

On May 15th 2015 BESST held a water quality awareness event with the Environment Agency (EA).

In partnership with the EA, BESST is working towards the Water Framework Directive's future legislation on water quality. One of the targets of the directive is to reduce surface water pollution from industrial sites, so understanding water quality and our effects on it will be useful to many BESST members. To drive and recognise improvement in this area BESST (as part of the *Love Your Rivers – Telford* program) has this year launched the *Blue Business Award*.



To help us with this the EA's Alan Jones and colleagues hosted an event at a site in Telford on the Wesley Brook. This brook runs from Priorslee, through Shifnal and eventually into the River Severn, so pollution incidents in Telford can have a direct effect on the biodiversity and economy of here and the wider area.



Alan explained how the environmental impacts affect the economic value of both the local economy and the wider catchment. Angling and the tourism have significant economic value, with each rod caught salmon worth £4, 000, and around £5,000 per mile for annual fishing rights. An estimated **1.3 million** fishing visits are made to the River Severn catchment each year generating an estimated **£13.5 million** of expenditure in local economies, which supports an estimated **444 jobs**.

The team then carried out a controlled electric fishing session. Any fish caught in the electrodes' field were temporarily stunned and netted, then surveyed and released. This captured information on the types of fish species, and gave an indication of the water quality in that area. Although the brook appeared to contain no life at all, young Brown Trout were captured and recorded, indicating that that the water quality is good at this time.



BESST members also tried out the water quality “kick sampling” method with the team. This involves disturbing the bed of the brook using your feet, and capturing any dislodged organisms into a net, all under controlled conditions to get a standardised sample. The contents of the net were then identified, and the invertebrates found show what the water quality is like.



This “indicator species” sampling approach will become more of a common practice as the Water Framework Directive requirements come into force. BESST have been working with Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the EA as part of the pilot *Love Your Rivers – Telford* program. This is to understand and input into how the new sampling method will be applied to checking surface waters from business sites in future, and how businesses will need to meet the new regulatory compliance aspects.

On reviewing the day’s activities, it was agreed that this stakeholder partnership approach, of businesses (BESST) working the regulatory body (EA) and a conservation charity (SWT) to understand and improve the water quality of our area, is one that should be presented at the National Catchment Based Approach conference in London later in the year (<http://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/>).



“The way that we have linked urban surface water pollution to seeing the effects and potential biodiversity impacts first hand is the best I have seen”

(Andy Whyte: BESST Chair)

For further information on this event please contact the BESST Coordinator Jaclyn Kitson on 01952 567578 or email jaclyn.kitson@telford.gov.uk