

EA-NORTH-EAST ^{Box} 4



EA-North East

What's happening in the North East



**ENVIRONMENT
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The North East

Snapshot of the environment

The North East has some of the most spectacular countryside in the UK. There are four national parks – the Northumberland National Park, North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales and part of the Peak District National Park – as well as several stretches of heritage coast. The region is also heavily industrialised, particularly in Tyneside, Teesside, West and South Yorkshire and along the Humber Estuary. Textile, chemical, refining and steel production industries play an important role in the local economy but put a major strain on the environment, particularly the region's rivers.

Main issues

Flooding

There are 257,000 properties at risk from flooding in the North East. Some communities experienced their worst flooding for 400 years in Autumn 2000. The Environment Agency has pressed for extra funds to tackle the problem and is building many new flood defences, including those at Selby, Barlby, Malton, Norton, Pickering, Gowdall and Stamford Bridge. The region has also seen an increase in the number of properties built in areas at risk from flooding in the last five years. The Agency is working with local authorities to minimise the impact of further developments in the flood plain, and we often object to planning applications.

The good news is:

- The quality of rivers and bathing waters has improved significantly in recent years
- The Environment Agency is working closely with local organisations to help clean up the North East's contaminated former industrial sites
- Air quality is generally good in most areas and improving
- The Agency is building, improving and maintaining flood defences, and developing increasingly effective flood warning systems

Waste

According to the most recent figures, 86 percent of the North East Region's household waste is disposed of in landfill sites and only six percent recycled or composted. In contrast, 41 percent of industrial and commercial waste is landfilled, with 44 percent recycled or re-used. Over the next two decades EU legislation will drastically reduce the amount of household waste that can be landfilled. This is why some local authorities are considering building new municipal waste incinerators. The Environment Agency is urging that less waste is produced and much more is recycled.

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Air quality

Although much of the region enjoys good air quality, some industrial areas and heavy traffic routes are still a concern. Nitrous oxide releases are a particular problem – of all the releases from industry regulated by the Agency in England and Wales, over three quarters come from this region, despite an 80 percent reduction between 1998 and 2000. Ozone levels also remain a problem as a result of increasing traffic and the Agency is continuing its work with local authorities to regulate industrial emissions.

Although sulphur dioxide emissions have dropped by a third in the last three years, the region's emissions still account for 20 percent of the national total. The Agency is continuing to work with the energy industry to reduce these emissions. In 2000, for example, we helped cut sulphur dioxide emissions at Drax Power Station by 88,000 tonnes a year.

Land quality

Compared to other parts of England, the region has a relatively high proportion of contaminated or derelict land. The Agency encourages the clean up and re-use of this land to help reduce the pressure on undeveloped areas, which often provide valuable wildlife habitats. For example, we're currently helping Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council and a local company clean up creosote leaching from an old tarworks into the River Calder at Mirfield.

See the North East Region's web pages at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/regions/northeast or call 0845 9 333 111 for more information

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