

[Press release: New information on rare River Severn fish population](#)

Monitoring work during the spring and summer of 2017 which used some of the latest technology, found that around 15,000 shad can make it above Upper Lode weir on the River Severn, near Tewkesbury before being halted by Diglis Weir in Worcester. These monitoring results are significant because they indicate the current levels of twaite shad in the river which once supported millions of this species.

Research part of a major project on the River Severn

The research was conducted by the Severn Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust as part of the multi-million pound Unlocking the Severn project, which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and EU Life. The information gathered will be vital for the project which aims to restore the shad's access to 155 miles of the River Severn, north of Worcester, by providing fish passage solutions at a series of weirs that currently the fish cannot swim over or around.

Environment Agency Fisheries Monitoring Specialist, Charles Crundwell said:

We had no idea how many shad we'd find – we thought a few thousand, but in fact results suggest we could have as many as 15,000 in the lower reaches of the river. This shows great promise that by unlocking the river there's scope for a really thriving population.

Plus the work to help the shad will open up the river for all fish species, so helping the shad will help everything else for the benefit of wildlife, residents, tourists and anglers.

Using different techniques to monitor the twaite shad

In order to learn more about the remaining small population of shad, particularly the conditions they need to prosper, volunteers and staff from the Severn Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust spent many hours watching and counting twaite shad swimming over Upper Lode weir during April, May and June.

In addition, a suite of remote monitoring techniques enabled monitoring all day, every day. This included cameras, counter plates triggered when a shad passed upstream and even the use of an acoustic beam giving an image similar to the ultrasound you get of a baby in the womb.

As well as the count of the shad, the monitoring team and its contractors made the first known underwater film of shad on the Severn as they migrated

upstream and the first images of the shad's spectacular spawning behaviour, which is like a whirling dancing with rigorous splashing seen just before dark.

Acoustic tracking tags fixed to 25 shad (another first for the UK, under licence from the Home Office) showed how they migrate up the river, what habitats they use, and how barriers delay them. This is all crucial information in understanding how to create the best access routes for the fish.

An suite of underwater camera equipment was installed at the spawning sites to understand this behaviour.

The allis shad

In addition to the twaite shad, the monitoring also recorded the rarer allis shad.

Charles explained:

Historically the allis shad were even more prized as a food fish and would certainly have been an important component of the catch prior to the navigation weirs being built. This is the first photographic proof that a tiny run of these fish still hold on in the Severn, which is really exciting and means that the natural restoration of this species is also likely to occur if we are able to provide fish passage solutions at the weirs further up the river.

More information about the Unlocking the Severn project is available [online](#). You can also follow the project on [twitter](#).

[Press release: Work starts on major Northumberland flood scheme](#)

Work has started on a major £600,000 flood scheme which will protect homes and businesses in a Northumberland coastal town from tidal flooding.

The project in the Cowpen area of Blyth will see an existing 180m flood wall upgraded and extended to create a 380m wall to reduce the risk of flooding to the town.

When taking climate change into account these new defences, from Crawford Street to Quay Road, will protect over 1,000 properties into the future while also offering immediate improved protection from tidal flooding to 58

properties.

The work is being funded by the Environment Agency but is being built by Port of Blyth as part of their wider redevelopment of the adjacent Bates and Wimbourne Terminals. The flood defences are due to be completed in Spring 2018.

While the Environment Agency has advised on the specifications and design of the flood wall, Port of Blyth will own and maintain the wall. The Environment Agency will carry out annual inspections.

Leila Huntington, the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Manager for the North East, said:

This is a great example of a partnership project which protects homes and businesses now and into the future. We have been working closely with Port of Blyth to support the development of a flood wall as part of a wider land development scheme.

By working together it means a greater standard of flood protection improvements can be provided at a reduced cost and with less disruption to the local community.

We're committed to increasing protection for our at-risk communities and are continuously looking for opportunities to collaborate with our partners and provide the best possible solutions.

Martin Lawlor, Chief Executive of Port of Blyth, added:

This project is a real win-win for the town of Blyth and the Port. As a result of this programme of flood defence work, a huge number of homes and businesses within Blyth will be protected by the flood risks presented by global warming.

On top of this, the scheme enables the Port to move forward with our development plans for connecting our Bates and Wimbourne Quay terminals which will attract inward investment into the town.

A Flood Warning service is available for Blyth residents considered to be at risk of flooding, one for the North Sea at Blyth and another for the North Sea at Blyth Town Centre.

To check if you are at risk of flooding and to sign up for free flood warnings call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit the [gov.uk web pages](#)

[Press release: Work starts on increased flood protection for Starcross and Cockwood](#)

At Starcross the Environment Agency will install 2 new floodgates at Church Road and Generals Lane slipway. They will also raise the car park levels at the Fishing and Cruising Club.

