

# Press release: Hefty fines for unlicensed anglers

Two men have been handed hefty court fines for fishing illegally in separate offences at Manor Farm Lakes Northhill, Bedford.

They were caught in May last year fishing without a rod licence during targeted patrols by Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers.

Jay John Whitbread, 22, of Church Lane, Bedford, was caught fishing without a licence at the same location on 2 separate occasions and both cases were heard together at court. He was fined £657, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £30 and £127 costs. A total of £814.

Liam Knight, 27, of Westmill Lane, Hitchin, was also caught fishing without a licence. He was fined £293, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £30 and £127 costs. A total of £450.

The defendants both pleaded guilty to Luton Magistrates Court on 6 March 2018.

After the hearing Environment Agency officer Kye Jerrom said:

It's a crime to fish without a valid licence and offenders could be fined up to £2,500, have their fishing equipment seized and be banned from fishing. Our enforcement officers inspect rod licences throughout East Anglia and could turn up at any time.

All income from rod licence sales is invested directly back into maintaining and improving fisheries. Those who fish without a rod licence are having a direct effect on that work and are selling other anglers short. At £30 for a 2 rod coarse and non-migratory trout license, or £82 to also fish for salmon and sea trout, and short term options available too, the rod licence is great value for money".

Anglers are being reminded that fishing for coarse fish in rivers is off limits until 16 June and anyone caught can expect to be prosecuted and face a fine. The 3-month break began 15 March and ends 15 June.

## **Close Season**

The close season on rivers is important to maintain healthy fish stocks, as it allows fish time to breed as well as giving other waterside wildlife the same break. During this time fisheries enforcement officers will be carrying out regular patrols of rivers with partners under OPERATION CLAMPDOWN.

OPERATION CLAMPDOWN is a joint Environment Agency, Police and Angling Trust – Voluntary Bailiff Service enforcement strategy run throughout the closed

season. It ensures reactive and planned enforcement activity prevents illegal fishing on lakes, rivers, ponds and canals where coarse fishing is allowed. Officers will be ensuring all anglers have a valid rod licence, and they will also be on the look-out for those using illegal baits, banned methods of fishing and fishing in prohibited areas.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – either online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – the only site you need, or from the Post Office.

The Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60.

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## **Press release: Flood scheme boost with £36m of funding**

From Hull to Bath and Wolverhampton to the Wirral, communities up and down England are set to benefit from a government cash boost that will protect thousands of homes from flooding, enhance the environment and bolster economic growth and tourism.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has today (Tuesday, 27 March) announced that 25 new schemes will receive a share of £36 million announced in the Autumn Statement to improve flood protection.

One of the biggest beneficiaries is Hull, where £12 million will improve the defences along the River Hull to protect homes, businesses, infrastructure and areas of cultural importance within the city. The funding will support the second phase of the project which started in 2016 and has so far seen 39 sections of defence improved over a 7.5km stretch of river.

The main pier at Seahouses, Berwick-upon-Tweed, protecting 140 properties and the town's picturesque harbour, will be regenerated thanks to an extra £2.9 million.

Rivers will be restored and habitat improved in Gloucester, where £1.2 million will go to projects to protect 370 properties along the Sud Brook and River Twyer.

In Derby, more than £300,000 will help create new wetlands and flood reservoirs to not only protect 110 homes from flooding but also enhance biodiversity in residential areas.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This funding will benefit projects across the country from Hull to Gloucester, from Wolverhampton to the Wirral, that need an extra

boost for flood defences to help our communities continue to prosper and grow in the future.

Not only will this investment make places more resilient against flooding, but it will help the local economy, enhance the natural environment and protect important areas of culture – whether it is the homes, businesses and cultural sites in Hull to the pier in Seahouses or the natural environment in Gloucester.

The government has worked with the Environment Agency to prioritise the areas that would get the most benefit – the schemes will not only protect an additional 3,000 properties from flooding but will contribute to wider benefits for the community.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

In the face of challenges like a changing climate, rising sea levels and more severe weather, the Environment Agency is working hard to protect people, homes and businesses from flooding.

As with every project we undertake, we're also striving to improve our environment and this additional funding will not only help us build flood defences, but restore vital habitat and bring nature back to some of our urban communities.

The additional £36 million funding was initially set aside for new projects in the Autumn Budget. The £33.8 million funding allocated today will go towards 25 flood schemes over the next three years, in addition to the £2.2 million given to 13 projects in Cumbria and Devon at the end of last year.

In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced £76 million to be spent on flood and coastal defences – £36 million for new schemes and £40 million to boost local regeneration in deprived communities at high flood risk.

