



Position Statement

Maintenance during prolonged dry and hot weather periods

Catchment flows within the drainage district are significantly influenced by catchment rainfall. When drought or lengthy period of below average rainfall occurs, water levels can rapidly become low or lower than the seasonal average.

Prolonged periods of dry weather reduce water availability in a watercourse whether the watercourse is stream fed or land drainage fed. During hot periods of weather especially when combined with very low flows, the impact on oxygen levels in water becomes significant; warmer water can carry less oxygen than cold water.

The Board is aware great care must be taken during maintenance of watercourses during prolonged periods of dry and hot weather regarding temporary de-oxygenation of the water and the resulting impact on any fish stock.

The recent and the near future weather conditions, linked to the impending start to the maintenance season, creates a significant risk for deoxygenation, which needs to be assessed in terms of potential fish presence.

The likely presence of fish in a watercourse is determinable by:

- Whether the watercourse is a canalised stream or has stream input
- Whether the watercourse receives water from an overtopping event of main river

De-weeding of the channel

De-weeding of the channel can cause temporary de-oxygenation of the water as silts which may have become trapped around submerged and emergent herbaceous growth is released into the watercourse in suspension.

De-silting

Silt should be removed carefully and in small quantities to minimise silt disturbance into suspension. Fish should flee from a de-silting area during the works, but a combination of low flow, warm water and silt in suspension will impact oxygen availability.

Signs of reduced oxygen availability

Dead or distressed fish seen gasping at water surface.

Mitigation

The Board will instruct its Contractors to:

- Monitor temperature levels and undertake maintenance where possible following a period of lower temperatures
- Where de-silting operations are to take place, adopt filtering methods to reduce the risk of silt movement during that maintenance
- Upon identification of fish in distress, cessation of works immediately
- Contact Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60