

# [Press release: Environment Agency kick-starts River Witham recovery](#)

The [Environment Agency](#) (EA) has released hundreds of thousands of roach and bream larvae into the River Witham on Friday (25 May 2018), to kick-start the river's recovery process following a major pollution incident in early March.

Following the pollution of the river in March, which is estimated to have caused the death of at least 100,000 fish, the EA has been working to bring those responsible to justice, as well as to ensure that the river recovers as quickly as possible.

## **Pollution killed at least 100,000 fish**

The EA has staff dedicated to the pollution incident full-time and is continuing to take regular samples of the water quality in the Witham as the river recovers.

The release of the larvae into the river forms an important first step on the road to recovery, which could take many months or even years as the river's complex ecosystem gets back to full health.

The fish larvae have come from the EA's [national fish farm in Calverton](#), which produces around 450,000 fish of 9 species each year for re-stocking. Calverton Fish Farm is funded by income from fishing licence fees, and last year it delivered more than 6 million advanced reared larvae back into the wild.

## **First step in river's recovery**

Environment manager Simon Mitchell said:

The release of thousands of larvae, reared by our own fish farm in Calverton into the River Witham, marks an important step on the road to the river's recovery.

According to our latest estimates, the pollution incident in March caused the death of no fewer than 100,000 fish – although the exact figure is likely to be higher. As a river is a complex ecosystem with different species recovering at different rates, the full recovery process may take many months or even years.

We take pollution incidents like this extremely seriously and will always seek to prosecute those who negligently damage our precious environment and wildlife. We have staff continuing to work on this pollution incident full-time, as the river progresses through the recovery phase.

Re-stocking is made possible through fishing licence fees, which fund Calverton Fish Farm. An annual fishing licence is available from only £30, and is [easily bought online](#).

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## [Digital fact finders](#)

A group of SRUC staff involved in the innovative Digital Classroom project made a recent visit to the University of the West of Scotland's Paisley campus on a fact-finding mission.

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## [Scotland's bathing waters continue to meet strict environmental standards ahead of new season](#)

 25 May 2018

As Scotland sizzles in the early summer sun, and with hundreds of thousands of Scottish families and visitors expected to head to our stunning coastlines for the bathing season (1st June – 15th September), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has revealed that 75 of the country's 86 designated bathing waters (87%) meet strict environmental standards for water quality.

The above assets are available for print, online and broadcast media to use to illustrate this story. Please [click through to our media gallery](#) to download them – no registration is required. All related items will be shown on the same page.

- 87% of Scotland's designated bathing waters meet strict environmental water quality standards.
- Water quality data available by 10.00 am every day during the season for 31 bathing water locations on [www.bathingwaters.mobi](http://www.bathingwaters.mobi), SEPA's website, via Beachline and live electronic beach signage.
- Partnership projects underway to improve bathing waters including 11 rated as 'poor'.
- Nairn bathing waters achieve the sufficient EU classification for the first time after 2 years of poor rating.

Rating	Number of bathing waters	Percentage
Excellent	25	29
Good	34	39
Sufficient	16	19
Poor	11	13
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ranked as the most beautiful country in the world by Rough Guide, Scotland's natural environment is world-renowned. Its beaches range from remote, unspoilt Hebridean sands to golden stretches along northern and eastern coves and popular Western shores.

Beach users will have access to real time water quality information from across Scotland's designated beaches thanks to SEPA scientists who sample and combine with state-of-the-art weather data to provide daily bathing water forecasts throughout the three and a half months. These are available at 31 bathing water locations by 10am every morning through:

Terry A'Hearn, Chief Executive of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, said:

"Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's stunning environment and we are committed to ensuring all of Scotland's designated bathing waters meet water quality standards.

"Having achieved the highest rate of compliance since the new Bathing Water Directive began we are already seeing many of our priority projects having a positive impact. Both Nairn sites, which have passed for the first time since 2015, have made good progress through working with partners and communities to coordinate activities and identify actions to address water quality challenges.

"Working with partners, we're continuing our focus on bathing waters rated as 'poor', with tailored improvement plans prepared by SEPA. These projects will result in major improvements to bathing water quality in the future and should see improvements over the coming season."

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

"Protecting and improving our bathing waters is crucial for our environment, for local economies which rely on beach tourism and for people who will be able to enjoy our seaside resorts and beaches over the summer months.

"Partnership working between SEPA, Scottish Water, local authorities, the farming sector, and communities is vital to achieving better results and I am pleased to see that this work has helped to drive forward improvements this season."

