

Warning to keep out of the water at two East Lothian beaches

Swimmers have been warned to stay out of the water at two East Lothian beaches after an oil leak from a substation at Torness nuclear power plant.

East Lothian Council has advised people not to bathe at Thorntonloch and Skateraw beach as a clean-up operation gets underway.

The local authority said an electrical fault at the substation caused an automatic fire protection system to activate leading to a mix of oil from the transformer and cooling water overflowing into the drainage system.

Reports of discoloured water in the sea led to the warning and water quality investigations are being carried out.

The substation is operated by SP Energy Networks and located within the grounds of EDF's Torness Power Station.

Stephen Kelly, Transmission Network Operations Manager for SP Energy Networks, said: "While the initial release of oil was swiftly contained within our catchment 'bund', we're working closely with EDF and SEPA to ensure any overflow caused by the cooling water is cleaned-up quickly and effectively.

"We're sorry for any inconvenience caused and are doing everything we can to resolve this situation as quickly as

possible.”

Tom Reid, the council’s head of infrastructure, also advised people to keep pets out of the water.

He said: “As a precaution we are advising members of the public to refrain from entering the water at Skateraw and Thorntonloch at this time.

“We would also ask that owners do not allow pets to enter the water. Protecting the local environment is our top priority and council officers have been on site and are working with colleagues from SP Energy Networks and EDF.”

Last week reports circulated on social media of the bodies of guillemots being washed up on Thorntonloch beach. It comes just a month after hundreds of dead gannets washed up after bird flu broke out on the Bass Rock, home to the world’s largest northern colony of the seabirds.

A spokesperson for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) said it was made aware of the oil leak yesterday.

They said: “Firewater and cooling oil were released to a drainage system on site and an unknown quantity escaped to the sea.

“Mitigation is in place to minimise the impact and we continue to liaise with the site operatives and other partners as a clean-up operation and investigation into the incident is carried out.

“SEPA is clear that compliance is non-negotiable, and we will consider any further action if required in line with our enforcement policy.”

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy

Reporter

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Skateraw near Torness