

Press release: Pair guilty of illegal fishing in County Durham

The Environment Agency has prosecuted two County Durham men for poaching and using illegal fishing equipment.

Ian David Cook, 38, of The Grove, Consett, and Michael Fullerton, 22, of Surrey Crescent, also in Consett, were each given a 12 month conditional discharge by Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on 6 December 2017 after pleading guilty to the offences. They were also each ordered to pay £420 costs.

Magistrates heard that on 30 November 2016 Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers observed Cook and Fullerton shining torches into the upper River Browney near West Butsfield, during a targeted evening patrol.

The River Browney and its catchment is an important and improving area for migratory fish, especially sea trout. Recent improvements to aid fish passage and water quality and a robust approach to enforcement have led to an increase in returning fish but at present, stocks remain low and vulnerable.

After detaining the men they seized two torches and a landing net containing three dead sea trout, each at various stages of spawning. Under the Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, lights are prohibited, as are landing nets if used without an authorised rod and line. It is also illegal to fish during the close season for migratory fish.

During interview, Fullerton admitted to shining the torch into the river and using the net to take fish but denied knowing it was illegal. He also denied knowing it was illegal to take fish during the close season. This was despite him holding a rod licence at the time, which spells out when and how legal fishing can be undertaken. Cook confirmed he understood that using a lamp to either take or assist in taking fish is an offence.

Kevin Summerson of the Environment Agency said:

This was a serious poaching incident using illegal instruments that could have had a severe impact on future stocks of sea trout in the River Browney. At this time of year sea trout are returning to rivers to spawn and protecting returning fish is vital to maintaining a healthy fish population.

That's why our fisheries enforcement officers work hard to target those people flouting the law and we won't hesitate to take action.

The conditional discharge will appear on Fullerton and Cook's criminal record. If either commits another crime within the next 12 months they can be sentenced for the first offence and the new offence.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Press release: Company fined £80,000 for polluting brook with hazardous chemical

Firth Rixson Metals Limited has been ordered to pay a fine of £80,000 after pleading guilty to polluting a watercourse in Glossop.

The Environment Agency prosecuted the company after over 600 litres of a solution of hydrochloric acid, caustic soda and water polluted nearby Shelf Brook.

This had a significant impact to the brook, resulting in 199 dead brown trout within a 500 metre stretch, with invertebrates also affected over two kilometres. The fins and eyes of the fish were noted to have a burnt appearance.

Member of the public reported incident

A member of the public initially reported the pollution in Shelf Brook to our Incident Hotline in April 2015.

Officers attended the area and found dead fish. Samples taken from the brook and a drain leading from the Firth Rixson Metals site into the brook were found to contain a highly alkaline liquid, made up of various metals, at elevated levels.

As part of Firth Rixson Metal's manufacturing process, an acid scrubber was used. Hydrochloric acid emissions were neutralised with caustic soda. Below the scrubber was a waste tank in a plastic containment bund.

Environment Agency launched investigation

The Environment Agency investigation identified a valve had been left open. This allowed water into the scrubber unit and the automatic dosing equipment had continued to add caustic soda. Staff failed to respond properly to alarms and a pump, which should have returned the solution, failed to activate.

This resulted in a highly alkaline solution overflowing from the containment bund, which entered the nearby drain to the brook. The company had failed to cap the drain, despite recent advice from local authority inspectors.

Pollution had significant impact

In sentencing, District Judge Davison said Firth Rixson Metals Ltd had allowed a state of affairs to exist which led to the incident.

Mark Easedale, Environment Manager for Greater Manchester, said:

This pollution incident had a significant impact on Shelf Brook, killing brown trout, which are a key indicator species of good water quality. The sentencing sends out a very clear message to anyone whose recklessness and negligence causes serious pollution to the environment. We will not hesitate to take action against polluters.

Our staff work 24/7 to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents and we encourage people to report such incidents to the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Firth Rixson Metals Ltd pleaded guilty to causing a water discharge activity not under and to the extent authorised by an Environmental Permit contrary to the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

Press release: Environment Agency announces £1.4m Anglian Waterways investment

Boaters are to benefit from a £1.4m investment into [Anglian Waterways](#), as the [Environment Agency](#) launches its latest improvement programme.

