

Press release: Natural flood management scheme for Yorkshire Dales communities

Running through the dale from just south of Kidstones to its confluence with the River Ure just down from Aysgarth Falls, Bishopdale Beck can quickly overtop and cause flooding in heavy rain.

The main road through the dale, the B6160, can become impassable and result in local residents in villages, such as Kidstones and Newbiggin, being unable to access vital infrastructure including schools, doctors' surgeries and shops.

But now a natural flood management (NFM) scheme aims to better protect the community in Bishopdale, which was chosen as one of three schemes in Yorkshire to benefit from an equal share of £501,000 of Government funding NFM initiatives.

Measures will be selected from a range of NFM interventions, including run-off management, using earth bunds and leaky wooden dams, peatland restoration, woodland creation, riparian buffer strips and management of floodplain grazing.

Simon Stokes, of the Environment Agency, said the scheme has been made possible by partner organisations coming together.

He said:

We look forward to working with the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the local community in delivering this project.

We hope that this project will really showcase partnership working and deliver a noticeable increase in resilience to flooding for the communities in the Bishopdale Beck catchment as well as improving the environment for both people and wildlife.

The Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust has been working with landowners to create individual farm plans, something which the partner organisations say they are keen to do more of in the Dales.

Tarja Wilson, of Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), said:

The idea is simple: farmers in the hills can take measures to slow

down flood waters, both benefitting their businesses and lowering the risk of homes being flooded downstream.

In Bishopdale farmers are working collaboratively through the Wensleydale Facilitation Fund to consider how they can carry out natural flood management on their holdings.

Natural flood management isn't a silver bullet which will solve flooding downstream, but it has multiple benefits for farmers, such as improving water quality and reducing flood risk. It can be a genuine win-win, for farmers and the wider community.

The scheme will be developed in close consultation with communities and landowners to ensure interventions complement existing agricultural businesses.

Local farmer and landowner Robert Brown said:

It's great to see investment in the uplands for natural flood management. Previous projects have been very successful and it's good to see lots of local farmers and landowners getting involved.

Dan Turner, of the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, said:

The Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust is really looking forward to working in partnership with the YDNPA and EA on the Bishopdale natural flood management project.

We believe that this could be a real flagship project, delivering natural flood management on a catchment scale while also providing other benefits, such as wildlife, and reducing diffuse pollution.

We have been working closely with farmers in the catchment for many years, so it's great to once again, work together to creating a more resilient catchment, that's both profitable, sustainable and working with the natural environment.

The scheme will complement peatland restoration work delivered through Pennine PeatLIFE, an EU LIFE project co-funded by the Environment Agency and water companies.

The project delivery partners, the Yorkshire Peat Partnership, have been

working with land owners in Bishopdale to restore upland blanket bog habitat in the area.

These habitats are vital for water storage, with healthy bogs storing and holding more water and sediment.

The two other areas to get a share of the £501,000 Government funding announced in the 2016 autumn budget for natural flood management schemes in Yorkshire are Brompton Beck, near Northallerton, and Backstones Beck in Ilkley.

The funding was part of a national £15million NFM programme which, in addition to delivering flood risk reduction and environmental enhancements, aims to contribute to the growing evidence base for NFM.

[News story: Water resources during hotter summer months](#)

The Environment Agency is urging people to follow water company advice to use water wisely during these hotter summer months to help manage demand and reduce the impact on the environment.

The overall water resources situation across England is looking generally healthy. Groundwater levels throughout England are now starting to naturally decline as expected for the time of year but remain within normal levels the start of summer. Rivers, lakes and reservoirs are also broadly where they should be for this time of year. Although during dry spells it's not unusual for some rivers and lakes in faster responding water catchments to drop quickly but they tend to recover quickly when the rain returns.

Environment Agency operational teams and hydrologists continually monitor water levels throughout the year and will determine what action is needed. During hot weather we work with water companies and other organisations to reduce the impacts of the hot weather on the environment. The action we take includes incident response, regulating water abstraction, advising businesses and farmers on water usage and monitoring for environmental impacts.

The Environment Agency also takes action to ensure water companies have made robust plans for managing water supplies, although water companies themselves would decide on proposing water restrictions.

Paul Hickey, Deputy Director and head of water resources for the Environment Agency said:

A natural reduction in river flows and groundwater levels at this

time of year is to be expected and water companies plan for these summer months. The summer started with river flow and groundwaters at normal levels in most areas, including the south east following the rain in spring.

