

Press release: Helping north east communities be flood resilient

The Environment Agency has appointed a new team of engagement officers to help communities be more resilient to flooding in the North East.

The £280,000 a year project includes four new engagement officers spread across four areas – Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Darlington, and Cleveland.

Funded by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC) for the next four years, the officers are working alongside partner organisations to help support communities.

It 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.

The Community Engagement Officers are working on behalf of the Environment Agency and local authority partners.

As well as supporting residents and businesses, working alongside schools will play a key role in helping future generations understand their risk.

Direct support for communities

Phil Taylor, from the Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team in the North East, said:

We've seen over the last few years alone just how devastating flooding can be for communities, so it's positive news that Northumbria RFCC has agreed to fund these dedicated officers to provide direct support to communities.

In areas where the Environment Agency's free Flood Warning Service is available the officers will be working to increase sign up to the service.

They'll also be helping develop community flood plans that will detail the action each community or business can take to reduce the impact of flooding, and help them return to normal life as soon as possible should a flood happen.

And working with schools and youth groups means children can be educated about what it means to be flood resilient and ensure the

messages delivered through the project have long-term impact in flood risk areas for years to come.

To find out more about your local flood risk and sign up to the Flood Warning Service Visit [the gov.uk web pages](https://www.gov.uk/web-pages)

Local Information

Durham & Darlington



Anna Caygill is the new Durham & Darlington Community Engagement Officer. Anna is working on behalf of the Environment Agency and the Durham & Darlington Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) to increase flood resilience in areas at risk of flooding.

There are over 4,000 properties at risk from fluvial flooding across Durham & Darlington's constituencies, however fewer than 54% of properties are signed up to receive alerts and warnings in areas where the free Flood Warning Service is available.

There are also approximately 10,000 properties at risk from surface water flooding which can occur rapidly without warning. Anna said:

I'd like to hear about all of the local flooding issues in Durham & Darlington and work with the local community to see if they can put actions in place to make themselves more resilient.

Previous work has already led to Community Flood Plans being established in areas like Lanchester, Chester-le-Street, Hurworth, and Neasham and I'm hoping to help other communities put similar measures in place while continuing to support the existing volunteers.

You can contact Anna at anna.caygill@environment-agency.gov.uk or 07867 372639.

Cleveland



Sarah Pearce is the new Community Engagement Officer for Cleveland. Sarah is working on behalf of the Environment Agency and the Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU) to increase flood resilience in areas at risk of flooding. Due to its location, areas of Cleveland are affected by flooding from a number of sources including coastal, river (fluvial) and surface water.

In Hartlepool 900 properties are considered to be at risk of surface water flooding, and in Middlesbrough 2,300 are considered to be at risk.

Across the four Cleveland local authority areas, there are over 6,000 properties at risk from fluvial flooding, however sign up to receive alerts and warnings in areas where the free Flood Warning Service is available is low, for example 11% in Redcar, 13% in Stockton, and just 3% on Hartlepool Headland. One of Sarah's aims is to increase take up of the Flood Warning service. Sarah said:

Previous work across Cleveland has led to Community Flood Warden groups being set up in communities such as Skinningrove, where a flood plan has been developed to support the community in responding to flood events.

I want to help other areas set up new groups and community plans in response to flooding, as well as supporting existing groups. I'd also like to look at the potential to appoint Flood Champions in at risk communities.

You can contact Sarah at sarah.pearce@environment-agency.gov.uk or 07867 441 697.

Northumberland



Emma Craig is the new Community Engagement Officer in Northumberland. Emma is working on behalf of the Environment Agency and Northumberland County Council to increase flood resilience in areas at risk of flooding.

Over 300 properties were flooded in Storm Desmond in 2015 but there are over 3,000 properties at risk of fluvial flooding in the county. Sign up to receive alerts and warnings in areas where the free Flood Warning Service is available is around 60%.

There are also around 17,000 properties at risk from surface water flooding.

Emma said:

Many communities in Northumberland have created plans and taken action to make themselves more resilient after experiencing significant flooding during Storm Desmond.

I'll be continuing to work in the communities which were affected as well as other areas in Northumberland that remain at risk of flooding.

You can contact Emma at emma.craig@environment-agency.gov.uk or 0208 474 9845.

Tyne & Wear



Taryn Al-mashgari is the new Community Engagement Officer in Tyne & Wear. Taryn is working on behalf of the Environment Agency, Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council, South Tyneside Council, North Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council in communities at risk of flooding from all sources. Taryn will help communities, businesses, and schools to develop plans which will reduce the impact of a flood.

Over five years ago many communities in the Tyne & Wear region experienced serious flooding during 'Thunder Thursday'. Surface water flooding such as this can happen with very little warning so Taryn will be aiming to get communities to take action and prepare for flooding now.

As an example, there are more than 2,800 properties at risk from surface water flooding in Sunderland and 4,100 in South Tyneside, and 1,800 in Gateshead, as well as 1,500 in Newcastle.

There are around 600 properties at risk of fluvial flooding in Tyne & Wear.

