

FOCUS

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN WOLVERHAMPTON, DUDLEY, KIDDERMINSTER, WOMBOURNE, KINVER, STOURBRIDGE, HALESOWEN AND WEST HAGLEY

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Flood scheme for Kidderminster

Work on Kidderminster's flood storage scheme by the developers of Crossley Park, is underway. The Environment Agency has worked closely with the developer's consultants on its design. This scheme will greatly reduce flood risk to Kidderminster's urban centre. The developer will undertake construction of the scheme with supervision from the Agency, and the Agency will be responsible for its ongoing maintenance.

Flooding is a significant problem in Kidderminster and studies carried out by the Agency showed that flooding could be reduced by the construction of a flood storage scheme upstream of the town. This development has allowed this approach to be adopted. The storage area north of the town includes Stourvale and Puxton Marshes, both SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest). The scheme will allow a rise in ground water levels to re-wet both marshes.

Tackling the flooding problem in Kidderminster is an excellent example of how working in partnership can bring huge rewards. The flood storage scheme, when coupled with the Kidderminster Town Centre scheme being undertaken by another developer, will help the regeneration of neglected areas and the local environment, as well as reducing flood risk in the town.



Kidderminster Town Centre flood alleviation scheme under construction

continued on page 2

Foreword

Welcome to the new look Annual Review of the LEAP for the West Midlands Stour catchment. This newsletter style will, we hope, introduce the Local Environment Agency Plan to more people and allow a greater sense of partnership in local environmental issues.

Partnerships will play an ever more important role in the years to come if we are to achieve sustained environmental improvement locally. I hope that you will find this newsletter of interest. If you have any comments or views, or you wish to become involved in addressing local environmental issues, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Steve Morley
Upper Severn Area Manager
Environment Agency

EA-Midlands LEAPs



Flood scheme for Kidderminster cont...

The regeneration of local environments is an important factor for economic growth and local people. The creation of a country park in the scheme's flood storage area, to be managed by the District Council, will provide green space for local people and tourists, in addition to providing storage for floodwater. Indeed, when full, it will hold over 684,000m³ of water. That is the equivalent to approximately 100 football pitches, 1m deep in water. The whole scheme has been designed with consideration for the creation and enrichment of habitats and will help wildlife flourish (See article on the regeneration of the town centre).

For further information on this item please contact: Jonathan Morgans, in Development Control, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Puxton Marsh

About the West Midlands Stour area

The West Midlands Stour area covers much of the land historically known as the Black Country – parts of the counties of Staffordshire, Herefordshire and Worcester. It has had a wealthy economic past due to plentiful supplies of minerals, particularly coal, but has suffered environmentally due to the pressures of the Industrial Revolution and intensive urbanisation.

Recent years have seen many improvements due to increased awareness of environmental issues. Water quality in the River Stour and many of its tributaries is much better than it was 10 years ago. This is highlighted in Kidderminster by a large increase in the numbers and diversity of fish species, including trout which need clean, well-oxygenated water. Various species identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), such as otters, have been moving back into the Stour area or, like great crested newts, are being protected.

Environmental stresses still exist however, and more work needs to be done to improve the environment to protect vulnerable species and improve conditions for local people. Flytipping, litter and dumping of shopping trolleys in watercourses are a concern due to their threat to the environment and human health. Culverted (buried) watercourses and over-abstraction have a very negative impact on the environment, whilst flooding and lack of recreation facilities can affect quality of life.



Red House Cone glassworks – Stourbridge



Wombourne



Blackheath



Wolverhampton



Kinver Edge



Bromsgrove



Halesowen

River Stour water quality success

The Agency's River Quality Survey, which was released in November 2001, highlights the River Stour as a success story with improved water quality. For more than a century the Stour has been affected by waste from the carpet manufacturing trade, including dye, organic matter, solids and grease, but these have been successfully resolved. Further work between the Agency, Severn Trent Water and the carpet industry has seen a dramatic drop in perethrin, the main mothproofing chemical used in the carpet industry.

A review of invertebrate and fisheries data, collected in 2000, shows that there has been a significant

improvement in water quality throughout the River Stour. An increase in Agency Environmental Protection work has helped improve Illey Brook and the top of the Stour from 'very poor' quality to 'good' since the 1970's.

The Agency's work with various sewage treatment plants has also helped improve water conditions, both by increasing flow levels and through operators reducing pollution. Blakedown Brook, which suffered particularly poor quality levels and species diversity in 1999 due to low flows (only 1.5ml/day), has been enhanced by a diversion of treated water, following Agency advice.

For further information on water quality please contact: Debbie Wargate from the Customer Contact Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



River Stour in Kidderminster

Banking to reduce oil pollution

Bromsgrove has one of the newest oil recycling banks in the country, opened in February 2001, at Safeway's in Buntsford Park Road.

The highly visible bank, shaped like a giant oil can, collects the waste engine oil of Bromsgrove's DIY mechanics. This new bank was made possible by partnership funding co-ordinated by the Oil Care Campaign, between Halfords, Bromsgrove Borough Council and the Environment Agency. The oil bank is one in the nation-wide network of over 1500 oil recycling banks.

