

Press release: Happy Dace for north east fish surveys

The Environment Agency has joined forces with expert anglers to carry out an important survey to assess the numbers of a highly prized fish in Northumberland.

Surveys for Dace, the main species of coarse fish in the River Tyne, much valued by anglers, took place downstream of Kielder reservoir as part of a wider programme to monitor any impact of the current trial of changes in the release of water from the reservoir.

Environment Agency specialists teamed up with 15 expert anglers from the Tyne Anglers Alliance and other fishing clubs to fish around a dozen locations on the North Tyne between Kielder and Watersmeet.

The aim was to both update and enhance our existing information on Dace populations.

One of the Dace surveyed during the event

Successful survey

Environment Agency Fisheries Officer Niall Cook, who organised the survey, said:

Angling was used in the survey in preference to other survey methods like electric fishing and netting because dace are highly mobile and difficult to catch, especially in wide rivers like the North Tyne.

The angling survey itself was really successful in that it showed dace to be present throughout the river system and in areas where they had not been recorded for many years, such as Falstone. We are hoping to repeat the exercise over several years or more to build up a more detailed picture.

The Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water and the hydropower operator, Innogy Renewables UK Ltd have been working together to make changes to the operating arrangements for the release of water from Kielder reservoir.

The trial started in November last year and is intended to maintain the future of water supply to the North East, better reflect the natural changes in river flows, provide increased flood storage in the reservoir and increase the generation of clean, renewable energy.

The rainfall over the winter trial period was low and large flood alleviation releases were not required, so the initial results were inconclusive.

As a result the trial has been extended through the summer and will be continually reviewed.

An angler taking part in the Dace survey

More natural flow variation

Hydrologist Rachel Merrix, who is leading on the trial for the Environment Agency, said:

We were keen to use this opportunity to change the releases from Kielder to try to make them reflect a more natural flow variation. While the changes are relatively minor we believe that monitoring is essential to ensure the environment is protected.

We have worked hard with our partners to listen to the views of both reservoir and river users, including holding a public drop-in last October ahead of the trial, and producing a freely available interim report.

We welcome feedback from anyone who uses the river or reservoir and are keen to hear how others feel the trial is going. We continuously monitor river levels, flows and water temperatures at several locations in the Tyne catchment and all of this data is available on request.

Other activities to monitor the impact of the new Kielder release regime include temperature monitoring at 11 new sites as well as fishing surveys and freshwater pearl mussel assessments.

For more information and updates on the trial visit [the dedicated Kielder release website](#) or email Kielder.reservoir@environment-agency.gov.uk with any queries or observations.