

Press release: Environment Agency bags award at Inland Waterways Association's Festival of Water

A prestigious 55-year-old trophy has been presented to Environment Agency staff as thanks for their hard work in helping boaters make the most of Anglian waterways this summer.

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) made the gesture at their Festival of Water at St Neots as the Environment Agency welcomed hundreds of boats and thousands of visitors to the River Great Ouse over the bank holiday weekend.

Since 1963, the Best Working Boat award has been presented to working vessels, and this year it went to two EA boats – the Ouse II Know and Ouseabout.

Irven Forbes, the Environment Agency's Anglian waterways manager, said:

We're delighted with this recognition of our teams' hard work to maintain our waterways for people and wildlife.

This summer, the hot, dry weather presented some challenges like weed growth, fallen trees and lower levels on some of our navigations, so we're extremely pleased to have made a contribution to a very successful festival.

We've had so many great comments from visitors about the Great Ouse and the River Nene – it's given us a real boost to help people enjoy them while getting closer to nature.

The IWA award recognises the efforts of the team over many months to make sure boaters had smooth sailing on the region's waterways.

Just days before the event, for example, it was all hands on deck to make sure a broken lock didn't hamper visitors reaching the festivities.

Hemingford Lock on the River Great Ouse suffered a mechanical failure – the drive shaft had separated, meaning the lock couldn't be operated even by hand. Getting the lock up and running again as soon as possible became a priority, and the team dropped everything to repair it in under 48 hours.

And over the previous months, EA teams really pushed the boat out to make sure Anglian waterways were in tip-top condition for both local boaters and visitors to enjoy.

This included refurbishing 8 of the region's busiest locks used by around 7,000 boaters every year, revamping 10 landings, clearing a number of large

fallen trees, de-shoaling on the rivers Great Ouse and Nene, and spending an extra £60k on de-silting the tidal Great Ouse at Denver, Salters Lode and the Old Bedford on top of the regular annual de-silting and weed-clearance.

To make it easier for boats to navigate, teams also made half a dozen passes to clear duckweed from the Old West channel – work that must be done carefully in hot summer conditions to avoid having a negative impact on the environment and wildlife.

The work is part of the Environment Agency's £2.5m investment in the 353 miles of navigable Anglian waterways, protecting them for the future as an important part of the nation's rich heritage and beauty, and recognising all they contribute to our environment, health and wellbeing and economy.

The festival also saw the IWA, Lincolnshire County Council and the Environment Agency launch a new initiative – the Boston to Peterborough Wetland Corridor, which will see all three organisations working in partnership to progress a wetland corridor from the Black Sluice at Boston to the River Nene near Peterborough.

The proposal would bring a huge boost to Anglian waterways with new recreational access for boaters, cyclists, fishermen and walkers, a significant section of wetland habitat for flora and fauna, and economic opportunities for local communities – especially in connection with the proposed Bedford to Milton Keynes waterway park, a new 16 mile link from the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes to the River Great Ouse in Bedford.

You can find more information on Anglian Waterways [here](#).

[Press release: Community order for operating an illegal waste site in Walsall](#)

In the case brought by the Environment Agency, Stephen Wayne Morgan (aged 52) had pleaded guilty to one offence of operating a waste storage and treatment facility without an environmental permit, at an earlier hearing. He was sentenced to a 2 year community order with a requirement to complete 250 hours of unpaid work, and ordered to pay £17,000 in prosecution costs, along with a £60 victim surcharge. Morgan must also pay £54,415.33 under a confiscation order depriving him of the criminal benefit from the illegal operation.

The case relates to an offence between 6 April 2015 and 29 August 2015 committed on Middlemore Lane, Aldridge, Walsall, where Morgan had operated under the trading name Aldridge Aggregates & Recycling. Over the period of

offending, Morgan allowed the deposit of waste on site, that was later shredded and crushed, before being sold as processed products. The site contained thousands of tonnes of waste including construction and demolition waste, wood waste, and waste soils.

The activities at the site posed a nuisance local residents and a local business. On one occasion (15 June 2015), waste on the site was deliberately burned, subjecting employees of a nearby business to excessive amounts of smoke and forcing them to shut the doors and windows of their business premises.

Complaints were made by local residents, who were subjected to problems of excessive dust blowing towards their homes and settling, and excessive noise from machinery crushing and shredding waste on the site. One resident described the noise as "incredibly loud" and said it could be heard every day from Monday to Friday over a period of months.

Mr Morgan was provided with advice and guidance from the Environment Agency but failed to obtain planning permission or an environmental permit to legitimise the operation. He continued to receive and process waste on the site despite being advised that the activities were illegal, that the activities were having an effect on the local community, and that enforcement action could follow. Waste operations continued even after the Environment Agency served a legal notice on Mr Morgan on 1 July 2015 requiring removal of the waste.

Morgan was ultimately evicted from the premises by the site landlords on 29 August 2015. Thousands of tonnes of waste had to be removed from the site in the ensuing clean-up.

In mitigation, Mr Morgan's barrister stated that he had no relevant previous convictions and had pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity. He stated that Mr Morgan had expressed remorse for his offending and had made some attempt to reduce the quantities of waste from the site. He further stated that Mr Morgan was suffering with a number of health conditions.

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

The operation of illegal waste sites undermine legitimate businesses along with the investment and economic growth that go with it.

This case demonstrates that we will act upon information given to us regarding suspected illegal or nuisance waste activity and will not hesitate to prosecute when circumstances warrant it.

If you see pollution or a waste crime incident, report it on our incident hotline on 0800 807060.

Press release: Extended jail sentence handed to waste criminal

John Bruce (aged 46) is already serving 26 months imprisonment for dumping, burying and burning hazardous waste at Ridgeway Park Farm, Throckmorton Airfield, Worcestershire.

