

# Press release: United Utilities fined £666,000 for polluting river with raw sewage

United Utilities has been ordered to pay a fine of £666,000 in after pleading guilty to polluting a river with untreated sewage effluent in Greater Manchester.

The Environment Agency took the prosecution against the water company after sewage polluted the River Medlock having a significant impact on fish population and water quality over a distance of four kilometres.

It was a member of the public who initially reported the pollution in the River Medlock at Park Bridge, Ashton-Under-Lyne on 14 October 2014 to the Environment Agency's incident hotline.

Officers found that the pollution had deposited grey sludge on the River Medlock's bed over four kilometres resulting in significant impact on fish stocks and water quality in the river.

In total United Utilities estimated that 21,700 cubic metres of sewage discharged into the water.

A report commissioned by United Utilities found that the incident had a detrimental impact on brown trout and had the potential to reduce the fish population the following year.

When the pollution was first reported, United Utilities Officers were attending a high-level alarm at the Sewage Tank and had identified a fault which meant the tank was not emptying to the foul sewer network as quickly as it should have been. This resulted in untreated raw sewage entering Glodwick Brook and the River Medlock, which is contrary to the permit conditions in place.

United Utilities admitted that their control centre had received an alarm about the discharge three days before, but the fault had not been recognised.

In sentencing on Friday 8 September, HH Judge Potter said the company's negligence had resulted in significant harm to the River Medlock.

Mark Easedale, Environment Manager for Greater Manchester, said:

The Environment Agency take pollution incidents very seriously and this case should send a strong message to companies of the potential consequences if they damage the environment.

We appreciate reports from the public to the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60 which allows our staff to respond

swiftly to protect people, wildlife and the environment – also to investigate environmental offences which may have occurred.

The sewage that was discharged had a significant impact on the River Medlock, killing brown trout, which are a key indicator species of good water quality. The case demonstrates just how important it is that water companies and wider industries maintain their equipment in order to prevent pollution to the environment.

We work closely with United Utilities who have undertaken extensive work to reduce their impact on the environment. It's important that we continue to work with partners in order to safeguard the environment and ensure such incidents are avoided in the future.

In mitigation United Utilities told the court of the steps they had taken to prevent a reoccurrence of this incident.

The company were fined a total of £666,000 and ordered to pay costs of over £32,000.

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## **Press release: Rod licensing blitz identifies 23 offenders**

Environment Agency Officers led a series of rod licence enforcement patrols around various sites in Essex and Norfolk, on the back of intelligence received. They were joined by colleagues from Essex and Norfolk Police forces, the Broads Authority and volunteer bailiffs from the Angling Trust.

Over a total of three days (6, 9 and 10 September 2017), eight Essex fisheries were checked, and one river stretch patrolled in Norfolk (the River Bure).

Officers checked dozens of anglers, stressing the importance of buying a rod licence and explaining how the income is reinvested in fisheries. A total of 224 rod licences were checked and 23 offenders identified (a 10.26% evasion rate).

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

These checks were badged under the name Operation Springfield II. The Operation focused on rod licence evasion and raising awareness of the need for anglers to purchase and renew their rod licences.

Our Officers patrol the watercourses all year round, including holidays and weekends. Those who avoid buying a rod licence and are found fishing illegally may face prosecution and a hefty fine.

Anglers should ensure they are properly licensed before going out to enjoy this worthwhile hobby.

Essex Police Rural and Heritage Crime Officer, PC Andrew Long, said:

Like other forces across the UK, Essex Police have joined with the Environment Agency and Angling Trust to work together and tackle criminality surrounding theft of fish and unlawful fishing.

This has an impact on one of the country's most popular pastimes, with more than 1.5 million people buying rod licences every year.

Taking part in unlawful fishing can have a detrimental effect on the environment so it's important for us to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and ensure everyone has the correct licence to do this.

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## **Press release: New figures reveal junior fishing licences increase 25%**

Sales of junior fishing licences across England and Wales, have received a welcome boost over the summer, according to the latest figures from the Environment Agency. The figures reveal junior fishing licence sales increased by 25.7% from 2016/17. The fishing licence, which is now free for 12 to 16 year olds, shows figures increased from 52,117 at the end of 2016/17 to 65,487 as of 21 August 2017.

The increase in sales is welcomed by the Environment Agency which highlighted the challenge of attracting juniors to the sport given the popularity of game consoles, TV and social media. The rise in sales figures was helped by last year's changes to fishing licences which included making them free to anyone aged 12 to 16\*.

Figures from 2009 to 2016 showed a 52.6% decline in junior licence sales reaching just 52,117 in 2016. It's hoped that the recent increase marks the start of an upward trend that will help secure the future of the sport. The free juniors fishing licence is supported by hundreds of partnership fishing events run alongside partners including the Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month. The events include free family fun days and taster sessions which help remove barriers for juniors and families enabling them to consider taking up fishing.

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

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. 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.

Today's children are the anglers of tomorrow. It's important we attract them to the sport early and offering a free fishing licence is one way to achieve that. Not only does fishing offer great health and educational benefits, angling generates over £1 billion for the UK economy and creates over 37,000 full time jobs.

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 [www.getfishing.org.uk](http://www.getfishing.org.uk).

