

## News story: Diving into innovation at Sizewell

The team of American underwater experts tackled their first UK 'nuclear dive' at Dungeness A in 2016 where, wearing full protective suits and shielded from radiation by the water, they were able to cut up empty fuel storage skips and retrieve other pieces of submerged equipment.

The ponds were used to store thousands of used nuclear fuel rods, held in metal skips, after they were discharged from the reactors. After the last of the fuel was transported to Sellafield for reprocessing, the skips and a range of redundant items, including sludge, were left behind in the water.

Pond clean-out conventionally takes place using remotely operated equipment to lift the whole radioactive skips clear of the water, exposing them to the air, where they are carefully cut up before decontamination, storage and eventual disposal. This process is slow with potential radiation dose risks for workers.

By doing the work under water, the divers can cut up the skips more safely, access awkward areas more easily, making the whole process safer, faster and more productive.

Now the lessons learned at Dungeness are being put into practice at Sizewell A pond as part of a decommissioning project that will take around 10 months to complete.

Steve Franks, Sizewell A Site Ponds Programme Manager, said:

The scale of work to be delivered by the divers is huge. Although we only have one pond to decommission, the inventory of the ponds is larger than at Dungeness A but we will still be looking to speed up the work wherever it is safe to do so.

In addition to a reduction in the overall radiation dose for workers, compared to traditional methods, the diving technique has a lower environmental impact, ultimately providing value for the UK taxpayer.

The first dive took place recently and focused on surveying the pond floor, transferring sludge into a purpose-built tank, setting up cutting equipment and size-reducing the first of 35 skips, which are classified as Intermediate Level radioactive waste.

The site is owned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). Geoff Suitor, Head of the Magnox Programme for the NDA, said:

Magnox's implementation of innovative approaches, such as the use

of divers to handle radioactive waste in ponds, contributes to real progress in reducing risks and hazards at the Magnox sites. Together, we are successfully cleaning up and making safe the UK's earliest nuclear sites on behalf of our communities and the environment.

During more than 250 dives at Dungeness A, a number of new ideas emerged including the use of lightweight plastic platforms for divers to stand on when exploring uncharted areas of the pond floor.

The team of 12 nuclear divers is supplied by US contractor Underwater Construction Corporation (UCC), which also carried out the Dungeness A project.

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## **Press release: Suspended jail term for landowner over illegal landfill site**

The Environment Agency has successfully prosecuted a landowner and two men who blighted 19 acres of Cheshire farm land by dumping and landfilling tens of thousands of tonnes of waste.

Mr Eric Hale of Bank Top Farm near Frodsham was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment suspended for two years, disqualified from driving for 12 months ordered to work 200 hours unpaid and have a curfew of 8pm to 6am for three months after pleading guilty to operating an illegal waste site without an environmental permit and dumping and landfilling controlled waste on the land.

Mr Hale also paid £100,000 in contributions towards the Environment Agency's costs. Mr Dennis Whiting and Mr Stefan Street each received a Conditional Discharge for two years after pleading guilty to dumping and landfilling controlled waste.

The Environment Agency brought the case against Mr Eric Hale, Mr Dennis Whiting and Mr Stefan Street after a lengthy investigation. The investigation identified that significant amounts of waste were being brought on to the farm, which did not have an environmental permit.

The Environment Agency identified that the operation of the illegal site was closely connected with a waste company Eric Hale Skip Hire Ltd. The prosecution for the Environment Agency stated that the majority of waste collected by the company was illegally dumped and landfilled at Bank Top Farm instead of being taken to a legitimate waste site.

Tracey Rimmer, Area Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

This operation demonstrates how the Environment Agency works in partnership to tackle serious waste crime. We have worked closely with the police and local authorities to pursue these criminals and bring them to justice. Waste crime is a serious issue diverting as much as £1 billion per year from legitimate business and the treasury.

During the course of the investigation Eric Hale, Steffan Street and Dennis Whiting were seen driving large waste vehicles which delivered, deposited and disposed of mixed waste, demolition waste including plasterboard and other waste including carpets and mattresses.

Trommel fines, which are a by-product produced during the recycling process and consist of materials such as wood, aggregate, glass, ceramics and organics, were also dumped at Bank Top Farm. The unregulated deposit of waste has the potential to cause harm to the environment.

The Judge on sentencing said:

Eric Hale was driven by greed to continue the illegal operation.

Also the court did not accept any of the mitigation of the offending put forward but Eric Hale's substantial personal mitigating circumstances were acknowledged by the court.

If you see waste crime report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Waste crime can cause serious pollution to the environment put communities at risk and undermines legitimate business and the investment and economic growth that go with it. You can call the Environment Agency on 0370 850 6506 to find out how to responsibly manage any waste your business produces or visit [www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/overview](http://www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/overview).

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## **Notice: The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead: application made to impound water**

The Environment Agency consult the public on certain applications for the abstraction and impoundment of water.

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
  - which Environment Agency offices you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
  - when you need to comment by
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## **Official Statistics: Joint Wood Energy Enquiry: 2015 data**

This release is the UK return to the biennial Joint Wood Energy Enquiry, conducted by the UN Economic Commission for Europe. It contains estimates of sources of wood fuel and consumption of wood energy in the UK in 2015.

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## **Official Statistics: European Forest Accounts: UK 2015 data**

This release contains data on stocks and flows of wooded land and timber and economic data on UK forestry to be submitted to Eurostat for the production of EU statistics on forestry. It replaces the previous Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting for Forestry.