

Press release: Work starts on multi-million pound North East flood scheme

Work has started on site on a £2.5million project which will help protect around 100 homes and businesses in a South Tyneside community from flooding.

Monkton flood alleviation scheme will also see a section of the Bede Burn running underground opened up – known as ‘daylighting’ – and green space created for the community to enjoy.

The scheme is being delivered by South Tyneside Council and its partners at the Environment Agency and Tyne Rivers Trust. It’s expected to be completed in the winter.

It will tackle surface water flooding, which happens when rainwater does not drain away or soak into the ground, but lies or flows over the ground instead.



Communities better protected

Councillor Moira Smith, Lead Member for Area Management and Community Safety at South Tyneside Council, said:

We are delighted to see work get underway to reduce the risk of

flooding to properties which have been badly affected in the past.

It is never possible to guarantee that an area will be flood free. However by working with our partners we can certainly help to increase the level of protection and reassurance by delivering long-term sustainable schemes such as this.

These measures will go a long way to controlling the flow of surface water and diverting it away from local residents and businesses. Once complete, communities will be better protected with the added benefit of an enhanced local environment.



Wider social and environmental benefits

The scheme involves managing surface water where problems have been identified around the Monkton Burn, Lukes Lane Estate and Leam Lane area, Mill Lane, Lilac Walk/College Road, Devon Road, Campbell Park Road/ Thirlmere Court and Mountbatten Avenue areas.

The plan includes improved drainage and landscaping next to Toner Avenue School and as part of uncovering the Bede Burn an attenuation basin to store run-off water during storms will be created.

The scheme will have wider social and environmental benefit, encouraging local people and children involved in creating valuable new habitat.

The scheme is largely funded by the Environment Agency, as well as a

contribution from the local levy – which is money raised by local authorities for flood projects.

Leila Huntington, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

This is an excellent example of partners working together to not only develop a scheme which reduces the risk of surface water flooding but also creates valuable habitat and a space for the community to enjoy.

We've been working with the council and Tyne Rivers Trust to raise awareness of the importance of understanding flood risk and taking care of their environment and there'll be opportunities for the community to get involved. This is something they really can be proud of.

Liz Walters, Project Manager at Tyne Rivers Trust added:

This is a great example of using environmentally friendly ways to reduce the risk of flooding. As part of the project we'll be working with the local community and schools to create a green space for local residents to enjoy as well as creating new habitats for wildlife.

Anyone who'd like to volunteer to help with planting at Bede Burn should get in touch with Tyne Rivers Trust on 01434 636904.

The latest information on the scheme can be found at the [Monkton Flood Alleviation Scheme website](#)

Press release: Waste vehicle seized from gang

A vehicle belonging to an organised gang operating in South East England has been seized by the Environment Agency and Thames Valley Police, as part of an ongoing waste crime investigation. The vehicle is believed to be linked to the operation of an illegal waste site in the Maidenhead area.

The seizure, which took place last week, comes as the Environment Agency and the police move forward in their investigation to capture those responsible for occupying land unlawfully and accepting tonnes of waste, often from unsuspecting sources, leaving behind the rubbish to be cleared at the expense

of the landowner or taxpayer.

Illegal waste crime drains the UK economy of £1 billion each year in clean-up costs and lost tax revenues. It has a devastating effect on the environment and local communities with pest infestations and fires, which could lead to water and land contamination plus air pollution from smoke.

Nick Daykin, Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader, said:

This is a great result in an ongoing investigation with Thames Valley Police to apprehend a group of unscrupulous individuals. The power to seize vehicles is a relatively new and is now an important weapon in our armoury for disrupting this type of criminal activity. This is a big message to the criminal fraternity: you set up site yesterday, we will have one of your vehicles off the road today and we will do it again tomorrow!

Using illegal waste dealers may seem tempting in terms of cost, but it can help fund organised crime. Everyone has a responsibility for their own waste and if your waste is found at an illegal site you could be facing fines of up to £5,000. To avoid this, we encourage members of the public and local businesses to ask their waste carrier for proof of their Waste Carrier's Registration and to ask to see a 'waste transfer note' and if possible take a photo of it on their phone.

