

Press release: Camera footage helps secure fisheries conviction

Body worn camera footage captured by Environment Agency officers on patrol has been used to support a conviction for the first time.

Callum Bell, 26, of Lyndsey Street in Houghton-Le-Spring, was fined for obstructing Fisheries Enforcement officers during an incident at Ouston near Chester-le-Street in June last year.

The footage shows Bell using insulting and threatening behaviour towards the two officers as they investigated an illegal fishing offence.

He appeared at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, 31 January, where he pleaded guilty to two offences of wilfully obstructing the officers in the execution of their duty, and two offences of using threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour towards the two officers. He was fined £534 and ordered to pay costs of £530.

In a separate offence from the same incident, David Daniel Bilverstone, 23, of Northlands in Chester-le-Street was charged with fishing without a licence. He failed to appear and the case was proved in his absence. He was fined £110 and ordered to pay costs of £180.

Threatening towards officers

Acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Chris Bunting told the court that on 18 June last year, the enforcement officers were carrying out a patrol of the freshwater lake Ouston Springs. They saw Bilverstone fishing with a rod and Bell seemingly asleep on the bankside.

One of the enforcement officers took Bilverstone aside to fill in an offence report form. He said he goes sea fishing and claimed he didn't know he needed a licence.

At this point Bell awoke and walked towards where the officers were standing by the lake side. It was apparent he was affected by alcohol. He quickly became aggressive and threatening towards the two officers.

He tried to grab the offence report book, threatened to push them in the lake and twice lunged towards one of the officers, trying to grab the officer's baton from its holster. Over the course of several minutes he continued to be verbally abusive, repeatedly swearing and making threats.

Even after the officers had finished dealing with the illegal fishing offence, he continued to shout abuse towards them from across the lake.

When interviewed, Bell said he was drunk and hadn't meant to obstruct the officers. In court, he offered an unreserved apology for his actions.

‘Safety of staff is paramount’

Rachael Caldwell, Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader for the north east, said:

Bell was told on more than one occasion that he was being recorded by the cameras but he continued to be threatening and abusive.

Our officers are doing an important job to ensure people are fishing legally and taking action against those that aren't. The safety of our staff is paramount and they shouldn't have to put up with any kind of abusive or threatening behaviour.

This is the first time cameras worn by our officers have been used to support a conviction. Our preference is to prevent hostility in the first place and I hope this serves as a warning to others that their actions are being recorded and will be used in future court proceedings. Hopefully people will think twice before acting in such a way.

Environment Agency enforcement officers in the north east first trialled the use of body worn cameras last year to help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour, assaults and threats against staff. It's expected they will be rolled out to teams elsewhere in the country in the coming months.

The cameras – which are the norm among many enforcement agencies – can be used in a variety of ways, including at visits to poor performing waste sites, illegal waste sites, during fisheries and navigation patrols and even during incident response.

Officers must follow clear guidelines on use of the cameras, including telling people they are being filmed, and deleting any footage after a month unless it is used for evidential purposes.

Fishing is free for children under 16, although those aged between 12 and 16 still need a junior licence. For anyone over 16, a full annual licence costs from just £30, with some short term and concessionary licences also available. [You can buy your rod licence online](#)

[Press release: Environment Agency completes £10 million flood storage](#)

basin on World Wetlands Day

A £10 million flood scheme which will protect almost 2,000 homes and businesses, hold more than 250 Olympic-sized swimming pools of water during a flood and includes more than 5 hectares of urban wetland habitat, has been officially completed today (Friday 2 February).

The Environment Agency has marked the completion of its Salford Flood Improvement Scheme to coincide with [World Wetlands Day](#).

The Salford scheme delivers on a long-held vision to not only create a flood storage basin in Salford – to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Irwell – but also to provide a boost to local wildlife populations by including a high quality urban wetland habitat.

Wetlands provide many benefits to society and help us to be more resilient to the effects of our changing climate. They provide multiple benefits such as slowing the flow of water, reducing flood risk, filtering water and capturing carbon. Their importance is increasing as a result of climate and land use change.

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

The £10 million Salford flood scheme will reduce flood risk to almost 2,000 homes and businesses. In addition, we have created more than 5 hectares of urban wetland, bringing attractive landscapes for people and wildlife.

People in the area can also enjoy a new footpath around the site and links to existing footpaths that now provide a green route to and from the centre of Manchester. This excellent partnership project is a fine example of the multiple benefits our work brings to the local community.

In its primary function the multi-million pound scheme will provide increased protection to more than 1,900 homes and businesses across Lower Broughton and Lower Kersal. Lower Broughton was affected by the devastating floods that struck the city on Boxing Day in 2015.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

How fitting that on World Wetlands Day a new scheme in Salford is opening that will reduce flood risk to thousands of homes and businesses and deliver a lasting legacy for wildlife in this area with five hectares of new urban wetland habitat.

I am pleased the government has been able to support this scheme as part of the £39.5 million we are investing in Greater Manchester by

2021.

The entire 28 hectare flood basin sits within a meander loop of the River Irwell and will protect surrounding properties by holding up to 650 million litres of water – the equivalent to 260 Olympic-size swimming pools – during flood conditions.

