



Funded by
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Fish Passage Feasibility Study

Recovering the Deben: From Source to Sea aims to restore the land, water, and nature throughout the River Deben catchment and estuary. The Deben flows for nearly 38 miles from source to sea and the estuary is a Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI). The river is impounded by historic mills and weirs, retired from their functional use, but remaining for water level management, aesthetic and heritage reasons. This study within the project aims to identify realistic fish passage routes along the Deben, and at specific sites on the Fynn and Mill rivers.

Read more about the project: [Recovering the Deben: From Source to Sea](#)

What is fish passage and why is it important?

Fish passage is crucial for maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems and sustaining fish populations, particularly for migratory species like **sea trout**, **brown trout**, and **eels**—all present in the river Deben. Many people are surprised to learn how many of our indigenous fish species migrate between spawning and feeding habitats throughout the year, many species regularly travelling for miles if uninhibited. Weirs, sluices, and other barriers can obstruct this natural migration, leading to population declines, reduced biodiversity, and disrupted food webs. Effective fish passage —such as fish ladders, bypass channels, or dam removals—allows fish to reach critical habitats, support natural reproduction cycles, and enhance the resilience of river ecosystems against pollution and climate change.

As part of the Water Restoration Fund grant, the **Fish Passage Feasibility Study** will involve engineers analysing the barriers to fish migration along the river Deben. They will explore all possible options to improve fish passage at various barrier structures along the entire length of the Deben and some of its sub-catchments to discover how we can improve fish populations within the river.

A completed fish and eel pass in
the Colne Valley, Essex.





Brown Trout



European Eel



Sea Trout

FAQs

What will the project involve?

In collaboration with the Lower Deben Riparian Owners Group, Upper Deben Farm Cluster and other organisations, the [Recovering the Deben: From Source to Sea](#) initiative, will contract AECOM fish pass experts to undertake the [Fish Passage Feasibility Study](#). We wish to use this partnership approach to enable delivery of fish easement along the river Deben.

What access will the engineers need?

To enable AECOM engineers to suitably access each structure, they would require access on foot to any river barriers your land. We would be grateful if you could allow this and if you are willing, help the engineers understand the operation of the structure.

What will happen next?

The timetable for the project will be discussed with Lower Deben Riparian Owners Group and Upper Deben Farm Cluster, who will be in touch regarding access.

What will the outcomes be?

AECOM will produce a report analysing the barriers along the river Deben, leading to options appraisal and outline designs at each sites identified as suitable for fish pass modification. This will then lead to potential capital delivery of the outcomes in the near future.

Take a look at similar projects being carried out elsewhere: [Unlocking The Severn](#)

Want to contact us? Email: Deben@essexandsuffolkrivertrust.org