



Environment
Agency

Mill Leese Flood Storage Area Vegetation Management Plan

20th September 2021.

Rother and Romney Asset Performance Team.

Site Location: Saltwood, Hythe, Kent CT21 4QU TR1604235986

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Summary

PSRA and operator safety

Dangerous trees throughout the embankment asset will be managed in the interests of both operator and public safety in accordance with a tree PSRA assessment that will be undertaken every 3.5 years (as a medium usage zone).

Crest

The crest of the embankment will be managed as a clear area, with only low growing non-woody vegetation permitted. New saplings will be removed. Only modest works required, as the crest is already substantially clear of woody growth.

Below the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) line (both upstream and downstream aspects of the embankment)

Saplings will be removed. Mature trees that are sickly or threatening to fall/drop limbs upon the badger fence will be felled/lopped following advice and guidance from a suitably qualified bat ecologist. Fallen timber will be removed from site. Trees that have been felled will not be allowed to re-grow (coppice regrowth will be removed annually), excluding mature hazel trees, which will be managed as coppiced trees. Where trees have blown over, we shall back-fill the hole left by the raised root ball with the support of an ecological assessment.

Above the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) line (both upstream and downstream aspects of the embankment, but not including the crest)

Saplings will be allowed to mature, as they contribute to the future viability of the legally protected habitat for bats. Dangerous trees will be managed following advice and guidance from a suitably qualified bat ecologist. Fallen timber will be left, providing it does not represent a health and safety hazard, as it provides valuable habitat for insects upon which bats feed. Trees that are felled will be allowed to regrow and be managed by coppicing on a 10 yearly cycle to maintain healthy stable trees.

In-channel vegetation

Weed in the Mill Leese Stream, 50m upstream of the trash screen, will be cut annually.

Implementation of this plan will require the assent of our FBG Team. Folkestone and Hythe District Council may need to be consulted, as the site is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Works will be delivered under our statutory powers following a Notice of Entry.

Review Period

This plan will be reviewed by 15th June 2026.

Introduction

This plan covers the period to March 2026. Mill Leese FSA was handed from Folkestone and Hythe District Council (nee Shepway) to the Environment Agency on 1st April 2006 under the Critical Ordinary Watercourses scheme. The asset relies upon an abandoned railway embankment as the reservoir embankment. This embankment is heavily wooded with mature trees. Badgers were resettled locally when the FSA was constructed, then excluded by a badger proof fence. The asset is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

(4)

Works within the 2020/21 financial year

1. Saplings on the crest of the embankment with a diameter less than 100mm were cut to the ground. Shrubs or other woody growth on the crest was largely removed. Low-growing, non-woody plants were encouraged on the crest and embankment generally.
2. Our contractors were instructed to deliver the first tranche of tree works on the embankment. These works included the removal of fallen branches & debris from the upstream facing slope, below the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) line, plus works on individual trees (see *Mill Leese Embankment Tree PSRA, proposed works and ecological assessment summary 2020* alongside plans in the appendices). However, due to landowner resistance and bats, the scope of works was severely limited.
3. Our Field Team cut the in-channel vegetation 50m upstream of the trash screen and desilted both upstream of, and behind the trash screen.
4. A suitably qualified badger ecologist continued to inspect the embankment periodically for evidence of badgers re-entering the embankment enclosure (none have done so to date).
5. Rabbit control (night time shooting) within the embankment enclosure was undertaken.

(5)

Works programmed for the 2021/22 financial year

1. Maintain the crest as an area clear of woody growth and debris.
2. Instruct contractors to back-fill root ball cavities on the embankment. Works to be delivered between May and September, but no later than 31st October to avoid dormouse and reptile hibernation. Project will also include filling in rabbit holes with granular material.
3. We shall appoint a contractor to complete those elements of the 2020/21 works that our contractor is not able to deliver within the previous financial year. This will include;
 - Concluding the PSRA works.
 - Removing woody debris up to the PMF line.
 - Managing any remaining trees that are threatening to fall upon the badger fence.
 - Cut to the ground any saplings with a trunk diameter less than 100mm from the zone below the PMF line, but excluding mature hazel trees, which will be managed as coppiced trees.
 - Complete the works to remove woody growth and debris from the crest.
4. Our Field Team will cut the in-channel vegetation 50m upstream of the trash screen.
5. Our Field Team will desilt the channel upstream of the trash screen if required.
6. A suitably qualified badger ecologist will inspect the embankment periodically for evidence of badgers re-entering the embankment enclosure.
7. A pest controller will survey for signs of rabbit activity within the embankment enclosure and manage any such incursions.

