

Press release: Explore the wonders of the Witham in free Wyndham Park event

Habitat improvements at Grantham's Wyndham Park are the stage for a day of free activities helping everyone enjoy the nature on their doorstep.

Environment and conservation experts will be on hand at the award-winning location on Sunday 24 September, offering games, competitions, crafts, wildlife spotting and more.

All activities have been designed to show how easy and fun it is to get closer to nature – and play a part in protecting it.

The event marks the official unveiling of improvements to Wyndham's Park's natural habitat, and a 100m-stretch of the River Witham that flows through it.

Enhancements include an area of stepped decking enabling safe access to a shallow part of the river and new wetland habitat to attract rare species.

All were funded using fishing licence money from the Environment Agency, which is re-invested into rivers, helping to improve facilities for anglers, tackle illegal fishing and encourage more people to take up the sport.

The event will offer a chance to explore the changes to the park's habitat, and discover how they benefit both visitors and wildlife.

Matt Parr, geomorphology technical specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

Few things beat the great outdoors but that doesn't mean you have to escape into the wilderness. Natural wonders can be found right in the heart of your town.

We'll be on hand to help you spot the opportunities, using the beauty of Wyndham Park – and our improvements to the river there – to show how easy and fun it is to get closer to nature.

Organisations taking part in the event include the Environment Agency, South Kesteven District Council, Lincolnshire Rivers Trust, Anglian Water and Rivercare.

It takes place from 12noon to 4.30pm on Sunday 24 September. The date coincides with World Rivers Day, a global celebration of rivers, their value to local communities and the importance of looking after them.

Press release: Salmon in Derbyshire river a first since Industrial Revolution

Atlantic salmon have been discovered on the River Ecclesbourne, a tributary of the River Derwent, Derbyshire for the first time since the Industrial Revolution following work carried out by the Environment Agency and its partners.

The discovery comes following the installation of fish passes on the River Derwent by the Environment Agency and Trent Rivers Trust which have helped to improve fish migration and allow the salmon to move upstream through the river.

The installation of fish passes is just one of a programme of actions carried out by the Environment Agency and its partners to remove barriers to migration and help restore salmon stocks throughout England.

Fisheries Specialist at the Environment Agency, Matt Buck, said:

Salmon is an important species and after two decades of work to improve water quality and the habitat for fish in the Trent catchment area, we now have a recovering population of salmon.

We are particularly excited to have found juvenile salmon in the Ecclesbourne for the first time in living memory, which indicates the success of salmon in this part of the river.

Poor water quality and weirs on the River Derwent constructed in the Industrial Revolution acted as a barrier to fish migration and left them stuck in unsuitable water. Weirs not only stop fish migrating, but trap fish spawning gravels and create ponded areas upstream which are not suitable for riverine fish species.

Over the past seven years, the Environment Agency has worked with partners and developers on the construction of fish passes on a number of weirs in the area. These passes have enabled adult salmon to swim freely further up the river, where they have access to more varied habitats providing suitable conditions to spawn, shelter and feed.

Matt continued:

Thanks to the work we have carried out with our partners, we are, for the first time ever, witnessing a recovering population of

salmon on the River Derwent and other local rivers which is an excellent result. Last year we saw a record number of sightings of adult salmon, including a salmon found at Belper weir for the first time in over 100 years.

We are committed to ensuring that salmon numbers continue to increase within the catchment by working with partners to enable fish passage on the remaining barriers and to improve the quality of river habitats for this fascinating species. If salmon are thriving we know the river is doing well for all fish and wildlife.

Press release: Global demand for British beer boosts exports

The British beer revolution shows no sign of slowing, Food Minister George Eustice today announced as the latest figures reveal one billion pints were shipped to beer lovers around the world last year, bringing a £600 million boost to the UK economy.

More than 500 breweries opened in the last year to meet the growing demand for a British pint – with shipments to a record 121 countries, including brewing powerhouses Australia and Germany. A further 2,000 new beer brands, including Sheffield's first craft lager and Arkell's first flavoured beer range, also launched – the highest figures of new beer on the market for over a decade.

To build on this momentum, this week the Government is connecting some of the country's best craft beers with buyers from across the US and Europe, putting the UK's national drink in the global spotlight and helping boost the bottles of British beer on shop shelves around the world.

Food Minister George Eustice said:

The UK's beer industry has a lot to celebrate – our established breweries now export to more countries than ever before, with bottles of British beer on shelves as far as Japan and New Zealand.

The craft beer boom in particular has secured our position at the forefront of the industry and made us a first choice for beer lovers the world over – with major retailers and supermarkets now stocking our smaller, unique brands over global big hitters.

Through the Food is GREAT campaign, the Government is working hard to make sure this important sector goes from strength to strength,

which is why we are connecting our finest brewers with world-leading buyers, opening new markets and driving exports.

Total exports of UK beer grew by nearly £100 million in the last year, securing British brewers' spot among the UK's top five food and drink exports for the second year running – ahead of some of our most famous exports like salmon and cheese.

Taking advantage of this trend, the Government's [Food is GREAT](#) inbound trade mission will show leading buyers our renowned craft-beer industry in action. The trade mission includes tours of local breweries and a visit to the Bristol Craft Beer Festival, which showcases more than 200 UK beers to more than 2,500 visitors.

