

# Leicestershire operator to pay penalty for illegal abstraction

The Environment Agency (EA) has imposed a Variable Monetary Penalty (VMP) on JRM Hire and Leasing Limited for illegally taking water from Sapcote Quarry in Leicestershire.

The VMP was issued on 22 June 2022 and will see the company pay £8,510, plus the Environment Agency's investigation costs of £7,482.77.

Since November 2018, Environment Agency officers have been receiving regular reports regarding the illegal abstraction of water from the base of Sapcote Quarry and carrying out their investigations.

The quarry is situated close to the town of Sapcote, Leicestershire, and had filled up naturally since quarrying ceased in the early 1990s.

The quarry is owned Mr John R Mac whose company JRM Hire and Leasing Limited operates from the quarry.

Abstraction of water from any source is regulated by the Water Resources Act 1991. Under Section 27 of the Act anyone can abstract up to 20 cubic metres of water per day for any reason without the need for an abstraction licence. JRM Hire and Leasing Limited has never held an abstraction licence at Sapcote Quarry.

The EA requested the company voluntarily attach a water meter to the pump to show the abstraction was below 20 cubic metres per day. During a site visit to Sapcote in May 2019 to inspect the abstraction, EA officers observed the pump operating at the base of the quarry with the water meter detached and concealed nearby beneath a towel.

During May and November 2020, EA officers were successful at collecting evidence of non-compliant water abstraction from the quarry. A warning letter was issued for the May offence, but the continued non-compliance resulted in the penalty being issued.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

We take our responsibility to protect the environment very seriously. Where there is evidence, the Environment Agency uses a full range of enforcement options.

A variable monetary penalty (VMP) is a proportionate monetary penalty for the more serious cases of non-compliance.

We rely on communities to report pollution and environmental issues to us and urge people to report issues to us on our 24/7 incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

### **How much is a VMP?**

The maximum amount for any VMP is £250,000 for each offence. The exact amount is calculated using the methodology in Annex 1 of the [EA Enforcement and Sanctions Policy](#).

### **When can VMPs be used?**

A variable monetary penalty can be used in following situations:

- when there is evidence of negligence or mismanagement
- when there is an environmental impact
- to remove an identifiable financial gain or saving as a result of the breach
- where it is not in the public interest to prosecute.

### **What happens to the money once the VMP has been paid?**

The money is transferred to Her Majesty's Treasury – The Environment Agency does not keep the money to fund its own activities or have a say in how the money is used. The Environment Agency is however, able to recover its costs, using an Enforcement Cost Recovery Notice.