

# [Press release: Environment Agency announces £750,000 to tackle single use plastics](#)

The announcement follows a pledge to eliminate avoidable waste and crack down on plastics as part of the government's [25-year environment plan](#) launched yesterday.

The pioneer project will see the creation of a new Plastics and Sustainability team across Devon and Cornwall working with businesses, local councils, charities and community action groups, such as the [Bude Cleaner Seas Project](#).

The team will aim to reduce the amount of plastic pollution across land, rivers and the coastline. It will promote better environmental practices across industry, including a reduction in plastic waste from manufacturing, along with community campaigns to clean up pollution locally.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, made the announcement from Bude, Cornwall today where she met with groups and charities who strive to clean up the coastline and keep it free of pollution.

Emma Howard Boyd said:

The government's ambitious plan for the environment is a significant step forward and the Environment Agency's commitment to reduce plastic pollution shows how we are already working to put the plan into action.

Plastic pollution is a threat to our natural environment and our new team promises to tackle it head on. By working together, we can reduce the amount which enters our land, rivers and the sea and protect wildlife for future generations.

The Environment Agency's work with partners to improve [bathing waters](#) has led to a [dramatic improvement](#) in water quality in recent years which has benefited coastal communities, visitors and tourism. A similar partnership approach will be taken by the new Plastics and Sustainability team. The ambitions for the project include:

- A reduction of plastics reaching land, waterways and shorelines.
- Promotion of better environmental practices in business and a reduction in plastic waste from the start of the manufacturing process.
- Increased local engagement to change public behaviour and encourage more community action to tackle pollution.
- Monitoring and research into ways plastics enter and affect the environment, supporting leading academics in the South West.

During Emma Howard Boyd's visit to Cornwall, she also spent time at Bude Haven school speaking to children about their passion for protecting their coastline and met local business owner Tom Dawe to find out how he had made his beachside restaurant more sustainable.

Emma will return to Bude in June to mark [World Oceans Day](#) and to see the project's progress.

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## **Press release: Waste offender prosecuted in Blackburn**

A Director of a former Lancashire waste plastics recycling business has been sentenced to 8 months in prison, suspended for two years, and ordered to complete 120 hours of unpaid work after his company breached its environmental permit, failed to comply with enforcement notices and continued to deposit waste despite suspension and subsequent revocation of its permit.

David Holt, 50, of Brockhall Village, Blackburn, was sentenced on Thursday, 04 January 2018 at Preston Crown Court after admitting three environmental offences relating to the operation of the former V10 Polymers Ltd waste plastics recycling business at Rockcliffe Works, Paterson Street, Blackburn.

The Environment Agency became aware of problems at the site in 2012 after complaints from members of the public. At that time, V10 Polymers Ltd was operating a waste plastics recycling business from the Rockcliffe Works site.

Due to concerns about the way the site was being operated, the Environment Agency served a formal notice requiring the company to remove all controlled waste from the site. It also advised the company to apply for an environmental permit if it wished to continue waste operations at Rockwell Works.

The Environment Agency made clear that any permit issued would require storage of combustible waste at the site to be improved and meet minimum fire prevention standards.

David Holt made an application for a permit for the site and included detailed proposals as to how the waste would be stored in the future to meet the requirements of the permit. The Environment Agency issued an environmental permit to V10 Polymers Ltd in response to this application.

However, the first inspection of the facility following the issue of the permit in April 2014 revealed excessive quantities of plastic waste stored in a manner that presented a fire risk and in breach of the company's environmental permit.

Due to the Environment Agency's concerns about the fire risk, a number of joint inspections were undertaken with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services.

The Environment Agency sought to work with Mr Holt, who was in day to day charge of the company's operations, to bring about improvements in the storage arrangements and implement a mandatory fire prevention plan at the site. However, Mr Holt failed to adequately respond to those interventions.

This led the Environment Agency to revoke the site's environmental permit from February 2016, further requiring the company to take steps to remove all remaining waste from the site by 21 March 2016.

The Environment Agency decided to prosecute after the company continued to illegally operate, despite the revocation of its permit, and failed to tackle the fire risk posed by excessive stockpiles of waste.

Environment Agency Officer, Karl Hunter said:

The operators of waste recycling facilities have a legal duty to comply with the requirements of their environmental permit to prevent the risk of harm to people and the environment.