International Trade Minister Mark Garnier said:

The boost in beer exports is great news for UK breweries and beer enthusiasts across the globe.

Our beer industry now exports to more countries than ever before and, as an international economic department, we are committed to help them build on this success to make the most of rising demand.

British breweries can use our overseas network which operates in 108 countries, or look for live exporting opportunities on our digital hub [great.gov.uk](#), to build their brands abroad as part of a Global Britain.

Across the country, breweries and exporters are recognising the growing demand overseas, and with Government support have set their sights on emerging and growing markets such as China and the US. This trend isn't only being felt in the beer sector – last week Lloyds Bank announced 69% of UK food and drink companies are looking to tap into new international markets around the world.

Sovereign Beverages, based in the North West, has strong links with nearly 70 of the world's biggest beer markets and now exports more than 5 million pints of over 700 UK beer brands each year.

Managing Director of Sovereign Beverage Company David Davies said:

British Beer is thriving both at home and abroad. We support some of the largest regional breweries in the UK providing sales and operational expertise to help smooth out the complexities of exporting excise goods. That is what we do.

We've seen double digit growth over the past 12 months through opening up new markets and developing existing ones. South Africa, South America and Eastern Europe are currently importing our beers

in record quantities. We get calls every week from UK breweries looking to export their beers around the world.

Last year Defra and Department for International Trade (DIT) launched the first International Action Plan for food and drink which will see Government and industry working together to boost food and drink exports over the next five years.

Led by Defra in partnership with DIT and VisitBritain, the Food is GREAT campaign plays a key role in driving exports for UK produce overseas – increasing the demand around the world and positive public perception of our food and drink. UK businesses can explore their potential exporting opportunities through DIT's digital portal, great.gov.uk. The website acts as a single destination for trade and investment. There are more than 1,900 'live export opportunities' online, bringing together and connecting UK businesses, international buyers and international investors.

Press release: Universal Credit – payments and labour market reports published

Research also shows Universal Credit offers real personalised service, providing more support to help people find a job. New figures show that Universal Credit claimants are 4 percentage points more likely to be in work within 6 months than people who claimed Jobseeker's Allowance.

Universal Credit payments are designed to mirror the world of work, with monthly payments reflecting the way many working people are paid. Work coaches can support claimants in getting budgeting advice, and research shows that 3 in 4 claimants felt confident about budgeting on a monthly basis.

Today's research also shows that, for full service claimants, nearly 80% receive their first payment in full and on time.

Universal Credit is already in every jobcentre for single claimants, and Universal Credit full service is being gradually rolled out across the country for all types of claimants.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke said:

Universal Credit lies at the heart of welfare reform which is helping people to improve their lives by supporting them into work.

Universal Credit provides claimants with an unprecedented level of

personalised support which takes into account their individual circumstances and makes work pay. We have been rolling out Universal Credit in a careful, safe and controlled way, allowing us to make improvements as we go. We want to ensure that payments are made on time and that people can take up all the extra support that didn't exist under the previous system.

Read the Universal Credit reports:

Some of the main findings are as follows.

Reports around payment timeliness

Timeliness

There has been an improvement in the payment timeliness figures over the last few months:

- in June 2017 92% of claimants received their full payment on time
- for all new Universal Credit claimants, around 76% receive their first payment in full and on time
- for full service claimants, around 77% receive their first payment in full and on time – this is a positive trend
- for new claims there are a number of one-off verification processes that must be completed and these can sometimes be delayed

Advances

Advances can be paid in the initial stages of a claim to help people who have short term budgeting issues. Claimants can receive up to 50% of their monthly entitlement, and we need to be confident they can repay the money. The advances are paid back over the initial months of the claim.

The data shows people are accessing support when they need it:

- 49% of new claims who were due a payment in June 2017 had an advance paid
- 45% of full service new claims who were due a payment in the same period had an advance paid
- 71% of all advances paid were new claim or change in circumstances advances

Waiting days

Waiting days are served, primarily, by those people coming out of employment. A range of groups are exempt from waiting days:

- people who are terminally ill
- victims of domestic violence
- care leavers or 16-17 year olds without parental support

- prison-leavers
- people who return to Universal Credit within a certain period of time, or who migrate over from legacy benefits within certain time periods will not serve waiting days

Currently the Universal Credit caseload is primarily made up of single childless claimants who are more likely to move in and out of employment than other claimant types, so are more likely to serve waiting days:

- as at June 2017, 75% of Universal Credit awards are paid to single people with no children
- between May 2016 and June 2017 64% of all households served waiting days
- 75% of single childless claimants, in the same period, served waiting days

Reports around the labour market

Universal Credit Employment Impact analysis

- Universal Credit has a positive impact on employment outcomes. Universal Credit claimants are 4 percentage points more likely to be in work within 6 months than a matched sample of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants
- the most recent data is supported by improved data and a larger cohort of claimants – 27,000 Universal Credit claims

Test and learn evaluation – families

Some test and learn evaluation was carried out with families in July 2015 and August 2016. Since this research was done we have improved the service and information available to families. The research found:

- Universal Credit claimants had flexible attitudes to work and were confident about applying for jobs
- 3 in 4 claimants felt confident about budgeting on a monthly basis

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