There is enough water for companies to maintain supplies if water resources are managed properly. There are no water use restrictions in place. It is always helpful, in terms of future supplies and protecting the environment, for everyone to follow advice on saving water from their water company and use water wisely. At this time of year the Environment Agency is always ready to respond to pressure on rivers caused by low flows and we continue to monitor the situation.

If the public see fish gulping for air that could be because of reduced oxygen and river flows, please report it the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

More detail on the current water situation is available on the Environment Agency's Creating a Better Place blog:

[Summer has started – what does that mean for the water situation in England?](#)

Press release: Cooperation the key to tackling pennywort

The Environment Agency has called on Thames river users to keep working together to control floating pennywort. More than 63 tonnes of the invasive water plant has been removed from the Thames over the winter and spring but there is still more to do.

Because of the efforts of the Environment Agency and some local groups, where there were large rafts of the plant in some areas, there are now only a few small traces of regrowth. The Environment Agency continues to monitor and remove new growth of this very invasive and destructive plant. However, the summer is the peak season for floating pennywort growth which can have detrimental impacts on watercourses. Large blooms of the plant affect the oxygen content of rivers, reduce biodiversity, can damage important habitats and potentially increase flood risk.

As part of the annual maintenance programme, the Environment Agency has been managing floating pennywort for several years in locations such as the River Wey and the Foudry Brook. But more help and support is needed from the public and river users if we are to succeed in controlling the spread of this destructive plant.

Daryl Buck, from the Environment Agency, said:

We actively monitor more than 200km of the River Thames. Our aim is to eradicate floating pennywort from the main River Thames completely, but we can only achieve this with the continued cooperation of key members of the community.

Early intervention is the most efficient way to keep on top of this damaging plant as it can grow up to 20cm per day! We are urging riverside owners to keep an eye on their watercourse and report any new growth to us. We also would like to hear from river users such as anglers, boaters and canoeists who may come across the plant when out and about enjoying the river.

One success story so far has been the work undertaken earlier this year in the Abbey River near Chertsey. Floating pennywort established itself last season in the popular watercourse, causing all kinds of issues for river users like anglers and kayakers as well as landowners.

Ian Penny, secretary of a local angling club, said:

This non-native plant is very aggressive and plays havoc for fish and plant life. The Environment Agency did an absolutely fantastic job of totally removing the floating pennywort from over a mile stretch of the river. Everyone who enjoys the river has a responsibility to help the situation by reporting any new sightings via www.plantracker.org.uk.

Richard Atkinson, Policy Officer for British Canoeing, said:

British Canoeing takes its environmental responsibility very seriously and wants all water users to have fun and enjoy the natural environment. Non-native invasive species like pennywort have a significant impact on biodiversity, the environment and paddling.

We will be encouraging our members to report any sightings via the app and by reinforcing the importance of the check, clean, dry procedure after paddling.

People can visit www.plantracker.org.uk or download the Plant Tracker app co-developed by the Environment Agency to enable river users to record sightings of floating pennywort to help concentrate removal efforts where they are most needed.

Floating pennywort was introduced into the UK as an ornamental plant. For more information pond owners are encouraged to go to the

plantwise campaign at
<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise/pondowner/index.cfm>

Ends

Notes to Editors

Photographs available on request

Floating pennywort is an aggressive invasive non-native species of plant, introduced to this country as an ornamental aquatic plant. It tends to favour slower moving watercourses. It is now widespread in southern and eastern England, including parts of the River Thames and its backwaters between Reading and Kingston and the River Wey.

The Environment Agency is under no obligation to remove floating pennywort, however we do have discretion to remove it under our statutory powers.

Riparian owners are also not obliged to remove it, unless it can be shown that they planted it, though if it is on their land they do have a duty to take reasonable action to ensure it does not cause damage to neighbouring properties.

What you can do to help

Please continue to help us. If you see floating pennywort in the river Thames or its tributaries please report its location by:

- Emailing us: enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

Not sure if it is floating pennywort?

- Look at the plant tracker website or download the app at www.planttracker.org.uk
- You can also report sightings using the plant tracker app.

Are you a boater?

- Don't pass through clumps of the plant. It can break off and spread downstream or carry it upstream.
- Visually check your craft regularly and, if safe to do so, remove any visible weed, placing it well away from any river or other water body.

