

Our approach to recreational opportunities



We're committed to creating a place where water, people and nature can come together.

By exploring a range of recreational activities that we could offer, our aim is to encourage health, wellbeing and social prosperity.

Our existing water parks, such as Rutland Water and Grafham Water, are a great example of what reservoirs can offer. They are a haven for wildlife, a place to relax and get back to nature, and include access to a range of activities such as water sports. While different to the embanked reservoir we are proposing, they offer examples of how the opportunities from a reservoir, such as recreation, can go beyond water supply.

The National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure¹ provides the framework for how water resources such as reservoirs should be developed. It sets out the types of recreational opportunities a reservoir can deliver including positive outcomes for mental health, physical health, social wellbeing and employment.

The Water Industry Act 1991 also places duties on water companies to consider conservation, access and recreation, including having regard to maintaining public access to places of natural beauty, and making water and land available for recreation, where reasonably practicable and in line with operational requirements.

In our phase one consultation we asked communities, stakeholders and landowners what kind of recreational opportunities they might like to see included in the reservoir, such as walking, cycling, horse riding, water sports and others. How we have considered this feedback in the emerging design for the reservoir is summarised in our Main Site Design Report. We've also made early assessments of existing recreation in and around the reservoir site to understand what potential impacts the reservoir could have, and if there are opportunities to complement it.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6437e3a2f4d42000cd4a1a7/E02879931_National_Policy_Statement_for_Water_Resources.pdf

Our emerging design includes several opportunities for recreation including walking, cycling, horse-riding, angling and water sports. Visitor hubs could give access to a range of activities, while other areas could provide opportunities for people to get close nature and wetlands.

As a project our work is continuing to understand which of these recreational opportunities could be provided by the reservoir as part our application for development consent. We are following the requirements of the National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure and our duties as a water company.

It might also be the case that some recreational activities could be delivered separately by others others when the reservoir is operational.

To help achieve this balance and to make sure we're creating potential conditions that might encourage others to invest, we are developing a recreation strategy. This will inform what we can provide at the new reservoir alongside its main purpose to provide public water supply.

As we continue to develop the recreation strategy and progress our plans for the reservoir, we will:

Seek input from stakeholders, including your local authorities.

Continue to engage with communities.

Ensure our design for the reservoir allows for the development and evolution of recreational activities.

Explain the opportunities we believe we could facilitate e.g. access to nature, walking, cycling and horse riding and complementary activities.

And explain the opportunities that would need investment from (and be delivered by) others e.g. camping, glamping, inflatable water parks, permanent function and events spaces.

Seek to ensure our design for the reservoir allows for the development and evolution of recreational activities as far as reasonably practicable, having regard to operational requirements, amongst other considerations.