

Press release: Environment Agency to tackle decline in salmon population

The Environment Agency is calling on anglers and netsmen to have their say on potential salmon rod and net limitations through an initial consultation launched today (Thursday 24 August 2017).

The consultation aims to understand how the Environment Agency can better manage salmon fishing in England and the Border Esk in order to reduce the impact on salmon stocks, which are currently among the lowest on record.

It will also look at the impact that any restrictions could have on those whose livelihoods and interests depend on salmon. The initial consultation runs until Monday 9 October 2017 and invites anglers, netsmen, fishery managers and the public to give their views and to help shape the future of salmon stocks in England and the Border Esk. The results will then be used to issue a formal consultation later this year.

Salmon stocks across the Atlantic are challenged by a number of factors including marine survival and barriers to migration. The Environment Agency is working with partners on a programme of action to restore salmon stocks throughout England.

Heidi Stone, the Environment Agency's Salmon Programme Manager said:

We are working hard to improve salmon stocks and are seeking views on measures to further protect this important species.

The issues facing salmon and the reasons for their decline are complex and there is no simple solution to increasing salmon numbers. Evidence indicates that the marine phase of their lifecycle is the most likely reason for their decline and that fishermen taking salmon is not the primary cause.

But if we do not act now, we risk seeing further declines in salmon in many of our rivers. We are asking for views on a range of options and your responses will truly help to form our approach to managing salmon stocks in the future.

The Environment Agency, Government, Angling Trust, Rivers Trust, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation UK, Wild Trout Trust and Institute of Fisheries Management have formed a working partnership in order to address this issue. This programme is called the Salmon Five Point Approach, and has been jointly developed and committed to by all partners. It sets out the actions to address the key pressures that affect the different life stages of salmon.

The priorities are:

- Improve marine survival
- Further reduce exploitation by nets and rods
- Remove barriers to migration and enhance habitat
- Safeguard sufficient flows
- Maximise spawning success by improving water quality.

Find out more about the [Salmon Five Point Approach](#).

Take part in the [e-consultation](#).

Press enquiries: please call 0203 025 5623, or email newsdesk@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Press release: Residents to learn more about ancient villages lost at sea

Evidence of communities on the Humber dating back 8,000 years will be discussed at a free community drop-in event at Welwick Village Hall on Monday 4 September.

Archaeologists will be on hand between 2-7pm to talk through the early findings from a geophysical study and small scale excavation between Outstrays and Skeffling last autumn.

The study found that the area contains a long and interesting history, with evidence of storm surge deposits, ancient river channels and areas of peat from as far back as the Middle and New Stone Age (approximately 3,000 to 8,000 years ago), which suggests that landscapes occupied and exploited by prehistoric people survive beneath the current farmland.

Across the higher parts of the site evidence was also found of Roman settlement activity which evolved into the medieval period as communities settled closer to the shore as the land was drained.

The initial archaeological assessment formed part of the design for the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme, a new habitat creation project on the Humber Estuary working in partnership between the Environment Agency and Associated British Ports.

Stephen Kemp, senior archaeologist at the Environment Agency, said:

Our initial assessment begins to tell the stories of communities by the Humber that learnt to adapt to environmental changes, like rising sea levels.

When many of these ancient communities lived here the coast was much further away and the surrounding land was significantly less populated, enabling people and the ecology to thrive.

The stories of the, now lost, villages provide interesting insight into environmental changes in today's contexts and why, when providing managed realignment schemes like this, it is vital to ensure we are working with nature to make good long-term choices that will maintain our modern communities.

The Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme will see a new inter-tidal environment created that offsets habitat losses from future coastal development and 'coastal squeeze'.

Coastal squeeze occurs when fixed hard flood defence structures, built to protect people and properties along the coast, reduce the inter-tidal land between low and high tide as a result of rising sea levels. It is a legal obligation for the Environment Agency to rebalance this coastal squeeze by creating a compensatory habitat.

As part of the proposed scheme a 900 acre natural habitat site will be created for estuarine and terrestrial wildlife and an improved landscaped flood defence will surround this area to help reduce the risk of flooding to the local community. Once complete, managed realignment sites like the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme are typically colonised with invertebrates and wading birds.

Environment Agency project manager Tim Cobb said:

With higher tides and changes in weather, we cannot avoid changes to our environment as we know it. But the results from our archaeological survey show that these changes have been happening for millennia and they stress the importance of addressing coastal squeeze in key locations on Britain's coastline.

While the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme is still in public consultation stage we are keen to present our initial findings to the community. Perhaps more importantly though, we'd like to learn more about the local community's understanding of the site to ensure they help us shape and maintain the important parts of the area's history.

