



Tool Box Talk

Focus on Performance

Fish

Sust. 15

What?

There are approximately 50 species of freshwater fish in the UK, with many more marine species. Fish are likely to be encountered in water bodies such as rivers, lakes, streams, ponds and brooks. This includes small and slow-moving watercourses.

Why?

Fish are seen as a good indicator of clean water within a watercourse or water body. Many fish species are extremely sensitive to pollutants which can include:

- Run-off of fertilizers and pesticides
- Discharges of sewage, fuel & oils, chemicals, heat and acidic or alkaline water
- Silt, disturbed sediment and stagnant water

Pollutants may cause damage to fish by through poisoning, reducing oxygen levels, affecting eggs or young, or impacting on food supplies. It is illegal to poison or injure fish and their spawning grounds by polluting water. Certain species of fish are also specifically protected by legislation.

How?

- Ensure no polluting materials (e.g. silt, fuel, chemicals) enter watercourses or waterbodies.
- If you plan to work in-channel you may affect fish populations. Check that you have relevant permissions from the Environment Agency or Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).
- In-channel working may be not be allowed during migrating (typically November–June) and spawning (April to June) seasons.
- Any changes to a river channel or water body banks may affect migration, feeding or breeding of fish.
- Consider zoning of work areas to minimise exposure and impact.

If specific protected species are identified (e.g. European eel, river lamprey, spined loach, whitefish), a protected species licence is needed from the relevant body:

- England: Natural England
- Scotland: Scottish Natural Heritage
- Wales: Countryside Council for Wales
- Marine: Marine Management Organisation



Brown Trout



European Eel

Questions

1. What different substances might harm fish?
2. What times of year do fish migrate and breed?
3. What works might affect fish feeding or breeding areas?

If you have any queries regarding the content of this tool box talk please contact your Sustainability Advisor or Line Manager.