

Press release: Lower Otter Restoration Project now applying for funding

The Environment Agency has today confirmed its commitment to the Lower Otter Restoration Project while applications for funding grants are made.

This assurance means that work to manage the estuary can press ahead and avoid delays on delivering the £8-9 million scheme.

Ben Johnstone, Environment Agency flood risk manager, said:

We are completely committed to the Lower Otter Restoration Project and, together with our partners, want to drive forward our work to create multiple benefits for people and wildlife.

Following public consultation the project team has selected the best option for the Lower Otter, which will include restoring the Big and Little Marsh floodplain. Most of the existing embankments will be kept with breaches to allow water to flow through. It will also create new intertidal and freshwater habitats with no increase in height to current water levels and flood risk.

The partnership scheme will provide new and improved access and amenities including maintaining the South West Coast Path and relocating the Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club. It will also protect the old municipal tip in the flood plain and deliver compensatory habitat for the construction and maintenance of flood defences in the Exe Estuary such as Starcross, Cockwood and Exmouth.

Dr Sam Bridgewater from the Lower Otter Restoration Project team said:

This is great news from one of the key project partners. We can now seek the necessary consents and permissions from a variety of authorities, so that we are ready to start work on the ground as soon as possible once funding is confirmed.

A public exhibition on the Lower Otter Restoration Project will be held later this year – details to follow.

[Press release: Come along to flood scheme update at Forge Mill Farm](#)

If you are planning a visit to Sandwell Valley Park, Forge Mill Farm or RSPB on Thursday 9 August, why not come and talk to Environment Agency staff about the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme?

Environment Agency staff will be setting up a stall near the Forge Mill Farm car park on 9 August, from 1pm to 4pm, to talk to local residents and visitors about the progress being made.

The completed scheme will reduce flood risk for 1,400 properties in the area. Phase 2 of the scheme, will provide additional flood storage at Forge Mill in Sandwell Valley, which is upstream of Perry Barr and Witton, and will control the flow of flood water downstream. Park users will have seen construction happening around Forge Mill Farm, at the golf course and along the river side.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency Project Manager for the Scheme said:

This is a great opportunity to find out more about what we've been doing so far and we have planned for the coming months. Come and hear more about the scheme, including an additional river crossing providing a circular walking route and environmental enhancements, such as the creation of wet woodland, crassula management (in conjunction with RSPB), tree planting, tree and hedgerow management and creation of new habitats in areas where we are taking material to build the embankment.

The main aspects of this phase include the building of a new embankment, installation of the river outlet and temporarily re-diverting the river.

The scheme, costing just over £32 million, is part of the Environment Agency's programme of £2.6 billion investment into flood defences across the country. The scheme was made possible through funding contributions from Birmingham City Council, Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Arts Council and crowd-funding.

The first phase of the scheme was completed in spring 2017. Following improvements to the existing upstream flood storage area at Perry Hall Playing Fields, Phase 1 delivered improvement works in Perry Barr and Witton, including wall repairs and wall raising along Brookvale Road, construction of walls along Tame Road and installation of a flood gate at the Atlas Industrial Estate entrance. These measures in isolation do not provide a big enough reduction in flood risk, although they did successfully prevent properties from flooding in May 2018, so Phase 2 will provide the necessary flood water storage during a major flood, such as that experienced in 2007.

Along with flood defences and flood management schemes, knowing your flood risk is also important when protecting your family and property from flooding. People can check their risk and register to receive free flood warnings by visiting our page on [preparing for flooding](#) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Press release: Environment Agency announces support for farmers during dry weather

Following the driest June since 1925 and a dry July, farmers have reported water supply concerns which could affect the irrigation of crops and welfare of livestock. Ahead of the National Farmers Union's drought summit today (Wednesday 1 August), the Environment Agency issued guidance to farmers detailing options to flex abstraction licences in serious cases.

