

# FOCUS

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN AND AROUND LEICESTER, LOUGHBOROUGH,  
MELTON MOWBRAY, SHEPSHED, NARBOROUGH, SYSTON AND KEGWORTH.

ISSUE 1

Page 4

Flooding -  
improved flood  
maps



Page 5

Litter -  
an eye-sore on  
the Soar



Page 6

Crayfish - the  
good and the  
bad



## Green engineering helps Melton Mowbray flood alleviation scheme

Actions 13.2 & 2.1

*Green engineering techniques are being used as part of a flood alleviation scheme for Melton Mowbray. Work is currently underway developing an upstream green 'sediment filter' of densely planted willow coppice to encourage sediment to be deposited from flood flows. This work is one element of a larger scheme that will, in conjunction with an improved flood warning system, protect Melton Mowbray from 1 in 100 year floods\*.*

The town of Melton Mowbray has a long history of flooding. The last major flood occurred in Easter 1998. This 1 in 50 year flood affected 164 properties and a significant area of agricultural land. As well as causing damage to property and possessions floods are recognised as having health implications with long term effects such as chronic anxiety and stress.



*New sediment filter slows down the flow of the River Eye to allow deposition of silt before the river enters the SSSI near Ham Bridge*

The Agency has worked closely with partners Melton Borough Council and English Nature to devise the best possible scheme for Melton Mowbray. A key element of the scheme is a flood storage area just upstream from the railway bridge at Brentingby. This location is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Penny Thorpe, Environmental Assessment Officer, Lower Trent, explains, 'The area has been designated an SSSI because of the way the River Eye meanders through it, the quality of its water and the wide variety of plant and invertebrate life it supports. Therefore a vital part of our work with English Nature has been to ensure that the

continued on page 2

## Foreword

*Welcome to the third LEAP Annual Review for the Soar catchment. This newsletter style will, we hope, introduce LEAPs 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 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.*



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SSSI is not damaged during the construction of the scheme and to ensure the long term protection of the SSSI'. To this end, several 'green engineering' features have been built into the scheme including upstream sediment traps, an upstream green 'sediment filter' of densely planted willow coppice and barriers to control sediment wash-off from adjacent arable fields also made from willow coppice.

The first stage of the Melton Mowbray Flood Alleviation Scheme was the excavation of approximately 13,000m<sup>3</sup> of material to form two silt traps which allow sediment to settle out in a controlled area. Despite delays caused by unforeseen events such as the Foot and Mouth outbreak and allowing for an archaeological investigation to be

undertaken at Burton Brook, the Agency completed Stage 1 on time in July. The excavated material from Stage 1 has been stockpiled and will be recycled within the main scheme works which are currently underway. It is expected that the scheme will be completed in Autumn 2002.



*Bio-engineering mats stabilise the top soil on the banks whilst bankside vegetation and reeds become established*

For more information, please contact: Penny Thorpe, Environmental Assessment Officer, Environment Agency Nottingham office.

*\*Floods are categorised by their size and the frequency with which they can be expected to occur. A 1 in 5 year flood is one that has a 20% chance of happening in any year, this is a relatively minor flood. A 1 in 100 year flood has only a 1% chance of happening in any year, but its effects can be enormous.*



*A rock sill has been installed to maintain shallow water levels in the sediment filter to prevent the reedbeds from drying out*

## Action against eutrophication

The Agency has monitored the Rivers Soar, Wreake and Sence to determine their eutrophic status. Under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, eutrophic rivers can be designated Sensitive Areas (Eutrophic) (SA (E)). Designation can require a water company to install phosphorous stripping equipment on their sewage treatment works that serve populations greater than 10,000.

Phosphorous is an important plant nutrient, but high levels can cause excess growth of aquatic vegetation, known as eutrophication. This can have a negative impact on the dissolved oxygen content of the water that in turn can affect fisheries in the area. The Agency hopes to have a decision on the designation of these rivers in the near future.