The free junior fishing licence is made possible as a result of income generated from adult fishing licence holders.

ENDS.

Notes to editors

- Figures quoted are for England and Wales
- \*Juniors still need to get a licence in order to fish but the licence will be free [www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence](http://www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence).
- These changes have also been implemented across Wales. Natural Resources Wales is the lead.
- Anglers are legally required to hold a valid fishing licence to fish in rivers, lakes and other inland waters in England (except the River Tweed) and the Border Esk (and its tributaries) in Scotland.

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## [News story: Better co-ordination to stop illegal waste carriers](#)

The Environment Agency and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) have agreed on steps to stop illegal waste carriers and improve road safety in England.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency Chief Executive, and Gareth Llewellyn, DVSA Chief Executive, signed an agreement today (12 September 2017) in London.

# How being a waste carrier works

Companies must [register as a waste carrier](#) if they:

- transport waste
- buy, sell or dispose of waste

However, some carriers operate illegally without the necessary licence, and don't dispose of waste legally.

Companies who use a waste carrier must [check they're registered to dispose of waste](#), and not allow the waste carrier to dispose of their waste illegally.

Every year waste crime costs taxpayers and businesses £1 billion. The Environment Agency spent almost £15 million stopping illegal waste activity between April 2015 and March 2016.

## What the agreement will do

The Environment Agency and DVSA will share intelligence and carry out joint operations in England to:

- stop waste being illegally transported
- target unsafe drivers and vehicles

The agreement will see:

- DVSA staff working within Environment Agency teams, making sure enforcement action is coordinated and effective
- information and intelligence shared between the 2 agencies, increasing the effectiveness of roadside enforcement activity on waste industry vehicles
- enforcement teams provided with up-to date and relevant intelligence about waste industry operators



A DVSA traffic examiner inspects a waste carrier

This will all help to:

- identify high-risk or illegal goods vehicle operators who are involved in the transport of waste
- reduce the number of seriously and serially non-compliant waste industry vehicles on England's roads

## **Report unsafe operators**

You can report any information you have about unsafe vehicle operators to DVSA.

## **DVSA intelligence team**

Email

[intelligenceunit@dvsa.gov.uk](mailto:intelligenceunit@dvsa.gov.uk)

Telephone

0300 123 9000

Report vehicle operators or lorry, bus and coach drivers breaking safety rules and laws.

Monday to Friday, 7:30am to 6pm.



## Building on years of joint work



Sir James Bevan and Gareth Llewellyn (right) talk to Environment Agency and DVSA staff at a joint operation in London

For a number of years, the Environment Agency and DVSA have worked together to stop waste crime, making sure companies are operating legally and vehicle safety is improved.

Gareth Llewellyn said:

DVSA priority is to protect you from unsafe drivers and vehicles.

I am delighted that we will be working with the Environment Agency to tackle those who illegally transport waste. By combining our enforcement powers and intelligence we'll be able to target those who break the rules more effectively.

DVSA traffic examiners will issue fines to those waste carriers we find to be operating in an unsafe manner. These operators are putting themselves and other road users at risk and pose a danger to our environment.

Sir James Bevan said:

We want to protect people and communities from the impact that

vehicle and waste crime can have and create a level playing field for all operators.

This memorandum of understanding with DVSA will help both organisations target the waste industry to improve compliance and vehicle and driver safety standards.

To help us with this, we are encouraging people to check with the Environment Agency if the company they are employing to take their waste away is a fully registered waste carrier.

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## **Press release: Landowners warned to be vigilant of fraudsters**

Organised criminals are known to be targeting sites in the West Midlands where they are either requesting to store waste which has been baled or claiming they will use the site for other means like vehicle storage, and then filling the site with baled waste instead.

Landowners are being duped by these criminals with the promise of payment for storage, but even if an initial cash payment is made, the further promised monies don't appear. Instead their land is filled up with the waste and they are left with clean-up costs that can run into the hundreds of thousands of pounds, or potentially a fine or custodial sentence leaving them with a criminal conviction on their record if the waste is not moved or disposed of in an appropriate manner.

The waste bales are being transported using curtain sided lorries and unloaded from the lorries using fork lift trucks. We would urge transport companies and plant hire companies to also be vigilant and not become part of this illegal activity.

Marc Liddeth, Environment Manager said:

A number of recent vehicle stops in the West Midlands found HGVs attempting to dispose of potentially illegal waste. These vehicles were stopped and the waste sent back to the original locations. The Environment Agency and police are investigating but we are unable to give any details at this time as it may damage any further investigations.

The storage of any baled or processed waste is not allowed without an environmental permit being in place. We are sending this warning



to landowners, hauliers and plant hire companies to remain vigilant and to prevent them becoming a victim of this scam.

Waste companies, local authorities and businesses all have a responsibility to check what happens to their waste. We have specialist teams who work in partnership with the police and agencies like HMRC to tackle waste crime. This specialist crime unit uses intelligence to track and prosecute organised crime gangs involved in illegal waste activity.

If you or your company are approached or have any information about those involved in this scam please contact the Environment Agency via their incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously online via [Crimestoppers](#) or by calling 0800 555 111.