Forestry England

Understanding Cannop Ponds

Cannop Ponds were created 200 years ago by damming the Cannop Brook. Originally, the purpose of the two Ponds was to supply water to Parkend Ironworks. The ironworks closed over 100 years ago, and the Ponds have become a well-loved part of our forest.

Both Ponds hold sufficient water to be classed as reservoirs. The two dams have a long history of leakage and repairs, and neither meet the standards required to safely pass the future storms we expect to see as a result of our changing climate. Major engineering work is now required to keep the reservoirs safe for future generations and comply with the requirements of the Reservoirs Act (1975).

What you will see

At this event you will see plans and illustrations of what we are proposing. Your comments and ideas will help shape the final details ahead of submission of a planning application in Spring 2027.

The project so far

In 2023, we presented four options for the future of Cannop Ponds and invited feedback from the public. Alongside assessing each option against the project's overall objectives, we carefully considered the views and comments received. Together, this evidence helped inform our decision on which option to take forward. We are presenting that option today.

It has taken longer than expected to complete the survey and design work needed to develop the preferred option. Today, we are sharing the results of that work as we continue to move the project forward and help ensure Cannop Ponds remains resilient for the next one hundred years.



Upper Cannop almost overtopped after Storm Bert brought 80% of November's rainfall in 2024.

Forestry England

Our vision for Cannop Ponds

Cannop Ponds will continue to be a much loved and valued part of the Forest of Dean.



Visitor access will continue with improved paths and facilities such as picnic benches, seating and boadwalks.

Upper Cannop will be improved to become a haven for wildlife.

Lower Cannop will continue to be a large area of open water. The dam will be strengthened and the spillway will be replaced with a completely new structure.

