



the River Restoration Centre

Working to restore and enhance our rivers

Technical Advice

River Irk, Manchester

Identification of opportunities for ecological improvement in the River Irk Catchment

KEY INFO

Date: March 2018

Client: Environment Agency

Type: Catchment survey and strategy

Themes: Planning, strategy, hydromorphology



The River Irk is a heavily modified water body which has been impacted by industrialisation and urbanisation over the last 200 years. It has been re-aligned, re-sectioned and constrained by bank protection for much of the catchment. There are also a number of large barriers to fish migration and issues with pollution throughout the catchment.

The Environment Agency and its partners have been working to reverse some of these impacts and restore habitats and native species to the river. However, this is an enormous task due to the scale and complexity of the issues in the catchment. RRC was asked to survey the River Irk to identify issues and opportunities for improving the ecology of the river, and to show how those issues and opportunities should fit into a catchment strategy.

RRC followed a methodological framework where catchment and site assessments are used to identify impacts, objectives and prioritise projects. During the site survey, over 2,000 360° photos were taken and uploaded to Google maps. Features, impacts and opportunities were also mapped on Google.

To prioritise works for improving the Irk, RRC developed a method which identifies catchment pressures and scores each reach based on its contribution to catchment issues. This is used to target the worse reaches and create catchment objectives. The opportunities are then prioritised based on the level of impacts in the reach and the expected improvement.

