

Top auditor: US\$2.6 bln environment funds not effectively used

China's top auditor has found that 17.6 billion yuan (about 2.56 billion U.S. dollars) of fiscal funds earmarked in 2016 for pollution control and resource management was not used effectively.

The finding was part of the results released after the National Audit Office (NAO) sent inspection teams to 18 provincial regions to review the use of fiscal funds for water pollution prevention and control.

The NAO inspectors also found that a total of 397 water pollution protection projects had failed to achieve desired effect, and some environment funds were not distributed in accordance with special protection plans.

The NAO noted increasing pressure from regional water environment protection, adding that in some regions, environment protection laws were not enforced strictly.

In response to the audit, local authorities in the 18 provincial regions have improved the distribution and use of more than 3 billion yuan of environment funds, and pushed forward the progress of 77 water pollution control projects.

Meanwhile, the NAO urged local auditors in 31 provincial regions to audit the funds meant for water pollution prevention.

Chinese authorities have punished 3,229 government officials for fiscal violations found when auditing the central government's 2015 budget.

News story: Iraq Afghanistan Memorial to be unveiled in London

The memorial honours both the UK Armed Forces and civilians who served their country in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan, and who supported them back home, from 1990-2015.

Around 2,500 invited guests will attend a service of dedication from a specially conducted Drumhead on Horse Guards at 11am, to include prayers, music and readings. A small ceremony will then be held in the gardens for the unveiling itself. It will be displayed on screens on Horse Guards.

The guests will be representatives of the many groups – military and civilian – whose efforts in those countries over a 25-year period are recognised,

including current Service personnel, veterans, civil servants and charity workers.

They will be joined by The Queen, other members of the Royal Family, Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon and other senior politicians.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The memorial will stand as a permanent reminder of the contribution and sacrifice that so many members of our Armed Forces, aid workers and civilian personnel made towards the security of the United Kingdom and the interests of Iraq and Afghanistan. Their efforts underline our on-going commitment to support the people of this region in building a more stable future which will help keep Britain safer and more secure.



Union Jack flag on British Military base, Crown Copyright.

The memorial commemorates the duty and service of British citizens who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way, protected our nation's interests far from the security of the UK, helped those in danger and worked to improve the lives of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. UK Citizens, from a vast breadth of organisations across Government, charities and non-governmental organisations worked tirelessly over many years to help the citizens of both countries. Some made the ultimate sacrifice during their efforts to lay the foundations for peace and stability.

Importantly, it honours all those who worked on the humanitarian side of operations, whether in a military or civilian role including areas such as aid distribution, education, healthcare, infrastructure and governance. The memorial recognises, praises and remembers with gratitude the unstinting and selfless commitment of all those, military and civilian, who served their country in support of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The distinctive memorial has been designed by sculptor Paul Day and gives equal prominence to the civilian and military contributions. It consists of two large stone monoliths supporting a bronze medallion. The two-sided medallion has sculpted reliefs depicting the memorial's theme of "duty and service".

The memorial project is run by a board of trustees, whose chairman is former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Stirrup, and The Sun newspaper ran a fundraising appeal for the memorial. The unveiling is being organised by the MOD, on the trustees' behalf, in partnership with The Royal British Legion, which is co-hosting a reception after the service.

After the unveiling, the public will be freely able to visit the Iraq Afghanistan Memorial in the Victoria Embankment Gardens.

[John McDonnell responds to a report from The UK in a Changing Europe, 'A successful Brexit – four economic tests'](#)

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on a report from The UK in a Changing Europe, 'A successful Brexit – four economic tests', said:

"This is an important and detailed piece of work which should be looked at seriously by everyone involved in the Brexit negotiations.

"It is vital for the good of the country that we can hold the Government to account using a series of tests like this, but to do so we will need much greater openness and transparency than the Government has shown so far.

"That's why Labour's amendments to the Bill in Parliament this week will seek to

require regular progress reports from the Government and full Parliamentary scrutiny.”

Press release: Man given suspended jail term over illegal Wakefield waste site

A Dewsbury man has been handed a 26-week prison sentence, suspended for 12 months, for illegally dumping waste on disused land in Horbury, Wakefield.

Samuel Joseph Stringer Hunter, 25, of Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury, was sentenced by Kirklees Magistrates’ Court on 27 January following an Environment Agency investigation.

