

DIO encourages return of red squirrels to Kirkcudbright Training Centre

Working with the Dumfries and Galloway Pine Marten Group, the team will install pine marten den boxes on the training area using funding from DIO's Conservation Group. The Balmae area has a population of grey squirrels, which has displaced the native population of red squirrels.

[Research has shown](#) that where pine martens have been reintroduced or encouraged, red squirrels flourish. This is because pine martens are a natural predator of squirrels, but red squirrels are much more cautious of pine martens than their grey cousins.

There is evidence of existing pine marten activity in the area, but it is mostly migratory. The team hope that installing six den boxes will encourage a permanent population of pine martens.

WO2 Scott Maclean, Deputy Training Safety Officer for Kirkcudbright Training Centre, who is leading the initiative for DIO, said:

Looking after our land and wildlife is extremely important to DIO. We're hopeful this will make a real difference to the ecology of the area by encouraging the return of native red squirrels. We'll be monitoring the pine marten den boxes using trail cameras and if this initiative is successful, we'd like to expand it to more of Kirkcudbright Training Area.

Dr Stephanie Johnstone, Chair Dumfries and Galloway Pine Marten Group, said:

We are delighted to be working with the MOD at the Kirkcudbright Training Area. The site is actively managed by the MOD to improve biodiversity and the extensive area contains a unique mosaic of habitats that provides opportunities for pine martens and many other species to thrive.

The installation of den boxes at the Kirkcudbright Range will benefit pine martens by providing them with a safe place to over winter and breed, replicating the scarce natural resource of large tree cavities within the landscape. Pine martens suppress invasive non-native grey squirrels at the landscape scale and the establishment of a pine marten population on the range will help support the existing on-site efforts to remove grey squirrels for the protection of the local native red squirrel population.

The MOD staff at Kirkcudbright have been enthusiastic in their support of our goal to assist the recovery of this native predator in Dumfries and Galloway and we look forward to continuing to

collaborate with the local MOD team in the years ahead.

This work forms part of a wider project to rejuvenate the Balmae Lake region of Kirkcudbright Training Centre. Led by W02 Maclean, staff from DIO staff and industry partner Landmarc Support Services have removed non-native plant species such as rhododendron, montbretia and bamboo and replaced them with Scottish wildflowers. It is hoped that this will increase insect numbers and diversity of insect species.

They have removed scrub to allow more light to reach the forest floor and have improved the path around the lake and added a small picnic area to encourage responsible public access. Canadian pond weed has been removed from the lake and a new sluice gate installed to allow the water level to be raised to its natural depth, increasing water quality and flow dramatically. W02 Maclean also plans to reintroduce native fish species, primarily brown trout.

[Joint statement from Embassies of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom](#)

World news story

Joint statement of Embassies of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom



We reject allegations that our countries are financing political or environmental protests in Serbia. These claims do not reflect our partnership with Serbia.

Since Serbia's transition to democracy, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany have been among its most generous and

reliable partners and friends, providing assistance funding totaling well over 3.0 billion euros.

We are clear and transparent about this assistance and our goals: to support reform, good governance, democratic development, green transition and prosperity. Significant amounts of this assistance is provided to the Serbian Government or delivered in cooperation with the Serbian Government and its agencies. These aims support Serbia's stated policy of progress towards EU Accession, as well as to support reconciliation and stability across the Western Balkan region.

Without reservation we reject any suggestion that our countries, or the organisations through which we provide technical assistance and support, are funding or directing actions specifically targeting the Serbian Government or any of its policies, this includes the financing of protests. This is a damaging accusation and particularly hard to understand for organisations that for many years have worked with and supported the Serbian Government – and the Serbian Parliament – in their reform programmes and development of democratic institutions.

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[Southwold bathing waters classified as excellent and good](#)

The results show that for the 2021 bathing season 94.7% of beaches and inland waters gained an excellent or good rating. While 4.3% achieved the minimum sufficient rating. This compares with 98.3% passing the required standards in 2019, and is the highest number since new standards were introduced in 2015.

Among the bathing waters achieving excellent and good are the 2 designated bathing sites at Southwold.

Southwold the Pier bathing water has been classified as excellent meaning the local authority can re-apply for a blue flag provided it meets other criteria. Southwold the Denes also went up in classification to good.

Southwold the Pier dropped from excellent to good in 2018 and has remained there until now. This was due to the occasional high result for E.Coli.

Investigations carried out by the [Environment Agency](#) were inconclusive but contamination by algae was a possible cause of the E. coli recorded. In 2021 no high levels of E. coli were present in any of the samples and therefore the bathing water quality was classified as excellent.

Beach sampling equipment at Southwold beach.

At Southwold the Denes, the Environment Agency and [Anglian Water](#) have worked together to improve the water quality. The bathing water has been classified as sufficient since 2017 but has now improved to good.

