

The Environment Agency has confirmed that it will prosecute Anglian Water over the September 2024 pollution incident at King's Dyke, which killed up to 1,000 fish.

That is welcome news.....

It is also important to be precise: Anglian Water has not been convicted in this case.

The EA has completed its investigation, decided to prosecute and is now awaiting a magistrates' court date.

But residents have been told about that decision now, before the case has gone to court.

That makes the handling of other environmental investigations affecting Whittlesey harder to ignore.

Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd, the company operating the IBA recycling facility at Saxon Pit, was itself being investigated by the Environment Agency while its original Whittlesey planning application was being considered, yet residents here were not told.

Saxongate only became aware of the Ilkeston case in November 2025, more than three years after permission was granted at Saxon Pit, once Johnsons had been prosecuted, pleaded guilty and been ordered to pay around £90,000 in fines and costs.

With Anglian Water, the EA has announced its decision to prosecute before the case has reached court. Yet Whittlesey residents were not told about the Johnsons investigation or prosecution. We found out by chance, and only after the company had pleaded guilty and been sentenced.

This matters because the original planning documents for the Whittlesey site specifically referred to Ilkeston.

In December 2021, Johnsons' Planning and Environmental Statement told Cambridgeshire County Council that the company operated in accordance with government laws and best practice and had "no non-compliances in the history of the company". It specifically presented its established Ilkeston IBA operation as part of Johnsons' experience and track record.

Yet Johnsons later pleaded guilty to a permit breach at Ilkeston running from March 2021 to June 2022. The Statement was written inside that period. Permission was granted inside it too.

The company was required to clear the land by 3 January 2022. An inspection the following day found five acres of waste still in place.

We do not know if Cambridgeshire County Council knew about that investigation. That is something we still need to establish. We do know that CCC consults the EA on planning matters like this.

Nor is this the first time Whittlesey has been left waiting for answers.

At Saxon Pit, the EA confirmed 122,858 tonnes of non-conforming waste unlawfully deposited between October 2017 and February 2018. An enforcement notice requiring its removal was initially served and later withdrawn. By June 2020 the EA had decided the waste could remain, subject to containment measures, while continuing to gather evidence for enforcement purposes.

In 2025 Steve Barclay MP told Parliament that, seven years after the waste was deposited, no prosecution had taken place. Twelve months on, we appear to be no further forward. And this is not merely history. Non-conforming waste has also been identified within the Southern Butress, where a further programme of stabilisation works expected to last around seven years is due to begin.

In addition CCC has confirmed that Johnsons intends to appeal the refusal of plans for a major expansion at Saxon Pit, including nearly doubling daily IBA processing capacity.

If the Environment Agency can tell residents now that it has decided to prosecute Anglian Water before that case reaches court, why were residents not given comparable transparency when a company seeking permission for a major new IBA facility at Saxon Pit was itself under EA investigation, and why has there been so little progress on the non-conforming waste investigation?

This is not about asking the EA to say less about Anglian Water.

It is about asking why Whittlesey residents were not told more when it mattered. Residents might be forgiven for thinking the whole situation feels a little fishy.

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If you suffer any noise, smells or dust please continue to report it to the Environment Agency 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60.

The EA also run an engagement HQ page for the area - search Whittlesey Quarry (Saxon Pit) | Engage Environment Agency

You can also email envhealth@fenland.gov.uk or call 01354 654321. This can be the best route for long term issues.

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