

Preventing Discharges at Whittle



Work has continued on the programme to prevent a polluting discharge from the former Whittle Colliery in Northumberland. Concerns were first raised in 1997 that, if left unchecked, the rising waters in the Whittle workings would lead to a polluting discharge into the Hazon Burn, a tributary of the River Coquet.

As well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the River Coquet also feeds a major water supply abstraction point operated by Northumbrian Water at nearby Warkworth.

The Authority has worked closely with key stakeholders including the Environment Agency, County and District Councils, Northumbrian Water and Newcastle University, in monitoring the rate of rise of the underground waters and designing and constructing the passive treatment system.

The rate of rise has reduced from 9cm per day in 1998, to around 3cm per day in summer 2001, and continues to reduce as the hydraulic head reduces. The treatment system, consisting of aeration lagoons and reedbeds, sympathetically contoured into the hillside, was completed in summer 2001.

A submersible pump is being installed in a large diameter borehole, sunk into the mine adit, and it is planned to carry out phased pumping trials to establish the rate of pumping required, and the effectiveness of the treatment system in removing manganese. An outbreak is unlikely prior to late 2003 allowing sufficient time to optimise the system, and if necessary, provide tertiary treatment for enhanced manganese removal.

Cuthill Casualty

The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease has had a considerable impact on public and private sector organisations throughout Britain. The Authority has not escaped this, as the scheme to treat the discharge at Cuthill in West Lothian has unfortunately had to be delayed due to restrictions on access to agricultural land.

A contract for the detailed design of the scheme was awarded to enable construction to start in 2001, but the subsequent outbreak prevented crucial site investigation work from taking place. The gradual lifting of restrictions should enable the scheme to go ahead in 2002, providing a clean up of 4 km of the Breich Water.