

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](#).