

Anglian Water pays out £100,000 to charity for 2 water pollutions

Utility company Anglian Water paid out £100,000 to 2 environmental charities after breaching the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Anglian Water Services Ltd of Huntingdon, Cambs, breached the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. The 2 pollution incidents were caused by burst water mains discharging water contaminated with sediment in 2016. The first took place in May at Billing Brook, Northampton and the second in July at Willow Brook, Corby.

After investigating, Environment Agency officers found that Anglian Water had discharged matter or effluent that is poisonous or injurious to fish, spawn, spawning areas or food of fish.

The company submitted an Enforcement Undertaking agreeing to take steps to ensure similar incidents would not happen again and offered to pay £100,000 to charity. Having taken into account the circumstances of the case, the Environment Agency decided that it would be appropriate to accept the Enforcement Undertaking.

As part of the Enforcement Undertaking Anglian Water reviewed its incident response measures, staff training and internal procedures. The company also agreed to pay the Environment Agency's costs.

Adam Glassford an Environment Officer for the Environment Agency, said:

Enforcement Undertakings are voluntary offers made by companies and individuals to make amends for breaching environmental regulations, including through a financial contribution to a project that must secure environmental benefit/improvement to protect, restore or enhance the natural capital of England.

When appropriate, they allow a better resolution for the environment than a prosecution as they require action to put things right in a way that directly benefits the environment and local communities.

Anglian Water Services Ltd offered to pay £50,000 to The Wildlife Trust (BCN) for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire and £50,000 to Growing Together Northampton.

Helena Darragh from Wildlife Trust BCN said:

With the payment from Anglian Water, we have been able to recruit a new land adviser to assist with the Farming for the Future (FftF)

project, a project that is part of the Nenescape Landscape Partnership scheme running in the Nene Valley.

This project works with farmers and land managers to improve and create new meadow and wetland habitats and make in field changes to improve water quality through the provision of advice and grants.

The funding has also topped up our grant pot to carry out such work and allowed us to expand upon the boundary by almost 10,000 hectares to include much of the Willow Brook and Harper's Brook catchments. Now, we are able work with more farmers specifically on water quality improvements in these areas.

The extension has been very timely given the devastating flooding that took place along these watercourses this past winter. We are looking forward to increasing our offer to farmers and making habitat changes in the coming months that will be of great benefit to wildlife and people alike.

Peter Strachan from Growing Together Northampton said:

During 2020, Growing Together undertook a major programme of work to improve the sustainability of 3 urban amenity lakes along the course of Billing Brook in east Northampton. Funding came from a number of sources, but even so we had to leave certain aspects of the project design out for financial reasons.

Receipt of this money has now enabled us to clear collapsed willow entanglements at the outflow from 1 of the lakes. This was threatening to block the outflow completely. This has opened up views along the lake and means that water can flush through far more effectively after heavy rainfall. This carries silt, fallen leaves and pollutants out of the watercourse far more effectively and so contributes to improved water quality and biodiversity.

A number of other interventions that will enhance water quality are also being evaluated as we monitor the performance of last year's works during their first full year.

An Enforcement Undertaking is a type of civil sanction. It is a voluntary offer by an offender to put right the effects of their offending. It is not an admission of guilt. The Environment Agency may accept an Enforcement Undertaking where it has reasonable grounds to suspect that the person offering the undertaking has committed an offence. Enforcement Undertakings are accepted in suitable cases.

The Environment Agency continues to prosecute organisations and individuals for environmental offences where evidence shows high levels of culpability and serious environmental harm.

Anyone who suspects a pollution should report it to the Environment Agency's 24 hour incident hotline by calling 0800 80 70 60.