

Canvey Lake



FACTSHEET

What are we doing?

What can you do to help?

Can the Lake recover?

In this leaflet you'll find clear, factual information about the situation.

We know residents are concerned about the recent conditions at Canvey Lake and the impact on wildlife. This factsheet explains what is happening, what action we are taking and what happens next.

We want to address some of the misinformation by providing clear, factual information about the situation. It will also help residents understand where to get up to date information.

This situation is not unique to Canvey Lake

Very hot and dry weather has affected lakes, rivers and ponds in many parts of Essex, the UK and internationally. It is on track to be the hottest summer on record.

Unfortunately, Canvey Lake is particularly vulnerable during hot, dry weather because it is a man-made drainage system rather than a natural water body. Its water levels rely on rainfall from surrounding roads and urban areas. When there is little rain, water levels drop and aren't naturally replenished.

During prolonged warm weather, evaporation causes levels to fall even further. As the water becomes warmer and shallower, oxygen levels decrease. Fish and other wildlife depend on oxygen in the water to survive, so these conditions can place them under significant stress and, in some cases, lead to deaths.

Blue-green algae

You may have seen blue-green algae visible at the Lake. It is not unique to Canvey Island. It is happening everywhere from the Lake District to the Norfolk Broads. This is a natural organism that can grow quickly during warm weather. When temperatures rise and water levels fall, algae spreads more easily. Because of the blue-green algae please follow the safety signs around the Lake:

- **please do not enter the water**
- **keep dogs out of the Lake**
- **do not touch algae**
- **do not fish in the Lake**



What are we doing?



Fish removal

Unfortunately, it's not possible to remove live fish from the Lake at the moment because water levels are very low and there are deep layers of soft silt. This makes it unsafe for people to enter the water and too shallow for the boats normally used in fish rescue operations.

We've spoken to the Environment Agency, which has supported fish removal work at the Lake in previous years, but current conditions mean this isn't possible right now.

Our aim is to carry out fish removal in the autumn when conditions have improved. In the meantime, we're monitoring the Lake every day and removing dead fish and wildlife where necessary.

We've also looked at whether extra water could be added to the Lake, but because Canvey Lake is so large, it would take a huge amount of water (4 swimming pools) to raise the water by a single centimetre. We've discussed this option with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service but they are unable to assist. We realise this may be disappointing news for residents.

Water testing

Specialists are testing the water to help us understand conditions in the Lake and plan future improvements. It is vital work to improve water quality and a foundational building block to recovery of the ecology.

Planning for dredging and improvement works

We're developing plans to improve water quality at Canvey Lake and have secured £1 million in funding to help deliver them.

A key part of the work will be dredging the Lake over the next winter to remove built-up silt. This silt is made up of things like decaying plants, bird droppings and material washed in from surrounding roads.

Dredging is a major project that requires specialist contractors, environmental assessments and the necessary permits, so it can't be carried out immediately. However, plans are already being put in place so the work can move forward as quickly as possible.

As well as improving water quality, we will also be enhancing habitats around the Lake, including improvements to the banks and the installation of floating islands to provide additional support for wildlife.

Aerators

Water levels have fallen to a point where the previous floating aerator can no longer operate effectively. To help improve water circulation and oxygen levels, we have purchased and are installing an alternative aeration system.



Could we have planned ahead?

We knew that Canvey Lake faced environmental challenges and had already started planning long-term improvements when we agreed to take the lease back from Canvey Island Town Council.

However, the combined effects of prolonged hot weather, low rainfall, declining water levels, and environmental pressures have been more severe than expected.

There are no quick fixes when restoring a lake the size of Canvey Lake. Recovery takes time and specialist advice. Our focus is on creating a long-term plan.



What can you do to help?

- please avoid feeding the wildfowl – this directly affects water quality and the wildfowl do not require additional food at this time of year
- please take your rubbish with you or put it in a bin
- follow the signs and advice at the Lake
- don't attempt to rescue wildlife yourself – please report any injured wildlife to us
- allow our staff and contractors to get on with their important work at the Lake and always treat them politely and with respect

Can the Lake recover?



Yes.

Our long-term aim is to ensure that Canvey Lake is a healthy, ecologically sustainable environment which supports wildlife, but recovery takes time. Our long-term plans focus on:

- improving water quality
- removing excess silt
- enhanced habitats
- education about how to care for the Lake
- keeping the Lake in good condition in the future



Find out more

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More info