



The Eden Rivers Trust
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NEWS RELEASE

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Improving rivers for wildlife by removing a weir and a ford

A weir and a ford have been removed from two rivers in the Penrith area to restore them to a more natural state and improve them for wildlife. Fish such as salmon and trout will now be able to move more freely in these rivers and make use of the areas that have been opened up to them.

The work has been carried out by Eden Rivers Trust with permission of the landowner and with the appropriate advice and consent from the Environment Agency. The ford was removed from the River Lyvennet near Cliburn Mill and the weir from Morland Beck near Crossrigg, Cliburn. Local contractor Alan Wearmouth was employed to complete the work.

A video of the weir removal can be seen on Eden Rivers Trust's YouTube channel – go to <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRDGRfJptXAjEfJwbj9Jjbg>.

Removing man-made barriers from rivers has multiple benefits. All rivers naturally move stone, gravel and silt along their bed and the pattern and amount of material moved depends on the strength of the flow. Weirs and other man-made obstructions in rivers alter the flow and hence the movement of material, which can cause major problems for wildlife and people.

Removing these barriers is part of Eden Rivers Trust's partnership work with the Environment Agency to help make the Eden and its tributaries meet the strict requirements of the European Water Framework Directive. This legislation aims to improve the water quality and wildlife of British rivers and the work was funded by Defra under their Catchment Restoration Fund.

Weirs and other man-made structures in rivers form one of the reasons why rivers are considered to be in poor condition. They also require constant maintenance to prevent them from deteriorating and this is the responsibility of the land owner. Taking them out altogether removes the need for maintenance as well as the burden of responsibility for the land owner and the risk of them collapsing and causing damage downstream.

Left to their own devices rivers will naturally wind and meander. This creates a variety of deep and shallow areas which are essential if a diverse range of river wildlife is to hide, breed and feed. Meanders also slow the flow of the water and reduce the amount of bed material moved. Altering the flow with obstructions such as weirs, as well as by straightening and deepening channels, causes changes in the flow which leads to erosion in certain places and deposits of gravel and silt in others. This not only adversely affects conditions for wildlife but increases the risk of destabilised banks, erosion, deposition and floods which are a problem for people and property.

The landowner, Mrs Priscilla Henley of Crossrigg House, Cliburn, said, “We were unenthusiastic about having the weir removed on the Morland Beck in the first place because it had been there for such a long time and we felt it was beneficial. However once ERT had very sensitively explained the advantages its removal would be to the habitat and surrounds we regretted not having had it removed sooner. ERT have been extremely good about keeping us informed about the whole procedure from beginning to end and the finished result is definitely an asset. The same can be said for the removal of the ford on the Lyvennet.”

Eden Rivers Trust Director, Simon Johnson, said, “Where weirs, fords and pipe bridges serve no useful purpose or are of no heritage interest then they should be removed. Removal of these redundant structures is an essential element of our overall strategy to make the Eden a dynamic and more natural river system. It is heartening to see how nature can react ‘post-removal’. Within a relatively short space of time fish can once again migrate and spawn in areas they have been excluded from, which in some cases could be many decades. Removal of weirs can be good for communities who are affected by localised flooding due to the impounding affect that these structures can have on river levels”.

ENDS

Pictures

River Lyvennet ford – before removal



River Lyvennet ford – after removal



Morland Beck weir – before removal



Morland Beck weir - after removal



Notes to Editors

Eden Rivers Trust

1. Eden Rivers Trust is a charity dedicated to conserving the beautiful River Eden in Cumbria and its hundred of miles of tributaries.

Getting our feet wet; researching, conserving and educating

2. It was set up in 1996 and has completed over 200 projects to improve the condition of the river for its wildlife and for people to enjoy.
3. The River Eden is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is classed by Europe as a Special Area of Conservation.
4. The Trust has been working with more than 200 farms to help them manage their land in the most environmentally-friendly way for the river.
5. To protect the Eden from erosion and pollution fences have been installed along more than 90 miles of the river and in excess of 20,000 trees have been planted. This has not reduced access for people but it has stopped animals trampling the river banks and polluting the water.
6. In the last five years staff from the Trust have met more than 10,000 people, half of them school children from 50 different schools.
7. Annual surveys use electronic devices in the water which momentarily stun the fish, allowing experts to assess their numbers and whether the population is improving. This is carried out at hundreds of sites and allows the Trust to identify any problems.
8. The Trust relies on fund raising and grants to carry out this vital work. It needs sponsorship and donations from individuals and businesses. People can donate, become a Friend of Eden Rivers Trust or volunteer.
9. Contact details for the Trust are Eden Rivers Trust, Dunmail Building, Newton Rigg College, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0AH, tel: 01768 866788 or email: office@edenriverstrust.org.
10. Further information on Eden Rivers Trust is available at www.edenriverstrust.org.uk.

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