

Penton Hook Landfill Restoration

Penton Hook, Chertsey, Surrey

This briefing is to update residents on our proposals for restoring the site

Who are we?

We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it a better place. As part of this job we need to dredge sections of the River Thames to improve navigation.

Why are we writing to you?

Since 1950, and until the early part of this decade, we have used the former gravel pits at Penton Hook for depositing waste material from our river dredging operations. These materials are delivered to the site by barge. However, we have run out of space and there is no alternative site available. We therefore want to remove, process and recycle some of the existing deposits to make space for new material in the future.

While we do this, we have an opportunity to improve the natural environment at Penton Hook. Although some parts of the site are developing into woodland, some areas are still visually unattractive. We are required by law to fully restore the site once we have finished using it for our depositing activities. Although we still intend to use the site for another ten years, we want to start this restoration process now.

We have some early plans for this but we also want to get your opinion on the parts of our project that are important to you.

What is our preferred option for restoring Penton Hook?

In 2007, we investigated a range of options for restoring the site. We assessed all these options for their cost, sustainability and

environmental legacy, and also whether they would create enough space for new dredging materials over the next ten years.

The most basic option was to simply level the existing gravel mounds and partially infill the surrounding lake. However, we have decided that we would like to improve on this.

Our preferred option is to excavate the previously deposited material and free up some space for new deposits. Penton Hook contains a high proportion of sand and gravel that has been deposited since 1950 (i.e. not virgin material). We want to dig these out, clean them and recycle them. This would also allow us to create a reedbed habitat in shallow pools around the edge of the Penton Hook lake as we have a European commitment (under the Biodiversity Action Plan) to increase coverage of this priority habitat.



A reedbed habitat similar to the one proposed for Penton Hook

The remaining silt left over from the gravel cleaning process would provide an ideal material for the reeds to grow in, providing a richer, more diverse wildlife habitat. By

recycling sand and gravel from the dredged material we will be re-using waste material and helping to reduce the demand for building materials from new quarries. This is a double win for the environment and demonstrates our clear commitment to sustainable development.

Why has this option been selected?

We believe this option is best able to achieve the greatest amount of habitat improvement, with a large proportion being completed within the first two years. It also allows recycling of material and processing of further dredgings. This option will allow us to:

- **reduce** the carbon cost of our essential dredging works by an estimated 5,000 tonnes of CO₂ between 2011 and 2021;
- **create** almost four hectares of priority Biodiversity Action Plan habitat;
- **recover** up to 215,000 cubic metres of reusable sand and gravel.

Although our main aims are to provide improved habitat and make space for new material, we also have an opportunity to provide a valuable recreational facility for local residents.

Will we continue to use the site for storing dredged materials?

Once we have completed our initial restoration project, we will continue to deposit new dredging materials on a much smaller area of the site.

We will continue this reduced operation for another ten years. We will then clear and restore the remaining area before leaving the site completely.

How will this project affect local residents?

We will require planning permission to remove and recycle the old materials and to create the reedbed habitat. We believe we could restore the majority of the site within two years of planning permission being granted. We would not disturb the most established woodland, and we would turn much of the current wasteland into an attractive green space for the local community. Subject to planning permission being granted, we are aiming to carry out the main phase of excavation and restoration

between October 2011 and September 2013. The exact timings of these work phases may change, depending on market conditions. However, this will not effect our overall ten year timescale for completion.

We will need to use gravel cleaning equipment during weekday daytime working hours. Some residents may be concerned about the noise and/or dust produced by this equipment.

We will minimise dust by using a water spray and we will control noise levels by limiting the hours of operation and by placing the equipment as far as reasonably possible from local properties. We would also make careful use of existing tree screens to limit the visual and noise impacts on local residents. Strict conditions of our planning permission would require us to keep noise and dust to reasonable levels.

Once we have completed the first phase of excavation and gravel processing (2011-13), we will remove our equipment. After three years we will temporarily bring the equipment back to process materials deposited since 2013. We would then remove the equipment again until 2021 when the final phase of excavation and processing would take place. After this, the remaining operational area would also be restored as a reedbed habitat.

During the initial restoration project (2011-13) and during the gravel processing periods (2017 and 2021), we will need to remove much of the recycled material from the site by road. This would require lorries to use the A320 Chertsey Lane highway. Again, strict planning conditions would restrict the number of lorry movements.

By cleaning and processing gravels on site, we will reduce the amount of recycled material needed to be taken away by road. We may also be able to use barges to take this material away from the site, although this will depend on the final destination of the material.

Are there any other benefits of the scheme?

We hope the scheme will provide recreational opportunities for bird watchers. Although we are deterring large waterfowl, the improved habitat would encourage smaller birds. There is also

potential for fishing pegs to be created for local anglers.

We are required by the British Airports Authority to minimise the risk of large birds flying across the Heathrow flightpath. Water birds, such as Canada Geese, are known to like large open areas of water and large open grassy meadows. Our proposed scheme is designed to reduce open water and meadow in favour of more reedbeds and woodland. We will also leave a navigable channel to maintain boat access for the residents in Temple Gardens.

As our scheme would involve lorry traffic to and from the site during the first two years of operation (and for shorter periods during the next eight years) we will need to improve the road junction at the site entrance. This will improve road safety and access for the residents of the adjacent properties.

What happens to the natural habitat that is already on the site?

We will perform an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the site as part of our planning application. This means we will need to take detailed surveys to establish exactly what species are present on site. We will not compromise important existing habitats or species. Should we need to relocate any species then we will do this in the most appropriate way.

