

# Press release: Oxford flood alleviation scheme online consultation opens up

The Environment Agency is calling on communities to have their say on benefits and features that will make up the £120 million project to reduce flood risk to all homes and businesses in Oxford.

The consultation will be open from 22 June to 20 July 2017, and will allow the public to input into design features; ranging from the 7 bridges along the route of the scheme, to options for benches and cycle racks on footpaths. The scheme is a major project which will involve lowering parts of Oxford's floodplain to increase capacity for floodwater, as well as widening and deepening some of the rivers and streams that run through it.

Speaking ahead of the launch of the consultation, Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme will be a major feat of engineering and is one of the biggest projects we are working on across the country. I am very proud of our partnership approach, which is so important to building the scheme and keeping this iconic city moving during times of flood, for businesses, commuters and communities of Oxford.

Cllr Yvonne Constance, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, added:

This is a really important issue for people in Oxford and beyond. The plans for the flood alleviation scheme are now very advanced and we want to hear what our residents think.

As the lead local flood authority, Oxfordshire County Council strongly supports the Oxford flood alleviation scheme and we encourage local communities, residents and businesses to take this opportunity to get involved in the consultation.

The project team spoke to over 200 members of the public at drop-in events throughout Oxford in May, where they shared information about the progress of the scheme and the many benefits it will bring. You can [go online](#) from 22 June to 20 July to view this information, see how they've been progressing with the scheme and to complete the consultation.

The project team will be available to help members of the public who don't have access to the internet to complete the online consultation at the

following libraries:

- Kennington Library, OX1 5PG: 2pm to 7pm on Friday 30 June
- Oxford Central Library, OX1 1AY: 12pm to 6pm on Thursday 6 July
- Botley Library, OX2 9LP: 9:30am to 2pm on Tuesday 11 July

The Environment Agency is working with local partners: Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, Thames Water, the Oxford Flood Alliance, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, and the University of Oxford, on the scheme to reduce flood risk to all homes and businesses in Oxford, as well as to major transport routes into the city.

## **Further information and contact details**

For further information please visit:

[Oxford FAS web page](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

or contact the project team at [oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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## **[Press release: 8,000 young fish released into the River Rother](#)**

The Environment Agency has today released 8,000 young grayling into the River Rother at Chesterfield to help fish populations recover from historical pollution.

This release is part of a five-year restocking programme that is helping to restore the river's ecology to how it was before the industrial revolution.

The baby fish were reared at the Environment Agency's fish farm near Calverton using funding from rod licence sales.

Dr Jerome Masters, fisheries officer at the Environment Agency, said:

The River Rother was once one of the most polluted rivers in Europe. Grayling were wiped out as a result, and weirs in the river makes their natural recolonisation highly unlikely.

But life is returning to the River Rother. Water quality has improved, and the re-stocking programme will see grayling returning to live alongside species such as brown trout, chub and roach which are already resident in Chesterfield's rivers.

Anyone who wants to help improve Chesterfield's rivers and the health of fish stocks could contribute by getting involved with the Wild Trout Trust's 'Trout in the Town' scheme.

Paul Gaskell, at the Wild Trout Trust, said:

We have a programme to help urban communities engage with and care for their local streams and rivers, called 'Trout in the Town'. In addition to caring generally for the river, groups often carry out invertebrate monitoring, and habitat improvement work. We can help out with training for that habitat improvement work and provide support with fundraising.

Anyone who is interested in becoming a founder member of a Chesterfield Trout in the Town group are invited to contact Dr Jerome Masters at [jerome.masters@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:jerome.masters@environment-agency.gov.uk).

More information on Trout in the Town projects can be found at [www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-town](http://www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-town) and [www.wildtrout.org/tint](http://www.wildtrout.org/tint).

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## **Press release: Fish kill costs Frome farmer Michael Aylesbury more than £22,000**

A farmer was told to pay more than £22,000 for polluting a river in Frome, Somerset, killing nearly 2,000 fish.

Dairy farmer Michael Aylesbury, a director in Cross Keys Farm Ltd, pleaded guilty to causing an unpermitted water discharge which turned the river in Frome brown and smelly in May 2016, killing 1,700 fish, probably many more.

The pollution came from a slurry lagoon at Bollow Farm, Silver Lane, East Woodlands where it was overflowing into a ditch from an underground chamber that had not been fully sealed off. Making matters worse, a spillage from a slurry pumping operation days before also entered the same ditch, meant only to carry rainwater.

The reduced water quality and the river's polluted appearance hit local

groups, like anglers, kayakers and swimmers, who had to suspend activities. Residents were also upset by the sight of distressed and dying fish.

The Environment Agency was alerted to the incident on 12 May 2016 and attempted to save the fish population by spraying hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels in the water. The pollution was traced back to Bollow Farm the next day.



To save the fish, hydrogen peroxide was sprayed to restore the dissolved oxygen levels

Tasked with protecting water, land and biodiversity, the Environment Agency classified the incident as category one – the worst kind – which affected the watercourse for more than 6km and was obvious to the naked eye.

The defendant told investigating officers “he had nothing to hide and held his hands up to the pollution incident” and that he was sorry it had happened.

Bath Magistrates’ Court found Aylesbury to be negligent for not informing the Environment Agency about the initial spillage and fined him £3,000, a victim surcharge of £170 and ordered him to pay costs of £19,306.69 on 5 June 2017.

Environment officer Andy Grant said:

Our role as a regulator is to protect people and the environment and support sustainable growth. We work with business owners to create better places but when avoidable incidents like this happen, we take action.

