

Pioneering Forest Machine Operator courses a success

This intensive and practical course offers four training places and addresses all aspects of mechanised harvesting and forwarding operations.

Press release: Find out about the latest plans to reduce flood risk in Otley

Updated: Revised date for the event following adverse weather conditions on Thursday 1 March.

Visitors to the drop in will have an opportunity to see how feedback from the last event in October has helped to shape options for flood alleviation scheme for Otley.

A review of the digital model of the river is now complete, and the testing of options in the model has begun, so the team would now like to share the findings from the work and get feedback for the next steps.

Representatives from Leeds City Council, Environment Agency and WSP (the consultants undertaking survey and investigation work) will be at the event to answer any questions and discuss the latest progress.

The drop in will be held at:

- The Core Otley, Unit 11 Orchard Gate, Otley LS21 3NX on Tuesday 13 March between 4–7pm

The town suffered flooding on three occasions between November and December 2015, which saw 74 properties affected. In the Autumn Statement 2016, Government announced £2 million to invest in a scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to homes and businesses.

The scheme is being led by Leeds City Council working closely with the Environment Agency.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

Together with our partners we are continuing to make good progress

on our plans for flood prevention measures in Otley. The modelling work on the river is finished and we are now testing the possible options. We want local residents and businesses to be as involved as possible in these plans as they develop, so would encourage people to go along to the drop-in session, find out more and give us their views.

John Woods, flood risk management advisor at the Environment Agency said:

We're grateful to everyone who came along to the last event in October to give us your views and ideas. We have looked at these in detail with Leeds City Council's engineers and consultants WSP and have tested a number of them in the digital model to assess their impact on flooding. Residents views are once again really important in helping us to shape the preferred option for Otley.

Work to pull together data to better understand the potential paths of flood water as well as collating historic and recent flood information began last year. The information from these investigations, carried out by consultants, WSP, has been used to update an existing digital model of the River Wharfe which has helped to form potential options for a scheme, which are now being tested.

The Otley Flood Alleviation Scheme is one of several schemes that is adopting a catchment-wide approach. This means the entire River Wharfe catchment area will be considered to help reduce flood risk. This approach looks at a combination of natural processes and engineered options to help slow the flow and catch water further up the catchment so that flood peaks are reduced further downstream.

For those who can't make it to the drop-in, members of the project team will be working regularly from Otley Town Council's office, and can be contacted on 01943 466335 or call in for a chat between these times:
Tuesday 13th March 3pm – 6pm, Wednesday 11th April 3 – 6pm.

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Press release: Foreign Secretary orders plastic to be binned from Britain's diplomatic network

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) will eliminate avoidable single-use plastics from its UK operations by the end of the year, and from its global operations by 2020. It is the first UK government department to announce such a ban.

This ambitious target makes the FCO a leader in the fight against plastic pollution not just in the UK, but globally too.

In recent weeks, the FCO has already removed all plastic cups, crockery, cutlery, straws and single-use condiment sachets from its London staff canteen, and is providing re-usable or biodegradable alternatives.

It plans to increase its 'latte levy' from 10p to 50p to encourage staff to use their own mugs instead of disposable ones – and places the FCO firmly at the top of the pack in taking real action to end plastic waste.

The Foreign Secretary has set a deadline of year-end 2018 for the FCO to find alternatives to the remaining avoidable single-use plastics in use in its UK estate.

As well as a ban by year-end in the UK, the Foreign Secretary has given a 2020 target for its overseas estate, with a significant reduction this year.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

It is time for the world to truly wake up to the damage being done

to the environment, and especially by the sheer volume of plastic that is dumped in our oceans.

If the UK is to turn the tide overseas on this crucial issue, it is only right that the Foreign Office leads the way at home.

Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office said:

Since 2009 to 2010, the Foreign Office has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 39%, waste by 45%, paper consumption by 42% and water use by 12.9 million litres in our UK operations. But we must do more to reduce our use of plastic. I am confident we can meet the challenge put to us by the Foreign Secretary.

In addition, the FCO is looking at how it can further reduce its environmental impact beyond plastic. Projects identified for consideration include replacing existing vehicles with electric hybrid vehicles, waste to energy projects, and a global automated energy monitoring and reduction programme.

The drive comes on the back of the launch of the government's [25-Year Environment Plan](#) last month, which set out measures to eliminate avoidable plastic waste by 2042 across the whole of the UK.

Background

The drive comes on the back of the launch of the government's 25-Year Environment Plan last month, which set out measures to reduce plastic waste.

The FCO already has a strong record in sustainability. Its most recent [annual sustainability report](#) show that in 2016 to 2017 in its UK operations the FCO:

- reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 39%
- reduced water consumption by 12.9m litres
- reduced waste & recycling produced by 45%
- reduced paper consumption by 42%

In recognition of these efforts, we were shortlisted as a finalist in the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) Awards 2017 for its actions to drive significant reductions in water and energy use across the UK estate – the first central government department to achieve this success in the 16 years the awards have been running.

Estimates of the amount of avoidable single-use plastics in the FCO include:

- 103,201 cold drinks bottles purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017 (stretching from FCO in London to Heathrow Airport)
- 655,718 hot beverage cups purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017 (FCO in London to Milton Keynes or Brighton)
- 285,600 plastic water cups purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017

- 14,950 pieces of plastic cutlery purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017
- 1.37 million avoidable single-use plastic items were used purchased by the FCO in the UK in 2017
- initial estimates suggest that the FCO globally is consuming at least 3.45 million items of avoidable single-use plastics

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@BorisJohnson](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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[Press release: Illegal Newcastle scrapyards charged with £7k fine](#)

A Newcastle man has been fined for operating a vehicle scrapyards without a permit in a prosecution brought by the Environment Agency.

Ronald Coulson Vincent Grieveson, 23, of Forest Hall, appeared at Newcastle Magistrates' Court on Friday, February 23.

He pleaded guilty to illegally storing and treating waste vehicles and parts without a permit. He was fined £3,628, and ordered to pay costs of £3,273.58 and a victim surcharge of £362.

Acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, solicitor Chris Bunting told the court Grieveson had been operating an illegal waste site at Unit C, Grieveson Industrial Estate, Byker, without an environmental permit.

Environment Agency officers visited the site on 16 November 2016 and saw oil seeping from loose car engines onto the concrete and into a combined sewer system nearby. Grieveson was told to stop illegal activities and stop oil leaking off site.

On a further visit a month later, Environment Officers found oil continued to leak off site from engines left on the concrete surface. More car engines were stored in a red skip and various car parts and tyres were stored elsewhere on the site.

Grieveson was issued with a legal notice warning him to stop all illegal activity on site and remove all waste by 16 January 2017. Yet, when officers returned again on 27 February 2017 they found little had changed.

In court solicitor, Jack Lovell, in mitigation stated that Mr Grieveson realised he had been naïve and foolishly thought he could operate legally with just a waste carrier's licence. Mr Grieveson produced photographs to show the site is now cleared of waste.

Jamie Fletcher, Area Environment Manager, Environment Agency, said:

It is important that waste materials are stored, handled and disposed of correctly to protect the environment and safeguard human health. The defendant in this case continued to operate outside the law despite numerous warnings, and by handling un-depolluted vehicles and parts, he caused pollution.

Anyone who has information about waste crimes can call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.