*Eutrophic vegetation near Melton*

# The Environment Agency, who are we?

We are a dynamic force focusing on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. Formed in 1996, we inherited the good work of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution and the Waste Regulation Authorities. The Agency is required and guided by Government to help achieve the objective of sustainable development – '...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The Environment Agency publication, 'An Environmental Vision, The Environment Agency's contribution to Sustainable Development' sets out how we aim to meet this challenge.

Our remit is very broad and encompasses pollution prevention and control, flood defence, waste management, fisheries, navigation, water quality, water resources and conservation. By adopting an integrated approach, we have the resources to deliver significant, long-term advances in every environmental arena. We are developing our role to educate, inform and influence society as a whole to adopt good environmental practice as well as fulfilling our obligation to enforce regulation when required.

We have our Head Office in Bristol and eight regional operations across England and Wales. Each region is then divided into Areas, headed by an Area Manager. In the Midlands Region, there are four Areas:- Lower Trent, Upper Trent, Lower Severn and Upper Severn. The main Office for Lower Trent is at Trentside in Nottingham.

For more information on the work and remit of the Environment Agency both nationally and in the Lower Trent area, please contact: the Customer Contact Team at the Nottingham Office.

# memo



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To Vaughan Birbeck

Our ref jrf/leap/s/ar3

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From James Freeborough

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Your ref

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Ext. Number 3620

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Date 19 November 2001

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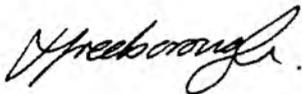
## SOAR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AGENCY PLAN – 3rd ANNUAL REVIEW

Please find enclosed a copy of the Soar Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP) Third Annual Review. We hope you will find the Newsletter style readable and accessible. A database containing information on each individual action has been retained internally for information requests made on a particular project.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the progress that has been made by the Agency and its partners in tackling the issues outlined in the LEAP.

We would be interested to hear your views on the newsletter style annual review, further copies of which are available on request.

Many thanks,



**JAMES FREEBOROUGH**  
Partnerships Team Leader  
Lower Trent Area  
Midlands Region

Enc.

*Please note error on pg. 6. SSSI is the acronym for Site of Special Scientific Interest, not Sight as printed.*

# A brief description of the Soar plan area

The Soar LEAP area lies mainly within the County of Leicestershire, with small parts of Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire, and includes the urban areas of Leicester, Loughborough, Wigston and Melton Mowbray. The total population is around 705,000 and the area covers 1,380 square kilometres. This includes the scenic upland Charnwood Forest area, as well as the fairly flat, open, rolling wolds of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. Largely rural, this agricultural area covers the catchment of the River Soar and its tributaries, the River Sence, the River Wreake and the Rothley Brook.

The upper reaches of the River Soar drain a mainly rural area and are of good to fair water quality. The Soar receives treated sewage effluent discharges from Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) along its length. As it passes thorough urban areas, there is the potential for oil related pollution problems from drainage received both directly and from a number of tributaries. Other than urban influence, the single most important contributing factor on the water quality of the River Soar is Wanlip STP, serving the city and surrounding areas. Water quality from the Soar's tributaries is generally good to fair. Groundwater quality is also generally good and the aquifers within the LEAP area are mostly of low vulnerability to pollution.

Most of the water used to supply the area's drinking water is imported from outside the LEAP area. This is due to the fact that although much of the area's geology is impermeable marls and clays, there have been few opportunities for reservoir sites due to the relatively flat terrain and low run-off. In addition, there are few aquifer areas which are capable of supporting large-scale abstractions.

The Soar Valley has suffered frequent and extensive flooding since the late 18th Century. The frequency of flooding and the poor drainage are due in part to the shallow gradient of the river and the general clay nature of the LEAP area but are mainly due to man-made structures built in the past to facilitate navigation.

Human impact has resulted in a significant loss of natural and semi-natural habitats and wildlife in the LEAP area. There are 49 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), including many wetland sites along the banks of the River Soar and 282 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) in the LEAP area. There are also three local nature reserves.