Sign up to receive alerts and warnings in areas where the free Flood Warning Service is available in Tyne & Wear is around 14%. Taryn said:

Previous work in Tyne and Wear has developed some good practice. For example a network of flood volunteers in North Tyneside provide local information to the council during periods of bad weather which helps the council direct their emergency response resources. In Gateshead a Community Flood Plan has been developed for an area prone to flooding.

I'll be hoping to replicate this sort of community activity across other areas while continuing to support existing volunteers.

You can contact Taryn at taryn.al-mashgari@environment-agency.gov.uk or 0208 474 9842.

Press release: Clampdown on illegal fishing in Lincolnshire

Fifteen anglers have been served notices for fishing offences committed on the River Witham. It comes after a clampdown on illegal fishing in which 180 spot checks were carried out to ensure anglers were properly licensed and fishing within the rules.

Enforcement officers were split into 4 teams on Sunday 20 August, as part of a multi-agency operation led by the Environment Agency.

180 offences uncovered

Anglers were caught allegedly committing a variety of offences including 2 for fish theft and one for using an illegal method.

Officers also seized an offensive weapon from an angler's vehicle while another vehicle was reported for being without tax and insurance.

Multi-agency operation

The Environment Agency's enforcement team worked in conjunction with the Midlands Wildlife Crime Group including officers from Derbyshire, Humberside, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire police forces and the [Angling Trust](#).

Lee Watts, Fisheries Enforcement Officer East Midlands for the Environment Agency, said:

We take illegal fishing very seriously. Anyone committing offences can expect to be prosecuted and face a substantial fine.

I am happy with the results, which show our partnership commitment to making our inland waterways free from illegal fishing activities.

I'd like to offer my thanks to all officers, police staff and Angling Trust personnel who took part and made it a successful operation. It's through partnerships like this that we can take action and send clear message to those who break the law.

Not only does illegal fishing damage the sport it also poses a serious risk of spreading fish diseases and invasive species. The irresponsible and illegal actions of a few can have widespread consequences for fisheries.

Angling Trust Fisheries Enforcement Support Service National Enforcement Manager, Dilip Sarkar MBE, said:

This was a perfect example of partnership working in action – and what can be achieved by everyone working together. As always, we are most grateful to our volunteers for so public-spiritedly giving up their time to help protect fish and fisheries. We look forward to more of these operations.

Hefty penalties

Anyone fishing illegally can expect to be prosecuted and face a fine of up to £2,500, and up to £50,000 for byelaw offences.

Last year, the Environment Agency checked more than 62,000 fishing licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 anglers for rod and line offences, resulting in fines and costs in excess of £500,000.

Anyone who suspects illegal fishing to be taking place should report the matter to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or to [Crimestoppers](#) on 0800 555 111.

Any angler aged 12 or over, fishing on a river, canal or still water needs a licence. A full fishing licence costs from just £30 (concessions and other types available) or is free for those aged 12 to 16. [Licences are available via GOV.UK](#), by phoning 0344 800 5386, or from a local [Post Office](#).

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund improvements for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. The income is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

Press release: Environment Agency trials use of body cameras

Environment Agency enforcement officers in the North East are wearing body worn cameras as part of a six-month trial.

It is the first of its kind within the organisation and is aimed at assessing if cameras can help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour, assaults and threats against staff, particularly those working with regulated and illegal waste sites.

If successful, body worn cameras, which are now the norm among many enforcement agencies, could be rolled out to Environment Agency teams across the country. They could be used in a variety of ways, including at visits to poor performing sites, illegal waste sites, during fisheries and navigation patrols and even during incident response.

Since the trial started in April, waste enforcement and fisheries officers have been wearing the devices during their routine activities and activate them if they encounter a hostile situation or site.



Footage from one of the cameras during a visit to an illegal waste site

Pilot scheme

The pilot scheme comes after Environment Agency employee, Paul Whitehill, an ex-police officer, was threatened with violence when he and a fellow colleague attended an illegal waste site on a routine visit. He said:

I worked with body cameras in the police and saw how effective they can be so suggested we run a trial.

Already officers have reported that wearing the cameras has prevented threatening situations from escalating.

Environment Agency waste enforcement officers regularly encounter aggressive behaviour across the country. Since 2001, the Environment Agency has successfully prosecuted 59 cases of obstruction, hostility or threatening behaviour towards staff, 22 of which were in the North East.

'Safety is paramount'

Rachael Caldwell from the Environment Agency's Waste and Enforcement Department, said:

The safety of our staff is paramount. They are well trained in dealing with hostile situations and we take any threat against them

very seriously. But our preference is to prevent hostility in the first place.

Studies also show that people are less likely to contest the evidence when they know their offence is captured on camera. This could help speed up justice and reduce legal costs.

Officers taking part in the pilot must follow guidelines on use of these cameras. They will not be permanently switched on and people will be informed if they are being filmed. If they are used the footage is automatically deleted after a month unless it is required for evidential purposes.

Rachael added:

Officers will only switch the cameras on if and when they enter a hostile situation. That could be a site where they have experienced aggressive behaviour in the past, or an unknown quantity where hostility may be anticipated, such as on a remote river bank.

