

Press release: Environmental charities receive over £1.5 million from businesses which broke environmental laws

Updated: Change of tense in one paragraph

Companies which broke environmental laws – either by polluting rivers, breaching permit conditions designed to protect communities or avoiding recycling – have agreed to make payments to a range of charities and have pledged to make improvements to avoid future offences.

30 charities and projects will benefit from the bumper pay-out of £1,564,761.09. The money will be spent by local groups on projects that will make a direct positive impact on the environment. Stretches of rivers will be cleaned up, native species will be restocked into rivers and communities groups will invest in parkland for everyone to enjoy.

There are 26 Enforcement Undertakings on the new list with payments ranging from £1,500 – £375,000, including 6 companies that have agreed to make 6 figure payments:

- Northumbrian Water Limited (£375,000) for pumping raw sewage into a tributary of the River Tyne.
- Filippo Berio UK Limited (£253,906.91) for failing to recover or recycle packaging waste.
- Anglian Water Services Limited have made two separate payments (£100,000 and £100,000) both for causing pollution incidents which killed fish.
- Heineken UK Limited (£160,000) for causing a pollution incident which killed fish.
- Kerry Ingredients UK Limited (£127,975) for causing a pollution incident which killed fish.
- Sandoz Limited (£120,932.23) for failing to recover or recycle packaging waste.

As well as making a suitable payment to an appropriate environmental charity, each company has accepted liability, demonstrated restoration of harm and invested to reduce the risk of similar breaches occurring in future.

The Environment Agency's ability to accept Enforcement Undertakings was extended in 2015 to a far wider range of offences. The Environment Agency is increasingly using this method of enforcement for suitable cases to swiftly restore the environment, improve practices of the offending company and avoid longer criminal court cases. However prosecutions will still be taken, particularly in the most serious cases.

Peter Kellett, Legal Director for the Environment Agency said:

We take pollution incidents very seriously and the payments of £1.5 million we're announcing today are the result of our firm but fair enforcement action and will benefit people and the environment across the country.

Enforcement Undertakings allow those who commit offences to restore the environment and to take steps to prevent a recurrence. When appropriate, they allow a quicker resolution than a prosecution and help offenders who are prepared to take responsibility for their actions to put things right with their local communities.

Stephen Trotter, Director, The Wildlife Trusts England, said:

The principle that a polluter should make amends for the damage they've caused makes good sense. We all depend on a healthy environment and this positive scheme allows some natural improvements to be funded which otherwise wouldn't happen. Clearly it would be better if these incidents hadn't happened in the first place – but at least something positive has come out of it.

Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust will use the money to help conserve and protect rare chalk streams and Surrey Wildlife Trust will support a range of projects including care of their heathlands through conservation grazing and Hedgerow Heroes, a citizen science project, to restore the remarkable network of hedges across the county that act as green corridors for wildlife.

The Wildlife Trusts also welcome the deterrent effect that these Enforcement Undertakings should have. It's really important that people understand their responsibilities and care for the natural world – it's also cheaper and makes business sense to do things cleanly than risk causing damage and pollution.

Restoration projects are in addition to work initially carried out to minimise environmental damage caused by pollution. Companies or members of the public are urged report pollution to the Environment Agency's 24/7 hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Environment Agency officers respond to limit damage to the environment and protect people and wildlife.

Several six-figure payments have been made for not recovering and recycling packaging. All companies producing packaging have a responsibility to recycle or pay for recycling to compensate and failure to follow packaging regulations will result in enforcement action and financial penalties.

- The list of enforcement undertakings is published here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enforcement-undertakings-accepted-by-the-environment-agency>

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement following increased fighting in eastern Ukraine](#)

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Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has urged restraint following the recent escalation of fighting in eastern Ukraine, and expressed concern about the worsening humanitarian situation.

Recent days have seen a significant increase in fighting in the Donbas, particularly focused around the town of Avdiivka where the Ukrainians have declared a state of emergency.

The Foreign Secretary said:

Over the past few days we have seen a high number of casualties and the humanitarian situation has deteriorated drastically in Avdiivka. Many civilians are without water, electricity and heating while outside temperatures are as low as -20 degrees.

The immediate priority must be security and a full sustained ceasefire, in line with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. I urge all parties to demonstrate restraint, and help facilitate crucial repairs to restore vital utilities and assist the vulnerable. Sanctions against Russia cannot be lifted until the Minsk commitments are fulfilled.

The UK continues to stand by Ukraine in full support of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Further information

SNP ducks fracking decision for another year

31 Jan 2017



A decision on the future of shale extraction in Scotland will not be made for another year, it has been confirmed.

Having introduced a ban on fracking at the beginning of 2015, the SNP said today it would now make up its mind "by the end of 2017".

The official 'Talking Fracking' consultation will also wait until after the council elections in May before closing.

It means the Scottish Government will have sat on its hands for three years while other parts of the UK press on with the technology.

Experts have said shale extraction could provide an economic boost for Scotland, as well as create jobs and secure future supplies.

