



# **Annual Fisheries Report 2017 to 2018**

## **Wessex**

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment. We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

Published by:

Environment Agency  
Horizon House, Deanery Road,  
Bristol BS1 5AH

[www.gov.uk/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency)

© Environment Agency 2018

All rights reserved. This document may be reproduced with prior permission of the Environment Agency.

Further copies of this report are available from our publications catalogue:  
<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications>  
or our National Customer Contact Centre:  
03708 506 506

Email: [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

# Foreword

In each of our 14 areas we carry out a wide range of work in order to protect and improve fisheries. Below are some examples of what has been happening in the Wessex Area (WSX), much of which benefits fisheries from funding from both fishing licence fees and other sources. For a wider view of the work we do across the country for fisheries please see the national Annual Fisheries Report.

# Contents

<b>Annual Fisheries Report 2017 to 2018 Wessex.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Foreword .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Fishing Licence Checks and Prosecutions .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Illegal Fishing.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Incident Management .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Fisheries Improvements.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Monitoring .....</b>	<b>16</b>

# 1. Fishing licence checks and prosecutions

During the 2017 to 2018 financial year (the last complete year of data) a total of 64,702 fishing licence checks were carried out by our fisheries enforcement staff across the country. Our checks show us that evasion was relatively low with a national average of 3.97%. Below are details from Wessex:



**63,161** rod  
licences sold



**£1,372,883.00**  
income generated from  
rod licence sales



**1784** rod  
licences checked



**53** successful  
prosecutions



**£8,073** fines  
and costs imposed

## 2. Illegal fishing

Illegal fishing remains a threat to game and coarse fish stocks in England and the fisheries they support. The Environment Agency uses a combination of covert and overt patrols to deter and detect poachers, as well as responding to reports of illegal fishing where there is a credible threat to fish stocks and where we have a realistic chance of apprehending the alleged offenders. We cannot respond to every report of illegal fishing so we must prioritise where we focus our efforts. For Wessex:

**126** illegal fishing incidents  
were reported to our incident  
hotline (0800 80 70 60)



### Christchurch Harbour fisheries enforcement partnership

Fisheries enforcement continues to be a crucial part of our work in Wessex. As part of the Christchurch Harbour Fisheries enforcement Partnership, the Environment Agency teamed up with Dorset Police, South West Lakes Trust and staff at the Royalty Fishery to tackle various crimes, including poaching.

Since being formed 11 years ago, the partnership has achieved a number of successes, including the landmark case of Plymouth man Shane Barton, who was ordered to pay back £104,000 that he made from fishing illegally in the harbour.

While cases of this nature are rare, the agencies involved in the partnership say this highlights the important work that is carried out by patrolling the river in their vessel, Bandit Catcher.

Stuart Kingston-Turner, Environment Agency fisheries officer, said: "We set up this partnership 11 years ago to provide extra eyes and ears in the harbour. We have gained valuable intelligence over the years that has led to criminal prosecutions. The patrols provide an excellent value for money and are an invaluable process in the harbour. Members of the public can report any suspicious activity to the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60."

Patrols carry out searches on the river at various times, both day and night, to ensure any criminal activity is stamped out.



The Christchurch Harbour fisheries enforcement partnership in action

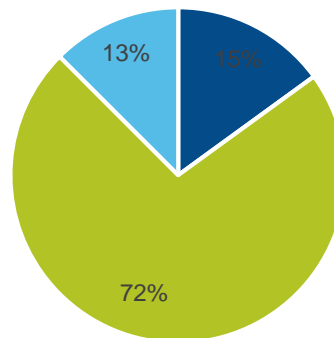
### 3. Incident management

Responding to fish kills and other environmental incidents is a vitally important part of what we do. We respond to thousands of substantiated incidents annually. Members of the public report incidents through our Incident Hotline (0800 80 70 60) and we are able to respond 365 days a year and on any day, at any time, providing an effective and proportionate response.

All incidents are categorised according to potential and actual impact on the environment and the impact on our resources. Category 1 is the most serious and Category 4 is a reported incident with no impact.