Press release: Dorset farmer given suspended prison sentence for burning rubbish

A Dorset man has received a six-month suspended prison sentence and been banned from working in the waste industry for five years after burning waste at a site near Poole.

Environment Agency officers visited French's Farm, Watery Lane, Upton on 17 August 2015 to check whether David House had complied with a formal notice to remove illegal waste from the site. Earlier checks revealed the farm was being used for the illegal storage and disposal of domestic and commercial waste.

Inquiries revealed House, a tenant farmer, had been disposing of waste by burning at the site since 2013. In fact, the agency had evidence from reports of 64 fires during a five-year period at the site. Dorset Fire and Rescue dealt with 11 fires within six months in 2015.

During interview, House claimed he had given permission to others to dump and burn waste and promised to clear the site within a month. This was not done. In recognition of ill health, it was decided House would be given a caution as long as he removed the waste by a set deadline. Instead, waste fires began again and, despite being told not to, House spread the ash across his land.

Tests revealed the ash contained arsenic, cadmium and lead.

During a second interview, House flippantly introduced himself as former Coronation Street character Ena Sharples before blaming others for the waste on his land.

Appearing at Bournemouth Crown Court, House pleaded guilty to knowingly causing the operation of a regulated facility without authority and disposing of controlled special waste in a manner likely to cause harm to human health.

He was given a six-month prison sentence, suspended for 15 months, and made the subject of a Criminal Behaviour Order that prevents him from being involved in the collection, transportation or disposal of waste from any premises.

Under the order, House is banned from setting or lighting any fire in the open for the purpose of burning controlled waste without obtaining permission, in advance and in writing, from the Environment Agency. He is also prohibited from importing or allowing any person in a vehicle to import or bring any waste onto any land, business premises or residential premises of which he has control or is the occupier. The ban runs for five years.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

While the vast majority of waste sites we regulate are well run and provide a much needed waste management service, we recognise there's an issue with a small number of operators who break the rule of their permit.

We tried to work with Mr House to rectify issues and to ensure he was operating within the law but to no avail. We will prosecute those willingly found flouting the law by undertaking illegal activity and causing harm to the environment and human health.

House was previously prosecuted for assaulting an Environment Agency officer who was trying to photograph waste at his site during a separate hearing in December 2016.

Waste crime can cause serious pollution to the environment put communities at risk and undermines legitimate business and the investment and economic growth that go with it.

If you see waste crime report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Editor's notes

House pleaded guilty to one count of operating a regulated facility without a permit under sections (38(1)(a) & 12(1)(a) of Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010 at Bournemouth Magistrates Court on 11 August 2017.

House pleaded guilty to disposal by burning under sections (33(1)(C) and (6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 at Bournemouth Magistrates Court on 11 August 2017.

Press release: North east man sentenced for illegal waste operation

A North East man who burned waste at his illegal waste site to avoid disposal costs has been sentenced.

George Charlton, 62, of Manor Way in Jarrow, appeared at Gateshead Magistrates' Court for sentence on Wednesday 23 August after previously pleading guilty to flouting environmental law.

He was charged with operating a waste site without a permit at Reay Street, Bill Quay in Gateshead, and illegally burning waste at that site.

He was sentenced to an 18-month Community Order, 250 hours of unpaid work, a 30-day Rehabilitation Activity Requirement, and ordered to pay costs of £750.



No environmental permit

Acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, solicitor Laura Taylor told the court that

Charlton collected waste from friends and relatives and took it to the site without registering as a waste carrier. He also had no environmental permit to store and sort the waste at the yard.

Environment Agency officers first visited the site on 4 April 2016 after they saw a cloud of smoke coming from the compound. On investigation they saw a pile of waste on fire and waste including furniture, beds, mattresses, wood and waste electrical items strewn across the site.

They spoke to George Charlton, who was on site, who said he was looking after it for his son. He became aggressive but the officers said the fire needed to be put out. Charlton extinguished the fire before leaving the area.

Further visits saw the waste still remained on site. On 4 July, the Environment Agency sent a letter to Charlton requesting that he stopped all waste activities on the site and cleared all waste by 15 August 2016.

On 24 August, the Environment Agency attended the site for an inspection together with Northumbria Police and officers from Gateshead Council.

Officers saw there were still large piles of mixed waste including household furniture, white goods, construction waste, garden rubbish and some scrap vehicles. There was also evidence of burning.

On 25 August Charlton was interviewed, where he confirmed his son was the legal owner of the site having been transferred through a solicitor, and that he had been looking after the yard since 2013.

He said he would attend the site around twice a week to check on it and deposit rubbish from friends and relatives. He said he would weigh in the scrap metal for money and cut up wood and other items to burn them.



Waste still present

Paul Whitehill, Environment Officer with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

Charlton was warned to stop his operation and to clear waste from the site but on multiple visits it was clear a large amount of waste was still present.

On the site inspection, which took place on 24 August 2016, after he was supposed to have cleared the site completely, there was still a large quantity of mixed waste and evidence of burning.

Illegal waste activity such as this has a detrimental impact on the community and environment, as well as undermining legitimate businesses. We'll continue to work hard to ensure enforcement action is taken against those who flout the law.