

Press release: Waste operator fined for illegal waste disposal in Devon countryside

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

In 2016 Mr Baker imported 7,514 tonnes of inert waste on a field at Poltimore, Exeter under the guise of 'drainage' works. This amount of waste far exceeded that permitted under an authorisation, issued by the Environment Agency, known as a U1 waste exemption. A U1 exemption enables waste to be reused without the need for an environmental permit but sets a maximum tonnage limit of 1,000 tonnes for soil and sub-soil.

The waste, from development sites around Exeter, was used to level off a significant part of the site, altering the character of the field and that of the surrounding landscape. The defendant not only failed to comply with the conditions of his U1 waste exemption but he also failed to secure planning permission from Devon County Council.

Richard Tugwell for the Environment Agency said:

This was a serious abuse of a U1 waste exemption which had a significant impact on the Devon landscape. People who use waste exemptions must ensure they comply with them and obtain appropriate planning permission.

Appearing before Exeter magistrates, Roger Baker, of Bovey Tracey, Devon, was fined £1,710 and ordered to pay £4,946 costs after pleading guilty to an offence under Reg 38 of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. The court also ordered Mr Baker to remove and appropriately dispose of the waste he'd illegally imported within 12 months.

The case was heard on 23 August 2018.

Press release: Helping communities be flood resilient

A team of flood engagement officers have worked with more than 60 schools and 700 businesses during their first year in post to help communities be more resilient to flooding in the North East.

The Environment Agency appointed the new team to increase awareness of flood risk and help people be prepared for flooding.

The £280,000 a year project, which started last summer, includes four new engagement officers spread across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Darlington, and Cleveland.

Funded by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC) for four years, the officers are working alongside partner organisations to help support communities.

In their first year they have worked closely with communities at risk of flooding to help them recruit Flood Wardens and develop Community Flood Plans, and have focused on ensuring businesses are resilient to protect the impact of floods on the economy.

Area updates

In Northumberland Colin Hall has been working with many Northumberland communities. In Ponteland in particular he has been working hard to increase their flood resilience including completing a Flood Week in Ponteland Primary School, campaigning for new Flood Wardens, progressing a community flood plan and establishing a Flood Warden Group.

In Tyne & Wear Taryn Al-mashgari has working in schools in Sunderland, South Tyneside and Newcastle delivering Flood Weeks and careers events. She's also focused on businesses in Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside. Her plans for the coming year include working with key communities such as Wingrove to raise awareness of surface water flooding.

In Cleveland, Sarah Duffy has been working with communities from across the area, working with schools in Middlesbrough, Stockton, and Redcar and Cleveland to complete a series of Flood Weeks. She's also been working with businesses in Yarm to increase resilience, including meeting businesses on the High Street, and running a Business Breakfast morning to bring businesses together. Sarah has formed strong links with Skinningrove Flood Warden Group and hopes to expand the Flood Warden network in Cleveland next year.

In Durham and Darlington Anna Caygill has been focusing on schools and communities such as Stanhope and Chester-le-Street, including promoting the Flood Warning Service and recruiting Flood Wardens. Anna has also been working closely with Durham Housing Group to identify where their properties at risk of flooding are and to come up with a strategy to warn and inform tenants to be more prepared for a flood event. In Darlington she has been working with groups in Cockerton and Haughton-le-Skerne to increase the area's resilience.

The Community Engagement Officers are working on behalf of the Environment Agency and local authority partners.

As well as supporting residents and businesses, working alongside schools has played a key role in helping future generations understand their risk.

The team hosted a region-wide Flood Warden logo competition which led to a new blue jacket uniform for flood wardens across the North East so they were recognisable to emergency services and the community during an incident.

Really successful first year

Phil Taylor, Environment Agency Flood Resilience Team Leader in the North East, said:

It's been a really successful first year for the Flood Engagement Officers and they are now well known within their communities. This is a foundation they will build on going forward.

A key part of their activity has been working with schools as future generations have a key role to play in ensuring our communities are flood resilient – the team has worked with around 5,500 school pupils this past year alone.

We all know just how devastating flooding can be for communities and there are actions people can take now will make all the difference to reducing the impact a flood can have.

We're still working hard to help communities understand their flood risk and sign up to receive free flood warnings, as well as helping residents develop community flood plans that detail the action each community or business can take to reduce the impact of flooding, and help them return to normal life as soon as possible should a flood happen.

To find out more about your local flood risk and sign up to the Flood Warning Service [online](#)

[Press release: Stourton flood defence works complete protecting businesses](#)

Businesses in the Stourton area of Leeds are benefitting from increased flood protection following the completion of a new 730 metre flood defence wall and property level protection, such as flood gates and demountable barriers.

