

Press release: £21 million Sheffield flood defence completed

A £21 million flood defence scheme to better protect hundreds of businesses in Sheffield's Lower Don Valley has opened today (Thursday 25 January).

The Lower Don Valley area is second only to the city centre for economic importance to Sheffield. The new flood alleviation scheme will benefit more than 500 businesses and safeguard around five thousand jobs, key roads in and out of the city and homes along a five mile stretch of the River Don.

New 'hard defences' have been installed along an 8km stretch of the river to raise flood defence levels comprising new gravity walls, installation of flood gates and the fitting of more than 300 flap valves to pipes and openings which discharge to the river.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency Chief Executive, said:

Flooding has devastating costs for people and businesses – and we know this has been the case for the people of Sheffield. This fantastic scheme will not only benefit homes and businesses in the city but it will also safeguard thousands of jobs due to the increased level of protection it provides.

It's been great to see Sheffield City Council and the Environment Agency working together in partnership to better protect the Lower Don Valley.

It is the first scheme of its kind in the UK to have business owners contributing to the costs of the flood protection through the creation of a formal Business Improvement District – a business led partnership created to bring additional services to local businesses. The Environment Agency and Defra contributed £19.3 million towards the total capital cost (£20.7 million), with local businesses contributing £1.4 million.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This partnership funding model showcases the way industry can work with Government to provide wider benefits to the community with local business investment in this project. The Sheffield Lower Don Valley scheme is protecting jobs, businesses and vital infrastructure which the whole city can be very proud of.

In Yorkshire, the Government is investing £430 million over the next four years to reduce the flood risk to a further 63,000 homes

and businesses.

The Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, Sir James Bevan, and the Leader of Sheffield City Council Councillor Julie Dore were among those at the event, also attended by local business owners, to mark the completion of the work.

Councillor Julie Dore said:

I am delighted to see we have fulfilled our promise to strengthen our defences against floods. I would like to express my thanks to all the partners involved in creating flood protection that is fit for purpose.

Our investment in this scheme means we are not only securing the future of existing businesses and homes but also making land more suitable for new homes and regeneration. This will create more jobs, investment and growth in the city.

Today marks the beginning of our commitment to preventing any future devastation. In the coming months and years we will be doing more work to ensure that we reduce the risk of floods and protect residents, homes and businesses across Sheffield.

The scheme has been shortlisted for an award as the best project over £5 million in the Institute of Civil Engineers Yorkshire and Humber Awards 2018.

Sheffield has suffered severe flooding with the most recent in 2007, 2009 and 2012.

Press release: Car breaker given £3,952 penalty for waste documentation offences

Yesterday (Wednesday 24 January 2018), Paul Tranter of Turnings, Knighton, pleaded guilty at Merthyr Tydfil Magistrates' Court to a charge of failing to produce waste transfer notes for his business.

The 49-year-old was fined £2,000, ordered to pay £1,782.68 in costs along with a £170 victim surcharge.

Circumstances of the offence

As part of a wider investigation into Mr Tranter's activities in relation to end of life vehicles at the Peugeot Breakers site in Knighton, Environment Agency officers served a notice on him on 7 September 2016. This notice required Mr Tranter to produce waste transfer notes or written records relating to the transfer of all controlled waste to and from the site between 10 September 2014 and 7 September 2016.

A waste transfer note is used to record the transfer of waste between different holders. This can be between the producer of the waste and a waste carrier, or a waste carrier and a disposal site or transfer station. There is a requirement to produce these notes under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

No documentation was received by the Environment Agency from Mr Tranter and so a letter was sent to him on 12 October 2016 stating that the requirements of the notice had not been complied with. A fixed penalty notice for the failure to comply with the notice, served on him in September 2016, was issued on 19 January 2017, requiring payment of the penalty within one month. To date the Environment Agency has still not received the documentation required and Mr Tranter has failed to pay the fixed penalty notice.

Remarks on the day of court hearing

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

Waste transfer notes allow everyone involved in the transfer to know what they are dealing with so they can manage it properly. Waste, if not managed properly, can damage the environment and blight local communities so these transfer notes allow us to check that waste has been disposed of safely and lawfully.

During sentencing the magistrates commented that Mr Tranter had been foolish to ignore the notices and noted that this was not his first incident with the Environment Agency (warning letter in 2011).

In mitigation Mr Tranter stated that he didn't understand the requirements around waste transfer notes, runs a small business and wants to 'keep going'. He also stated that the waste did always go to permitted facilities, although there were no transfer notes to show this.

Press release: North east rivers get fish stocks boost

The Environment Agency has released more than 40,000 young fish into north east rivers during last year to give stocks a boost.

The fish – chub, dace, roach, bream, barbel, tench, grayling, crucian carp and rudd – are just some that were released right across the region during 2017.

And on Monday (22 January), the Environment Agency's north east fisheries team started off the new year by releasing 4,000 chub and 5,000 roach into the River Skerne at Darlington.

All the fish were reared at the Environment Agency's fish farm near Calverton, Nottinghamshire, using funding from rod licence sales.

Last year fish were released into rivers such as the Tees, Wear, Skerne, Gaunless, Browney, Blyth, Pont, Clow Beck and Langley Beck as well as Stillwater fisheries.

The work is part of the Environment Agency's ongoing plan to develop and restore rivers and fisheries in the region, targeting those which have previously been affected by pollution or where barriers affect fish passage.



Paul Frear, Fisheries Officers for the Environment Agency in the north east, said:

Restocking is one of many things we do together with our partners to develop fisheries, including reducing the impact of pollution, improving habitats and removing barriers to fish migration.

The Environment Agency releases fish into our waterways annually. Fisheries officers target fish stocking activity using data from national fish surveys to identify where there are problems with poor breeding and survival. Paul added:

By releasing fish into the rivers it helps the process of natural recovery and development. We're pleased to be able to provide these young fish as part of our commitment to rod licence paying anglers. Restoration and the creation of new fisheries for all people to enjoy is a very important aspect of our work.

Many of our industrialised rivers have improved dramatically in water quality in the last 30 years and targeted and appropriate restocking has helped the restoration of natural fish stocks and viable fisheries.

Angling is a great way to keep healthy and enjoy the natural environment. All rod licence income is used to fund work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.



Fishing is free for children under 16, although those aged between 12 and 16 still need a junior licence. For anyone over 16, a full annual licence costs from just £30, with some short term and concessionary licences also available. You can buy your rod licence online at the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk)

Press release: Crackdown on illegal waste and fishing activities

During 2017 the Environment Agency successfully prosecuted 108 individuals and companies for flouting waste and fishing laws in the North East resulting in almost £170,000 in fines and costs.

There were 16 prosecutions of individuals or companies for waste offences, amounting to total fines of £62,763 and costs of £40,493.

There were also two custodial sentences, three suspended sentences, two community orders and two rehabilitation orders. The courts also awarded a total of £14,735 in compensation to those affected by the crimes, which included a landowner left with costs of £100,000 to remove 585 tonnes of waste dumped on their land.

In addition, the Environment Agency revoked two environmental permits from waste companies who continually failed to meet their permit conditions.

Courts imposed a further £19,162 in fines and costs on an individual and company for twice polluting a protected water course.

In fisheries enforcement, there were three serious offences resulting in £1115 in fines, costs and victim surcharge, plus two 12 month conditional discharges.

There were a further 87 offenders prosecuted for 119 rod licence offences, including 77 offences for fishing without a licence. This resulted in total fines, costs and victim surcharge of £29,461, with three offenders also given conditional discharges.

Enforcement activity has taken place right across the North East in Teesside, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and Northumberland.

The Environment Agency's enforcement teams work alongside other specialist teams to support businesses in abiding by their permit conditions, but take tough action against those who deliberately flout regulations.

Fisheries enforcement officers carry out regular patrols and act on information and intelligence to target illegal activity on our rivers.

Jamie Fletcher, Environment Manager at the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

We take illegal waste and fishing activity very seriously. We have had some excellent results in court over the last year and will continue to work hard in the coming year to ensure enforcement action is taken against those who flout the law.

Waste crime can cause serious pollution to the environment, puts communities at risk and undermines legitimate businesses, impacting on investment and economic growth.

