

Bankside erosion at the River Spey near the Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore, had been accelerating in recent years. Without intervention there was a high chance that the whole section would collapse in due course, potentially impacting on the nearby road. The standard approach to protecting river banks is often hard engineering solutions that use rock or concrete. However, wherever possible this is now being discouraged in favour of more natural, sustainable, environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing techniques that are based on natural materials such as large root wads or live trees.



*Eroding bank before works*



*Post repair*

The repair at Aviemore has been undertaken using willow spiling, a technique whereby live willows are woven into a support structure of willow posts that reinforces the bank and in time becomes a “living wall”. To date very little willow spiling has been undertaken in the catchment, the only local example being a short single tiered section along the Allt Ban (a spatey upland burn) at Glenmore. The Aviemore site, alongside a fast flowing section of a major Highland river has provided an opportunity to undertake a more complex repair using a two tiered system.



*Repair works in progress.*

The site will now be monitored to assess the effectiveness and suitability of the technique for use next to high flow river systems and its resilience to the Highland climate. Once established, annual pruning will be required, but the cuttings can then be utilised elsewhere.



The works were undertaken over the course of 3 days by MNVconsulting Ltd. They also provided on the job training for 3 local contracting teams such that there is now a local skills base who could undertake works using this technique in the future.

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