Informing us of the initial spillage and keeping an eye on nearby watercourses are two simple actions the farmer could have taken which would have sped up our investigation and stopped the cause of the pollution sooner.

Last November we restocked 5,500 fish including chub, roach and bream at two locations in Frome and we continue working with our partners including the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Frome Town Council, farmers and landowners to identify opportunities to enhance and protect the River Frome.

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## [Press release: Showcasing our cool kit at London Rivers Week](#)

On Tuesday 27 June from 12pm to 3pm at Walthamstow Marshes, near Springfield Marina, the Environment Agency will be showcasing their cool kit and little critters as part of London Rivers Week.

London Rivers Week is running again this year with Catchment Partnerships and environmental organisations such as Thames21, ZSL, London Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and the South East Rivers Trust, putting on public events, walks and talks at special river sites.

Amanda MacLean, Catchment Co-ordinator at the Environment Agency, said:

We are very excited to be showcasing our work at the London Rivers Week this year on the 27 June. Over the last 20 years the Environment Agency has made big steps to improve the quality of water in rivers. Please do come along to find out about the wide variety of ways in which we work to create a better place for people and the environment. We're bringing lots of our cool kit for you to see.

The Environment Agency will have demonstrations of flood risk management equipment, including their:

- weed cutting boat
- flood water pumps and aerators (in and by the river)
- incident response vehicle, and
- temporary flood barrier.

Members of the public can talk to staff and find out about the following activities:

- monitoring the health of our rivers; trays of invertebrates will be on display
- invasive species
- pollution incidents
- flood risk management; including how we work with communities to reduce flood risk, and
- general information about our other activities and work with partners such as LVRPA (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority).

Other exciting events the Environment Agency is running during London Rivers Week include:

- 4pm to 6pm Monday 26 June at Watling Park, Burnt Oak, HA8 0RF at the northern entrance off Abbots Road.
- 12pm on Tuesday 27 June at the Strand on Kew Green.
- 11:30am on Wednesday 28 June at the River Wandle, Merton High Street, Colliers Wood.

More details and a full list of events can be found on the [official website](#).

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## **[Press release: Wiltshire man handed suspended prison sentence for running illegal waste activity](#)**

Mr. Robert Cooper, 78, of Hicks Leaze Farm, Chelworth appeared at Swindon Magistrates Court on Monday 5 June 2017 for operating a regulated waste facility without the necessary environmental permit (contrary to regulations 12 (1)(a) and 38 of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010) at the Farm between 9 April 2014 and 10 July 2014.

The defendant had pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing on 15 May but the case was adjourned for a pre-sentence report due to the facts of the case and his previous waste offences.

Mr Cooper was given a 12 week prison sentence, suspended for 2 years and ordered to perform 200 hours of unpaid work. The court also ordered Mr Cooper to pay the Environment Agency's full costs of £13,027.35

Mr Howard McCann prosecuting, told the court how the Environment Agency started investigations following complaints from members of the public about the burning of material in December 2013, and the sheer number of lorries dumping waste on site from April 2014 onwards.

Environment Agency officers visited the site and witnessed large quantities of waste including 4 large mounds of construction and demolition (C&D) waste,

the largest of which was measured at approximately 65 metres long, 7 metres high in places and between 5 to 7 metres wide. Officers estimate a total of about 8,285 cubic metres of waste on site. The farm is about the size of 9 football pitches. Mr Cooper allowed people to tip their mixed waste for up to £40 per load, treated it by sorting the materials and then burning some of it.

Mr Cooper charged people between £10 (green waste) and £40 per 20-tonne load (C&D waste). Given the main waste mounds discovered by officers, they calculated that Mr Cooper could have made more than £23,000 from his illegal activities. The court found that Mr Cooper's actions were deliberate and that the environmental harm was localised due to the presence of plasterboard, chemical drums and leachate seen on site. The justices also found that the offending was repeated and for financial gain. The court gave Mr Cooper credit for his early guilty plea and co-operation with the Environment Agency throughout its investigation.

Checks with the Environment Agency's public register confirmed that he did not have a permit for the site, and although he did have 6 waste exemptions, none of these would have allowed him to carry out the types of activities seen by officers.

All waste activities are regulated by the Environment Agency. Whenever waste is stored or treated, the operator is required to hold an environmental permit or register for an exemption, which is reserved for low-risk waste activities only.

During site visits, Environment Agency officers observed the burning of waste with discarded empty containers labelled as "dangerous to the environment". One officer experienced a strong acrid smell which made him feel so unwell that he had to use a protective dust mask. The officers saw what appeared to be leachate puddles in and around the burning waste and plasterboard, which cannot be disposed of to landfill with other biodegradable waste as it can produce toxic hydrogen sulphide gas.

Steve Clare of the Environment Agency said:

It is very disappointing that Mr Cooper continued to allow the operation of an illegal site despite his previous convictions.

The net is closing in on people who think they can make easy money undercutting legitimate waste businesses by putting the local environment at risk. We are constantly gathering information on illegal waste sites, criminal activities and environmental crime in Wiltshire and across the south east.

We are taking a zero tolerance approach against offenders. In cases like this where individuals consistently operate illegally, we have absolutely no hesitation in prosecuting them, as we want to make sure that waste crime doesn't pay.

This extends to landowners, and their agents, who fail to take

steps to prevent such offences once they are made aware of them.

For all media enquiries, please call 0800 141 2743.