

Press release: Environment Agency urges caution as high tides expected on south coast

Environment Agency staff are working around the clock to minimise flood risk and to protect people, property and land. Teams are out clearing trash screens, inspecting coastal defences, and checking river levels.

Richard O'Callaghan, Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We're expecting to see a combination of high tides and winds leading to an increased tidal surge for Saturday around midday. Due to Storm Brian we are currently assessing key areas at risk on the current forecasts and planning for our response.

With a particularly high tide due in Yarmouth at midday tomorrow, we will be moving 100 metres of temporary barrier to the Isle of Wight today, ready to deploy in the morning. We will also be putting the boards into the RNLI slipway in Lymington this evening, as well as closing the gates tonight and tomorrow for the high tides.

Anyone concerned should act now and sign up to our free Flood Warning Service so they can be ready to take action if they get these warnings to protect themselves and their property. Please check your flood risk and sign up for our free warnings at gov.uk/flood or by calling 0345 988 1188. You can also get the latest updates on Twitter by following us at @EnvAgencySE.

We will continue to monitor the situation very closely and we urge communities to be aware of their risk and be ready to act.

For media enquiries, contact 0800 141 2743.

Press release: Environment Agency warns of coastal flooding in Dorset

The Environment Agency is urging people to remain vigilant to potential coastal flooding as high winds and rain is forecast to hit the Dorset coast on Saturday.

Current forecasts show a low pressure storm arriving on Saturday 21 October which, combined with close-to-spring tides, means flood warnings are likely to be issued along the Dorset coast.

Areas likely to be impacted include West Bay, Lyme Regis, Poole Harbour, Chiswell, Preston Beach and Christchurch.

Rachel Jacobs of the Environment Agency said:

We urge people to take care on the Dorset coast this weekend. Strong winds pose a risk of waves overtopping defences and whilst coastal storms can look dramatic, we strongly advise against “wave watching” or taking “storm selfies”.

Please take note of road closures and don't attempt to walk or drive through flood water. Just 30cm of flowing water can move a car and driving through water can also create waves.

Environment Agency teams have been working around the clock to check flood defences and have been taking precautionary measures such as closing tidal gates. Teams will continue to be out this weekend and are ready to respond to flooding.

The Environment Agency continue to monitor the situation and will review plans as and when the forecast changes.

Residents and businesses are encouraged to [sign up to flood warnings](#) on the Environment Agency website. People can also call Floodline on 0345 988 1188. Once registered, if a flood warning is issued, they will receive an automatic message by telephone, SMS text message, email and/or fax.

Find out [how to prepare for flooding and if your home is at risk](#).

Press release: River restoration project wins national conservation award

A partnership project between the Environment Agency and the Box Moor Trust in Hemel Hempstead has been recognised with a national award.

The project has transformed a 1 kilometre stretch of the River Bulbourne in Hemel Hempstead from a straight, wide and silty river into a meandering chalk stream, which is a globally rare habitat.

The 'Bringing Back the Bulbourne' project scooped the 'best medium scale' award at The Wild Trout Trust Conservation Awards held at the Savile Club in London. The awards seek to recognise and encourage excellence in habitat management and conservation and celebrate effort, ingenuity and imagination.

Nancy Baume from the Environment Agency said:

We are delighted that our work to restore the River Bulbourne has been recognised by the Wild Trout Trust. This project represents years of hard work for us and our partners.

The Environment Agency is committed to working with partners to protect and restore our chalk streams for the benefit of wildlife so future generations are able to enjoy these unique resources.

The £60,000 project has breathed new life into the river. The natural meander of the river has now been restored, creating new habitats for plants and wildlife. Removing a weir has allowed fish to move along the river, while cutting back trees has allowed more light to reach the river.



An aerial photo showing the straight river before the project works started.



An aerial photo showing the restored river after the project works.

Volunteers have installed woody habitat features along the channel which create refuge areas for fish and other wildlife.

Other works include installing fencing to reduce bank erosion from livestock, creation of kingfisher banks to increase nesting opportunities, and improving ford crossing points across the river. The project has been designed to incorporate natural flood management techniques, and the final phase of the project, to create wetland scrapes, will take place later this year.

People walking through the moors can now appreciate a rare and iconic chalk stream with all of the rich diversity of wildlife that it supports.

The River Bulbourne is an example of a chalk stream, which is a watercourse that flows from chalk-fed groundwater. Chalk streams are a very rare habitat globally, with more than 85% of all the chalk streams in the world found in England.

David Kirk the Chairman of the The Box Moor Trust said:

The Box Moor Trust would like to thank all of those involved at the Environment Agency, in particular Nancy Baume and Jack Herriot, for all of their hard work and dedication over the last few years. The Trust would also like to thank Allen Beechey of the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project for his help and our dedicated team of volunteers whose tireless work has been integral to the success of the project.

This project is part of a wider programme of works which the Environment Agency are working on, alongside partners, to deliver improvements to chalk streams in the Hertfordshire and North London area. These works include river restoration improvements and abstraction reductions.

For more information contact: HNLenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Press release: Melksham Metals boss to pay £1.99 million or be jailed for 8 years

The owner of a Wiltshire scrapyard and recycling company has been ordered to pay almost £2 million he made from running an illegal waste site in Melksham.

In July, Lee Hazel appeared before Swindon Crown Court where he was warned he'd face an 8-year prison sentence if he failed to pay the full amount owed under a confiscation order made under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

The ruling marked the culmination of a 5-year investigation into Lee Hazel and Melksham Metals Recycling Ltd by the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Police. Wiltshire Police conducted the financial aspects of the investigation

The original confiscation order was for £2.74 million, but this figure was reduced at Swindon Crown Court following an application to amend the earlier judgement under a legal clause known as the 'Slip Rule.'

Hazel's lawyers successfully argued it had been wrong to include a figure for VAT when calculating how much their client had benefited from crime. They also alleged that, in preparing its prosecution, the Environment Agency had mistakenly included invoices for ferrous metals.

After hearing evidence for the defence, Judge Tim Mousley QC, reduced the confiscation order to £1.99 million from the original figure of £2.74 million.

Hazel was warned on several occasions about unlawful waste activities including the illegal disposal of waste on farmland and depositing and processing waste without an environmental permit. He is both the owner and sole director of the company.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

These were serious offences committed by a waste operator who has little respect for the law and the environment. He was motivated by financial gain and carried out unauthorised activities over a

number of years.

This case should serve as a warning to anyone in the waste industry who thinks they can flout the law. Where we have the evidence, we won't hesitate to prosecute offenders.

Investigations revealed that he and his company dumped stone off-cuts and sludge at a farm on the outskirts of Melksham beside an old canal, as well as carrying out unauthorised activities at his Station Yard premises in Bath Road, Melksham.

In February 2016, [Hazel received an 18-month prison sentence, suspended for two years, for running an illegal waste operation](#) at Station Yard and for the dumping of waste at a farm. The court heard the Environment Agency had revoked Melksham Metals' operating licence and the site had closed down.

Hazel was caught after an enforcement officer from Wiltshire Council found various waste materials including chalky stone, tarmac road planings and concrete pipes dumped in fields at Queenfield Farm beside the disused Wiltshire to Berkshire Canal. The officer followed a line of 'chalky liquid' in the road outside the farm back to Station Yard. He reported the incident to the Environment Agency.

Last year's hearing followed 2 earlier trials at Swindon Crown Court in June 2014 when Hazel and the company were found guilty of 4 charges in relation to the dumping of waste at Queenfield Farm, Melksham.

The court heard Melksham Metals had a contract to remove waste stone from a local stonemasons yard. The waste should have been taken to a licensed site, but was dumped at Queenfield Farm instead.

In November 2015 Lee Hazel and the company pleaded guilty to a further 5 charges each relating to unauthorised waste activities at his Station Yard premises.

They admitted the unauthorised treatment of controlled waste at Station Yard from 2004 to 2008, breaching a waste control licence, operating a regulated facility without a permit and having waste without authorisation.

Hazel was warned that even if he was sent to prison, he would still have the debt hanging over him.

In addition, Melksham Metals Recycling Ltd was ordered to pay a £100 fine for each of the 7 offences it pleaded guilty to. Only a nominal fine was imposed on the company because of the size of the confiscation order.

Press release: Pupils design new Flood Warden logo

Hundreds of creative youngsters across the north east have completed designs in a competition to produce a new Flood Warden logo.

The Environment Agency's four community engagement officers— appointed to help north east communities be more flood resilient – have visited schools in the region to launch the competition.

They've received designs from more than 300 children, which will be looked at by an Environment Agency judging panel at the end of the month.

The winning design will be printed onto all Flood Warden jackets across the region.

Flood Wardens are community volunteers who support their communities during flooding incidents – including activating a community's flood action plan, ensuring the most vulnerable in their community are safe and working closely with the Environment Agency.

The winning youngster will also be presented with their own flood warden jacket as a thank you for their help.

Taryn Al-Mashgari, Community Engagement Officer who covers the Tyne and Wear area, said:

Community Engagement Officers are working closely with schools to educate children about what it means to be flood resilient and to help them understand the impact of flooding, ensuring our messages have a long-term impact for future generations.

We've talked to them about the importance of Flood Wardens and what they do and it's been fun for the children to come up with a new design.

The winning logo will be worn by wardens right across the north east so it's an important job for these youngsters!

The four new community engagement officers are funded by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC).

Emma Craig works in Northumberland, Taryn in Tyne and Wear, Anna Caygill in Durham and Darlington, and Sarah Pearce in Cleveland.

Their work includes helping businesses and residents to understand their risk of flooding and ensuring those in flood risk areas are signed up to receive free flood warnings.

They're also helping communities prepare themselves for flooding, such as supporting them to develop community flood plans and recruit volunteer Flood Wardens in at risk communities.