

News story: Kestrel close encounter

With their pointed wings and long tails, kestrels are a familiar sight along UK motorways and main roads as they use thermals from the road to hover while they look for prey.

Now one of them has discovered their perfect perch – on a Highways England CCTV camera stand.

Kestrel video

Our Traffic Officers Leigh Goodchild and Steve Dyas first spotted this cheeky kestrel while monitoring traffic flows in October 2016. Since then they have been treated to frequent sightings – and have grown fond of their new friend.

We have released this video to coincide with the RSPB's [Big School Bird Watch](#), which encourages pupils to get closer to nature by counting birds at set times.

Kestrels are on the RSPB amber list of protected species, with only around 46,000 breeding pairs estimated to be in the UK. They are most recognisable in their characteristic hovering hunting mode but also like to find a high perch where they can stay on the lookout for prey.

Our CCTV camera platform seems to fit the bill. Traffic Officer Leigh said:

On one occasion she returned with half a mouse, which she promptly swallowed tail and all!

She's rather obsessed with her own image but her inquisitiveness has given us some good close-ups.

She's squawked and attacked the lens a few times as well. When that happens we discourage her from hurting herself by tilting the camera skywards.

Her visits certainly brighten up our day and make a change from the traffic.

Research and analysis: Habitats Regulations Assessments – North East

North West South East South West

Marine Plans

Under the EC Habitats Directive, all marine plans must have a Habitats Regulation Assessment.

The Habitats Regulation Assessment looks at what impact a plan could have on the objectives of a European conservation site. It includes:

- pre-screening review
 - screening review
 - an appropriate assessment information report
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Press release: South West Water

prosecuted for crude sewage spill in

Truro River

South West Water will pay £54,000 in fines and costs for allowing untreated sewage to escape from a pumping station near Truro in Cornwall.

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 16 March 2015 approximately 400,000 litres (88,000 gallons) of sewage was discharged from the Calenick Pumping Station into the Truro River via Calenick Creek.

Located south of Truro at the head of an estuary, the site receives sewage from surrounding villages and pumps it to Truro (Newham) Sewage Treatment Works for full treatment, including disinfection.

An investigation by the Environment Agency revealed two factors contributed to the illegal discharge.

In 2015 a contractor working on electrical panels at the pumping station forgot to restart the pumps. This meant sewage arriving in the wet well, a storage area within the site, wasn't pumped out.

Shortly before the spill, South West Water received three urgent alarms via telemetry warning that sewage had reached a high level in the sump, yet no pumps were running. The team responsible for sending a crew to the pumping station failed to telephone them with a 'high priority' request to attend the site. Instead, they messaged them electronically, forgetting the crew was at a meeting and wouldn't be able to get to Calenick for some time.

A short while later, further alarms were triggered warning the water company that sewage was now spilling from the pumping station outfall into Calenick Creek. The discharge continued for approximately four-and-a-half hours.

The pumping station lies within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation close to commercial mussel and oyster beds at Grimes Bar and Malpas. Fortunately, the sewage spill occurred during the closed season for shellfish, although there was a risk of possible contamination of shellfish beds.

Mark Pilcher of the Environment Agency said:

It is vitally important water companies have robust procedures in place to ensure their sewage infrastructure assets perform appropriately.

Calenick Sewage Pumping Station is situated at the head of a very sensitive estuary containing important intertidal habitats and commercial shellfish beds. The unpermitted discharge of crude sewage to the estuary because the pump station was not switched on following a site inspection is unacceptable.

South West Water had earlier pleaded guilty to discharging crude sewage from Calenick Sewage Pumping Station contrary to Regulations 12(1)(a) and 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010.

At a sentencing hearing at Truro Crown Court on 26 January 2017, South West Water was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay £4,000 costs.

Official Statistics: Provisional statistics – UK fleet landings from other EU member states' waters: 2015

It is being released now in response to a request by Defra to publish management information provided to them for operational purposes. The figures are provisional and will be subject to revisions as further quality assurance is complete and as updated information are received and analysed. Due to their provisional nature these data are high level aggregations without further breakdown.

It is planned that these provisional data will be followed by a more detailed final form statistical release as part of the [UK Sea Fisheries Statistics annual publication in September 2017](#).

Press release: Charity payment after water company permit breach

The Environment Agency has accepted an Enforcement Undertaking which will see Northumbrian Water pay £375,000 to charities in the North East after it breached environmental permitting regulations.

The offer also includes actions for Northumbrian Water to improve its operations and infrastructure.

It follows a sewage pollution incident involving West Wylam pumping station, investigated by the Environment Agency on 18 February 2015.

A blockage upstream of the pumping station resulted in raw sewage overflowing into Park Burn, a tributary of the River Tyne, breaching its permit.

Investigations showed significant water quality impact at Park Burn, with sewage odour and litter visible, and ammonia and suspended solid levels above accepted levels. Surveys indicated there had been no significant impact on the invertebrate population in the burn, and there was no impact on the Tyne, due to the river size and flow of the river.

Northumbrian Water carried out an immediate clean-up of the polluted area after it was reported to them.

Wide range of measures

The Environment Agency is making better use of the wide range of measures that are available to bring sites back into compliance as quickly as possible. Along with prosecutions, it uses enforcement notices, stop notices and civil sanctions to either improve performance or stop sites from operating.

The Environment Agency's use of civil sanctions is in line with recent legislation extending their availability for more offences.

Civil sanctions such as these can be a proportionate and cost-effective way for businesses to make amends for less serious environmental offences. The company must offer to restore or remediate the harm caused by the incident, and demonstrate they will change their behaviour and ensure future compliance with legislation.

Proportionate response

Fiona Morris, Environment Manager with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

We will always take forward prosecutions in the most serious cases and while we did initially consider prosecution, the company submitted an EU which we subsequently accepted.

We felt it to be a more proportionate response that would benefit the environment – achieving more than if the company had been convicted and fined.

We work hard to protect people and the environment, and a clear regulatory framework with agreed standards and targets has helped to drive major environmental improvements over the last few decades.

We're continuing to improve our approach to ensure that we remain a fair and proportionate regulator.

The actions offered in the accepted EU, require Northumbrian Water to:

- Make donations to Tyne Rivers Trust (£134,500), Northumberland Rivers Trust (£59,500), Wear Rivers Trust (£48,500), Tees Rivers Trust (£58,500).
- Make a donation of £74,000 to Groundwork towards the Land of Oak and Iron Project.
- Make improvements to site operations and infrastructure, including updated sewerage records, an updated process for asset planning and management and refurbishment of West Wylam pumping station, as well as an accelerated programme of planned upgrades to sewer infrastructure in the area.
- Further inspections and surveys of the impacted area.
- Pay Environment Agency costs.

Failure to comply with an EU may result in the offender being prosecuted for the original offence.

[See the full list of the most recent enforcement undertakings](#)