

Temporary fix being worked on for orange water in South Esk

Coal authority bosses are working to put a temporary mine water treatment scheme in place as soon as possible after part of the River South Esk turned orange.

This was revealed by a spokesperson from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) who said that The Coal Authority and SEPA are working in partnership to improve the environment in mining areas.

She added: "Water has been rising in the mine workings of the former Bilston Glen colliery since coal mining finished in 1989 and is now overflowing to the River South Esk.

"Until April 2020, the impact of mine water on the river had always remained localised. A sustained period of dry weather has seen river levels fall and the orange discolouration in the South Esk has become much more visible.

"Recent heavy rainfall events, whilst not improving flow rates in the River South Esk for any significant period, may have been sufficient to remobilise some of the iron sediment further down the river."

She added: "The Coal Authority and SEPA continues to monitor the river. Intervention is required to reduce the environmental impact and the Coal Authority is working to put a temporary mine water treatment scheme in place soon as possible.

"Earlier intervention had not been possible due to uncertainty surrounding the location, volume and water quality of the discharge. The Coal Authority is still progressing towards a permanent mine water treatment scheme.

“As Scotland’s environmental regulator, SEPA is working with partners and those we regulate to deliver improvements in the Esk catchment. In carrying out this important work, we must ensure we understand and address areas of community concern and are pleased to be part of the new Esk River Improvement Group.

“We encourage people to continue to report any changes in the river, using our 24-hour online form at www.sepa.org.uk/report.”

A Scottish Water spokeswoman said: “The reported orange colour in part of the River Esk is not associated with Scottish Water infrastructure. We understand it is linked to mine water discharge.”