A planning application for the Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme is expected to be submitted at the end of 2017. Subject to planning approval, the Environment Agency says it anticipates starting work for the western site in 2018.

Further archaeological excavations are anticipated in advance of the main scheme construction and regular updates on the findings will be communicated to the community on a regular basis.

Partners involved in the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme excavation include: the Environment Agency, Historic England and York Archaeological Trust.

For any queries relating to the Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme or for more information, please email Welwick.Skeffling@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Press release: Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme wins large project of the year at NEC Awards

Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme has scooped the Large Project of the Year award at this year's NEC awards in London.

The awards were announced at a recent NEC Users' Group Annual Seminar.

The driving force behind the award winning scheme is a dedicated project team made up of experts from Leeds City Council, Environment Agency, BMMjv (a joint venture between BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald) and ARUP.

Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme is one of the largest river flood defence projects in the country. Led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, it aims to provide an increased level of protection against flooding from the River Aire and Hol Beck for 3,500 residential properties and businesses in the city centre. The scheme also includes flood risk reduction at Woodlesford.

One of the key aspects of the scheme is the replacement of Victorian weirs at Crown Point and Knostrop in the city, with innovative moveable weirs, which are being used for the first time as a flood defence in the UK. The new moveable weirs can be lowered in flood conditions to reduce river levels and the threat of flooding. The use of this technology has meant lower flood defence walls elsewhere in the city, to help preserve connectivity with the waterfront.

The floods experienced in December 2015 reinforced just how important this scheme is for the city of Leeds. Widespread flooding from some of the highest river levels ever recorded affected more than 2,000 residential properties and nearly 600 businesses.

The scheme was recognised for its 'one team' ethos with members of all partner organisations working side by side on a daily basis. This collaborative approach between client, contractor and consultant puts the project at the forefront of contract management, resulting in a project which is on programme and within budget despite being affected by some of the worst flooding Leeds has experienced.

The NEC Awards recognise excellence in project delivery and showcase examples of good practice through collaboration from across the world.

The site works for Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme started in January 2015 and are scheduled to be completed this September.

The project team is currently working on options for Phase 2 of the scheme, which will adopt a catchment-wide approach meaning the entire River Aire catchment area will be considered to help reduce flood risk in Leeds. Consultation on potential options is due to be carried out from September.

Press release: Oil and gas regulators host public drop-in event

Agencies that regulate Third Energy's oil and gas activities are hosting a drop-in event in Kirby Misperton to explain how they are working together to protect the community and the environment.

The Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, Oil and Gas Authority, Public Health England and Ryedale Borough Council are hosting the event at Kirby Misperton Village Hall on Thursday 7 September.

These agencies work together to assess the impacts of the oil and gas industry, to oversee industry operations, and to ensure that any exploration and development, including fracking, is done in a way that does not put people or the environment at risk of harm.

The drop-in session will give local people a chance to talk to agency staff on a one-to-one basis to find out about agencies' roles and to hear more about the plans that have been put in place since permissions have been granted, along with what will be done in the coming months to regulate site activities.

Everyone is welcome to attend at any time between 2pm and 7pm.

Press release: Warning for anglers after illegal cast net seized

Anyone caught fishing with an illegal cast net in North East waters will be prosecuted, the Environment Agency has warned.

The warning follows the seizure of a cast net from an angler caught using it to catch salmon on the River Wear at Durham. The seizure was a first for the area and Environment Officers want it to stay that way.

Fisheries Enforcement Technical Specialist Kevin Summerson is leading the investigation against the angler. He said:

Even though these nets can be purchased from a number of UK outlets it is illegal to use them in North East rivers. Anyone caught and prosecuted could face a hefty fine and even a custodial sentence.

We take illegal fishing very seriously. Whether anglers use illegal equipment or fish without a licence, it's not fair on other anglers and endangers the future of the sport.

"Our work is intelligence led and we work closely with our partners at the police and Angling Trust to target known hot spots and where illegal fishing is reported to us.

We carry out enforcement work all year round and will be continuing throughout the coming weeks, including the upcoming Bank Holiday weekends. I'd urge people to help us protect the health of our fisheries by reporting any suspected illegal activity to us.

It is illegal to use cast nets to catch freshwater fish, eels, trout, migratory trout or salmon in the North East. They are also illegal if used to catch migratory trout, salmon or freshwater eels up to six nautical miles from the coast line.

The maximum penalty for this offence if convicted before a magistrate is an unlimited fine and/or three months in custody, or an unlimited fine and/or up to two years in custody before the crown court.

The Environment Agency works 24 hours a day to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents and we encourage people to report such incidents to our Incident Hotline on 0800 807060.