

EVENT LEARNING

Safety & Sustainable Development

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Incident Date / Time: December 2013 / Various

Location: Borders Railway Project

Works Taking Place / Incident Type: Construction (Earthworks and Excavations) / Siltation of Watercourse

Issued By: Hugh Wark, Project Director, Borders Railway Project

Project Name / Number: Borders Railway Project / 129713

For the attention of: All Scotland and North East

Description of incident

As a result of various construction activities including excavations, pumping operations and exposed ground adjacent to watercourses, a number of instances of silt release into watercourses occurred with the potential to affect a European-protected watercourse (Special Area of Conservation).

CAUSES

Particularly wet weather with rising water table and high runoff rates.

Previously unidentified manhole and field drainage carrying silty water into watercourse.



Failure to intercept and adequately redirect water from excavations before work starts.

Silt fencing and other measures in place but not regularly maintained and checked for function.

The reader is required to take action where appropriate to implement the following;

- Check that all contractors understand the specific risks of their site and wherever possible prevent water from entering the site / excavation and minimise exposed ground near watercourses.
- If overpumping or pumping to settlement areas, ensure the arrangement is being checked regularly and water is filtering adequately.
- Ensure adequacy of any secondary mitigation where appropriate, such as downstream silt fences and straw bales etc.
- Check adequacy of contractor Incident Response Plans and ensure staff are fully briefed.