Contact

All press enquiries: 0800 141 2743

[Press release: Skip-It Torbay to pay thousands for skipping on asbestos removal](#)

A South Devon waste processing company has been ordered to pay £16,404 in fines and costs for failing to remove thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste from two sites in Torbay.

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

Armabridge Ltd, trading as Skip-It Torbay, operates from a waste transfer station at Barton Hill Way, Torquay. In June 2015 an Environment Agency officer discovered asbestos contamination in a pile of approximately 3,200

tonnes of residual waste at the site. In March 2016, following a lack of progress in dealing with the waste, the Environment Agency served an enforcement notice on the company to formalise the removal of the asbestos-affected material.

The company appealed against the enforcement notice, but the appeal was later dismissed by a planning inspector, who in January 2017 upheld the enforcement notice and gave the company 3 months to comply with its requirements.

In May 2017 an environment officer returned to the site and saw the pile of waste was still present. No significant progress had been made to remove it and as a result the company had breached its enforcement notice.

In January 2016, Armabridge Ltd was prosecuted for illegally depositing approximately 2,000 tonnes of asbestos contaminated waste at a second site, Kerswell Gardens, Torquay. In February 2017, following a lack of progress in clearing the waste, the Environment Agency served an enforcement notice requiring that the waste be removed.

In July 2017 an Environment Agency officer returned to the Kerswell Gardens site and found the hazardous waste was still present and that the enforcement notice had been breached.

Jacob Hess, for the Environment Agency, said:

This case emphasises the importance of robust waste acceptance procedures. Failure to segregate wastes appropriately can lead to complex and costly remediation at a later date.

We have recently run a campaign with local roofing businesses and waste operators to raise awareness of asbestos containing materials and how to correctly dispose of them.

Armabridge Ltd was fined a total of £13,334 and ordered to pay £3,070 costs by Plymouth magistrates after pleading guilty to 2 offences of failing to comply with enforcement notices relating to Barton Hill Way and Kerswell Gardens, Torquay contrary to Regulation 38(3) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010. The company has been given until 30 September 2018 to safely dispose of waste from both sites.

Press release: Wood fire man to pay £6,491

Waste company director Lee Reynolds has been fined £1,356 for the illegal storage of wood which went up in flames at Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. He was

also ordered to pay £5,000 costs and a victim surcharge of £135.

In just 2 months 3,000 tonnes of processed mixed waste wood was stashed in a warehouse at Lattersey Hill Industrial Estate before being abandoned some time before March 2015. A month later, the first of 3 significant fires broke out.

Reynolds, aged 36, formerly of Eye Road, Peterborough, was the sole director of Biomass Products UK Ltd which owned the illegal business.

Biomass Products UK Ltd was unlawfully operating the site without an Environmental Permit. In pleading guilty at Peterborough Magistrates' Court (14 February 2018), Reynolds accepted that the offence was due to his consent, connivance or attributable to his neglect as a director of the company.

Miss Wendy Foster, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court Reynolds had a 'flagrant disregard for the law' and had deliberately run the site illegally or allowed it to be run illegally. She said:

From January 2015 there can be no doubt that Reynolds was expressly aware that the activities were illegal and posed a significant fire risk.

She told the court that the site, a steel framed warehouse, was leased by Reynolds in October 2014 for 5 years from a pensions' holding company. The building's use was restricted to warehousing or workshop use, with a specific condition of the lease that no waste should be stored there. On the same day, Reynolds opened a business bank account stating he would use the building for storage, chipping and onward sale of waste wood.

Miss Foster said that deliveries were made only in the evening or at weekends and soon neighbours noticed a bad smell coming through the wall, which was reported to the landlord. The Environment Agency was alerted to the site in December 2014 and gained access early in January 2015 when it was found that the unit had been stacked from floor to ceiling with processed mixed treated wood. The unit was 7 metres high.

Reynolds was told he was operating without an environmental permit and was potentially committing an offence and that operations should stop immediately and the waste be removed. Waste transfer notes were also requested. The waste was not moved and no transfer notes handed over.