The project, led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, has reduced the risk of flooding to 88 businesses in Stourton and is one of the first areas of work for the second phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The £1.4m project, funded by Leeds City Council and the European Regional

Development Fund, is part of a package of measures of advanced works designed to mobilise defence construction quickly and efficiently to best protect the city, before the main works of the scheme are approved.

As well as the new flood defence wall along the boundary of the Haigh Park Road Industrial estate with the Aire and Calder Canal, property level protection has been installed at four businesses and one Northern Power Grid sit. This has involved supplying 17 aluminium demountable barriers that can be installed by the businesses across door openings in the event of a flood, where surface water flooding could occur due to the water being prevented from discharging into the canal or river as normal.

The works will provide a 1 in 200 year standard of protection to 88 existing businesses in the Stourton Industrial Estate, safeguard over 4,000 existing jobs in the area and help to protect access to the M1.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

"It is very pleasing to see these works at Stourton as part of the initial element of phase two of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme completed.

"Similar measures introduced at Woodlesford for phase one proved effective during the Christmas floods of 2015, so these defences will help protect local businesses, safeguard jobs, and vitally offer reassurance and confidence that these improvements do work at a local level.

"These measures provide further protection for our city centre and for the South Bank area, with formal engineering elements supported by the impressive flexible barriers which can be deployed quickly whenever there is a flood threat. We are firmly committed to seeing all our communities and businesses along the River Aire catchment protected through measures like this, and will continue to make the case for the phase two plans."

On 26 December 2015, Leeds experienced significant and widespread flooding with some of the highest river levels ever recorded following Storm Eva. The flooding affected nearly 3,000 residential properties and nearly 700 commercial properties. 40 businesses in Stourton, between Thwaite Mills and the M1, were significantly affected by the floods.

Adrian Gill, area flood risk manager from the Environment Agency, said:

"The completion of these works is great news for the businesses that flooded in Stourton and for the people and communities who depend on them for the services and jobs they provide.

"Following the successful completion of Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme in October 2017, the Environment Agency is continuing to work closely with Leeds City Council to develop and deliver Phase 2 of the scheme, which will help to ensure that Leeds continues to be a great place to live, work and do business."

Towngate Plc is an industrial property agent that manages around a dozen commercial properties in the Stourton Industrial Estate. All of its tenants

were impacted in the December floods.

Tom Lamb, property manager at Towngate Plc said:

"We were delighted when we were informed of the flood defence plans in Stourton. We understand that projects like this take a while to get off the ground and we were surprised at how quickly it took Leeds City Council and the Environment Agency to make the announcement.

"Since we have been able to tell our tenants about the plans, confidence in the area has boosted as many of our tenants' concerns will now be addressed. We hope this increased confidence will also continue to benefit businesses looking to move here, bringing with them more employment opportunities to the area."

The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme is led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency and is split into two phases.

A big contribution to the flooding at Stourton was the breach of the river and canal at Knostrop. Stourton is located downstream of Phase 1 of the new Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme and at the time of Storm Eva, Phase 1 of the project was under construction, so it didn't provide any flood risk benefit to Stourton.

In October last year, the £50 million Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme was officially opened which now provides a 1 in 100 year standard of protection. During construction, there was a repair to Knostrop by-wash with strengthening works including sheet piles. Work also involved the construction of moveable weirs at Crown Point and Knostrop and the removal of a manmade island which separated the canal and river, known locally as Knostrop Cut. The weirs can be lowered when high river flows are expected, to help lower the river level. This work will help protect from another breach happening as it did on Boxing Day, and provide additional protection to Stourton.

The completion of work at Stourton comes as an outline business case for phase 2 of the scheme has been submitted to government, which outlines plans to reduce flood risk to the city upstream of the city centre, taking a catchment wide approach. Phase two identifies measures further upstream including the Kirkstall corridor which was badly hit by the 2015 Christmas floods. It also looks at areas beyond the city boundary to further reduce the possibility of the river flooding in Leeds, as well as additional measures to offer protection for the South Bank area of the city centre which is a key future economic driver for Leeds.

The phase two plans also have a strong focus on Natural Flood Management (NFM), with proposals to create new woodland areas which would more than double canopy coverage in the River Aire catchment. It also proposes water storage areas to be created and developed, operated by control gates system meaning water can be held and then released back into the river when safe to do so. A third element would be the removal of existing obstructions along the river to help reduce water levels, along with lowering the riverbed in

places to improve its capacity and flow.

Aside from these measures, phase two would also see some new infrastructure measures installed including landscaping, terracing, embankments and walls, but due to the range of natural measures the height of any engineered defences would not need to be as high as originally projected, typically averaging 1.2 to 1.5 metres in height.

If approved by the government, proposals for the main works of Phase 2, created by Leeds City Council working with the Environment Agency and BMM JV Limited, would see work scheduled to begin in summer 2019.

News story: National Drought Group – Chairman's Statement – August

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened on Wednesday 29 August to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

The present situation and the prospects

Rainfall across England over three months from May to July was 54% of the long-term average (LTA). Farmers, the environment and water companies faced considerable pressures caused by the rapid deterioration in water resources.

At the end of July, a band of wet weather brought some respite as it moved across parts of the country. United Utilities called off a proposed hosepipe ban in early August but continued with applications for 4 drought permits, should they be needed later in the year. These have been approved by the Environment Agency.

August has been unsettled with dry periods interrupted by wet weather. This has helped the situation.

The Met Office's 3 month outlook for September to November forecasts that above average temperatures and slightly lower than average rainfall are likely.

As we move into autumn the Environment Agency, the water companies and the other members of the NDG will continue to work closely together to reduce the risk of water restrictions and balance the needs of the public, businesses and the environment.

Action we are taking

Water Companies

Water companies have taken and will continue to take a range of actions to maintain water supplies for customers, including:

- Operational interventions such as installing new pumping stations, reconfiguring networks to reduce reliance on specific water treatment works, and accelerating work to bring sites back into operation.
- Tackling leakage by providing extra funding and resource to fix leaks, alongside use of technology such as satellite imaging and drones to find leaks.
- Implementing contingency drought plans as appropriate.
- Promoting water efficiency messages to customers through increased media activity, roadshows and community engagement.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has:

- Responded to a 330% increase in dry-weather related incidents compared with this time last year.
- [Introduced flexible abstraction for farmers](#) in emergency cases in order to safeguard food production and animal welfare, where it is satisfied there will be no adverse effects on the environment.
- Allowed farmers to trade water allowances – as set out in their abstraction licence – on a short-term basis, without the need to change their licences.
- Granted United Utilities 4 drought permits at locations in Cumbria, to enable them to be deployed quickly should they be needed.
- Used our powers to protect the environment by applying for a drought order. This is the first time we have used these powers due to the extraordinary dry weather this summer.

Other partners

Defra, the National Farmers' Union, Canal & River Trust, the Angling Trust and other NDG members are working actively to manage down the risks and support the needs of water users and the environment.

Advice to the public

Although we have received some rainfall during August, the overall outlook for the next 3 months remains drier than average. We encourage everyone to follow the advice of their water company and use water wisely. This will help protect the environment and the economy, and reduce the risk of further water restrictions.

Next NDG meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 20 September where we will focus on preparing for next summer as the drought may continue through the winter.

[Press release: Drought planning continues after hot summer puts pressure on environment](#)

The National Drought Group has urged people to use water wisely following a meeting to discuss pressure on water resources and the environment following this summer's heat wave.

The environment has suffered due to the driest May to July across England since 1921. The Environment Agency (EA) responded to a 330% increase in significant drought-related incidents as teams acted to protect wildlife and rescue fish struggling due to low river flows.

Numerous species, habitats, birds, trees and aquatic life have been affected by the hot, dry summer and high demand for water. EA hydrologists recorded 'exceptionally low' river flows for 5 weeks in a row, reservoir stocks for England as a whole were at historic lows for the end of July and soils were the driest on record in the North West.

The EA's Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan, chaired the National Drought Group meeting and received updates from water companies, discussed ways to protect the environment and sustain support for farmers and businesses. Water companies were asked to outline progress against agreed action plans to maintain water supplies while protecting the environment. They reported that there are no current plans to bring in Temporary Use Bans (hosepipe bans) although water restrictions remain a possibility if rainfall in September is

low.

The EA has taken a range of actions to respond to the impacts of dry weather including:

- Supporting farmers by allowing more flexibility with water abstraction in order to safeguard food production and animal welfare.
- Operating water transfers to help maintain river flows.
- Increased monitoring and inspection of businesses abstracting water to ensure they are not taking more water than they need.
- Issuing 4 drought permits to United Utilities at locations in Cumbria, should they be needed later in the year.
- Not cleaning EA fleet vehicles and office windows to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Although August has seen dry periods interrupted by bouts of wet weather, the Met Office 3 month outlook for September to November forecasts that above average temperatures and slightly lower than average rainfall are likely.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency said:

Over the last few months of prolonged dry weather the Environment Agency, the water companies and many others have been working hard together to reduce the risk of water restrictions and balance the needs of the public, businesses and the environment.

Despite the recent rain, we will need to continue to collaborate closely as we move into autumn. All of us have a role to play in helping to protect the environment and maintain supplies. We encourage everyone to use water wisely.