

Press release: Progress continues on new North East fish pass

New fish pass 'baffles' to help fish get across a barrier in the River Wear have been installed this week in a significant step forward for the new Stanhope Fish Pass.

The Environment Agency resumed work on the fish pass in June after it was postponed in November due to health and safety concerns about high river levels, and to allow for fish to spawn.

The £260,000 project at Stanhope Weir includes a Larinier fish pass to open up the river and make it easier for salmon and sea trout to move up the River Wear to spawn.

Baffles are a series of metal plates which are fixed to a sloped concrete channel – they slow the flow of the water so that fish can swim over the top of them easily.

The Environment Agency is also carrying out repairs to the weir which will improve the river flow and level monitoring capability of the Stanhope River Gauging Station.

'Significant step forward'

Daniel Magee Project Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

It's a significant step forward for the new fish pass to see the baffles going in – this is going to make it so much easier for fish to reach their natural spawning grounds and is good news for the River Wear.

By also improving the monitoring capabilities of the gauging station we can continue to provide an accurate and timely flood warning service to around 400 homes at risk of flooding from the River Wear.

When the work is complete it safeguards the flood warning system for the future as well as creating environmental improvements. We appreciate the community's continued patience while this work has been ongoing.

Stanhope Gauging Station is ranked in the top 10 most important flow sites in the North East area. Opened in September 1958 it has an almost continuous record of flow data, making it one of the longest flow records in the North East area at 60 years.

Work is expected to be completed by the end of this month.

Notice: CH65 4HB, Essar Oil (UK) Limited: Environmental permit draft decision advertisement

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. In some cases it also consult on draft decisions for environmental permits. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- the Environment Agency's proposed decision and the reasons and considerations on which it's based this
- additional relevant information available since the application was advertised
- any information or guidance provided by the Secretary of State relevant to the application

News story: Grouse moors: Working together to achieve shared outcomes

The National Gamekeepers Organisation has provided an industry-led free grouse moor training day at [Snilesworth Estate](#) on the North York Moors (02 August) to help improve land management and enhance local wildlife.

The day gave new Natural England upland staff an insight into the day-to-day management of a driven grouse moor to better equip them with the skills and understanding to work together with land managers, farmers and gamekeepers on the restoration of upland habitats. Organised by John Clarke from the National Gamekeepers' Organisation and Simon Lovel from Natural England, the training was delivered by Snilesworth Estate head keeper, Jimmy Shuttlewood and his team. Natural England is now considering organising a future training day for hill farming later in the year.

The training looked at grouse moor management from an industry perspective, focusing on the life cycle of grouse, habitat management, predator control, medicated grit, which activities take place at different times of year, considerations keepers make in the siting of grouse butts and other infrastructure, and what happens on a typical shoot day.

Natural England uplands policy advisor Simon Lovel said:

Conservation is ultimately about people and by increasing our understanding of those who manage the land, the easier it is to find genuine shared outcomes that can be delivered utilising the local knowledge and traditional skills of the practitioners on the ground. We are planning upland ecology training for gamekeepers and farmers later in the year.

John Clarke from the [National Gamekeepers Organisation](#) added:

This has been a fantastic step towards working together in the future.

Those attending had a greater understanding of how driven grouse moors are managed and the associated range of environmental benefits, including the restoration of upland habitats. Going forward, Natural England staff, gamekeepers, farmers and land managers will be able to work better together to achieve healthy and resilient upland ecosystems, that will support thriving local communities off the back of sustainable land uses.

Natural England's Chairman, Andrew Sells, recently spoke at [the Game Fair and highlighted the benefits for conservation of moorland from partnership working](#).

He said:

We are also seeing more estates coming into partnership agreements with Natural England, voluntarily finding ways to enhance the environment. These deepening relationships will be vital in joining up prime wildlife sites and achieving goals of the [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

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Press release: Living on the hedge of the A64

Over the last seven months, Highways England has been carrying out a major junction improvement at Barton Hill near York to improve safety and visibility for road users. As part of this £2.8m scheme which completed on Friday, sections of the hedgerow, a number of trees and stone from an old water culvert had to be removed.

But rather than throwing these items away Highways England and its contractor A-one+ have given them a new lease of life by working closely with Jonathan and Julian Curtoys, the owners of Sloemotion.

Highways England project manager Russell Mclean said:

We saved as much of the hedgerow as possible but sections of the hedge had to be removed. The sloe berries used to produce the gin grow on hedgerows, so it seemed like the perfect solution to donate the hedge to this local sloe gin producing firm.

We were able to reduce the amount hedgerow we needed to remove by altering some of the scheme's drainage and this work will also help to prevent flooding in the area. Some logs from the trees were also donated to Castle Howard stately home to be used as chippings in the ground.

Cabinetmaker and artist Mark Bennett, of the Woodlark in Malton, was also brought on board. He will be taking part of an Oak tree which was removed from the site and transforming it into a bar for Sloemotion. The remainder of the tree will be used to create bat and bird boxes, which will be placed near to the A64.

Mark will also be using some of the removed hedgerows to create innovative displays for the gin company's products and hand cut stone from the culvert will be used to adorn the company's new buildings near Barton-le-Willows.

Russell added:

Our work to improve safety at the junction will benefit over 9,000 drivers a day. We have converted the crossroads to a staggered junction by realigning Mains Lane, extended the culvert to allow the carriageway to be widened, constructed 200m of new road and realigned 600m of the A64. We have also relocated a bus stop, an emergency telephone and a pedestrian crossing.

While we were doing this we upgraded and extended an otter fence to prevent them coming onto the A64. And we have reinstalled an old milepost and will be replacing a historic road sign that has been refurbished.

Jonathan Curtoys, Managing Director of Sloemotion, said the junction improvements will benefit his employees who use the junction.

The changes will certainly have a positive benefit for drivers but then to also donating the hedgerow, the stones and timber to local businesses it feels like something is being given back to the community. I commend Highways England and A-one+ for this – it has been a pleasure working with them over the last seven months.

Mark Bennett of The Woodlark added:

It's great that we can use what would otherwise have gone to waste and give something back to the environment such as the bird and bat boxes.

Later this year replacement hedgerows will be planted.

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.