at the northern end of the Scheme

to link in to the existing dam car park.

The enhanced / reinstated access track would contribute to improved safety at the venue, by allowing the paddlers and canoes to be shuttled back alongside the river to the top car park beneath the dam. In addition, the new track would contribute to a reduction in erosion and environmental damage currently occurring due to the lack of a formal path in many locations. Enhanced access within the area would be beneficial for emergency vehicles.

Egress and Access

The Scheme would provide improved access and egress arrangements to improve safety when canoeists are exiting the River Washburn, and also contribute to a reduction in bank erosion. Boulders would be placed down to form an outside shutter for placed steps, leading to a shallow concrete ramp into the water. Ramp access would be provided at two locations along this stretch of the river.

In-River Works

The Scheme would involve the replacement of uncharacteristic gabion retention features along the river with natural stone boulders. These boulders would provide minor restrictions to the regulated dam-released flow, thereby increasing the local velocity of the water and the rivers attractiveness for canoeists. A new canoeing feature would also be created using locally cut stone from the broken upstream weir within the river bed.

Dragonfly Pond / Wetland Areas

The existing dragonfly and wetland areas would be enhanced in association with the Scheme.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE SCHEME

An Environmental Impact Assessment for the Scheme has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (and amendments). As there is currently no available assessment criteria for a project such as this, each specialist specific environmental topic has been prepared in accordance with existing Government Departments

/ Agencies and/or best practice guidance.

A summary of the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment is provided below. Important landscape constraints and opportunities within the area of the Scheme are shown on the plan below.

Planning

The Scheme would generate a mixture of beneficial and neutral impacts upon the implementation of a wide range of national policies. The Scheme has been developed to agree with the principles set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17 (Sport and Recreation) and Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas), having particular regard to its sensitive location within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There would be a number of benefits in terms of encouraging sustainable and appropriate recreation in the AONB.

The Scheme would not significantly adversely affect any regional policy relating to the protection of the natural environment, and can be regarded as being sustainable. The adopted and draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) 12 supports, in principle, this type of development of an established and highly valued recreation resource. It accepts that some cases may be located within protected areas such as AONBs.

The Scheme would generate a mixture of beneficial and neutral impacts upon the implementation of a wide range of local policies. A number of specific policies in the relevant local plans provide explicit support, in principle, for the Scheme. They reflect the importance of the Scheme in providing a sustainable and appropriate recreation facility in the countryside and the Nidderdale AONB.

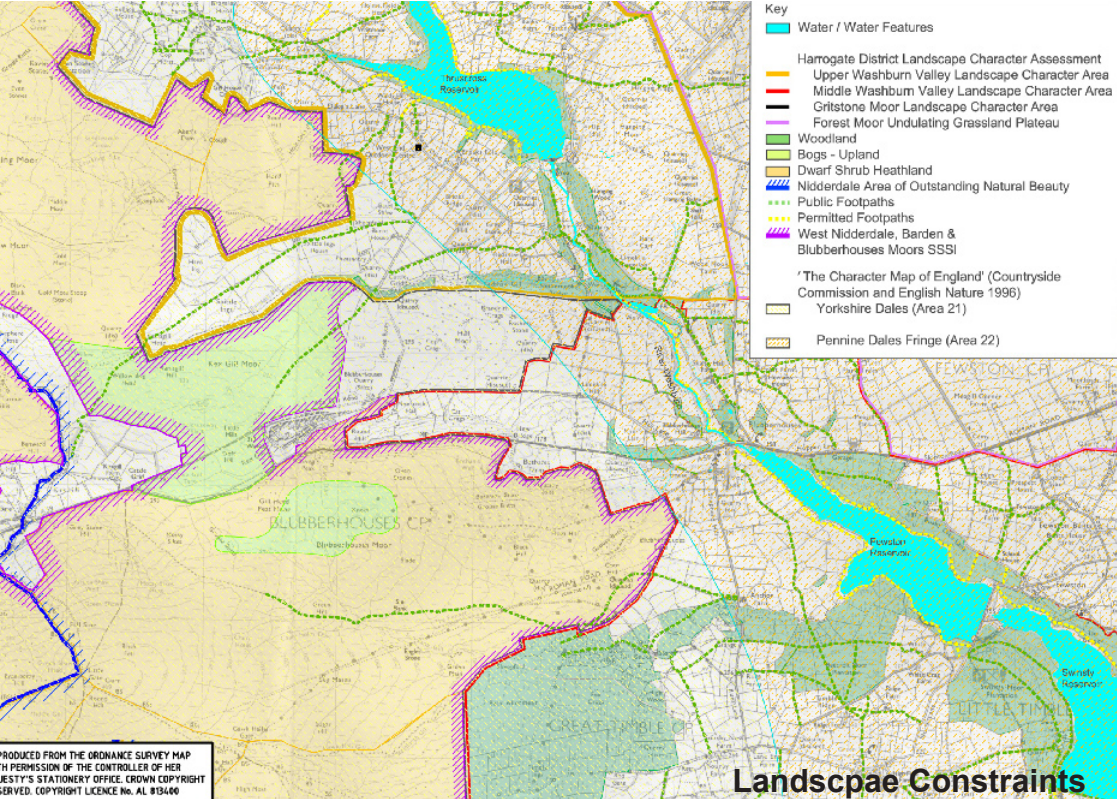
No Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), planning allocations or planning applications would be adversely affected by the Scheme

Landscape and Visual Effects

Landscape impacts would consist of the minimal loss of existing semi improved wet grassland vegetation, remodelling of the river bed and bank and the creation of new wetland ditches.

Visual receptors would be very small in number and consist principally of footpaths, two small sections of road and Skaife Hall Farm. No visual receptor would be exposed to the entire Scheme, although most would experience substantial visual intrusion on competition days due to event activity. Visual intrusion on non-competition days would be slight or non-existent.

Wherever possible, existing vegetation would be retained and mitigation planting would be



undertaken to replace that lost through construction. The maturing of existing and mitigation planting would reduce the impact upon some receptors.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

The River Washburn runs through a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In addition there are records of several European and UK protected species in the general area e.g. otter and crayfish. The predominant habitat types identified within the Washburn area are mixed semi-natural woodland and a number of different grasslands. The majority of the river runs through areas of established woodland.