

Press release: Polluter to submit plans for River Witham repairs

- The notice requires agricultural and fertiliser company Omex Agriculture Limited to submit proposals for repairing the river
- Ammonia entered the River Witham in March of this year and caused the worst river pollution ever recorded in Lincolnshire
- An investigation into the circumstances continues

The company responsible for a major pollution on the River Witham that killed at least 100,000 fish has been told they must develop plans to restore the river.

The Environment Agency has issued agricultural and fertiliser company Omex Agriculture Limited with a 'notice of liability' under the Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2015.

The notice – only the second the Environment Agency has issued since the regulations came into place – requires the company to develop plans for repairing the environmental damage caused when ammonia entered the river in March 2018.

The ammonia affected the river from Bardney to the Wash, severely impacting the condition of the river and its ecosystems. It's thought to be the worst river pollution incident ever recorded in the county.

Manfai Tang, environment manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We know the pollution had a devastating effect on delicate river ecosystems, and issuing this notice means the process of helping the river recover to its natural, healthy state can start sooner.

It's one way we're working to protect and improve our environment for local people and wildlife. We look forward to receiving proposals from Omex for review, and working with them to restore the Witham.

After the incident, Environment Agency experts and biologists worked tirelessly with other organisations to clean up the pollution and mitigate the damage. Fisheries teams have since re-stocked the river with more than 1.5 million fish larvae, including common bream, roach and tench, plus re-introducing around 40,000 roach and common bream ranging from 30 to 40mm long.

Meanwhile, the Environment Agency is continuing to investigate the circumstances of the pollution. Further action will be considered once the investigation is complete.

Anyone who suspects a pollution incident is urged to report it to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

- Under the Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2015, a Notice of Liability allows the Environment Agency to require a polluter to take steps to remediate the damage done by a pollution incident.
- Once the notice is served, the recipient has 28 days to lodge an appeal.
- The polluter has until mid-January to submit their proposals. The Environment Agency must be satisfied the plan represents the best results for the environment.
- This measure is taken separate to the ongoing investigation under the Environmental Permitting Regulations.