

Northumberland launches strategy to protect white-clawed crayfish

On Friday September 27th the banks of the River Wansbeck in Northumberland played host to the launch of a strategy that aims to help protect one of the region's best loved resident species.

The Northumberland Crayfish Conservation Steering Group has unveiled a new 'Crayfish Area Conservation Strategy' on the grounds of Meldon Park in Northumberland.

The strategy was developed by the Northumberland Catchment Partnership and will be delivered by the Northumberland Crayfish Conservation Steering Group. This group is made up of the following partnership organisations: the Environment Agency, Northumberland Rivers Trust, National Trust, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Northumbrian Water Group, Northumberland County Council, Tyne Rivers Trust, and Northumberland National Park Authority.

Northumberland is incredibly lucky to have some of the best populations of white-clawed crayfish in the country. This is the only species of freshwater crayfish native to the UK.

The species provides food for otters, fish and herons whilst also being responsible for helping to break down leaf litter and plant growth.

However, the species is at risk of being lost from the region and the strategy looks to help conserve one of the most threatened species in the UK.

The two-page strategy lays out a framework that will hopefully ensure the freshwater crayfish stays a resident in the region for years to come. The strategy aims to improve our knowledge and better understand of the current distribution and status of freshwater crayfish in Northumberland, and improve our understanding of threats to the remaining populations, agree priorities and take appropriate actions.

Ian Marshall, Water, Biodiversity Technical Specialist, Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency is the lead national organisation for the white-clawed crayfish and we fully support the aims and objectives of the Northumberland Crayfish Partnership.

Their main threat is the spread of non-native crayfish species, which out compete our white-clawed crayfish and an aquatic mould carried by these invasive species named crayfish plague. Although it is harmless to humans, it causes 100% mortality in our native crayfish populations. We can prevent its spread by not moving crayfish around, as well as, properly checking, cleaning and drying

equipment such as wellingtons, nets, boats or other equipment.

We would advise everyone who is enjoying our environment to ensure they follow the important check, clean and dry advice as biodiversity is a critical factor in helping to protect the white-clawed crayfish.

In 2019, we have made significant steps to work with the Northumberland Crayfish Partnership, and the Environment Agency looks forward to working closely over the coming years and to undertake the practical conservation actions that will help preserve the habitat of white-clawed crayfish throughout the region.

The Crayfish Area Conservation Strategy work will include carrying out surveys for the species to spot population changes and get an up to date picture of where different crayfish species are residing, identifying potential river or pond habitat improvements and developing safe havens where crayfish can be moved to ensure the species survives into the future.

The strategy launch on the banks of the River Wansbeck will provide an excellent opportunity for people to handle the white-clawed crayfish and experience its ideal habitat.

John Hogger of The Northumberland Crayfish Conservation Steering Group, said:

In Northumberland we are incredibly lucky to have some of the best populations of white-clawed crayfish in the country. It is a legally protected species which lives under rocks and amongst tree roots in rivers, lakes and ponds.

Unfortunately, due to the introduction of crayfish from other countries around the world the species is now endangered and requires a significant amount of help to ensure the remaining populations survive.

The partnership includes a wide variety of organisations including conservation charities, non-governmental organisations, landowners and river users collaborating to identify risks and opportunities to make sure this endangered species is valued and protected.

In the future we will also be working hard to raise awareness of white-clawed crayfish in Northumberland, through engagement with schools and communities where the species is present so that together we can help preserve this incredibly rare species for the benefit of our rivers and for future generations.

Have your say on final details for the A417 Missing Link scheme

The planned improvement for the A417 will see the last stretch of three miles of single carriageway on the 31-mile A417/A419 route upgraded to dual carriageway.

Highways England announced the preferred route for the scheme, part of the Government's £15 billion road investment programme, in March this year.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

This key route helps people get to work, school, visit friends and family and we need to make sure it is safe.

We are committed to making sure the community and all road users reap the benefits of any upgrade to the route – which will support the local economy, ease congestion and pollution and, of course, will factor in the area's landscape, environment and history.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of the consultation in due course.