Oil pollution is a serious problem in the UK. Every year careless disposal of oil damages the environment. In the past, some DIY motorists have put their waste oil down street drains. Street drains generally run directly into local watercourses. This pollution causes devastation to wildlife, habitats and contaminates our drinking water. The oil from just one oil-change is enough to smother a four-acre lake. The oil bank provides local DIY mechanics with a safe place to dispose of their oil, thus reducing the number of oil pollution incidents and protecting the local environment.

The waste engine oil that is collected in oil recycling banks is reprocessed for use as fuel for industrial applications or regenerated back into a lubricating product, so conserving the global oil supply.

The success of the oil bank will be monitored by keeping a record of the amount of oil emptied from it. Indeed, by July 2001 the bank already contained 600 gallons of waste oil.

The Oil Care Campaign provides a number of resources to help people pinpoint their nearest oil recycling facility. The Oil Bank Line (0800 66 33 66) provides a freephone service that uses postcode information to search and locate your nearest bank. In addition the Oil Care Campaign has recently launched a fully searchable web site at www.oilbankline.org.uk. To find out more about the Oil Care Campaign visit our web site at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/oilcare.

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For more information on the Oil Care Campaign locally, please contact Sarah Harcombe at the Environment Agency Kidderminster office.



A greener future

*The redevelopment of Kidderminster town centre has created an exciting
Developers, Wyre Forest District Council and th*



The area of the former Brintons' carpet factory was identified in the Wyre Forest local plan as an ideal site to focus redevelopment for the centre of Kidderminster. The first phase of the redevelopment includes a new Tesco store, which requires a diversion of the River Stour, with subsequent phases to include further shopping, leisure and community facilities and a new bus station. This development aims to address several major environmental concerns and enhance local facilities for the community.

Kidderminster suffered substantial flooding from the River Stour in 1955, 1960 and 1998. Much of the river's length in the town flows in culverts under buildings, which increases the risk of flooding and decreases opportunities for wildlife. The development site includes former carpet factories, gas works and similar

industrial sites which are heavily contaminated in places, and it is crucial that this contamination does not reach either the river or groundwater. The presence of a public water supply borehole only metres away from the edge of the development increases the importance of this.

The first phase is now under construction with the river diversion needed for the development now completed and the river in this section has been opened up and is no longer culverted. The Stour, once notorious for its poor water quality, now supports many fish, including trout, and the otters that feed on them. The re-aligned river channel has landscaped banks and riffles (stony areas) which aerate the water and provide a better habitat for plants and animals. Otter holts and passes on the bridges have also been provided to allow the passage of the animals upstream. The riverbed has been lined with stones which have been reclaimed from a local sugar beet processing factory and are already naturally rounded.

Remediation work on the contaminated land on the first phase of the site has now been undertaken and a lined Sustainable urban Drainage System (SuDS), which limits surface water run-off, has been installed. The lined system ensures that contamination in the underlying soils cannot get through, and that water is retained at source before being later released to the river, after storm water has passed downstream.

or Kidderminster

opportunity to upgrade and regenerate this environmentally sensitive area.
 Agency, are working together in partnership.

Construction of the foundations of the first buildings using rubble from the former factories will start shortly.

The area has been transformed from one where the River Stour was hidden from the community in culverts under the old factories, to one where the new development faces the river and it forms a new 'green heart' for Kidderminster town centre (see also the Kidderminster flood alleviation article).



For further information,
 please contact:
 Jennie Comerford,
 Partnerships, Environment
 Agency Shrewsbury office.

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Help on its way for Blakedown Brook

The Blakedown Brook rises to the west of the Clent Hills and flows west into the River Stour at Kidderminster. A feature of the valley is the large number of pools, enhanced by dams, many of which go back to the 17th Century. Over abstraction of groundwater supplies has led to an artificial fall in the water table with consequent reduction in the water flow to both rivers and dependent pools. As a result, a number of these pools are permanently dry.



Borehole

In October 2001 work began to drill a borehole near Blakedown. Abstraction of water from the borehole will help to top-up flows to the Blakedown Brook and Hurcott and Podmore, both Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). It will also help to maintain water levels in Windmill, Cottage and Broome Mill Pools, which have been dry for many years.

The Borehole will be 100 metres deep. It is the first stage in the work to provide water for the pools which, in turn, will help to re-create a habitat which can be re-colonised by wildlife.

The work, which is a short-term solution to the problem, is being carried out as part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Environment Agency and South Staffordshire Water. Under this MoU, South Staffordshire Water has agreed to tackle the problem of low-flows in the Blakedown Brook area in the long-term by reducing water abstraction from local boreholes by up to 6.2 million litres per day. Formal revisions to the abstraction licence reflecting this are currently being prepared by the Agency.

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The Agency is actively encouraging abstractors to reduce their abstraction..

The Agency is actively encouraging other abstractors in the area to reduce their abstraction, in order that flows in the Blakedown Brook can return to their natural state, rather than be supported by further groundwater abstraction.