## Wessex Incident Management Categories

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4



## 4. Fisheries improvements

The boxes below highlight some of the projects we have delivered. This is followed by a summary table below listing many of our environmental improvement projects that have helped to deliver benefits to fisheries; many in conjunction with our partners. We have included the time of our fisheries officers in the funding considerations for the projects as their posts are funded by fishing licence income. Considerable amounts of their time and expertise has been provided for the projects. The Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP) which is funded from rod licence income has been used to help deliver a number of schemes and many projects have also received funding from Government or from other parts of the Environment Agency e.g. Flood defence, the Environment Programme or Water Framework Directive budgets. Where contributions from fishing licence income have been included, this has been noted.

<b>£198,399</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>£79,638</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>£278,037</b>
EA Funding		Match Funding		Fisheries Improvements

In 2017 to 2018 Wessex installed 7 fish passes and opened up 29.5km of habitat or spawning ground for fish.

Project Title	Outcome or benefit	Partners	EA Funding (£)	Match funding (£)	Total Cost (£)
By Brook Cattle Fencing	Improved river corridor habitat, installation of cattle drink and fencing	By Brook Fly Fisher's Club	£875	£875	£1,750
Bulford Channel Habitat Improvements	Improved habitat within river channel, canopy thinning and flow management	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust,	£2,000	£3,000	£5,000
Midford Brook Cattle fencing project	Restricted access to river by livestock, reduced run-off	Avon & Tributaries Angling Association, landowner	£2,424	£850	£3,274
Bemerton & Churchfields	Created better habitat and morphology for spawning salmon. installation of large woody debris, brushwood berms and flow deflectors, narrow the channel, improve flow velocity and variability, create in-stream habitat, loosen the gravel and remove silt	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Salisbury & District Angling Club	£18,000	£2,2000	£40,000
Cannington FDS	Improvement to fisheries habitat, flow reinstated into the channel.		£4,500		£4,500
Etsome sluice removal	Structure removal resulting in- Reduction in fish kills, improved biological continuity, WFD improvements	Water company	£3,000		£3,000



Hills to levels 2017	Creation of wet woodland as part of flood storage area on the Merriott Stream	FWAG	£20,000		£20,000
Improving habitat and fishing access on the Bristol Avon at Melksham	Improved marginal habitat for fish and other wildlife, reduced fine sediment release, improved fish populations.	Wildlife Trust	£2,000	£2,500	£4,500
Marden river restoration project - phase 1	Improved marginal and in-channel habitat for fish and other wildlife, reduced fine sediment release, improved water quality and fish passage improvements.	Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Wroughton Angling Club, Calne Angling Association	£32,000	£8,500	£40,500
Our Wonderful Wellow initiative	Improved river habitat (habitat variation) and improved fish stocks.	Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Wellow Fly Fishers Guild, local landowners	£13,000	£1,150	£14,150
RARP - Durrington Phase 2	Created better habitat and morphology for spawning salmon. installation of large woody debris, brushwood berms and flow deflectors, narrow the channel, improve flow velocity and variability, create in-stream habitat, loosen the gravel and remove silt,	Natural England, Wildlife Trust, Local Stakeholders	£11,200	£12,003	£23,203
RARP - Laverstock Phase 2	Created better habitat and morphology for spawning	Natural England, Wildlife Trust,	£50,000	£8,600	£58,600

	salmon. Installation of large woody debris, brushwood berms and flow deflectors, narrow the channel, improve flow velocity and variability, create in-stream habitat, loosen the gravel and remove silt	Local Stakeholders			
RARP - River Till improvements	More diverse physical habitat structure through daylighting and the introduction of large woody debris (LWD) allowing the reach to support features and species as stated in the SSSI designation and achieving favourable condition.	Wessex Chalkstreams Rivers Trust, Landowners	£10,000	£3,000	£13,000
River Cale-Wincanton	Introduction of habitat features to improve channel diversity	CATCH group	£1,000	£1,000	£2,000
Lakewood pond restoration	Desilting and fisher management	Friends of Lakewood group, local council	£700	£1,000	£1,700
Publow (River Chew) habitat improvement project	Improved in-channel habitat for fish, reduced fine sediment release, improved fish populations	Wild Trout Trust, Chew Fly Fishers Club	£1,000	£500	£1,500
Sopley Fry Refuge Stage 1	Preliminary work to prepare area for fry bay creation	WCSRT, Avon Roach Project, Landowner,	£5,500	£2,560	£8,060