We recognise that there are areas of the site which have already become quite well established and that is why only limited improvement works will take place in these areas. But elsewhere, we will look to maximise the environmental and public improvements.

Where do we go from here?

We have already completed a Feasibility Study and Economic Analysis and we now have funding for our project. However, we would like local residents and businesses to give their views before we finalise our plans. We will give the local community an opportunity to revise and improve our basic design before we submit a formal planning application for the scheme.

A full consultation of our plans will be carried out once we have submitted our planning

application to the Council. However, we would like to hear your early thoughts and opinions now.

How can I feed back my views?

Accompanying this newsletter is a simple questionnaire. We have already identified some potential opportunities and some potential concerns. But we want to know what your most important issues are so we can address these in our ongoing design work.

Please complete and return the questionnaire (attached). You can also complete it online by visiting:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/pentonhook

You can also email your comments to:

pentonhook@environment-agency.gov.uk

We will also be holding a public exhibition where you are welcome to come and discuss our plans with our project team. Here, we will be able to listen to your views and show how we have developed our proposals to recognise the opportunities and concerns raised by local residents. The public exhibition will be:

**29 July 2010
Between 12 noon and 8pm**

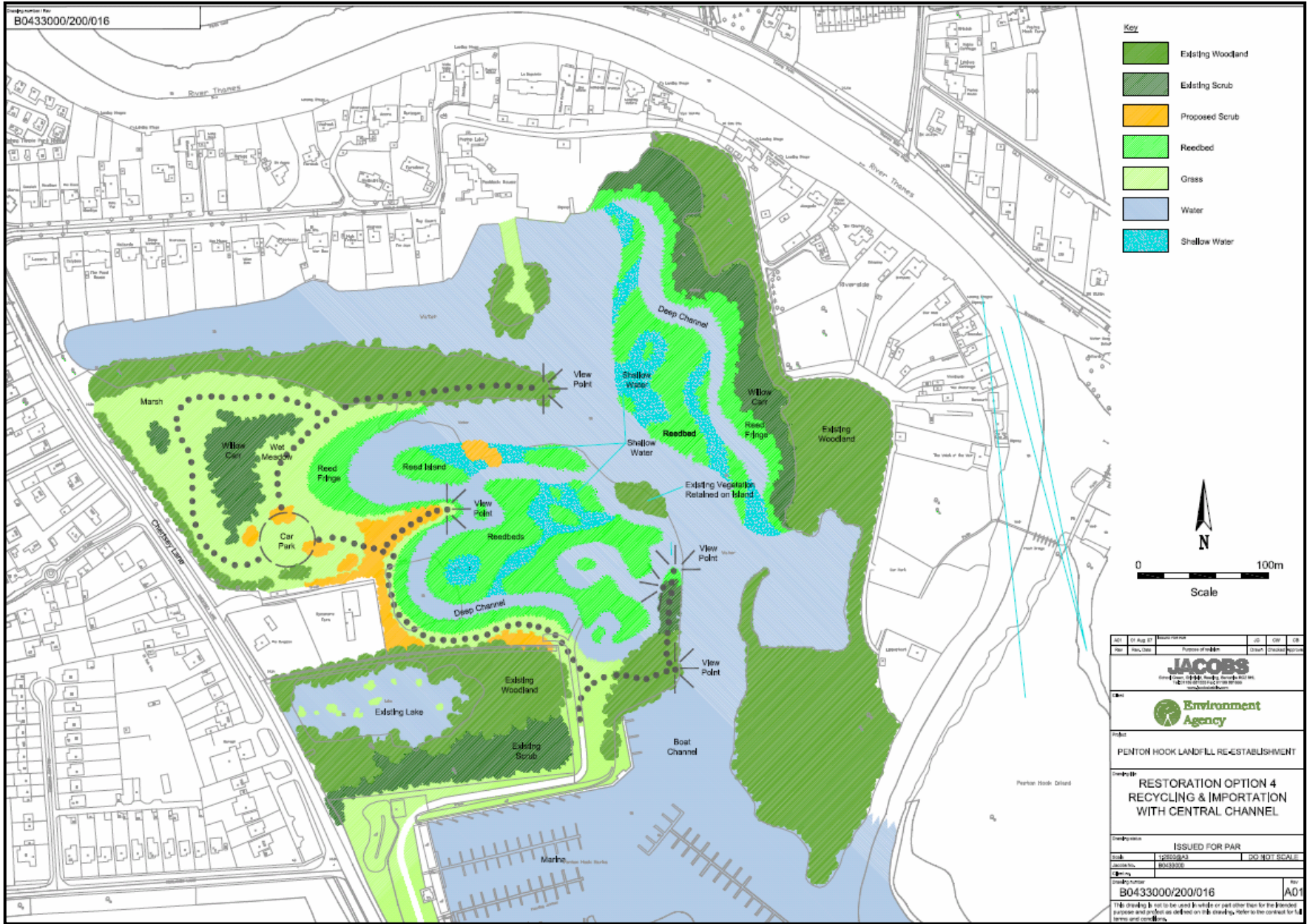
**Penton Hook Yacht Club
Penton Hook Marina
Staines Road, KT16 8PY**

After our public exhibition in July, we will send out another newsletter explaining how the detailed design has been developed to take account of comments received. We currently anticipate submitting the formal planning application in January 2011.

Contact

We will continue to update you on the progress of the scheme but if you have any further enquiries regarding these proposals please contact:

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A plan of what a restored Penton Hook site would look like