The Capital Investment Programme sets out the repairs and upgrades being made across Anglian Waterways' 353-mile network.

Seven-figure investment

Eight locks across its most popular rivers are set for refurbishment. The seven-figure investment will ensure the structures remain in good working order for years to come.

The work covers locks at Wadenhoe, Woodford, Titchmarsh, Orton, Cotterstock, and Ashton on the [River Nene](#), and Eaton Socon and Brandon on the [River Great Ouse](#).

These are among the busiest locks on the Anglian Waterways network, giving access to around 7,000 boaters a year.

Work started in November and continues throughout the winter months, avoiding the peak boating season to minimise disruption for those on the river.

Sign up for latest updates

The locks will have to close during the work to be drained of water and allow full access to the chambers and the gates. Boaters can get the latest information by [signing up for email updates](#) or calling the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 and asking for Anglian Waterways.

The investment programme will also include de-shoaling work on the rivers Great Ouse and Nene. This will remove underwater gravel that builds up naturally and can hamper navigation.

Also included are investigations into improving the Nene's landing stages, where boaters can disembark, and upgrading control panels at the locks to the same model, making them consistent and easier to use and maintain across the region.

Neil Pope, Anglian Waterways assets team leader at the Environment Agency, said:

Our precious waterways are an important part of our nation's rich heritage and beauty. They are a national treasure, valued for their contribution to our environment, our health and wellbeing, and our economy. We're proud to play a part in caring for them, and we take that responsibility very seriously.

Maintaining them to a good, safe working standard is our number-one priority. We invest money very carefully to ensure the best value for every pound we spend. This means our waterways will continue to offer outstanding value to the many, many people who enjoy them every year.

The Environment Agency cares for more than 353 miles of navigable waterways in the Anglian region, as well as a vast network of associated facilities such as bridges, locks, moorings and toilets.

The two most popular rivers in this network – the Great Ouse and the Nene – attract more than 7,000 boaters and an estimated 1.1m other visitors every year.

Capital Investment Programme

The work in the agency's investment programme is subject to change. The current schedule (7 December 2017) is:

- Wadenhoe Lock, River Nene, Northamptonshire: 3 January 2018 to 12 February 2018. Complete refurbishment.
 - Woodford Lock, River Nene, Northamptonshire: 27 November 2017 to 22 December 2017 and 22 January 2018 to 23 February 2018. Complete refurbishment.
 - Titchmarsh Lock, River Nene, Northamptonshire: 3 January 2018 to 16 March 2018. Complete refurbishment.
 - Cotterstock Lock, River Nene, Northamptonshire: 22 January 2018 to 16 February 2018. Replacement of counterweight.
 - Ashton Lock, River Nene, Northamptonshire: 16 February 2018 to 28 March 2018. Refurbishment of guillotine gate.
 - Orton Lock, River Nene, Cambridgeshire: Dates to be confirmed. Re-painting.
 - Landing stages, River Nene: November 2017 to April 2018. Investigate the possibility of additional landing stages along the Nene and repair existing ones.
 - De-shoaling, River Nene: Dates to be confirmed. Remove gravel impacting navigation.
 - Eaton Socon, River Great Ouse, Cambridgeshire: February 2018. Replace sweep arms on the mitre gates.
 - Brandon Lock, River Great Ouse, Suffolk: March 2018. Repair footbridge walkway.
 - De-shoaling, River Great Ouse: Dates to be confirmed. Remove gravel impacting navigation.
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[Press release: Medway Flood Action Plan Launched](#)

The Medway Flood Partnership has today launched the [Medway Flood Action Plan](#), outlining how it will reduce the risk of flooding to 9,000 properties in communities along the River Medway in Kent.

The plan is owned by the Medway Flood Partnership and outlines how the members will work with communities to manage the risk of in the Medway catchment. This covers all land draining into the Rivers Medway, Beult, Teise, Bourne and Eden, as well their tributaries. During the December 2013 flood event, over 900 homes were flooded across the Medway catchment, devastating people and livelihoods.

