

The Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnership

is a collaboration between organisations and individuals across our region to protect and restore the water environment as a part of the catchment-based approach (CaBA). We also work alongside similar partnerships on the Tyne and Tweed.

The catchment based approach is a way of working at a river catchment scale to improve the water environment for wildlife and people. By working together, the catchment partnerships aim to:

- share local knowledge and expertise
- identify the local challenges
- deliver cost effective solutions with multiple benefits.

In 2019, NRCP decided to focus its delivery through sub-groups, one of which is the River Lyne sub-group which aims to deliver a whole River Restoration Project. The Lyne has a relatively compact catchment which contains a variety of issues and opportunities.

The group has been working through several issues and updates on these are included for information.



Funding update

The core work of the River Lyne sub-group (part of the Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnership) is currently being supported by CELL Big Local - <http://cell-biglocal.org.uk/cell-big-local> as well as the Environment Agency Water Environment Improvement Fund Grant, which are co-ordinated by Northumberland Rivers Trust on behalf of the NRCP. 2020 saw additional WEIF funding via EA as well as a further tranche earmarked for 2021, which is being used to begin work on river improvements (working within Covid guidelines, etc). Thanks to all colleagues at EA for this support as well as to Groundwork and Catchment Sensitive Farming for their work with land managers.



Water Quality

The Environment Agency has classified the river Lyne as POOR as part of the assessments for the EU Water Framework Directive. Details of this can be found online at:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB103022076820>



Work in the catchment aims to identify and address these issues and the sub-group was formed to initiate action and to bring together local residents, communities, business and other organisations to agree priorities.



Progress to date

Walking the Lyne

Last year, Steve Lowe from Northumberland Rivers Trust walked the whole Lyne catchment to evaluate water quality issues and to start the process of addressing problems as well as opportunities.



This work has been turned into a series of videos and shared with partners but in order to make this publicly accessible, a condensed version has been uploaded to NRT's YouTube channel, which is free to access.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gghGwT67tkA&t=32s&ab_channel=NorthumberlandRiversTrust

Remediation of historic coastal dumping at Lynemouth Bay

This was an early focus of the NRCP, and it is considered significant that the partnership collectively made UK Government aware of the growing concern for coastal "landfill" across the UK. The work of the partnership featured heavily on TV including in a broadcast in 2020 on Channel 5's "Filthy Britain", which included monitoring work from Northumbria University. The intervention from Northumberland County Council has been warmly received.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2020/Aug/Work-progresses-on-historic-Lynemouth-pollution.aspx>



Sewerage & Septic tanks

This is one area where low flows could be a problem and is a possible issue across the catchment, as well as other parts of rural Northumberland where mains sewerage is not available.



The Rules governing management of a private septic tank or sewage treatment plant were upgraded in 2015 but many “owners” remain unaware of these “General Binding Rules”, as a result of which they may be exposed to prosecution in the event of a failure leading to a pollution incident.

The partnership is aiming to use information being prepared on another project to assist in sharing this information across households. Meanwhile information is available at; <https://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks/general-binding-rules>

Lynemouth Mine Water Treatment Scheme (MWTS) Phase 2 (2020) - Pumped passive mine water treatment scheme controlling rising mine waters in Northumberland



Another concern in the catchment is the rising levels of underground mine-water

and its potential to impact upon the river as well as groundwater (part of which includes drinking water protection area). The Coal Authority have undertaken recent work to address this.

https://waterprojectsonline.com/custom_case_study/lynemouth-mine-water-treatment-2020/

Possible impacts from former open-cast mining



The cumulative effect of extant open-cast mining has been suggested to have left a legacy of altered seasonal flow rates and a change in character of the river.

This requires further consideration however there are concerns that this may lead to incidents of pollution arising from low water flow and the subsequent reduced dilution.

Story mapping

The Northumberland Rivers Catchment Partnership, which NRT hosts, want to develop a catchment ‘story map’ to help everyone to interrogate evidence and turn it into action on the ground.

The story map will assist in co-ordinating and recording delivery and issues as well as bringing together evidence and

information to further improve our rivers. This information will be available freely but all in one place. The process has started, and we hope to have this “live” in the New Year.



Working with land managers and farms

Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) is a partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England, working with farmers and a range of other partners to improve water and air quality in high priority areas. CSF offers farmers free training, advice and support for grant applications. The Lyne is considered a priority catchment and we were delighted to link Groundwork with CSF to undertake visits to a number of farms in 2019 to see what advice could be made available and to consider additional measures that could be delivered through other funding opportunities.



Groundwork were also able to work with Parish Councils and some Community Groups to identify opportunities for public involvement too, which could include access issues, for instance.

A report on this has been made available to partners and 2020 will see the initial proposals being developed (and delivered – we hope!) with supportive farms.

As many may know, there is also a forthcoming change is farming support following Brexit and it is anticipated this work will be further supported through the new measures.

Meanwhile, UK legislation has confirmed **Farming Rules for Water** - what must be done to manage manure, fertiliser and soil to prevent runoff, erosion and leaching.

Sediment “fingerprinting”

Dr Simon Pulley from the Rothamsted Institute has been undertaking studies to determine where silt in river water originates from. This is showing some interesting results although the final report is yet to be made available. However, it does seem to support the suggested findings of the walkovers and other work and will, once available, help to focus on certain activities and locations to help address this. One beneficial landscape feature looks to be woodland, which almost eliminates the flow into watercourses, and which is also of major benefit with carbon capture, so is attracting attention from government.

Fish studies

Although planned “electro-fishing” studies by Environment Agency could not proceed

because of “lockdown”, Northumberland Rivers Trust completed an eDNA study as part of the 1000 Rivers Project (<https://1000rivers.net/>).

This gave some interesting results showing the river to be home to eels, Atlantic salmon, brown trout and four other species of fish.



Given this was a good fishing river in the past, it is encouraging to note this current diversity despite the range of issues for which the Lyne has failed its water quality tests. The full study will be available on NRT’s website.

As a footnote, we also found plenty of signs of otter on the river during the walkover studies.

A1 dualling

Highways England are currently finalising plans for upgrading parts of the A1.

The road has three major crossings of the Lyne catchment, north of Morpeth. Each will have some upgrading to culverting and discharges, which can be heavy in extreme conditions.

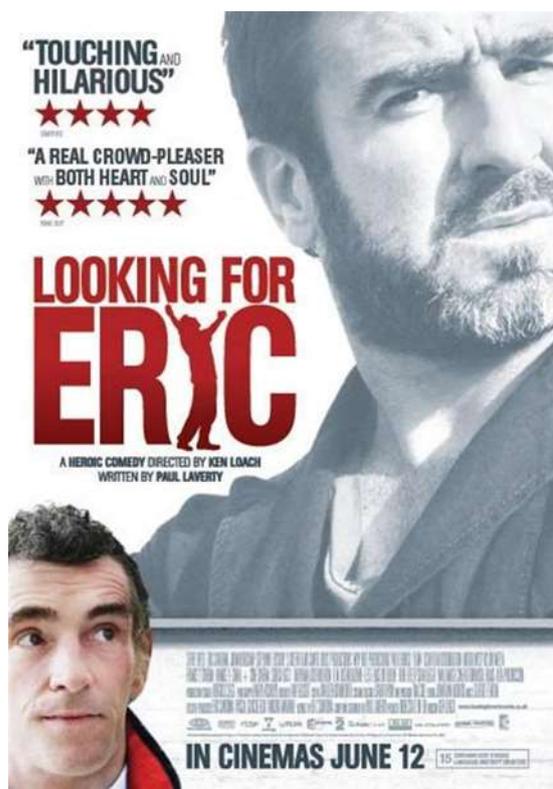
Road runoff happens when pollutants from oil spills and tyre and brake wear of vehicles build up on roads, especially in dry periods, and are then washed into

nearby rivers when it rains. This work presents opportunities to address this.



It is also hoped that “mitigation” works may also allow for other riparian improvements, although this is not yet guaranteed.

Meet ERIC



Don’t be confused with the infamous high kicking actor/footballer’s quote “when the seagulls follow the trawler, it’s because they think sardines will be thrown

into the sea” because it had nothing to do with wildlife!

Far better, in fact, as we have ERIC NE, our very own Environmental Records Information Centre (North East) which is home to over 3.6 million wildlife records!

Based at the Great North Museum (Hancock) in Newcastle, ERIC covers the entire North East Region. As such it plays a vital role in assisting nature recovery projects.

Anybody’s records are welcomed, and we would encourage submission of anything you see. They do get checked to make sure they are accurate! Lots of phone apps help with this too.

ERIC also help with identification through lots of great events and activities. Such as reminding *Monsieur Cantona* that it is correctly GULLS, not seagulls.



<http://www.ericnortheast.org.uk/>

Report an environmental incident

We can all play a part in improving our local environment by reporting things we see, when out and about. Here are a few ways in which you can assist;

EA Incident hotline

Telephone: **0800 80 70 60**

This is a 24-hour service



Environment Agency

Call the Environment Agency Incident Hotline to report:

- damage or danger to the natural environment
- pollution to water or land
- poaching or illegal fishing
- dead fish or fish gasping for air
- main rivers blocked by a vehicle or fallen tree causing risk of flooding
- flooding from any river, stream, canal, natural spring or the sea
- incidents at Environment Agency-regulated waste sites
- illegal removals from watercourses
- unusual changes in river flow
- collapsed or badly damaged river or canal banks

Report waste crime

You can report waste crime anonymously to Crimestoppers, such as dumping large amounts of waste illegally.

Crimestoppers

Telephone: **0800 555 111**

This is a 24-hour service

Northumberland County Council



NCC also has roles and responsibilities for environmental services and details can be found at;

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/SelfService/Report.aspx>

Volunteering Opportunities

There are a great many opportunities for helping as a volunteer with one or more partners. This has been affected by Covid 19 restrictions, but work is planned over the next few months with special arrangements depending upon the task.

Let us know if you are interested, so we can ensure you become aware of possibilities when they arise.



Alternatively, we welcome donations towards this and other river improvement projects. These can be made via:

<https://www.justgiving.com/northumberland-riverstrust>

Further information on the project is available from **Steve Lowe at Northumberland Rivers Trust**

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Northumberland Rivers Trust



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