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743. Or e-mail us at southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk

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[Press release: Environment Agency confirms Blue Green Algae in three](#)

Locations across the Lake District

Following hot, dry, weather across Cumbria, the Environment Agency has confirmed reports of Blue Green Algae in three locations across the Lake District.

Ullswater, Coniston and Killington Lake have all tested positive for potentially toxic Blue Green Algae which can have a negative effect on the appearance, quality and use of the water.

Throughout the summer months, the Environment Agency test water samples and confirm if Blue Green Algae has been found. They then inform landowners of the blooms, so they can take the necessary steps to warn the public of any potential dangers. This could may be the local authority, or a private landowner.

Jim Ratcliffe from the Environment Agency says:

As always, if people see any environmental impacts due to dry weather, such as fish in distress, or Blue Green Algae, please report it to the Environment Agency incident line on 0800 80 70 60 open 24/7, so we can investigate and take appropriate action to protect people and the environment.

If our sampling confirms Blue Green Algae is present in a lake or river, we inform the landowner, and they are encouraged to take the necessary steps to inform users of the water, by way of posters, notices or other means.

The Environment Agency continues to work with water companies, businesses and farmers across the country to provide advice, helping to balance the needs of water users and minimise impacts on the environment of any dry weather.

Water bodies affected by Blue Green Algae, or Algal Blooms may be green, blue-green or greenish brown and can produce musty, earthy or grassy odours. Blooms can also cause foaming on the shoreline, which can sometimes be confused with sewage pollution. During a bloom, the water also becomes less clear, blocking sunlight and stopping plants in the water from growing.

Blue Green Algae naturally occurs in inland waters, estuaries and the sea. Blooms can form when their numbers become excessive. Once algal numbers are high, the bloom is likely to persist throughout the season, declining only on the onset of winter conditions.

Bloom and scum forming blue-green algae can produce toxins. Toxin producing blooms are called Harmful Algal Blooms. These toxins can be harmful to wild animals, farm livestock and domestic pets. In humans, they have been known to cause rashes after skin contact and illnesses if swallowed. Not all blue-green algae blooms and scums are toxic, but you can't tell just by looking at them, so it's best to assume they are.

For further information visit

www.gov.uk/government/publications/algal-blooms-advice-for-the-public-and-landowners/algal-blooms-advice-for-the-public-and-landowners.

Water is a precious resource and it is always helpful, in terms of future supplies and protecting the environment, for everyone to follow advice on saving water from their water company and use water wisely– especially during a period of dry weather.

Advice on what to look out for, and the effects of blue-green algae, can be found at www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/policies/algae.

[Press release: Households urged to play their part in tackling waste crime](#)

The Environment Agency (EA) has revealed that over a third of illegally dumped waste is from households.

The regulator is now urging homes to avoid illegal waste operators by taking extra care when it comes to disposing of rubbish.

A recent change in the law means that householders found to be knowingly involved in the illegal dumping of waste, could be liable for Landfill Tax or prosecuted alongside the actual illegal operators.

It's been found that unlicensed waste operators target householders via social media or local advertising, often luring customers with cheaper rates to dispose of unwanted furniture, building rubble or garden waste.

An Environment Agency spokesperson, said:

We must all come together to win the fight against waste criminals. We're doing our part with enforcement action and prosecution, whenever necessary. But we cannot do this alone. Households also have a responsibility to ensure their waste is collected by a responsible operator who will not pollute the environment with

waste or cost thousands to clear up and make safe.

It's estimated to cost the UK economy £600M every year, the equivalent of a new and fully staffed NHS hospital. More than 850 new illegal waste sites were discovered by the EA in 2016-17. While an average of two illegal waste sites are shut down every day, they continue to create severe problems for local communities and business, particularly in rural areas, as well as posing a risk to key national infrastructure.

To avoid contributing to waste crime, householders are advised to take the following steps:

- Check the waste management operator being used is a registered waste carrier. Registration documents should be available on request and should be inspected before services are rendered. [You can check environmental permits online](#) or call 03708 506506.
- Get a written receipt/transfer note complete with contact details, a description of waste removed and details of where the waste is being taken to.
- Note down the vehicle type, colour and registration number of the vehicle that's taking your waste away.

Report suspected waste crime to the EA incident hotline 0800 807060 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.