

Water pollution probes net £2.1m to improve River Trent catchment

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Investigations by the Environment Agency into water pollution has brought a contribution of £2.1 million from Severn Trent Water Limited to a river charity.

- Severn Trent Water to fund environmental projects
- Water quality impacted by sewage spills
- Enforcement Undertakings accepted for 3 pollution incidents

Trent Rivers Trust will be using the money to improve several environmental projects in the region.

The details of the incidents are included in the latest list of Enforcement Undertakings (EU) published on gov.uk

An Enforcement Undertaking is available to the Environment Agency as a sanction for dealing with some environmental offences.

They can be offered for offences including polluting rivers, breaching permit conditions designed to protect communities, or failing to register and comply with recycling/recovery obligations.

The Environment Agency has agreed Enforcement Undertakings for the following incidents.

- One million pounds for the discharge of poor-quality final effluent from Sutton-in-Ashfield sewage treatment works into the River Maun, Nottinghamshire, on 13 December 2020.

The company reported the spill one day after it occurred and worked to repair damage by importing healthy sludge to restore treatment processes.

- £600,000 for an unauthorised discharge of sewage from Alfreton Highfields Sewage Pumping Station, Derbyshire into Oakerthorpe Brook on 28 July 2021.

The spill caused considerable ecological damage to the brook for a distance of at least 2.5 kilometers.

- £500,000 for 3 exceedances of bio-oxygen demand at Marehay Wastewater Treatment Works in Denby, Ripley, Derbyshire between 9 October 2021 and 3 May 2022.

Stretch of River Amber where Trent Rivers Trust will restore.

Geoff Craig, Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Protecting the environment in the East Midlands and taking action against those that damage or threaten this is our utmost priority.

While we will always take forward prosecutions in the most serious cases, Enforcement Undertakings are an effective enforcement tool to allow companies to put things right.

They allow polluters to correct and restore the harm caused to the environment and

prevent repeat incidents by improving their procedures.

This helps ensure future compliance with environmental requirements.

If people suspect water pollution incidents they should call our 24/7 hotline on 0800 807060.

Matt Easter, chief executive officer of Trent Rivers Trust, said:

Whilst we would rather these incidents did not occur in the first place, our focus lies on ensuring that any Enforcement Undertaking funds are well spent in the impacted catchments.

A key issue across all affected watercourses is that these rivers are unnatural, significantly affected by barriers and prone to pollution.

We are, therefore, going to restore habitat, improve water quality and remove barriers. This is so our rivers become more resilient and wildlife can come back stronger.

Encouragingly, initial surveys on one of the affected watercourses have already shown that salmon are present in the lower catchment, so ensuring they can move further up the catchment to spawning grounds. This will be an integral part of the project.

With all these enforcement undertakings, we have a chance to leave the catchments in a much better position than before any incident, and not only restore our rivers, but enhance them.

Stretch of River Amber where Trent Rivers Trust is looking to restore. Photos courtesy of the Trent Rivers Trust.

Background

Trent Rivers Trust

The Maun, Trent Rivers Trust are planning on restoring a more natural flow to the lower reaches that are severely impacted by barriers, historic straightening and water quality.

The Amber offers an excellent opportunity to address barriers in the lower reaches and open up more river for spawning fish that are currently restricted to the lower catchment.

Initial surveys of Bottle Brook have shown that salmon are present in the lower catchment, so the work will ensure fish can move further up the catchment to spawning grounds.

With all 3 projects, Trent Rivers Trust aim to ensure that once the catchments are better connected, the habitat and water quality are also good enough to support species that require clean and cool water.

The Enforcement Undertakings

Severn Trent Water Limited (reference EU915)

The offence was failure to comply with a permit condition (water discharge activity) – Regulation 38(2).

It relates to the discharge of poor-quality final effluent from Sutton in Ashfield sewage treatment works into the River Maun, Nottinghamshire and fish kill on 13 December 2020.

This was a Reactive offer.

They will contribute: £1,000,000 to Trent Rivers Trust.

They will also cover the Environment Agency's costs and carry out actions to stop offending, prevent a recurrence and/or restore any harm.

The EU was accepted on 24 December 2024.

Severn Trent Water Limited (reference EU1064)

The offences were:

- operating without or other than in accordance with an environmental permit (water discharge activity) – Regulation 38(1)
- failure to comply with a permit condition (water discharge activity) – Regulation 38(2)

They relate to the unauthorised discharge of sewage from Alfreton Highfields Sewage Pumping Station, Derbyshire into Oakerthorpe Brook on 28 July 2021.

This was a reactive offer. They will contribute £600,000 to Trent Rivers Trust.

They will also cover the Environment Agency's costs and carry out actions to stop offending, prevent a recurrence and/or restore any harm.

The EU was accepted on 30 December 2024.

Severn Trent Water Limited (reference EU1167)

The offence was failure to comply with a permit condition (water discharge activity) – Regulation 38(2).

It relates to 3 exceedances of bio-oxygen demand at Marehay Wastewater Treatment Works in Denby, Ripley, Derbyshire between 9 October 2021 and 3 May 2022.

This was a reactive offer. They will contribute £500,000 to Trent Rivers Trust.

They will also cover the Environment Agency's costs and carry out actions to stop offending, prevent a recurrence and/or restore any harm.

The EU was accepted on 29 September 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-pollution-probes-net-21m-to-improve-river-trent-catchment>