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Severn Trent Water Limited was sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court on 22 March 2019, for the incident which occurred in November 2013. In addition to the fine, the company was ordered to pay prosecution costs of £50,693 and a victim surcharge of £120.

The incident occurred due to a blockage in the company's sewer system within Sutton Park.

On 12 November 2013 at around 4pm, the Sutton Park Visitor Centre received a report of a sewage smell and that a sewer was discharging waste into the Longmoor Valley. Due to poor light, the location of the incident was not identified until the following morning when a park ranger found a large amount of sewage flowing from a manhole cover and spreading across the surrounding area.

Officers from Natural England attended and mapped the extent of the damage. They found that the sewage had spread across an area of 1.15 hectares (an area slightly greater than the size of an international rugby pitch). Sewage had also entered a nearby ditch and travelled 700 metres into the Longmoor Brook to the Longmoor Pool within the Park.

Severn Trent Water Ltd liaised with Natural England, the Environment Agency, Birmingham City Council and Historic England to produce a plan to remediate the site. Soil and plants had to be scraped up across the affected area to stop the spread of sewage contamination. Around 0.65 hectares of rare and sensitive plants were destroyed. Representatives from Natural England expressed concern with the progress and efficiency of the clean-up operation, which concluded in May 2014.

In passing sentence, His Honour Judge Drew QC recognised that Sutton Park is an environmentally sensitive area, and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. The judge noted that the clean-up operation had been slow and poorly managed, but that the company had ultimately taken all necessary steps to remediate the site and that it had made a long term commitment to restoring the affected area.

In mitigation, the court noted the company's overall environmental record and set of values, that the company had accepted responsibility for the incident, and that it was not a commercially motivated offence.

The Environment Agency has recognised an improvement in Severn Trent Water Limited's overall environmental compliance since the incident. The organisation were identified as an industry leading company in the Environment Agency's Environmental Performance Assessment in 2017.

Emma Johnson, Natural England's Area Manager for the West Midlands, said:

There's a lot of love for Sutton Park. It is used and enjoyed by many, it's a prime site for wildlife and is part of the history of the West Midlands. The sewage spill incident caused by Severn Trent Water and the impact it had is amongst the worst damage to a SSSI that Natural England have witnessed.

It's particularly disappointing as water companies should have technology and processes in place to prevent this type of spill from happening. Natural England have supported and worked closely with the Environment Agency and I hope that the outcome of this prosecution helps highlight the importance of protected sites and the need to look out for them.

Looking forward, I am hopeful that ourselves and the Environment Agency can work with Severn Trent Water to rectify the issues and restore the site to a healthy state, and prevent future spills.

Marc Liddeth, Area Environment Manager for the Environment Agency said:

This case demonstrates how partners work together to share information and advice to protect the environment. It also highlights the importance of reporting environmental damage or pollution quickly, and members of the public can do this by calling the Environment Agency Incident Hotline on 0800 807660.

News story: 'Rogue' private landlords must stop exploiting students

Rogue private landlords providing poor and substandard living conditions for students will be warned over exploiting learners by the Universities Minister today (25 March), as new regulations now in force give tenants the power to make them face justice in court.

Speaking to students today, the Minister will hit out at private landlords who do not fulfil their responsibilities, resulting in some students encountering poor conditions such as a lack of heating or hot water. Some [figures](#) have even suggested that one in five students live in 'squalor' and reported mice, slugs, and other vermin infesting their accommodation.

[New regulations](#) came into force last week empowering students and renters across the country, giving them the right to take landlords to court where they fail to address serious defects in homes such as mould, damp and safety hazards.

The Minister will describe the regulations as a 'milestone' for student renters, helping to raise standards in student accommodation and hold landlords more accountable for their actions and responsibilities.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Students' time at university should be some of the best days of their lives and yet I have heard appalling stories of students living in terrible conditions, which can affect their studies and even their mental health.

While there are many landlords who do take their responsibilities seriously, for too long rogue private landlords have been exploiting vulnerable students by failing to provide even basic standards of living.

Now the time is up for these landlords making a profit from shoddy accommodation. These new regulations make landlords more accountable, helping to improve standards, and students should use their powers to make sure landlords face justice where they're not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Minister for Housing Heather Wheeler MP said:

For the last year, we have worked tirelessly to ensure all tenants, including students, have access to a fairer private rented market

across the country.

From cracking down on unnecessary costs through our Tenant Fees Act, extending HMO regulations to offer protections to more tenants than ever before and giving councils the funding they need to tackle rogue landlords, we are determined to make renting of the standard it should be.

Now, these changes are set to have a real impact. Students must use these powers to crackdown on poor quality accommodation and opportunistic landlords profiting from tenants' misery.

A [survey by NUS and UniPol](#) found that in 2018, 40 per cent of UK students who rented privately lived with damp and mould on their walls. The same survey found that over a third of students said poor living conditions made them feel anxious or depressed (36%).

To make sure that students receive adequate accommodation when renting privately, Unipol and Universities UK have created codes to set standards for practice and conduct, which landlords can sign up to, to make sure standards are met.

The Universities Minister is calling on all private landlords renting properties to students to sign up to these codes to help to ensure they act responsibly, meet standards of practice and have a clear complaints process.