At a site meeting 2 weeks later temperature readings in the waste pile were so high that Reynolds was told the site was a fire risk and the waste needed to be removed imminently, but despite a following enforcement notice nothing was done and the site abandoned.

Following a fire, a multi-agency emergency action plan, put together two months before, was put into action and two-thirds of the waste wood was removed from the building, co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and paid for by the Environment Agency. Four fire service appliances

remained at the site for 12 more days leading to significant financial and logistical demands on the fire service.

Miss Foster said the building was structurally damaged and the remaining third of the wood inside had to be cleared by the landlord at their cost. The adjoining building was also damaged.

Reynolds told investigating officers that he had made all the decisions about the operation, had no experience of waste and had only intended to store the wood until it could be shipped abroad.

He claimed he had not been paid to take the wood and a man he had met in a coffee shop said he could buy it off him and ship it abroad for power supply.

He said he did not know he needed an environmental permit, hadn't looked at waste transfer notes and handed the keys back to the landlord before the first fire assuming they would deal with the waste.

He said he had been an estate agent for 10 years before starting the business.

Miss Foster said:

Research carried out by Mr Reynolds before starting the business was grossly inadequate and the activities that followed were reckless, if not a flagrant disregard for the law.

She said the failure to retain transfer notes for the wood was 'highly suspicious'.

After the hearing Environment Agency officer Emma D'Avilar said:

This individual has put his own gains before the environment, and the businesses and people who have to live and work on the industrial estate. His story does not add up and the court has seen through his fabricated story.

Companies that deal in waste are governed by extensive legislation and controls so that situations like these do not occur. It was a sham operation from the outset that had to be cleared up by the Environment Agency, Fire and Rescue Service and the landlord which put great pressure on already limited resources.

Reynolds pleaded guilty to:

Between 1 October 2014 and 12 March 2015 on land at Unit 1, Unit B1, Lattersey Hill Industrial Estate, Benwick Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, Biowood Products UK Limited did operate a regulated facility, namely a waste operation for the deposit and storage of waste, without being authorised by an environmental permit granted under Regulation 13 of the Environmental

Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 and that offence was due to your consent, connivance or attributable to your neglect as a director.

Contrary to Regulation 12(1)(a), 38(1)(a) and 41(1)(a) and (b) Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

Press release: Sandwell Valley Park remains open during construction works

Access preparation for the construction of phase 2 of the Environment Agency's Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme started late January and will continue for the next couple of months. The main construction for the scheme will begin late spring/early summer and will reduce the risk of flooding to 1,400 properties in the area.

Over the next few weeks park visitors will see tree felling operations and some movement of HGVs through the access routes by Forge Mill Farm and the railway bridge by the RSPB centre. Any HGV movement will be carried out within normal working hours Monday to Friday. Priority will be given to park users, to keep disruption to a minimum. Both Forge Mill Farm and the RSPB will remain open during construction, and a path between the 2 buildings will remain available throughout the construction of the scheme. Handsworth Golf Course will be modified to support the scheme, but it will remain open as usual.

Recent Environment Agency drop-in sessions updated the public about progress of works, and received valuable feedback from local community members and representatives of user groups in the park. Another drop-in session is being planned in the near future. Staff will be on hand to answer questions and confirm information such as timescales, footpath closures and traffic management. Attendees will also be able to view the plans and get an overview of the programme as a whole.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency project lead for the scheme said:

This is a very exciting scheme that is going to reduce the risk of flooding for 1,400 properties in the area. We have been working closely with our partners and the local community to ensure that we minimise disruption to the park users and keep the community informed as we progress through the construction phase.

Councillor David Hosell, cabinet member for highways and the environment, said:

Council officers have worked hard with the Environment Agency to ensure that the scheme has minimal effect on visitors to the Valley.

We are delighted that part of the scheme and work in the Country Park will include new fencing for improved animal pens at Forge Mill Farm, extending it as a visitor attraction. There will also be improvements to the entrance into the park for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders entering from the Old Newton Road.

More information about the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme is available [online](#). Alternatively contact the Environment Agency project team at witton.frms@environment-agency.gov.uk.

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 the Environment Agency's [flood information pages](#) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.