

Press release: Water scheme keeps River Slea flowing

The river that gives Sleaford its name is being given a helping hand by the Environment Agency with the switch-on of a groundwater scheme.

Around 1.1 million litres of water a day is being drawn up from an underground limestone aquifer, via a 44-metre deep borehole, and fed into the River Slea, keeping it from drying out.

The 'augmentation scheme' ensures the river continues to flow during its driest months, benefiting local habitat and preserving the look and feel of the town's water environment.

Almost 150 years ago, the river was described as "a never failing source of pure water" but natural and man-made changes to the environment and water cycle saw it dry up for extended periods from the 1960s.

The augmentation scheme was established in 1995 in response to calls from the local community, which values the river as an attractive feature.

For most years since, it has been supplementing the flow during the river's driest months, which tend to be between July and December. Without it, the river would typically run dry during this period.

Claire Anderson, Environment Planning Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency exists to create better places for people to enjoy and wildlife to thrive. This scheme achieves both. By supplementing the flow of water, we contribute to the town's cherished water environment and we minimise the environmental impact of dry weather, protecting the habitat in which dozens of species live.

After activating the scheme, Environment Agency officers monitor the Slea between the borehole and Cogglesford Mill, ensuring everything is working as it should.

The Slea augmentation scheme was activated on Saturday 15 July.

Press release: Northwich flood risk management scheme officially opened

Guests were invited to a special event on Friday 30 June to mark the completion of the final phase of construction for the £7 million defences.

The market town of Northwich suffered serious flooding in 1946 and more recently in 2000 and 2012. This has caused distress and financial impact for residents as well as costing millions of pounds worth of damage to homes and businesses.

The new scheme reduces flood risk to almost 400 homes and businesses as well as 3 development sites in Northwich, Cheshire. It is the result of close effective partnership working between the Environment Agency, Northwich Town Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Northwich BID and the Canal and Rivers Trust, as well as local businesses and the wider community.

The scheme itself is made up of 1.7km of flood defences using a combination of flood walls and embankments, along the banks of the River Dane and River Weaver. To ensure that Northwich's historic facade is kept intact, the project has used high quality finishes on the walls and state-of-the-art solutions including glass panels and floating ecosystems in order to reduce the visual impact of the defences. In addition to fixed flood defences, the scheme will also use demountable defences and flood gates across key footpaths and highways.

Lee Rawlinson, Environment Agency Area Manager, said:

This scheme will help to keep the local community protected while at the same time helping to safeguard the economic investment in the town, and the permanent jobs created as a result. Northwich is at risk of flooding from the Rivers Dane and Weaver and the construction of this flood scheme will reduce the risk to nearly 400 local homes which equates to protecting more than 1,000 residents and further businesses. Cheshire West and Chester Council has been working tirelessly to encourage development in the town and by reducing the risk of flooding, we can further boost the confidence of potential investors and ensure Northwich continues to prosper during, what are, challenging times.

Councillor Samantha Dixon, Leader of Chester West and Cheshire Council, who officially opened the scheme, said the flood defence project would play a key role in the town's continued economic growth. She explained:

Recent public investment in Northwich includes £35 million for the capital works to stabilise the town from subsidence, and future growth plans include £100 million of private investment and £15

million of public investment. The partnership work undertaken during the last few years will help to put Northwich in a much better economic position for the future and will help to support inward investment.

Even with new flood defences in place, the risk of flooding can never entirely be removed. It is important that residents prepare in advance. They can start by telephoning the Environment Agency Floodline on 0345 988 1188 to find out if they can sign up for free flood warnings.

Information about [preparing for flooding](#), including how to check your flood risk, develop a flood plan and putting together a flood kit is also available online.

Press release: Schemes across the country to receive £15 million of natural flood management funding

New allocations of flood management funding will allow homes, businesses and communities around the country to benefit from increased flood protection, [Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey](#) announced today.

34 community led projects have been named as winners of a [£1m government funded competition](#), the first of its kind, and will now be able to realise their innovative plans to use landscape features such as ponds, banks, meanders, channels, and trees to store, drain or slow flood water.

24 other catchment scale projects have also been allocated funding to develop larger scale projects which will benefit wider areas; with Cumbria, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire and Walsingham all receiving over £1m of funding.

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This funding will help more than 50 projects around the country take full advantage of innovative natural flood management measures. Flood defence technology and engineering is better than ever and by using a mix of natural and concrete defences, we can provide the best flood protection for individual areas.

Methods such as restoring floodplains and planting trees will not only help protect families, homes and businesses from flooding, they will also bring environmental benefits to the wider area and

all the people who live in these many communities.

Minister Coffey announced the successful allocations in Sutton and Roxwell, where she visited two of the schemes which will receive funding.

Following flooding in Roxwell last year the community bid for funding to improve land and ditch management and reduce the risk of the local brook overflowing again. This project has been allocated £50,000 so the community can work with local landowners to help slow the flow of water down to the brook.

Sutton's sustainable drainage in schools project will receive £50,000 to improve the town's natural flood defences. This scheme will be run across seven of Sutton's schools, providing improved flood protection to over 100 properties.