Over the next 5 years, at least £19 million will be invested in the Medway catchment on projects that help to manage and reduce flood risk. Measures include increasing the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and providing property-level resilience measures to homes in Yalding, Collier Street and Laddingford. The Environment Agency will be spending about £1 million each year on maintenance of river channels and flood defences such as flood walls,

sluices and weirs, to ensure they remain in good condition.

Many organisations have a role in managing and responding to flooding: parish councils, local authorities, national agencies, landowner representatives and local businesses. Reducing the risk of flooding in the Medway catchment is a complex problem, which can only be solved by working in partnership.

The Medway Flood Partnership was established in January 2017 to bring these organisations together to co-ordinate these activities. We have also developed a Medway Action Plan that sets out our shared objectives and priorities for the next 5 years and a vision for the next 25 years.

Together the partnership are looking at where they can build defences to better protect communities as well as where they can slow the flow of floodwaters and reduce flood levels through natural flood management. Where it is not possible to prevent flooding, they are working with local communities to help them be better prepared and resilient to flooding so that they can recover more quickly after a flood.

Julie Foley, Environment Agency Area Manager, said:

The launch of this plan demonstrates our commitment to finding practicable solutions to manage flood risk. Over the next 5 years, fully funded schemes within the Medway Flood Action Plan will reduce the risk of flooding to over 1,700 homes along the River Medway. With our partners, we will also be exploring further opportunities for schemes that help to reduce flood risk and improve the local environment.

Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member at Kent County Council, said:

I'm delighted that the Medway Flood Action Plan has been launched and that we can finally get to work on flood defences in the area. During the winter 2013 to 14 floods, over 900 homes and businesses in Tonbridge, Yalding, East Peckham and other smaller communities were flooded from the River Medway. We are determined to reduce the risk of flooding to these communities. This is tremendous news for those communities affected and goes to show that the hard work we have put in with our partners has helped us secure the funding and draw up a robust plan to help manage and reduce flood risk.

Contact

- All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743
- Email: southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk
- Follow us on Twitter: @EnvAgencySE

Press release: Heathrow coach firm polluted river with toilet waste

A west London river was contaminated after toilets from luxury coaches were emptied into public drains.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, based near Heathrow Airport, broke environmental law when staff poured waste into sewers, instead of taking the waste to an approved site for disposal.

Officers from the Environment Agency turned detective in 2015, tracing pollution in the River Crane to where Symphony operated, a trading estate minutes from the airport.

A monitoring device, called a sonde, found the river had been polluted, and other sondes identified Symphony as the source, which officers confirmed through a network of drains.

The watercourse was further polluted when chemicals and dirty water entered the drains after staff washed vehicles on Symphony's premises. The firm had been warned by the Environment Agency and the company's landlords doing so was against the lease. Symphony would have stayed within the law by disposing of the chemicals at an approved site, or by cleaning their cars and coaches at an authorised location.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, Eastern Business Park, Ely Road, Hounslow, was fined £18,000 by Ealing Magistrates' Court, which ordered the firm to pay £12,113.62 in costs, and a victim surcharge of £170. The company was charged with allowing poisonous, noxious or polluting matter into the River Crane, between May 2015 and February 2016, and failing to provide the Environment Agency with documents relating to their activities.

The sole director of the firm, Allen Jeyakumar, of Lee Road, Greenford, was fined £3,134 by the court, for allowing Symphony to commit the offences. Mr Jeyakumar also had to pay a victim surcharge of £142.

Mathew Reed, who led the investigation for the Environment Agency, said:

Incidents like this have the potential to have a serious and long-term impact on the health of the river. Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd was given repeated warnings about its activities.

People might think we will find it too difficult to trace the cause of pollution, but this case proves that some detective work leads to a conviction.

Identifying pollution through a complex network of drains can be

difficult, but that doesn't mean it cannot be done. We have the skills and technology to do it.

Both Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd and Allen Jeyakumar pleaded guilty to all charges at an earlier hearing.

For media enquiries, please call 0800 141 2743, or email southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk.