

[Press release: Sea change for migrating smolts](#)

The Environment Agency has carried out underwater sonar surveys to check for young salmon using a new route across the Tees Barrage gates.

And the results show the juveniles – known as smolts – successfully making their journey from spawning grounds upstream out to sea.

It follows changes to the operation of the Tees Barrage in 2015, which means on every tidal cycle the gates are lowered to allow fish to pass both upstream and downstream.

Surveys have shown the barrage gates are the main route for salmon migrating upstream and the automation of the gates has resulted in an extra 1,500 hours per year of fish passage for returning adult salmon to reach their upstream spawning grounds.

It's in addition to the other routes that salmon use including the Barrage's navigation lock, the Denil fish pass, the fish pass in the white water rafting centre, and the main canoe slalom.



Downstream migration improved

Phil Rippon, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

As well as improving the routes for returning adult fish we are also looking to improve the downstream migration of these precious fish and maximise the number of smolts reaching the North Sea.

By lowering the main barrage gates at set times, it means that as well as providing an additional upstream route for adult salmon we are providing a much easier route for the young salmon moving downstream as well. It is known that the sooner the smolts reach the sea the better their survival chances are, resulting in more returning adult fish.

Our recent work using an underwater sonar has shown large numbers of smolts using the gates to pass successfully downstream. It's really positive to see yet more evidence that salmon are spawning upstream and these youngsters have been living in the river for up to 3 years before they move out to the sea.

Every year smolts, which are between 1 and 3 years old, leave the river to start their feeding migrations to the sea – travelling as far as Greenland – where they will spend up to three more years as an adult salmon before returning to the river to spawn.

Smolts are vulnerable throughout their migration and only around 5% of those that leave the river will return to spawn the next generation of salmon.

[Underwater sonar footage of River Tees smolts crossing the Tees Barrage](#)

Steering group

The Tees Barrage Fish Pass and Operation Steering Group, made up of Tees Barrage owners the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, Angling Trust, Salmon & Trout Conservation Trust, Tees Rivers Trust, Industries Nature Conservation Association and Tees Barrage International White Water Centre, oversees the monitoring and research of fish and seal populations and carried out action to improve fish passage.

Research to understand the preferred routes through the barrage for fish and how to make it easier for them while reducing seal predation has been the focus of recent surveys.

Last year also saw the use of an acoustic deterrent device (ADD) to deter seals from entering the navigation lock, which showed promising results. Phil added:

We're working really hard together with our partners to understand how fish naturally try to pass through the barrage and then to make it as easy as possible for them. We've changed the way the main gates and navigation lock operate to allow more fish passage, and we'll be using an acoustic deterrent device again this summer.

We want as many fish as possible to make it upstream to their

spawning grounds to ensure the River Tees continues to improve.

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[**News story: Reduced limit for North Sea nephrops fishing explained**](#)

The Marine Management Organisation and Defra are providing advance notice of a reduction in the quarterly catch limit for North Sea nephrops for quarter 3 only. This is being reduced from 20 tonnes to 4 tonnes per vessel. The changes are part of a package of measures to cut fish mortality in the Farne Deeps and help long-term recovery of the stock.

Vessels fishing against the under 10 metre and over 10 metre pool allocations for North Sea nephrops will be subject to the new limit from 1 July to 30 September 2018.

The change is happening because the Government believes it is fair that all

sectors should contribute to the reduction in overall fishing effort on Farne Deep's nephrops and to developing a sustainable nephrops fishery that will secure future stability and profitability for local fishermen.

In 2015 ICES advice showed that the Farne Deep's nephrops stock was in danger of collapse and recovery measures were introduced from 1 April 2016. ICES advice published on 30 June 2017 demonstrated that stock abundance was increasing but that catches were still notably above the stock's maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

Nephrops fishing activity in the Farne Deep's is usually highest in the winter period, however Cefas analysis identified a pattern in the last two years of unusual and significant effort targeting nephrops in quarter 3 when the inshore fleet usually engage in a mixed fishery.

The planned catch limit (20 tonnes) for the fourth quarter, when the recurring winter nephrops fishery begins, is not affected.

Official Statistics: Forestry Commission England (FCE) Corporate Plan Performance Indicators 2018

Annual report of the key performance indicators for Forestry Commission England showing progress towards our key aims of helping enable the protection, improvement and expansion of the woodland resource in England. The publication includes both FCE's six Headline Performance Indicators (also separately reported at quarterly intervals) and our annually reported indicators. This publication is also known as the Forestry Commission England Indicators Report 2018.

National Statistics: Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking: 2018 Edition

This release contains provisional statistics on UK woodland area, certified woodland area, and areas of new planting and restocking. These statistics are used to inform government policy and resource allocation, to provide context to UK forestry and land management issues and are reported to international organisations. Figures for certified woodland areas are often used as an

indicator of sustainable forest management. However, it should be noted that woodland that is not certified may also be managed sustainably.