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

Natural flood management is an important part of our approach, alongside traditional flood defences and helping homeowners to improve their own property resilience. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to flooding and this scheme is a fantastic example of how we can use a variety of measures that work together to reduce flood risk.

These allocations come from the £15 million of natural flood management funding which was announced in March, following the Autumn statement.

Details of the allocations are available [here](#).

Press release: Yorkshire Water fined £600,000 for polluting a Staithes watercourse with sewage sludge

Yorkshire Water has been fined £600,000 for polluting a Staithes watercourse with sewage that had leaked out from a poorly-maintained storage tank.

The company was sentenced on Thursday 13 July at Leeds Crown Court, after admitting one charge of causing a water discharge activity into Dales Beck, at Dalehouse, without an environmental permit.

The pollution originated from the firm's Hinderwell Waste Water Treatment Works in July 2015. It had leaked from a poorly-maintained, rusting sludge

storage tank, which had holes in it.

Richard Bradley, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that the sewage had a significant impact on the quality of the water in the beck. The watercourse, which passes through a caravan park, was discoloured and had a foul odour. Up to 100 dead fish were seen, and water quality tests revealed high levels of ammonia and low dissolved oxygen levels.

Downstream, the pollution incident affected water quality in Staithes Harbour, which was a designated bathing water at the time. An 'abnormal situation' was declared for 17 days during the peak holiday season and Scarborough Council erected signs advising the public not to enter the water.

Yorkshire Water initially blamed works at the nearby Potash Mine for the water discolouration, but four days after the spill they used dye testing to trace the source back to the treatment works.

Sewage sludge could clearly be seen in the yard near the tank, and from there it had entered Dales Beck via a small ditch below the Sewage Works. Yorkshire Water did not immediately clean up the yard because it believed the sludge was contained on the site and would be recirculated back into its treatment process. However, the firm's own site user manual stated that the site drainage is not sealed. This was not picked up by the company and the sewage was in fact discharging into the watercourse.

The court heard that, as well as causing the pollution, Yorkshire Water also failed to act quickly in cleaning it up. In August, the Environment Agency asked the firm to provide a plan for how it was going to clean up the mess, but no reply was received. After further visits and correspondence, the company was still cleaning sewage sludge from the water on 19 October, some three months after the incident.

In sentencing, His Honour Judge Khokhar said the company had been reckless, rather than just negligent.

Claire Campbell, environmental planning specialist at the Environment Agency, said after the hearing:

This case demonstrates how important it is that water companies and wider industries maintain their equipment and facilities to a high standard in order to protect the environment. This pollution incident had a significant impact on the ecology of the watercourse, as well as an impact on the amenity of a caravan park and Staithes beach.

In mitigation, Yorkshire Water told the court that it had invested in measures to prevent the incident recurring. A gully guard had been installed to contain any future spillages within the site, and an alarm had been installed on the sludge tank. The tank has now been replaced.

The company was also ordered to pay £28,078.10 in legal costs.

Press release: Close season offenders risk court appearance and £50,000 fine

The Environment Agency reported 122 offences of fishing during the close season, following 670 patrols carried out in the restricted period. The targeted patrols also detected 179 other offences, mainly unlicensed fishing.

Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers were supported by 232 Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiff Service members, carrying out over 5,000 hours of patrols under Operation CLAMPDOWN. Now in its 5th year, Operation CLAMPDOWN is a joint initiative between the Environment Agency, Angling Trust's Fisheries Enforcement Support Service, UK National Wildlife Crime Unit and police forces, aimed at gathering intelligence about illegal fishing and responding through targeted patrols. The volunteers reported 111 suspicious incidents to the Environment Agency and police.

The coarse fish close season restrictions are imposed in order to protect vulnerable spawning fish, helping to safeguard fish stocks for the future. Patrols took place across rivers, streams, drains and specific canals and stillwaters covered by the coarse fish close season byelaw, which runs from 15th March – 15th June inclusive.

Judy Proctor, Acting Deputy Director for Fisheries at the Environment Agency, said:

The vast majority of anglers fish legally; sadly there is a small number of anglers who cheat others by fishing during the close season. The coarse fishing close season helps protect vulnerable spawning fish – this is why it's in place. 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 5, Phase 1 Volunteer Bailiffs throughout England demonstrated 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.

The enforcement work was supported through a network of 474 Angling Trust volunteer bailiffs covering all counties in England. Patrolling under operation CLAMPDOWN for a 5th year, they assisted by reporting illegal fishing incidents and information to the Environment Agency and police.

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.

Notes to editors

- Enjoy fishing and make sure you fish legally
- Annual fishing licences from only £30
- It's easy to buy online. [Get a Fishing Licence](#)
- All fishing licence income is used to fund work to protect, improve and develop fisheries, fish habitats and angling.
- Go fishing – Find out about angling events, fisheries and venues so you can [go fishing](#)
- The Environment Agency is cracking down on illegal fishing
- The reason why it is illegal to fish on rivers, streams and some specific canals and stillwaters. Due to many waters being under multiple ownership we apply legislation in a precautionary approach. This helps to protect vulnerable fish during spawning time. In addition fishery managers are free to impose close season rules at any time should they consider it necessary to protect their fish stock