

Food processing plant pay £50k for effluent leak

Noble Foods Co leaked approximately 26,000 litres of untreated waste water from their plant of which an unknown quantity entered the stream in January 2020. The plant slaughters and processes chickens, on Corringham Road in Gainsborough.

The discharge occurred as a result of a series of faults within the company's treatment plant.

As the effluent leaked from the plant, workers on site blocked a drain in an attempt to contain the spill. But the untreated waste water flooded the area which eventually reached a surface water drain and entered the stream.

Despite their efforts to minimise the damage, staff didn't follow emergency procedures correctly meaning their efforts were unsuccessful.

While it's unknown how much untreated waste water entered the stream, samples taken by Environment Agency officers found a toxic level of ammonia in the water. The levels were more than 80 times the natural level.

After an investigation, the Environment Agency deemed the matter could be appropriately handled by way of an enforcement undertaking. As part of the enforcement undertaking the company paid £50,000 to the Lincolnshire Rivers Trust to fund environmental improvements around Lincoln.

Michael Waugh, Regulatory Officer at the Environment Agency, said:

We always aim to get the best result for people and nature. Enforcement undertakings mean those responsible for pollution have the chance to take responsibility for their actions and put things right in a way that directly benefits the environment.

In this case, the extra cash will go to making real improvements to local watercourses including the Brayford Pool, which will be a boon for wildlife and visitors.

Nicola Craven, Project Manager at Lincolnshire Rivers Trust said:

The funds received from this enforcement undertaking will provide valuable financial support to enable river improvement projects in and around Lincoln.

Our planned work around the Brayford Pool and Fosdyke will help improve a range of habitats adding value for both people and wildlife.

Noble Foods has also spent £40,000 on measures to clean up the stream and prevent a repeat pollution, including installing alarms and equipment to stop waste water entering the stream.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- On 28 January, Noble Food Co committed a single offence contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Protection Regulations (EPR) 2016 by discharging effluent into an unnamed watercourse contrary to their environmental permit.
- The Environment Agency is increasingly using enforcement undertakings for suitable cases to restore or enhance the environment, improve practices of the offending business and ensure future compliance with environmental requirements. We will continue to pursue prosecution for the most serious cases.
- The Environment Agency is required to publish details of EUs we have accepted, which we do on a regular basis on our website
- The latest list of enforcement undertakings can be found here:
[<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-environment-agencys-use-of-civil-sanctions/enforcement-undertakings-accepted-by-the-environment-agency-2>]
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