Similarly those fishing illegally are cheating other anglers and putting the future of the sport and quality of our rivers in jeopardy.

We have specialist teams that work hard to target those suspected of being involved in illegal activity and to ensure any necessary action is taken against them.

We work closely with a wide range of partners including local authorities, police and the fire service, and I'd like to thank them for their continued support.

To report information about illegal activity contact Crimestoppers on 0800

News story: Human skull found by dog walker sheds light on Somerset's history

An important historical find has been made in Somerset when a Langport dog walker found a well-preserved human skull.

Roger Evans of Newtown found the skull along the banks of the River Sow in March 2017. The skull was reported to the police and analysed. After several months the results revealed it belonged to a woman aged 45 or older during the late Iron Age (380-190BC) – several centuries before the first Roman invasion of Britain.

The discovery hinted there may be more clues in the area, so in December the Environment Agency reduced water levels where the remains were found so South West Heritage Trust and the agency's own archaeologist could investigate.

No other human remains were found, but the archaeologists discovered that the skull lay close to a series of round, timber posts driven deep into the river bed. These may be the remnant of a causeway or raised walkway and more posts could still survive hidden in the mud. Radio carbon dating of the posts is being carried out to see if they and the skull are of the same date. Further groups of posts were seen further down the channel, suggesting other prehistoric wooden structures are present nearby.

The Environment Agency returned water levels to normal to provide a measure of protection to the timber posts and any other archaeological remains still in the channel.

Stephen Dean, Environment Agency archaeologist, said:

The chance discovery on the banks of the River Sow has shone fresh light on Somerset's hidden history. It has already added valuable information to the Somerset Historic Environment Record and reinforced our connections with the South West Heritage Trust.

The Environment Agency's future work on the River Sow, carried out on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority, will be informed by past discoveries such as these and will look to capture more of the area's rich historical and archaeological story.

The discovery of the Sowy Skull is also a poignant reminder that, in looking to the future, the work we do must be informed by an understanding and respect for Somerset's rich cultural and natural heritage. Only by understanding this heritage can we hope to leave it a condition fit for generations to come.

Analysis by a human bone expert showed that the female skull suffered considerably from gum disease and tooth loss. Her diet included coarse material, which had unevenly worn her remaining teeth, and resulted in severe osteoarthritis in the joint of her right jaw. She had also suffered at least one episode of chronic illness or nutritional stress during childhood. The woman's head appears to have been deliberately removed at, or shortly after death.

Richard Brunning, the South West Heritage Trust archaeologist, said:

Severed heads are not an unusual discovery for the Iron Age, but the placement of the skull in a wetland beside a wooden structure is very rare, possibly reflecting a practice of making ritual offerings in watery environments.

Notes to editors:

The South West Heritage Trust is an independent charity committed to protecting and celebrating Somerset and Devon's rich heritage. As well as the widely-praised Museum of Somerset and the redeveloped Somerset Rural Life Museum, in Glastonbury, the Trust manages state-of-the-art facilities in Taunton and Exeter to care for the extraordinary archive collections of the two counties. The Trust also provides essential advice about the historic environment and manages historic sites. Visit www.swheritage.org.uk/.

Archeologists first delved into the wetlands between Burtle, Westhay and close to Glastonbury in the nineteenth century. In the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Farmers made wooden trackways to cross the wetlands of the Levels and Moors area, and also occasionally deposited valuable objects and human remains in the shallow waters. By the Iron Age, some settlements were actually made in the wetland – the Glastonbury and Meare Lake Villages – which could only be reached by dug-out canoes.

Work commissioned by the Environment Agency at Steart Marshes at the mouth of the River Parrett has shown the presence of Iron Age farming communities on the Steart peninsula. Studies there, and further along the Parrett, have shown that the floodplain was constantly changing in response to sea level rise, climate change, and human activity.

A community excavation by the South West Heritage Trust on the nearby 'island' of hard geology in the floodplain at Aller, discovered Iron Age defences and numerous circular pits for storing grain. The island may have acted as a defensive refuge from attacks and would have overlooked the wetlands where the skull was deposited.