



Department
for Environment
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Damian Collins MP
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Your ref: DC/25933/JD
Our ref: MC2021/23590/NM

22 October 2021

Dear Damian,

Thank you for your letter of 6 September to the Secretary of State about flood concerns and loss of habitat at the Mill Leese Flood Storage Area reservoir. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay in doing so. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence.

The Environment Agency (EA) recognises the increased local interest in this issue, and has received requests from the public for a copy of the Inspector's Report for Mill Leese. The EA wishes to be open and transparent. However, there are restrictions within the Reservoirs Act 1975, and subsequent guidance in the National Protocol for the Handling, Transmission and Storage of Reservoir Information and Flood Maps, that mean it is unable to publish the full contents of the section 10 report and section 12 statement. The EA is currently reviewing the reports in line with the National Protocol and the Environmental Information Regulations to identify whether any information can be disclosed. Information about the Reservoirs Act can be found here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/1677/regulation/4>

The EA also wants to provide clarification on the work it is carrying out on the site. Please find attached the latest details, which it is providing to interested members of the public. The EA will update its information once it has been able to carry out further surveys on site.

I am aware that you have requested the EA to refer the Inspector's Report to a referee appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. In the first instance, the EA informally challenged the recommendations and, through those informal discussions, agreed a reduction in the amount of work originally required to that now contained in the current vegetation management plan. The vegetation management plan will be updated once the EA has been able to carry out further surveys on site.

The EA is now satisfied that the required recommendations are in the interests of public safety and are consistent with its conservation duties, and so there would be no grounds on which to refer a dispute under that provision.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact the Secretary of State about this important issue.

REBECCA POW MP