



Action for the River Kennet

7 June 2017

Sluice failure leaves fish stranded

A sluice failure on the River Kennet over the spring bank holiday weekend, leading to a fish rescue, is being resolved. The Environment Agency sent an environmental team to Eddington Bridge, Hungerford very quickly after first reports of dramatic falls in river levels, and they were able to recover and move several hundred trout and grayling from the stream by A4 Hire.

The sluices that failed are a historic structure linked to the milling operations at Eddington, but their function today is largely redundant as there is no longer an active mill. However, the structure also fed water into a fishing lake and a side stream flowing into a Special Area of Conservation around the water meadows. The meadows support some of the best known populations of the rare **Desmoulin's whorl snail** *Vertigo moulinsiana* in the UK. The tiny snails rely on ditches and depressions in wet meadows in order to survive.

Charlotte Hitchmough from ARK said 'In many ways the collapse of the sluices has a very positive impact on the river environment, the upstream section is now flowing freely and the river is reverting to its natural course, however it is important that flow in the stream leading to the water meadows is restored, to prevent further ecological damage and to protect the habitat on the meadow.'

Jed Ramsay, Chief Executive of the Town and Manor of Hungerford added, "As a land and riparian owner upstream and downstream of Eddington Mill, we have seen the short term impact of the failure of the sluices on our waters. However we recognise that there will be some great long term benefits for the environment and we are working closely with our neighbours and respective agencies involved to ensure the best outcome now and for the future".

The repair, replacement or removal of the sluices is likely to be both complicated and expensive, with several agencies working with the landowners involved to identify the best solution for residents and the environment.

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For more details contact Charlotte Hitchmough 07880 515859 or 01672 512700

ARK is a registered charity and is the Rivers Trust for the Kennet Catchment.

Image: Dead trout in River Kennet stream at Hungerford.

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