

Press release: North East man fined for illegal fishing

A Newcastle man has been fined for fishing using an illegal set line which can be damaging to fish stocks following an investigation by the Environment Agency.

Lin Zhi Jin, 42, of Belgrave Parade, Newcastle, appeared at Newcastle Magistrates' Court on Friday 13 April where he pleaded guilty to fishing using the illegal equipment. He was ordered to pay a total of £400 in fines and costs.

A set line, which is a fixed line above water with baited hooks attached to it, can result in severe injury to fish and is indiscriminate in nature, making it a damaging method of capture.

It happened in the early hours of 26 July last year when Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers were carrying out patrols of the River Tyne in the Wylam area when they saw the defendant on the river bank. He was spoken to and produced a valid rod licence, which permits fishing using a rod and line.

While checks were being carried out a search of the immediate area revealed a set line tied to a post on the river bank and leading into the river. It was hauled in and found to have four baited hooks attached to it.

Potential to damage fish populations

Kevin Summerson, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

The River Tyne is an important river for migratory fish and this spot in Wylam is popular for keen anglers. This type of equipment is illegal to use in rivers in England for a reason – they have the potential to cause significant damage to fish populations.

We take all kinds of illegal fishing very seriously, whether it's those fishing without a licence or licensed anglers using illegal equipment. It's not fair on other anglers who make sure they fish within the law, and also endangers the future of the sport by damaging the sustainability of fish stocks.

The Environment Agency's work is intelligence-led and they work closely with partners to target known hot spots and where illegal fishing is reported.

Important for people to report illegal fishing

During March the Environment Agency prosecuted nine anglers at courts in the

North East for unlicensed fishing and associated offences, resulting in fines and costs totalling almost £2,000.

This included three men from Morpeth prosecuted for unlicensed fishing and byelaw offences that took place on 29 September 2017 on the River Wansbeck. Fisheries Enforcement Officers were supported by Northumbria Police when they made the arrests.

Ashley Lawson, 29, of Shields Road, Dwayne Dodds, 33, of Rutherford Place, and Martin Shaun Pringle, 28, of Kitty Brewster Road, all had their cases proved in absence at South East Northumberland Magistrates' Court and received fines and costs totalling more than £1,100.

Kevin added:

As well as unlicensed fishing some of these offences included obstruction, failing to state correct names or addresses, using illegal baits, close season offences and theft. It's really important people report information about suspected illegal fishing to us so we can investigate.

The Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60 and are always looking to gather good intelligence.

With the support of the Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiffs – who keep watch on their local rivers and report suspicious activity to the Environment Agency and when appropriate, the police – this network has increased.

The Environment Agency is currently working with the Angling Trust as part of Operation Clampdown – the annual blitz on illegal coarse fishing during the close season, which started on 15 March and runs until 15 June.

All income from rod licence sales is used to fund Environment Agency work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries, including improving habitats for fish and facilities for anglers, tackling illegal fishing and working with partners to encourage people to give fishing a go.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – [you can buy them online](#)

[Press release: Northumberland farmer fined for failing to fix pollution](#)

risk

A Northumberland farmer who was fined £19,000 last year for twice polluting a protected watercourse has been ordered to pay a further £2,854.56 in fines and costs for failing to fix the source of the pollution.

John Laing, 54, of New Heaton Farm in Cornhill-on-Tweed, Northumberland, appeared at Berwick upon Tweed Magistrates' Court on 5 April 2018 having previously admitted contempt of court.

The court heard that in January 2017 Laing was ordered by Newcastle Magistrates' Court to repair the storage unit by 30 June 2017. Without remedial works, there remains a continued risk of silage leaking from a silo storage unit into a tributary that flows into the River Till.

The order had required Laing to carry out specific works to capture and prevent any effluent from escaping the silo, and provide written certification from a chartered engineer that the works had been completed to the required standards. Environment Agency officers made several visits to the farm before and after the deadline to check whether the works had been completed.

While Laing had enlisted the services of a builder, work had not started before the June 2017 deadline. Subsequent visits by Environment Agency officers in August and September 2017 revealed that some work had begun but not as agreed and to a poor standard.

In mitigation, Laing said he had relied on the assurances of a builder as to the quality of the remedial work and was no longer using the storage facility himself.

Neil Paisley, Senior Agriculture Officer at the Environment Agency, said:

John Laing has repeatedly shown a disregard for the law and a disregard for the environment since an initial pollution incident in 2014.

Pollution of any watercourse is a serious offence because of the devastating impact it can have on fish, wildlife and ecosystems. We will take action against anyone who fails to act in accordance with environmental laws and fails to comply with orders to ensure pollution is prevented.

