

Press release: Water quality returns to 'safe' following Heanor chemical spill

Tests carried out by the Environment Agency on the water quality of numerous ponds in Shipley Country Park have revealed the water has now returned to a safe drinking water quality and signs to stay out of the 2 affected ponds have now been removed.

Drinking water quality does not mean it is recommended to drink the pond water; it means the concentrations of cyanide currently monitored are below these standards.

Environment Agency officers have continued to investigate and monitor the impact on the local environment of an accidental spillage of around 400 litres of liquid cyanide from a lorry delivering to an industrial unit in Heanor on Tuesday 6 February, some of which leaked into the nearby Adam's Pond.

Since the incident occurred, the Environment Agency has been regularly collecting samples from numerous ponds on the site and sharing the results with Derbyshire County Council, which owns the park, and Public Health England. The results have determined what actions were required to minimise the impact of the contaminants in the watercourse and ponds.

Greg Oakes, Area Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Samples have regularly been taken to monitor the cyanide levels in the water and the results of the latest samples show the water is now at a drinking water quality, which is an excellent result. However, we would stress, drinking water standards does not mean we would recommend drinking the pond water, it is just that the concentrations of cyanide currently monitored are below these standards.

Our officers have been working to minimise the effects of the spillage on the environment and wildlife in the area. The contamination was largely contained to Adam's Pond, which unfortunately resulted in a number of dead fish being found in the pond but, due to the level of contamination, our staff were unable to enter the water to carry out a netting activity to capture them. Whilst our monitoring showed there was some discharge to the nearby Osbourne's pond, this did not result in any dead fish being found there.

We placed bags of activated carbon downstream of Osbourne's pond to help filter cyanide out of the water and prevent it from leaking

down the watercourse into the further ponds but the best course of action, minimising risk to people and the environment, was to wait for it to break down naturally.

In light of the latest results, rather than continuing with monitoring on site, we will now put a recovery plan in place. Adam's Pond is still closed to fishing to allow the water life to recover and the Environment Agency will meet with the county council and the local fishing club next month to discuss a management plan for the pond.

We will also be investigating the source of the pollution and take appropriate action against those found to be responsible.

A report by the Environment Agency's National Centre for Environmental Toxicology confirmed there was no significant risk to other wildlife which may have eaten dead fish from Adam's Pond.

ShIPLEY Country Park has remained open and safe to use following the chemical spillage incident but visitors to the park were advised by Derbyshire County Council not to enter the water or let their dogs enter the water in Adam's Pond and Osborne's Pond.

Councillor Simon Spencer, Derbyshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure, said:

ShIPLEY is a much-loved park and the damage caused to Adam's Pond is extremely distressing. But we're relieved that there appears to have been no damage to Osborne's Pond and pleased that the water in both ponds has now returned to safe drinking water quality.

This must not be allowed to happen again and we're pleased there will be an investigation and action taken against those responsible to send a clear message to businesses that they need to take their environmental responsibilities seriously.

The Environment Agency plans to visit businesses on the industrial estate next to the park to identify any potential pollution risks. We're grateful for any help and advice they can give about measures businesses can put in place to prevent further incidents like this happening at the park in the future.

Environment Agency staff work 24/7 to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents. If you see pollution in your local river or watercourse, please call their incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Speech: International Development Secretary's speech at the Bond conference

We've just 12 years left to fulfil our promise to the world's poorest, and the commitment so central to the Global Goals – to Leave No One Behind.

We set ourselves the task that by 2030 every child will have the chance of a decent education, but we are 85 years adrift on current projections – not set to achieve that until 2115.

That is better though than our current assessment on when we will end malnutrition – we are looking at least a century before delivering that.

And we'll be well into two centuries hence before we do make extreme poverty history.

You know that on current trajectories, achieving the Global Goals – which we talk about and show our commitment to in the pin badges we wear – is simply out of reach.

We've known for some time we are failing.

The facts speak for themselves – and the many we are letting down.

If we want those facts to change we have to change what we do.

To deliver on the promises we've made to the world's poorest, business as usual isn't going to cut it.

And to understand how we need to change we need to understand why the world, and we as a sector, are falling short.

Let us reflect for a moment on the issue currently dominating the headlines: sexual exploitation of the vulnerable, known by some, ignored by others.

