

Press release: Exeter flood defence scheme

The construction of the Exeter flood defence scheme is now well advanced with completion of the whole scheme expected at the end of 2018. The scheme is a partnership between the Environment Agency, Devon County Council and Exeter City Council. The flood defences will reduce the risk of flooding to more than 3,200 homes and businesses in Exeter.

As part of the new defences being built in the north of the city it will be necessary to close Station Road from 9 April 2018 for 9 weeks. Station Road is located near St David's Station and links Exwick Road to Cowley Bridge Road across the River Exe.

Two flood gates will be built across Station Road on either side of the river and the flood relief channel. When not in use the gates will sit behind the footpaths; when a flood is expected the gates will be closed thereby completing the flood defences and protecting the properties on each side of the river.

It is necessary to close Station Road to vehicles during the construction work due to the size of the foundations required to support the gates. Pedestrians and cyclists will be able use the footpaths across the bridges except for the 4 weekends in May when complete closures will be in place.

Cllr Roger Croad, Devon County Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environmental Services said:

This is an essential element of the flood defence scheme and these flood gates will reduce flood risk to hundreds of homes and businesses in the city. Every effort will be made to minimise disruption during the closure of Station Road, but the long term benefits will outweigh the short term inconvenience.

The Environment Agency and Network Rail have co-ordinated their work such that Network Rail will carry out essential maintenance work on their level crossing during this time to avoid the need for a separate closure at a future date.

The Environment Agency will be holding a drop-by briefing on Station Road on 12 March 2018 from 4pm to 7pm to explain the works and diversion routes. The briefing is in the public car park on the Exwick side of the bridge. You can also see the latest information on GOV.UK.

Throughout the works detailed traffic and pedestrian diversion signage will be erected to direct people around the closures.

Richard Cox, the scheme's project manager said:

We'd like to thank commuters and others for their patience while we carry out these essential works. We regret that there will be inconvenience and we urge motorists to plan ahead and allow extra journey time. If people have questions regarding the diversion routes or works they can call the Exeter scheme information line on 07769 162338.

Press release: Fourteen men fined for fishing without a licence

The Environment Agency is reminding anglers of the importance of having a rod licence after successfully prosecuting fourteen men last month.

The anglers were caught committing the offences in 14 separate incidents across the North East in July, August and September last year, including three in Hexham, and one each in Bellingham, Harlow Hill and Wylam. They received combined fines of £3,749, including £1,784 in costs and £300 victim surcharge. All pleaded guilty with the exception of two who were found guilty in their absence.

Rachael Caldwell, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

We've started the year as we mean to go on – taking strong action against illegal fishing.

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. Those that don't are cheating their fellow anglers and endangering the future of the sport. In addition rod licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

The Environment Agency carries out enforcement work all year round. Fisheries enforcement work is intelligence-led, targeting known hot-spots and where illegal fishing is reported.

All income from rod licence sales is used to fund Environment Agency work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries, including improving habitats for fish and facilities for anglers, tackling illegal fishing and working with partners to encourage people to give fishing a go.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – you can buy them online at Gov.uk.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it

directly to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Press release: South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee has two vacancies

More than 5 million people are at risk of the devastating effects of flooding in the UK, with thousands of properties at risk in the south west.

The Environment Agency is looking for enthusiastic people to help manage flood risk throughout the south west and make a real difference to people's lives and to the environment we live in.

The Agency is looking for people from all walks of life to fill vacancies on the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC). Being an RFCC member is an exciting opportunity to help guide local flood and coastal management across the whole region.

The RFCC covers Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The successful applicants will play an important role in deciding on local priorities, approving programmes of work, and supporting the Environment Agency and lead local flood authorities in working with communities and other partners.

They will have a key role in balancing local priorities and making sure that investment is co-ordinated at the river catchment and shoreline scale, as well as promoting the consideration of climate change impacts in local decision making.

The Environment Agency is recruiting a member to represent land/country farming and another member to represent business interests.

Land/country farming

- provide a land management perspective at committee – working with the inland member and conservation members
- help the committee to understand issues affecting inland communities, landowners and farmers and how this impacts on river process and the coast
- monitor and review flood risk management and the river needing to be addressed
- provide a link between the committee, land management and farming groups

in the committee's area

- advocate good soil management with the farming sector to benefit flood risk and reduce diffuse pollution

Business interests

- experience in securing funding/investment from/for the private sector
- currently working in the business sector and understands the impact that flooding can have on private business
- established links to economic/regeneration institutions such as chamber of commerce, local enterprise partnership and other business leader forums

People from a wide range of backgrounds are invited to apply for the posts, especially those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and women who are currently under-represented on regional flood and coastal committees.