		Christchurch AC			
Ratfyn PARR Project stage 1	Habitat improvements in river corridor, greater angling opportunity	Wild Trout Trust, Landowner	£1,500	£2,600	£4,100
River Tone Fisheries Improvement Project	Improved marginal & in-channel habitat for fish and other wildlife, promote and increase angling participation and educate the local community, groups and stakeholders on river management.	Westcountry Rivers Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Wild Trout Trust, Taunton Angling Association and Taunton Fly Fishers Club.	£17,700	£8,000	£25,700
Tisbury Recreation Ground Phase 1	Habitat improvements, bankside improvements, stakeholder engagement	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Tisbury Town Council	£2,000	£1,500	£3,500
<b>Total</b>			<b>£198,399</b>	<b>£79,638</b>	<b>£278,037</b>

### Lakewood pond restoration

As part of the 2017 to 2018 Fisheries improvement Programme, we helped to fund the restoration of a small pond in Christchurch. Lakewood is a small urban pond in Christchurch, which through many years of accumulated silt had become difficult to fish for the local group who carry out young angler coaching days at the pond. Building on fantastic work by the Friends of Lakewood trust and the local council, we helped to pay for a machine to remove years of sediment build up. We also removed the carp that had found a home in the pond, which went to a connected lake downstream of the site, fished by a local angling club.

After the works were complete we stocked crucian carp and tench, to provide a more natural fish community in the pond and a great opportunity for local young anglers to catch these charismatic fish during a number of coaching days held at the lake by the restoration group.



An excavator on individually operated legs was able to remove sediment from within the pond.



We were able to help with stocking a number of crucian carp into Lakewood.

## **River Marden, Wiltshire**

Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) applied to the Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme fund following several small projects on the river and a river-length walkover survey and desk research.

The River Marden rises in Calstone Wellington, Wiltshire and runs through the town of Calne, then through pasture and villages before joining the Bristol Avon to the north east of Chippenham. The river has a number of issues along its length that are resulting in the degradation of both water quality and fisheries habitat. These include river impoundment and fish passage restrictions by weirs and the historic straightening of large sections of river.

### **2017 to 2018 Improvement works**

#### **Weir fish passage studies**

BART identified three weirs where fish passage and, if feasible, upstream riverine habitat improvements following the weir removals, would gain significant benefits for the river. Reports have been completed and provided to the Environment Agency Fisheries Department.

#### **In-stream habitat improvement**

This element of the project worked on an heavily shaded and straightened section of the river downstream of Chilvester Hill, Calne. Low cost improvements were delivered here including coppicing to re-instate a 60:40 ratio of shade to light. In-stream wooden flow deflectors were constructed from bankside materials to help re-meander the river within its straightened banks.

In total BART constructed 11 structures, which will have a variety of benefits including increased flow diversity, cleaner spawning gravels and providing enhanced fish cover for fry and adult fish. We are looking forward to seeing how these structures develop as similar structures we have built on the river in Calne have been very well received and had an almost immediate impact on the river and the sport provided. The Marden is a relatively spatey river so we anticipate that the structures will be well hidden by silt accumulation in a year and will form part of a newly meandering bankside within 2-3 years. We will continue to monitor the progress of these structures as this occurs.

#### **Boulder Weir removal**

BART's survey work on the Marden identified two boulder weirs immediately above the confluence of the river with the Bristol Avon at Chippenham. The weirs presented a barrier for smaller, weak swimming species as they were only passable in high flow conditions. The two boulder weirs were removed as part of this project and the once uniform deeper section of river with slow flows, is now shallower with riffles, exposed gravel bars and less silt deposition creating new potential spawning grounds.





Alternate berms constructed to re-form a meander within the banks of this straightened section



Before and after

### **Hampshire Avon Churchfields, Bemerton restoration**

This project to improve habitat on the Hampshire Avon was designed and delivered by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Water Team and was funded by the Environment Agency (River Avon Restoration Programme and Fisheries Improvement Programme) and Salisbury City Council. There were also contributions in-kind (in terms of time) from the Wessex Chalk Streams Project (hosted by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, supported by the Environment Agency, Natural England, Wessex Water, Wessex Chalk Streams and Rivers Trust and the Wiltshire Fisheries Association) who also provided and supported volunteer labour during the delivery process.