Hunter had denied two environmental offences but was found guilty after a trial.

Lorna Matchett, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that investigating officers discovered the illegal activities in July 2014.

Hunter had been storing waste on land near Bridge Road, near the River Calder behind the Horbury Bridge Industrial Estate, although no environmental permits were in place for the operation.

There were several piles of mixed waste containing treated and untreated wood waste and plastics, and skips belonging to the Hunter Group or Huddersfield Skip Services, both of which Hunter was involved with at the time.

The defendant claimed that these waste activities were allowed because they were covered by waste permitting exemptions. But the Environment Agency said the waste was being stored in breach of the exemptions: there was too much waste, it was of a type not compliant with the exemptions and it was stored for too long.

Hunter was told to clear the waste from the site, but inspections between October 2014 and January 2015 revealed that much of it remained. There were also signs that waste had been deposited into the ground, which was contaminated with plastic, glass, a trainer and mixed construction and demolition waste.

The court heard that through running the site illegally, Hunter avoided £4,120 in permitting fees and £5,148 by not installing the correct surfacing to prevent pollution to the ground. It is estimated that Hunter received between £6,400 and £18,720 for the waste he brought onto the site.

In sentencing, the chair of the bench said:

These offences were so serious that custody was the only option.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said after the hearing:

Environmental permitting regulations exist to protect the environment and local communities from the risk of harm. Hunter's activities on this site posed a pollution risk and a fire risk that could have affected the nearby railway line. Hunter also undercut legitimate businesses by avoiding mandatory permitting and infrastructure costs.

We hope this case demonstrates the importance of environmental compliance. Anyone who breaks the rules will be pursued. Anyone who believes waste is being dumped illegally is urged to report the matter to our incident hotline on 0800 807060 so we can investigate.

Prior to sentencing, Hunter told the court in mitigation that he had cleaned up the waste in the shortest possible time.

In addition to the suspended jail term, he was ordered to undertake a rehabilitation activity of 15 days under supervision, and to carry out 300 hours of unpaid work within the next 12 months. Hunter must also pay legal costs of £4,640 and a victim surcharge of £150.

Press release: Over 300 volunteer bailiffs help fight against illegal fishing

From Cornwall to Cumbria, an army of dedicated anglers is helping the fight against illegal fishing and fish theft. They are the recruits of the Angling Trust and Environment Agency's Voluntary Bailiff Service (VBS) who act as the "eyes and ears" on riverbanks and lakes, reporting suspicious incidents and providing crucial information to the Environment Agency and the police.

VBS began as a pilot project in the South East in 2012 following a formal partnership between the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust. It was rolled out across the country in spring 2015 and, following inductions last

autumn, proudly boasts more than 300 volunteers.

Bailiffs are unpaid and rigorously vetted before they are selected. Successful candidates receive an intensive training course on what is expected of them from enforcement professionals, including the Angling Trust, the Environment Agency and the Head of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Volunteers are trained on fisheries enforcement law, signs of illegal fishing and how to record information in a way that could be used as evidence. First-hand learning includes attending joint patrols with the police and Environment Agency.

Volunteers recently gained valuable experience when they joined police and Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers on a joint patrol of the River Severn and at a number of stillwaters. Even at a relatively quiet period of the year they found reports of illegal fishing.

It's not just rod licence offenders that are being reported either. On other patrols people have been cautioned by the police for going equipped for poaching, motoring offences and possessing drugs and weapons.

Dilip Sarkar MBE, the Angling Trust's National Enforcement Manager, said:

All of our volunteers are valued and we now have the sound foundation to move forward, increase engagement and provide more practical training. We have come a very long way, since the formal partnership and although we still have far to go, this activity is already making a difference.

Graeme Storey, National Fisheries Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

All money raised through rod licence sales is used to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries benefiting anglers. The Voluntary Bailiff Service is our latest move to tackle illegal fishing and to protect that revenue. The vast majority of anglers who fish legally deserve to see those who flout the law brought to account but to that criminal minority our message is clear: we won't hesitate to take action.

The Angling Trust and Environment Agency are appealing for more anglers to join the VBS. Induction and training days are being run this spring and anyone interested in joining the VBS should email

karen.sarkar@anglingtrust.net