

Scottish Secretary welcomes August 2019 Labour Market Statistics

Secretary of State for Scotland Alister Jack responds to August Labour Market Statistics.

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The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show mixed results, with the rate of employment remaining steady with an increase of 4000 alongside an increase of 12,000 in unemployment. Scotland's 3.6% unemployment rate remains below that of the UK as a whole at 3.9%, and the number of people employed in Scotland is near the recent record high at 2,685,000.

In response to these figures, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Today's figures present a mixed picture but any increase in unemployment is a cause for concern. We cannot let up in our efforts to grow the Scottish economy.

We will leave the EU on October 31 and begin to realise new opportunities for business.

The UK Government has also committed almost £1.4 billion to date for city and growth deals across Scotland with more to come.

We will continue to work with the Scottish Government but I urge them to use their considerable economic powers more effectively.

South West Water to pay charity £350,000 after polluting stream

The money from South West Water will benefit watercourses in Plymouth as an alternative to prosecution by the Environment Agency.

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South West Water has offered to pay £350,000 to the Westcountry Rivers Trust to help a Devon river recover from serious pollution that wiped out the local fish population.

The payment, known as an Enforcement Undertaking, has been accepted by the Environment Agency as an alternative to prosecution and will benefit urban watercourses in the Plymouth area including the Tamerton stream.

In August 2016 the Environment Agency responded to reports of dead fish in the Tamerton stream. The pollution was traced to an overflowing manhole on South West Water's combined sewer network. South West Water and its contractors arrived on site that evening and stopped the discharge the following morning.

The pollution had a substantial impact on the watercourse, killing more than 100 brown trout. The dead fish were found downstream near Tamerton Foliot, close to where the stream enters the Tavy estuary.

Mike Ingman for the Environment Agency said:

The Tamerton Stream has suffered several pollution incidents over the past five years.

It is good to see a positive outcome from what was serious pollution of a local stream. South West Water has since cleansed the main sewer line that runs through the woods and this should help reduce the likelihood of any further pollution.

Fish killed in the Tavy stream ended up near the Tavy Estuary, a sensitive watercourse

The Tavy Estuary is a sensitive watercourse with several important designations including Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The South West Water Enforcement Undertaking offer will fund a programme of works known as the 'Plymouth River Keepers Project' that will help offset the damage caused by the water company.

Dr Nick Paling of the Westcountry Rivers Trust said:

We are excited about the Plymouth River Keepers Project. By encouraging people to reconnect with nature and bringing urban rivers and streams back into the affection of the people living close to them, we believe we can have a positive impact.

The Westcountry Rivers Trust will use the money to restore fish numbers through additional habitat management work and pay for a programme of community engagement to raise awareness of pollution problems on Plymouth's urban streams. The project also aims to increase public usage and appreciation of the Tamerton stream and encourage community-led monitoring of local watercourses.

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Call to run a project that improves the opportunities to provide placements, work experience and higher-level apprenticeships within SMEs and micro businesses in Buckinghamshire.