In Cockwood the harbour wall will be improved with a raised level along Dawlish Road in line with predicted sea level rises. Work is expected to take around 6 months and be finished by summer.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

The storms hitting our coast in the past week demonstrate the importance of tidal defences. We are making a number of improvements to increase the level of flood protection in this area. Across England we are investing £2.6 billion in over 1,500 flood and coastal schemes to help protect homes and businesses at risk.

This important scheme has been designed to reduce the risk of tidal flooding to more than 660 residential and commercial properties.

From 8 January the road around Cockwood harbour, including Church Road and Dawlish Warren road, will be closed to traffic to allow work to be carried out and to ensure public safety. Pedestrians will continue to have access.

Works and road closures have been timed to avoid school holidays and the summer season but we apologise for any inconvenience the closures cause.

Construction of the Starcross and Cockwood tidal defence scheme begins just a few weeks after the £12m Dawlish Warren beach management scheme was opened by Michael Gove. The Dawlish Warren scheme provides increased flood protection to around 2,800 properties in the Exe estuary. Once complete, the Starcross and Cockwood tidal defence scheme is expected to further reduce flood risk for over 660 properties.

Notes to editors

The Environment Agency builds, maintains and improves sea defences to reduce the risk of coastal flooding. About 1.8 million homes are at risk of coastal flooding and erosion in England.

Between 2015 and 2021 the Environment Agency is investing in over 1,500 flood and coastal schemes to help protect homes and businesses at risk.

From 2015 to 2021, the Environment Agency is investing £2.5 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects.

Press release: Fines over £7,000 handed to 11 anglers for fishing illegally

On the 21 December, Northampton Magistrates' Court heard how the anglers were caught fishing illegally at pools in Bulkington, Worcester, Market Bosworth and Earlswood. The court issued combined fines of £7,113.

Overall, the anglers were given higher than average fines with the highest total fine of £853 given to an angler from Redditch for fishing illegally at Weston Lawns in Bulkington. This is over 28 times more expensive than an annual £30 licence.

All the anglers were caught fishing without a rod licence by Environment Agency officers out on regular patrol. None of the accused appeared in court, so all were found guilty in their absence.

Scott Dalton of Redstone Lane in Stourport on Severn, Christopher Beasley of Princes Avenue in Nuneaton, Christopher Kennedy of Middleton Hall Road in Birmingham, Jason Glover of King Charles Avenue in Walsall, Daniel Soar of Leicester Street in Bedworth, Shane Mctigue of The Laurels in Bedworth, Louis Kane of Cartmel Close in Liverpool, David Webb of Langley Close in Redditch, Daniel Wells of Mile Tree Lane in Coventry, Paul Lawless of Parbrook Road in Liverpool and Darryl Plimbley of Gospel Oak Road in Coventry were all found guilty for fishing without a licence under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

We're continuing to see anglers receive significant fines for fishing illegally which is why I can't understand the reasons some anglers continue to flout the law and risk prosecution for fishing without a licence. A licence costs just £30 and now lasts for 12 months from the day you buy it.

Most anglers fish legally and are happy to have their licence checked, the minority that fail to buy a fishing licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. Fishing

licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

With most anglers fishing legally it seems ridiculous the minority still risk a significant fine like these we've seen here.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease, restoring fish stocks through re-stocking, eradicating invasive species, and fish habitat improvements. Fishing licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing, to encourage participation in the sport and to manage a voluntary bailiff scheme.

Children under 12 fish for free. Anyone aged 12 to 16 also fish for free, but do need to have a valid Environment Agency fishing licence. Anyone over 16 must pay for an [Environment Agency fishing licence](#) to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

[Press release: Tivvy Skips Ltd prosecuted for burning waste in Devon](#)

A Devon skip company has been ordered to pay £5,500 in fines and costs for illegally burning waste. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

Tivvy Skips Ltd runs a small waste transfer station near Tiverton and operates under an environmental permit. On 6 January 2017 the site was inspected and waste was seen being placed in a dumper truck, before being transferred into a skip and burned.

The condition of the skip and debris found around it indicated the burning of waste was a 'routine occurrence'. Alan Hutchings, the site manager at Tivvy Skips, blamed the illegal burning on a member of staff who he claimed was doing it without his knowledge.

A court heard the Environment Agency had previously warned the company about burning waste, but it had ignored the warnings.

Richard Tugwell, of the Environment Agency, said:

Burning waste is illegal and poses a serious risk to the environment and human health. The motive is nearly always financial as it reduces the amount of waste a company has to legally dispose of.

Courts take these offences seriously and where we have evidence, we won't hesitate to prosecute.

Appearing before Exeter magistrates, Tivvy Skips Ltd was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £2,500 costs after being found guilty of breaching Regulation 38 of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016.

Since the offence, the company has introduced new management procedures and was found to be compliant during a recent inspection.