

Press release: Kerry Ingredients UK Limited paying £127,000 over pollution incident

The Environment Agency has accepted an offer of more than £127,000 for an enforcement undertaking from Kerry Ingredients UK Limited following a pollution incident in the River Cam in Gloucestershire.

The incident, which took place in June 2014, resulted in the deaths of more than 200 fish.

As a result, a financial contribution of £127,975 is being shared between Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (£40,451), Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (£19,766), Severn Rivers Trust (£52,758) and Bristol Zoological Society (£15,000)

The Environment Agency's ability to accept Enforcement Undertakings was extended in 2015 to a far wider range of offences. The Environment Agency is increasingly using this method of enforcement for suitable cases to swiftly restore the environment, improve practices of the offending company and avoid longer criminal court cases. However prosecutions will still be taken, particularly in the most serious cases.

The Kerry case is one of a number revealed today in which charities will receive more than £1.5 million for projects benefitting wildlife and the environment as a result of enforcement action by the Environment Agency.

Peter Kellett, Legal Director for the Environment Agency said:

We take pollution incidents very seriously and the payments of £1.5 million we're announcing today are the result of our firm but fair enforcement action and will benefit people and the environment across the country.

Enforcement Undertakings allow those who commit offences to restore the environment and to take steps to prevent a recurrence. When appropriate, they allow a quicker resolution than a prosecution and help offenders who are prepared to take responsibility for their actions to put things right with their local communities.

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News story: Kestrel close encounter

With their pointed wings and long tails, kestrels are a familiar sight along UK motorways and main roads as they use thermals from the road to hover while they look for prey.

Now one of them has discovered their perfect perch – on a Highways England CCTV camera stand.

Kestrel video

Our Traffic Officers Leigh Goodchild and Steve Dyas first spotted this cheeky kestrel while monitoring traffic flows in October 2016. Since then they have been treated to frequent sightings – and have grown fond of their new friend.

We have released this video to coincide with the RSPB's [Big School Bird Watch](#), which encourages pupils to get closer to nature by counting birds at set times.

Kestrels are on the RSPB amber list of protected species, with only around 46,000 breeding pairs estimated to be in the UK. They are most recognisable in their characteristic hovering hunting mode but also like to find a high perch where they can stay on the lookout for prey.

Our CCTV camera platform seems to fit the bill. Traffic Officer Leigh said:

On one occasion she returned with half a mouse, which she promptly swallowed tail and all!

She's rather obsessed with her own image but her inquisitiveness has given us some good close-ups.

She's squawked and attacked the lens a few times as well. When that happens we discourage her from hurting herself by tilting the camera skywards.

Her visits certainly brighten up our day and make a change from the traffic.

Press release: Pollution of brook costs Evesham food processing company

over £59,000

Walsh Mushrooms, a mushroom packaging and distribution company operating at the Vale Park industrial estate in Evesham, appeared in Cheltenham Magistrates' Court yesterday (31 January 2017) and pleaded guilty to an offence of polluting the nearby Battleton Brook with the effluent of rotting mushrooms.

The company was fined £50,000, ordered to pay costs of £8,888.16, along with a £170 victim surcharge.

The prosecution was brought by the Environment Agency, following reports of pollution of the brook in April and May in 2015. The company was charged with one offence contrary to Regulations 12 (1) (b) and 38 (1) (a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

On 24 April 2015, an Environment Agency officer visited the Battleton Brook in Evesham following a report it had turned black with a foul odour. The officer found the brook heavily polluted with organic matter, causing low levels of oxygen. Some frogs and a significant number of invertebrates downstream of Vale Park had been killed as a result of the pollution incident.

Officers, along with staff from Severn Trent Water Limited, identified the source of the pollution as a skip full of decomposing mushrooms on the Walsh Mushroom site, which was leaking into a surface water drain. Investigations of the drainage system suggested this had been ongoing for a number of days. Walsh Mushrooms were advised to remove the skip, undertake a cleaning operation, and conduct a full inspection of the site drainage system.

The Environment Agency stated that the company had failed to carry out the site drainage survey within a reasonable time after 24 April 2015. As a result, on 14 May 2015, officers attended the premises of Walsh Mushrooms again to examine the site drainage system and discovered that similar effluent was continuing to flow into it.

A representative of the company was interviewed and accepted that no training had been given to staff regarding the function or maintenance of the site drainage. No training had been given to staff regarding pollution risks associated with storing waste on the site. The company had failed to carry out any environmental risk assessments since it began operating at Vale Park in 2000.

The company, which had no previous convictions, expressed remorse for the incident. It acknowledged its failure to carry out environmental risk assessments or give appropriate training to company staff. The company stated that it had co-operated with the Environment Agency's investigation and taken steps to remedy the issues at the site. These included the monthly sampling of fluids from the on-site inceptor, the training of staff and the storage of waste mushrooms in leak-proof containers.

Following the outcome of court proceedings, an Environment Agency spokesperson said:

Walsh Mushrooms failed to conduct any assessments of the risks their operations posed to the environment. They did not understand or maintain their drainage system and they failed to provide any training for staff on how to recognise or deal with pollution incidents. As a result of these failings, they caused significant damage to the brook. We will always seek to take action against those whose actions results in pollution of our rivers.

Many companies in the food processing industry fail to appreciate that food wastes can be highly polluting and cause serious damage to the environment. By following sensible environmental management procedures businesses will be better placed to comply with relevant legislation and reduce the risks damaging our stream and rivers.

If members of the public notice any signs of pollution in a river, stream or lake please report it to our Incident Hotline 0870 80 70 60.

Research and analysis: Habitats Regulations Assessments – North East North West South East South West Marine Plans

Under the EC Habitats Directive, all marine plans must have a Habitats Regulation Assessment.

The Habitats Regulation Assessment looks at what impact a plan could have on the objectives of a European conservation site. It includes:

- pre-screening review
- screening review
- an appropriate assessment information report