

Esk Catchment Action Plan

River Esk, North Yorkshire

**Humber River Basin District
Water Management Catchment ID 26**



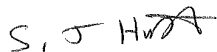
First of all I would like to say a big thank you to everyone that attended the meetings and who put forward their ideas for the Esk Catchment Action Plan. It was great to see such a large number of people who care for the Esk and wish to improve the river.

A special thank you should go to the Esk Catchment Action Plan Steering Group, who represented a wide range of organisations and helped develop the final plan.

Here is the list of people who sat on the Esk Catchment Action Plan Steering Group:

Mr Gordon Wooding (Guisborough Angling Club)
Mr Godfrey Hutchinson (Esk Fisheries Association)
Mr Keith Bristow (Esk Fisheries Association)
Mr Robert Sword (Dawnay Estate)
Mr Ian Whisker (Glaisdale Angling Club)
Mr Mark Stratton (Glaisdale Angling Club)
Mr Angus Oughtred (Yorkshire Esk Trust)
Mr George Winn-Darley (Grosmont Estate and Yorkshire Esk Trust)
Mr Olly Foster (Egton Estate and Yorkshire Esk Trust)
Mr Jonathan Payne (Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer – Esk and Coastal Streams)
Mrs Amanda Smith (Natural England)

This plan has set out a vision for future restoration work on the River Esk, which will help to influence the future river basin management plans which are being developed by the Environment Agency for the period 2015 to 2021.



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Background Information

The Esk is a “**BAP priority river habitat**”, due the presence of a number of **Annex II Habitats Directive species** i.e. Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*), Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*) and Otter (*Lutra lutra*). The river also supports populations of Brown/Sea Trout (*Salmo trutta*) and European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). All the species listed above are **UK BAP Priority species**.

The Esk is the **only river in Yorkshire** with a Freshwater Pearl Mussel population, and one of only eleven rivers in the whole of England that supports this species. A small number of mussels are left ~1000. The vast majority are old (60+ years of age), with a few younger individuals being found in the river. The Freshwater pearl mussel will become **extinct** in the River Esk in the next 30 years unless immediate action is taken to halt its decline.

The Freshwater Pearl Mussel is a very important **indicator species**, which show us the health of our river systems. When species like this start to disappear, then we know that all is not well with the river ecosystem.

The Esk is also the principal Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout river in Yorkshire, but their numbers crashed in the 1970`s and 1980`s and continued to remain low through the 1990`s and early 2000`s. The Esk is also the only **nationally recognised** Salmon river in Yorkshire.

This document sets out an action plan to restore the river so that a whole host of aquatic and riparian species can thrive.

Supporting information

1) Barriers to fish migration

- Esk barriers to fish migration December 2012
- Black and Veatch Danby Weir assessment
- Environment Agency Fish Pass Manual (2010)
- Environment Agency Yorkshire and North East fish pass prioritisation spreadsheet

2) Water quality and sediment monitoring

- Study of sedimentation levels (Redox) in Esk for FWPM (2006)
- Durham University – Spatial and temporal water quality in River Esk for FWPM (2009-2011)
- Durham University – Fine sediment in River Esk (2008)
- Durham University – Nitrate concentrations in River Esk (2009-2011)
- EA biological water quality data (1991-2007)
- Durham University – Fine sediment flux in River Esk (2009)
- Esk SCIMAP for fine sediment – channel risk (2011)
- Esk SCIMAP for fine sediment – land erosion risk (2011)
- Durham University – Spatial patterns of fine sediment supply and transfer in River Esk (2006)
- Esk SCIMAP risk map for nitrate (2009)
- Orthophosphate water quality data for River Esk (2007-2010)
- Durham University – Esk catchment summary

3) Non-native invasive plant species

- NYMNP – Non-native invasive plant species records
- Himalayan balsam identification sheet
- Japanese knotweed identification sheet
- Japanese knotweed records on Esk (2011)

4) Fisheries monitoring

- Esk rod catch data (1905-2010)
- Esk habscore and fish survey data (2011)
- Esk habitat assessment (1999)

5) Esk waterbody maps

- GB10402706807 Glaisdale Beck Catchment
- GB10402706808 Great Fryup Beck Catchment
- GB10402706809 River Esk from Source to Baysdale beck
- GB10402706811 Danby Beck Catchment
- GB10402706812 Baysdale Beck from Source to River Esk
- GB10402706813 River Esk from Baysdale Beck to Sleddale Beck
- GB10402706815 River Esk from Sleddale Beck to Ruswarp
- GB10402706816 Stonegate Beck Catchment
- GB10402706817 Sleddale Beck from Source to River Esk
- GB104027068010 Murk Esk from Source to Wheeldale Gill
- GB104027068020 Wheeldale Gill from Source to Murk Esk
- GB104027068030 Murk Esk from Wheeldale Gill to Eller Beck
- GB104027068050 Eller Beck from Source to Murk Esk
- GB104027068060 Murk Esk from Eller beck to River Esk

6) Esk WFD information

- Environment Agency River Waterbody WFD Status (2009)
- Esk WFD Status Map

7) Land use and land management

- Area of intensive land use in Upper Esk (Landcover 2007)
- Natural England agri-environment scheme coverage in the Esk catchment

8) General Information

- Annual assessment of salmon stocks and fisheries in England and Wales (2011). Cefas and Environment Agency
- Esk Pearl Mussel and Salmon Recovery Project Map – work carried out 2008-2012
- River Esk Salmon Action Plan
- Ecology of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)
- Ecology of the Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)
- Environment Agency River Esk Factfile
- NYMNP water friendly farming guide
- Esk Pearl Mussel and Salmon Recovery Project Leaflet
- River Esk Tideway Byelaw Report June 2011