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1 Feb 2017



A cash injection aimed at cutting the country's attainment gap should not miss out children in smaller schools who need it, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith welcomed news that £120 million was to be released to schools across Scotland as part of Pupil Equity Funding.

However, she emphasised that some schools weren't getting any money, and sought reassurances as to why.

It was announced today that 114 schools in Scotland won't receive any cash, out of 2500.

But under a similar scheme in England, 133 schools out of 21,500 miss out, proportionately a far lower number.

Instead, she added, the Pupil Premium approach used by the UK Government might be more effective.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"This is a welcome move and will hopefully go some way to closing Scotland's stubborn attainment gap.

"However, it's essential no pupils who need it miss out on this cash.

"There does appear to be a higher number of schools in Scotland being left out than in England.

"Now the Scottish Government needs to provide assurances that this is because the money there is not needed, rather than a fault in methodology."

For more on the announcement, visit:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38816114>

In England there are 133 schools who do not receive any pupil premium at all, that's out of around 21,500. Here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2016-to-2017>

In Scotland, there are 114 schools who don't receive any Pupil Equity Funding and that's out of around 2,500. Here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund/Schoolallocations>

Press release: Pollution of brook costs Evesham food processing company over £59,000

Walsh Mushrooms, a mushroom packaging and distribution company operating at the Vale Park industrial estate in Evesham, appeared in Cheltenham Magistrates' Court yesterday (31 January 2017) and pleaded guilty to an offence of polluting the nearby Battleton Brook with the effluent of rotting mushrooms.

The company was fined £50,000, ordered to pay costs of £8,888.16, along with a £170 victim surcharge.

The prosecution was brought by the Environment Agency, following reports of pollution of the brook in April and May in 2015. The company was charged with one offence contrary to Regulations 12 (1) (b) and 38 (1) (a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

On 24 April 2015, an Environment Agency officer visited the Battleton Brook in Evesham following a report it had turned black with a foul odour. The officer found the brook heavily polluted with organic matter, causing low levels of oxygen. Some frogs and a significant number of invertebrates downstream of Vale Park had been killed as a result of the pollution incident.

Officers, along with staff from Severn Trent Water Limited, identified the source of the pollution as a skip full of decomposing mushrooms on the Walsh Mushroom site, which was leaking into a surface water drain. Investigations of the drainage system suggested this had been ongoing for a number of days. Walsh Mushrooms were advised to remove the skip, undertake a cleaning operation, and conduct a full inspection of the site drainage system.

The Environment Agency stated that the company had failed to carry out the site drainage survey within a reasonable time after 24 April 2015. As a result, on 14 May 2015, officers attended the premises of Walsh Mushrooms again to examine the site drainage system and discovered that similar effluent was continuing to flow into it.

A representative of the company was interviewed and accepted that no training had been given to staff regarding the function or maintenance of the site drainage. No training had been given to staff regarding pollution risks associated with storing waste on the site. The company had failed to carry out any environmental risk assessments since it began operating at Vale Park in 2000.

The company, which had no previous convictions, expressed remorse for the incident. It acknowledged its failure to carry out environmental risk assessments or give appropriate training to company staff. The company stated that it had co-operated with the Environment Agency's investigation and taken steps to remedy the issues at the site. These included the monthly sampling of fluids from the on-site inceptor, the training of staff and the storage of waste mushrooms in leak-proof containers.

Following the outcome of court proceedings, an Environment Agency spokesperson said:

Walsh Mushrooms failed to conduct any assessments of the risks their operations posed to the environment. They did not understand or maintain their drainage system and they failed to provide any training for staff on how to recognise or deal with pollution incidents. As a result of these failings, they caused significant damage to the brook. We will always seek to take action against those whose actions results in pollution of our rivers.

Many companies in the food processing industry fail to appreciate that food wastes can be highly polluting and cause serious damage to the environment. By following sensible environmental management procedures businesses will be better placed to comply with relevant legislation and reduce the risks damaging our stream and rivers.

If members of the public notice any signs of pollution in a river, stream or lake please report it to our Incident Hotline 0870 80 70 60.

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Dr. Jitendra Singh felicitates best performing employees of DoPT

The Minister of State for Development of North Eastern Region (I/C), Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh was the chief guest at the Prize Distribution Ceremony of Department of Personnel & Training

5-magnitude quake hits Tibet; no casualties reported

A 5.0-magnitude earthquake jolted Zhongba County in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region at 6:07 p.m. Wednesday (Beijing Time). No casualties were

reported.

The epicenter was monitored at 30.67 degrees north latitude and 83.34 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 8 km, according to the China Earthquake Networks Center.

The epicenter, 124 kilometers from the county seat and 757 kilometers from Lhasa, is in an uninhabited zone and therefore the moderate quake caused no injuries and death of people and livestock, Wei Xince, deputy county governor, told Xinhua by phone.

Local authorities were checking damages to roads and makeshift livestock pens in the summer pasture.

Zhongba, which is in the western-most of Xigaze prefecture and borders Nepal, covers an area of 45,900 square kilometers and has a population of 24,800. It has an average altitude of over 5,000 meters.