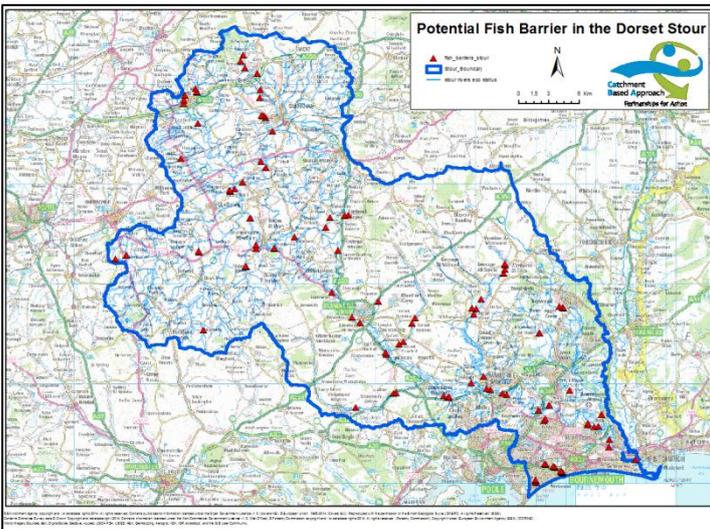




Fish Barriers and Fisheries

Fish barriers

In common with most rivers, the Stour has a large number of man-made structures which influence the river level and speed of flow, such as sluice gates (“hatches”) or weirs.



These structures can be a difficult for fish to pass. One option is remove them, opening up passage for all fish species and allowing the river to regain its natural form and function. However the removal of all structures would fundamentally alter the rivers character, ecology and have an adverse effect on fish, for example the loss of impoundments could cause associated by-pass channels used for fish refuge and fry habitat to dry out and alter the fish stock size and composition.

In most cases, structures have been modified through the design and installation of fish passes to ease fish, such as Salmon and Trout, movement and reverse the Europe-wide decline in eel stocks. Other fish species benefit from fish passes as well, allowing them to disperse along the river, gaining access to seasonal feeding areas and shelter during floods.

The channelisation and dredging of rivers also reduces suitable fish and fry habitat, making life harsh for fish. Effective habitat restoration, such as the installation of large woody debris which reduces the flow and creates refuges, would help to enhance the river and make it more hospitable to fish.

Fishery zones

The Stour headwaters and tributaries with significant groundwater inputs support self-sustaining populations of wild brown trout. These fisheries require sensitive management to

maintain good trout populations, generally achieved by small clubs or syndicates ensuring fishing pressure is light.

Headwater and tributaries arising on clay or sandy soils and fed by minimal groundwater experience very low flows and high temperatures during dry summers and are subject to pulses of high nutrient concentrations. Coarse fish predominate here and populations vary from year to year, making fisheries unviable for periods. Adjacent ponds and lakes with no or limited through flow have developed into very popular and successful fisheries.

The upper and middle Stour coarse fisheries on the main river support a wide range of species and angling here is generally controlled by small local clubs. The Stour downstream from Blandford changes in character and supports a small population of barbel, recently enhanced by supplementary stocking by the Barbel Society and Environment Agency and habitat improvements for young fish. Fisheries on the lower Stour are relatively popular with anglers targeting large barbel and chub.



Fisheries

The Dorset Stour catchment supports a range of sport fishery types, all are catch-and-release in nature. Small numbers of salmon and sea trout still ascend the Stour but few are now caught. The salmon fisheries on the lower river yielded several dozen salmon each year until the mid-20th Century, at that time all fish were retained. The main river is now primarily a coarse fishery, with very limited trout fishing on some suitable small tributaries. In recent decades, impoundments and low-lying areas have developed as commercial pond and lake fisheries.

Throughout most of the Stour catchment access for angling is generally controlled directly by the landowner or through an angling club or syndicate. Some day-ticket fisheries are available from local clubs such as the River Allen Association, the Salmon and Trout Association and Ringwood and District Anglers Association. Limited public areas with fishing rights are present on council-owned river frontage, where scope to enjoy fishing is generally constrained by other activities incompatible with a quiet sport. Controlled access sites promote good environmental awareness, minimising litter and associated vandalism.