

Somerset landowner kills fish by tipping chemicals on ground

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A retired plant nursery owner has ended up with a bill of more than £27,000 for illegally disposing of waste herbicides and pesticides at a site in Somerset. The chemicals entered a stream and killed more than 270 fish.

In September 2017 the Environment Agency received a report of dead fish in a watercourse known as the London Cross tributary near Combe Florey, Taunton. Investigating officers found dead lamprey, bullhead, brown trout, eels, freshwater shrimps and other aquatic invertebrates that are food for fish. They followed the trail of dead fish and invertebrates upstream to some pipes draining into a ditch.

The next day officers met with the landowner, Michael Cheadle, who showed them an area of gravel near a polytunnel where he said he'd disposed of some old chemicals used at his former nursery business including a fungicide, disinfectant and some fertiliser granules. He said that afterwards he hosed down the area with water. The gravel was only 15 metres from the ditch the officers had seen the previous day.

Cheadle later admitted disposing of a total of 6 chemicals at the site including a fungicide called Amistar that is highly toxic to aquatic life. He told officers he had burnt the empty pesticide containers on a bonfire. Water samples taken from the ditch and stream also contained Lindane, a persistent insecticide that is toxic to humans.

The investigation revealed there was a land drain beneath the gravel where the defendant disposed of the waste pesticides allowing the chemicals direct access to the ditch and nearby stream. A biological survey confirmed the pollution had 'significantly impacted' approximately 2 miles of watercourse. Some of the species affected, including eels and lamprey, are endangered.

Matthew Sully of the Environment Agency said:

Pesticides can harm humans, wildlife and the environment if misused or disposed of incorrectly, so it is important farmers and growers behave responsibly.

The defendant had been in the horticultural industry for many years and should have known how to safely dispose of waste pesticides and horticultural chemicals.

Although a negligent act, Mr Cheadle has shown remorse and undertaken all remedial measures asked of him to make sure there were no lasting effects from the chemicals.

The defendant had previously paid more than £25,000 to the Environment Agency to cover its investigation costs. We have powers to re-charge for staff time and any additional resources used during the investigation of pollution incidents.

Appearing before Taunton magistrates, Michael Cheadle, of Oldway, Stogumber was fined £1,130 and ordered to pay £747 costs after pleading guilty to two charges of discharging polluting matter to the stream and the improper disposal of waste pesticide containers. The case was heard on 10 September 2019.

Although domestic pesticides can normally be taken to a local waste recycling centre, commercial and industrial pesticides should be safely disposed of via a licensed hazardous waste collector, details of which can be obtained through yellow pages, internet searches, county waste partnerships or county council websites.

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[Supporting healthy and active later life: apply for funding](#)



The number of people in the UK aged over 75 will rise from 1 in 12 today to 1 in 7 by 2040. A third of children born today can expect to live to 100.

This rising life expectancy poses a significant challenge for health services. It is also an opportunity for businesses to develop new products and services that will help us all to lead healthy and active lives in older age.

The UK Government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund Healthy Ageing Challenge is a £98 million investment to support businesses and researchers to develop these new products and services.

It is part of the Ageing Society Grand Challenge that aims to ensure people enjoy 5 extra years of healthy and independent life by 2035.

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, has up to £2 million from the fund to invest in stage 1 of the Healthy Ageing Trailblazers competition.

Businesses and public sector organisations are being encouraged to show how products, services and business models that support people as they age could be scaled up.

Up to £38 million could be available in a second phase to support the development of the best ideas in a series of large projects.

Projects must meet healthy ageing challenges

The competition aims to establish large, multi-disciplinary, collaborative projects that demonstrate new business models and products working at scale to provide new and sustainable services for older people.

It will fund projects across 7 themes of the [Healthy Ageing Challenge Framework](#) drawn up by the [Centre for Ageing Better](#):

- sustaining physical activity
- maintaining health at work
- designing for age-friendly homes
- managing common complaints of ageing
- living well with cognitive impairment
- supporting social connections
- creating healthy and active places

There is a focus on the first 3 themes and on exploiting benefits across all the themes. Projects that address healthy ageing challenges outside the themes will also be considered.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 23 September 2019, and the deadline for applications is at midday on 27 November 2019
- businesses and public sector organisations of any size may apply
- stage 1 projects could range in size up to £100,000 and stage 2 projects up to £6 million
- an online briefing event will be held on 4 October 2019

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1. 19 September 2019 The funding levels for this competition have increased slightly: for stage 1 £1.5m is increased to £2m, for stage 2 £36m is increased to £38m
2. 16 September 2019 First published.

Education Secretary backs review of university admissions

In a letter sent today to universities regulator, the Office for Students, Mr Williamson welcomes the review and urged the regulator to set as high a bar as possible on quality in the sector, so universities are focused on reducing drop-out rates and ensuring the best possible value for money.

The Education Secretary also made clear that he supported the OfS' intention to look seriously at the rise of unconditional offers and whether 'conditional unconditional' offers breach consumer law.

He outlines his support for the OfS' review of admissions to look into the benefits and challenges of a Post Qualification Applications system, where students would apply to university after receiving their A level results.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Higher education has the power to change lives and is vital to producing the skills our country needs. But this is only the case when students receive a high quality education and we can be confident of the value of the collective investment from students and taxpayers.

We have to fight to keep the public trust and respect in our world-

leading universities and to me that means a relentless focus on quality. That's why I want the OfS to go even further on this, developing more rigorous and demanding quality requirements, and I give my full backing to boldly use its powers to ensure value for money.

I'm also concerned about how some universities are recruiting students, in particular a worrying rise in unconditional offers. So I welcome the OfS' focus on whether 'conditional unconditional' offers are harming students' interests and whether they breach their consumer rights.

I recognise that we need to review if the current system is working as well as it can, so I am glad the OfS is looking at whether it would be in students' interests to apply for their university place after they have their A level results.

The guidance comes after the publication of the OECD Education at a Glance report last week, which highlighted the wide-ranging outcomes and earnings for graduates, and Andreas Schleicher, Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills, reiterated the importance of having quality assurances in higher education.

As the regulator for higher education in England, the OfS plays a vital part in ensuring students and taxpayers are getting value for money. The guidance letter sets out the Education Secretary's priorities for higher education and his expectations for the OfS' work, including:

- Review how students rights' as consumers can be strengthened, including looking at options for standardised contracts between higher education providers and students;
- To focus on part-time and flexible learning; reviewing how to promote greater student choice; and raise awareness of accelerated degrees;
- Develop the government's flagship Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework to enable it to be published at subject level in 2021; and
- Explore how international students can be better supported and integrated, in line with Global Britain's efforts to strengthen relationships around the world.