In this case, David Holt deliberately stored an excessive quantity of combustible waste for a number of years without taking the necessary fire prevention measures. He failed to implement a fire prevention plan and repeatedly failed to act on notices served by the Environment Agency to do so. Even when the Environment Agency revoked the company's permit, he continued to accept waste into the site, illegally.

The fire at the site on 21 August 2017, and three subsequent fires have had a significant impact on local residents and businesses and demonstrated that our concerns were well-founded. In September 2017 we used our emergency powers to create fire breaks within the waste, which significantly reduced the size and duration of subsequent fires. Had David Holt produced and complied with an adequate fire prevention plan, installing fire breaks within the waste, it would have greatly reduced the consequences of fires at the site.

We hope the court's sentencing decision demonstrates the importance of companies adhering to their environmental permits.

On hearing mitigation on David Holt's behalf, the court accepted that David Holt had not been a fly by night operator and had been working hard to try and maintain the business and those employed by it. The court also acknowledged his good character and contribution to his local community.

V10 Polymers Ltd and the previous site owner, Holt Developments Ltd, are now both in liquidation and the site has been sold to Driftdale Limited, an Isle of Man based property development company.

The new owner is responsible for ensuring that waste is removed from the site and correctly disposed of. The Environment Agency is working with Driftdale Ltd and our partner organisations to ensure this is completed as soon as possible. The new owners must also take all necessary steps to prevent fire until waste is removed from the site and the company has constant manned security to minimise the risk of further fires.

If you witness suspicious activity or a fire at the site, please call the emergency services. Environmental incidents should be reported to our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Mr Holt was also ordered to pay £10,000 towards the Environment Agency's costs.

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## **Press release: Green light for Hull's £42m Humber flood scheme**

Funding has been secured for a £42 million upgrade to the tidal flood defence scheme in the Humber Estuary – improving flood protection to 113,000 properties.

Led by the Environment Agency, the Humber Hull Frontages scheme will present an opportunity to review and improve a 19 kilometres stretch of tidal flood defences in the Humber Estuary to better protect homes and businesses that are at risk of flooding in Hull.

Floods Minister, Thérèse Coffey said:

This state of the art scheme is great news for homeowners and businesses along the Humber Estuary, especially for the city of Hull, as we both upgrade existing defences and add new defences extending protection.

It is a key part of our £430m flood defence investment programme for Yorkshire, better protecting thousands of homes and helping businesses to grow, thrive and create new opportunities – supporting the Government's work on the Northern Powerhouse.

Proposed improvements in Hull will be supported by a further 4 kilometres of new and raised tidal defences on either side of the city in the East Riding of Yorkshire, at Hessle and Paull, delivered by East Riding of Yorkshire Council in partnership with the Environment Agency.

Helen Tattersdale, project manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Hull has a long history of being flooded from the Humber Estuary. This was seen most recently in December 2013 when a tidal surge flooded more than 260 properties when the city's defences were overtopped.

By raising the existing defence walls and embankments, we are able to plan for the effects of climate change and bring them to the level needed to better protect the city from tidal flooding in future years.

Contractor BMM JV – a joint venture between BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald – has been appointed to develop a detailed design and build plan along Hull's 19 kilometre waterfront. This work follows the review of existing flood defences along the banks of the Humber Estuary in Hull conducted by built environment consultants at Arup.

Donald Daly, project manager for Arup said:

Coastal Flooding is one of the most serious threats facing the UK. That's why it is so important that Hull, the country's largest at-risk urban area outside of London, has received government approval for additional tidal flood defences.

Using a range of technologies to collect and make sense of vast amounts of data, we've developed plans that will improve defences to account for anticipated changing weather patterns and sea level rises over the next 100 years.

BAM Nuttall Mott MacDonald Joint Venture is looking forward to delivering the flood alleviation project as part of its Water and Environmental Management Framework. Over the next few months, BMM JV and the Environment Agency will consult with landowners, businesses and local residents on key elements of their proposed designs.

Allan Rogers, BAM Nuttall National Framework Director said:

We are delighted to be involved with another significant flood alleviation scheme for the Environment Agency. It's a scheme that will deliver outcome measures that will lessen the flood risk to business and homes. We are committed to delivering the scheme efficiently and with stakeholder issues in mind

The Humber Hull Frontages scheme is one of a number of tidal flood alleviation projects that form part of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Environment Agency and local partners are now in the process of developing an advanced approach to managing flooding in tidal areas by the Humber for the next 100 years.

Subject to planning approval, work on the Humber Hull Frontages scheme will start next summer and will be complete by 2020.

It will be a long-term investment that will contribute to securing the viability of Hull and the wider Humber region, ensuring it retains its place as the eastern gateway to the UK economy.

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## **Press release: Waste offences fine for Sunderland man**

Malcolm George Holmes of Vicarsholme Close was due to stand trial on 9 January 2018 at South Tyneside Magistrates' Court on charges that he failed to supply paperwork concerning the removal of waste. He pleaded guilty and was fined £990 with £2,010 costs.

Prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Chris Bunting told the court that in 2016 Environment Agency officers were investigating illegal waste activities on land at Sheepfolds Road, Sunderland, close to the Stadium of Light.

Acting as a property consultant, Holmes had found a tenant for the land on behalf of the landlord. The tenant went on to illegally dump and burn mixed waste on the site.

In May 2016, the landowner was given four weeks to clear the waste after it was abandoned by the tenant. During a meeting with officers, Holmes, who continued to act on behalf of the landowner, was given clear instructions that he must retain all waste transfer notes. Waste transfer notes provide proof that waste is disposed of legally via a licensed operator.

Although the site was cleared of waste, Holmes failed to supply the waste transfer notes, didn't respond to a statutory notice requesting the missing documentation and, in court, Holmes admitted he never had the paperwork. The location of the waste, and whether it was legally disposed of, remains unknown.

Rachael Caldwell from the Environment Agency said:

Environmental laws are there to protect communities and the environment from pollution. Businesses getting rid of waste have a legal duty of care to show their waste has been correctly and legally disposed of.

We hope this case demonstrates the importance of environmental compliance. Anyone who breaks the rules will be pursued, and where

repeated or significant breaches are found, we will prosecute.

In December, the former tenant of the site pleaded guilty to his part in the case and was ordered to pay a total of £1,730 in fines & costs.

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## **Press release: New information on rare River Severn fish population**

Monitoring work during the spring and summer of 2017 which used some of the latest technology, found that around 15,000 shad can make it above Upper Lode weir on the River Severn, near Tewkesbury before being halted by Diglis Weir in Worcester. These monitoring results are significant because they indicate the current levels of twaite shad in the river which once supported millions of this species.

### **Research part of a major project on the River Severn**

The research was conducted by the Severn Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust as part of the multi-million pound Unlocking the Severn project, which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and EU Life. The information gathered will be vital for the project which aims to restore the shad's access to 155 miles of the River Severn, north of Worcester, by providing fish passage solutions at a series of weirs that currently the fish cannot swim over or around.

Environment Agency Fisheries Monitoring Specialist, Charles Crundwell said:

We had no idea how many shad we'd find – we thought a few thousand, but in fact results suggest we could have as many as 15,000 in the lower reaches of the river. This shows great promise that by unlocking the river there's scope for a really thriving population.

Plus the work to help the shad will open up the river for all fish species, so helping the shad will help everything else for the benefit of wildlife, residents, tourists and anglers.

### **Using different techniques to monitor the twaite shad**

In order to learn more about the remaining small population of shad, particularly the conditions they need to prosper, volunteers and staff from the Severn Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust spent many hours watching and counting twaite shad swimming over Upper Lode weir

during April, May and June.

In addition, a suite of remote monitoring techniques enabled monitoring all day, every day. This included cameras, counter plates triggered when a shad passed upstream and even the use of an acoustic beam giving an image similar to the ultrasound you get of a baby in the womb.

As well as the count of the shad, the monitoring team and its contractors made the first known underwater film of shad on the Severn as they migrated upstream and the first images of the shad's spectacular spawning behaviour, which is like a whirling dancing with rigorous splashing seen just before dark.

Acoustic tracking tags fixed to 25 shad (another first for the UK, under licence from the Home Office) showed how they migrate up the river, what habitats they use, and how barriers delay them. This is all crucial information in understanding how to create the best access routes for the fish.

An suite of underwater camera equipment was installed at the spawning sites to understand this behaviour.

## **The allis shad**

In addition to the twaite shad, the monitoring also recorded the rarer allis shad.

Charles explained:

Historically the allis shad were even more prized as a food fish and would certainly have been an important component of the catch prior to the navigation weirs being built. This is the first photographic proof that a tiny run of these fish still hold on in the Severn, which is really exciting and means that the natural restoration of this species is also likely to occur if we are able to provide fish passage solutions at the weirs further up the river.

More information about the Unlocking the Severn project is available [online](#). You can also follow the project on [twitter](#).