This brings the total investment in flood defence to £2.6 billion by 2021, when more than 1,500 flood defences will have been built to protect 300,000 homes up and down the country.

Over the past two years, the Environment Agency has completed more than 350 new flood schemes to protect 100,000 homes. In addition to building hard defences, it has improved its response by investing in new technology and equipment like temporary flood barriers, pumps and 6,500 trained staff across the country.

The Environment Agency's free flood warning system also reaches more than 1.2 million people to give them vital warning when flooding is expected. You can check your risk and sign up to receive warnings on [GOV.UK here](https://gov.uk) or by calling

## [News story: First tree planted in River Aire natural flood management pilot](#)

The first of thousands of trees to be planted across the upper River Aire catchment took place today as part of a pilot natural flood management project.

Cllr Judith Blake CBE, leader of Leeds City Council, planted the first tree on site at Eshton Beck, Gargrave, witnessed by volunteers, landowners, local authorities and partners. This pilot site will have 450 trees planted, to see how natural techniques can slow the flow of water and reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

Ray Bridge Farm, Eshton Beck, Gargrave is the location of the first pilot site where trees such as Dogwood, Guelder Rose, Downy Birch, Alder, and willow will be planted along with hedgerows of hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers will be leading the planting of trees at the site.

The natural flood management pilot forms part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme, led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, which has a catchment wide approach to flood risk as it enters its second stage.

This £500,000 pilot programme, which has been funded by Leeds City Council, forms part of plans to plant hundreds of thousands of trees that will support second phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Working with natural processes to reduce flood risk, known as natural flood management, is an important part of managing and reducing flood risk in a sustainable way alongside more traditional engineering solutions. The interventions will also create habitat for wildlife and help regenerate rural and urban areas through tourism.

The pilot sites will allow the team to be able to do monitoring and research of the techniques used to gather evidence and increase their understanding and the benefits they give to reducing flood risk. The pilot programme will also be used by the Environment Agency and Leeds City Council to develop a co-design approach to working with landowners, tenants, local authorities and other key partners such as the Aire Rivers Trust and the White Rose Forest. This will help to then develop future plans for the catchment.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

These new trees are a hugely significant part of our plans to protect Leeds from future flooding like the devastation we saw on Boxing Day 2015.

It's great to be working with partner authorities along the River Aire to get the first of the trees planted.

They are part of what will be a range of natural flood management measures in a catchment wide approach to prevent future catastrophic floods affecting communities along the river.

Adrian Gill, Area Flood Risk Manager at the Environment Agency said:

I'm really pleased to launch this pilot programme in partnership with Leeds City Council. Using natural techniques to minimise flood risk while creating new habitats and increasing woodland cover across the Aire catchment will help realise the ambitions set out in the Defra's 25 year environment plan.

While we can never truly eliminate the threat of flooding, working together across local authority boundaries to develop and deliver this programme will help us to create better, more effective solutions to a catchment-wide challenge.

Following the successful opening of the £50million first phase of the scheme serving the city centre, Holbeck and Woodlesford in October last year, phase two identifies measures further upstream including the Kirkstall corridor which was badly hit by the 2015 Christmas floods. It also looks at areas beyond the city boundary to further reduce the possibility of the river flooding in Leeds, as well as additional measures to offer protection for the South Bank area of the city centre which is a key future economic driver for Leeds.

The phase two plans have a strong focus on natural flood management, with proposals to create new woodland areas which would more than double canopy coverage in the River Aire catchment. It also proposes water storage areas to be created and developed, operated by control gates system meaning water can be held and then released back into the river when safe to do so. A third element would be the removal of existing obstructions along the river to help reduce water levels, along with lowering the riverbed in places to improve its capacity and flow.

An outline business case for phase 2 has been completed, which was submitted at the end of January 2018. Outline design for engineered options is being progressed, which will be followed by a tender process with an aim to

awarding the construction contract award in autumn 2018.

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## **Press release: Events to find out more about North East natural flood management**

Weardale residents can find out more about how a £2.1million natural flood management project could reduce their risk of flooding and create a haven for wildlife in a series of events to be held next month.

The Weardale Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project will see the Environment Agency investigate and deliver natural features across 100km squared area to reduce the risk of flooding to 141 properties.

The project team is currently carrying out an assessment of NFM techniques that might help reduce flood risk in Weardale and takes in towns and villages including Stanhope, Westgate, Eastgate and Wolsingham.

