

# Press release: £5 billion investment by water companies to benefit the natural environment

The Environment Secretary Michael Gove has challenged water companies to increase investment and improve environmental outcomes by 2025.

The ambitious measures set out by the Environment Agency in the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) will see up to £5 billion of investment by water companies in the natural environment through 2020 to 2025.

This will help tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the water environment, from the spread of invasive species and low flows to the effects of chemical and nutrient pollution.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

I want water companies to invest in the long term future of our environment. It is right that the Environment Agency is challenging water companies to go further.

This significant investment will help tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the natural environment. It will help to improve our waterways, increase biodiversity and combat non-native invasive species. This will support our goal to leave the environment in a better state for future generations.

Water companies have a duty to protect and enhance the natural water environment. The government expects water companies to meet the obligations set out in the Environment Programme (WINEP) by 2025.

The investment will:

- Protect and improve at least 6000km of our waters
- Protect and improve 24 Bathing Waters and 10 Shellfish sites
- Protect and improve 1800 hectares of protected nature conservation sites
- Enhance nearly 900km of river and 4276 hectares through wider biodiversity improvements

The measures in WINEP represent the basic measures required by water companies to meet their environmental outcomes. However this also presents an opportunity for the industry to develop innovative approaches which will benefit customers, communities, the environment and natural capital.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

A clean water environment keeps us healthy, sustains wildlife, and is essential to the success of the economy. Water quality has improved in recent decades but water companies are still responsible for at least one serious pollution incident every week.

We put together a programme of work for water companies over the next five years which will produce significant environmental improvements: protecting and improving over 6,000km of rivers, 24 bathing waters, 10 shellfish waters and 18000 hectares of protected nature conversation sites.

Water companies have until later this year to submit more detailed plans to Ofwat. I'm looking forward to seeing more innovation and less pollution.

Certain aspects of the WINEP, on an exceptional basis, will be considered for extension of the 2020-2025 timeframe if they facilitate long term sustainable outcomes and maximise environmental benefits.

Water companies have until 30 June to submit their case for extension to the Environment Agency and Ofwat.

This ambitious programme marks a real step forward in delivering the environmental outcomes set out in our [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

Notes:

- Environment Secretary, Michael Gove's speech to the water sector can be found [here](#).
- Environment Agency report on State of the Environment water quality can be found [here](#).

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## [Press release: River coarse fishing season starts tomorrow](#)

It's a great time to get out there and go fishing, but the Environment Agency is reminding anglers to make sure they have a fishing licence before they go.

You can buy a [fishing licence](#) online and don't forget that all fishing licence income is used to fund work to protect, improve and develop fisheries, fish habitats and angling. If you want to fish a new river this season, why not visit [fishinginfo](#) to find details of different venues, river levels and angling clubs.

## **Volunteers helping to tackle illegal close season angling**

The Environment Agency reported 87 close season offences during the first 10 weeks of the annual restricted period for coarse fish. Officers undertook 729 targeted patrols, also detecting 115 other offences, mainly unlicensed fishing, but also several illegally set traps.

Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers were supported again by Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiff Service members on Operation CLAMPDOWN. Now in its sixth year, Operation CLAMPDOWN is a joint initiative between the Environment Agency, Angling Trust's Fisheries Enforcement Support Service and police forces, aimed at gathering intelligence about illegal fishing and responding through targeted patrols.

Patrols took place across rivers, streams, drains and on specific canals and stillwaters that still retain the close season.

Kevin Austin, Environment Agency Deputy Director Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment, said:

It's a great time to go fishing. So I'd encourage anglers to get out there, enjoy yourselves fishing and make sure you are doing the right thing.

I'd like to thank the Angling Trust volunteers for the significant role they play in stopping illegal fishing through their work on Operation CLAMPDOWN.

The vast majority of anglers fish legally; sadly there are a small number of anglers who cheat others by fishing during the close season. It is still possible for anglers to fish during this time on many stillwaters and canals, which are open all year round.

We respond to the intelligence we receive about illegal fishing by ensuring our patrols are targeted at the right places – and the right people.

Dilip Sarkar MBE, Angling Trust National Enforcement Manager, said:

These figures show that during Operation CLAMPDOWN 6 Volunteer Bailiffs throughout England are demonstrating their massive commitment to protecting fish and fisheries and cracking down on illegal fishing.

All anglers can help this process, in fact – at any time of year – by

reporting information and offences in progress to the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60, or the police on 101/999 as appropriate.”

Anyone who suspects illegal fishing to be taking place should report the matter to the Environment Agency’s incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

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## [Press release: Sea change for migrating smolts](#)

The Environment Agency has carried out underwater sonar surveys to check for young salmon using a new route across the Tees Barrage gates.

And the results show the juveniles – known as smolts – successfully making their journey from spawning grounds upstream out to sea.

It follows changes to the operation of the Tees Barrage in 2015, which means on every tidal cycle the gates are lowered to allow fish to pass both upstream and downstream.

Surveys have shown the barrage gates are the main route for salmon migrating upstream and the automation of the gates has resulted in an extra 1,500 hours per year of fish passage for returning adult salmon to reach their upstream spawning grounds.

It’s in addition to the other routes that salmon use including the Barrage’s navigation lock, the Denil fish pass, the fish pass in the white water rafting centre, and the main canoe slalom.



## **Downstream migration improved**

Phil Rippon, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

As well as improving the routes for returning adult fish we are also looking to improve the downstream migration of these precious fish and maximise the number of smolts reaching the North Sea.

By lowering the main barrage gates at set times, it means that as well as providing an additional upstream route for adult salmon we are providing a much easier route for the young salmon moving downstream as well. It is known that the sooner the smolts reach the sea the better their survival chances are, resulting in more returning adult fish.

Our recent work using an underwater sonar has shown large numbers of smolts using the gates to pass successfully downstream. It's really positive to see yet more evidence that salmon are spawning upstream and these youngsters have been living in the river for up to 3 years before they move out to the sea.

Every year smolts, which are between 1 and 3 years old, leave the river to start their feeding migrations to the sea – travelling as far as Greenland – where they will spend up to three more years as an adult salmon before returning to the river to spawn.

Smolts are vulnerable throughout their migration and only around 5% of those that leave the river will return to spawn the next generation of salmon.

[Underwater sonar footage of River Tees smolts crossing the Tees Barrage](#)

## **Steering group**

The Tees Barrage Fish Pass and Operation Steering Group, made up of Tees Barrage owners the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, Angling Trust, Salmon & Trout Conservation Trust, Tees Rivers Trust, Industries Nature Conservation Association and Tees Barrage International White Water Centre, oversees the monitoring and research of fish and seal populations and carried out action to improve fish passage.

Research to understand the preferred routes through the barrage for fish and how to make it easier for them while reducing seal predation has been the focus of recent surveys.

Last year also saw the use of an acoustic deterrent device (ADD) to deter seals from entering the navigation lock, which showed promising results. Phil added:

We're working really hard together with our partners to understand how fish naturally try to pass through the barrage and then to make it as easy as possible for them. We've changed the way the main gates and navigation lock operate to allow more fish passage, and we'll be using an acoustic deterrent device again this summer.

We want as many fish as possible to make it upstream to their spawning grounds to ensure the River Tees continues to improve.

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## **[Press release: Government steps up the fight against waste criminals](#)**

Waste criminals act illegally to evade landfill tax, undercut responsible waste disposal businesses, operate illegal waste sites, export waste illegally and fly-tip – blighting communities with bad smells, fly infestations and fires.

Their activity cost the English economy more than £600 million in 2015 and the review announced by the Environment Secretary today is the next step in the government's ongoing work to tackle the crime – which is already a serious offence with tough penalties.

A [Call for Evidence](#) launched today (10 June) will enable a wide group of

people to have their say on ways to crack-down further on Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), who profit from waste crime.

The review will be chaired by [Lizzie Noel](#), a Non-Executive Director at Defra.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, said:

Organised criminals running illegal waste dumps and fly-tipping are blighting local communities. They cost our economy vast amounts of money, pollute our environment and harm our wildlife.

We must crack-down on these criminals who have no regard for the impact they have on peoples' lives. The time is right for us to look at how we can best tackle these antisocial and inexcusable crimes.

The review will:

- Consider the types of crimes being committed and organised crime groups involved;
- Consider the environmental, community and economic impacts of serious and organised waste crime;
- Consider how the Environment Agency, other organisations, and the law enforcement system can work together to tackle the threat;
- Make recommendations for a strategic approach to serious and organised waste crime.

Minister of State for Security and Economic Crime, Ben Wallace, said:

Organised crime groups exploit any opportunity to make money. Our local communities are being scarred by the illegal dumping of waste, while at the same time people are being conned into placing contracts with dodgy waste firms.

We are committed to ending this scourge and I look forward to exploring what more Defra, local authorities, the private sector and police can do on this issue.

More than 850 new illegal waste sites were discovered by the Environment Agency in 2016-17. While an average of two illegal waste sites are shut down every day, they continue to create severe problems for local communities and business, particularly in rural areas, as well as posing a risk to key national infrastructure.

A [study](#) by the Home Office suggests that criminals may also use waste management activities such as operating illegal waste sites as a cover for crimes such as theft, human trafficking, fraud, drugs supply, firearms supply and money laundering.

Review chair Lizzie Noel has more than 20 years' experience of senior roles in both the private and public sectors. She will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and the Call for Evidence will enable a wider group of people to have their say.

Lizzie Noel said:

The health of our communities, environment, and economy is being harmed by organised groups committing serious waste crimes.

This review is an opportunity to properly understand the extent of this criminal activity, and I look forward to working with a range of partners to ensure our response is robust and effective.

Since 2014, the Government has given the Environment Agency an extra £60million towards enforcement work to tackle waste crime. This extra investment has shown a return of about £5 for every £1 extra spent.

Today's announcement builds on a range of new measures from the government to tackle waste crime, including [new powers](#) for the Environment Agency to lock the gates to problem waste sites to prevent waste illegally building up and powers to force operators to clear all the waste at problem sites, and [extending landfill tax](#) to include material disposed of at illegal waste sites with effect from April 2018.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

Last year, we closed down two illegal wastes sites a day and were granted new powers to complement our existing enforcement efforts. Our officers are also out in communities, preventing and disrupting criminals through our intelligence led investigations, and also dealing with the consequences of illegally dumped waste to the environment and the wider community.

We welcome the opportunity to review how best we deploy our resources and strengthen ties across government and with the police to target organised criminal rings behind illegal waste operations, and bring perpetrators to justice.

The Government has also [recently given councils powers](#) to hand out on-the-spot fines to fly-tippers, made it easier for vehicles suspected of being used for fly-tipping to be stopped, searched and seized, and later this year [will introduce new fixed penalty notices](#) for householders who pass their waste to a fly-tipper, subject to Parliamentary approval.

The review is due to be completed by September 2018.



## Further information:

- Serious organised crime is the planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks
- Lizzie Noel will be supported by an advisory panel bringing a wide range of experience in serious organised crime, security, and waste. The panel comprises Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire, Colin Church, Chief Executive Officer at Chartered Institute of Waste Management, and Craig Naylor, Deputy Chief Constable in Lincolnshire Police.
- Householders can check if a waste carrier is an approved carrier on the Environment Agency [website](#).
- The cost of waste crime to the English economy being over £600m in 2015 is from [Rethinking waste crime](#), Environmental Services Association Educational Trust, 2017.
- The figure of the extra investment in the EA having shown a return of about £5 for every £1 extra spent on tackling waste crime is from [Waste crime interventions and evaluation project report](#).
- The Home Office study referred to is [Understanding organised crime: estimating the scale and the social and economic costs](#), October 2013.
- For further information please contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7317 or out of hours on 0345 051 8486

## Terms of Reference

- The Serious and Organised Waste Crime review is initiated by, and will report to, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

## Purpose

- To consider, in depth, serious and organised waste crime – including our response to it – so that we can make actionable recommendations for a strategic approach to waste crime.
- This review will directly inform a strategic approach to waste crime, which will be published in the new resources and waste strategy. This strategy is part of the Government's environmental policy following the 25-year plan and the Clean Growth strategy. The review will also help shape future direction of work in this area.

## Objectives

The review will:

- consider the extent and nature of crimes being committed, and the types of organised crime groups involved
- consider the environmental, community and economic impacts of serious

and organised waste crime

- consider how the Environment Agency is responding to the threat
- consider the ability of the Environment Agency, other organisations, and the law enforcement system as a whole, to work together to tackle the threat
- make recommendations for a strategic approach to serious and organised waste crime
- make recommendations for the future direction of work

In implementing the review, the review team should also take account of:

- the enforcement landscape and the multiple organisations involved
- the sustainability, scalability, deliverability and cost-benefit trade-offs of responses to serious and organised waste crime
- wider work underway in Defra, the Home Office and the Environment Agency
- lessons learnt and examples of best practice from a wide range of stakeholders

## **Scope**

- The review will take a broad approach, to understand the scale, nature and impact of serious and organised crime and current and potential response to it. The focus will be on England only.
- The review will concentrate on organised criminal involvement in waste crime, characteristics of criminal enterprises, intelligence gathering and enforcement effectiveness. It will consider fly-tipping and smaller waste crime incidents only in connection to the review's understanding of organised criminality.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

- The review will be chaired by Defra Non-Executive Director Lizzie Noel. The review will report to the Defra Secretary of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

## **Ways of working**

- The Chair will be responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and progress of the review and delivery of the final report. The Chair will work closely with the Head of Waste and Recycling, who will oversee the review within Defra. Progress reviews will be conducted monthly.
- The Chair, with advice taken from the core working group, may seek to access wider expertise dependent on need.
- The review will be supported by a Secretariat within Defra, and by staff within Defra and the Environment Agency throughout.
- A communications strategy and stakeholder engagement plan will be developed. All communication with the media will be undertaken through Defra Communications Team or the Environment Agency Communications team.

## **Timing**

- The review will commence in June 2018 and is due to be completed by September 2018.

## Reporting

- An evidence-based report will be submitted to Defra Ministers for consideration, detailing the findings of the review.
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## [Press release: Work starts on Northumberland flood defence](#)

Work will start on Monday (11 June) on a £65,000 flood embankment which will protect homes in Hexham from flooding.

Storm Desmond saw flooding to 15 properties at Tyne Green, Hexham, on 5 December 2015.

Properties flooded as a result of water from the River Tyne flowing through an underpass beneath the Newcastle-Carlisle railway line near to Tyne Green Golf Course.

The Environment Agency prioritises delivery of new and improved flood defences using government funding over a rolling six year programme, to schemes which provide the greatest benefits to protect properties from flooding.

Due to the small number of properties that would benefit, against the cost of delivering a flood scheme at Tyne Green, the Environment Agency had been unable to deliver new flood defences in the area.

### **Funded by residents**

The work is being uniquely funded by residents who have pooled individual grants made available to them following flooding over the winter period of 2015/16.

The Environment Agency and Northumberland County Council worked closely with Tyne Green residents, Northumbrian Water and Network Rail to provide a creative solution.

The work will take around three weeks to complete and will be marked by a celebration event with the local community later in the summer.

The flood embankment, to be built by Breheny Civil Engineering, has been designed to protect against a flood event similar to that experienced by Tyne Green residents during Storm Desmond.

Chris Hood, Project Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

The start of this work marks the final step in what has been a long and difficult journey for local residents. I would like to thank them for their support and continued patience while we have worked together with Network Rail and others to find the best and most cost-effective solution at Tyne Green.

They have used their initiative and all worked together to pool their grants which has allowed us to be able to build this flood bank. We hope this protection afforded by the new defence will now provide local residents with peace of mind when bad weather threatens in the future.

## **Innovative solution**

Northumberland County Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services, said:

It shows what a big impact Storm Desmond had on our county when improvement schemes are still ongoing more than two years after the event.

This is another fine example of agencies working with local communities to find innovative solutions to improve their areas and prevent flooding events damaging their homes in the future.

County Councillor for Hexham Central with Acomb Trevor Cessford added:

This is great news for local residents and should hopefully provide peace of mind and security for the future. I would also like to say a huge thanks to all the residents for their patience and understanding in this drawn out matter and for the selfless financial contributions they themselves have made towards the project.

The Environment Agency is urging people to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' by visiting the [Floods Destroy website](#) and do three things to prepare for flooding.

- check your postcode and find out if you are at risk of flooding
- sign-up for free flood warnings if you are at risk
- view and save the 3-point flood plan so you know how to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' in a flood