Since the preferred route was announced, the project team has been carrying out further surveys and assessments and the feedback from this consultation will help shape the final proposal that is submitted to planning chiefs.

Highways England Senior Project Manager Mike Goddard said:

We had overwhelming support for our preferred route, with almost three-quarters of respondents at the last consultation in favour of it. We hope that once again members of the public and community groups will take the time to share their views on this more detailed proposal.

The upgrade will bring many benefits, including helping to boost growth and prosperity by making journeys more reliable and improving connectivity between the Midlands and the South West, and more predictable journey times; it will also improve safety for drivers and reduce air pollution from queuing traffic.

The consultation we're launching today is an important step before submitting a planning application, so we are keen to engage with people and particularly interested to hear views on how the scheme links with other roads and serves the needs of users of the route, local communities and businesses.

As the scheme is in the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the proposals aim to fit into and complement the character of the surrounding landscape.

Highways England has worked closely with many stakeholders in developing proposals that reduce any impact on the environment and enhance areas for wildlife, archaeology, watercourses and public accessibility. This work will include installation of a new green bridge.

Walkers will also benefit with improved access to public footpaths, including the Cotswold Way National Trail and the Gloucestershire Way, helping more people to enjoy the routes safely.

The 3.6-mile section of dual carriageway will be complemented by an extra climbing lane at Crickley Hill for slow moving traffic. A new section of road built through Shab Hill to the east of the existing A417 will re-join the road near the current location of Cowley roundabout and a new junction will be created at Shab Hill with connections to Birdlip and the A436 to Cheltenham and Oxford. The Air Balloon roundabout and Cowley roundabout are to be removed as part of the scheme.

The consultation is running from 27 September to 8 November 2019 and members of the public will get the chance to meet with the project team and talk about the proposals at a series of seven consultation events. More information is available on the [scheme web page](#).

The work to develop options for the Missing Link was made possible by the Government's £15 billion Road Investment Strategy. Its delivery will be subject to confirmation of funding within the second Road Investment Strategy, which will cover the period between 2020 and 2025.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Dstl seeks industry wargame partners

Wargames can be used to explore tactical, operational and strategic issues across the business, security, emergency services, humanitarian and military sectors. Wargames encourage players to: think innovatively and creatively in a safe to fail environment; identify emerging issues; test hypotheses; assess

alternate options and highlight the potential consequences of choices.

Under its Searchlight initiative, Dstl is looking for industry partners, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to help develop innovative wargaming tools, techniques, technologies and analysis. Companies need not have any experience in the defence sector. Opportunities exist across all aspects of wargame design and analysis, especially in the field of data capture, analysis and visualisation.

Jim Squire, a Dstl Consulting Fellow, said:

Dstl is seeking to engage with non-traditional defence suppliers through its Searchlight initiative. This is a great opportunity, especially for small companies, to share knowledge and expertise and to understand the opportunities available in the defence sector in the high profile area of wargaming.

Dstl will also offer the opportunity to access its expertise and peer review of the potential utility of innovative approaches and subsequently to test the best of these live in Dstl's Defence Wargaming Centre.

The 7 November event will outline Dstl's aims and give participants the chance to network with potential new collaborators. The dual focus will be on closed pitches from SMEs to the Dstl team of specific offers that may improve wargaming outcomes and on an open event where there will be the chance to present 'Lightning Briefs' to a broader audience and network informally with other participants and exhibitors.

The event is being hosted by The Manufacturing Technology Centre and supported by KTN; the UK's Innovation Network; ADS, The Federation of Small Businesses; Team Defence Information and techUK. Dstl will also provide more information on its role in encouraging SME innovation and growth as partners in Venturefest South.

To secure a place at the event register online at [Team Defence Information](#)

For more information on the SME Searchlight contact: searchlight@dstl.gov.uk

Release of the Stena Impero, 27 September 2019

Statement by the Foreign Secretary following the release of the Stena Impero on 27 September 2019.

UN Human Rights Council 42: UK Statement on Cooperation with the United Nations, its representative and mechanisms in the field of human rights

Ambassador Julian Braithwaite thanked the main sponsors Fiji, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, and Uruguay for the exemplary way in which they have led negotiations on this important resolution