

Salmon leaping up a weir

HLF is supporting a new project, run by the Don Rivers Catchment Trust, to reconnect people and communities to the River Don and to encourage the once-prolific salmon to return to the River Don.

A brief history of the Don

In the 18th century the Don was considered one of the finest salmon rivers in England. Salmon were once so common in the River Don in Yorkshire that they formed a staple part of the local diet. However, the harnessing of the river to drive the Industrial Revolution in Yorkshire, and the increased pollution from industry in the 19th and 20th centuries made the river uninhabitable for most wildlife.

Having been mentioned as a key part of the natural beauty of the area in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and sketched by JMW Turner, it became the 'shallow river running through Sheffield…usually bright yellow with some chemical or other' in George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*.

Over the last 20 years, water pollution has been reduced. However this rich local heritage is still undervalued, and the river remains fractured by weirs and locks which threatens this recovery.

The living heritage of the River Don

The The living heritage of the River Don is a HLF-supported three year project which will create a long-distance heritage trail from Doncaster to Sheffield to allow people to learn about the heritage that surrounds them. It will also install fish ladders and other weir modifications to reconnect isolated habitats and allow fish to pass up and down river. Conservation apprenticeships and a volunteer programme will get the local community involved and help them develop heritage skills.

[quote: Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF Yorkshire & the Humber]"It is wonderful to think that in five years' time we will be able to stand in the centre of Sheffield and watch these fish swimming upstream again."[/quote]

Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "In the 18th century, apprentices in the centre of Sheffield complained that they were forced to eat salmon for lunch every day. We are delighted that, thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to fund this project which will once more make salmon commonplace throughout the Don catchment area, and help people better understand the natural heritage at the heart of their communities. It is wonderful to think that in five years' time we will be able to stand in the centre of Sheffield and watch these fish swimming upstream again."

Find out more information on the Don Catchment Rivers Trust website.



Salmon swimming up a weir

Jumping for joy up the River Don