

[Press release: Charities paid £190,000 after North East pollution incidents](#)

The Environment Agency has accepted four Enforcement Undertakings which will see more than £190,000 paid to North East charities after breaches in environmental permitting regulations.

Northumbrian Water Ltd will pay £50,000 to Wear Rivers Trust as well as carrying out site restoration and remediation work and making improvements to its infrastructure and reporting mechanisms.

It follows a pollution incident at Wapping Burn at its confluence with Gore Burn near Peterlee, which happened in April 2016.

An ecology survey carried out on 27 April found that the pollution had caused a minor negative impact downstream of the discharge.

Northumbrian Water will also pay £135,000 split equally between Durham Wildlife Trust, Wear Rivers Trust and the Marine Conservation Society.

It follows a pollution incident which happened in the summer of 2016 at a stream behind Aykley Heads in Durham. Environment Agency officers located a sewer pipe crossing the stream in the river bed, which was causing the pollution downstream. The sewer had cracked underneath the water.

Northumbrian Water has since repaired that whole length of sewer pipe.

Slurry discharge

Dairy farmer Alan Newton, 54, from Gibbet Hills Farm in Howden Le Wear has paid £7,842 to Wear Rivers Trust as well as making improvements to his site and infrastructure.

This follows a discharge of slurry from an earth banked lagoon from Gibbet Hills Farm to Beechburn Beck in November 2017, resulting in over 3km of the beck being affected.

Once advised about the leak Mr Newton acted instantly, blocking the pipe and removing the slurry from ditches on the land which were leaking into the beck. He also cut a ditch to collect slurry which had soaked into land. He has since removed the pipe outlet and reinstated an earth bank with clay lining, has installed an automatic irrigation system and states he will install a slurry level indicator and check the structure daily.

And M&K Hodgson Limited, which operates a pig farm called Handale Banks Farm at Liverton near Loftus, will pay £5,300 to Tees Rivers Trust after a pollution incident at Waytail Beck at Loftus that was identified as being a result of pig slurry spreading at the farm.

The majority of the pollution came from a field that had never been spread

upon before and despite asking the correct relevant questions about land drainage prior to the incident the slurry entered underground field drains and affected 2km of the beck.

The company will not be spreading in this location in future and is exploring ways to reduce the need to spread during the winter months, including investing in ways to separate rain water from dirty water using off-site storage.

EU's a 'more proportionate response'

The Environment Agency is making better use of the wide range of measures that are available to bring sites back into compliance as quickly as possible. Along with prosecutions, it uses enforcement notices, stop notices and civil sanctions, including Enforcement Undertakings, to either improve performance or stop sites from operating. Fiona Morris, Environment Manager with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

We will always take forward prosecutions in the most serious cases but sometimes we feel an Enforcement Undertaking a more proportionate response that benefits the environment, achieving more than if the companies had been convicted and fined.

In these cases the companies took immediate action to rectify the situation and have since taken steps to prevent it from happening again. The affected watercourses will now benefit from some great environmental work by local charities.

We work hard to protect people and the environment, and a clear regulatory framework with agreed standards and targets has helped to drive major environmental improvements over the last few decades.

Jim Cokill, Director of Durham Wildlife Trust, added:

Durham Wildlife Trust will use the funds to support urgent work to halt the continued decline of the water vole across the region.

The water vole is a species that is under real threat of extinction across the UK, with declines of over 90% in recent decades. The Wildlife Trusts in the North East are leading the effort to save this charismatic species and enhance the rivers, streams and wetlands that are its home.

Enforcement Undertakings can be a proportionate and cost-effective way for businesses to make amends for less serious environmental offences. The company or individual must offer to restore or remediate the harm caused by

the incident, and demonstrate they will change their behaviour and ensure future compliance with the law.

Failure to comply with an EU may result in the offender being prosecuted for the original offence.

The full list of Enforcement Undertakings is [now available online](#).

News story: Police get funding boost to fight organised crime in Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire police will receive a £4.6 million funding boost to fight organised crime and gang violence.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid has approved a special grant application from Bedfordshire police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Kathryn Holloway.

The additional funding will support the force to disrupt gang activity in and around towns in the force area.

This gang activity includes high-harm crimes, such as gun violence, county lines drug operations, and child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

We are determined to crack down on serious violence and gang activity, which threaten the fabric of our communities.

This funding will help Bedfordshire police in their operations to dismantle criminal gangs and protect the public.

We recognise the changing demands that the police are facing and remain committed to providing them with the support they need.

PCCs can apply for special grant funding to alleviate the burden of police forces dealing with unexpected events or exceptional demand within their areas.

HMICFRS, the independent police inspectorate, assessed the special grant application from Bedfordshire's PCC and found the costs to be reasonable and proportionate.

In its 2016 PEEL inspection of the force, HMICFRS concluded that the volume

and complexity of crimes faced by Bedfordshire Police in some places – for example, Luton – was comparable to that of a London borough.

Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner Kathryn Holloway said:

I've fought all year to land the argument that the nature of the gang, gun and knife issues we face represent precisely that extraordinary challenge for Bedfordshire Police.

This will cover the entire cost of Op Boson, the force's specialist response to gang, gun and knife crime, which has placed an unprecedented strain on us over the past two years, together with the spend on this area calculated for this financial year.

Special grants are in addition to the police funding settlement, which is increasing funding by £460 million in 2018 to 2019, including money raised from the Council Tax precept. This includes an increase of £2.9 million for Bedfordshire police.

The government is also ensuring police have the powers they need to get weapons off our streets and is putting a strong focus on early intervention to ensure young people don't get drawn into a life of crime.

In April, the government published a new Serious Violence Strategy. The strategy sets out an ambitious programme of 61 commitments to tackle serious violence, in particular recent increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide.

The Home Secretary recently launched the £200 million Youth Endowment Fund, which will provide support and focus on those young people most at risk of violence.

The government has also announced a consultation on a proposed new statutory duty to underpin a public health approach to tackling the issue of serious violence and launched an independent review into drugs misuse – a key driver in the rise of violent crime.

Press release: Lord Ahmad announces funding boost for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

- £500,000 of additional UK aid support for victims of sexual violence globally.
- The new Murad Code on sexual violence, named after Yazidi Nobel Peace

Prize laureate Nadia Murad, will set out the expected standards of behaviour when gathering evidence of sexual violence for courts in conflict situations.

- New global guidelines on the reporting of sexual violence in conflict.

The Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon has announced £500,000 of additional UK aid support for victims of sexual violence across the world.

The extra support will be used to boost the number of expert deployments by the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Team of Experts, supporting efforts in places such as Syria, Burma and Nigeria. The Team of Experts support governments, judiciary, police, military and NGOs, on evidence gathering and training.

Ahead of the PSVI Film Festival on 23-24 November, Lord Ahmad also called on countries to sign up to the new Murad Code on sexual violence. Named after Yazidi Nobel Peace Prize laureate and campaigner Nadia Murad, the Code will set out the expected standards of behaviour from government bodies, NGOs and aid workers when gathering evidence of sexual violence for courts in conflict situations.

The Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Today's funding boost means that we can quickly deploy greater numbers of experts to support conflict affected countries.

The new Murad Code sets out the expected standards of behaviour from government bodies, NGOs and aid workers who are gathering evidence from survivors of sexual violence in conflict situations. We are making it crystal clear that impunity will not be allowed to run riot, and we are embedding accountability in our work.

Our fight against stigma and impunity continues to be a priority, because it is not just the right thing to do, but vital to reducing conflict and improving global security and stability.

Nobel Prize winner and human rights activist, Nadia Murad said:

Hundreds of Yazidi survivors have testified, the process of telling their stories is traumatizing, certain procedures must be followed to make sure we are not harming their well-being. Despite breaking taboos and speaking about their horrific sexual violence experiences, justice has not been delivered.

The Murad Code is a step in the right direction, we encourage the international community to adopt it and support the fight for justice.

During humanitarian emergencies, including conflict, violence against women and girls (VAWG) can increase in both frequency and severity. While data is limited, existing evidence indicates that approximately one in five displaced or refugee women are subjected to sexual violence. Survivors of sexual violence in conflict are often victimised by media reporting which can increase stigma. The Minister called on the international community to get behind new global guidelines on the reporting of sexual violence in conflict. In a meeting at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Friday 23 November, Lord Ahmad, joined by United Nations Special Representative Pramila Patten, will seek further commitments from partners to prevent and respond to conflict related sexual violence. Lord Ahmad also hosted 40 young filmmakers from conflict-affected and Commonwealth countries at Lancaster House to discuss how they could use their work to stamp out stigma.

Note to Editors

- This latest announcement comes ahead of the international 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Based Violence Campaign which starts on Sunday (25 November)
- The Department for International Development (DFID) is recognised as a global leader in tackling VAWG in all its forms, including domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and preventing sexual violence in conflict. This UK leadership has meant using the full range of the Britain's influence to defend women's and girls' rights wherever they are threatened.
- The 'Fighting Stigma through Film' festival will take place on the 23-24 November, at the British Film Institute (BFI) in London. The event is free to attend, register for tickets [here](#)

Further information

[Press release: Vulnerable court users to benefit from £5m government investment](#)

The investment will allow for more people to be supported in a safer, more comfortable environment and is part of HMCTS' commitment to improving the condition of court buildings and access to justice for all users.

The Personal Support Unit (PSU) is a charity that helps people who find themselves in court and in need of assistance, providing them with advice and guidance through a team of volunteers so they can represent themselves to the best of their ability. These are largely people representing themselves in cases of divorce, contact with children or eviction from their homes.

Additional facilities now available include:

- a new, larger room so that more people can be helped;
- kitchen facilities and new furniture;
- extra phone lines to allow volunteers to support more clients;
- privacy screens for conversations between clients and volunteers.

Justice Minister, Lucy Frazer said:

Court appearances can often come at difficult and emotional times in a person's life. Therefore, I was delighted to hear the positive effects these new and improved personal support facilities are already having and look forward to seeing first hand the difference this refurbishment has made.

The team of volunteers in Liverpool are doing a fantastic job and this funding means they can now offer their guidance and support to even more people. This government is committed to helping those that need it most and ensuring our justice system remains the best in the world.

Personal Support Unit Chief Executive Officer, Eileen Pereira said:

I was bowled over by the work that has been done by the courts team at Liverpool to enable this expansion of service to take place. Our team of volunteers will be able to support more Litigants in Person as a direct result of the move to the new room which is already being shown by the rise in numbers of people we have helped.

The PSU nationally managed more than 65,000 contacts in the last year and in this financial year we are expecting over 75,000 contacts. Liverpool is fast becoming one of our busier PSU units. Our vision "No one should face court alone" is alive and well in Liverpool.

The refurbishment is part of HMCTS' ambitious £1bn reform programme, which is bringing new technology and modern ways of working to the justice system.

This programme has already delivered:

- A new fully accessible online civil money claims service giving the public the ability to make a small claim online – with more than 31,000 claims made since its launch in March and user satisfaction at 90%;
- A new system for applying for divorce online, which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%;
- A new probate system in testing, which has cut errors, quickened the process and has a user satisfaction rate of 93%;
- A pilot of fully video hearings in tax tribunals to test the potential for roll-out where appropriate across the courts and tribunals system;

- The national implementation of a new in-court system to record the results of cases digitally and instantly.
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[News story: Professional Entry Scheme: Bar Council app to be tested at five new courts](#)



In August [we announced](#) that we would be testing a Professional Entry Scheme at a limited number of courts, in a pilot designed to reduce queues and grant legal professionals easier access to court buildings.

The pilot, which is being tested in partnership with legal professional membership organisations, has been running since September. When the pilot completes in December, we will evaluate it. If successful, the scheme will be extended nationally and could be extended to other professional groups.

Throughout the pilot, the Bar Council has also been testing an app that it has developed to give its members a digital 'id card', which can be scanned by Court Security Officers. From Monday 26 November 2018, Bar Council members who have registered for the app will be able to use it at five additional courts:

- Chester Crown Court.
- Nottingham Crown Court
- Portsmouth Combined Court
- St Albans Crown Court
- Swansea Crown Court

For more information about registering for the Bar Council's app, contact: MemberServices@BarCouncil.org.uk

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