(6)

Works within the 2022/23 – 2025/26 financial years

1. Our Field Team will manage the crest once a year to maintain it as an area clear of woody growth and debris.
2. Manage trees in the interest of operator and public safety following advice and guidance from a suitably qualified bat ecologist.
3. Proactively manage the hazard of trees/branches falling upon the badger fence.
4. Fell diseased trees up to the PMF line, following advice and guidance from a suitably qualified bat ecologist.
5. Remove arisings and fallen woody debris from the embankment that lies below the exceedance line.
6. Back-fill new root ball cavities on the embankment up to the PMF line. Works to be delivered between May and September, but no later than 31st October to avoid dormouse and reptile hibernation.
7. Cut to the ground and saplings establishing upon the embankment, up to the PMF line, but excluding mature hazel trees, which will be managed as coppiced trees.
8. Cut back any growth from the stumps of felled trees to combat coppice regrowth.
9. Our Field Team will cut the in-channel vegetation 50m upstream of the trash screen annually.
10. Our Field Team will desilt the channel upstream of the trash screen annually, if required.
11. A tree PSRA assessment will be undertaken in January 2023.
12. A suitably qualified badger ecologist will inspect the embankment periodically for evidence of badgers re-entering the embankment enclosure.
13. A pest controller will survey for signs of rabbit activity within the embankment enclosure and manage any such incursions.

Conclusion

We plan to divide the management of the embankment into three zones;

1. Below the PMF line, on all aspects of the embankment
2. Above the PMF line, on all aspects of the embankment (not including the crest).
3. The crest.

We note the requirements of the section 12 and 10 reports. We believe that the Matter of Maintenance contained within the Section 10 report of April 2020, section 13.4, is addressed by this plan up to the PMF flood level, which will be suitably maintained for reservoir safety.

Above the PMF line trees will be managed as appropriate for safety, but also so as to maintain the nationally important bat habitat. Recent monitoring of bat activity, in support of the works undertaken in the winter of 2020/21, have revealed the presence of numerous bats of various species using the embankment as a foraging and navigational resource.

The Crest will be managed in line with the Matter of Maintenance recommendations.

Recommendations

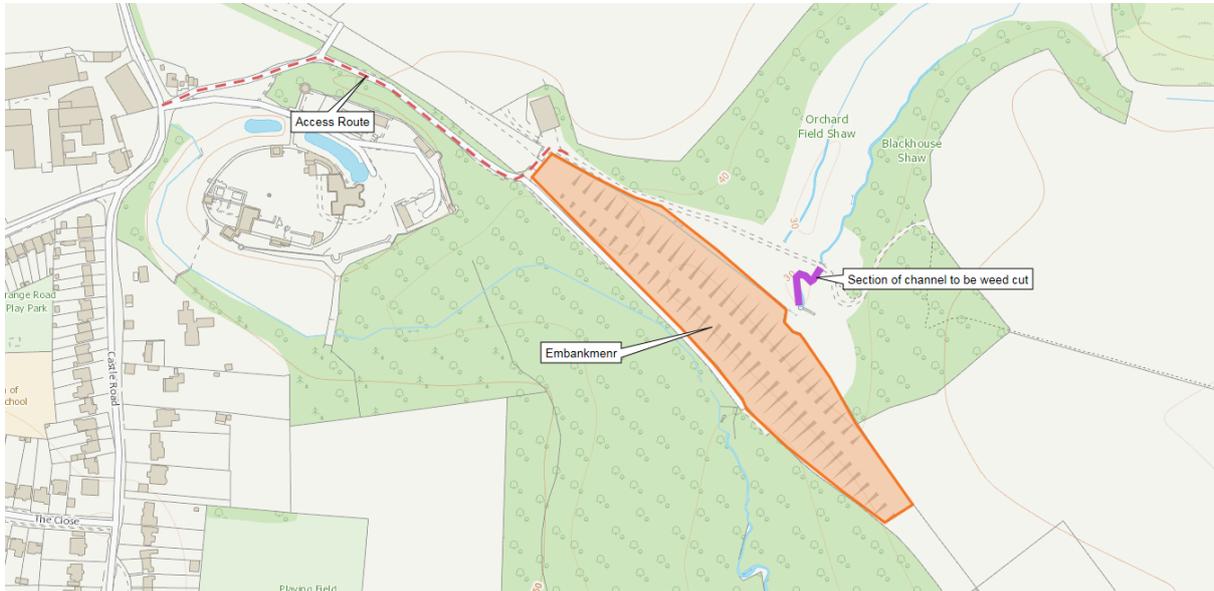
That works outlined within this plan are delivered in full to ensure compliance with the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Review

