

River Pool Pollution Incident Factsheet (update)

On 28 June 2026, a serious pollution and fish kill incident occurred on the River Pool (Ravensbourne catchment) through Bromley and Lewisham, South London. The source of this pollution has now stopped, and water quality has returned to normal.

We are very grateful to the catchment partners and members of public who have helped support our incident response with local intelligence. We have received a lot more pollution incident reports and there has been a noticeable increase in vigilance on the catchment. Please continue to report any new pollution, dead or distressed fish to our incident hotline 0800 807060 or online at www.gov.uk/report-environmental-problem.

This update has been shared with Catchment Partners, local MPs and Councillors.

What happened

We responded to a report of a pollution incident and fish kill on the River Pool on 28 June 2026. This affected the stretch of river between Cator Park and where the River Pool joins the River Ravensbourne near Catford Hill.

The River Pool covers a large urban catchment. It is affected by multiple pressures, including domestic misconnections, diffuse pollution, illegal fly-tipping of liquid waste, and road run-off. At times, illegal discharges can cause acute pollution incidents like this one.

While our investigation is ongoing, we are unable to comment on the cause of the pollution or its source, as this could prejudice any enforcement action that may follow.

The environmental impact

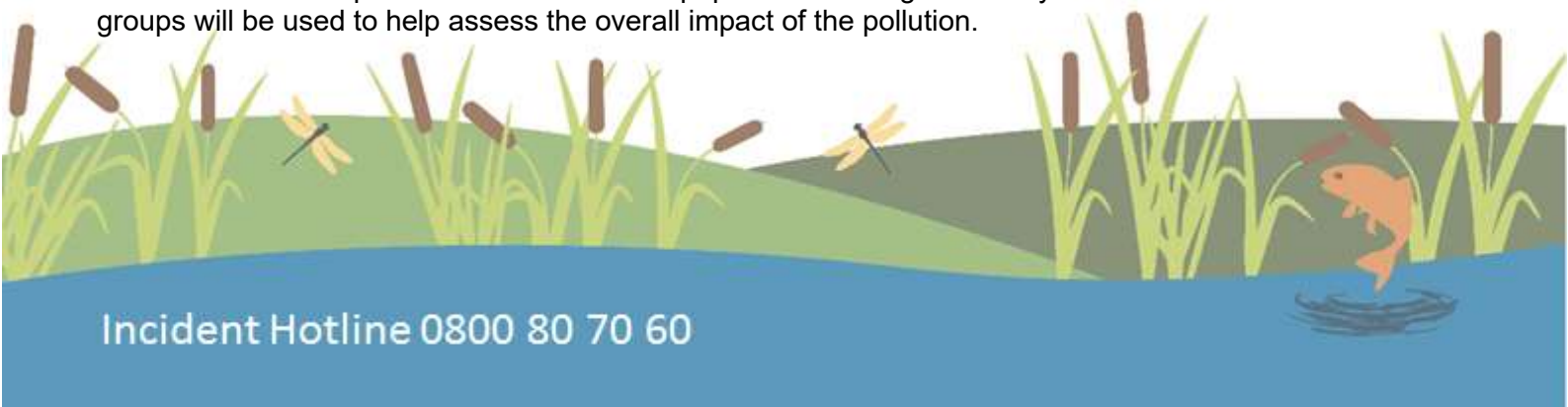
This incident has been confirmed as a Category 1 'Major' - our most serious type of incident due to its environmental impact. Our officers were on site within hours of the initial incident being reported to us and have been out for several days since monitoring the impact and responding to other nearby reports.

Unfortunately, this incident had a significant impact on fish life and invertebrates (the foundation of the aquatic food chain) over a 3km stretch of river. We recorded large numbers of dead European eel and observed multiple dead fish (including chub, roach, gudgeon and stickleback). Recovered fish have been identified, measured and recorded, with samples preserved as evidence to support the ongoing investigation.

There was no impact on public drinking water supplies. As a precaution, residents and pet owners were advised to avoid contact with the affected section at the time of the incident.

How we responded

We have been working extensively out on the ground monitoring the impact of the pollution and investigating all potential sources. We have also carried out surveys assessing the number of dead fish, and to determine impacts on the invertebrate population. Data gathered by citizen scientists and catchment groups will be used to help assess the overall impact of the pollution.



Whilst our officers are no longer on site every day, we will continue to monitor the river closely and progress our investigation. Our recent field monitoring shows that water quality has returned to normal. Routine water quality monitoring data is available to the public at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/water-quality>.

There may be some areas where residual dead fish remain. We were able to remove most larger species from the water; however, some carcasses do remain. These are not expected to have a significant impact on water quality as they break down naturally. Please do not try to remove any dead fish yourself.

How do I report my concerns

We work hard to protect our rivers, but with your help, we can do more. Intelligence from members of the public and community groups is incredibly valuable to us as it helps us identify, limit and stop pollution. Often members of the public and community groups who know the rivers well and see them every day are the first to spot something unusual.

Urban rivers can be affected by pollution from many sources, particularly the surface water drainage network. This can be subject to illegal activities such as fly tipping or direct discharges of liquid wastes. If you suspect or witness illegal or suspicious activity involving fly tipping into our rivers or the drainage network, please do report it, but not attempt to intervene.

Please report anything out of the ordinary to us as soon as you can, either via our hotline 0800 807060 or online at www.gov.uk/report-environmental-problem. An odd colour or cloudiness in the water, an unusual smell, dead or distressed fish may indicate potential pollution. If you have taken any photos, please do mention this in your report and provide your contact details, as our duty officers can find these very helpful. It helps if you can describe where and what you are seeing, and how far you think the impact is going, but never put yourself at risk by going into unsafe areas or getting too close to or into the river.

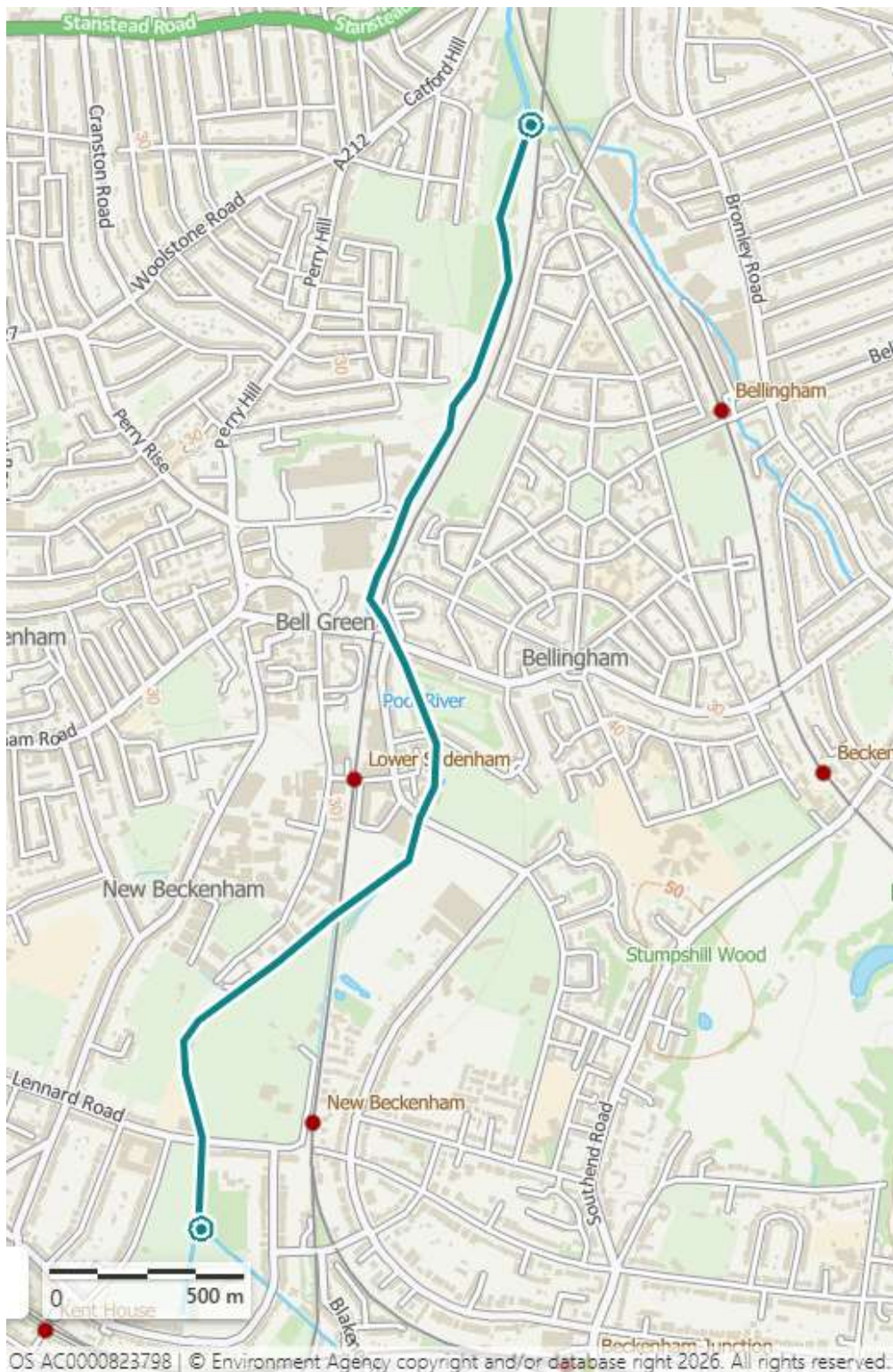
Although we are unable to respond to every environmental incident reported to us or provide feedback to individual reports of environmental incidents, we do assess all reports and respond rapidly to those we think are serious. Every report is useful for building up a picture of chronic issues and environmental crime.

If you are concerned about public health risk, please contact your local council. Public Health England and the Environment Agency offer advice as part of the existing 'swim healthy' guidance which is available to read at www.gov.uk/government/publications/swim-healthy-leaflet/swim-healthy.

What happens next

As an environmental regulator our focus is now on carrying out a thorough investigation into this incident. At this early stage we are unable to share detailed information in case it compromises the investigation or any future legal action. We are committed to using our enforcement powers to understand exactly what happened, punish any offender and doing everything we can to protect people, wildlife and the environment. The investigation will be conducted in accordance with our policy and guidance, which is available to view online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-enforcement-and-sanctions-policy>.

We understand how upsetting this incident has been to the local community. We are keen to support the recovery of the River Pool, and our fisheries team are already exploring how and when to restock the river with key fish species. We will continue to work closely with Thames21, the London Boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham, Thames Water, community groups and other partners to support improvements to the River Pool and increase its long-term resilience to pollution and other environmental pressures.



Map of the River Pool from New Beckenham to Catford. Source: Environment Agency 2026