

Beck is fish for the future thanks to Highways England project

As part of its commitment to reduce the impact of its roads on the environment, Highways England has remodelled the culvert which helps Skitwath Beck at Penruddock, about six miles from Penrith, flow under the busy A66.

The work was completed in July and will make it easier for fish like brown trout, eels and even Atlantic salmon to travel through the culvert – especially important during the autumn spawning season for salmon and trout when they need to travel upstream to lay eggs.

Dion Auriac, Highways England's Project Manager, said:

This is a small but important project which will help support aquatic biodiversity at a location right along on the A66.

It also underlines our commitment to reducing the impact of our roads on the environment – in this case by modifying a structure originally provided during the construction of the road.

As part of the modifications, which took a month to complete, a meandering two stage channel was fitted to the culvert base by bolting timbers to the concrete and backfilling the sides with gravel. Stones were also fixed to the floor of the low flow channel to further break up the flow and provide refuge for juvenile fish making their way upstream. New water gates, known locally as hecks, and fences were replaced.

An innovative design was used so that as many river dwelling species as possible, including otters and eels, could benefit from the improvement. It includes measures to reduce the speed of the flowing water and make it easier for more fish to move upstream but also provides multiple depths and roughened surfaces through the culvert giving a wider variety of species the capability of passing through the culvert.

Rachel Osborn, Highways England's senior environmental specialist who developed the Skitwath Beck project, said:

The purpose of this particular project was to enable fish to migrate through the culvert and access more habitat upstream. The addition of natural features in the culvert benefits fish populations and the overall 'health' of the watercourse.

The scheme also supports other work delivered by local interest groups. Danny Teasdale of Ullswater Catchment Management Community Interest Company said:

The improvement to Skitwath culvert is welcomed and complements other community work underway to improve natural habitat along the beck and the wider Ullswater catchment such as installing fencing to protect river banks and tree planting.

Although not the first in the region, the fish easement is the first to be provided from a national five-year programme of special 'designated funds' – worth £936 million between 2020 and 2025 – to improve the environment along roads. The money is designed to secure a better deal for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders, tackle air and noise pollution and look at innovative ways of delivering a better strategic road network for everyone.

In September, Highways England's staff in the North West marked the delivery of the first five years of designated funds environmental improvements with the completion of layby and other improvements in Cumbria.

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

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

[Kidderminster child rapist has his sentence increased](#)

News story

Callum Haycock has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.



A man who raped a five-year-old girl has had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, intervened and referred his sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS)

scheme.

Callum Haycock, 21, denied the offences but was later convicted of raping the girl.

Haycock was sentenced to a 3 year community order on 1 October 2020 at Worcester Crown Court and was ordered to pay the victim £2,500 in compensation. He was also placed on the Sexual Offenders Registry for a period of 5 years.

Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 11 December the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to a 3 year Community Order with a 12 month electronically monitored curfew, between the hours of 7pm to 7am.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

Haycock's sickening actions have had a significant impact on the victim and her family, and it is right that the Court of Appeal has increased his sentence today. My thoughts remain with the victim and her family for their ordeal.

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[Sam and Dan take top spots for personalised registration searches](#)

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Targeted testing to be offered to children in north east London, Kent and Essex

- Government announces a targeted testing drive for secondary school and college students in parts of north east London, Essex and Kent
- Aims to combat a rapid increase in cases among this age group by identifying asymptomatic cases and helping to break chains of transmission
- Mobile testing units will be deployed and home tests kits will be distributed and staff, students and their families will be urged to get tested this weekend

Cases in London, Essex and Kent have been rising rapidly, with the fastest rates in those aged under 11 to 18 years old.

From today all staff, students and their families in certain schools and colleges will be urged to get tested. Latest figures from the ONS showed almost 1 in 3 people in England show no symptoms of having the virus but are still able to pass it on. Large-scale rapid testing helps identify these asymptomatic cases, driving down infection rates and helping break chains of transmission.

Schools and colleges will be provided with information on how to get involved, and parents or carers will be able to apply for tests using the online testing portal. Children under 16 attending a mobile testing unit (MTU) need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The surge testing capacity will be deployed to help identify as many positive cases as possible, especially those who may be asymptomatic and unwittingly transmitting the virus.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We want to keep schools and colleges open, because it is right both for education and public health, but in the face of rapidly rising cases we must act to target rising rates in secondary school pupils.

From our successes in Liverpool and Leicester we know surge testing is safe, and helps us quickly assess where the virus is spreading most and take action to stop it in its tracks.

I urge every student, parent and teacher in these areas to step forward for testing, irrespective of whether they have symptoms. While COVID-19 may be lower risk to children and young people, it still poses a significant risk to their families and communities. By taking these vital steps, we can get on top of cases and help

bring transmission of this virus under control now.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This additional testing capacity underlines this government's commitment to ensuring that education is a national priority, because that is in the best interests of students' progress, development and wellbeing.

I would encourage everyone eligible to access the testing and I'd like to thank staff for continuing to ensure that schools and colleges have protective measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission.

Any student, staff or family members who test positive will have to isolate for the required period, and NHS Test and Trace will work closely with Local Authorities to take appropriate measures to support contacts within schools, and carry out necessary contact tracing.

The additional capacity comes thanks to the historic expansion of testing capacity by NHS Test and Trace, which is now able to process nearly 600,000 PCR tests every day and deploy new rapid lateral flow tests.

Children under 12 must be accompanied by a guardian and the test has to be administered by that guardian.

Children 12 to 17 must be accompanied by a guardian and can administer the test themselves.

Children under 12 do not need to wear a face mask.

In London

An additional 44,000 home test kits will be made available for school staff including teachers to test before returning in January.

Additional MTUs will be deployed in or near schools for staff, students and their families to be tested, providing tests over and above existing test sites in the capital.

London boroughs receiving additional testing are:

- Barking and Dagenham
- Hackney and the City
- Havering
- Newham
- Redbridge
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest

In Essex

An additional 10 MTUs will be deployed tomorrow and over the weekend.

Essex boroughs receiving additional testing are:

- Southend
- Basildon
- Basildon
- Canvey Island
- Harlow
- Brentwood
- Harlow
- Southend

In Kent

An additional 2 MTUs will be deployed tomorrow, with a further 10 MTUs arriving at the weekend.

Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 10 December 2020

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 10 December 2020.



The ninth meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday, 10 December 2020.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the

Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

The taskforce acknowledged the publication yesterday of DfT-commissioned [reports by consultants AECOM and Prof. Norman Fleck](#) which provide reviews of the condition of the bridge's pedestals and of the recent modelling and analysis of the bridge by other engineering consultants.

Taskforce members agreed to meet again next week to discuss the reports' contents and implications.

Taskforce members were updated on the first of a series of collaborative meetings with TfL to explore the current full works programme and cost schedules in detail and to consider alternative procurement approaches, shift patterns and de-risking the programme with advanced investigation work.

The taskforce was also pleased to hear from TfL that procurement for the temporary ferry service was proceeding on schedule.

The taskforce also agreed to continue discussions on funding and the temporary road bridge proposal from Foster and Partners at its meeting next week.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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