A Scottish Water spokeswoman said:

"We are pleased to see the continued improvement in bathing water performance. Scottish Water has undertaken significant investment in

partnership with SEPA in recent years to support bathing water quality.

“We are committed to delivering investment where our assets are found to be compromising quality. We continue to work with SEPA and a range of agencies, local authorities, beach users and other relevant organisations to improve bathing water quality where required.

“People can help by ensuring that they only flush the right things down toilets – the three Ps: pee, poo and paper – to avoid causing blockages to drains and sewers which can cause pollution on beaches.”

## **ENDS**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

#### **2018 results in full**

Highland and Islands

(8 excellent, 4 good, 4 sufficient, 0 poor)

Achmelvich	Excellent
Dores	Good
Dornoch	Excellent
Dunnet	Excellent
Ettrick Bay	Good
Findhorn	Good
Gairloch Beach	Excellent
Ganavan	Excellent
Loch Morlich	Excellent
Lossiemouth (East)	Sufficient
Machrihanish	Excellent
Nairn (Central)	Sufficient
Nairn (East)	Sufficient
Rosemarkie	Good
Sand Beach	Excellent
Thurso	Sufficient

Lothian, mid Scotland and Fife

(8 excellent, 5 good, 1 sufficient, 3 poor)

Aberdour (Silversands)	Excellent
Aberdour Harbour (Black Sands)	Good
Anstruther (Billow Ness)	Excellent
Burntisland	Good
Crail (Roome Bay)	Excellent
Elie (Harbour) and Earlsferry	Excellent
Elie (Ruby Bay)	Excellent
Fisherrow Sands	Poor
Kinghorn (Harbour Beach)	Poor
Kinghorn (Pettycur)	Good

Kingsbarns	Excellent
Kirkcaldy (Seafield)	Good
Leven	Good
Portobello (Central)	Sufficient
Portobello (West)	Poor
St Andrews (East Sands)	Excellent
St Andrews (West Sands)	Excellent

North East Scotland  
(4 excellent, 8 good, 4 sufficient,  
1 poor)

Aberdeen	Sufficient
Arbroath (West Links)	Good
Balmedie	Excellent
Broughty Ferry	Excellent
Carnoustie	Good
Collieston	Good
Cruden Bay	Poor
Cullen Bay	Sufficient
Fraserburgh (Philorth)	Excellent
Fraserburgh (Tiger Hill)	Sufficient
Inverboyndie	Sufficient
Lunan Bay	Good
Monifieth	Good
Montrose	Excellent
Peterhead (Lido)	Good
Rosehearty	Good
Stonehaven	Good

Solway  
(1 excellent, 2 good, 0  
sufficient, 4 poor)

Brighthouse Bay	Poor
Carrick	Good
Dhoon Bay	Poor
Mossyard	Good
Rockcliffe	Poor
Sandyhills	Poor
Southernness	Excellent

South East Scotland  
(3 excellent, 9 good, 2 sufficient,  
1 poor)

Broad Sands	Good
Coldingham	Good
Dunbar (Belhaven)	Good
Dunbar (East)	Good
Yellow Craig	Sufficient
Eyemouth	Poor
Gullane	Excellent
Longniddry	Good

North Berwick (Milsey Bay)	Good
North Berwick (West)	Good
Pease Bay	Excellent
Seacliff	Excellent
Seton Sands	Sufficient
Thorntonloch	Good
Whitesands	Good

West Scotland  
(1 excellent, 6 good, 5 sufficient, 2 poor)

Ayr (South Beach)	Poor
Culzean	Sufficient
Girvan	Sufficient
Heads of Ayr	Poor
Irvine	Sufficient
Largs (Pencil Beach)	Good
Lunderston Bay	Good
Luss Bay	Sufficient

Maidens	Good
Millport Bay	Excellent
Prestwick	Good
Saltcoats/Ardrossan	Sufficient
Seamill	Good
Troon (South Beach)	Good

## **The revised Bathing Water Directive**

Under the revised Bathing Water Directive:

- classifications are calculated at the end of the 2017 season for display on all beaches at the start of the 2018 season;
- water quality classification applies for the whole season;
- the overall condition of a location is described through bathing water profiles.