Current Colliers Trail route

Entrance road to Cannop Ponds

Upper Pond

Picnic area

Upper Pond spillway

Car park

Lower Pond

Lower Pond spillway

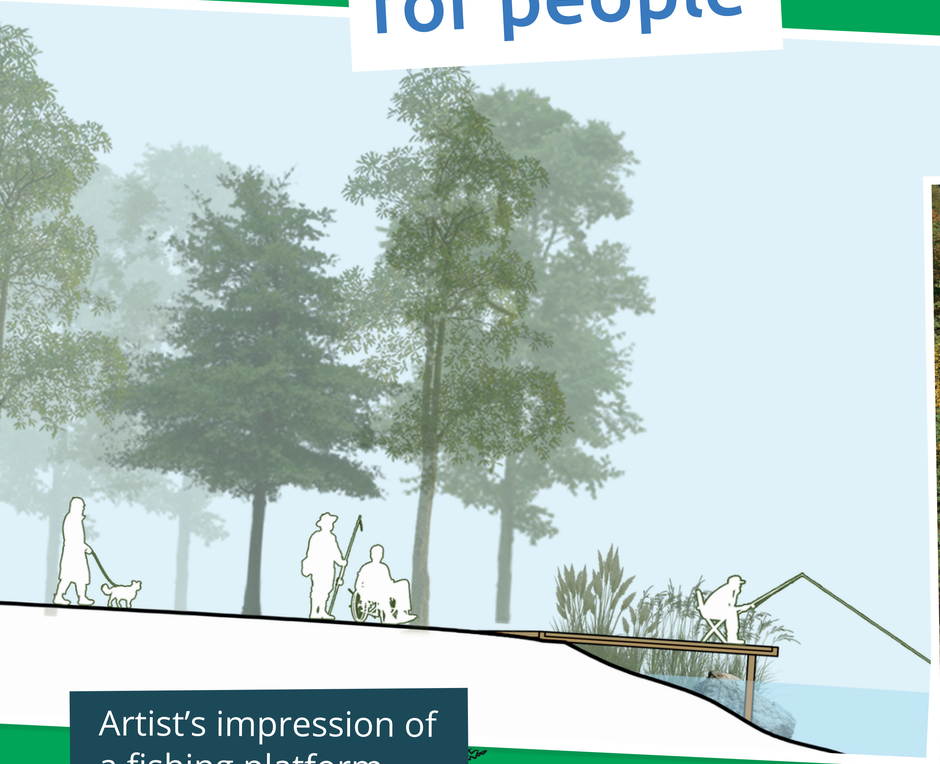
Landscape masterplan of Cannop Ponds

Credit: Mott MacDonald

Forestry England

Our plans for Lower Cannop

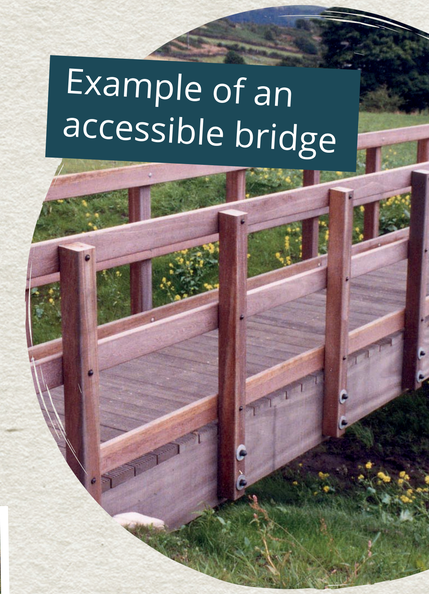
for people



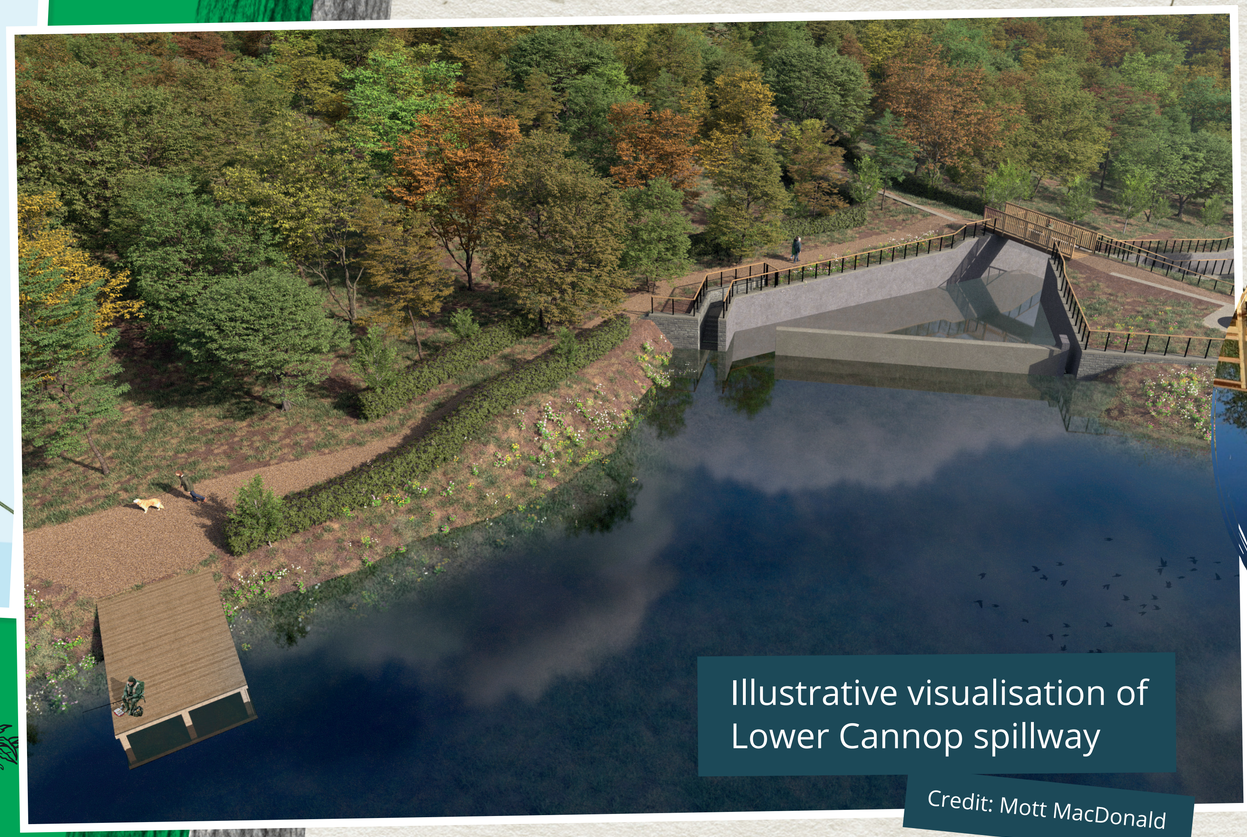
Artist's impression of a fishing platform

