

News story: Fish merchant fined for fisheries offences

Geoffrey Blake, trading as Ventnor Haven Fisheries in the Isle of Wight, was sentenced at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court on 11 December 2017 in a prosecution brought by the MMO.

The court heard how the company, a registered buyer of first sale fish, failed to submit 369 sales notes in either electronic or paper form to the MMO within 48 hrs of the landing taking place between 25 February 2016 and 1 September 2017.

Mr Blake pleaded not guilty but was convicted by the court and ordered to pay a fine of £500, costs of £500 and a victim surcharge of £50.

A spokesperson for the MMO said:

The requirement to submit sales notes within 48 hours enables the MMO to gain an accurate picture of fish stocks on which to base its fisheries management decisions.

When, as in this case, sales notes are not submitted that picture becomes partial, distorted or inaccurate. This prosecution shows that the MMO will take the appropriate enforcement action to prevent such a situation occurring.

Press release: Police funding increases by £450 million in 2018

Home Secretary Amber Rudd has today (19 December) announced a substantial £450 million increase in police funding across England and Wales as part of a comprehensive settlement for forces and counter terrorism policing.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Whether it is your local forces, the national picture or counter terrorism capabilities, this is a strong settlement that ensures forces have the resources they need to keep us safe.

Taxpayers will invest more money in forces because the work our officers do to protect us is absolutely vital, and we recognise

demand is changing.

However, my message to police forces is that this increased investment must mean we raise the pace of reform.

For too long embracing digital and increasing productivity have been tomorrow's policing problems – now they are today's necessities. The government is committed to meeting this challenge and we want policing to do the same.

The settlement follows a period of engagement, with Minister for Policing and Fire Nick Hurd speaking to every force in the country about the demands they face. It is clear that with more victims of serious, hidden crimes such as domestic abuse, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation coming forward, this has placed greater demand on policing.

To help meet the needs of each area, government is protecting its grant to forces in cash terms and empowering locally elected police and crime commissioners to raise precept contributions by up to £1 a month for a typical household. Together, this will mean force budgets will increase by up to £270 million nationally.

Counter terrorism police funding will also increase by around £50 million to £757 million, a rise of 7%. This is in recognition of the changing threat from terrorism and to ensure counter terrorism policing has the resources needed to respond and keep the public safe.

At a national level, £130 million extra will be provided for priorities such as special grants to help forces meet unexpected costs, for example, the £9.8 million given to Greater Manchester Police after the Manchester Arena attack, and national technology programmes designed to deliver greater productivity and mobile working.

Police forces will also be able to access the £175 million police transformation fund. Led by the police themselves, the fund gives individual forces money to invest in reform and digitisation projects to benefit the whole policing system.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

Public safety is our number one priority and we have responded swiftly to evidence of a shift in demand on forces.

This new comprehensive settlement will mean local forces can be more effective in their critical work to fight crime and protect the public.

I have seen for myself the exceptional, can-do attitude of police officers and staff around the country. The government remains very committed to helping police improve efficiency by investing in the technology and skills that modern policing will need to be fit for

the future.

The Home Office agrees with the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Fire Service, who last month said forces can be more ambitious in driving efficiency.

The Home Office, working with the police, has also identified around £100 million of potential savings to be made through smarter procurement of everything from cars to uniforms.

If all forces delivered the level of productivity from mobile working as the best forces, the average officer could spend an hour a day extra on the frontline – this has the potential to free up the equivalent of 11,000 extra officers across England and Wales.

In addition, plans are also in place to increase transparency around police reserves, which range from 7% to 42% of forces' annual funding. In March 2017 police forces held usable reserves of over £1.6 billion, which compares to £1.4 billion in 2011. The Home Office intends to publish data on all PCCs' reserves and introduce guidance to require PCCs to publish clearer information in a bid to make force funding more comparable for the public.

To help forces plan their finances more effectively for the future and in response to the view of PCCs and Chief Constables, the Home Office has signalled its intention to repeat the same settlement for 2019 to 2020 provided there is substantial progress from policing in delivering productivity and efficiency improvements.

You can read the [provisional police grant report for 2018 to 2019](#) which sets out the amount of grants proposed for the police in England and Wales.

Press release: Environment Agency offers stocking fillers for anglers

The Environment Agency is getting into the festive spirit by providing stocking fillers for anglers as its staff restock rivers with thousands of fish in the run up to Christmas.

Calverton fish farm, the Environment Agency's specialist fish breeding farm in Nottingham, produces between 400,000 and 500,000 fish each year. The farm breeds nine species of fish including Chub, Dace, Barbel, Roach, Bream, Crucians, Rudd, Tench and Grayling. The restocking activity is part of an annual programme, funded by income from rod licence sales.

Alan Henshaw, fisheries team leader at the Environment Agency said:

Many of our industrialised rivers have improved dramatically in water quality in the last 30 years and concerted restocking from Calverton has accelerated the restoration of natural fish stocks and viable fisheries.

New techniques in Pond Rearing have delivered significant improvements in the average size of the 18 month-old fish and many rivers and lakes throughout England have benefited from these stockings. The quality and range of fish produced as part of the restocking programme is testament to the hard work of the staff at Calverton farm.

All of this work is funded by money from rod licence sales to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.”

Some notable stockings that will take place:

- 34,781 mixed Chub, Dace and Roach stocked into the River Leadon in Gloucestershire.
- 29,750 mixed fish stocked into Rivers, Canals and Stillwaters across Cumbria and Lancashire in the North West.
- 600 Barbel into the River Dearne in South Yorkshire.
- 21,000 Roach, Bream, Crucians and Tench stocked into still waters and 7,600 Chub, Dace and Barbel stocked across rivers in Thames region.
- 6,400 fish comprising of 6 different species split between the River Wid, Blackwater and Colne in Anglian East region.
- 4,250 Roach, Bream and Tench into the Blind Yeo in Wessex plus more than 3,000 additional fish split into other waters in the area.

More stockings will continue into the New Year.

Restocking of England's Rivers and Lakes by the Environment Agency happens for a number of reasons. This may be following a pollution incident where the original population has been lost, where recruitment is poor or in the creation of brand-new fisheries and Angling opportunities.

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[News story: Over 900,000 more customers open fee-free basic bank accounts](#)

Over 900,000 new fee-free basic bank accounts were opened between July 2016 and June 2017, taking the total number of fee-free accounts open to nearly 5 million, according to the government's basic bank account report published today.

Basic bank accounts have been available in the UK for over a decade, but since September 2016 the UK's nine largest banks have been legally required to offer fee-free basic bank accounts, designed to improve financial inclusion for those who don't have a current account or who might struggle to open a standard account.

Other findings in this year's report include:

- there are just under 8 million basic bank accounts open in the UK
- for the second year running, Nationwide and Lloyds Banking Group opened the most fee-free basic bank accounts between July 2016 and June 2017
- Nationwide, Clydesdale Yorkshire Banking Group, and Co-op have a larger market share of basic bank accounts than personal current accounts
- Lloyds Banking Group accounts for almost half of the basic bank account market

Stephen Barclay, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

Making sure that everyone has access to the financial services that they need is at the heart of our plan to build a fairer society and an economy that is fit for the future. The government has legislated to make sure fee-free basic bank accounts are available

to those who need them and I am pleased to see that so many people – who might have previously been at risk of running up debt through bank charges – have access to a completely free account. It is important for a fair economy that banks continue to help all their customers to manage their finances confidently and responsibly.