

# Irwell Catchment Pilot

Working together to improve the Irwell Catchment

July 2012

**The Irwell Catchment Pilot continues to build strong foundations and is starting to develop a clear way forward to deliver more for our water environments in the Irwell Catchment.**

## Who's on the Irwell Pilot Steering Group

The Group is made up of individuals from a range of public, private and civil society organisations who have come together to develop a coordinated plan of action to improve the quality of our water environments and associated habitats.

The Group includes:-

- Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
- British Canoe Union
- Environment Agency
- Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority
- Irwell Rivers Trust
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Red Rose Forest
- Salford Friendly Anglers
- United Utilities

## Progress to date

The Steering Group has met five times since it started in January 2012. Ten aspirational Outcomes have been developed which provide the starting point for the Group.

The Outcomes are themed and include environmental and social aspects. You can view them at the following web address:-

[http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Irwell\\_outcomes\\_-\\_Final\\_version\\_18\\_05\\_12.pdf](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Irwell_outcomes_-_Final_version_18_05_12.pdf)

## Evidence to action

We have been collating and mapping a range of data relating to the quality of the local water environment. Additional information about wider environmental and social conditions are also being used to help us determine where there is the greatest need for improvements to be made.

Existing projects and on-the-ground action in the Irwell Pilot area is being captured which will allow us to develop 'need and opportunity' maps. This will be completed by the end of July and will be used to help us prioritise action and decide what our next steps should be.

## What's going on in the Irwell Catchment?

### Rivers Return Project

The Irwell Rivers Trust has been awarded £300k from the Catchment Restoration fund to carry out river restoration on Kirklees Brook over the next 3 years. The work will include the removal of a number of weirs and a culvert.

### Caught on camera

'Fishing in the Irwell - not in my life time'. Well think again! The recent improvements in water quality have resulted in the recovery of fish populations. Many of the rivers in the Irwell Catchment now support good fishing. But don't take my word for it take a look at a story that ITV Granada Reports ran featuring Salford Friendly Anglers and Ollly Southgate from the Environment Agency. The anglers on the day didn't disappoint and landed some fine specimens; proof that our rivers are recovering.

<http://www.itv.com/news/granada/story/2012-06-19/urban-fishing-craze/>



Brown trout caught on the River Irwell

Photo courtesy of Salford Friendly Anglers

### Clayton Vale weir removal

Weirs change the natural form of a river and were installed to help supply water to industrial mills. Many have become redundant and abandoned, and have reached the end of their physical lives. In their neglected condition they can increase flood risk to local communities, as well as act as barriers to fish migration.

Working with others, the Environment Agency aim's to carefully remove many of these barriers. Such schemes have been undertaken on Kirklees Brook, Eagley Brook and the River Irwell.

The photos below show the River Medlock at Clayton Vale. The weir removal was delivered through a partnership between the Environment Agency, Manchester City Council and Groundwork Manchester.



River Medlock, Clayton Vale before & after removal

### Nature gives WFD a helping hand

The Irwell catchment saw exceptional rainfall in June. River levels were the highest ever recorded. The local emergency services and Environment Agency worked hard to help people and businesses impacted by flooding.

The damage inflicted from the force of the river can be seen on the River Irwell near Little Lever where a weir, that had stood for over 100 years, collapsed.

The debris from the collapsed weir will be removed by the Environment Agency to prevent it from becoming a flood hazard. It also means that fish can move more freely along this stretch of the river. This will have positive benefits on the general ecology and help us to further improve water quality



River Irwell near Little Lever, weir collapses following record rainfall event

### What's coming up

The Irwell Pilot Steering Group will be meeting with the Irwell Nature Improvement Area Partnership on the 24 July to discuss how the two groups can work more closely together to deliver more for the Irwell Catchment.

For further information on the Irwell Pilot please contact Katherine Causer on 01925 542608 or [katherine.causer@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:katherine.causer@environment-agency.gov.uk)