There are 100km of river designated as coarse fisheries by the EC Fisheries Directive in the plan area. The local fisheries are all rod and line and make up a valuable and much used resource

for angling. Major still waters such as Cropston and Thornton reservoirs are very successful trout fisheries. Match fishing is of great importance on the River Soar, the River Wreake and the Grand Union Canal as well as a number of small local fisheries. There are also a number of gravel pits, which are used extensively for pleasure and match angling.

“  
...most of the area's  
drinking water is imported’



A view of Loughborough from Beacon Hill



Kingston Hall, near Kingston on Soar



Ratcliffe on Soar power station



East Midlands Airport

## IPPC gives regulation new bite

IPPC - Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control is being phased in to supersede IPC. IPPC aims to achieve protection of the environment by issuing of permits which regulate the whole installation. In addition to regulating emissions to air, land and water, IPPC will also take into account raw material efficiency, energy efficiency, accidents and minimisation of noise and vibrations. This all adds up to greater protection of the natural environment. The current period for IPPC applications, which expires on 31 December 2001 covers the non-ferrous metals industry and certain tar and bitumen activities. The Agency looks forward to working with these industries to achieve better environmental protection through the use of best available techniques.

# What is a LEAP?

A LEAP is a Local Environment Agency Plan. It is the Agency's integrated local management plan process which is used to identify, assess, prioritise and hopefully solve local environmental issues or problems. These issues are related to the Agency's functions but aim to take account of our local customers and may be tackled in partnership with them. These actions will aim to bring about environmental improvements to optimise benefits for the local environment and deliver sustainable environmental improvement.

This newsletter reports on the LEAP Annual Review.



## Agency working to improve flood mapping in the Soar area

Actions 21.1 and 21.2

People living in Leicestershire can now find out whether their home is at risk from flooding by using improved maps produced by the Agency. The indicative floodplain maps show the areas of land which lie within the natural floodplain and are therefore at potential risk of flooding. The Agency seeks to make continuing improvements to indicative floodplain maps and amendments are expected early next year for the River Soar maps upstream of and including Leicester. Other flood mapping work being carried out this year includes work on the River Sence, Broughton Astley Brook which flows through Broughton Astley to the south of Leicester, Whetstone Brook and the Wood Brook which flows through Loughborough.

Nearly two million homes and businesses lie in river and coastal floodplains in England and Wales. A floodplain is the natural 'overspill' area when a river rises above its banks. Section 105 of the Water Resources Act 1995 requires the Agency to publish floodplain maps indicating the extent of flooding for a 1 in 100 year flood\* (Larger floods are possible, but would require much more extensive mapping). The maps are used by the Agency, local authority planners and others to assist decision making on control of development within the floodplain, improving the local flood warning service, maintenance and

improvements to flood defences and for emergency planning.

Indicative floodplain maps use the best information currently available, based on historical flood records and geographical mathematical models. The Agency is committed to improving and refining the maps as new information becomes available, for example following a severe flood event. However, these maps do not cover flooding from other sources such as burst water mains, or sewer and road drain overflow and they do not show flood defences as this would excessively complicate the maps.

Local maps are already available for public inspection at Agency and local authority offices, but now people can get information for the whole of England and Wales via the 'What's in your backyard?' section of the Environment Agency website which can be found at: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).

If your home or business is in the floodplain, you can obtain a free information pack on what to do before, during and after a flood and information about your local flood warning service, by calling the Agency's Floodline on: 0845 988 1188.

For more information on the local floodplain maps within the Leicestershire area, please contact: Roy Ladhams, Strategic Planning and Improvements, Environment Agency Nottingham office.

*\*Floods are categorised by their size and the frequency with which they can be expected to occur. A 1 in 5 year flood is one that has a 20% chance of happening in any year, this is a relatively minor flood. A 1 in 100 year flood has only a 1% chance of happening in any year, but its effects can be enormous.*



Flood maps are available via the Agency's website



Aylestone was one area flooded by the Soar in 1992

“*...indicative floodplain maps show the areas of land which lie within the natural floodplain and are therefore potentially at risk of flooding*”

# Pink rivers -now only a memory

Actions 2.1,  
2.2 and 2.3

In the past, effluents discharged from dyehouses to the sewerage system in parts of Leicestershire have discoloured large stretches of the River Soar, Sence and the Wood Brook turning their waters pink or purple. Now, after several years of negotiations with the dyehouses and Severn Trent Water, the Agency believes that the great reduction in the discolouration of these watercourses that has been achieved can be sustained.

The discolouration of the river system used to lead to many public complaints. Although the colour does not adversely affect the population and diversity of aquatic invertebrates, it is possible that the feeding habits and breeding success of fish may have been affected. There is also anecdotal evidence that reduced light penetration may have restricted plant growth.

To prevent discolouration, standards have been placed on the colour intensity that may be discharged from the Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) and Severn Trent Water has undertaken additional treatment at STPs to comply with these standards. The Agency is pleased to report that many of the larger dyehouses have now installed treatment plants to remove the colour at source and initial teething problems have been corrected. Several dyehouses discharging

to the STPs have closed, further reducing the colour load to be treated. Severn Trent Water will be gradually withdrawing additional colour removal treatment at the STPs as it becomes unnecessary to supplement the treatment systems at the dyehouses. To facilitate this, the Agency has introduced seasonal colour standards at Wanlip (Leicester) STP, taking account of available dilution in the river. This will help minimise chemical use by focussing the effort at the dyehouses themselves, rather than at the STPs.

The Agency will continue to monitor the discharges from the STPs to ensure they are complying with their consent levels and that protection of the watercourses is maintained.

For more information, please contact: Alan Roe, Water Quality Consents Team Leader, Environment Agency Nottingham office.

“  
...standards have been placed on the colour intensity that may be discharged from the sewage treatment plants...”



THEN - coloured discharges



NOW - clean waters

# Eye-sore on the Soar

Action 17.1

Most watercourses, especially where banks are open to public access, suffer from a loss of amenity due to litter and other debris from a number of sources. In the past, especially after flood events, this has caused a problem on the Soar. The Agency has powers to remove litter where it is causing a blockage to an operational structure in a main watercourse, but would like to see a co-ordination of efforts at tackling litter throughout the plan area. Several initiatives have been undertaken to tackle the issue of litter, such as Leicester City Council's Greenlife Boat programme. However, the question remains, 'Is litter still a problem on the Soar and how best could we tackle it?'



Example of the eye-sore created by litter on watercourses in the Soar LEAP area

# New group set to preserve archaeology in the midlands

A new group has been set up recently to assess the archaeological heritage of the Trent Valley, including its tributaries. The Trent Valley Geoarchaeology Group has representatives from many interested organisations, including the Agency and two meetings have been held so far. A key aim of the group is to digitise the SMR (Sites and Monuments Register), but the group is also interested in buried archaeology of all ages. Initially focus is on the River Trent and it is hoped that the methodologies developed will eventually be applied to the Soar.

Action 6.5

# Crayfish surveys uncover the good and the bad

Recent crayfish surveys in the River Wreake and the upper part of the River Soar have produced good data showing healthy populations of native white-clawed crayfish. This is good news as it shows that the crayfish have been able to survive several minor pollution incidents in this area. The native crayfish is a BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) species protected under British law. It is illegal, without a special licence, to take them from the wild or to sell them. It is also illegal to release any non-native crayfish into the wild.

The Agency, often in partnership with organisations such as English Nature, works to protect and enhance native crayfish populations through habitat enhancement, re-introduction programmes and non-native crayfish eradication.

However, the bad news is that these surveys have also shown populations of non-native crayfish to be widespread across the Soar LEAP area. Non-native signal crayfish are now present in the Wreake catchment upstream and downstream of the River Eye SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), in the Soar Brook at the top of the Upper Soar catchment and in a tributary of the River Sence. Native crayfish face an uncertain future in the UK, due to direct

competition from introduced species of crayfish. The Signal crayfish can carry a fungal disease, commonly known as crayfish plague, to which the native crayfish is highly susceptible. Outbreaks of this disease have wiped out entire populations of native crayfish, displacing them from many river catchments.

To tackle non-native crayfish spread, the 3rd phase of a control project has successfully been completed on a tributary of the Wreake. Volunteers from the Leicestershire Wildlife Trust, Agency staff and others removed more than 10,000 animals from the tributary to reduce the number of mature breeding adults at key locations. It is hoped that this work will help slow the rate of downstream colonisation.

The Agency is currently assessing options for further work to protect existing populations of native crayfish. This could involve prioritising actions on a site by site basis according to availability of resources. The Agency would like to hear from any parties interested in contributing to this work. To back up these initiatives, the Agency is maintaining a programme of research with partner organisations such as English Nature. Further information concerning crayfish can be found in the Agency publication, 'Freshwater Crayfish

in Britain & Ireland', available from the Customer Contact Team.

For more information on the Agency's work on crayfish, please contact: Peter Sibley, Biologist, Environment Agency Nottingham office.



White clawed native crayfish



Non-native signal crayfish

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...surveys have also shown populations of non-native crayfish to be widespread across the Soar LEAP area

# Searching for bat roosts

The Agency is hoping to work with partner organisations to identify bat roosts within the LEAP area. Once roosts have been located, then action can be taken to protect and enhance them where necessary. The Agency is particularly interested in Daubenton's and Pipistrelle bats, both of which feed over water. Daubenton's bat has a characteristic steady flight, often within a few centimetres of the surface, like a small hovercraft catching insects. Pipistrelle bats are the UK's smallest bat, weighing between 3 – 8 grams. They have a fast and jerky flight as they twist

about catching insects, up to 3,000 in a night. Despite being our most abundant bat, the Pipistrelle is thought to have suffered a significant decline in numbers this century. The main threats to the Pipistrelle and other bats, are loss of roosting sites and a reduction in insect prey due to farming practices and decline of wetlands, hedgerows and other suitable prey habitats. Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which makes it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to roosts and to kill, injure, catch or keep bats.



Pipistrelle bats - the UK's smallest bat

# Black Brook set for enhancement

The Agency is currently working with Charnwood Borough Council to look at ways of enhancing the Black Brook as it passes through Loughborough. A consultation exercise on this topic is expected to finish shortly. Unsympathetic flood defence work in the past has degraded the river habitat resulting in an impoverished biological system and reduced aesthetic appeal.

The Agency, in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council, hopes to restore the existing straight channel to a more meandering natural state with improved habitats for wildlife. Public access will be improved and the amenity value of the area also increased.



Black Brook, Loughborough

Action 7.2

# New water abstraction strategies

A new approach to water abstraction management is being launched by the Agency. These are Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) and they will be introduced over the next few years. CAMS aim to provide a 'shared strategy for the sustainable management of water resources within a catchment'. The Government recommended production of these strategies in their document 'Taking Water Responsibly', published in March 1999, to enable the Agency to manage water resources effectively, consistently and through consultation.

Each strategy will set out the availability of water for abstraction in a single catchment and the resulting abstraction licensing policy. Where there is a water deficit, CAMS will determine a procedure for reclaiming water to protect the water environment. CAMS is a national initiative and will cover every catchment area in England and Wales.

The Agency has determined the regional CAMS areas, most of which follow the existing LEAP boundaries and has prioritised the production, as shown below. Each CAMS will operate on a six year review cycle and will take about two years to produce. In Lower Trent the Local CAMS will be:

CAMS AREA	PROVISIONAL DATE OF PUBLICATION
Trent Corridor	Spring 2003
Derwent	Spring 2004
Soar	Spring 2005
Idle and Torne	Spring 2006
Trent & Erewash	Spring 2007

The Agency has started working on the Trent Corridor CAMS this year with consultation leaflets sent out to over 700 organisations and individuals. The leaflet outlines the issues that need to be considered in preparing a strategy for the future use of water and invites people to express their interest and submit comments and suggestions. At this time, we expect consultation on the Soar CAMS to take place during 2003. Craig Hatcher, CAMS Officer, Lower Trent Area, said, 'CAMS will help to improve our understanding of the availability of water in a catchment and plan for the future to ensure the water based environment is better protected'.

For more information or copies of the leaflet when published, please contact: Craig Hatcher, CAMS Officer, Environment Agency Nottingham office.

“  
...enable the Agency to manage water resources effectively...”



Cropston Reservoir near Leicester is used for public water supplies.

General Interest

# Promotion of buffer strips

Through contact with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and landowners, the Agency seeks to promote the use of buffer strips along watercourses. Buffer strips are a range of landscape features between 5 – 50 metres in width which provide a break between agricultural land and a watercourse. They potentially have a wide range of benefits including creating new wildlife habitats, stabilising banks and reducing diffuse pollution such as sediment, pesticides and

nutrients that may otherwise get washed off from agricultural land and into the watercourse causing detriment to water quality. For more information, the Agency publication 'Understanding Buffer Strips' is available from the Customer Contact Team, Lower Trent Area.

Grass strip and woodland forming buffer area  
Credit: Graham Ward, taken from 'Understanding Buffer Strips' an Agency publication.



Action 7.6

# Sustainable urban Drainage Systems

The take up of the principles of Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the Soar catchment has been slow. The Agency is partnering a student project with Loughborough University to investigate existing drainage problems on the University site and consider how these problems can be overcome by sustainable drainage techniques. It is hoped that if these works come to fruition, they will provide a valuable demonstration of SuDS in use.

SuDS is the collective name given to a flexible range of physical measures used to reduce the impacts of urban drainage on natural watercourses. Porous pavements, infiltration basins, grassed banks and other techniques are used to reduce the quantity of runoff from an urban site and to slow the velocity of runoff to allow settlement and filtration. For more information, the Agency publication, 'Sustainable urban Drainage: An Introduction', is available from the

Customer Contact Team, Environment Agency Nottingham Office.



Swales (grassy depressions) provide temporary water storage.

Action 12.1

# Dealing with dewatering

One part of the Agency's regulatory work is ensuring that any adverse effects on the water environment associated with dewatering activities are minimised. Dewatering is carried out in order to facilitate easier mineral extraction operations, of which there are a few in the Soar Valley. The water is often

pumped into an adjacent watercourse and therefore represents a loss of groundwater resources. The Agency has been involved in detailed discussions with the Mineral Planning Authorities and the Aggregate Companies about methods of dewatering that minimise environmental damage. This dialogue

has been frustrated by a lack of statutory control. However, in a draft Water Bill going before Parliament probably in the next parliamentary session, there is a proposal to introduce better control of such activities. If passed, this will require application to be made to the Agency for a consent, permit or licence.

Issue 11

*The results of this year's Annual Review are that 7 actions have been completed (1.11, 1.23, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 5.1), 8 actions have been removed to be reported through other actions (1.3, 1.22, 1.29, 6.3, 7.4, 11.3, 16.1 and 23.3), 9 actions have had no progress made (1.19, 1.21, 1.25, 1.28, 8.1, 17.1, 18.2, 19.1 and 23.4), no new actions have been added and 57 actions are ongoing.*

*Should anybody wish to support the work within the Soar LEAP area or require a full report of progress made on LEAP Actions this year, then please contact: Sam Todd, Partnerships Officer, Environment Agency Nottingham Office.*

*We would be delighted to receive your feedback. For further details on any of the articles in this newsletter or to give us your views on this new newsletter style of Annual Review reporting, please contact:*

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*This newsletter covers the Soar catchment area. Other catchments covered by the Lower Trent Area office are: Lower Trent and Erewash, Derbyshire Derwent and Idle and Torne.*

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Environment Agency - Floodline  
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Environment Agency - Emergency Hotline  
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