

STATEMENT: Environment Agency
SUBJECT: Fish removal from Tilgate Lake
DATE: 27 January 2010

"The Environment Agency is carrying out a project to improve the dam on Tilgate Lake as part of the Upper Mole Flood Alleviation Scheme, a multi-million pound project that will help protect thousands of Crawley's residents from the risk of flooding in the future.

While the normal water level will remain as it is today, raising the height of the existing dam by 2.5 metres will result in an increase in the amount of water that can be stored at the lake during a period of high rainfall. However, before construction begins, we need to remove water out of the lake, which may affect the fish in it. Therefore, we are recommending the removal of a significant number of the fish from the lake while this takes place.

A recent investigation into the health of the fish, carried out by an independent expert, has revealed the presence of a serious parasite affecting the fish in the lake. We have been in discussions with Crawley Borough Council, which owns both the lake and the fish, on the various options available.

One option is to quarantine a number of the larger fish and return them to the lake after the work has been carried out. Alternative arrangements are currently being investigated into what to do with the volume of fish that could not be stored for the duration of the project. Unfortunately, the options are limited by the presence of the parasite, as we do not want to spread this to other stocks or other areas. We may have to consider culling some affected fish to ensure a better future for those remaining.

Tilgate Lake is an important angling resource for the Crawley area. Environment Agency fisheries staff are keen to work closely with Crawley Borough Council to draw up proposals for sustainable management of fish stocks in the lake and improvements to facilities for anglers".