

Press release: Water quality improvements signal end for 1980s river equipment

Lea Marston lakes were created in the 1980s to collect contaminated sediment flowing down the River Tame from Birmingham and Minworth sewage treatment works. An automatic trash screen was built to collect logs and other debris to protect the equipment used to remove the contaminated sediment. It was never installed to protect people from flooding.

Over the last 30 years water quality in the River Tame has improved dramatically, and for over 15 years there has been no need to clear the sediment. This has meant that the lakes have become a wildlife haven for birds and other animals.

The trash screen costs over £200,000 each year to run and maintain and it has now got to the end of its design life. So, as it is not providing any environmental benefit and it's not reducing flood risk, the Environment Agency are planning to decommission it.

This will lead to further improvements in water quality; logs and other natural debris are good for healthy rivers as they create natural shallows and deep areas which is really good for fish and aquatic life.

Neil Lote, from the Environment Agency said:

We're really pleased to see the work we've been doing to improve river water quality have such wide benefits. The screen isn't reducing flood risk, and is actually acting as a barrier to further environmental improvements to the lakes and the river, so it makes sense to remove it.

After the Environment Agency remove the screen, they will be able to take more accurate measurements of water levels so their flood alerts and warnings will be more accurate as the water level won't be artificially altered by the screen.

The Environment Agency will closely monitor the lakes and the River Tame before they totally remove the screen to make sure the river is flowing as their expert assessments have shown.

Press release: Environment Agency agrees first Enforcement Undertaking for odour pollution

An Enforcement Undertaking (EU) has been agreed with Renewi UK Services Ltd, formerly Shanks Waste Management Ltd, after the company were suspected of causing odours, following a history of odour complaints.

The site on Sowerby Woods Industrial Estate, Barrow-in-Furness, is one of two in Cumbria which takes the county's municipal waste. Waste at the site is processed, the recyclates are removed and the remaining waste is turned into Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). Local businesses and residents have complained of being affected by odours from the site since 2014. These reports were investigated by the Environment Agency and the Operator has subsequently put additional measures in place to minimise the impact of odour.

When appropriate, it may be in the public interest to accept an EU from an Operator rather than prosecuting them for an offence. EUs allow those who are suspected of committing offences to restore the environment and to take steps to prevent a recurrence. When appropriate, they allow a quicker resolution than a prosecution and help offenders who are prepared to take responsibility for their actions to put things right voluntarily, working with their local environment.

Having worked with the Operator to identify changes that were needed the Environment Agency accepted the EU offer which included an increase in the biofilter stack height, alterations to the management of the processes on site and increased sampling and monitoring.

As part of the EU, the Operator has also donated £60,000 to a local environmental charity which will benefit the local environment, made compensation payments to a number of local businesses and individuals as well as paying the Environment Agency's investigation costs.

Claire Westgarth, Environment Agency Installations Team Leader said:

This is the first time an EU has been accepted for alleged permit breaches relating to odour at an Installation, which is a huge achievement.

Since the Operator invested and addressed the issues on site the reduction in odour has been noted by local businesses. Whilst a site like this may never be completely free of odour, we are really pleased with the outcome for the local community.

We are continuing to monitor odour around the site to check that the measures continue to be suitable for minimising the impact from odour.

The Environment Agency is receiving more EU Offers since they became available in 2015 and we assess and accept them where the offer adequately addresses the offending and restores and benefits the environment”
The EU was completed on 24 May 2018.

Press release: Call to sign up for flood warnings as up to 80% of Lincolnshire coastal communities yet to fully register

The Environment Agency has today urged residents on the Lincolnshire coast to sign up for flood warnings, as its flagship £7m Lincolnshire coastal flood scheme wraps up for this year.

Over the course of the £7m Lincolnshire Beach Management (LBM) scheme, the EA’s contractors pumped around 400,000 cubic metres of sand onto Lincolnshire’s coastal beaches. This sand helps to protect people and their properties by reducing flood risk and damage to the sea defences along the coast. The added sand acts as a buffer between the sea and the defences, taking out the brunt of the wave energy, thereby extending the lifespan of the EA’s defences.

Restoring sand levels that are naturally lost to the sea over the year helps the EA reduce flood risk to over 20,000 homes and businesses, 24,500 static caravans and 35,000 hectares of land.

But although the EA has staff working around the clock to protect people and their property from flooding, the risk of flooding can never be completely eliminated. That’s why the EA is calling for residents in coastal communities to sign up for its free flood warning service.

The latest figures show that thousands of people who live in ‘at risk communities’ along the Lincolnshire coast are still yet to sign up – with the percentage of residents fully registered for warnings in key communities like Skegness as low as 22%.

Flood warnings give people valuable information and time to prepare for flooding, and the EA’s free service enables residents to choose how they’d like to receive warnings and alerts. Although some residents will be enrolled automatically through their telephone provider, they can sign up fully by [online](#) or by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188. People can also make a flood plan [here](#) so they know what to do to prepare, act and survive.

Mark Robinson, senior flood risk advisor for the Environment Agency, said:

The completion of our £7m LBM coastal flood scheme will help us continue to protect and reduce flood risk for tens of thousands of people and their properties. This scheme extends the life of our sea defences by protecting them from the energy of the waves as they impact on the coast.

