



Vange Marshes Reserve

February 07th 2006

On 1st December 2005 the RSPB acquired 25ha (62 acres) at Vange Marsh North, on a long lease from Basildon District Council. Prior to the acquisition, we gained permission to carry out some preparatory works. These works included the draining of the 'lake' in October, by the installation of a temporary pipe at the southeast corner of the site. Draining the site was a necessary evil, allowing us to do meaningful ground survey work to inform our plans for the site and to provide access for the mandatory archaeological surveys. The marsh is therefore in a temporary "resting" state, before our new management begins.

We have now formulated our plans, in consultation with a whole range of organisations and individuals, including a number of local birdwatchers. These plans are now with the local planning authority and Environment Agency to gain the required permissions. If all goes well we will be on the ground in March carrying out a range of works:

- Installing a sophisticated tilting weir sluice to allow precise control of water levels.
- This sluice will create a mosaic of water, mud and vegetation, with water levels adjusted to provide optimum conditions for wintering, breeding and passage birds.
- We also plan to open up the blocked sluice that created the 'lake', to allow the creation of a 1ha bounded saline lagoon habitat with islands.
- The works proposed will also benefit a range of other wildlife – not just birds.
- To allow us to provide a site that is usable by as many birds as possible it will be essential to install measures to control access. A moat will protect the north shore of the site and visitors will be restricted to the northern half of the east and west shores. There will be a viewing screen at the southeast corner.
- In the longer term we plan to have a footpath connecting the site to Wat Tyler Country, via a bridge over Pitsea Creek.

Vange Marsh North has been a good site intermittently in the past. Our plans will ensure that it is consistently managed for the years to come, allowing the development of a sustainable wetland wildlife community.

At the same time as acquiring Vange Marsh North, we also acquired 93ha (230 acres) at Vange Wick Marshes. Plans are at an advanced stage to re-wet these marshes and manage them for a similar range of birds and other wildlife.

Chris Tyas Essex Area Manager.

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