

9 July 2013 – DF/073/13

Restrictions on the Kennet lifted but Environment Agency investigation continues

The Environment Agency is still appealing to the public for information about where a pesticide that polluted the River Kennet between Marlborough and Hungerford last week came from.

Environment Agency officers have been investigating the source of the pollution, believed to be chlorpyrifos, a common agricultural pesticide, and have been taking samples to assess the impacts on the water quality.

Samples taken last week and over the weekend show that the pesticide has dissipated naturally with the water flow and levels have dropped significantly since last week.

Public Health England continues to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and Wiltshire and West Berkshire Council and, following the latest round of water sample results, it has advised that the previous restrictions asking the public and pets to avoid skin contact with the water can be removed.

The Food Standards Agency has also advised that there should be no restrictions on eating fish caught in the river.

Paul Hudson from the Environment Agency said: "It is obviously great news that the pesticide has dissipated naturally and that the precautionary restrictions put in place have been removed following advice from Public Health England and the Food Standards Agency.

"We are still trying to trace the source of the pesticide, and we would appeal for anyone who has information to come forward so that we can take steps to educate those responsible and others to try to prevent it from happening again.

"We are also meeting with business owners along the Kennet regularly to keep them informed of the latest information."

Environment Agency investigations have shown that many macro-invertebrates were killed last week, but there have been no reports of any fish killed.

Anyone with any information about this incident, or any pollution or environment incident, should contact us by calling our hotline number 0800 80 70 60.

Ends

Notes to Editors

The River Kennet is not a designated bathing water. The Environment Agency regularly tests the River Kennet for a range of chemicals, monitoring the quality of the water for potable abstraction, as water is abstracted at several points along the river by a wide range of industry e.g. water companies, for manufacturing and crop irrigation.

The Environment Agency does not carry out routine biological monitoring because the River Kennet isn't a designated Bathing Water.

Bathing water advice from Public Health England:

In undesignated bathing areas, there is always a small risk of illness, particularly mild gastrointestinal illnesses, when individuals use the area for recreational activities.

To reduce the risk of illness for adults and children:

- Minimise contact of water to the mouth and nose area*
- Wash hands (and face if required) with soap and water after leaving an area, after handling items that may have river water on them and before eating*
- Shower after total body immersion*
- Avoid food and drink consumption unless adequate measures have been taken to prevent cross contamination of food/drink*
- Cover cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters/dressings before taking part in recreational activities.*

All media enquiries: 0118 953 5555; Out of hours 0800 141 2743

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