

Press release: Heathrow coach firm polluted river with toilet waste

A west London river was contaminated after toilets from luxury coaches were emptied into public drains.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, based near Heathrow Airport, broke environmental law when staff poured waste into sewers, instead of taking the waste to an approved site for disposal.

Officers from the Environment Agency turned detective in 2015, tracing pollution in the River Crane to where Symphony operated, a trading estate minutes from the airport.

A monitoring device, called a sonde, found the river had been polluted, and other sondes identified Symphony as the source, which officers confirmed through a network of drains.

The watercourse was further polluted when chemicals and dirty water entered the drains after staff washed vehicles on Symphony's premises. The firm had been warned by the Environment Agency and the company's landlords doing so was against the lease. Symphony would have stayed within the law by disposing of the chemicals at an approved site, or by cleaning their cars and coaches at an authorised location.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, Eastern Business Park, Ely Road, Hounslow, was fined £18,000 by Ealing Magistrates' Court, which ordered the firm to pay £12,113.62 in costs, and a victim surcharge of £170. The company was charged with allowing poisonous, noxious or polluting matter into the River Crane, between May 2015 and February 2016, and failing to provide the Environment Agency with documents relating to their activities.

The sole director of the firm, Allen Jeyakumar, of Lee Road, Greenford, was fined £3,134 by the court, for allowing Symphony to commit the offences. Mr Jeyakumar also had to pay a victim surcharge of £142.

Mathew Reed, who led the investigation for the Environment Agency, said:

Incidents like this have the potential to have a serious and long-term impact on the health of the river. Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd was given repeated warnings about its activities.

People might think we will find it too difficult to trace the cause of pollution, but this case proves that some detective work leads to a conviction.

Identifying pollution through a complex network of drains can be difficult, but that doesn't mean it cannot be done. We have the skills and technology to do it.

Both Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd and Allen Jeyakumar pleaded guilty to all charges at an earlier hearing.

For media enquiries, please call 0800 141 2743, or email southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk.

[News story: Social worker accreditation system plans announced](#)

The government has today (5 December) published its [response](#) to a consultation on the implementation of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) for child and family social workers.

The plans outlined today address feedback from the sector to ensure the new system is implemented effectively through an initial voluntary phased roll-out from 2018

The NAAS will raise the professional status of child and family social workers, providing a clear career path as well as ensuring they have the knowledge and skills they need to practice effectively.

The system forms a key part of the government's reforms to children's social work to ensure every child receives expert support and protection.

Children and Families Minister Robert Goodwill said:

Vulnerable children and families deserve the highest-quality care and support and that's why we are driving forward reforms in children's social work.

The National Assessment and Accreditation System is a key part of this work to strengthen the skills and professional status of child and family social workers so they can provide this vital support to children who need it.

We welcome the constructive feedback we have received and will work closely with the sector and local councils to support them as they start to introduce the new system in 2018.

Steve Walker, Leeds City Council Director for Children's Services, said:

The National Assessment and Accreditation System has brought a welcome focus on the arrangements that local authorities have in place to set the conditions in which best practice can flourish.

Leeds' involvement in the accreditation system will provide us with an opportunity to review and strengthen our career development opportunities for social workers and enable us to recruit and retain great social workers, which is what children and young people need and deserve.

Carla Pawsey, Leeds City Council Social Work Team Manager, said:

The National Assessment and Accreditation System is an opportunity to professionalise our profession and to be seen as accountable and evidence-based in our practice wisdom.

The initial roll out of the NAAS will consist of Phase One involving five local authorities and Phase Two, involving up to 20 authorities, and will promote a stronger focus on learning and development within the children's social work sector profession.

Social workers in the authorities involved in Phase One and Two of NAAS will be assessed against specific criteria setting out what constitutes effective social work practice, known as the Knowledge and Skills Statements.

Recruitment also began today for a Chair and CEO of Social Work England, the new regulator for all social workers in England which will be based in Sheffield.

The Department for Education, jointly with the Department of Health, will establish Social Work England to ensure public protection and drive improvements in social work practice, from initial education and training to continued professional development.

[Press release: PM meeting with Prime Minister Rajoy: 5 December](#)

The Prime Minister met with Prime Minister Rajoy of Spain this afternoon. Theresa May began by restating the UK's support for the Spanish Government on the issue of Catalonia – stating the rule of law must be upheld and the Spanish constitution respected.