The new defence is an 'offline' storage basin that will work in tandem with the existing flood storage area at Littleton Road, completed in 2005. To create the storage capacity ground was excavated from the site and then reused to build a raised embankment around the periphery to form part of the defence system.

The embankment's south-west corner features an inlet to allow the controlled spill of water into the basin when river levels are high. Water is then stored in the basin during a flood and released by two outlet pipes back into the river once the water level has dropped.

Making the most of every design aspect, the flood embankments have been planted with 10ha of wildflower habitat, to attract pollinating species such as lady birds, moths, butterflies and bees – whose population has dramatically declined across the county in recent years.

The scheme not only brings flood risk and wildlife benefits, but also leisure and amenity benefits to the local community.

With exactly 2.5km of new footpath skirting the periphery, runners and cyclists can enjoy the improved scenery and the links to existing footpaths that now provide a green route to and from the centre of Manchester.

Within the basin area, a number of multi-use sports pitches have been given improved playing surfaces and better drainage systems, making them more resilient to flooding than the pitches that were in place before the scheme.

The two kiosks on site were decorated by renowned Manchester graffiti artist, kELz0, who observed the wildlife on site to create the vibrant designs.

As a longer term, economic benefit, the scheme will help Salford Council's regeneration plans by enabling development in areas previously not viable. More than 90 hectares of development land has been protected as a direct result of the scheme which will allow increased opportunities to develop land within the river corridor.

Throughout the 3-year construction term, the Environment Agency worked closely with Salford City Council, the local community steering group, the Broughton Trust, Salford Friendly Anglers, Kersal Vale Allotment & Horticultural Society and the University of Salford.

Funding for the scheme came from a number of sources. £5m came from Government Gant-in-Aid, £4.1m came from a Government growth fund and the remaining £1.2m came from Salford City Council.

Councillor Derek Antrobus, lead member for planning and sustainable development at Salford City Council said:

The new flood basin realises a long-term ambition of the city council to reduce the risk for local communities.

The council is delighted that it will also provide an excellent amenity and we have invested in the bridge from Kersal Dale so the site is integrated into the walking and cycling route along the Irwell Valley.

The scheme's completion will officially be marked with the unveiling of a plaque by the Environment Agency's Chair, Emma Howard-Boyd and the city's Mayor Paul Dennett.

The government is investing £2.6 billion to better protect over 300,000 properties from flooding by 2021.

The flood basin will be opened to the public once essential work to the path network has been completed. Dependent on dry weather conditions, this is scheduled for early Spring. The flood basin is already fully operational and will be used during a flooding event as required.

Take a tour of the scheme from above by viewing our drone footage of Salford on [YouTube](#).

Press release: Partners work together on day of action along Norfolk river

Following complaints over several months from Norfolk Broads residents living along the River Yare in Norwich about illegal fishing, littering and general anti-social behaviour, Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer Nick Beardmore took action. He raised the matter with partners including Norfolk Police and the Broads Authority at the monthly Norfolk Police Broadsbeat Partnership meeting.

As a result a multi-agency day of action was arranged for the Heron Island area, led by the Norfolk Police Broadsbeat team. The day saw new information signs installed, a big clean-up of the area and rod licence checks carried out.

Nick Beardmore said:

The residents were overwhelmed with the support they received and I

want to thank everyone who joined us on the day, which was a real success. Hopefully the problems encountered in the past won't be repeated.

Norfolk Police Broadsbeat officers Derek Rutter, Martin Chapman, Paul Bassham and Amy Barrell used 2 police boats to transport everyone over to the island and carry out hi-visibility patrols along the Rivers Wensum and Yare. They also explained their role to the cadets, who were split into 3 groups and rotated throughout the day.

Broadsbeat officer PC Paul Bassham said:

It was recognised that if we didn't all pull together to tackle the emerging issues, the problems would continue to escalate once the weather turned warmer. This would take up valuable resource time and make life miserable for residents around Heron Island.

PC Barrell co-ordinated the follow-up response, supervising North Norfolk and Broadlands Police Cadets, and Officers Tina Wright, Peter Davison, Andy Mason and Ian Kennedy while they cleared the area and installed the new signs. The team worked alongside Broads Authority Rangers, local residents, a tree surgeon and the Environment Agency throughout the day.

Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader Lesley Robertson said:

Working together in this way means we can pool our resources and tackle a number of issues at the same time. I am very pleased that local residents felt supported and urge anyone with information about illegal fishing activities to report it to our 24-hour Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

For updates and pictures, follow us on Twitter @EnvAgencyAnglia @Broadsbeat @BroadsAuth

[Press release: Suspended jail term for landowner over illegal landfill site](#)

The Environment Agency has successfully prosecuted a landowner and two men who blighted 19 acres of Cheshire farm land by dumping and landfilling tens of thousands of tonnes of waste.

Mr Eric Hale of Bank Top Farm near Frodsham was sentenced to 12 months

imprisonment suspended for two years, disqualified from driving for 12 months ordered to work 200 hours unpaid and have a curfew of 8pm to 6am for three months after pleading guilty to operating an illegal waste site without an environmental permit and dumping and landfilling controlled waste on the land.

