

Press release: New environmental protections to deliver a Green Brexit

Plans to consult on a new, independent body that would hold Government to account for upholding environmental standards in England after we leave the European Union have been set out by Environment Secretary Michael Gove today.

Leaving the EU gives us the opportunity to put the environment at the heart of policy making, while ensuring vital protections for our landscapes, wildlife and natural assets are not only maintained but enhanced.

To help deliver a Green Brexit, ministers will consult on a new independent, statutory body to advise and challenge government and potentially other public bodies on environmental legislation – stepping in when needed to hold these bodies to account and enforce standards.

A consultation on the specific powers and scope of the new body will be launched early next year.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said today:

We will deliver a Green Brexit, where environmental standards are not only maintained but enhanced.

Today we are setting out our plans to ensure the powerful are held to account. We will consult on creating an independent body – encouraging transparency and preventing careless or irresponsible behaviour damaging our natural environment.

We will consult as widely as possible on these proposals to ensure we get this important decision right for future generations.

Currently environmental decisions made in the UK – from improving air and water quality to protecting endangered species – are overseen by the European Commission, which monitors targets, scrutinises new legislation and takes action against illegal behaviour.

This current system is underpinned by a number of ‘environmental principles’, such as sustainable development and the polluter pays principle, which puts the onus on polluting individuals or businesses to pay to repair damage.

Although these principles are already central to government environmental policy, they are not set out in one place besides the EU treaties. The proposed consultation on the statutory body will therefore also explore the scope and content of a new policy statement to ensure environmental principles underpin policy making.

One of the key questions, which we will explore with the devolved

administrations (DAs), is whether Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland wish to take a different or similar approach. We want to hear from as many people and organisations as possible right across the UK – from business, NGOs, the farming sector, civil society, and elsewhere.

[Press release: North east man sentenced for waste fire](#)

A Cleveland farmer has been ordered to pay £4,899.44 after illegally storing and setting fire to controlled waste on his land.

The blaze, which was filmed by a National Police Air Service (NPAS) helicopter crew, took place at Holdensfield Farm, Yarm, in December 2016.

Charles Roderick Pickering, aged 71, of Holdensfield Farm, was charged with two waste offences when he appeared before Teesside Magistrates' Court on Friday, 10 November.

He admitted both allegations brought by the Environment Agency and was handed a £3,000 fine with £1,729.44 costs and £170 victim surcharge.

The court heard how the NPAS helicopter crew observed the fire, which was giving off a large plume of black smoke. Footage shows the fire was unattended and included materials such as uPVC door and window frames, wood, wheelie bins, a fridge and shower trays over an area of 50 metres square.

The fire was 200m away from a large housing estate to the north, 200m from HMP Kirklevington Grange to the west, 200m from two busy A roads servicing Yarm and immediately adjacent to a golf driving range.

Burned waste

When Environment Agency Officers attended the site on 19 December 2016 they found the burned and partially burned waste also included televisions, carpet, mattresses, kitchen units and garden waste. There was also an area of unburnt waste consisting of various packaging materials, paint tins and wooden pallets.

Pickering explained that he had allowed a man, whom he only knew by first name, to bring on some of the waste at no charge, with the rest being from his own farm. He admitted he had started the fire, stating he had done it when he considered the wind conditions suitable.

On 26 January 2017, Pickering was interviewed under caution. He produced an invoice and waste transfer notes showing that some of the burnt materials had been removed from the farm.

Mr Brown, of Hewitts Solicitor's mitigating on Mr Pickering's behalf, said Mr Pickering accepted responsibility for his wrong doing and had only burnt waste when the wind blew away from local housing and prison. He had now removed the waste at his expense.

Ignorance is 'no excuse'

Speaking after the court case, Environment Agency spokesperson Rachael Caldwell said:

Ignorance is not an excuse for flouting environmental laws. Not only did Pickering unlawfully accept controlled waste onto his farm, he put the health of the local community and environment in danger by setting fire to it, producing a flume of smoke and fumes.

This case demonstrates the need for everyone to take their environmental responsibilities seriously. Failure to do so can have an immediate impact on people around you and pollute the environment for future generations.

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[Press release: Thousands of fish released into rivers](#)

The Environment Agency has released 8,000 young fish to give fish stocks a boost in north east rivers.

The chub and dace were released on Thursday, 9 November into the River Tees

at Low Coniscliffe and River Wear at Maiden Castle.

It's part of the Environment Agency's ongoing plan to develop and restore rivers in the region, targeting those which have been affected by pollution or where barriers affect fish passage.

Fisheries experts will release a total of 30,000 fish over the next two weeks in rivers and Stillwater fisheries in the north east. As well as the Tees and Wear, fish will be released into the Skerne near Darlington and the Team at Gateshead.

The fish – chub, dace, roach, bream, tench, rudd and crucian carp – were all reared at the Environment Agency's fish farm near Calverton, Nottinghamshire, using funding from rod licence sales.



Commitment to anglers

Alice Fitch, Fisheries Team leader for the Environment Agency in the north east, said: "We are pleased that we can provide these fish for stocking as part of our commitment to rod licence paying anglers. Restoration and the creation of new fisheries for all people to enjoy is a very important aspect of our work."

The Environment Agency releases fish into our waterways annually. Fisheries officers target fish stocking activity using data from national fish surveys to identify where there are problems with poor breeding and survival. Releasing fish helps the process of natural recovery in waters which have been impacted by pollution or suffered poor water quality.

Alice added: "Restocking is one of many things we do together with our partners to develop fisheries, including reducing the effects of pollution, improving habitat and removing barriers to fish migration."



Fisheries officer Paul Frear releases dace into the River Wear.

Improved water quality

Many of our industrialised rivers have improved dramatically in water quality in the last 30 years and targeted and appropriate restocking has helped the restoration of natural fish stocks and viable fisheries.

Angling is a great way for everyone to keep healthy and enjoy the natural environment. All rod licence income is used to find work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

Anyone who wants to go fishing needs to buy a rod licence. A full annual licence costs £30 (short term and some concessionary licences are also available) and are available [online](#)

[Fish stocks boost for north east rivers](#)

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