A key role will be ensuring the aims of the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy are embodied within the committee's decisions and to ensure consistency between strategic and local plans.

Further information and how to apply is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/south-west-regional-flood-and-coastal-committee> or contact pamela.udy@environment-agency.gov.uk on 02084 746298. The closing date for applications is Thursday 5 April at 5.30pm.

Press release: Stanford-le-Hope man fined over £7,000 for fly-tipping

A man has been ordered to pay more than £7,000 in fines, compensation and costs after he admitted leaving mixed commercial waste on land owned by Thurrock Council.

Billy Prince illegally dumped the waste at a compound located on land at Stanford Road, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex in May 2015.

The compound is used to store street cleaning and highways team equipment and is not an authorised waste collection facility or site permitted for authorised waste disposal.

On 11 May 2015, Prince used a vehicle owned by his employer to unlawfully deposit a quantity of mixed commercial waste at the compound.

CCTV showed a vehicle which was later found to have been driven by Prince depositing waste at the site.

There was a large yellow sign at the compound entrance that stated 'No

Tipping’.

The Environment Agency investigated the incident and determined that the offending was deliberate and undermined legitimate waste management activities. The offending caused inconvenience to the council and clean-up costs.

Prince was sentenced at Chelmsford Magistrates’ Court last week. The court heard Prince had pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity and was ‘very remorseful’ of his actions, having lost his job as a result.

He was fined £2,000, ordered to pay compensation to Thurrock Council to the value of £3,970, costs of £1,105 and a victim surcharge of £120.

Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader Lesley Robertson said she was pleased with the sentencing outcome, and it showed that the courts were taking such incidents seriously. She said:

A community order or custody, as well as a financial penalty, could have been imposed. As this was a single offence the penalty was reduced and the magistrates felt a financial penalty, which totalled more than £7,000, was appropriate.

This shows that even with a single fly tip the penalties are very high.

[News story: ‘Far too many serious pollution incidents’ says Environment Agency water quality report](#)

Environment Agency Chair, Emma Howard Boyd has called on water companies and farmers to cut the amount of pollution incidents harming England’s waters and for penalties to be made tougher, as the EA publishes [The State of the Environment: Water Quality](#) report today.

Although the number of serious incidents has fallen by almost two thirds since 2001, the report reveals that 317 occurred in 2016. Agriculture is now the largest sector responsible for water pollution, while the number of serious incidents by water companies has remained at around 60 per year for the past decade – more than one a week.

The report shows that water quality has improved markedly over the last 30 years, following more than a century of poorly regulated industrial practices. England has the cleanest bathing waters since records began and

rivers that were biologically dead are reviving. But there is more work to do to achieve the Environment Agency's ambition of a cleaner, healthier and better managed water environment

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

Water quality is better than at any time since the Industrial Revolution thanks to tougher regulation and years of hard work by the Environment Agency and others.

But there are still far too many serious pollution incidents which damage the local environment, threaten wildlife and, in the worst cases, put the public at risk.

I would like to see fines made proportionate to the turnover of the company and for the courts to apply these penalties consistently. Anything less is no deterrent.

The report reveals that the Environment Agency has taken more than 50 million samples to monitor water quality over the past 20 years. In 2016, 76% of the tests used to measure the health of rivers were rated good. However, only 14% of rivers reached good ecological status overall – this is because the failure of one test means the whole water body fails to obtain good or better status.

The most common reason for rivers not achieving good status was phosphorus, which produces algae and depletes oxygen. More than half of rivers have been found to have unacceptable levels of phosphorus, caused by sewage effluent and pollutants from farmland.

The report also states that groundwaters have been deteriorating in quality over the last 60 years with only 53% achieving good chemical status in 2016.

Defra's [25-year environment plan](#) sets out a challenge to improve at least three quarters of waters so that they are close to their natural state. The report identifies population growth, climate change and plastic pollution as some of the potential threats to water quality in future.

It calls on businesses and the public to do more to protect the environment by disposing of household chemicals responsibly, not putting fats and oils down the drain, and minimising use of single-use plastics.

[Read the State of the Environment: Water Quality report](#)