Although we work around the clock to reduce flood risk to Lincolnshire's coastal communities, the risk can never be completely eliminated. Our latest figures show that many people on Lincolnshire's coast are yet to sign up for flood warnings – warnings that could give them vital information and time to prepare and act for flooding.

We urge people in Lincolnshire's coastal communities to sign up to our free flood warning service now by visiting www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk or by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Press release: Spot check crackdown on waste carriers around London City Airport

Environment Agency officers are once again out in force to crack down on illegal waste crime around London City Airport.

Recently the Environment Agency supported a multi-agency day with partners including the Met police and DVSA – in a bid to reduce and disrupt waste crimes, metal/cable theft, tax evasion and prevent dangerous vehicles from being on the road.

During the day of action, vehicles were stopped by officers from the partner agencies to identify offences and non-compliance.

On one occasion, a vehicle carrying a suspected stolen cable was stopped. The driver was interviewed under caution by the Police with an Environment Officer on hand to question him about duty of care offences and non-compliance.

Environment officers also checked whether waste carriers were providing waste transfer notes to the sites where they collected waste from.

Senior Environmental Crime Officer Julia Leigh said:

We want to make it very clear to people that everyone has a duty of

care to ensure their waste is managed and disposed of correctly by the people they give it to. If you use illegal waste carriers to take your rubbish you risk being fined up to £5000. When someone offers to take your waste, you need to check that they are a registered waste carrier with us and they must provide you with a waste transfer note that tells you where they are taking the waste to.

Police and DVSA used their powers to prohibit a number of vehicles from being used on the road due to the dangerous defects they identified.

DVSA vehicle examiner Keith Barker, whose team took three vans off the road during the operation, said:

DVSA is committed to protecting you from unsafe drivers and vehicles. There's no excuse for driving with mechanical defects or with an overweight or unstable load. Those on London's roads who break the rules are putting themselves and others at risk. Working alongside our colleagues in the Environment Agency we'll crack down on rogue drivers and operators, making London's roads safer for all.

Waste being transported with no authorisations is likely to end-up at unregulated sites. Such sites store waste in vast quantities and for long periods of time posing significant risks to health and the environment. Risks can include fire which has the potential to contaminate water and land as well as air pollution from smoke. Illegal waste sites are often the cause of odour complaints too.

Julia Leigh added:

People who manage waste illegally cost the taxpayer millions every year in clean-up costs and make considerable sums of undeclared income. They also undercut legitimate business, and pose a direct threat to sustainable growth in the waste management sector. Our enforcement days make sure that the Right Waste goes to the right place □to stop unpermitted businesses undermining legitimate businesses and help create a level playing field.

Media enquiries: 0800 141 2743.

Press release: Anglers urged to report non-native salmon catches

The Environment Agency is urging anglers and commercial fishermen to report unusual catches after a non-native pink salmon was caught in North East waters.

The fish was captured in a commercial net, close to the mouth of the River Tyne in early June. Since then, there have been further unconfirmed reports of pink salmon being caught in coastal nets in the North East.

Around 200 non-native pink salmon were caught in waters off the North East and Yorkshire coast in 2017 and by anglers in the rivers Tyne, Coquet, Wear and Hull, but this is the first confirmed catch of 2018. Further afield, anglers have confirmed catches in rivers in Scotland and in western Ireland.

Pink salmon (*Onchorhynchus gorbuscha*), also known as humpback salmon, originate from the northern Pacific Ocean.

Millions were stocked in the White Sea region of north Russia from the 1950s until the early 2000s to develop a net fishery. As a result, some have established self-sustaining populations in rivers and coastal areas in Russia, Finland and northern Norway. These populations now appear to be expanding. This is the most likely origin of the pink salmon recently caught in the UK and Ireland.

Non-native species have the potential to disturb the natural balance of our environment so, the Environment Agency is collecting data on sightings of pink salmon so officers can monitor and review any potential impact on biodiversity.

The Environment Agency's Jonathan Shelley said:

The high numbers of pink salmon in our waters in 2017 was quite unusual. Now we've seen the first pink salmon caught in 2018, we're asking anglers and netsmen to make us aware of any other pink salmon they catch.

I'd urge them to contact us if they see any non-native salmon in the waters, with a date, location and if possible a photograph, which would really help us identify them and build up a picture of where they are.

At this stage we don't think there's likely to be a major impact on wild fish stocks, but it is important we build up as comprehensive

a picture of the number and distribution of pink salmon arriving, so we can take any necessary action.

Fishermen who hold a salmon licence and catch pink salmon are asked not to return the fish to the water if they are confident in their identification. Instead they are asked to dispatch them humanely and make the fish available to the Environment Agency for inspection and further analysis. If this is not possible, they are asked to send a sample of the scales. Coarse and trout anglers who catch pink salmon are asked to retain them in a keep net if possible and alert the Environment Agency to arrange collection. If this is not possible, the fish should be released.

Data collected will help the Environment Agency, fisheries researchers and other organisations with an interest in fisheries management in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Scandinavia, better understand how to manage the arrival of pink salmon in the UK.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the North East environmental monitoring team on 0800 807060 or email jonathan.shelley@environment-agency.gov.uk.