We will improve the visitor experience by:

- Upgrading path surfaces around the bridge and spillway for visitors of all abilities.
- Renewing existing and providing new accessible fishing platforms and associated access paths.
- Providing a new equipment container for the angling club in a more suitable location.
- Installing an accessible bridge over the new spillway.
- Providing interpretation of the historic structures (e.g. the tramway, Bixslade Wharf and the stone works).



Example of an accessible bridge



Illustrative visualisation of Lower Cannop spillway

Credit: Mott MacDonald



Example of an accessible platform

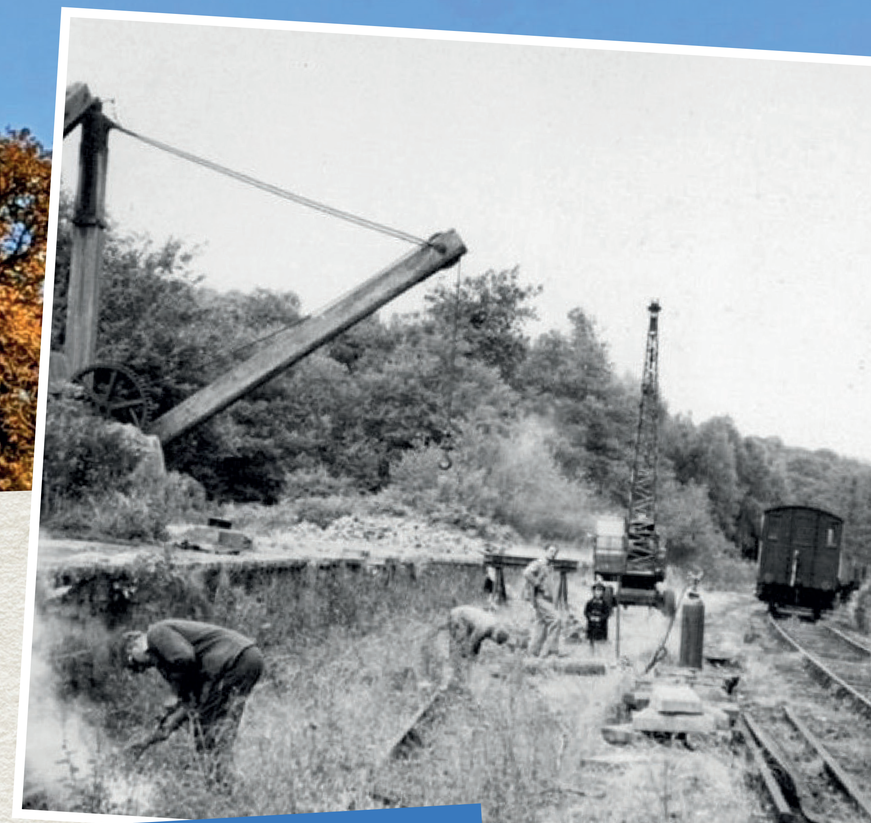
Forestry England

Our plans for Lower Cannop

for the environment







We will improve conditions for wildlife by:

- Removing invasive non-native plants from Lower Cannop, so that native plants and amphibians can thrive.
- Providing eel passes to encourage eels and lampreys to move freely along Cannop Brook.
- Improving the margins of the open water for wildlife.
- Installing a variety of bird and bat boxes.







