



South Essex Reserves

This is the fourth of a series of regular newsletters on progress at the RSPB's South Essex Reserve network.

Vange Marsh North:

Since the last newsletter in November work has progressed well. The remaining ground works that needed finishing have been completed. These included:

- The reopening of the blocked sluice to create a 1ha, self contained, saline lagoon habitat with islands.
- The connection of the stream running along east boundary of the site to the moat, this water will be essential for the moat to function effectively and to manage the water levels within the lake.

The saline lagoon now works well and salt water from Pitsea Creek flows into the lagoon at high tide. Two islands were lowered during the landscaping to act as additional feeding areas and these appear to work well as they are at water level at high tide. The abstraction point for fresh water from the stream has also been installed and this includes an oil and silt trap. Water has been flowing into the lake since Christmas and the recent rain we have had has been a great help in raising the water levels back up.

Some finishing off will be completed in the next few weeks that include installing a litter trap on the fresh water abstraction point and putting in elm boards into the saline lagoon sluice. This will keep half the water in the lagoon at low tide.

Late summer will see the start of more work to help manage the remainder of the reserve. New fencing will be put up along the boundary to the railway so we can safely graze the grassland. Plans to improve the public access to the site include a permissive route through the reedbed to the viewing screen and a bridge over the creek from the County Tip.

Vange Wick Marsh:

Phase two of the ground works at Vange Wick is now complete. The reservoir and water control structure are now in place and water is starting to build up in the marsh ditches. An abstraction licence has been acquired so additional water can be pumped out of the stream to wet the marshes up. Phase three of the works will run in two stages, starting in March when an abstraction sluice will be installed in the stream to separate salt and fresh water. Work will then start again in August when the abstraction pump will be installed and a bridge replaced. This will be completed in time for next winter when the reservoir can be filled and the marshes wetted up properly.

West Canvey Marsh:

Work on West Canvey has so far consisted of site surveys to inform us on decisions for the future of the marsh. These reports have looked at insects, reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife as well as archaeology and hydrology. This will help us this summer when the RSPB will carry out a public consultation to find out how local people would like to use the open space on the Marshes. If you want to comment on the future of West Canvey Marsh, please keep an eye out in local press and in the local community for details.

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