Investigations by the Environment Agency and Anglian Water in 2018 revealed that the Southwold Waste Water Treatment Works was causing bacterial contamination of the Denes bathing water. As a result, Anglian Water started chemical dosing in 2019 to disinfect the wastewater to reduce the bacteria levels in the bathing water during the bathing season. This technology has helped improve the water quality.

A permanent system to disinfect the sewage effluent will be completed by March 2025. An enlarged storm storage tank was installed at the Waste Water Treatment Works in 2021 to reduce the frequency and volumes of storm sewage discharges.

John Daniels, Senior Environment Officer, said:

We are thrilled that the bathing waters in Southwold are back to Excellent and Good. It is great to be able to work with Anglian Water and achieve these results.

Greg Hall, Coastal Catchment Manager for Anglian Water said:

In 2019 we invested in constructing temporary disinfection technology at Southwold Water Recycling Centre prior to any request from our regulators to help improve the bathing water quality.

Particularly on Southwold Denes Beach because we know how important it is to the local community.

We're the first water company in the UK to trial PFA chemical disinfection. This is a more cost and carbon efficient form of disinfection compared to the traditional method of UV disinfection and completely safe for the environment.

The trial has been completely successful. We've been delighted to see that virtually no bacteria was recorded at Southwold Denes beach during the 2021 bathing season in the Environment Agency bathing water samples.

The Environment Agency has been monitoring bathing water sites since the 1990s, and in this time there have been significant improvements. In the early 1990s, for example, just 28% of bathing waters met the highest standards in force at that time. Based on today's data, 99% of bathing waters meet the minimum standard, with 70.7% reaching the highest standards.

While progress has been made, there is still much more to be done to ensure cleaner and healthier waters for people to enjoy. We are clear that more needs to be done on the part of water companies. We are taking robust action to support regulators, businesses, farmers and councils to help clean up our waters.

Since 2015 the Environment Agency has required water companies to install Event Duration Monitors at bathing water sites. This captures data on the frequency and duration of storm overflow discharges. All the data is published online so the public can see what is happening in their local area. More than 12,000 of England's 15,000 storm overflows now have these monitors, and the remaining 3,000 will have them by end of next year.

Knowing more about water quality helps people make informed decisions on when and where to swim. The [Environment Agency's Swimfo](#) website provides detailed information on each of the 400+ bathing waters in England. It also notifies bathers when Pollution Risk Warnings have been issued.

Environment Agency chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

With billions spent on seaside visits every year, we know good water quality helps coastal towns prosper. Twenty years of improvements in bathing water took targeted regulation and significant investment. While this is reflected in today's results we must continue to work together to maintain this trend.

We cannot afford to be complacent. Public confidence in water quality has faltered in recent years with new evidence of pollution incidents getting much needed attention as a result of some excellent campaigning. The polluter must pay. To restore trust, water companies, industry and farmers need to get the basics right or face legal action.

The prize is multiple benefits to people and nature. The Environment Agency is working to ensure £120 million is invested in coastal habitats like England's saltmarshes. Which will protect against coastal erosion and also store carbon equivalent to nearly 40 million people's annual domestic emissions.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Water quality is an absolute priority. We are the first Government to direct Ofwat to prioritise action by water companies to protect the environment and deliver the improvements that we all want to see.

But we must go further to protect and enhance water quality. Our Environment Act puts in place more protections against water pollution than ever before. We are investing in programmes to support farmers to tackle water quality issues and we are clear

that where water companies do not step up we will take robust action.

[North East business partners sentenced for waste offences](#)

The court result follows a joint investigation between the Environment Agency and Newcastle City Council into multiple waste offences.

Louise Margaret Bland, 51, of King Street, Gateshead, appeared at Newcastle Crown Court on Thursday 20 January for sentence after previously pleading guilty to operating an illegal waste site and failing to produce waste transfer notes.

David Ashley McNeill, 34, of Morris Street, Gateshead, was sentenced at Newcastle Magistrates' Court on 13 January after previously pleading guilty to four fly-tipping offences, operating an illegal waste site, failing to comply with a notice to clear the site and failing to produce waste transfer notes.

Fly-tipped waste at Beaumont Street

Fly-tipping across Newcastle

The court heard that the pair were partners in a business known as both NE1 Waste Management and NE1 Garden and Waste Services. They were issued a waste carrier's licence on 23 July 2020, which is a legal requirement for anyone transporting waste. Carriers must also keep records of waste types and quantities, and the place the waste is taken must be legally authorised to accept it.

On four occasions over the next four months, Newcastle City Council Enforcement Officers traced fly-tipped waste across the city at Woodstock Road, Westfield Road and Beaumont Street back to people who had paid for waste removal services from the pair via their Facebook page.

During August 2020, the Environment Agency were alerted by the council that NE1 Garden and Waste Services had leased a derelict former scrapyards at Walker Road and were also depositing waste there.

