MOUNTS BAY FISH AND EEL PASSAGE

FACTS

The plight of the European Eel (Anguilla anguilla)

Scientists estimate that, across Europe, glass eel numbers have now fallen to less than 5% of their 1980s levels. For this reason action is being taken throughout Europe to fulfil the goals of the European Union recovery plan for eel.

Relevant causes of decline -

- Urbanisation - habitat loss
- Migration barriers - reduced habitat access
- Water quality and pollution / predation /pathogens and parasites / climatic and oceanic changes
- Under natural conditions eels only occurs in water bodies that are connected to the sea

Why are eels important?

- significant role in the food chain as predator and scavenger in a healthy river
- important supply of food to bird species such as Bittern (SPA interest feature in Marazion Marsh), heron and egret in the breeding season
- prey for predators including Otters.

Drivers

- The Eels Regulations 2009 and Eel Management Plans will improve access for migrating eels across the River Basin management Districts.
- Eels are protected species and the aim is to provide unhindered access to all our watercourses for migratory fish species.
- Creating an improved stream network allowing the re-population of eels will make the streams resilient to climate change and natural variations.
- Allowing fish passage under coastal defences and other infrastructure such as roads and railways is directly linked to the need to improve coastal defences in the Mounts Bay area.

Urbanisation - 3 out of the 4 rivers in the Mounts Bay have been significantly modified by urbanisation to an extent that they hinder eel migration

Barriers to migration

28 blockages have been identified in the streams around Penzance, Longrock and Marazion streams.

Chyandour culvert at Penzance creates a blockage to migration of eels and other fish species.
SOLUTIONS

A series of solutions have been identified to improve eel and fish passage in the Mounts Bay area.

The aim to improve the fish populations and health of the rivers to be able to cope with future changes to climate and to combat antropogenic influences.

How can we help?

- Improve river ecology to provide a balanced ecosystem
- Removal of redundant blockages in rivers
- Rock ramp bypass of redundant weir system
- Ensuring safe passage for eels up and down rivers by installing eel passes at barriers and screening at water intakes
- Make culverts passable to all fish species

Eel using a climbing bristle board