On Tuesday 4 September, Bruce pleaded guilty to a charge in relation to operating a regulated facility at Ridgeway Park Farm without an Environmental Permit. Worcester Crown Court handed Bruce a 22 week custodial sentence to run concurrently to his existing 26 month sentence.

The case, brought by the Environment Agency, concerned illegal waste operations at Ridgeway Park Farm in 2016. Bruce had accepted over 60 tonnes of redundant kitchen and bathroom materials onto his site. When Environment Agency officers visited the farm, they saw that in addition to these materials, flat pack furniture and packaging materials were being burnt on site.

In mitigation, the Judge noted that Bruce had pleaded guilty and therefore avoided the need for a full trial.

An Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

Mr Bruce has shown a blatant disregard for the environment and local community by operating a large scale illegal waste site at his farm. His actions undermine legitimate business also the investment and economic growth that go with it.

The Environment Agency will use all its enforcement powers, where we believe environmental offences have been committed. In cases where we believe monies have been unlawfully gained, we will investigate under the proceeds of crime act and confiscate assets.

The Environment Agency urge people to report waste crime on our Incident Hotline 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Press release: Waste operator fined

[for illegal waste disposal in Devon countryside](#)

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

In 2016 Mr Baker imported 7,514 tonnes of inert waste on a field at Poltimore, Exeter under the guise of 'drainage' works. This amount of waste far exceeded that permitted under an authorisation, issued by the Environment Agency, known as a U1 waste exemption. A U1 exemption enables waste to be reused without the need for an environmental permit but sets a maximum tonnage limit of 1,000 tonnes for soil and sub-soil.

The waste, from development sites around Exeter, was used to level off a significant part of the site, altering the character of the field and that of the surrounding landscape. The defendant not only failed to comply with the conditions of his U1 waste exemption but he also failed to secure planning permission from Devon County Council.

Richard Tugwell for the Environment Agency said:

This was a serious abuse of a U1 waste exemption which had a significant impact on the Devon landscape. People who use waste exemptions must ensure they comply with them and obtain appropriate planning permission.

Appearing before Exeter magistrates, Roger Baker, of Bovey Tracey, Devon, was fined £1,710 and ordered to pay £4,946 costs after pleading guilty to an offence under Reg 38 of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. The court also ordered Mr Baker to remove and appropriately dispose of the waste he'd illegally imported within 12 months.

The case was heard on 23 August 2018.

[Press release: Helping communities be flood resilient](#)

A team of flood engagement officers have worked with more than 60 schools and 700 business during their first year in post to help communities be more resilient to flooding in the North East.

The Environment Agency appointed the new team to increase awareness of flood risk and help people be prepared for flooding.

The £280,000 a year project, which started last summer, includes four new engagement officers spread across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Darlington, and Cleveland.

Funded by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC) for four years, the officers are working alongside partner organisations to help support communities.

In their first year they have worked closely with communities at risk of flooding to help them recruit Flood Wardens and develop Community Flood Plans, and have focused on ensuring businesses are resilient to protect the impact of floods on the economy.

Area updates

In Northumberland Colin Hall has been working with many Northumberland communities. In Ponteland in particular he has been working hard to increase their flood resilience including completing a Flood Week in Ponteland Primary School, campaigning for new Flood Wardens, progressing a community flood plan and establishing a Flood Warden Group.

In Tyne & Wear Taryn Al-mashgari has working in schools in Sunderland, South Tyneside and Newcastle delivering Flood Weeks and careers events. She's also focused on businesses in Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside. Her plans for the coming year include working with key communities such as Wingrove to raise awareness of surface water flooding.

In Cleveland, Sarah Duffy has been working with communities from across the area, working with schools in Middlesbrough, Stockton, and Redcar and Cleveland to complete a series of Flood Weeks. She's also been working with businesses in Yarm to increase resilience, including meeting businesses on the High Street, and running a Business Breakfast morning to bring businesses together. Sarah has formed strong links with Skinningrove Flood Warden Group and hopes to expand the Flood Warden network in Cleveland next year.

In Durham and Darlington Anna Caygill has been focusing on schools and communities such as Stanhope and Chester-le-Street, including promoting the Flood Warning Service and recruiting Flood Wardens. Anna has also been working closely with Durham Housing Group to identify where their properties at risk of flooding are and to come up with a strategy to warn and inform tenants to be more prepared for a flood event. In Darlington she has been working with groups in Cockerton and Haughton-le-Skerne to increase the area's resilience.

The Community Engagement Officers are working on behalf of the Environment Agency and local authority partners.

As well as supporting residents and businesses, working alongside schools has played a key role in helping future generations understand their risk.

The team hosted a region-wide Flood Warden logo competition which led to a new blue jacket uniform for flood wardens across the North East so they were

recognisable to emergency services and the community during an incident.

Really successful first year

Phil Taylor, Environment Agency Flood Resilience Team Leader in the North East, said:

It's been a really successful first year for the Flood Engagement Officers and they are now well known within their communities. This is a foundation they will build on going forward.

A key part of their activity has been working with schools as future generations have a key role to play in ensuring our communities are flood resilient – the team has worked with around 5,500 school pupils this past year alone.

We all know just how devastating flooding can be for communities and there are actions people can take now will make all the difference to reducing the impact a flood can have.

We're still working hard to help communities understand their flood risk and sign up to receive free flood warnings, as well as helping residents develop community flood plans that detail the action each community or business can take to reduce the impact of flooding, and help them return to normal life as soon as possible should a flood happen.

To find out more about your local flood risk and sign up to the Flood Warning Service [online](#)