We will complete a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment as part of the planning application process. This will be supported by the extensive environmental surveys completed over recent years and our knowledge of the Ponds and adjacent woodland.

Hidden heritage

Lower Cannop Dam was originally an embankment that took the Bixslade tramway across the Cannop Valley. Many of the original stone blocks that held the rails can still be seen when you walk up the Bixslade Valley, past the coal mine and stone quarries.

Our heritage is there to be discovered, if you know where to look. We will use this opportunity to bring some of these stories from our past to life for our visitors of today and tomorrow.

Forestry England

Our plans for Lower Cannop

for flooding

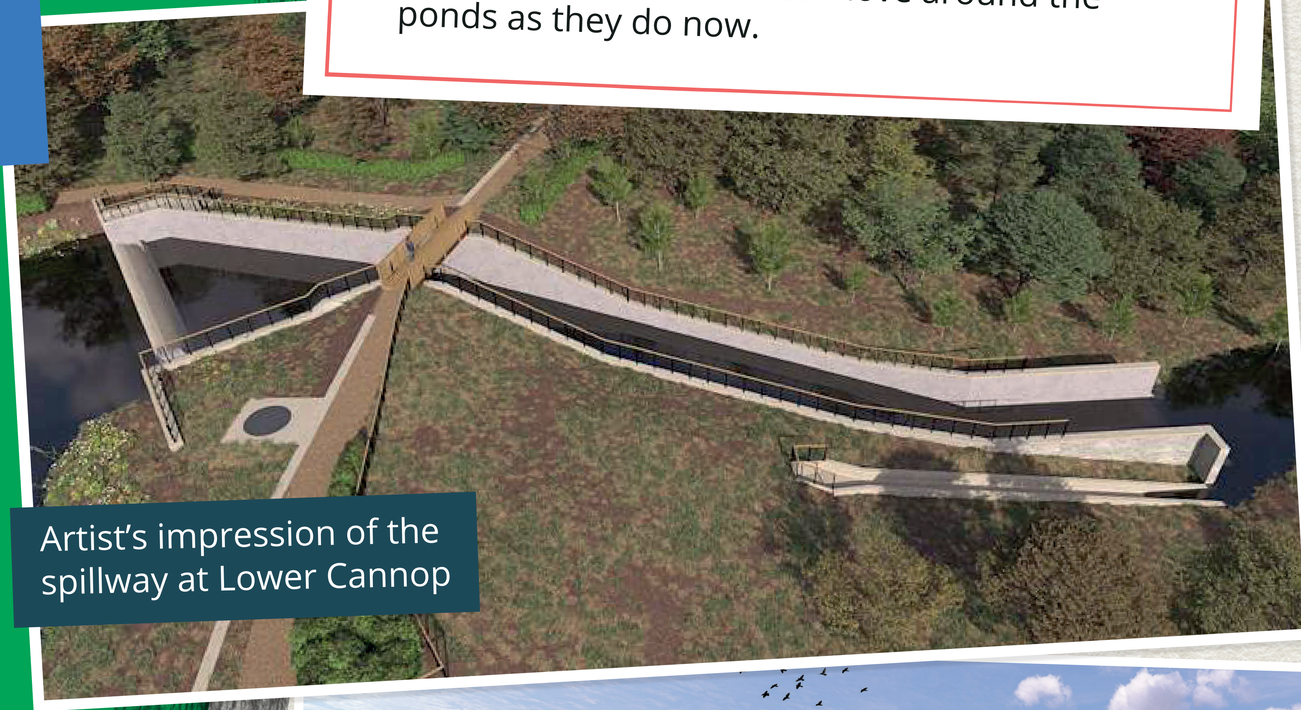
We will manage the risk of future flooding by:

- Building a new larger spillway structure capable of passing future floods safely.
- Creating a new longer weir at the top of the spillway which will control water levels during low and high flows.
- Adding a permanent drawdown system so that the water level can be reduced for repairs and maintenance.
- Carrying out work to reduce water leaking through the dam.
- Removing the existing hydropower equipment, including the inlet pipe and turbine building.
- Reducing the water level in Lower Cannop and increasing the height of the dam to increase storm water storage capacity and reduce flood risk.

Although there's less opportunity for landscaping than at Upper Cannop, the design aims to fit in naturally, work efficiently, and protect the character of the area as much as possible.

The new spillway has been designed to keep the structure as simple and unobtrusive as possible. The spillway walls will be kept low and partly built into the ground, so they blend in better.

The bridge will connect neatly with existing paths, so people can continue to move around the ponds as they do now.



Artist's impression of the spillway at Lower Cannop



Illustrative visualisation of Lower Cannop spillway

Credit: Mott MacDonald

Forestry England

Our plans for Lower Cannop



Current



Future

Forestry England

Our plans for Upper Cannop

for people

We will improve the visitor experience by:

- Providing a new wildlife viewing platform to offer closer, more immersive experiences with nature.
- Maintaining space for a catering provision by the picnic area.
- Creating a new all-access trail and boardwalk in the area below the dam.
- Replacing the existing footbridge across the spillway with a wider structure to improve accessibility.
- Providing more seating next to the water with a terraced picnic area.
- Improving the visual appearance of the area between the waterside and the car park.
- Rerouting the Colliers Trail to avoid the road - Separating cyclists and walkers from vehicles to improve safety.



More seating for visitors (artist's impression)



Visualisation of boardwalk



New wildlife viewing platforms (artist's impression)

Forestry England

Our plans for Upper Cannop

for the environment



Example of floating island habitats for birds





We will improve conditions for wildlife by:

- Creating a more natural water's edge with open water, marshes, reedbeds and wet woodland.
- Creating space for nature by providing visitors with a dedicated all-access route, avoiding sensitive areas around the northern end of Upper Cannop.
- Removing invasive non-native plant and fish species from Upper Cannop, so that native plants and amphibians can thrive.
- Creating floating islands to provide undisturbed habitat for birds.
- Providing eel passes to encourage eels and lampreys to move freely along Cannop Brook.
- Creating meadows and grassland areas around the dam to provide habitat for pollinators and insects.