They registered a 'waste exemption' for the site, which means limited activity can take place without the need for an Environmental Permit, but an Environment Agency visit revealed the activities were outside of the exemption. The pair were told to stop all activity at the site immediately.

They were given until 21 September 2020 to clear the site of waste, which included mattresses, freezers, sofas, timber, plastic and black bags. During two occasions in September, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service attended fires at the site.

Fly-tipped waste at Woodstock Road

Ordered to clear the site

Further checks by the Environment Agency revealed new deposits of waste. McNeill blamed fly-tippers for breaking in and dumping some of the waste in the yard.

In October 2020, the Environment Agency issued a notice to McNeill to again clear the site of the waste he'd deposited. The following month both McNeill and Bland were given notice to produce the legally required waste transfer notes for waste taken by them to the site at Byker. No notes were produced.

During interview in December 2020, Bland said she did not have any knowledge of the fly-tipping incidents across the city, and that the waste she collected had been disposed of correctly either at the Walker Road site or by taking to a permitted site. She said that repeated fly-tipping at the Walker Road site had caused McNeill to end the lease there.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

The waste industry is strictly regulated and operators have a legal duty to ensure their business doesn't impact on the community or environment.

In this case both Bland and McNeill had a blatant disregard for the law, dumping waste at the Walker Road site and not keeping any records of their activities.

We'll continue to work closely with our partners to identify criminal activity and ensure action is taken against those who break the law.

Waste dumped at the Walker Road site

Zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping

A Newcastle City Council spokesperson added:

Fly-tipping is not only illegal, it looks unsightly, damages land, and can lead to pollution of the environment. Illegal operators undercut legitimate businesses, and undermine efforts to dispose of

and recover waste safely.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping and as a council we are doing all we can to catch and prosecute those who spoil our communities by dumping rubbish.

Local people should be wary of any businesses that only operates through social media and do not have a landline phone number or business address.

They should also check that anyone who says they can take away their rubbish is registered to do so. As always we would encourage people to help, and when safe to do so, provide us with information so we have the greatest chance to catch these criminals.

You can make a report anonymously by visiting Newcastle City Council's website.

McNeill was sentenced to a 12-month community order to include 25 days rehabilitation, fined £100 and ordered to pay a £95 victim surcharge.

Bland was sentenced to a 12-month community order to include 20 days rehabilitation activity. She was fined £100 for breaching an unrelated suspended sentence and also ordered to pay a £95 victim surcharge.

[Home Secretary seeks advice on controlling dangerous opioid](#)

Home Secretary Priti Patel will seek expert advice on tightening controls on a substance linked to multiple fatalities resulting from heroin overdoses under the Misuse of Drugs Act, the Home Office announced today (Friday 21st January).

The Home Secretary has written to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) to commission advice on three substances, including Isotonitazene, an opioid that has been used instead of or in addition to heroin.

In early 2021, the National Crime Agency said that more than 46 overdoses and 16 deaths linked to Isotonitazene had been reported in a 10-day period. Public Health England issued a warning in August 2021 that the overdoses may have been caused by heroin mixed with Isotonitazene. Current data indicates there have been 25 deaths and seven overdoses linked to Isotonitazene up to September 2021.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Reports of fatal overdoses linked to this dangerous substance have been deeply disturbing, and I want to act now to ensure no further lives are lost or families torn apart.

I'm determined to end the misery and destruction caused by the misuse of drugs and will consider the ACMD's expert advice on tightening restrictions on this dangerous substance.

The Home Secretary will request advice on the appropriate classification and scheduling of Isotonitazene and related compounds under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and associated Regulations. She is also commissioning the ACMD for advice on two other substances:

- CUMYL-PeGACLONE – a synthetic cannabinoid
- Diphenidine, a substance which can have ketamine-like effects

The Home Secretary is determined to act swiftly to crack down on the harms caused by the misuse of such dangerous substances.

Currently the three substances are covered by the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, meaning that while supply of the substances is unlawful, possession is not.

Due to the concerning reports around the effects of these three substances, the UK voted in favour of international control along with other countries at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs meeting which took place between 12-16 April 2021.

The Home Office has a statutory duty to consult the ACMD under the Misuse of Drugs Act before amending the legislation.

The move comes after the government recently published its 10-year Drug Strategy to tackle the harms caused by drug misuse. Illegal drugs are a major driver of homicide – 48% of all homicides in the year to March 2020 were drug-related.

The Strategy involves measures to reduce both demand and supply of illegal drugs including:

- dismantling over 2,000 county lines, which are used to supply drugs and often involve recruiting children
- investing a record £780m in the drug treatment system to get people off the drugs that fuel crime in the first place
- delivering a generational shift in demand for illegal drugs, including by ensuring people face tougher consequences for so-called recreational misuse