

## **Press release: Courts issue £177,720 in penalties to anglers**

The Environment Agency revealed it prosecuted 691 people for angling offences throughout April, May and June 2017. In total, courts imposed penalties of £177,720, with the highest being £974. Some 314 offenders received penalties of over £300, ten times the price of a year's legal fishing.

The most common offence was fishing without a valid licence, which could see offenders landing fines of up to £2,500 and a criminal conviction. Other offences included removing coarse fish contrary to national byelaws put in place to protect fish stocks. During the restricted period the Environment Agency carried out 17,589 fishing licence checks and issued 963 offence reports.

Kevin Austin, our new Deputy Director for Fisheries at the Environment Agency said:

The Environment Agency and its partners take unlicensed angling very seriously. While only a minority of anglers seek to evade the law and do not buy a licence if only 5% of anglers didn't buy a £30 annual licence this would represent a loss of around £1.5m to the sport and to the environment.

Anyone fishing without a licence can expect to be prosecuted, fined and face having a criminal conviction. Obtaining a fishing licence is easier than ever and costs from just £30 for the year and remember that the junior licence is now free – there is no excuse.

Anyone who suspects illegal fishing to be taking place should report the matter to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

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## **Notice: P022 9PH, Angus Energy Weald Basin No3 Limited: environmental permit application advertisement**

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- where you can visit to see the application documents
- when you need to comment by

The Environment Agency will decide:

- whether to grant or refuse the application
- what conditions to include in the permit (if granted)

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## **Press release: CMA makes switching easier for 700,000 UK energy customers**

New CMA measures will help 700,000 restricted meter customers, including around 400,000 in Scotland, to switch without changing their meter.

This follows an extensive investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) into the energy sector, which found that around two thirds of restricted meter customers could save an average of £154 per year by switching energy tariff.

In the past, the cost and hassle of changing their meter could have proved a major barrier for many of these people to switch to a cheaper deal. However, the CMA's new measures mean that restricted meter customers can now more easily access a wide range of different deals and rates.

The CMA is also demanding that suppliers offer:

- reminders about switching, via bills,
- contact details for Citizens Advice or Citizens Advice Scotland (as appropriate), and
- further information to assist them with switching (eg their total consumption, their consumption levels by register, their meter type, their current tariff type).

To help people with restricted meters to get the best deal on their energy, the CMA has made the additional recommendation that Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland become recognised providers of information and support to these customers. Both agencies have now confirmed that they will implement this recommendation.

CMA Director of Remedies Susannah Meeke said:

We want to help as many people as possible to shop around for the

best energy deal for them. But, many people on restricted meters have effectively been prevented from doing this because they would need to change their meter – which is both costly and a hassle.

Now they will be able to switch like any other energy customer – and potentially lower their bill by up to £154 a year.

We welcome the fact that Citizens Advice is now offering additional information and support for these customers to help them explore their options.

## Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For more information on the CMA see our [homepage](#) or follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
2. Restricted meters are those which apply different rates across different times of the day. Examples of affected energy customers include those with Economy 10 and THTC meters.
3. Suppliers with fewer than 50,000 customers do not have to accept restricted meter customers, although they may choose to do so. A large majority of suppliers have more than 50,000 customers.
4. Media enquiries should be directed to [press@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gsi.gov.uk) or call: 07774 134814

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## Press release: New opportunities for councils to benefit from growth

Councils are being encouraged to join forces and put forward proposals to retain the growth in their business rates income as the Secretary for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid announces new pilots today (1 September 2017).

From April 2018, pilots across economic areas will be able to retain 100% of the growth in income raised locally through business rates, responding to council calls to reduce local government's dependence on central government.

Findings from this tranche of pilots will then help develop options for local authorities to retain more of the money they raise in the future.

This move builds on previous pilots originally launched in Liverpool, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West of England, Cornwall and Greater London in

April 2017, which will also continue into next year.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I am committed to helping local authorities control more of the money they raise locally,

By encouraging councils to work together, with the aim of sharing their business rates income, it enables them to take a much more strategic view on decisions that benefit the wider area.

Expanding the pilot programme is an opportunity to consider how rates retention could operate across the country and we will continue to work closely with local government to agree the best way forward.

## **Working together to boost growth**

Proposals will need to promote sustainability and collaborative working to promote growth and councils working together to 'pool' their business rates, particularly groups of districts who are proposing to work with their county, will be viewed more favourably.

The government is also keen to spread the pilots across the country, with a focus on rural areas, to ensure that more can be learnt about the scheme in different places.

Alongside the 2018 to 2019 pilots, the government will continue to work with local authorities, the Local Government Association, and others on reform options that give local authorities more control over the money they raise and are sustainable in the long term.

## **Further information**

The deadline for proposals is Friday 27 October – details can be found on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Successful pilots will be announced in December 2017 and the department will support authorities in preparing for implementation in April 2018.

Pilot local authorities will retain 100% of the growth in their business rates income in the year of the pilot (2018 to 2019), meaning that the central government share (usually 50% of the growth) will stay in the local area.

The pilot programme will not affect funding to other, non-pilot, local authorities. There is already a system of redistributing funding between councils to ensure that areas with lower business rates income do not lose out.

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## Press release: Social housing regulator issues guidance on fees

In the run up to the introduction of fees for social housing regulation from October 2017, the regulator of social housing has published fees guidance for registered providers and will be issuing invoices from 4 September.

It has also published terms of reference for a new Fees and Resources Advisory Panel which will meet for the first time in October to enable engagement on fees with a range of stakeholders, and provide transparency.

The regulator was granted powers to charge fees under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. It set out initial proposals in a discussion paper in 2014 and held a statutory consultation at the end of 2016, consulting extensively with sector representative bodies.

The new fees regime will include:

- a one-off flat-rate registration fee of £2,500 for successful registration with the regulator
- a fixed annual fee of £300 for providers with fewer than 1,000 social housing units
- an annual per unit fee for large providers with 1,000 or more social housing units, for 2017/18 this will be £4.72

Due to the decision to start charging fees from 1 October 2017, 50% of the annual fee is payable for 2017/18.

Julian Ashby, Chair of the HCA Regulation Committee said:

Following extensive consultation with the social housing sector, we undertook to make some changes to the initial proposals. This included delaying the introduction of fees to October 2017 and setting up a Fees and Resources Advisory Panel. I hope the guidance we have published today reinforces our aim for the fee-charging scheme to be fair, simple, transparent and practical. We are committed to keeping our costs under review and therefore the fee level reasonable and proportionate, while maintaining effective regulation.

Thank you to the many organisations who have expressed an interest in joining the Panel. It is part of our commitment to be transparent with stakeholders in relation to the fees charged and the quality of the regulation delivered. And it will enable us to engage with a range of sector stakeholders alongside our existing arrangements.

[Social housing regulation fees – Guidance for registered providers](#) and the [Fees and Resources Advisory Panel – terms of reference](#) are available on the website.

1. The decision statement for the [consultation on fees](#), which ran from November 2016 to January 2017, is available on the website.
2. Funding for some aspects of the regulation function, such as reactive regulation including consumer regulation, will be continued through government grant in aid.

The Homes and Communities Agency is the single, national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England, and is the regulator of social housing providers.

As regulator, its purpose is to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs.

It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation, as enshrined in legislation, focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer.

For more information visit the [HCA website](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

Our [media enquiries page](#) has contact details for journalists.

For general queries to the HCA, please email [mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk](mailto:mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk) or call 0300 1234 500.