

Scientists from British Geological Survey scoop major impact award

A team of scientists from the British Geology Survey (BGS) has won Team of the Year at the Praxis Unico Impact Awards 2017 aimed at recognizing knowledge exchange and commercialization professionals. The award was received by BGS's GeoAnalytics and Modelling Directorate as a result of their consistent excellence in adding value to the vast datasets held by the BGS in addition to building relationships and overcoming challenges.

Press release: Innovative flood defence engineering on show at Leeds Waterfront Festival

Visitors to this year's Leeds Waterfront Festival will get the chance to see the innovative technology being used to reduce the risk of flooding to the city.

The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme project team will be on hand at the event on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June, to explain what work has been done for phase 1 of the scheme in the city centre.

A model of a moveable weir will be demonstrated at the event, which is a replica of those installed in the River Aire at Crown Point next to Knightsway Bridge. The moveable weirs used for the project can be lowered in flood conditions to reduce river levels and the threat of flooding.

The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme team will be hosting a stand at Armouries Way, Leeds, LS10 1JP (next to Leeds Dock) between the hours of 10am to 4pm, Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June.

The first phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme, led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, aims to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Aire and Hol Beck for residents and businesses in the city centre. The scheme also includes flood risk reduction at Woodlesford.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

This year's Leeds Waterfront Festival promises to be a great event for people of all ages. With the first phase of the Leeds Flood

Alleviation Scheme nearly finished, visitors to the festival will be able to get a unique insight into the technology involved through the virtual reality experience and the moveable weir to see how the system works to reduce the risk of flooding in the city centre. It is a simple but very clever approach and we look forward to seeing lots of people taking the chance to find out more about it as they enjoy the festival.

Rosa Foster, Strategic Partnerships & Projects Manager at the Environment Agency said:

This event is a great opportunity to demonstrate the moveable weirs before our work in the city centre comes to completion. This is the first time that moveable weirs are being used in the UK for a flood risk reduction scheme and we're excited to show everyone at this year's festival what's been achieved.

Visitors to the event will also get the chance to try out the virtual reality area, and wear headsets to view 360 degree footage from the construction phase of the project and see what it's like to work inside a cofferdam in the river. A cofferdam is a dry working area created in the river by driving in sheet piling. The last cofferdam is now in place while the final moveable weir is constructed.

The event will also see the launch of the 'Cones on the Waterfront' children's book written by Chris Madeley, a waterfront safety book following a group of cones characters as they navigate potential waterway hazards. The story includes waterway construction areas, and was written based on the work of the flood risk reduction scheme being built in Leeds.

Copies of the book, sponsored by Leeds Scheme contractors BAM Nuttall, will be available in exchange for a charitable donation for the Leeds Children's Charity. The author will also be there to sign copies of the book. There will also be live performances throughout the weekend event to explain the story behind the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The site works for Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme commenced in January 2015 and are scheduled to be completed this coming September. It is one of the largest river flood risk reduction schemes in the country which when complete will provide an increased level of protection from flooding from the River Aire and Hol Beck for residents and businesses in the city centre. The scheme also includes defences at Woodlesford.

The project team is currently working on options for Phase 2 of the scheme, which will adopt a catchment-wide approach meaning the entire River Aire catchment area will be considered to help reduce flood risk in Leeds. Consultation on potential options is due to be carried out from September.

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Press release: Company and director sentenced after pollution incidents

A company and its director have received fines and costs totalling £33,000 after significantly polluting a stream with blood and then failing to notify the Environment Agency.

The case against AWSM Recycling Ltd, of Lane Head Farm, Hutton Magna, west of Darlington and its sole director Adam Metcalfe, 37, of the same address, involves a number of breaches of environmental law over a significant period of time between July 2011 and October 2015.

The company stores waste and spreads it on agricultural land for the purpose of land improvement, which is controlled by environmental permits.

Both the company and Metcalfe appeared for sentencing at Teesside Crown Court on Monday 19 June. Metcalfe was fined £1,000 and his company £20,000, with the company also ordered to pay £12,000 in court costs.



Three separate pollution incidents

Representing the Environment Agency, barrister Craig Hassall outlined the offences to the court.

The charges relate to the illegal spreading of hazardous material on land, unauthorised burning of waste and, by breaching permit conditions, allowing waste to escape into streams in three separate incidents.

It also involves the spreading of a nitrogen-rich substance contrary to regulations designed to protect the environment from pollution.

The offences admitted by AWSM Recycling Ltd at a previous court hearing in November 2016 include three significant pollution incidents between January and May 2015.

The first, into Newbiggin Beck, was a leak from a store of blood waste which was kept for land spreading. It resulted in Bishopton Beck in particular being affected, with all invertebrates and fish for 1.2km downstream found dead.

A second incident in March affected Stillington Beck for 1km, significantly reducing oxygen levels in the water. It was caused by land spreading activities involving abattoir waste.

And in May 2015, it was reported that a concrete store which held waste beef blood at Lane Head Farm was leaking into a drain and flowing into a stream. A number of dead fish were found downstream into Smallways and Hutton Becks for

a distance of 2km. The water samples showed high ammonia concentration levels.



Breached permit regulations

The company also admitted failing to notify the Environment Agency about a pollution incident in relation to the May offence.

In further offences, the company also took in large amounts of waste not covered by its environmental permit, including some containing antimony, a substance that should not be allowed to enter groundwater.

Metcalfe, 37, pleaded guilty at the same hearing last November to burning waste at Lane Head Quarry, and failing to notify the Environment Agency about a pollution incident in relation to the May offence impacting on Smallways and Hutton Becks.

Both the company and Metcalfe further appeared at Teesside Crown Court on Tuesday, 21 March this year, where they pleaded guilty to a further offence of failing to comply with Nitrate Prevention regulations because they spread nitrogen-rich digestate during the closed period, which resulted in ammonia being found in a local stream.

Metcalfe, representing AWSM Recycling Ltd, said that since the offences about accepting waste not covered by a permit had come to light new procedures had been put in place, with producers now asked to complete an audit form.

He said he thought he had an exemption to cover the waste on his land at Lane

Head Farm.

And he said the first pollution incident was due to vandalism of his storage tank, and he did not feel the incident was serious enough to report at first look. A mechanical failure of new equipment led to the March pollution incident, he added.

Neglect 'led to serious pollution incidents'.

Following the sentence, the Environment Agency's John Cowl, said: "Environmental permits are there to protect our communities and the environment and both AWSM Recycling Ltd and Adam Metcalfe flouted these permits for a significant period of time.

"Their neglect led to serious pollution incidents which impacted on nearby streams and killed fish and invertebrates.

"This has been a lengthy and complicated investigation by our environment officers and we're pleased this has now been dealt with by the court.

"I hope this sends out the message to others that if they fail to abide by environmental laws then we will take action."