Mr Hale also paid £100,000 in contributions towards the Environment Agency's costs. Mr Dennis Whiting and Mr Stefan Street each received a Conditional Discharge for two years after pleading guilty to dumping and landfilling controlled waste.

The Environment Agency brought the case against Mr Eric Hale, Mr Dennis Whiting and Mr Stefan Street after a lengthy investigation. The investigation identified that significant amounts of waste were being brought on to the farm, which did not have an environmental permit.

The Environment Agency identified that the operation of the illegal site was closely connected with a waste company Eric Hale Skip Hire Ltd. The prosecution for the Environment Agency stated that the majority of waste collected by the company was illegally dumped and landfilled at Bank Top Farm instead of being taken to a legitimate waste site.

Tracey Rimmer, Area Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

This operation demonstrates how the Environment Agency works in partnership to tackle serious waste crime. We have worked closely with the police and local authorities to pursue these criminals and bring them to justice. Waste crime is a serious issue diverting as much as £1 billion per year from legitimate business and the treasury.

During the course of the investigation Eric Hale, Steffan Street and Dennis Whiting were seen driving large waste vehicles which delivered, deposited and disposed of mixed waste, demolition waste including plasterboard and other waste including carpets and mattresses.

Trommel fines, which are a by-product produced during the recycling process and consist of materials such as wood, aggregate, glass, ceramics and organics, were also dumped at Bank Top Farm. The unregulated deposit of waste has the potential to cause harm to the environment.

The Judge on sentencing said:

Eric Hale was driven by greed to continue the illegal operation.

Also the court did not accept any of the mitigation of the offending put forward but Eric Hale's substantial personal mitigating circumstances were acknowledged by the court.

If you see waste crime report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Waste crime can cause serious pollution to the environment put communities at risk and undermines legitimate business and the investment and economic growth that go with it. You can call the Environment Agency on 0370 850 6506 to find out how to responsibly manage any waste your business produces or visit www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/overview.

Press release: New proposed measures announced ahead of salmon consultation

The Environment Agency is proposing new measures to protect salmon stocks across England and in the Border Esk, which are currently among the lowest on record.

The 2015 national salmon stock assessment indicated that salmon stocks in many rivers across England had failed to meet their minimum safe levels. The 2016 assessment showed this trend continued and the new measures proposed are based on this assessment.

The proposals come after an initial EA consultation last year to understand how the better management of salmon fishing in England and the Border Esk can reduce the impact on salmon numbers. The responses to that consultation helped inform these proposals and build an understanding of the likely impacts for managing salmon fishing in the future.

The Environment Agency is now proposing the following measures to protect salmon stocks in England Fisheries and on the Border Esk:

1. Stop the taking of salmon from the majority of net fisheries by 2019. Other nations have closed their net fisheries; the evidence shows we should too.
2. For rivers with the lowest salmon stocks, a mandatory requirement to return all salmon caught. This reflects the need for both net and rod fishermen to help us protect Salmon stocks.
3. Voluntary catch and release targets for all other rivers.
4. Restriction on the number, size and type of hooks that can be used when fishing.

Kevin Austin, Environment Agency's Deputy Director for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment said:

We are not suggesting these proposals lightly and have consulted widely with those affected. However we need to take action now in order to give as many of the salmon that make it back to our rivers as possible a chance to spawn successfully.

The reasons for decline of salmon are complex and there is no single solution; reducing the catch of salmon can only partly contribute to the recovery of salmon stocks. We continue to work closely with water companies and other to improve water quality and low flows on salmon rivers. We are also investing and working in partnership to improve fish passage on schemes up and down the country.

It is only through continuing to take concerted action, and through the co-operation of others, that we will successfully protect this iconic species for future generations.

Reducing the taking of salmon by rods and nets is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger programme called the 'Salmon Five Point Approach'. The Salmon Five Point Approach has been jointly developed and committed to by a wide range of partners which include Government, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Angling Trust, River Trusts, Association of River Trusts and the Institute of Fisheries Management.

It sets out the actions to address the key pressures that affect the different life stages of salmon. The priorities are:

1. Improve marine survival
2. Further reduce exploitation by nets and rods
3. Remove barriers to migration and enhance habitat
4. Safeguard sufficient flows
5. Maximise spawning success by improving water quality

You can find out more about the [Salmon Five Point Approach](#).

We will formally advertise the proposed byelaws to protect Salmon will be published on GOV.UK in late February 2018, and all those wishing to may respond either online or via letter.

Notes to Editors:

1. The most vulnerable rivers will be the rivers classed as "At Risk" as predicted by 2021. These are: the Tees, Stour, Yealm, Plym, Ribble, Wyre, Lune Crake, Calder and Derwent
2. Voluntary catch and release levels at rivers classed "probably at Risk" will be required to be greater than 90%
3. Voluntary catch and release levels should be encouraged on rivers classed as 'Probably not at Risk'

4. Other countries that have closed salmon net fisheries include, Eire, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Faroese fisheries
5. [2015 national salmon stock assessment](#)
6. [2016 national salmon stock assessment](#)