

# Wading birds in deep trouble

An urgent call for volunteers has been issued to help tackle the mass decline of wading birds in Scotland.

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## Press release: Harron Homes fined £120,000 over construction pollution

A Leeds-based house building company has been fined £120,000 for illegally polluting a watercourse from a Huddersfield construction site.

Harron Homes Limited was sentenced yesterday (20 November) at Leeds Magistrates' Court after admitting one charge of causing illegal discharges from its Farriers Croft estate in 2015.

The Environment Agency prosecuted the firm after investigating reports of contaminated run-off which was entering a tributary of Grimescar Dyke.

Rosalind Emsley-Smith, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that an officer visited the site on 20 November 2015 and saw polluted water flowing out of the entrance of the construction site. The company was also pumping silt contaminated water from site excavations which also entered the watercourse.

Following the Environment Agency's visit, Harron Homes attempted to control the silt run-off by setting up settlement tanks. However, further incidents of pollution were reported in November and December 2015 and subsequent inspections revealed that this system was inadequate. Silty water was found to be discharging, resulting in further pollution.

Samples taken from the discharges showed that they were having a significant impact on the water quality in the watercourse up to three kilometres further downstream. Some samples showed there to be nearly 35,000 milligrams of suspended solids per litre of water, whereas a healthy watercourse is expected to have a concentration lower than 30 milligrams per litre.



The firm's attempt to contain the muddy water was inadequate; silt was seen flowing off the site

Mark West, environment management team leader at the Environment Agency, said:

These pollution incidents had a significant impact on the water environment over a number of weeks, and were entirely avoidable. In West Yorkshire there has been a worrying increase in the number of pollutions incidents reported to us that on investigation are attributable to the construction sector.

Construction companies should consider the potential environmental impact of developments they undertake at the initial planning stage and must adhere to environmental permitting rules and invest in appropriate management systems to prevent their activities from affecting the local environment.

If anyone spots pollution of this kind, they are urged to contact the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 807060 so we can investigate.

In mitigation, Harron Homes told the court that it had now put procedures in

place to prevent future pollution incidents.

In addition to the fine, the company was ordered to pay £8,706.71 in legal costs and a £120 victim surcharge.

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## **Press release: Flood defences put to the test in Bewdley**

Environment Agency along with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Wyre Forest Council and the community flood group have conducted a successful barrier deployment exercise on the Stourport Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire.

The exercise, which ran from 9am to 3pm, tested the barrier deployment plan and procedures, and working arrangements with partners and the local Community Flood Group. This ensures barriers can be quickly and safely erected when needed during a flood with minimum disruption to residents and businesses.

Environment agency staff were on hand to talk to members of the public about the work they do during flooding and other times of the year and also how people can better protect themselves and their properties during times of flood. Students from the local school were given a tour of the barriers and shown how they are assembled, they also discussed the issues of flooding in the local area.

Mark Bowers, Flood Risk Manager said:

This exercise allowed us to practice and test our barrier deployment plan for Bewdley, gaining valuable training experience with our partners as well as the opportunity to identify ways in which we can further refine our plans. This in turn will enable us to better respond during floods.

Temporary barriers are just one of the ways we aim to better protect people and properties. It's important to remember we can never fully protect against flooding, which is why we encourage people to go online at <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk>, check their flood risk by entering their postcode, and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.

Nick Farress, Bewdley Town Council Clerk added:

The exercise was an opportunity to test the community flood plan and prepare our group of volunteers for the real thing. We are very grateful to the Environment Agency for organising the event and continuing to support the use of the temporary barrier. The community flood group, managed by the Town Council, is a vital resource in a flood event and is always in need of new volunteers, so I would encourage anyone who can help to get in touch with the Town Council.

Wyre Forest Station Commander, Daryl Justice, said:

Our involvement with the Bewdley Flood Barrier response is a new arrangement that will see our firefighters add even more value to the Wyre Forest community.

When flooding is predicted our on-call firefighters will be given a period of notice which will minimise the impact on their primary employment and, although deployed under the direction of the Environment Agency, they will remain available for life threatening emergencies.

This is one of the first initiatives of its type in the UK and is a great example of how fire crews can add value in other areas. It also supports Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's wider vision of 'Saving More Lives'.

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