The Prime Minister gave an update on the Brexit negotiations, confirming that she would be reconvening talks with the European Commission before the end of the week. She said both sides were positive about the progress that could be made ahead of December European Council. Prime Minister Rajoy said he shared the desire to move talks on to the next stage of negotiations as quickly as possible and that Spain would remain a constructive partner.

Prime Minister Rajoy spoke about the deep and strong relationship between Spain and the UK, referring to the significant investment that Spanish companies have made in the UK and the fruitful trading relationship. The Prime Minister welcomed views on how we could continue a good trading relationship between the two countries after Brexit and ensure this was as frictionless as possible.

The two leaders spoke about foreign policy and the threat of Russia, agreeing that it was important to maintain a collective and rigorous approach to sanctions and to counter disinformation.

They also spoke about increasing co-operation to counter the growing threat of terrorism. The Prime Minister outlined that the nature of terrorism was changing and how the internet and social media was providing terrorists with an extra tool to accelerate and amplify the terror they seek to spread.

Lastly, Prime Minister Rajoy raised the issue of the abhorrent treatment of Libyan people being smuggled into Europe and the ongoing efforts to help repatriate them. The Prime Minister said that this was an important challenge and she wanted to work closely with her European colleagues now and in the future to see what more could be done by, for example, improving conditions in the country of origin.

[News story: More cancer specialists to be employed by the NHS](#)

The NHS is to employ more cancer specialists, to speed up cancer diagnoses and get more people into treatment more quickly. The specialists will be trained in areas where there are shortages. It is part of Health Education England's new Cancer Workforce Plan.

Announcements of extra provision include:

- 200 clinical endoscopists – to investigate suspected cancers internally
- 300 reporting radiographers – to identify cancers using x-rays and ultrasound
- support for clinical nurse specialists – to lead services and provide quality care

The plan is part of a campaign to make sure patients are diagnosed quickly and get better access to innovative treatments that can improve survival rates.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The NHS has made amazing progress in diagnosing and treating cancer – it's incredible that 7,000 people are alive today who would not have been had mortality rates stayed the same as in 2010.

We want to save more lives and to do that we need more specialists who can investigate and diagnose cancer quickly. These extra specialists will go a long way to help the NHS save an extra 30,000 lives by 2020.

[News story: VisitBritain Board Member Appointed](#)

Dame Judith Macgregor was British High Commissioner to South Africa from September 2013 until March 2017, when she retired from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office after a career of some 40 years in the Diplomatic Service.

After graduating from Oxford (LMH) with a first class degree in Modern History, and a year in Romania as a British Council scholar, Dame Judith entered the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1976 serving first in the former Yugoslavia, and later as First Secretary in Prague and Paris. In her early years in the FCO, she held various posts dealing with Poland, Western Europe, and as the Secretary of State's speechwriter.

After accompanying her husband as Director General for Trade Promotion in Germany and Ambassador to Poland, she resumed her own career as FCO Director for Security Policy in 2000, and then as Ambassador to Slovakia (2004-6). She was appointed FCO Director for Migration in 2007, and Ambassador to Mexico in 2009, for which she was awarded the CMG. In 2013, she became British High Commissioner to South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. She was awarded the DCMG for her services to Diplomacy in January 2016.

Dame Judith was President of the FCO Women's Association from 2006 to 2016 overseeing a significant increase in the number of FCO women in the senior grades. In Mexico and South Africa she led government efforts to increase bilateral trade and investment as well as to boost tourism to the UK, working closely alongside VisitBritain. Dame Judith also spearheaded projects to increase bilateral programmes in R&D and represented UK Embassies overseas on the Whitehall Ministerial Committees Governing ODA Funding for International Research and Innovation.

Since leaving the FCO, Dame Judith has become an Independent Non Executive Member of the Board of the UK/Mexican mining company, Fresnillo plc and a Lay Member of the Governing Council of Southampton University, while remaining on the Advisory Board of the School of Slavonic Studies of UCL. Dame Judith was

elected an Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple and Honorary Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford in July 2017.

Dame Judith's husband John, concluded his diplomatic career as Ambassador to Austria and UK Governor of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to become Dean of the University of Kent at Brussels. During his wife's appointment to Mexico he was Visiting Professor of International Relations at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, and now teaches and mentors at his old Institute in Brussels and at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna.

Dame Judith and Mr Macgregor have a daughter and three sons.

The role is remunerated at £320 a day for two days a month. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Dame Judith has declared no such political activity.