

Dove Cliff Weir Removal – July 2019 update

Background

We are working to restore the River Dove to improve biodiversity and improve fish passage through the entire Dove catchment. The best solution for fish passage in our rivers is to remove barriers, such as weirs and sluices, especially when they are in a poor condition and serve no other purpose as they can cost lots of money and resources to operate and maintain.

Fish passes alone do nothing to improve the habitat required for fish to spawn and grow. However, removing weirs does, by allowing the sediments within the river to deposit naturally, creating the right downstream environments.

Why are we removing the weir?

Our 2016 structural assessment has shown sections of the weir to be in a poor condition.

As the weir is not required for river level gauging, or to help manage flood risk, it serves no purpose and is therefore redundant.

Dove Cliff weir forms the first barrier to fish migration along the River Dove. Its removal will improve the effectiveness of fish pass solutions installed at barriers upstream in the Dove catchment.



Benefits of removing this weir

On its own Dove Cliff weir currently completely blocks or delays ecological migration of up to 1187km. This equates to 90% of the catchment. Removing this Environment Agency-owned weir will open up over 30 miles of habitat for fish and other species.

Removing the weir will:

- Allow easier movement of fish between habitats
- Increase and improve habitats suitable for spawning
- Support and improve the ecological diversity within the river
- Allow the important spawning gravels to redistribute downstream of the weir, having a positive effect on the downstream fish spawning grounds and stabilising the riverbed

The reconnected habitat will support fish stocks across the Dove catchment.

What we will be doing

We will remove most of the weir down to riverbed level, leaving a small section on the south bank for heritage purposes. We recognise the historical context of the location and will continue to work with local archaeologists and Council Historic Advisors throughout this project.

During the works, a temporary channel will be created to divert the river and allow the weir to be removed in a dry working area. This is for ease of works, to minimise the risk of silt being disturbed and entering the river uncontrolled, and to allow archaeologists to safely record the structure. Fish will use the temporary channel to freely move up and downstream.

The temporary channel will maintain the flow in the river and we will provide a small proportion of flow down the Mill Leat similar to now.

This work has no impact on flood risk.

We will take all appropriate action to minimise the impact of silt release during the works.

Timescales

All construction work will take account of fish spawning seasons.

February 2019 - site preparation works including some tree removal to minimise risk of birds nesting

August / September 2019 - compound and haul roads set up

September 2019 – start construction, including bypass channel and in-channel works

December 2019 / January 2020 – complete construction

There will be some restrictions to the working area for health and safety reasons, as it will be a live construction site. After the works are completed the existing access will be reinstated.

There will be some disruption to angling in the vicinity of the weir during the works, due to the necessary construction site boundary, but we will look to minimise impacts.

We will confirm working hours nearer the time but it is usually Monday to Friday, 7:30am – 5pm.

Further information

We have an online information page about this project, which we will keep updated on a regular basis. The link to this page is <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/removal-of-dove-cliff-weir>

Contact us

If you have any queries about this project, please contact our Engagement Team via email at Engagement_WestMids@environment-agency.gov.uk or by telephone on 0203 025 1583.