If anyone spots a potential pollution issue they can report it to the

Environment Agency's free 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: New figures reveal 1 in 11 anglers are junior anglers

Fishing licence sales show a huge increase in popularity among children with 1 in 11 anglers being juniors according to new figures released by the Environment Agency today.

The introduction of free fishing licences for children in 2017 has led to a 53% increase with more than 79,000 junior licences issued last year.

The figures were welcomed by the agency in light of challenges in attracting juniors to the sport given the popularity of game consoles, TV and social media.

Kevin Austin, Head of Fisheries at the Environment Agency, said:

While today's figures are welcomed and encouraging, we mustn't rest on our laurels. Today's children are the anglers of tomorrow and it's important we attract them to the sport early. We're really pleased to see that a growing number of young people are taking up the offer of a free junior licence, helping them to enjoy the great outdoors and this great sport.

Children today have a wealth of technology at their fingertips, and coupled with the costs parents face, it's easy to see why fewer children are enjoying outdoor activities. Through our continued investment into fishing, our aim is to ensure the sport continues for generations to come.

From April, the age of free junior licences change from 12-16 to 13-16. Junior fishing licence work will continue to be supported by Environment Agency partners such as Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month. Those under thirteen will not be required to purchase a licence.

All fishing licence income is used to fund work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries. The Environment Agency works in partnership with the Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month to offer free fishing events and activities.

To find an event close to you take a look at get fishing. To buy a licence online visit: www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence

Notes to editor

- Figures quoted are for England and Wales
- Juniors still need to get a licence in order to fish but the licence will be free at get a fishing licence.
- These changes have also been implemented across Wales. Natural Resources Wales is the lead.

1. Junior sales

- 2015/16: 60,762
- 2016/17: 52,117

News story: Statement on Ofwat and rebuilding public trust in the water sector

Ofwat, the economic regulator of the water sector in England and Wales, has set out its [agenda](#) for rebuilding public trust in the water sector.

On 31 January, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Defra, wrote to Jonson Cox, Chairman of Ofwat, asking him to investigate what changes could be made to improve water companies' corporate behaviours.

The Environment Agency regulates the environmental performance of water companies. In February, the Environment Agency released the [State of the Environment report for water quality](#).

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

"We welcome the Secretary of State and Ofwat's call for water companies to act as diligently for their customers and the natural world as their owners. Jonson Cox says they should consider sharing water resources better. Today, the Environment Agency is meeting senior water company representatives to agree how to increase collaboration and coordination across the sector.

"Since 2005, the water industry has invested billions in the environment and brought compliance for discharge at wastewater treatment works to 99 per cent, but this is not a moment for congratulations. Water companies are responsible for at least one serious pollution incident every week. The courts need to make fines for pollution incidents proportionate to the turnover of companies. Sentencing guidelines in 2014 did bring in higher fines for environmental offences, but financial penalties must force board members to seriously consider environment risk, and not see it as an operational expense.

“In line with the ambition of the 25 Year Environment Plan, water companies also need to do more to act on climate change. England’s flood and drought risks are increasing so we need to see more action to provide water security. Water companies shouldn’t think of climate resilience as just expenditure. On Friday, Mark Carney spoke of the major opportunity for investors and creditors it brings in long-term infrastructure.”

Press release: Wickham man fined £3,000 for allowing the dumping of waste at Firgrove Lane

Joe Keet of Firgrove Lane, Wickham, Hants, has been fined £3,000 for knowingly permitting the deposit of controlled waste at Firgrove Lane, following a trial at Portsmouth Magistrates Court.

Jasper Smith and Phillip Jenkins, who brought some of the waste to the site, also pleaded guilty at Portsmouth Magistrates Court on 18 December 2017, where Mr Smith was fined £333 and Mr Jenkins £121, and they shared the £300 costs.

Joe Keet was fined £3,000 with a £170 victim surcharge and £1,904.75 costs after being found guilty by magistrates of knowingly allowing the deposit of controlled waste without the correct permit. This included construction and demolition waste, household clearance and commercial waste, waste wood, furniture, grab bags, black sacks of domestic waste, underlay and insulation.

Mike O’Neil, Environment Manager said:

Joe Keet’s actions showed a blatant disregard for the environment. In cases like this, where the actions of individuals threaten to undermine legitimate businesses, we have no hesitation in prosecuting those involved. We, in fact, previously prosecuted Mr Keet in May 2016.

To ensure that the right waste gets to the right place, we encourage the public and businesses to check that their waste carrier is registered on Gov.UK and to ask to see a copy of the waste transfer note for the waste. If possible take a photo of the note on your phone.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

Mr Keets was prosecuted under Section 33(1)(a) and (6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended)

Mr Smith and Mr Jenkins were prosecuted under section 34(1) and 34(6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743

Please ask for the duty press officer

Or email us at southeastpressofficer1@environment-agency.gov.uk

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