

Press release: Plastic pollution could stop horse riders in their tracks

Plastic granulate, sold as an alternative surface for equestrian centres, could place Yorkshire's horses and riders at risk, present a pollution hazard and lead to owners falling foul of the law.

Plastic granulate is a waste material derived from the recycling of cable sheathing and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). It's being marketed by some waste producers and brokers as a base material for horse maneges and track surfaces. However, there is no legal route available for its use for this purpose except in accordance with an Environmental Permit.

Furthermore, the plastics contained within this material can contain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP's), phthalates and lead stearate. Weathering can cause leaching of these toxic substances into the wider environment, potentially causing contamination to land and groundwater. Some plastic granulate may even be cross-contaminated with non-plastic elements such as metal fragments and glass, making surfaces where it's used potentially harmful for horses and riders.

Environment Agency officer, Greg Deakin said:

We're determined to eliminate avoidable waste and crack down on plastics as part of the government's 25-year environmental plan.

We're therefore urging those with equestrian facilities to carefully consider the use of this material. It might be offered free of charge or for a small delivery fee, but it is an offence under the Environmental Permitting Regulations to use this waste without appropriate environmental controls.

If you're found to have plastic granulate waste deposited on your land without the appropriate Environmental Permit awarded by the Environment Agency, you could be fined and be liable for the cost of its disposal.

Producers or brokers of plastic granulate have a legal duty of care to ensure plastic granulate is disposed of at a permitted facility. If you are approached and offered this material and you do not have an appropriate Environmental Permit, please let us know on 03708 506 506 and ask to speak to your local waste team. Alternatively you can email the details to enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

If you are aware of any deposit of this waste please report it, anonymously if you prefer, to our 24-hour National Incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: Prison sentence for waste operator

Mixed commercial and construction/demolition waste was illegally stored at a site in Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, despite advice given by Environment Agency officers.

Cambridge Magistrates' Court heard that the site in Long Drove began as a skip hire site but soon became an unpermitted waste transfer station.

Stop notices were twice placed on the business but Daniel Lee Crockwell, aged 35, of Milton Road, Cambridge, carried on operating.

On 26 July 2018 Mr Gurjit Bdesha, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court:

He ignored advice and guidance given to him on numerous visits by Agency officers.

Crockwell had no previous waste experience but tried to compete with established businesses in the area.

As well as the suspended prison sentence, magistrates ordered Crockwell to pay £5,592 costs.

The site of Cambridge Skip Hire at Half Acre Site was first visited by Environment Agency investigating officers in August 2016. No-one was around so a letter was left asking the business to make contact, but it failed to do so and a stop letter was placed on the business.

In November 2016 officers tracked down Crockwell, the company director, who reluctantly agreed to meet them at the site. Mr Bdesha told magistrates:

He told them he needed a few weeks to clear the site and would meet with them again.

Crockwell agreed to clear the site by 16 February 2017 but failed to do so and eventually the landowners took control of the site and cleared it themselves.

Mr Bdesha said Crockwell had taken a risk in running the business illegally

and had only ever held a waste carriers' licence during the year of operating at Long Drove.

He had eventually stopped taking in extra waste in November 2017 and closed down his website and disconnected the phones at the same time.

Mr Bdesha said that before a waste transfer station could be operated at the site there would have had to have been improvements to the infrastructure to protect the environment. Planning and health and safety requirements would also have been needed.

After the hearing, Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader Phil Henderson said:

Whilst the Environment Agency seeks to work with operators who co-operate and want to comply with the law, we will take action against those who don't.

Always make sure you are operating legally before embarking on a waste management activity or you are likely to get a visit from our enforcement officers.

More information on [permitting waste activities](#).

Crockwell pleaded guilty to:

Between 31 December 2015 and 31 December 2016 on land known as Half Acre Site, Long Drove, Waterbeach, CB25 9LR, you operated a regulated facility, namely a waste operation for the deposit, storage and treatment of waste without being authorised by an environmental permit granted under Regulation 13 of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

Contrary to Regulation 12 and 38(1)(a) Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

[Press release: Lower Otter Restoration Project now applying for funding](#)

The Environment Agency has today confirmed its commitment to the Lower Otter Restoration Project while applications for funding grants are made.

This assurance means that work to manage the estuary can press ahead and avoid delays on delivering the £8-9 million scheme.

Ben Johnstone, Environment Agency flood risk manager, said:

We are completely committed to the Lower Otter Restoration Project and, together with our partners, want to drive forward our work to create multiple benefits for people and wildlife.

Following public consultation the project team has selected the best option for the Lower Otter, which will include restoring the Big and Little Marsh floodplain. Most of the existing embankments will be kept with breaches to allow water to flow through. It will also create new intertidal and freshwater habitats with no increase in height to current water levels and flood risk.

The partnership scheme will provide new and improved access and amenities including maintaining the South West Coast Path and relocating the Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club. It will also protect the old municipal tip in the flood plain and deliver compensatory habitat for the construction and maintenance of flood defences in the Exe Estuary such as Starcross, Cockwood and Exmouth.

