

White pollution

White pollution looking like paint or toxic blue-green algae has been reported from the Scottish coastline. SEPA analysis has shown that it is pollen from conifers and spruce trees, which can be released in large quantities during warm weather.

EA scorecard

The EA have set up a scorecard system to record their level of achievement for aspects of interest, such as the nature of the workforce. Other subjects, such as recreational use of water, do not feature at all.

Skate on

An angler in a small RIB in Muckle Row off Shetland was attacked repeatedly by a large skate. It bit into the boat in a number of places, leaving teeth in some of them. Possibly it mistook the boat for a rival skate.

Destruction of the Zambezi

Which is the world's best white water run, the Grand Canyon, the Zambezi below Victoria Falls? Keep in mind that there are plans to dam the latter and turn it into a lake. If you want to get there before the destruction of this world beating venue don't leave it too long. August to October is the least testing time, before the start of the rainy season.

Blackballed

A number of beaches around Sydney, including surfing beaches, have been closed after the appearance on them of black balls with soft centres and harder skins, smelling absolutely disgusting. Analysis suggests they are a mixture of human faeces, cooking oil, grease, fuel oil, drugs and industrial chemicals. They are thought to have resulted from sewage spills from an unknown source.

ACCESS & environment

Another Avon threat

The EA are threatening to remove a radial gate on the Avon in Chippenham which jammed ahead of a winter storm and flooded the town centre. They want to reduce the route through the town from a broad river to a meandering stream with a series of rock weirs. While Chippenham Canoe Club are not too worried and could use water upstream of the town, draining of the river would prevent future approach of boats along a restored arm of the Wilts & Berks Canal.

Further downstream, the EA are well into their second decade of delaying a link to the Kennet & Avon Canal at Melksham, which needs to bypass new housing in the town. The link would use part of the Avon to allow craft to return to the town as is widely desired but excuse after excuse has been produced to delay this, not helping Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club, who are sited by the Avon.

It was the same EA that fined Wessex Water £500,000 for not telling them fast enough about a sewage leak in Melksham.

Oxford flood scheme fence

Concerned about a fence shown across a legal navigation channel through the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, Paddlers International took this up with the EA, who said it was just a shadow. We are pleased to have the following response and note the artwork change:

Thank you for your e-mail. Yes, you are correct; the illustration does show a fence across the new stream. Apologies for the fact that we had previously described it as a shadow. The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme is a very large and complicated project and the team members who reviewed your previous query were unaware that a removable fence might be required at this location in order to prevent livestock in Hinksey Meadow from escaping under the bridge.

Since this illustration was produced, we have reviewed the fencing proposals for the scheme, and we will not be putting removable fencing across the channel at this location. The water under Willow Walk bridge will be a backwater, created when the new stream connects with the Bulstake Stream. Under non-flood conditions, this water will not extend very far into Hinksey Meadow, so in effect, the channel behind the illustration will be dry for much of the year and we will place the removable fencing across this dry section of the channel rather than placing it across the backwater. We will update the illustration to reflect the fact that there will be no fence across the channel at this location.

My colleague Russell Robson regularly works with canoe and kayaking groups with regards to recreation on the River Thames, but if you have the contact details for any canoe or kayak groups that you think would be interested in working with us specifically on the



The welcome change to the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme artwork.