How did we get to this?

Penny Mordaunt speaking at the Bond conference

How did those, there to protect, support and serve the most vulnerable people on earth, become complicit in their exploitation – by protecting the perpetrators, by failing to grip the problem or turning a blind eye?

Because we failed to put the beneficiaries of aid first.

How did we lose sight of that fundamental duty, for all the good people, many in this room today, and all the good works done? For be in no doubt that is what has happened.

It may have started with an attitude born of fundraising pressures, fierce competition for bids or work, guarding an organisation's reputation to maximise its reach and offer.

That attitude found a justification, via the chaotic and complex situations we operate in, the belief that reporting wrongdoing would do more harm than good, that we've so many other things to worry about, or that peacekeeping troops are doing far worse.

And then any nagging doubts that lingered, as predatory individuals moved to another organisation's payroll, were banished, in order to avoid any criticism of the sector.

Maybe that's how it happened. Maybe.

However it did, the result was the grotesque fact of aid workers sexually exploiting the most vulnerable people, and threatening whistle-blowers if they protested.

In our respective walks of life – in aid and in politics – we have difficult choices to make, some of life and death: Who to help. Who to save. Who to rescue. How to do the most good. How to do the least harm.

But on some issues there is no choice.

You cannot help and support people, you cannot give them hope and a chance, you cannot promote human rights or the dignity of every human being – whilst paying them for sex, and whilst funding an industry that exploits them.

So why do we find ourselves here?

We find ourselves here for the same reasons we find ourselves so far from delivering the Global Goals.

Because we've forgotten three things: The needs of those we are here to serve. The expectations of those who enable us to – the British people. And the values that make us who we are.

To recover we must put the beneficiaries of aid first.

We must live up to the values of our nation.

And as a sector, as well as a "to do list" we also need to have a "to be list".

We cannot separate the aid this nation gives from the values this nation has. So, how will those principles and values help us deliver the goals?

First, they will improve our performance.

I've seen great things from organisations when they put aside concerns about information and knowledge sharing, Intellectual Property ownership – stop competing and start collaborating.

In Somalia, by putting beneficiaries first, sharing data and working together, aid organisations have staved off famine.

In Kenya, I've seen technological innovation IP shared to utterly transform options for communities to become more resilient.

And I've seen so many nations, frustrated at a humanitarian system which if it worked better would give us a billion more to spend on helping people, start to come together to speed up the pace of reform.

Second, it will enable others to help.

I've seen entrepreneurs forfeiting profit and their own security to bring water, healthcare and childcare to their workforce.

Major companies wanting to make this their mission.

Small community organisations and businesses connecting with and supporting those in the developing world.

And I've seen the courage and commitment of our armed forces opening up the space for us to operate in.

We need the humility to recognise what others can bring will multiply our efforts. And we need to let many others help.

Third, it is a necessary condition of the British public's support – and their support is a necessary condition of our work.

I've seen the poorest in our own nation giving generously to others less fortunate than themselves, time after time – whether it's in DEC appeals, or in Oxfam's shops.

They've seen Ebola defeated, girls educated, hurricane victims rescued, polio near eradicated, and hope and help brought to Syria's hell on earth, by individuals risking everything, everything, for the love of humanity.

They continue to give, but I can tell you on many fronts they want us to raise our game: on what you do, on what I fund, and what together we can achieve.

And finally, we must live our values because what you do, what Britain's aid sector does, is more than satisfy the practical needs of life.

In addition to food, water and shelter we bring the rule of law, security, justice.

We bring protection for refugees and human rights.

We bring freedom – of thought, of religion, of scrutiny, of the press.

We bring empowerment – of women, of people with disabilities, of children.

Without us bringing our values to work, we will fail in that work.

So, let this moment not just be a wake-up call to improve safeguarding.

Let it also be a wake-up call to all that we must be, if we are to deliver on our promise to the world's poor.

I will shortly bring forward a new development offer focussed on delivering the Global Goals.

It will require others to help.

It will require us to change where we work and who we work with, and greater cooperation between DFID and our armed forces.

It will depend on the private sector.

It will require more sharing of data and working together.

It will compel us to leave no one behind.

It will make UK aid work harder – delivering for the world's poor, but also for the UK's security and prosperity, upon which UK aid depends.

