

Lake study aims to improve water quality

The Environment Agency is working with Groundwork North East & Cumbria, Hull University, the SILT group, Northumberland County Council and the local community on the project at Wansbeck Lake at Riverside Park in Ashington.

The lake is an important and well used water sports location and the build-up of silt on the lake bed is adversely affecting the future of these activities as well as impacting on habitat and water quality.

The long-term aim of the project is to improve the ecology of the lake, as well as enhance the facility for those who use it. It's hoped this upstream recovery will also lead to habitat improvements further downstream in the estuary.

The study includes surveys by marine experts who earlier this month took samples of sediments upstream of the barrage and carried out an ecological survey.

A drone survey also collected data which will now be used to inform options for removing sediment build-up from the lake. There will also be a future community workshop and online survey to review the options available as part of the project.

The main benefits will be to gain a better understanding of the options available to improve the local ecology, water quality, recreational use and visitor potential of Riverside Park and the lake.

Work is necessary

Heather Harrison, from the Environment Agency's Environment Programme Team, said:

The work is necessary to get a better understanding of the options available to improve the water quality and biodiversity of the lake and its sustainable use for recreational watersports.

We are working closely with the local community, river users and our partners to investigate and develop options to safeguard the long-term future of the lake and its surroundings.

We'll be looking at options to flush away sediment build up on the bottom of the lake, and the best ways to create habitat. This is a popular area for the community and visitors alike and we'll be working closely with them throughout to ensure they understand the project and have a say in its future.

The £35,500 study, which is funded by the Environment Agency with contributions from Groundwork NE and Cumbria and Northumberland County Council, will be complete in Spring next year.

Wansbeck barrage, which was constructed in 1975, was part of a major regeneration scheme following dismantling of heavy industry in the area. The barrage created a locked navigable inland waterway and artificial lake, 4km long and at its widest is in the region of 200m across, and 3 miles of riverside country park in Ashington.