

[News story: Foreign Secretary's Christmas message 2018](#)

The Foreign Secretary said:

"As 2018 draws to a close I want to [look back](#) at just some of the work the Foreign Office has been doing around the world to ensure the safety and prosperity of the UK, and to defend the values we all believe in.

From securing international backing to uphold the ban on chemical weapons to our [support for a political solution](#) to end the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

British diplomacy has continued to respond to some of the biggest issues affecting the world today.

We have hosted landmark events at home too, galvanising international focus on ending the [illegal wildlife trade](#) this autumn, and reinforcing our bonds across the Commonwealth family with a hugely successful [Summit in April](#).

Next year will of course bring further significant challenges with Brexit. I do not underestimate them, but we have faced bigger challenges in our history and will always find a way to thrive and prosper whatever the outcome.

As Christmas approaches I also think of all Foreign Office staff and members of the intelligence community working overseas to keep all of us safe. I want to thank them and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

Watch the message:

[Christmas message 2018](#)

[Press release: 5 unregistered boaters ordered to pay more than £7,000](#)

Register your vessels or pay the price, Environment Agency warns

Press release: 5 unregistered boaters ordered to pay more than £7,000

- All were prosecuted for not registering boats they kept on Environment Agency waterways
- They've been ordered to pay more than £7,000
- It brings the total of avoided registration charges recovered so far this year by the Agency to over £73,000

Five boaters are facing extra expenses this Christmas after they've been ordered to pay more than £7,000 for flouting the law.

They failed to register their vessels, and the Environment Agency is warning other boaters not to do the same or they could face fines, fees and even a criminal conviction.

Boat owners are legally required to register any vessel they keep, use or let for hire on Environment Agency waterways, and to clearly display a valid registration plate.

But William Headen of High Street, Offord Cluny (St Neots), Peter Clare of Brunel Road, Stevenage, Ian McDonald of Riverside Island Marina, Isleham, Kevin Simington of Muir Street, Silvertown (London), and Christopher Smart of Priory Marina, Barkers Lane (Bedford) all failed to do so.

All the cases were proved at Cambridge Magistrates Court on 13 December, except for Mr Smart's case, which was proved at Luton Magistrates Court on 11 December.

Mr Headen was ordered to pay £1,290, Mr Clare £1,212, Mr McDonald £1,778, Mr Simington £1,098 and Mr Smart £1,694 in the next 28 days.

It brings the total of avoided registration charges recouped by the Environment Agency so far this year to £73,000 – money which will be reinvested into maintaining, improving and protecting waterways.

Nathan Arnold, waterways team leader at the Environment Agency, said:

Our waterways are part of our nation's rich heritage and beauty, and they contribute to our environment, economy and health and wellbeing.

But boaters who break the law by not registering their boats are putting the future of these historic and precious waterways at risk – so we won't hesitate to take action against them.

As well as not contributing their fair share towards the upkeep of waterways, unregistered boats can be unsafe, hazardous to other river users and a

pollution risk to the local environment and wildlife.

The Environment Agency looks after 353 miles of navigable waterways in the Anglian network, which includes the Ancholme, Black Sluice, Glen, Welland, Nene, Great Ouse and Stour, as well as associated locks and navigation facilities like slipways, moorings, showers and toilets.

More information about boating and waterways, including registering vessels, is available from the [Environment Agency](#). If you suspect a boat is illegal, please contact the EA on 03708 506 506 or email waterways.enforcementanglian@environment-agency.gov.uk

Press release: Company fined after land spreading leads to pollution

A company has been fined £20,000 following an Environment Agency investigation after polluting a stream during land spreading at a North East farm.

Press release: Company fined after land spreading leads to pollution

A company has been fined £20,000 after polluting a stream during land spreading at a North East farm.

Whites Recycling Ltd – based at Mill Lane in South Witham, Lincolnshire – appeared at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on Thursday 19 December where it pleaded guilty to breaching its environmental permit and polluting a tributary of the River Tees.

It was fined £20,000, and ordered to pay costs and a victim surcharge amounting to £4,430.

Prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Sally Dennison told the court that the company has an environmental permit for mobile plant land spreading at Greystones Farm near Eppleby, west of Darlington.

Conditions of the land spreading deployment states the operation should comply with the 'Code for Good Agricultural Practice' which requires that weather conditions are assessed prior to spreading taking place, and also

states 'the activity will be carried out without harm to the environment'.

Stream 'running black'

On 22 March 2017 a pollution incident was reported by a member of the public advising that a stream close to Greystones Farm was running black.

The following morning environment officers from the Environment Agency attended the farm and met with the farm manager. He confirmed that eight loads of digestate had been spread on the field the previous day. The field appeared to be waterlogged.

The officers investigated an unnamed tributary of the River Tees and saw that drainage outfalls from the field were discharging a black coloured liquid into the watercourse.

Whites Recycling arranged for a tanker to attend and remove the pools of digestate and rainwater that had accumulated on the field.

Rainfall data gathered by the Environment Agency showed around half of the average monthly rainfall for the area fell on 22 March 2017 and 23 March 2017 and the Met Office had also issued a severe weather warning for snow on the 22 March 2017 for the area.

Checks on the company's Environment Management System showed there was no condition to check the weather forecast prior to spreading taking place, and the field record sheet had been incorrectly filled out. It stated the nearest watercourse was 150m away when the stream is only separated from the field by a main road.

The company said the incident had resulted from a systems failure and was not committed deliberately or recklessly, and that immediate action was taken to prevent further harm by removing further liquid from the field. The company's Environment Management System has been reviewed and updated and it had also conducted training for all of its staff in the new procedures. The company apologised to the Environment Agency and the court for the breach and the resulting pollution.

Vital that companies abide by permit conditions

Environment Officers Louise Poole, from the Environment Agency's Land and Water Team in the North East, led the investigation. She said:

Permits are in place to protect the environment and our communities while also supporting businesses in their activities.

Permits have strict conditions for a reason and it is vital companies abide by those conditions. In this case, land spreading during adverse weather led to a waterlogged field and a black discharge into a nearby river, impacting on the environment. The company has since updated its procedures and improved staff training.

Run off from land into our waters has a significant negative effect on the environment. The Environment Agency works hard to protect our environment and I hope this sends out a message to others that we take incidents such as this seriously and will take the necessary action against those flouting the conditions of their permit.