

# [Press release: Report on state of air quality in England highlights urgent action needed on ammonia emissions](#)

A rise in ammonia emissions is having a damaging effect on wildlife and habitats, according to the Environment Agency's first ever report on England's air quality, published today. [The report](#) shows that, unlike other main air pollutants, emissions of ammonia have increased since 2013.

Ammonia deposition can overload land and water with nitrogen; it acidifies soils, natural habitats, and freshwaters. These effects reduce biodiversity in sensitive habitats creating a knock-on effect for our wildflower species, aquatic and insect life. The report shows of England's nitrogen-sensitive habitats, 95% are affected by nitrogen deposition.

The vast majority of UK ammonia emissions, 88%, come from the agricultural sector as a result of such activities as fertiliser use and slurry storage. Higher concentrations and deposition levels are associated with areas of intensive livestock production, especially dairy and beef.

The Environment Agency is today calling on farmers to take urgent action by changing land management practices and becoming more nitrogen efficient. A new Code of Good Agricultural Practice designed in collaboration with farming organisations, DEFRA and the Environment Agency is being published today to help farmers improve their land management and reduce ammonia emissions.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

Urgent action is needed if we are going to tackle the hidden blight of ammonia emissions. These emissions are having a detrimental impact on the environment, precious habitats and wildlife. As custodians of the land, farmers must take the lead by changing their land management practices.

More broadly, poor air quality is bad for the environment but also people's health and wellbeing. This report also shows the need to tackle the high levels of nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and particulate matter that persist in certain areas. Improvement to air quality is going to require action from nations, government at a national and local level, organisations, and communities – but just as importantly – individuals.

## **Huge improvements in air quality since the 1970s**

The report shows the progress made in reducing air pollution over recent decades. Since 1970 in the UK:

- Nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) emissions have reduced by 72%
- Particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) has reduced by 73%.
- Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) has reduced by 97%
- Non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC) have reduced by 66%

These emissions come from a range of sources including vehicles emissions and industrial processes. By working with the industries, the Environment Agency has helped to contribute to these reductions and will continue to do so through future regulation.

However, while legal limits are being met for the majority of pollutants, high levels of nitrogen dioxide, ozone and particulate matter remain in many urban areas with high concentrations around homes and schools, and are consequently a major public health concern. Furthermore, under current projections, emission reduction targets for 2030 will not be met for ammonia, NO<sub>x</sub>, NMVOCs, SO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> without further action. Particulate matter can have impacts on health even below current legal thresholds.

The Government has moved to address these issues by publishing its Clean Air Strategy. Clean Air is the first of the ten major goals set in the 25 Year Environment Plan, which contains important commitments aimed at curbing emissions from combustion plants and generators, ending the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040, and improving industrial emissions further by building on existing good practice and the successful regulatory framework. The Clean Air Strategy is currently out for public consultation until mid- August. To comment please go to the [Clean Air Strategy Consultation](#)

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## [Press release: Amnesty event chance for illegal car breakers to make fresh start](#)

Illegal car breakers in the Portsmouth area are being invited to find out more about becoming 'legit' at an amnesty event being staged all this week by the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency is encouraging those interested in making a fresh start to visit their incident vehicle parked next to Mick's Burgers on Portsdown Hill.

Visitors will be able to talk to staff in person and find out how to get a permit – with no catches or comebacks. The officers will be there from 8am until 3pm every day until Friday July 20.

The impact of illegal waste sites is estimated at £98 million, with illegal

car breakers among the worst offenders. The Environment Agency has new powers to clamp down on illegal breakers, such as by blocking their yard, seizing their van and confiscating their profits.

Those choosing to hurt the reputation of the car-breaking industry by operating illegally without the necessary paperwork and infrastructure might save money in the short term. However, they cause pollution, fires, illegal hazardous waste, and take business away from the 'good guys' who are doing their best to run a professional operation to support their family.

Environment Agency officers are already out looking for illegal operators, on the roads of Portsmouth and Chichester, and online.

Vic Jennings, from the Environment Agency's Hampshire and Isle of Wight Regulatory Waste Team, said:

We're trying to make it as easy as possible for local car breakers to get legit. We're using our incident vehicle up on Portsdown Hill from 8am to 3pm all this week so people can drop in discretely, and anonymously if they wish.

We can answer their questions, or even start them on the process if that's what they want. Our message is simple: 'show us you're trying, and we'll help you all the way'.

[Free help is also available online](#) or by calling 03708 506 506.

The Environment Agency will be holding another amnesty week 15 to 19 October 2018, on the Chichester bypass, next to the Pass Street Café, PO19 7RT.

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## **Press release: Yellow fish remind people how they can reduce sea pollution**

The Environment Agency is using yellow fish to alert people on the Kent coast to what happens when they pour fat, oils or other waste down their yard drains or road gullies.

Teams visited Walpole Bay in Margate and Viking Bay in Broadstairs where they painted yellow fish symbols next to drains carrying surface water into the sea. Their aim is to remind residents and business owners how pollution can travel directly into the ocean.

Working with Thanet District Council and Southern Water, on 13 July they

stencilled the fish symbols on and around the covers of road drains along the towns' promenades.

It is part of a national campaign by the Environment Agency to raise awareness of the importance of keeping the country's bathing waters clean, supported by the mantra 'Only rain down the drain!'

Initiatives like these have contributed to the great strides made in improving the quality of bathing water over the last 20 years. It is thanks to the hard work of the Environment Agency, Defra, water companies, councils, local communities, farmers and environmental organisations.

The Environment Agency continues to remind the public that everyone has an important part to play in protecting the seas and improving the quality of the country's bathing waters.

Alan Cansdale, Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

It has been great having the opportunity to work with local people, who also use and enjoy the local bathing waters. The Yellow Fish campaign is a simple and effective way of showing everyone that by making small changes we can all help to reduce pollution entering our rivers and seas which in turn helps to keep the local bathing water clean.

Councillor Jason Savage, Deputy Leader for Thanet District Council, said:

Our partnership work with the Environment Agency and Southern Water has enabled us to highlight the important role that residents, visitors and businesses play in keeping Thanet's beaches clean. The Yellow Fish campaign is a fantastic way to help get this message across.

Rob Butson, Bathing Water Manager for Southern Water, said:

It's vital we all work together to protect our beautiful beaches and bathing waters. Campaigns like Yellow Fish really help engage the community and spread the message that only rain should go down the drain!

We're proud to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and the Council to help play our part in improving bathing water quality across our region.

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# Press release: Water company fined for pollution incidents

Northumbrian Water Ltd (NWL) has been ordered to pay over £33,600 in fines and costs for three separate pollution incidents, including pollution of a Tyne Valley burn with untreated sewage effluent, which bypassed the local sewage treatment works.

The company was sentenced on Monday 23 July at South Tyneside Magistrates' Court after admitting one charge of causing a discharge of untreated sewage into Smithy Burn at Broomley on 19 August 2016.

Two other similar offences were taken into consideration as part of this case following unpermitted discharges of sewage effluent on 26 June 2015 at both Summerhouse & Killerby Sewage Treatment Works (STW), both near Darlington.

The pollution at Broomley originated from a storm overflow channel. These allow rainwater and sewage effluent to bypass a sewage treatment works in times of heavy rainfall, to avoid the works' capacity being exceeded. To be lawful, storm overflows should be incorporated into the works' environmental permit.

According to the Environment Agency, this was not the case at Broomley, since Northumbrian Water's environmental permit clearly states that discharges to Smithy Burn should consist only of treated sewage effluent.

## **Silt build-up**

Chris Bunting, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that investigations found a build-up of silt had prevented flow from reaching the works, and instead diverted it to the storm overflow. Northumbrian Water's maintenance inspections hadn't included a requirement to check a manhole chamber where the blockage would likely have been discovered.

Formal samples were taken from the burn and an ecological survey revealed a thick sewage fungus affecting the watercourse for 100m downstream of the outfall, which had starved the water of oxygen and resulted in the death of freshwater shrimp and midge larvae.

At Summerhouse & Killerby STW's, the Environment Agency's inspections found both to be in a poor state of repair with faulty equipment. Rather than discharging treated sewage effluent, at Killerby sampling showed effluent leaving the works was more polluted than where it arrived.

Malcolm Galloway, appearing for NWL told the court that staff were to blame for the faults as they hadn't followed the company's inspection procedures, and that NWL has a good compliance record. He also maintained that the storm overflow at Broomley had been permitted because it was included in the permit application made back in 1989.

In sentencing, District Judge Roger Elsey ruled that the company's culpability was low, but that the additional offences meant the fine had to be increased.

Environment Agency Area Environment Manager, Fiona Morris said:

The incident at Broomley had a significant impact on the ecology of Smithy Burn. This case demonstrates how important it is that water companies and wider regulated industries understand and comply with the conditions by which they are permitted to operate.

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## [Press release: Playground ready for summer fun at Forge Mill Farm](#)

*Updated:* Wrong image used in original article

Ongoing construction of phase 2 of the Environment Agency Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme, meant that the children's play area at Forge Mill Farm, had to be closed whilst the wall was being built. In addition to the play area being ready for the start of school holidays, contractors have now moved access to their construction site, away from the main visitor car park, to ensure safety of visitors to the park.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency project lead for the scheme said:

We have been working closely with our partners and the local community, to ensure that we minimise disruption to the park users and safety is of our top priority, especially as the summer holiday season begins and more people come to enjoy the park.

A number of notice boards are now on display around Forge Mill Farm, the lake and RSPB, to give visitors the latest information on progress of Phase 2 of the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme, which will reduce the risk of flooding for 1400 properties in the area.

More information is available about the scheme on the [Perry Barr and Witton flood scheme page](#) or [contact the Environment Agency project team](#).

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 the [Environment Agency flood information pages](#) or

calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.