

Keith

Thank you for your email. The current situation is set out below. We will keep you informed as further information becomes available.

Approximately 20,000 litres of diesel has been lost to ground from an oil supply company, some of which has reached the Lower Test Valley SSSI via a Southern Water maintained surface water drainage system. Potential widespread contamination of the Lower Test Nature Reserve has occurred over the last few weeks.

Natural England staff have been out to inspect parts of the SSSI, and on our visit on Wednesday we found some evidence that contamination had reached the floodplain downstream via the recent spring tides. We found no evidence of impact upstream of the outfall, but the river channel is reported to have been affected on some days with the rising tide.

The Environment Agency has also had staff carrying out ecological surveys to determine the extent of the habitats and species affected by this incident.

At the moment tankers remain on site at the industrial estate to remove water and oil out of the surface water drain before it reaches the water course. This will continue until the risk is minimised. The source of the contamination is currently being investigated and measures have been put in place to stop any further oil reaching the surface water drain, including removing contaminated soil. These works have minimised the amount of oil coming out of the outfall.

NE and EA are ensuring preventive measures are in place to stop further oil reaching the designated sites, and we are also ensuring these measures don't themselves damage the designated sites. Sensitive areas are fenced off and where access is needed to prevent further pollution mats are placed on pathways. Additional booms have been put across the river downstream and on the outfall to prevent oil flowing downstream, and NE provided advice on access and how to minimise damage to the designated sites when on site earlier this week for this task.

NE is also liaising with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust staff, to ensure that their detailed knowledge of the site is used to minimise negative impacts on the designated sites and the Reserve.

At the moment efforts on site are focused on stopping the pollution at the source and collecting evidence. Once this has been done and the evidence has been collated, the necessary clean up and mitigation/compensation works will be determined.

Regards

Alison

Alison Graham-Smith

Lead Adviser for the Test Valley
Hampshire Chalk Catchments Team
Thames Solent Area
Based in Eastleigh