It will require me to stop funding organisation that do not deliver our objectives, contribute to the Goals, or live up to our standards.

It will have our national values and freedom at its heart.

It will require leadership and courage to deliver.

And it will put our beneficiaries first.

They are the 10 million more children who will see their 5th birthday. The 81 million who will have enough food to develop normally. And the 400 million more able to read and write. If we do deliver the Global Goals by 2030.

In my first week in this job I told you that I believe in aid.

And I've not changed my mind.

And I believe in you, in why you chose this career, in why you are here today.

The organisations in this room do great work. I know that. I've seen it with my own eyes.

All the vital work that Bond members, organisations of all sizes, from small to large, do each and every day. Passionate, committed, tireless individuals doing amazing work, in some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

I believe in British compassion and charity. From the Magna Carta to universal suffrage, from William Wilberforce to Peter Benenson to Leonard Cheshire – as a nation we can and we have made the world a better place.

Since the Oxfam scandal broke, you and UK aid have helped vaccinate around

1.5 million children from polio.

That's heroic.

But if we have the courage and the will to change we can do more.

And we must.

We know what to do.

We know what to be.

So let's get to it.

Thank you.

News story: New chair appointed to British Transport Police Authority board

A former RAF officer will be the new chair of the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA).

Ron Barclay-Smith, who served in the RAF Regiment, was chosen following an independent selection process and has been appointed for a 4 year term from 5 March 2018.

He will chair the BTPA Board which holds the British Transport Police (BTP) to account to make sure the service upholds passenger safety and security on an increasingly busy transport network.

Mr Barclay-Smith is currently a non-executive director at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. He has also held various chief executive roles, including in the legal and health sectors, and has chaired a variety of organisations, including Veterans Scotland. He served in the RAF Regiment from 1972 to 1991, including 3 operational tours in Northern Ireland.

Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

I should like to thank Mark Phillips for his contribution during his period as interim chair of the BTPA.

Ron Barclay-Smith has a wealth of experience and will provide vital and strong leadership for the BTPA over the next 4 years, as we invest in the biggest modernisation programme of the railways since

Victorian times.

We have one of the safest railway networks in Europe and BTP officers play a vital role in keeping the travelling public safe, so it is vital we continue to give them the support they need to do that job.

Mr Barclay-Smith said:

I am delighted to have been appointed and I look forward to working closely with colleagues and staff at the authority, the Chief Constable and officers of the BTP, and the many stakeholders involved in the railway system in our country.

This is an exciting time for the railways as passenger numbers increase and a huge modernisation and development programme takes place. It is therefore a critical time for policing on the railways, and we need to ensure that investment is targeted in the right areas and front-line policing is sustained and supported effectively.

The BTP is a specialist, national force that provides a service to rail operators, their staff and passengers. It also polices other networks – the London Underground, Docklands Light Railway, Croydon Tramlink, Sunderland Metro and Glasgow Subway. It has around 3,000 police officers and around 600 PCSOs and special constables. The BTPA was established in 2004 to improve the public accountability of the BTP.

**Statement to Parliament: NHS
prescription charges from 1 April 2018**



Regulations have been laid before Parliament to increase certain National Health Service charges in England from 1 April 2018.

In the 2015 Spending Review, the government committed to support the Five Year Forward View with £10 billion investment in real terms by 2020 to 2021 to fund frontline NHS services. Alongside this, the government expects the NHS to deliver £22 billion of efficiency savings to secure the best value from NHS resources and Primary Care must play its part.

This year, therefore, we have increased the prescription charge by 20 pence from £8.60 to £8.80 for each medicine or appliance dispensed. To ensure that those with the greatest need, and who are not already exempt from the charge, are protected we have frozen the cost of the prescription prepayment certificates (PPC) for another year. The 3-month PPC remains at £29.10 and the cost of the annual PPC will stay at £104. Taken together, this means prescription charge income is expected to rise broadly in line with inflation.

Charges for wigs and fabric supports will also be increased in line with inflation.

Details of the revised charges for 2018 to 2019 can be found below.

