



STATEMENT

22 February

Statement on the oil pollution incident on the River Lee navigation:

Jon Guest, Canal & River Trust waterway manager, says: “When the oil leak was first spotted on 11 February we responded immediately and our teams were onsite within the hour. Booms and absorbent pads were put in place to contain the spill and begin the clean-up. Since then, we have been working closely with the Environment Agency (EA), the statutory authority for pollution incidents of this size, to manage the situation and minimise the damage to wildlife and property. While we made good initial progress unfortunately the spill has continued due to a combination of heavy rainfall and a continuation of the leak at source.

“We are continuing to remove spilt oil and have closed Stonebridge, Tottenham and Old Ford locks to prevent oil spreading further. We’ve been really heartened by the response from people who live on, work on or love visiting the river, with many offering to help with the clean-up. This support has been amazing. We have given out absorbent pads for boaters to use on the oil around their vessels and are running volunteer clean-up events, which have been fantastically supported.

“Sadly, incidents like this happen too frequently on the River Lee. We deal with an average of six pollution events each year relating to discharges from Pymmes Brook – a waterway we do not manage - into the Lee. This affects wildlife and people who depend upon the waterway for their livelihood. This pollution derives mainly from industrial sources, run-off from urban areas and numerous misconconnections from residential properties. This needs to stop. We’ve contacted partners, councils and MPs to ensure we work together to find a solution, and identify those responsible. We need to make sure this event is neither forgotten nor repeated.”

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