The Environment Agency is working on the project with Natural England, Forestry Commission, Durham County Council and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

They want to work with local farmers and landowners who are interested in getting involved in the project to assess the impact of different NFM features. Over the coming months, the North Pennines AONB partnership will be taking the lead in approaching farmers and landowners to discuss voluntary involvement in the scheme. They will be supported by Wear Rivers Trust.

A series of information events for communities is taking place in April to find out more about what it means for them and how they can get involved, as well as capturing their local knowledge about flooding history in the area.

### **First step in 'pioneering project'**

Environment Agency Project Manager Kirsty Hardy said:

This is the first step in what is a pioneering project to explore and deliver natural flood management features to reduce flood risk, as well as enrich the landscape and habitat of what is a beautiful area of countryside.

Until December this year we will be assessing different techniques and our colleagues at the North Pennines AONB Partnership, supported by Wear Rivers Trust, will be speaking with local farmers

and landowners before we can then identify any suitable locations for potential delivery of natural flood management features.

This project is ultimately going to increase our understanding of the impact natural flood management can have on reducing flows along tributaries on the Upper River Wear.

We're hosting a series of events where people can find out more about natural flood management and how they can get involved, as well as help us understand past flooding in the area. This really is an exciting project where the community can play a key role and I'd encourage people to come along.

## **Early discussions**

Rebecca Barrett, Biodiversity Lead for the North Pennines AONB Partnership, added:

We have already had some early discussions with a number of farmers and landowners in Weardale. They are interested in the project and are happy to discuss ways to help reduce the impact of flooding on their community.

It is a pleasure to meet with the people whose land management activities play such an important role in the appearance and function of our landscape and we are looking forward to developing the project in partnership with them over the coming months.

All drop-in events take place between 2.30pm and 7pm on:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
4 April	Westgate Village Hall, Front Street, Westgate, DL13 1RX
5 April	Wearhead Village Hall, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DY
10 April	Cowshill Village Hall, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DA
11 April	Eastgate Village Hall, Eastgate, DL13 2HU
12 April	Stanhope Community Association, Front Street, Stanhope, DL13 2NQ

In March 2017 the Environment Agency announced £15million of funding had been made available for NFM schemes nationally. The Weardale project will allow the Environment Agency to gather and understand evidence to support that natural flood management can play a role in reducing flood risk.

NFM features are specifically designed to work with the natural processes in the landscape to slow river flows and reduce flood risk. As with traditional flood walls and embankments they are a tool to help reduce risk but can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely.

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## Press release: Invasive species week: Floating pennywort a spreading menace

Reports of floating pennywort in our rivers and lakes have reached a record high with 50 tonnes of the invasive plant being removed from the River Thames by the Environment Agency in 2017.

Fast-growing plants like floating pennywort can spread into the wild if they are not properly disposed of when removed from garden ponds. The [Be Plant Wise](#) campaign has handy tips for gardeners on how to prevent this from happening.

Lord Gardiner, the Biosecurity Minister, will see the effects of floating pennywort on Little Britain lake, Hillingdon, and hear about the work being carried out to prevent this plant from spreading further in the River Colne on Monday, 26 March 2018.

He will also see new signs being put up to encourage fishermen and boaters to [Check, Clean, Dry](#) their equipment and clothing to avoid spreading invasive species.

Biosecurity Minister, Lord Gardiner said:

Invasive species pose a real threat to our country's native plants and animals and cost the economy at least £1.8 billion a year.

The Check, Clean, Dry campaign is playing a key role in raising awareness of these threats – helping to prevent new arrivals and stopping the spread of invasive species already here. It is great to see the whole community of river users supporting this programme to protect the future of our precious native species.

As well as following the Check, Clean, Dry advice, people can help by reporting sightings of invasive plants through the [PlantTracker app](#).

Lord Gardiner's visit comes as part of a wider push by government to promote Invasive Species Week. The week is an annual awareness-raising campaign organised by the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) and Defra to get members of the public thinking about simple steps they can take to stop the spread of invasive species which threaten Britain's plants and animals.

Find out more on [non-native species](#).

Below are the themes for Invasive Species Week, which runs until 29 March



2018.

- Monday 26 March – Ornamental plants. [Be Plant Wise](#) and raising awareness of invasive plants.
- Tuesday 27 March – Hitchhikers. Information on the ways that recreational water users, field workers and anyone out in the countryside can help to prevent the spread of INNS, in particular promoting [Check Clean Dry](#).
- Wednesday 28 March – Exotic pets. Owners are asked to make sure they never release pets, or allow them to escape, into the wild.
- Thursday 29 March – #getINNSvolved – on the last day of Invasive Species Week tell us how you are getting #getINNSvolved.