Dear Mr Joy

Further to Craig Ralston’s attendance at your Parish meeting earlier in the year Natural England has been giving some thought to the subject of flood bank access. As I think you know we have also had meetings with Ellerton and Bubwith Parish Councils.

The text below, which has also been sent to Ellerton and Bubwith Parish Councils, outlines our position on flood bank access. Although I am waiting for some additional information from the Environment Agency they have confirmed that they would not object to the flood bank between the bridleway on the northern flood bank and the bottom of Ings Lane becoming a permitted route. I understand the Agency is still undertaking some internal consultation on our suggestion that there be seasonal access to other stretches of flood bank.

*Natural England believe that during the period 15 June to 15 November there is a less significant risk of disturbance to wildlife particularly ground nesting and wintering birds and consequently we would have less concern regarding the banks being accessible to walkers between these dates. Although there may still be ground nesting birds present during this period it is felt that any breeding birds will be at a stage where disturbance will have minimal effect. We have therefore suggested to the Environment Agency that permitted access to the flood banks be available between 15 June and 15 November. It is felt that such a position would be consistent with our statutory duty to protect and improve England’s natural environment, and the various legislation that relates to the protected sites.*

*Obviously the flood banks are also let out to local farmers for grazing so livestock are likely to be present at this time and I know this is one aspect the Agency are considering before they respond. They are also considering potential impacts on other operational matters. They have suggested that they may have concerns regarding a formal right of way along the flood banks both on operational as well as environmental grounds.*

***The Environment Agency has however suggested in an initial response that they would not object to a short length of flood bank becoming a year round permitted route at East Cottingwith to form a circular route at the confluence of the Pocklington Canal and the River Derwent.***

*Obviously dog owners accessing the flood banks would be required to keep their dog under close control.*

As previously discussed Natural England are very keen to work with the local community and the Parish Councils to try and achieve an agreed approach to flood bank access.

Please do not hesitate to contact either Craig Ralston or myself if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Regards

Simon

Simon Christian

Lead Conservation and Land Management Adviser

Yorkshire Derwent

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**Note new telephone number 020 802 66478**

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In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing

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