For further information please contact: Alastair Hoare, Hydrogeologist, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Blakedown Brook

Black Country waste minimisation group

The Environment Agency is helping Groundwork Black Country and the Black Country Business Environmental Association deliver waste minimisation training courses to local businesses and give on-site advice and assistance.

The training helps to raise awareness of environmental legislation, waste minimisation techniques and pollution prevention methods. It is proving popular, with over 70 companies from Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall already attending, and it has led to reforms in companies' policies on the environment. It can also lead to participation in waste minimisation clubs and the introduction of a Practical

Environmental Management Programme.

Waste minimisation clubs aim to achieve reductions in waste and emissions by highlighting the economic, social and environmental gains. Companies that enrolled in the 1999/2000 waste minimisation clubs have identified approximately £240,000 worth of savings.

The Practical Environmental Management Programme covers environmental policies, legislation, identifying environmental impacts and addressing them, auditing and environmental management systems. The course is accredited by the

Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management.

Anyone interested in courses should contact: Groundwork Environmental Centre on 0121 530 5510 or email bc@groundwork.org.uk

Training underway



Green oases

The Agency is seeking funding to start a community-based, nature and access project in the Sandwell and Dudley area. This project will help protect wetland wildlife, such as water voles, and conserve vital habitats, like wet woodlands.

The main thrust of the project is to help local communities to conserve and protect the wildlife and green spaces of the Mousesweet, Black and Smestow Brooks. Emphasis will be placed on improving the access to the neighbouring green spaces for local residents.

The Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP) for the River Stour identified many of these urban areas as 'green deserts'. The project aims to create and improve 'oases' of open space in the vicinity of these brooks.

Jo Langfield, Partnerships Officer for the Environment Agency said, 'We have carried out extensive consultation with local people, community groups and local authorities. This has confirmed

that the open spaces connected with the brooks are valued and well used. There is a clear need and desire to undertake environmental improvements along the watercourses. It is hoped that these improvements will bring about social and environmental benefits. In both the Mousesweet and Black Brook areas there is much enthusiasm to realise the potential of the watercourses for biodiversity, recreation, education, as well as general health and well-being.'

For more information on the project please contact: Jo Langfield, Partnerships Team, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.



Wet woodlands



Mousesweet Brook

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Restocking Himley Pool

Fishing is an important recreational pursuit. It provides adults and youngsters with a chance to enjoy the countryside and fresh air for a low price. Fishing can also develop an important appreciation for nature and wildlife. Still waters are particularly important, providing a good introduction to the sport, with novices having a higher chance of a catch than in flowing waters.

Water pollution can take its toll on fish stocks. Sensitive species such as the trout can be lost if monitoring and regulation does not take place. The Environment Agency has a positive role to play in this through regulation of discharges and monitoring of water quality. The Agency also monitors fish stocks, provides advice on fishery management and becomes involved in partnership projects with owners and angling clubs to improve fisheries.

One pool the Agency has regular contact with is Himley Pool, on the outskirts of Dudley. This year the fisheries department was asked for advice when fishermen began experiencing difficulties catching fish. This prompted a survey that showed that the dominant population of Crucian Carp were all close to the end of their life cycle. Successful breeding is always difficult for this species, but in Himley Pool this was further hampered by the presence of active Grass Carp that were reducing the natural regeneration of plant life and therefore destroying the Crucian Carps' spawning conditions.

To help the fishermen and to encourage youngsters, the Agency not only advised Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to remove some of the Grass Carp and



Netting

restock, but also provided 500 Roach from its fish farm at Calverton to start the process. Following netting at Mary Stevens Pool in Stourbridge to remove excess stocks where no fishing is allowed, 311Kg of Roach and Rudd were transferred to Himley Pool.

For further information on this story please contact: Ros Challis, Fisheries, Environment Agency Shrewsbury office.

Waste minimisation - get staff involved!

Reducing waste makes sound business sense. Working with businesses over the past few years, the Agency has learnt how important staff commitment is to the success of any waste minimisation project. The foundation for environmental improvement is the involvement of staff - they know the business processes inside out and will ultimately be instigating the improvements.

The Agency has written a booklet to help companies involve their staff in reducing waste, setting out how to undertake a waste minimisation campaign within their company. The Agency launched its waste minimisation, 'Getting staff involved' publication in the West Midlands in March 2001. The booklet helps companies plan a complete awareness raising campaign, with template posters and other useful tools.

Agency Tactical Planning Officer, Beth Gronow, says: 'Implementing a successful waste minimisation programme, energy efficiency

programme or environmental management system helps both the environment and the company's performance, as well as bringing financial savings. Staff involvement at all levels is required to do this.

'Working with businesses and organisations, the Agency appreciates that obtaining staff commitment is not always easy for a number of reasons, and that once a company has gained enthusiasm, it needs to be maintained. In response to this, the Agency has produced this guide and we hope that it will become an invaluable tool for companies and organisations determined to minimise their waste and achieve economic and business gains.'

For further information on this story please contact: Sarah Harcombe, Tactical Planning, Environment Agency Kidderminster office.



Recycling



We would be delighted to receive your feedback on this new newsletter style LEAP. Please contact us-

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