Prescription charges

- Single charge: £8.80
- 3 month PPC (no change): £29.10

- 12 month PPC (no change): £104.00

Wigs and fabric supports

- Surgical bra: £28.85
- Abdominal or spinal support: £43.60
- Stock modacrylic wig: £71.25
- Partial human hair wig: £188.70
- Full bespoke human hair wig: £275.95

Published 26 February 2018

Press release: Energy customers in Wales to save as UK Government caps fuel bills

- New price cap power introduced to Parliament following BEIS Select Committee approval
- Move will guarantee protection for the 11 million households currently on the highest energy tariffs – in addition to 5 million vulnerable households already protected by Ofgem's safeguard cap
- In 2016-2017, Wales ranked above average in the UK for the number of customers switching energy provider, but this was less than 1 in 5 customers

New legislation is being introduced to Parliament later today to cap poor value energy tariffs and save consumers in Wales money on their energy bills.

The Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill will put in place a requirement on the independent regulator, Ofgem, to cap energy tariffs until 2020. It will mean an absolute cap can be set on poor value tariffs, protecting the 11 million households in England, Wales and Scotland who are currently on a standard variable or other default energy tariff and who are not protected by existing price caps.

The Bill is part of a package of measures being introduced by government to increase competition in the retail energy market and lower prices for consumers, including the rollout of smart meters in every household and initiatives to promote smarter and faster switching.

Despite being higher than the national average, last year less than 20% of customers in Wales took up the offer to switch fuel suppliers. Today's measures will mean that energy companies cannot exceed a certain amount on monthly bills – providing peace of mind to hard working tax payers.

The government intends that Ofgem implements the cap as soon as possible so that customers get the protection they need by next winter.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

It's often older people or those on low incomes who are stuck on rip-off energy tariffs, so today we are introducing legislation to force energy companies to change their ways.

Our energy price cap will cut bills for millions of families, starting this year. This is another step we are taking to help people make ends meet as we build a country that works for everyone.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

Energy prices for millions of households on default tariffs are still too high. Our new price cap will guarantee that consumers are protected from poor value tariffs and further bring down the £1.4 billion a year consumers have been overpaying.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

We are working hard to deliver an energy supply that is clean, affordable and innovative and an energy market that delivers the best possible value and service for energy customers. This new legislation is a big step forward toward that goal.

The introduction of the Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill comes after the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee scrutinised the draft Bill as part of the government's work to build consensus for the cap. The Committee backed an absolute cap and made a number of other recommendations about the Bill in its report, which the government has accepted in full.

In setting the cap, Ofgem will also take into account the need to create incentives for suppliers to improve efficiency, the need to set the cap at a level that enables suppliers to compete effectively for supply contracts, the need to maintain incentives for customers to switch and the need to ensure that efficient suppliers are able to finance their supply activities. This will make sure the cap reflects the interests of both consumers and suppliers.

It will be in place until 2020 when Ofgem will recommend to government whether it should be extended on an annual basis up to 2023. In line with the Committee's recommendation, the government will ensure Ofgem reviews the level the cap is set at least every six months while it is in place.

The Competition and Markets Authority 2016 review of the retail energy market found that domestic customers of the Big Six suppliers faced a £1.4 billion a year detriment.

The government is determined to tackle this detriment, by encouraging consumers to switch suppliers and tariffs. The introduction of smart meters will enable consumers to see the cost of their energy usage and more easily find the best tariff for them.

The latest league table from Ofgem comparing the default or standard variable tariffs of the 10 largest energy suppliers shows that those households who are prepared to shop around can, on average, save around £300 from switching to the cheapest tariffs on the market.

Earlier this month, one million more vulnerable consumers who receive the Warm Home Discount were protected from higher bills with the extension of Ofgem's safeguard tariff cap, introduced in 2017. There are now five million households protected by this cap. Government also announced a new consultation to give Ofgem and the Department for Work and Pensions new powers to make it easier for vulnerable consumers to be protected from unfair energy bills.

The cap is part of a package of measures designed to deliver the government's objective of clean, affordable and innovative energy as part of the Industrial Strategy.

Notes to editors:

1. Government response to the Competition Market Authority's report Modernising the Energy Market can be found here (insert link).
2. Ofgem's league table and other reports can be found here.
3. Explainer about Ofgem's existing cap can be found here.
4. Announcement on consultation on better data sharing between DWP and Ofgem found here.
5. The Industrial Strategy sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. It sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future – how we will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure.