

Press release: Heathrow coach firm polluted river with toilet waste

A west London river was contaminated after toilets from luxury coaches were emptied into public drains.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, based near Heathrow Airport, broke environmental law when staff poured waste into sewers, instead of taking the waste to an approved site for disposal.

Officers from the Environment Agency turned detective in 2015, tracing pollution in the River Crane to where Symphony operated, a trading estate minutes from the airport.

A monitoring device, called a sonde, found the river had been polluted, and other sondes identified Symphony as the source, which officers confirmed through a network of drains.

The watercourse was further polluted when chemicals and dirty water entered the drains after staff washed vehicles on Symphony's premises. The firm had been warned by the Environment Agency and the company's landlords doing so was against the lease. Symphony would have stayed within the law by disposing of the chemicals at an approved site, or by cleaning their cars and coaches at an authorised location.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, Eastern Business Park, Ely Road, Hounslow, was fined £18,000 by Ealing Magistrates' Court, which ordered the firm to pay £12,113.62 in costs, and a victim surcharge of £170. The company was charged with allowing poisonous, noxious or polluting matter into the River Crane, between May 2015 and February 2016, and failing to provide the Environment Agency with documents relating to their activities.

The sole director of the firm, Allen Jeyakumar, of Lee Road, Greenford, was fined £3,134 by the court, for allowing Symphony to commit the offences. Mr Jeyakumar also had to pay a victim surcharge of £142.

Mathew Reed, who led the investigation for the Environment Agency, said:

Incidents like this have the potential to have a serious and long-term impact on the health of the river. Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd was given repeated warnings about its activities.

People might think we will find it too difficult to trace the cause of pollution, but this case proves that some detective work leads to a conviction.

Identifying pollution through a complex network of drains can be difficult, but that doesn't mean it cannot be done. We have the skills and technology to do it.

Both Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd and Allen Jeyakumar pleaded guilty to all charges at an earlier hearing.

For media enquiries, please call 0800 141 2743, or email southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk.