

Press release: Heineken paying £160,000 over pollution incident

The Environment Agency has accepted an offer of £160,000 for an enforcement undertaking from brewer Heineken UK following a pollution incident at their cider factory in Hereford, which saw several thousand fish killed.

Heineken have also paid more than £12,000 to cover the Environment Agency's legal costs.

The incident, at their Bulmer's cider plant in August 2014, was caused when a container of ammonia-contaminated water was emptied to a surface water drain which connected to the Widemarsh Brook.

At the time it was estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 fish were killed including bullhead, minnows, juvenile chub & dace.

Environment Agency spokesperson Dave Throup said:

It's very unfortunate that a significant pollution of one of Hereford's main watercourses happened as a result of Heineken's actions.

However, we are pleased that the company is planning to make a positive contribution to the county's environment by offering this enforcement undertaking.

As a result of the enforcement undertaking, £150,000 will go to the Wye & Usk foundation and £10,000 to Yazor Widemarsh & Eign Brook restoration project.

Press release: Launch of major new Selly Park North and Selly Oak flood scheme

Yesterday (Thursday 2 February), the Environment Agency and Calthorpe Estates carried out a sod cutting ceremony which marked the launch of the Selly Park North and Selly Oak Flood Risk Management Scheme.

The ceremony was performed by Chair of the Environment Agency Emma Howard

Boyd, Director of Development at Calthorpe Estates, Ralph Minott, and Senior Flood Risk Advisor for the Environment Agency, Mike Adams.

Working as part of the Rea Catchment Partnership, the £4 million partnership project will reduce the risk of flooding to over 150 local homes and businesses in the Selly Park North and Selly Oak area of Birmingham. It will also help keep key highway routes and infrastructure open during times of flood, maintaining vital transport and emergency routes in an area that was severely affected by flooding in 2008, and more recently in June 2016.

The Environment Agency and Calthorpe Estates will be holding public information drop-in sessions for local residents to find out more about the scheme. The sessions will be held on:

Monday 6 March, 2pm – 8pm at

St. Peter's Church

Old Church Road

Birmingham

B17 0BB

and

Tuesday 7 March, 2pm – 8pm at

Christ Church

953 Pershore Road

Selly Park

B29 7PS

The scheme, which will be delivered by the Environment Agency, involves deepening and widening an existing flood water storage area near the Bourn Brook Walkway on Harborne Lane. This will increase the capacity of the storage area and offer wildlife habitat and ecology improvements. Flow improvement works will also be carried out, raising land on two plots to ensure that future Pebble Mill development is safely above the flood level and creating an overland flow route to direct flows to a new bypass culvert running underneath the Pershore Road. This will reduce the risk of flood water getting onto the highway and being routed towards the community. Construction work on site will begin in the next few weeks.

Funding for the scheme has been raised through a mixture of Government Grant in Aid, Local Levy and approximately £2 million in partnership contribution

from Calthorpe Estates.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

This scheme is a great example of how, by working with local partners, we can not only better protect homes and businesses but also deliver other benefits to local people: such as helping to keep vital transport links open.

Ralph Minott, Director of Development at Calthorpe Estates said:

Over nearly four years now we have worked hard within the Rea Catchment Partnership and together we have been able to realise this partnership project, and the improvements that will make a difference to the community here. Part of the works include raising the ground level at the three- acre site of the former BBC Sports and Social Club at Pebble Mill, and using part of the land as a new overflow flood channel, which will create an opportunity to reuse the site that has been blighted by its flooding status. It is testament to the strong partnership between Birmingham City Council, Environment Agency, ourselves and other partners sharing the same ambitions that this project has come to fruition.

Across the West Midlands £65 million of government funding is being invested until 2021. That includes £2.4 million for Selly Park South and £28 million in Perry Barr and Witton in Birmingham.

[China develops homegrown explosive atmosphere test chambers](#)

China has developed its own explosive atmosphere test chambers, ending its reliance on foreign technology and products, the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation announced on Friday.

The equipment tests products operating in various explosive environments, such as rockets, planes, vehicles, mines and gas pipelines in kitchens.

A set of standards for such tests would be unveiled later, said Deng Rongwu, a scientist working on the project.

Green Party: Government disability benefit cuts foster prejudice against disabled people



3 February 2017

*** Jonathan Bartley, co-leader: Government policy based on false idea that sick and disabled are guilty until proven innocent**

The Green Party has condemned Government plans [1] to cut disability unemployment benefit in a bid to get more disabled people into work.

Jonathan Bartley, who co-leads the Green Party as a job share so he can care for his disabled son Samuel, said:

“These cuts are illogical, based on a false premise and clearly pernicious. Cutting a benefit designed to support sick and disabled people into employment, is no way to help them into work.

“Those at the receiving end are those that even the Government accepts are sick and disabled. But these cuts will drastically reduce the quality of life for many disabled people and is tantamount to kicking people when they are down.

“Government policy is increasingly based on the false idea that the sick and disabled are guilty until proven innocent, and that if they can be beaten hard enough by a weaponised welfare state they will be forced to find work.

“The Government should instead be focusing on removing the real barriers to finding work. This includes more support, not less, and working with employers to ensure that the world of work is accessible in every way through practices such as flexible working. It should also include tackling the widespread prejudice against disabled people which the Government is itself fostering.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/03/cut-to-disability-benefits-may-make-return-to-work-harder-claim-mps>

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Green member of House of Lords seeks to 'abolish' herself



3 February 2017

*** Green peer seeks to transform House of Lords from within**

*** Jenny Jones: Lords reform is essential for proper scrutiny of Brexit process**

Jenny Jones, Green member of the House of Lords, will today (February 3) continue her fight to transform the unelected chamber.

Baroness Jones' House of Lords Reform Bill will get its second reading on Friday, with reform of the Lords more important now than ever to enable proper scrutiny of the Brexit process.

Baroness Jones hopes to gather support from within the Lords for her plans to replace the House of Lords with a democratic and effective second chamber. This would use proportional representation to elect a new house, but keep many existing peers as non-voting experts.

Her Bill is the first with this mix of proposals to come from within the Lords.

Jenny Jones said:

"I'm not the only Lord who wants to abolish their right to vote in the second chamber, but I'm aiming to be one of the most energetic peers in making it happen. I'm relatively new to the Lords and I hope my fresh approach will help fast track the various discussions about Lords reform.

"The referendum vote in favour of Brexit makes Lords reform both urgent and inevitable. The government could try to push through all kinds of bad ideas on the back of the Brexit negotiations, the Great Repeal Act and hasty trade deals.

"We need an effective and democratic chamber to help scrutinise the secondary legislation and the international deals.

"The Government may well give itself so-called Henry 8th powers to just unilaterally repeal or amend European laws after the Repeal Act passes, opening the door to a bonfire of environmental and social protections. We need a second chamber that has the legitimacy and popular backing to challenge the use of such anti-democratic powers."

Notes:

1 <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldordpap.htm>

Jenny's bill is the third on a list to be taken at 10am on Friday 3rd June. Nine peers in addition to Jenny have put their names down to speak so far.

House of Lords Reform Bill [HL] Second Reading [[Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb](#)]

If the bill is read a second time, [Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb](#) to move that the bill be committed to a Committee of the Whole House

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