

Press release: Valentine's Day of action against illegal waste activity

Environment Agency enforcement officers, on the 14 February, paid unannounced visits to 14 sites across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Hampshire and West Berkshire in a bid to stamp out waste crime and protect the environment from the threat of pollution.

Named Operation Arrow, officers targeted sites suspected of operating in the waste business without the required environmental permits, flouting the law and committing crime.

Waste that ends up at unregulated sites is often stockpiled in vast quantities and for long periods of time. The waste can pose a significant risks to the environment, blighting communities with smoke fumes and causing noise and odour complaints. Illegal waste operators also undermine the work of legitimate waste companies, creating an unfair playing field for business.

Helen Page, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency said:

We want to make sure the right waste goes to the right place – to protect the environment and local communities. Site visits on our days of action are just one of the ways we are tackling waste crime to help make sure this happens.

We are really pleased with what we achieved. Of the 14 sites visited, 5 were found to be operating illegally. The information we have gathered is helping us target our work at those involved in organised environmental crime and where their activities pose the greatest risk to the environment.

Everyone can do their bit to reduce waste crime by making sure that any waste for disposal is collected by a licensed waste carrier and taken to a properly permitted, legitimate waste site.

To check if someone is registered please visit environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers.

For all media enquiries please phone 0800 141 2743, or email us at southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk

Press release: Rugeley Flood Risk Management Scheme well under way

The Environment Agency's Rugeley Flood Risk Management Scheme that began in December is progressing well. Preparations for the construction of the embankment have now started.

To make sure that the public stay safe while the work is being carried out, the Hagley playing fields will remain closed to the public until 2018, once the scheme has been completed.

During a flood, the embankment will hold water from the Rising Brook and help to reduce the risk of flooding for over 114 homes and 159 businesses. Other benefits of the £3.8 million scheme include improving habitat, restoring heritage features and reconnecting footpaths and improving accessibility. It also forms an integral part of Cannock Chase council's plans to regenerate parts of the town centre.

Environment Agency Project Manager Matt Griffin said:

We're working hard to get the scheme completed as soon as possible so we can minimise any disruption and inconvenience. However, keeping people and the community safe during the work remains our priority which means closing the playing fields is essential.

The works are a partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase District Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

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Press release: Restoring fifty hectares of rare and threatened habitats in Doncaster to benefit all

Almost 50 hectares of nationally-important habitat is being restored in Doncaster as part of an Environment Agency-led project benefiting communities and wildlife.

The work across seven woodland areas, including two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), will help improve water quality, reduce flood risk, and enhance natural habitats for protected species.

Beginning in September last year, the Inspiring Water Action in the Torne project is creating, restoring and improving up to 46.5 hectares of wet-woodland priority habitats – and involving local communities in doing so.

The 46.5 hectares represents 11 per cent of the Environment Agency's national target for habitat creation.

Measures include selectively thinning the woodland, re-wetting areas that have dried out, improving access for visitors, and sowing native plants that will help filter pollutants from the environment.

As well as providing for one of the nation's most threatened bird species – the Willow Tit – the restored wet-woodland will act as a natural aid to reducing flood risk by creating more room for water.

The estimated 4,000 cubic metres of extra storage space will help naturally

interrupt and soak up the flow of rising waters, reducing the risk to around 1,000 nearby properties, as well as to agricultural land.

This will lessen the reliance on the Keadby Pumping Station, bringing down the carbon and financial costs of using it to artificially drain excess water from the River Torne into the River Trent.

David Newborough, Environment Agency catchment co-ordinator, said:

Our role is to create better places for people and wildlife. This project is a perfect example of how we can achieve that through simple measures that deliver many benefits.

By restoring wet woodland to a state that's closer to how nature intended, we're protecting vital habitat, providing for threatened species, creating spaces that everyone can enjoy, and reducing the risk of flooding, all in one go.

Communities across the area are involved in making the project a success, with volunteers and school children taking active roles.

Around 600 children and young people across seven schools, each linked with one of the woodland sites, are using the project to learn first-hand about flood risk, water quality and management, and ecology.

David continued:

Working with school children is one of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of this project.

They are directly involved in understanding and protecting our natural environment, which is essential for its future. And their enthusiasm for the difference they can make is great to see.

Some of the work is being carried out by volunteers, who are learning new skills in the management of woodland habitats. These skills will help them maintain the improvements into the future.

The £100,000 project, which includes work at Potteric Carr Nature Reserve SSSI, Holmes Carr Wood, Tickhill Low Common, Bog Wood, Bessacarr Bank, Sandall Beat Wood SSSI and Rossington Brick Pond, is expected to bring benefits valued at around £1m.

Inspiring Water Action in the Torne is a Torne Catchment Partnership project led by the Environment Agency and involving [Yorkshire Wildlife Trust](#), [Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council](#), [Natural England](#) and local communities.

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