

News story: Brown trout return to Newcastle-under-Lyme

This follows successful work to improve the ecology and habitat of the brook.

The Lyme Brook runs through the heart of the town, and has suffered from poor water quality from as far back as the industrial revolution when new industry and development had an impact on the brook.

Since the 1980s water quality in the Lyme Brook, one of a number of brooks that form the headwaters of the iconic River Trent, has dramatically improved. In recent years, using the Environment Agency's Environment Improvement Fund, a partnership called the Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Partnership has been working to improve the habitat of the brook, mainly through Lyme Valley Parkway.

This volunteer-led programme that brings together Groundwork West Midlands, the Wild Trout Trust, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the National Citizen Service has been making all sorts of improvements to encourage brown trout to return to their ancient spawning grounds. And the partnership is excited to say, brown trout have been found.

Stephen Cook from Groundwork West Midlands said:

It's great to see that the years of hard work by local people have paid off.

The fact trout are in the brook means that other species will be thriving too and the quality of the habitat must be improving which is so important. It was also great fun creating the new berms, shifting the gravel and teaching children about their waterways so this news is just the icing on the cake.

Councillor Ann Beech, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council cabinet member for operational services, added:

The Borough Council is proud to be involved in a partnership project which is already reaping the rewards of work to improve the water environment at the Lyme Brook.

It's great news that brown trout have returned – it's a clear indicator of the brook's renewed health as high quality water and a good habitat are vital requirements for them to spawn. Where they thrive, other wildlife will too.

Although the Environment Agency has found brown trout, the work doesn't stop.

The partnership is continuing to work on further habitat improvements so the brook can sustain trout breeding populations.

It is currently looking to recruit members for a 'Friends of the Lyme Brook' group to safeguard this work and lead on future improvements. If you are interested, please call Groundwork on 01782 829914 or email Stephen.cook@groundwork.org.uk.

Mel Westlake, Catchment Coordinator from Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment said:

This is fantastic news as brown trout are an indicator that the work being carried out by the Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment partners is having a real and lasting effect on the water quality and habitats for fish.

The brown trout is synonymous with Newcastle-under-Lyme for a number of reasons including appearing on [the borough's coat of arms](#) as well as featuring on the statue on the roundabout in the centre of the town.

We hope to be able to continue with more of this restoration work throughout the whole of the Trent Catchment ensuring that brown trout are once again a common site in our local rivers and brooks.

Hopefully in the near future, brown trout will again be a common sight in Newcastle.

Background

The trout were found on an Environment Agency fish survey of the brook. The trout were measured and returned unharmed to the water.

Improvements led by Groundwork West Midlands were carried out through a series of volunteer-centred events using volunteers from the local community, Friends of Lyme Valley Parkway, Environment Agency and National Citizen Service.

These improvements have involved the creation of shallow sloping 'berms' along the bank side using brushwood from the pollarding and coppicing of suitable trees nearby. Opposite each 'berm', sections of the bank side have been removed with a mini-digger allowing the brook to 'wiggle'.

In addition, gravel spawning areas (riffles) have been created by placing gravel at locations in the brook, together with pinned woody debris, which has been fixed into the banks. Woody material becomes home to invertebrates and is a good hiding place for young fish.

Yellow flag iris and sedge have been planted along this section of the bank and in the muddy pockets within the berms. These plants will provide shelter and shade for developing fish and for adult fish. [Further details of the](#)

[project](#) are online and there are films showing the making of the Lyme Brook wiggle.

[Lyme brook: road to recovery](#)

[Second phase and fish survey](#)

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News story: Exploration Education and Outreach Grants Awarded

A total of £122 000 has been awarded for these exciting new projects.

The following partners have been awarded funds for projects that support the objectives of the Agency's education and exploration programmes:

- Curved House Kids: City on Mars Discovery Diary
- North Hertfordshire College: Airbus Foundation Discovery Space – Aurora Programme
- Northumbria University: Family Space Explorers
- Spacefund: RoboKids Primary School Tour

The UK Space Agency is delighted to be able to support these projects, which meet our education objectives in encouraging children to take up STEM subjects, raise awareness of careers in space-related areas, and raise awareness of the UK's exploration programme.

We look forward to publishing more details on the individual projects as they get up and running over the next few months.

NUSTEM at Northumbria University who will be working on the 'Family Space Explorers' project said:

NUSTEM at Northumbria University are delighted to have been chosen as part of the outreach programme for the UK Space Agency. Space is a fascinating subject, and we're looking forward to bringing the story of space exploration to toddlers and their families. Through story books and creative activities, we'll be sharing a glimpse of the UK's role in space with North East families.

Joanne Fox from Spacefund, who will be creating the 'RoboKids Primary School Tour', said:

Sponsored by the UK Space Agency's Exploration grant scheme, RoboKids aims to take over 7,000 Primary School children on a fun and inspirational journey to Mars. Pupils will help programme our friendly robot "Nao" and embark on a robotic mission to the Red Planet. Curriculum mapped to Key Stages 1 & 2 for computing, science and design technology, RoboKids uses a successful recipe of fun, excitement, and technology to deliver a 40 minute interactive show followed by a 40 minute ExoMars rover building and programming workshop. Available from October 2017.

[Press release: James Brokenshire statement on Storm Ophelia](#)

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Over the past 24 hours, I have been in regular contact with the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and representatives from multi-agency emergency response organisations, ahead of Storm Ophelia. There is close co-operation between the agencies and necessary contingency arrangements are in place with the relevant resources and networks tasked to ensure public services are protected as far as possible. The UK Government stands ready to provide a full range of support if requested.

The Met office has put an Amber warning in place from 12 Noon to 11pm with the likelihood of storm force high winds during this period. Everyone should take steps to protect themselves and their family from the impacts of this severe weather threat.

We should be particularly mindful of the elderly and vulnerable and ensure they remain safe throughout the coming hours. Regular updates will be provided via NI Direct and PSNI across various social media channels.

I am remaining in Northern Ireland today and will be keeping in

close contact with the agencies who are planning both for the initial storm and its aftermath.

People should be vigilant and stay safe.

[News story: Civil news: understanding when a case needs exceptional funding](#)

Clarification on answering the scope funding question when making your online application in the Client and Cost Management System.

Remember to make the correct selections when working your way through the online legal aid funding application process if you want to avoid delays.

More than 100 applications or amendments a month are currently marked incorrectly as requiring exceptional case funding.

Scope questions

One part of the application process which seems to be causing confusion concerns the 2 options offered to providers when they come to the drop-down menu scope questions under this section:

'ECF: In scope Schedule 1 Legal Aid Sentencing & Punishment of Offenders Act 2012' within Section 10 Exceptional Funding.

1. You should select 'yes' if the case is in scope for funding and does not require exceptional case funding.
2. You should select 'no' if the case is out of scope for funding and does require exceptional funding.

Exceptional funding hyperlink

If the proceedings are outside the scope of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 you must use the exceptional funding hyperlink. This appears on page 2 of your application.

Further information

[CCMS training website: exceptional cases FAQs](#) – to download fact-sheet

[CCMS training website: making an initial application](#) – to download quick guides