View of a wilder Upper Cannop, including proposed floating island habitats

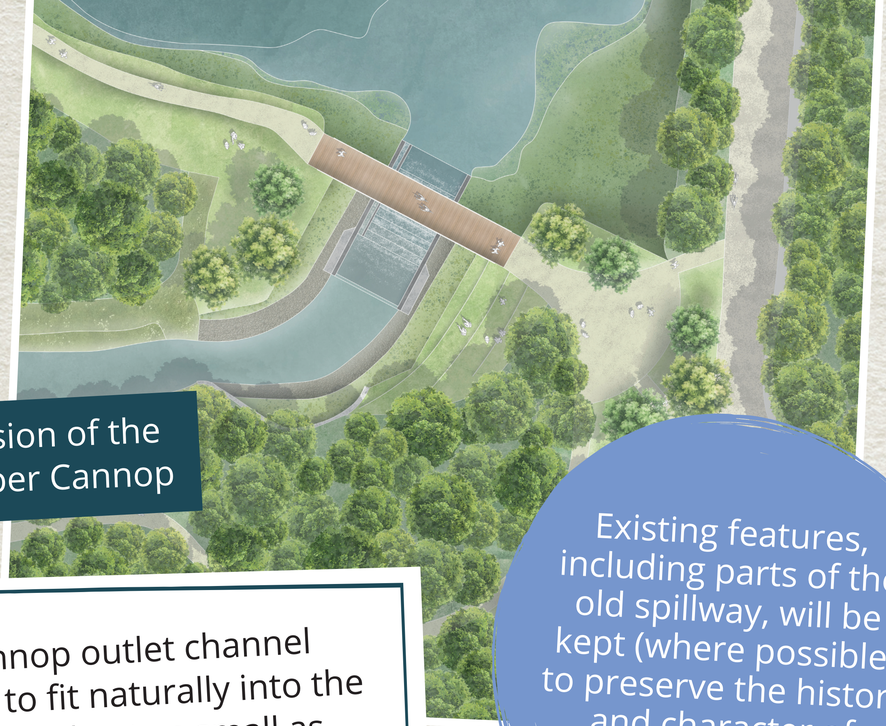
Credit: Mott MacDonald

Forestry England

Our plans for Upper Cannop for flooding

We will manage the risk of future flooding by:

- Reducing the volume of water stored by the reservoir below 10,000m^3 (the equivalent of four olympic swimming pools).
- Replacing the existing spillway with a new outlet channel capable of safely passing future floods.
- Improving stability of the dam by lowering and flattening the top and making the sides less steep.
- Improving the existing causeway at the northern end of Upper Cannop so it remains stable during major flood events.
- Managing the build-up of silt.
- Using rock (rip rap) to protect sensitive areas from erosion.



Artist's impression of the spillway at Upper Cannop

Existing features, including parts of the old spillway, will be kept (where possible) to preserve the history and character of Cannop Ponds.

The new Upper Cannop outlet channel has been designed to fit naturally into the landscape, with its size kept as small as possible while still working effectively. The walls will be low and shaped to blend in, rather than stand out.

Where possible, erosion protection will be hidden so the space can still be used by visitors, with the land gently stepping down towards the water. Only the minimum amount of vegetation will be removed, and new planting will help restore the wooded feel of the area.