The arrangements will allow farmers to trade water allowances – as set out in their abstraction licence – on a short-term basis, without the need to change their licence. The EA will fast-track the process to enable farmers to act quickly and arrangements will be agreed locally where the EA is satisfied that there will not be any adverse effects on the environment or the rights of other lawful water users. The EA also monitors river flow and will maximise access to water when it is available, such as following heavy rain.

In severe cases where there is a real or imminent threat to crops and livestock, the EA may temporarily allow additional, emergency abstraction. Each case will be assessed to minimise impacts to the environment or the rights of other water users.

Paul Hickey, head of water resources, Environment Agency said:

We know that farmers are facing considerable pressures in responding to drought conditions and we want to support them by allowing them to flex their abstraction licences in the most serious cases to safeguard food production and animal welfare.

We must also balance farmers' needs with those of wildlife and other water users so we will only allow these arrangements where we are satisfied there won't be any adverse effects on the environment.

As the hot, dry weather is set to continue we urge everyone to use water wisely to protect the environment and help prevent the need for water restrictions.

The Environment Agency will continue to carry out compliance checks on abstraction licences to ensure that abstractors keep to their licences and any agreed flexible arrangements.

The temporary arrangements do not apply to water companies as they are able to use a variety of drought measures defined in law to manage droughts and public water supply. The Environment Agency works closely with water companies to ensure they are following drought plans and implementing actions to conserve water in a timely way.

Notes to Editors

It is up to abstractors to ensure that they use water wisely, efficiently and have sufficient water for their needs.

Any flexible arrangements will be one-off, limited to this event. If any abstraction outside a licence is likely to need to re-occur, licence holders must apply to vary the licence at the earliest opportunity.

It is important that water abstraction licence holders check their licence details – licence holders can now view and [manage water abstraction licences online](#)

The Environment Agency can review hands off flow conditions more frequently to allow abstractors to take advantage of any peak flows when significant rainfall occurs.

Use of water company headroom by other abstractors where this is sustainable. Southern and Anglian Water have said that in principle this can be provided and we are awaiting details from the companies on their proposals.

Press release: Large fine for Leicester textile firm

Leicester based Euro Dyers Ltd have been ordered to pay a total of £59,259 after operating an illegal textile dye house in a residential area.

Euro Dyers Ltd pleaded guilty at Leicester Magistrates' Court on 25 July 2018 and were ordered to pay a fine of £40,000, costs of £19,084 alongside a £175 victim surcharge.

The company, who operate at the Saffron Works, Saffron Lane, Leicester had been told on several occasions that they needed an environmental permit to operate. Despite numerous warnings from Environment Agency staff who encouraged and tried to assist them with an application, they never successfully applied for a permit.

A permit would have introduced conditions to manage odour, regulate emissions to air and sewer, the generation of waste, noise pollution and the prevention of accidents. The latter would have been especially important as inspections found flammable liquids stored on top of oxidising chemicals and chemicals stored with no containment to control leaks.

Environment Agency officers also found waste water leaking into a roadside drain outside.

Speaking after the ruling, an Environment Agency officer involved with the investigation said:

Despite several attempts to assist the company and after numerous warnings, this company still refused to be brought into the permitting regime., We hope that this fine will serve as a warning to them and others in the industry that there are strong penalties if they flout the law.

This is great news to the residents who live nearby, the environment and to competitors who do the right thing and comply with the law.

We are committed to working with the industry to ensure they operate legally. However, we will take enforcement action where a company refuses to comply. We make sure the impacts from these sites are controlled in accordance with a permit and that all companies in the industry are operating on a level playing field.

Dyehouse operators across England who do not currently hold an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency should proactively assess the capacity of their sites to check whether they require a permit. Any company, who finds that their site's capacity is above the threshold of 10 tonnes per day, should contact the Environment Agency for advice and guidance on their application for a permit.

[News story: New guide for farmers to help reduce air pollution from ammonia](#)

Updated: We have added the animated video produced to support the launch of the COGAP to reduce emissions of ammonia from agriculture.

A new guide published today sets out the steps farmers, advisors and contractors can take to reduce ammonia emissions and help improve air quality.

Our [Clean Air Strategy](#) highlights that agriculture is responsible for 88% of UK emissions of ammonia gas, which 'over-fertilises' natural habitats with nitrogen and combines with other pollutants to produce fine Particulate Matter pollution which is harmful to human health.

The [Code of Good Agricultural Practice \(COGAP\) for Reducing Ammonia Emissions](#) sets out simple steps all farmers can take to reduce ammonia emissions, such as using a nutrient management plan to calculate fertiliser application rates.

It also includes more significant changes to slurry storage, spreading equipment and infrastructure, alongside innovative techniques such as slurry and digestate acidification and separation.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Air pollution is not just an urban issue and with 88% of ammonia emissions coming from farming, the government is taking concerted action.

With clear new guidance and financial support we will help farmers across the country to take action, reduce emissions and help improve air quality.

In addition to the new guidance, Defra is providing a package of financial and technical advice to help farmers reduce their emissions.

Defra is investing £3 million over the next three years to fund a specialist team of experts who will offer support, advice and guidance on the most effective ways to reduce emissions from ammonia on their land.

It will fund demonstrations of the latest low-emission spreading equipment and one-to-one advice on reducing ammonia emissions which will be available from Catchment Sensitive Farming officers by the end of this year.

A video has also been produced by Defra to support the launch of the COGAP. [Ammonia emissions from agriculture video](#)

The RDPE Countryside Productivity scheme is currently offering 40% grants towards much of the manure management equipment recommended in the COGAP to reduce ammonia emissions. This includes low-emission spreading equipment, slurry and digestate storage bags, digestate processing equipment and mild acidification equipment. Farmers in priority catchments for reducing water pollution may also be eligible for grants towards covers for slurry stores and lagoons under the Countryside Stewardship scheme.

The voluntary code has been written by Defra in collaboration with the National Farmers Union (NFU), the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and the Agricultural Industries Confederation.

Contributions have also been made by other organisations including ADAS, the

British Egg Council, the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers, the Environment Agency, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF), the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, Natural England, Plantlife and the Tenant Farmers Association.

The guide includes information on how to reduce emissions when:

- storing organic manure
- applying organic manure
- applying manufactured nitrogen fertiliser
- feeding livestock
- housing livestock

NFU environment forum chairman Mark Pope said:

The NFU welcomes the launch of the Code of Good Agricultural Practice for Reducing Ammonia Emissions. The code contains a variety of measures to reduce ammonia emissions on farm, which in many instances provide multiple benefits to the environment and resource efficiency.

Farmers have recognised there is a need to reduce their ammonia emissions and the sector has made improvements with levels dropping by 10% in the past 30 years. However, further reductions are required from the industry in order to meet targets set under the Government's Clean Air Strategy. We urge Defra to continue to offer farmers guidance on this issue alongside targeted financial support where necessary.

Robert Sheasby, chief executive of the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC), which represents companies delivering both inputs and advice to farmers said:

We are pleased to note that the new code recognises the importance of professional advisers in guiding farm practice. Those on the Feed Adviser Register and FACTS Qualified Advisers are already undertaking additional training that will update some 4,500 professionals on the code's requirements.

By delivering advice tailored to the needs of individual farms, their crops and livestock, we will make a significant contribution to meeting Defra's ambition for productivity and ammonia mitigation.

Jill Hewitt, Technical Consultant at the National Association of Agricultural Contractors added:

Spreading manures, slurry and digestate waste has become a

predominantly contractor operation and the NAAC welcomes new guidance to help farmers and contractors make decisions about the best way to apply waste to land to maximise nutrient content, and minimise air pollution.

Nigel Penlington, Head of Environment and Buildings at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board said:

There is increasing pressure on farmers to control ammonia so we welcome this as a first step to help raise awareness and provide simple, practical steps to make a difference on the farm, improve the image of farming and its environmental performance and, at the same time, save farmers money and provide some benefits to the health and welfare of livestock and crop health.