Basic Details

Publish Date

02 September 2025

Case ID#

3268

Title

Unpermitted excavation on a flood storage reservoir

Nation

England

Regulator Reference No.

537

Legal Status

Statutory

Reservoir Type

Impounding

Reservoir Capacity

10 - 24,999m3

Year of Construction

1970 - 1989

Main Construction Type

Earth fill embankment

Dam Height

0 - 1.99 metres

Dam Flood Category

B

Hazard Class

High-risk reservoir

Reservoir Use

- Flood risk management

Owner Type

Public body

Incident Details

Date & Time of Incident

08 July 2024 - 12:00

Date Incident Closed

08 July 2024

Observations that Caused the Incident to be Declared

- Other (including pollution and unplanned scour release)

Describe the Incident

During routine maintenance works, the undertaker of a flood storage reservoir noticed that someone had excavated into the dam. A contractor working on behalf of a developer had removed a section of the bank. The undertaker notified the supervising engineer and investigated the cause. The undertaker and supervising engineer visited the contractor within 24 hours. They instructed them to stop all works and reconstruct the embankment. The reconstruction was completed under supervision of the supervising engineer. The available documents on the Local Planning Authority website did not make it clear what the exact approved details for works on the dam were. The Environment Agency had been formally consulted, and they had provided details of their required conditions. Work on site suggested the contractor was not aware of the required conditions. The situation appears to have occurred by a lack of suitable communication. The undertakers have since discussed with the planning authority: how the incident was able to occur what corrective actions should be taken measures to prevent a reoccurrence.

Supporting Photos

Unpermitted excavation on a flood storage reservoir - Incident Image

Causes and Impacts

Natural Processes which Initiated or Contributed to the Incident

- None

Main Contributing Factors to the Incident Occurring

Dam Factors

- None

External Factors

- Other external factors (describe below)

Shortcomings

- Process or procedural shortcoming

Root Cause of the Incident

Impacts on the Reservoir

- External erosion

Supporting Photos

Unpermitted excavation on a flood storage reservoir - Cause Image

Unpermitted excavation on a flood storage reservoir - Cause Image

Supporting Contributions and Studies

Human Factors which Influenced the Incident

Rapid attendance of undertaker and SE to construction site and instruction to cease works, and reinstate bank.

Instrumentation at the Reservoir

Not applicable

Was Instrumentation Effective?

Not Applicable

Assistance by External Parties and Impacts on Downstream Population

None

Summary of Studies or Investigations Undertaken

There are investigations ongoing to ascertain the cause of the incident. The initial investigation indicates either a failure in communication between the LPA and the EA (in relation to application and discharge of planning conditions) and the contractor working for the developer or failure by the contractor to comply with approved conditions.

Lessons Learnt

Lesson 1

- Regulatory

Improved communication is required to ensure all aspects of any proposed development that might affect a reservoir dam are encompassed with relevant conditions attached to any planning permission granted. It is advisable to involve the Supervising Engineer into the consultation process by the undertaker for this purpose. A suitable monitoring process of the works after planning permission has been granted should be conducted by the undertaker to ensure all works comply with the approved details and conditions.

Lesson 2

Lesson 3

Lesson 4

Closing Comments

Supporting Photos

Information provided has been sent from reservoir owners and engineers, and cleansed of personal information by the enforcement authority. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data, but if you find an error please contact the relevant enforcement authority.