## **Wet weather problems**

- Diffuse pollution is the largest pollution pressure on the water environment in Scotland, but it can be difficult to identify and control. The risk of diffuse pollution is worse during rainfall because nutrients, soil, chemicals and faecal bacteria can be washed from land into the surrounding water environment. Single discharge points might not seem to be an issue, but several combined across a whole river catchment can significantly affect water quality, including in EU designated bathing waters. Land and run-off management practices play a pivotal role in diffuse pollution mitigation.
- Another source of pollution at beaches can be combined sewer overflows (CSOs). During heavy rainfall CSOs, which discharge diluted but minimally treated sewage to watercourses and coastal waters, are essential to prevent flooding. However, during extended periods of rain,

which are not uncommon in Scotland, the combined effect of CSOs in a catchment can have a negative impact on the water quality. To minimise the impact of combined sewer overflows on water quality, SEPA imposes conditions requiring sewage litter and debris removal and on the location and frequency of their operation. SEPA continues to work closely with the Scottish Government, Scottish Water and the Water Industry to ensure that planned capital investment programmes aimed at upgrading sewerage infrastructure throughout the country are prioritised to maximise environmental benefits.

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## [Press release: New quarantine proposals to protect England's trees](#)

Proposals to consult industry on new quarantine arrangements for high-risk plants are among the measures set out today (Friday 25 May) in [the Government's plan to protect the UK's precious trees](#).

Currently quarantine is used by some horticulture businesses as part of strong biosecurity measures against high-risk species. We want to explore how this targeted approach can be broadened out so we have better protection against harmful pests and diseases right across the industry.

Once we leave the EU we will have the chance to tighten biosecurity measures further and take swifter, more targeted action against serious threats like Xylella.

[The Tree Health Resilience Strategy](#), the first major publication to come out of [the 25-Year Environment Plan](#), sets out a new proactive approach to tree health, with landowners, charities, the public and government working together to take actions to build resilience against pests and diseases to protect the nation's trees – worth an estimated £175 billion.

As part of this approach, a new senior cross-industry Plant Health Alliance to strengthen biosecurity practices across industry has been established. The Alliance brings together the country's leading nurseries, retailers, tree suppliers, landscapers, foresters, [the RHS](#) and Defra to ensure an effective response to threats such as Xylella and Emerald Ash Borer.

Launching the strategy, Secretary of State Michael Gove said:

The UK has a global reputation for setting the high standards for biosecurity of plants and trees but there is no room for complacency. We must seize every opportunity offered by Brexit to strengthen our biosecurity.

In 10 years' time I want to be able to say our oaks are thriving, that pests are being kept at bay and that our woodlands and forests are flourishing.

Trees benefit our economy, society and wellbeing significantly and this strategy sets out how we will preserve them for generations to come.

The Strategy also includes:

- Launching the 'Don't Risk It' campaign this summer to raise awareness of the risks of bringing back plant materials from holiday destinations
- Consulting with industry on contingency plans for key threats to our trees and plants to ensure a swift and effective response should new pests and diseases enter the UK
- Strengthening protection against Xylella – maintaining continuous scrutiny of the risk situation and taking measures to maintain the strongest possible controls
- Building knowledge and awareness of threats to trees to ensure accurate and up to date information
- Working in partnership with the sector to drive up biosecurity standards through assurance and safe sourcing
- Exploring strengthening of public procurement strategies to specify safe sourcing, and
- Reviewing passenger baggage allowance for regulated plant material to assess whether it should be discontinued.

Christine Reid, Head of Conservation for [the Woodland Trust](#), said:

The Woodland Trust welcomes this strategy. It is an important step in coordinating the UK's efforts to combat tree pests and diseases; we rely on our beloved trees, yet they are facing too many threats.

We need an effective biosecurity strategy, we need to plant more UK-sourced trees, and we need to develop the forestry sector. With the necessary knowledge, skills and capacity, we can ensure a healthy, resilient tree population.

This strategy outlines the key steps required, and has brought



together the sector charged with making this happen.

Sir Harry Studholme, Chair of [the Forestry Commission](#) said:

Publishing this strategy is a critical milestone in our ongoing work to safeguard England's trees.

It provides clear direction on how we can work collaboratively across sectors, to combat tree pests and diseases, to protect our beloved forests and woodlands for not only our current generation but for the future.

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## **Policy paper: Tree health resilience strategy 2018**

This strategy sets out plans to reduce the risk of pest and disease threats. It also sets out how we will strengthen the resilience of our trees to withstand threats.

This strategy includes a National Action Plan. The plan sets out what we're already doing and what we and others will need to do to protect our trees and the important services they provide.

In "our goals", we've summarised what we hope to achieve over the next 5 years.