Mr Skidmore will also encourage all universities to consider the social value of contracting out services, such as accommodation, to help make sure the wider community benefits from these decisions.

He is working with the University of Northampton to look at ways in which universities can ensure they are embedding social values in their procurement practices.

Press release: African tech talent touches down in London to participate in Go Global Africa programme

- Innovative tech startups from Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa arrive in London today for two-week programme to help take their business to the next level
- Aim is to create a mutually beneficial partnership with Africa which

helps develop new tech to solve local and global issues and pave the way for future trade

- Programme is part of the ambitious new UK-Africa Innovation Partnerships announced by Prime Minister Theresa May in August 2018

Twenty of the most innovative and exciting development-focused startups from Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa arrived in London today to take part in the first Go Global Africa programme.

Go Global is a hugely successful innovation scheme which supports startups to improve their business skills and capability, build links with the UK's thriving tech sector and work with UK expertise to take their firms to the next level.

The programme was started by the UK Israel Tech Hub and over the last four years it has helped develop new UK-Israel collaborations in the digital economy. According to the most recent report on its impact, the UK Israel Tech Hub has led 175 tech partnerships in deals worth £85 million.

Not only does the scheme help firms in the host country but it also plays a vital part in making links for UK startups in these new markets. And with young populations, five of the world's fastest growing economies and a thirst for innovation, Africa is a continent alive with opportunity.

Digital Minister Margot James said:

It is fantastic to welcome these talented entrepreneurs to the UK. Africa is a vibrant and dynamic continent, with huge potential for growth, and the firms chosen for the first Go Global Africa programme see tech as a force for good in society.

I've no doubt they have the talent to play a transformative role in their country's growth while also building connections for UK startups in new markets and highlighting Britain as the place to develop new technology.

The startups, selected from more than 400 applicants, are developing cutting-edge products and services in industries including fintech, healthcare, agritech and water management.

They will receive coaching from pitching experts Enterprise Academy, a public speaking masterclass, and advice on scaling up from PriceWaterHouseCoopers dedicated startup team and the Natwest Fintech Accelerator.

Bethnal Green Ventures, Europe's first tech for good accelerator, will provide the startups with insights on how to launch and scale tech for good ventures and Carlos Espinal from Seedcamp will provide guidance on fundraising.

Following the programme the startups will receive ongoing support from the UK's International Tech Hub Network, which now spans three continents and has seven hubs. They will act as Go Global champions and share the skills they have learned to mentor other firms in their countries. This will help spread digital skills, capability and entrepreneurial spirit to create jobs and prosperity.

Further information:

- The tech sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Africa. The continent's startups raised 50 per cent more venture capital in 2017 than in 2016, and the majority of this is being invested in South Africa (£130 million), Kenya (£114 million) and Nigeria (£89 million). Nigeria and Kenya's technology sectors are growing rapidly and generate more than ten per cent and 11 per cent of their respective economic output.
- Strengthening the UK's partnership with African nations is a key element of the Government's commitment to reinvesting in the UK's relationships across the world, expanding and deepening the nation's overseas network, working with others to face challenges and advancing common interests.
- Prime Minister Theresa May announced the UK-Nigeria, UK-Kenya and UK-South Africa tech hubs in August 2018. The hubs are one pillar of a broader Digital Access Programme which aims to boost digital inclusion across Africa.

Winners of the Go Global Africa competition are:

- Ethredah Chao Mwalwala, [Afya-Plan, Health Financing start up](#)
- Godfrey Allan Tollo Ochieng, [Myfugo Innovations LTD, Agritech](#)
- Nasreen Ali Mohamed, [Cherehani Africa, Fintech](#)
- Richard Machomba Muita, [FlexPay Technologies, Fintech](#)
- Jamie Wilfred John Magambo, [CropCrowd, Agritech](#)
- Isaac Maina Karani, [Elikham Systems Limited, Water Management Tech](#)
- Tochukwu Chiemeziem Egesi, [Innovation Corner Digital Health](#)
- Paul David Azemoh, [Thrive Agric, Agritech](#)
- Muhammad Salisu Abdullahi, [eTrash2Cash, Fintech](#)
- Eunice Odunayo Eweniyi, [Piggybank.ng, Fintech](#)
- Abiodun Akanji Adereni, [HelpMum, Digital Health](#)
- Faith Ekwebelam, [Social Lender, Fintech](#)
- Ralph Gbenga Oluwole, [Helium Health, Digital Health](#)
- Vinodhan Naidu, [Envisionit E-Escrow, Fintech](#)
- Owen David Meredith, [GLU Global \(Pty\) Ltd, Information Technology Systems Integration](#)
- Tania Engau Ikedji Mukwamu, [MaxiCash \(Pty\) Ltd, Fintech](#)
- Tyron Geoff Fouche, [Nobuntu, Fintech](#)
- Marnus Jacobus van Heerden, [Pineapple Tech \(Pty\) Ltd, Insurtech](#)
- Neo Valentine Hutiri, [Technovera Pty Ltd, Digital Health](#)
- Stephanus Hattingh, [Health Solutions Africa, Digital Health](#)