

Press Release: AES (Europe)

In September 2008 we were contacted by a representative of Henleaze Swimming Club who was concerned about the water quality at Henleaze Lake. Following discussions with the club representative we advised a full survey package to determine the quality of the water in addition to many other factors that influence water quality.

In October 2009 the lake at Henleaze was surveyed and this included:

- Samples of water taken for analysis
- Water plants taken for identification
- Fish were netted and electro-fished to determine the species present
- A number of fish were removed for health testing
- Scales were removed from a number of fish for ageing
- A small number of pike that were removed had stomach contents inspected to determine the most abundant prey fish

Following the collation of all the information a report was issued to Henleaze Swimming Club that gave full details of all the studies and reports and also gave recommendations for improving the water quality.

The report summarised the following:

- The water quality under normal conditions was good although was influenced by other factors
- The other factors were: algal growth, higher than sustainable biomass of fish and poor light penetration of the benthic layer
- The fish population was many times higher than the water could sustain
- Fish of most species displayed poor growth rates
- Fish of most species displayed a higher than average number of parasites
- A category two parasite was present on some species of fish
- Poor representation of rooted macrophytes.

As a result of this information a number of proposals were made and these included:

- Continuous monitoring of water quality parameters to determine diurnal and seasonal patterns
- Increased planting of rooted macrophytes
- Improved habitat enhancement for zooplankton (algae grazers)
- Reducing significantly the number of fish present in the lake
- Increasing the proportion of piscivorous fish (fish predators)

- Installation of additional aeration to ensure that during the summer, fish had sufficient aerated water
- Applications of organic silt digester to reduce the organic loading in the water
- A management plan to be put in place to assist in the long term, sustainable future management of the water.

All the above proposals have since been adopted by Henleaze Swimming Club at considerable cost and effort as a demonstration of their commitment to the long term well being of the lake, the swimming members and the anglers.

In many cases when fish have to be removed from an inland water, they can be transferred to other waters. For this process to occur, permission is sought from the Environment Agency and in addition, in most cases, a health certificate obtained. In some circumstances a health certificate is not mandatory but most responsible fish dealers will health test fish as a standard precaution.

Part of the health test protocol means that the presence of some parasites requires that fish cannot be transferred at all or can only be transferred to a water where the said parasite is already present. Most fishery consultants, however, would refuse to move infected fish under any circumstances and this is to ensure that infected fish are isolated. This is a responsible position to take especially given the recent rise in cases of some fish disease, such as KHV.

AES Europe has a position that any fish transferred by AES Europe to another water, will have a health test certificate whether mandatory or not. The company will not transfer fish that have a notifiable parasite or disease under any circumstances. We work hard to ensure that fish disease transfer is kept to a minimum and this is why, after discussion with Henleaze Swimming Club and the Environment Agency, the decision was taken to humanely destroy the removed fish.

It is always regrettable when fish have to be culled and unfortunately instances where this needs to occur are rising. We would recommend to all angling clubs and fishing waters to stock responsibly: always ensure newly stocked fish are health tested and if in any doubt, seek further information from companies such as ourselves and/or their local Environment Agency fisheries officer.

Note to Editors

AES Europe is a private company based in Northamptonshire which specialises in the management and improvement of lakes and other waterways. Our consultants have a combined total of 35 years work in fisheries, water quality and environmental toxicology. AES Europe works on sites across Europe for private, commercial and government authorities and aims to provide sustainable solutions and practices in all works.