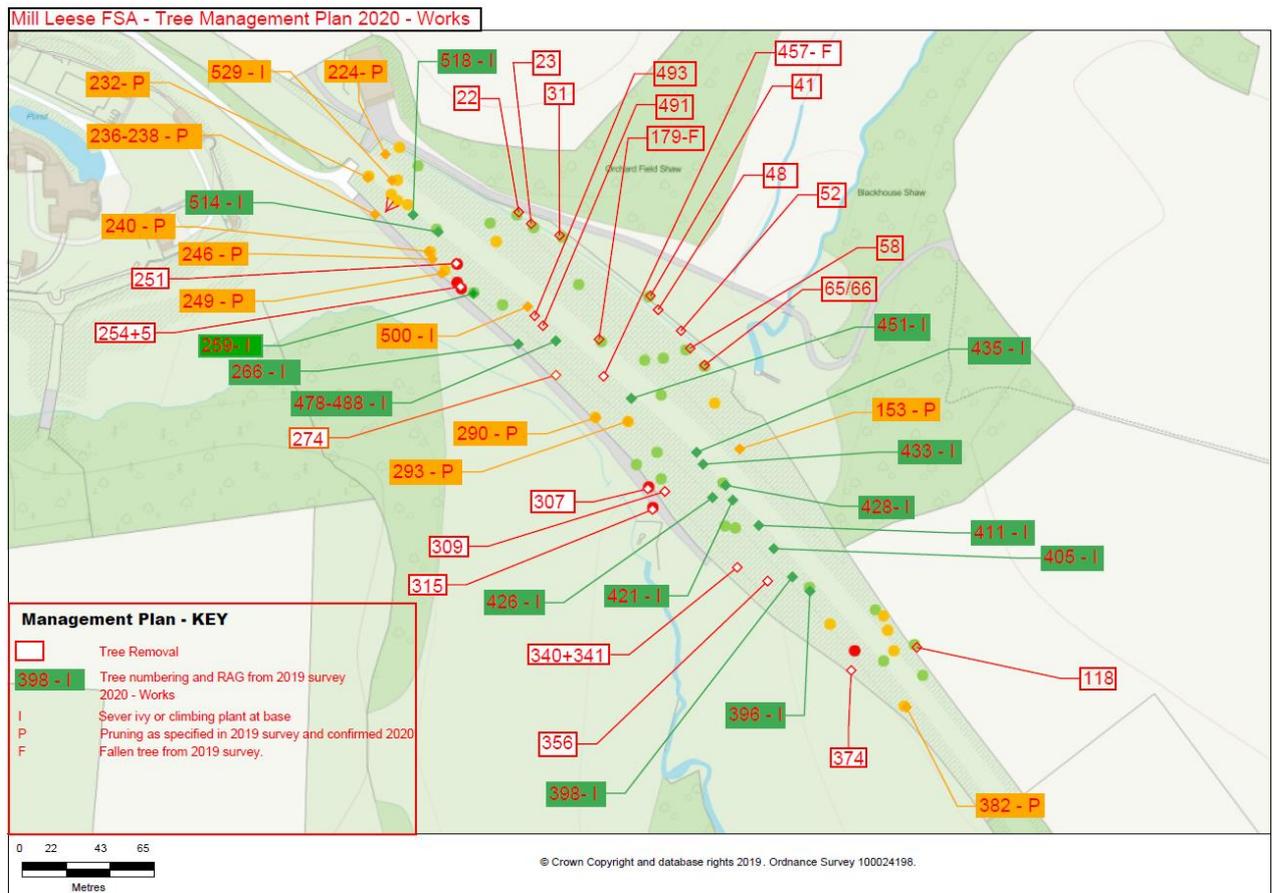
This plan will be reviewed by 15th June 2026. The review will be conducted by the Rother and Romney Asset Performance Team. Consultees will include:

- Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology Team
- Supervising Engineer
- Landowner(s)
- Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Appendices



Appendix 1: Plan of the Mill Leese FSA Embankment



Appendix 2: Plan of tree works proposed within the 2020/21 – 21/22 financial years

Related Documents

Operational instruction 362_09 The safe management of trees

Section 10 and 12 reports: [N:\KSL_Reservoirs\SE145 Mill Leese FSR\Reports and Statements](#)

Mill Leese Embankment Tree PSRA, proposed works and ecological assessment summary 2020 (*PDF*).

Bat Tree and Activity Survey Report. Corylus, 3rd February 2021.