



Artist impression

At Development Victoria we understand people's passion for the existing dam on our site in Knoxfield, but the expert evidence is clear – the dam is unsafe. We are taking measures to protect the Blue-billed Duck and other species by creating an environment that gives them the best opportunity to thrive, as well as create a space that the community can access and enjoy. Below we have addressed commonly asked questions about the future of the dam.

#### What is wrong with the existing dam and why can't it stay?

We originally looked at delivering the housing development around the dam as this would provide the best protection to the dam's existing habitat. Unfortunately, once the dam was assessed by expert hydrologists, it was found that:

- It was structurally unsound with leaks and cracks in the dam wall detected.
- The banks are too steep. Waterbodies in residential areas are required to have gently sloping banks so if someone was to fall in, they could safely stand and make their way out. This is not the case with the Knoxfield dam. If someone was to fall in, it could be a potentially very dangerous.
- The dam does not meet the stormwater management requirements for the site.

It is important to note that we have considered all options in making the decision to create a new wetland. Any rectification of the dam's significant structural issues would still result in significant draining of the dam and completing earthworks which would result in the subsequent loss of the dam's habitat.

Given there is no future scenario where the dam habitat can be protected, Development Victoria has designed a new wetland that meets safety criteria for the dam's steep banks, meets the design requirements for flood and storm water management and provides better nesting and breeding habitat for water birds including the Blue-billed Duck.

## What is proposed for the new wetland?

The new wetland will provide:

- an enhanced habitat for water birds, including the endangered Blue-billed Duck, resulting in a better overall environmental outcome for the area.
- an improvement to the water quality and available breeding habitat for local species through targeted planting which is currently absent at the existing dam. This includes planting dense vegetation and reed beds with the Blue-billed Duck in mind.
- a range of settling, sedimentation and water retention ponds to treat stormwater, mitigate flooding and protect Blind Creek.
- an area that is safe and not at risk of collapse which is a high likelihood for the existing dam.
- a safe public pathway through the wetland to Blind Creek which will create a new recreational link to the area that is safe for people and wildlife.

## Why are works already happening on the existing dam?

The condition of the dam has been regularly monitored since we took control of the site. We received an independent assessment in January this year which highlighted further deterioration requiring urgent repair works to be carried out.

This maintenance work will reduce the risk of dam failure and flooding to ensure its safety for the community. We will continue to regularly inspect and monitor the condition of the existing dam and carry out necessary maintenance works to keep it in a safe condition.

## Is there evidence of Blue-billed Duck breeding on site?

Yes. In March 2021, Development Victoria received reports of Blue-billed Duck breeding at the dam. Our ecologist, Ecocentric Environmental Consulting, visited the site to confirm the sighting of a Blue-billed Duckling. In early 2022, during ongoing monitoring, two breeding pairs were reported at the dam.

Regular monitoring of Blue-billed Ducks and other wildlife continues. The reports can be accessed via the resources tab on the project website: [development.vic.gov.au/knoxfield](https://development.vic.gov.au/knoxfield).

## Why can't you leave the dam for Blue-billed Ducks to breed?

Due to its age and original construction the dam is structurally unsound, with leaks and cracks in the dam wall detected. While this can be repaired in the short term, fixing the structural issues long term would require the dam to be drained which would significantly impact the dam's existing habitat, including the loss of Blue-billed Duck nesting habitat.

The repairs to the structural problems with the dam will have to occur regardless of the future use of the site meaning the loss of habitat is ultimately unavoidable.

Given there is no future scenario where the dam habitat can be protected, Development Victoria designed a new wetland that provides better nesting habitat for water birds including the Blue-billed Duck and meets the safety and flood and stormwater management requirements for the site.

### How will you protect wildlife during construction?

By taking a considered approach to the design of the wetlands, we will deliver the wetland in stages to ensure there is always a significant body of water on site for the Blue-billed Duck and other species.

During the staged construction, we will continue to monitor the behaviour of the Blue-billed Duck and other species. Decommissioning of the existing dam will commence after we have seen sufficient establishment to support the existing water bird species. This will be guided by our expert ecologist. We will take all steps to ensure there is always a significant body of water on site for the Blue-billed Duck and other species.

### How will the wetland be built?

Construction of the new wetland will occur in a staged manner, providing continual access to a waterbody for wildlife currently using the existing dam. The current dam will remain in place for approximately 12 months after the new wetland is built to ensure that the planting in the new wetlands is well established.

After the first phase of the improved wetland is established, the existing dam will be partially filled and redeveloped as part of an overall water retardation, filtration and habitat system.

### Will the new wetland be smaller than the existing dam?

The proposed new wetland design is larger than the existing dam. The new wetland will consist of three key waterbodies, extensive landscaping, and pedestrian links. The largest of these waterbodies is being specifically designed for the Blue-billed Duck and other water bird species and is not mandatory in the context of developing this site.

Development Victoria has designed the wetland to provide enhanced ecological and sustainable benefits, as well as providing the existing and future communities with accessible amenity that they can enjoy.

### Why is treated stormwater better for the wetland and Blind Creek?

Treating the stormwater will improve the quality of the runoff flowing into the waterway by removing pollutants such as suspended solids, nitrogen, phosphorus, litter and heavy metals. Currently, untreated stormwater collects in the dam and then drains into Blind Creek.

Treated stormwater is cleaner water which allows for a wider range of plants and animals to live within the wetland and within Blind Creek. It also helps to reduce the number of pollutants being discharged into Port Phillip Bay, helping to improve the health of the bay.

### Has Development Victoria been listening to the feedback from environment groups asking for the dam to be retained?

Development Victoria has met with key community groups over a number of years to listen to their views and desires to maintain the existing dam on the site.

Throughout this period, we have endeavoured to explain the structural issues with the dam and the limitations this placed on saving the Blue-billed Duck habitat.

We understand the importance of this site to the community which has become home to a range of vulnerable species. It is our continued commitment to work with the local community on the final design of the wetland and

public areas so it can meet the community's desires for a healthy, vibrant wetland that can support a range of wildlife, including the Blue-billed Duck.

#### Are you moving the dam simply to make room to develop more townhouses?

No. When Development Victoria first acquired the site, we looked at designing the housing development around the dam to provide the best protection to the dam's existing habitat and be the most cost effective.

However, due to the structural issues with the dam, we had to design a new wetland that meets safety criteria for the slopes of the dam's banks, meets the design requirements for flood and stormwater management and provides better nesting habitat for water birds including the Blue-billed Duck.

#### What will Development Victoria use the townhouse profits for?

Development Victoria is a Victorian Government agency. We are a public entity but we are entirely self-funded, so our activities contribute to our work and business. Every extra dollar we earn goes back to the Victorian Government – to help pay for the health, education and infrastructure services the Victorian people need.

We balance commercial smart with community needs – and our experience shows that sustainable, liveable investments deliver the best long-term return for all.