

Press release: Managing hazardous materials advice for Astonfields businesses

The advice and guidance Environment Agency staff gave to businesses on the Astonfields Industrial Estate, Stafford, will ensure that local businesses manage their hazardous waste and materials to help prevent pollution in the future.

In this unannounced day of action, more than 50 businesses were visited and inspected by Environment Agency staff. The inspections checked a number of things, including how hazardous materials are stored, how they are disposed of, whether the site and its drains are maintained and if businesses know what to do if something did spill into surface water drains.

James Perry, from the Environment Agency's Hazardous Waste Team, explains why it's important to reduce the risk of pollution:

Hazardous materials used in industrial processes can be washed into the surface water drains by rain. These drains usually flow directly into a brook or a river which means hazardous materials can pollute the water, causing a problem for fish and other aquatic life. In serious cases, a pollution can also affect other businesses who use the water for their industrial processes or even affect drinking water.

By offering advice and guidance on measures businesses can take to reduce the risk of pollution, we're seeking to make sure the owners have robust processes in place to prevent a pollution and know what to do if something goes wrong. This is really important; at the Environment Agency we follow the 'polluter pays principle', so if something does happen, the company responsible will have to pay the costs of clean up and recovery.

The Marston Brook flows near the industrial estate and has suffered from low levels of pollution from materials washed into it from surface water drains for a number of years. It is hoped this day of action will reduce the level of pollution seen in the Marston Brook.

If anyone is concerned about the business practices at any site, or if there is a pollution in a river or brook, please contact the Environment Agency's 24/7 incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: Strategic Review of Charges Consultation Launched

The Environment Agency is launching a public consultation today (Thursday 30th November) on the cost of its permits and business charges. Regulating business costs the taxpayer money, but under proposals laid out in the Strategic Review of Charges, the burden on the public purse would be significantly reduced. The proposed changes will mean that businesses pay for the full services they use rather than the public – a more financially-sustainable model that will lead to long-term environmental improvements.

This the biggest review of charges that the Environment Agency has ever carried out, and has involved a 12 month period of engagement with businesses and trade associations. There have been very limited changes to business charges since 2011, with costs kept below inflation (CPI).

The proposals are for a simpler and more consistent charging arrangement. Our charges will reflect the amount of regulatory effort needed at a site. Businesses that are well-managed and low-hazard present a low environmental risk and would be charged less. Higher-risk or poor-performing businesses would be charged more.

If the new charges are implemented, the Environment Agency will also be able to invest more in our permitting service. This is vital to improve the standards of certain sectors, such as waste and nuclear industries.

Neil Davies, Environment Agency Director of Regulated Services, said:

Our work to regulate industry protects and enhances the environment. The proposed changes will mean that businesses pay for the full services they use rather than the public. This is more financially-sustainable, will lead to a better service to businesses and long-term improvements to the environment.

We have been engaging with trade associations over the last year while we were developing these proposals. Their input into this process has been really valuable and I urge them to take part in the consultation.

The consultation will run until 12 January 2018, with the proposed charges being introduced in April 2018 – the start of the financial year. To have your say: click [here](#).

News story: New Farming Rules for Water

From 2 April 2018 [new rules for all farmers in England](#) will be introduced to help protect water quality, by standardising good farm practices that many are already performing and offering a new approach to regulation.

In essence the rules require farmers to:

- keep soil on the land;
- match nutrients to crop, and soil needs, and
- keep livestock fertilisers and manures out of the water.

The Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

These new rules are a win-win for farmers and the environment. They will help improve water quality, set a level playing field for all farmers, help businesses save money from better resource efficiency and improve their resilience.

Our ambition is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and these new rules will help us deliver our plans for a Green Brexit along with a better future for farming business.

Farmers and land managers will be able to determine what approach is best for their land, through methods such as deciding when it is safe to spread fertilisers.

The farming rules for water were drawn up with farming and environment stakeholders to recognise and build on the good progress that a great many farmers have made in trying to tackle pollution.

There are eight rules, five about managing fertilisers and manures and three on managing soils.

The fertiliser rules require farmers to test their soils, then plan and apply their fertiliser or manure to improve soil nutrient levels and meet crop needs. They include minimum storage and spreading distances from water bodies.

They also require the farmer to assess weather and soil conditions to reduce the risk of runoff and soil erosion.

The remaining rules require farmers to manage livestock by protecting land within five metres of water and reducing livestock poaching.

In addition to these rules, farmers are encouraged to incorporate organic fertilisers into the soil within 12 hours of spreading to significantly

reduce ammonia pollution.

Farming rules for water are part of a whole package of measures to help farmers and land managers look after the environment. The government is also investing £400 million through Countryside Stewardship which supports farmers in creating or restoring precious habitats and a £12 million farm ammonia reduction grant has incentivised farmers to tackle agricultural emissions.

The new rules will not only benefit farming businesses: clean water helps tourism, fishing and shellfish businesses to thrive, reduces the cost of treatment and protects biodiversity.

The Environment Agency will roll out the rules through an advice led approach, working with farmers to meet the requirements before enforcement action is taken.

Press release: Call for anglers to submit their salmon and trout catch returns

The Environment Agency are calling upon all migratory salmon and sea trout rod licence holders to submit their catch return records by 1 January 2018.

The submission of angler's reports plays a vital role in the assessment and management of salmon and sea trout stocks in England. The information submitted forms part of the wider Environment Agency's Salmon 5 Point Approach, which aims to conserve and enhance England's salmon populations.

The submission is a legal requirement for all salmon and sea trout anglers, and each submission will go towards securing the future of the sport.

Lawrence Talks, National Senior Advisor for Salmonid Management, said:

Salmon are a highly valued fish in the world of angling and we ask all migratory salmon and sea trout rod licence holders to complete a 'catch return' in order to help us secure the future of this sport.

The Environment Agency, Government and partners are committed to taking action to conserve and enhance England's salmon populations. We use the catch return data to assess and manage salmon and sea trout stocks in a sustainable way.

Catch returns can be completed online at [GOV.UK/catch-return](https://gov.uk/catch-return) and need to be submitted by 1st January 2018.

Anglers can fill in their catch returns online: www.gov.uk/catch-return

Press release: Clean-up takes place following heavy rainfall

The Environment Agency has removed a large amount of debris from a County Durham dam following rain and high river flows.

Prolonged heavy rain saw river levels rise across the north east leading to Environment Agency field teams working through the night to keep the region's rivers flowing.

Spring Gardens dam – which reduces the risk of flooding to West Auckland from the River Gaunless – prevented large amounts of debris from causing blockages further downstream.

This week the field team has been back out clearing up after the heavy rain resulted in 12 Flood Alerts being issued across the region.



Alex Murray, Field Team Leader, said:

The dam is designed to hold back flood water during high flows, and then slowly release it once the threat has passed.

While it wasn't necessary for it to operate during the heavy rain last week, it prevented debris from reaching downstream and creating blockages, which is equally important and helps reduce the risk of flooding to the town.

It resulted in a large build-up of debris so this week we've been clearing it up, along with our other flood defence assets, to ensure they are clear and in working order ready to do their job again.

Our Field Teams regularly carry out work to check and maintain our rivers right across the north east to make sure anything which is deemed a potential flood risk is removed.

Spring Gardens dam was built after West Auckland and South Church were badly affected by floods in 2000.

People are advised to [check if they live in a flood risk area and sign up for flood warnings](#) and find out how they can [prepare for a flood](#)