Delivery was undertaken by volunteers and independent contractors, led by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The general trend of the works was the installation of large woody debris, brushwood berms and flow deflectors with the aim of narrowing the channel, improving flow velocity and variability, increasing scour, and creating in-stream habitat. Additional structures were also installed to help protect areas of river bank that were showing signs of detrimental erosion due to public and dog access. In addition, a weir used by the canoe club was adjusted to reduce impoundment upstream and also the erosion it was causing on an adjacent public footpath downstream, with footpath repairs also being undertaken.

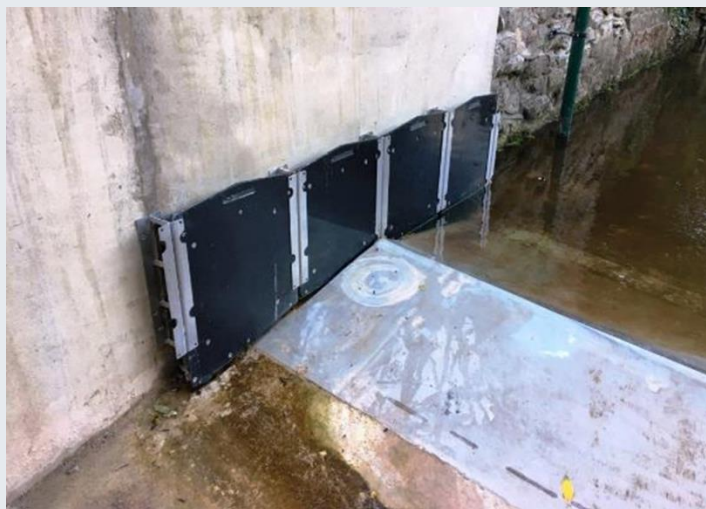
In all, a total of 26 interventions were implemented throughout the reach. The size and type of these interventions were bespoke to the localised conditions, but were installed with an overarching view of what was needed within the reach as a whole.

Volunteers helping to prepare a section of river bank for natural revetment to protect it from erosion (© WWT)



### **Wessex eel passes**

Eels are a vitally important species throughout the Wessex region, and one that has undergone a decline nationwide in recent years. Working with other teams within the Environment Agency and external partners, we have managed to improve eel passage on a number of obstructions in the area. Many of these are small weirs that eels, and small eels or elvers in particular, struggle to pass when looking for suitable habitat to live and mature in upstream. The artificial eel tiles help to provide a structure that the eels can find purchase against and wriggle through. It also slows the velocity of the water which would otherwise be too fast for the eels to swim against.





Eel passes being created in North Wessex

## 5. Monitoring

Monitoring of all fish species is vital to our assessment of the condition of the environment. Surveys of fish populations, including coarse fish, are used to assess the status of stocks and contribute to the overall assessment of ecological status of a water body. In Wessex:

**136** Waterbodies  
**assessed** for  
fish 2016/17

**41%** of waterbodies  
assessed were at  
good status or above  
for fish

These assessments are part of a triennial report. The next report is due to be published later this year.



## 7 Year Survey Year 1

In 2017 we had a relatively small fish programme completing 33 surveys. The main focus was around the 10 eel index surveys on the Frome and Piddle catchments.

2017 was also the first year that a new piece of work begun focussed around drought monitoring. South Wessex had 6 sites to deliver which included 2 sites on the Dorset Stour and 4 sites on the Hampshire Avon.

The surveys form part of a national programme that will involve annual sampling for the next 7 years. The network of sites across the country all require 3 runs to provide us with catch depletion data. On top of this, HABSCORE habitat surveys must be completed at each site to provide detailed habitat information of the sites. Over the course of this programme trends will hopefully be identified that will allow us to understand how fish populations change over time with varying flow levels and the influence the flow has on available habitat for fish.



Fish monitoring

You can look at our Catchment Data Explorer for more information.

Our fish count data is now available [online here](#)

For information on what we are doing across the rest of the country read our other Area reports

**Would you like to find out more about us or your environment?**

**Then call us on**

**03708 506 506** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

**email**

**enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk**

**or visit our website**

**www.gov.uk/environment-agency**

**incident hotline**

**0800 807060** (24 hours)

**floodline**

**0345 988 1188** (24 hours)

Find out about call charges ([www.gov.uk/call-charges](http://www.gov.uk/call-charges))

**Environment first:**

Are you viewing this onscreen? Please consider the environment and only print if absolutely necessary. If you are reading a paper copy, please don't forget to reuse and recycle.