But both the SNP and Labour have dogmatic objections to fracking, even though privately the Scottish Government claims to be sympathetic.

Despite the moratorium on fracking, Scotland currently imports daily shipments of fracked gas from the US to refine at Grangemouth.

Scottish Conservative energy spokesman Alexander Burnett said:

"This is another spineless decision by the SNP on the topic of fracking.

"It should be looking at the potential for an economic boom and a more secure supply of power for people in Scotland.

"But instead, it's pandering to the left of the party because it doesn't want to lose votes in May's council elections.

"It is well-established that fracking can be explored safely and sensitively, yet the Scottish Government seems reluctant to even do that.

"And all the while, Scotland risks losing business surrounding the technology south of the border, where the government is altogether more open-minded on this."

To see the full document, visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00513575.pdf>

The ministerial foreword states: "We will then ask the Scottish Parliament to vote on our recommendation, and we will come to a final decision by the end of 2017 on whether or not unconventional oil and gas has a role in Scotland's energy mix."

The Scottish Conservatives have long supported the need for exploring fracking north of the border, and opposed the moratorium that was introduced two years ago.

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/01/scottish-conservatives-oppose-moratorium-fracking/>

Lord Coe must immediately come back to the Select Committee and clarify his evidence in light of this new information – Allin-Khan

Commenting on the release of emails concerning Lord Coe's alleged knowledge of specific allegations connected to the Russian doping scandal, Rosena Allin-Khan MP, Labour's Shadow Sports Minister said:

"These are very troubling allegations. The release of these emails by the Select Committee cast serious doubts over the evidence previously given by Lord Coe to the inquiry.

"World Athletics is going through one of the most serious doping scandals in its history and requires the strongest possible leadership. Lord Coe must immediately come back to the Select Committee and clarify his evidence in light of this new information.

"He must be honest about which allegations he knew of and when he found out about them. The IAAF and BOA need transparency and honesty throughout their organisations now more than ever, and that has to start at the very top."

Local Government Reform White Paper unveiled by Mark Drakeford

The White Paper, which is out for consultation until the beginning of April, is the result of months of discussions between the Welsh Government, local

authorities and others on how to strengthen council services in the face of future challenges. It seeks views on proposals for mandatory regional working to deliver a range of services, address workforce issues, and implement electoral reform including allowing voting at 16. It also calls on members of the public to become active participants in local democracy and in the design and delivery of services.

Amongst the proposals are a mandatory economic development footprint that would also cover certain planning functions and transport.

Councils would have some flexibility over what footprint they use to share responsibilities for other mandated services including education improvement, social services, additional learning needs, public protection and promotion of the Welsh language.

Councillors would make up the membership of new, enhanced joint committees which would oversee these services and make decisions on behalf of their respective councils. Funding arrangements would work on the existing practice of pooled budgets.

The local government workforce is an essential part of these proposals and the Welsh Government will consider, through the Workforce Partnership Council, how to support the transition over to the new arrangements, using statutory guidance where necessary.

Councils would still have the option of merging under the new plans and, where there is local agreement for this, the Welsh Government would work with them to make it a reality.

The White Paper also calls for a different and more equal partnership between people and the public services they use. This would see the development of a new set of principles recognising people as the best experts in how to manage their own lives and putting in place small interventions earlier to resolve issues before they escalate further.

The proposals strike a new balance between clear and unavoidable objectives for local government with flexibility for councils to determine how those shared objectives are best delivered locally. Thus the White Paper proposals provide councils with powers to choose between operating a Cabinet or Committee system and to decide how the activities of councillors are best reported to the electorate. Similarly, views are invited on enabling local authorities to adopt either 'first past the post' or 'single transferable vote' election systems. Following passage of the Wales Bill, further conversation will take place on a wider set of measures to reform electoral arrangements in Wales to improve both voter registration and turn out at elections.

In line with the new proposals, the Cabinet Secretary also announced that he would be considering how the wider local government finance system could be reformed – ensuring a fairer and more sustainable system to support local authorities in the future.

Setting out the proposals for consultation, the Local Government Secretary said:

“This White Paper is not about change for change’s sake. Our councils are working against a backdrop of extraordinary austerity and some services are facing a great deal of pressure. Local government reform is essential if we’re to make these services stronger and more resilient to cope with the demands of the future.

“The new regional arrangements will bring councils together to work more effectively in the interests of people and their communities.

“We want to see a new relationship between councils and their communities where public services support people to live independent lives and intervene only when necessary and only for as long as is required.

“We also want a new relationship between the Welsh Government and our councils; one that is based on mutual respect for the important, and different, roles we each play.

“Underpinning all of these new arrangements will be effective scrutiny and accountability, where councillors act as the champion, advocate and guide for people who elect them.

“I want to thank local authority leaders and others for their help in forming a serious and credible set of proposals. I look forward to working alongside them further following the local government elections in May.”

The consultation will close on 11th April 2017 and is available to view on the Welsh Government’s website: consultations.gov.wales.