

Weirs on the River Avon

What is a weir?

A weir is a man-made structure usually created out of stone, metal or concrete which is placed in a river to back water up creating an impoundment.

The water is usually then fed along a channel called a lade to a mill. The mill used water from the lade to power its operations.

Weirs were present along much of the River Avon; constructed as early as the 1700's.

The weirs were associated with approximately 21 mills along the river, driving industry but nowadays these weirs have degraded and disappeared. Only a few remain.



Westfield Weir on the Logie Burn, a tributary of the River Avon. This weir blocks passage for migratory fish such as salmon, sea trout, eel and lamprey preventing them from spawning upstream.

This step in the serpentine bed simulates the effect of a weir in a river as the white Bacopa Bahia act as water flowing over the crest of the weir.

Impact of weirs on the Environment

Weirs cause major environmental impacts on wildlife along rivers. Primarily, the main animal which feels the greatest impact are migratory fish species such as salmon and sea trout. These fish start their life in the river, migrating to sea where they continue to grow. Once the fish have grown enough they migrate back to the river Avon where they ascend the river to reproduce.

Weirs impact this lifecycle by blocking passage upstream, not allowing salmon to ascend the river, reducing access to gravels where salmon and sea trout spawn. Weirs also stop gravels moving downstream, reducing the available habitat for fish below weirs.