

Frequently asked questions raised at the 2020 Community Consultation on river restoration at RSPB Insh Marshes.

What is the purpose of the Community Consultation?

Throughout the winter of 2020, the RSPB undertook extensive community engagement to better understand the opinions and concerns of the local community, regarding river restoration work at RSPB Insh Marshes.

Questions, comments and concerns raised by members of the local community have proved invaluable when considering river restoration and sustainable management of RSPB Insh Marshes. Using Scottish Land Commission's best practice protocols on how landowners, land managers and communities can work together, we hope to make better – and fairer – decisions about land use.

The RSPB will undertake further engagement work at crucial points during the project, to ensure the project delivers for nature, climate and people. Stay up to date with upcoming opportunities to find out more via our [email updates](#), [Cairngorms Connect website](#), or emailing insh@rspb.org.uk

How will wildlife be impacted?

The river restoration project's key objective is to restore and reconnect the river and floodplain by removing historical modifications. The primary outcome and main driver for RSPB are that the work will improve the habitat for the range of wetland and riparian species found on the reserve.

For example, removing embankments to reconnect the floodplain, will result in an increase of fen, marsh and swamp habitat, creating more space for species such as waders, rails and ducks.

Meandering (or 're-wriggling') the tributaries and adding woody material within the river, will create a mosaic of habitats such as gravel banks, improving conditions for aquatic species, including Atlantic Salmon, Freshwater Pearl Mussels and invertebrates such as the rare Northern Silver-Stilettofly and Five Spot Ladybird.

What will be the impact on agriculture and farmland?

Farming is essential to the floodplain of the River Spey, helping to create and maintain a mosaic of habitats that support a rich diversity of species, including those found on the wetland at RSPB Insh Marshes. The low-lying floodplain has been seasonally grazed or cut as marsh hay for hundreds of years. Today, grazing continues to play a part in maintaining the wetland habitats and holding back the successional processes, such as scrub development.

Farming will continue to play an essential role in managing the reserve as we plan for the future. The reserve has for many years, and continues to do so today, provided 580 ha of seasonal grazing. An additional 90ha of ground is leased under a full agricultural tenancy. The five options presented at the 2020 Community Engagement will not impact the land leased under a long-term agreement with our farm tenant. There will, however, be some changes to the seasonally grazed land but the current low-intensity spring, summer and autumn grazing will still be required to help manage the wetland habitats.

What impact will river restoration have on flooding and flood risk?

The proposed river restoration projects on RSPB Insh Marshes are not designed as a flood alleviation scheme. However, the proposed options will provide natural flood management measures by slowing the flow of water and helping to reduce the flooding peak as it passes through the floodplain, potentially reducing flood risk on land and in communities surrounding RSPB Insh Marshes.

We appreciate that flood risk is a key concern for local communities and have carried out extensive research with our consultants to model various flood events scenarios, to ensure this work will not negatively impact surrounding communities.

Whilst this project is not a flood alleviation scheme, on a landscape-scale the ecological restoration work undertaken by our Cairngorms Connect Partnership will further help mitigate flood risk. Restoring peatland, planting montane scrub and expanding the Caledonia Pinewoods within the River Feshie and River Tromie catchments will help capture and slow the water flow, further reducing the worst of the flooding downstream through natural flood management techniques.

Will I still be able to access and enjoy Insh Marshes?

The proposed options will impact only a small area of the reserve, and visitors will still be able to access and enjoy RSPB Insh Marshes. Work will be phased and carefully planned to minimise disturbance for visitors, and the wildlife breeding and wintering on the nature reserve.

The options won't impact the River Spey core path, and access along the river for recreation will still be possible.

The River Restoration project will improve habitat for a wide range of species, so we are hopeful that the wildlife at Insh Marshes will only get bigger and better for visitors! If you're interested in finding out more about the wildlife and habitats at RSPB Insh Marshes, we have a range of public events this summer and autumn. [Click here for more info.](#)