

# Press release: Pony and trapped!

A pony was found up to its belly in thick mud after a Hillingdon company polluted a stream near Heathrow.

Dirty water escaped from a site operated by Arbormaster (UK) Ltd in 2016, when staff washed soil. The muck then travelled into fields and a stream called Mad Bess Brook, between Harefield and Ruislip.

The pony broke free from the sludge, but Arbormaster, of St. Leonards Farm, New Years Green Lane, Harefield, has been fined £3,500 for the incident and failing to obtain a permit from the Environment Agency for the work.

In February 2016, the Environment Agency was asked to investigate reports from members of the public that the River Pinn, some distance away from the Arbormaster plant, had become cloudy at several locations downstream of Ruislip.

Officers were unable to prove the muddy water got into the Pinn, but they traced the pollution back to Mad Bess Brook and St Leonards Farm. Investigators found a large quantity of murky water cascading down the side of a pile of waste soil. The water drained away from the farm via a ditch connected to the stream.

The discoloured liquid was discovered shortly after Arbormaster installed a machine at St Leonards Farm to clean waste soil used in landscaping. The Environment Agency ordered the company to stop the process as a result of the pollution.

District Judge Deborah Wright, sitting at Ealing magistrates' court on 26 April 2019, called the company's actions "reckless". The pollution adversely affected the stream's invertebrate population meant to help sustain wildlife numbers.

James Burton, a senior environment officer for the Environment Agency in London, said:

Pumping large amounts of water into a waste pile without any way of capturing the liquid was inevitably going to cause a problem. Arbormaster knew the water was escaping from the site, yet failed to stop the soil-washing.

The Environment Agency can work with companies to make sure they comply with the law, but enforcement is always open to us. I hope the £3,500 fine sends out a powerful message to businesses that protecting the environment is not an optional extra. It's a must.

All commercial waste activities are regulated by the Environment Agency. Whenever waste is stored or treated, the operator is required to hold an

environmental permit or register for an exemption, which is reserved for low-risk waste activities only.

Arbormaster pleaded guilty to the charges.

In addition to the £3,500 fine, the court ordered the company to pay costs of £5,000 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Arbormaster (UK) Ltd was charged with breaching regulations 12 (1) (a) and 38 (1) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016, for not possessing a permit, and regulation 12 (1) (b) and 38 (1) (a) for undertaking a water-discharge activity without the required permit.