Dr Sam Bridgewater from the Lower Otter Restoration Project team said:

This is great news from one of the key project partners. We can now seek the necessary consents and permissions from a variety of authorities, so that we are ready to start work on the ground as soon as possible once funding is confirmed.

A public exhibition on the Lower Otter Restoration Project will be held later this year – details to follow.

Press release: Come along to flood scheme update at Forge Mill Farm

If you are planning a visit to Sandwell Valley Park, Forge Mill Farm or RSPB on Thursday 9 August, why not come and talk to Environment Agency staff about the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme?

Environment Agency staff will be setting up a stall near the Forge Mill Farm car park on 9 August, from 1pm to 4pm, to talk to local residents and visitors about the progress being made.

The completed scheme will reduce flood risk for 1,400 properties in the area. Phase 2 of the scheme, will provide additional flood storage at Forge Mill in Sandwell Valley, which is upstream of Perry Barr and Witton, and will control the flow of flood water downstream. Park users will have seen construction happening around Forge Mill Farm, at the golf course and along the river

side.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency Project Manager for the Scheme said:

This is a great opportunity to find out more about what we've been doing so far and we have planned for the coming months. Come and hear more about the scheme, including an additional river crossing providing a circular walking route and environmental enhancements, such as the creation of wet woodland, crassula management (in conjunction with RSPB), tree planting, tree and hedgerow management and creation of new habitats in areas where we are taking material to build the embankment.

The main aspects of this phase include the building of a new embankment, installation of the river outlet and temporarily re-diverting the river.

The scheme, costing just over £32 million, is part of the Environment Agency's programme of £2.6 billion investment into flood defences across the country. The scheme was made possible through funding contributions from Birmingham City Council, Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Arts Council and crowd-funding.

The first phase of the scheme was completed in spring 2017. Following improvements to the existing upstream flood storage area at Perry Hall Playing Fields, Phase 1 delivered improvement works in Perry Barr and Witton, including wall repairs and wall raising along Brookvale Road, construction of walls along Tame Road and installation of a flood gate at the Atlas Industrial Estate entrance. These measures in isolation do not provide a big enough reduction in flood risk, although they did successfully prevent properties from flooding in May 2018, so Phase 2 will provide the necessary flood water storage during a major flood, such as that experienced in 2007.

Along with flood defences and flood management schemes, knowing your flood risk is also important when protecting your family and property from flooding. People can check their risk and register to receive free flood warnings by visiting our page on [preparing for flooding](#) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Press release: Environment Agency announces support for farmers during dry weather

Following the driest June since 1925 and a dry July, farmers have reported

water supply concerns which could affect the irrigation of crops and welfare of livestock. Ahead of the National Farmers Union's drought summit today (Wednesday 1 August), the Environment Agency issued guidance to farmers detailing options to flex abstraction licences in serious cases.

The arrangements will allow farmers to trade water allowances – as set out in their abstraction licence – on a short-term basis, without the need to change their licence. The EA will fast-track the process to enable farmers to act quickly and arrangements will be agreed locally where the EA is satisfied that there will not be any adverse effects on the environment or the rights of other lawful water users. The EA also monitors river flow and will maximise access to water when it is available, such as following heavy rain.

In severe cases where there is a real or imminent threat to crops and livestock, the EA may temporarily allow additional, emergency abstraction. Each case will be assessed to minimise impacts to the environment or the rights of other water users.

Paul Hickey, head of water resources, Environment Agency said:

We know that farmers are facing considerable pressures in responding to drought conditions and we want to support them by allowing them to flex their abstraction licences in the most serious cases to safeguard food production and animal welfare.

We must also balance farmers' needs with those of wildlife and other water users so we will only allow these arrangements where we are satisfied there won't be any adverse effects on the environment.

As the hot, dry weather is set to continue we urge everyone to use water wisely to protect the environment and help prevent the need for water restrictions.

The Environment Agency will continue to carry out compliance checks on abstraction licences to ensure that abstractors keep to their licences and any agreed flexible arrangements.

The temporary arrangements do not apply to water companies as they are able to use a variety of drought measures defined in law to manage droughts and public water supply. The Environment Agency works closely with water companies to ensure they are following drought plans and implementing actions to conserve water in a timely way.

Notes to Editors

It is up to abstractors to ensure that they use water wisely, efficiently and have sufficient water for their needs.

Any flexible arrangements will be one-off, limited to this event. If any abstraction outside a licence is likely to need to re-occur, licence holders

must apply to vary the licence at the earliest opportunity.

It is important that water abstraction licence holders check their licence details – licence holders can now view and [manage water abstraction licences online](#)

The Environment Agency can review hands off flow conditions more frequently to allow abstractors to take advantage of any peak flows when significant rainfall occurs.

Use of water company headroom by other abstractors where this is sustainable. Southern and Anglian Water have said that in principle this can be provided and we are awaiting details from the companies on their proposals.