Illustrative visualisation of Upper Cannop spillway

Credit: Mott MacDonald

Forestry England

Our plans for Upper Cannop



Current



Future

Forestry England

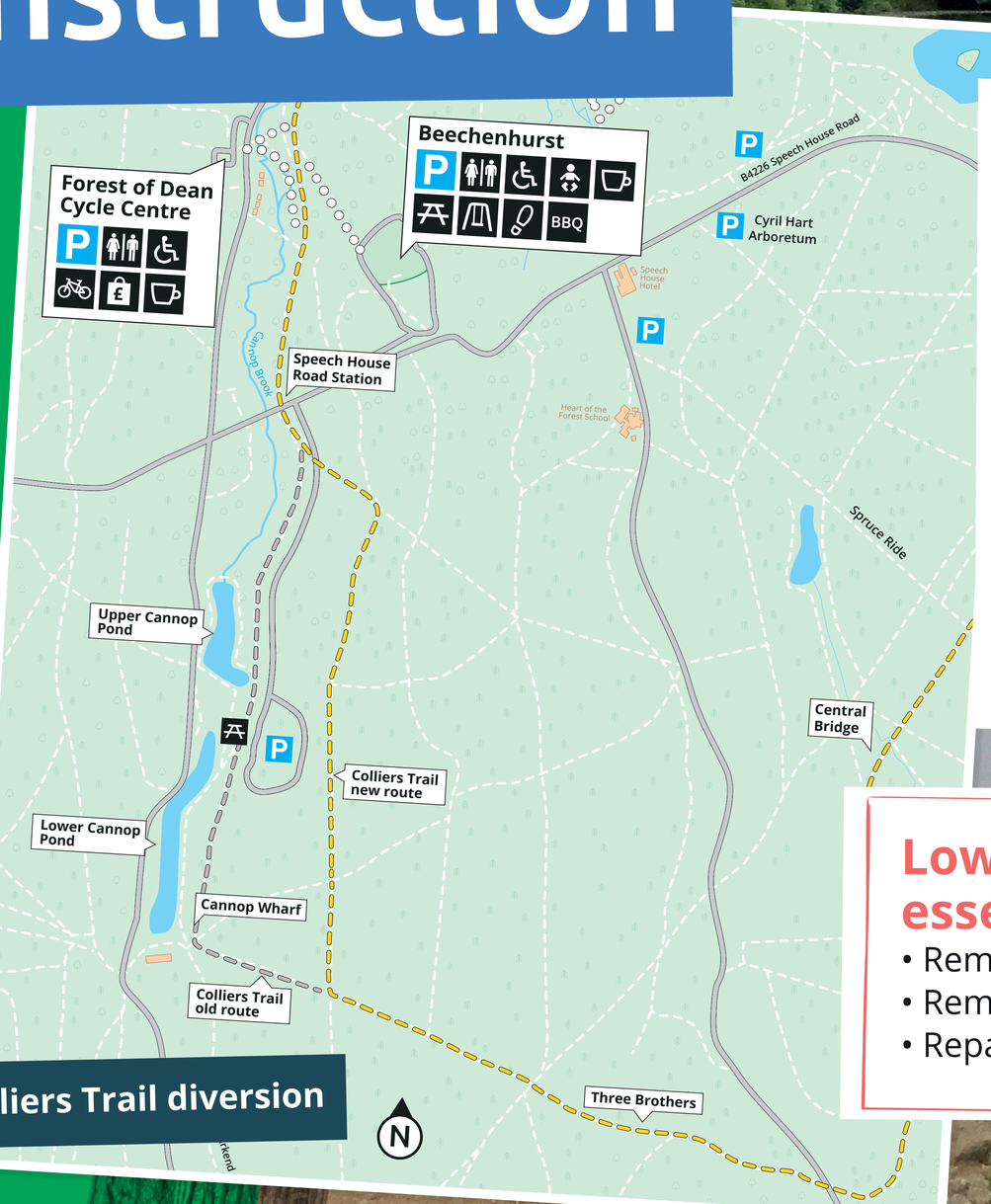
What to expect during construction

The visual impact of the construction works will be significant:

- Water levels in both Upper and Lower Cannop Ponds will need to be lowered, likely using pumps and siphons, although the detailed methodology will be developed during the next phase of the project.
- Upper Pond will need to be fully drained to enable the removal of accumulated silt and the reshaping of the pond margins.
- During the period when the ponds are drained, passers by will experience a markedly different landscape, with exposed pond beds and reduced water levels.



An example of reservoir draining



Colliers Trail diversion

We will keep everyone safe by closing the site to visitors:

- The whole site including the car park will be closed for the duration of the works.
- The Colliers Trail will be permanently diverted to a new route so that it can remain open.
- The Public Right of Way across each of the dams will be temporarily closed.

Lowering the water levels is essential so that we can:

- Remove the silt that has built up over time.
- Remove and rebuild the spillways and inlets.
- Repair and strengthen the dams.

Forestry England

What happens next?

Our survey work is nearly complete.

The engineering requirements have been determined, and we know what we need to do to secure Cannop Ponds for the future.





Project timeline

- **Undertake further ground investigations**
  Autumn 2026
- **Submit planning application**
  Early 2027
- **Planning approved**
  Autumn 2027
- **Construction starts**
  Early 2028
- **Works completed**
  Early 2030

Your views matter

Your views on our proposal are important, as they will help to shape the final details, as well as support our planning application.

Please take time to fill out our feedback survey to give us your thoughts. You can also revisit the information you have seen today via our website:

forestryengland.uk/cannop-ponds-future

If you have any questions, please email **cannopponds@forestryengland.uk**

Scan the QR code to take part in our survey

Thank you for your time.
We look forward to hearing from you.

forestryengland.uk