

Press release: Fishing cheats land big fines in court in Middlesex

Anglers had penalties of over £450 each imposed at Uxbridge Magistrates Court on 6 February 2017 for fishing illegally, without an Environment Agency rod licence.

Adam Younie 26 of Haverhill, John Tibbs 46 of Romford, and Steve Sullivan 48 were caught fishing without a licence by Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers at Thorney Weir lakes, West Drayton, Middlesex. Each were fined £300 (with £127 costs and £30 victim surcharge) when an Environment Agency annual licence at the time, cost just £27.

All anglers failed to appear in court. Environment Agency Fisheries Team Leader, Richard Tyner said:

We check licences across all fisheries in Hertfordshire and Essex, and work in partnership with fishery owners and the police to detect and deter fisheries crime. People who don't buy a licence are cheating other anglers and the future of the sport. The Environment Agency relies on the income from rod licence sales to continue the important work we do to protect fish stocks, improve fisheries and encourage more people to take up fishing.

If you are caught fishing without a rod licence you risk a criminal conviction and a fine up to £2,500. There is no excuse. Annual rod licences for trout and coarse fishing remain at £5 for 12 to 16 year olds, £18 for senior and disabled concessions and £27 for non-concessions. Children under 12 can fish for free. Licences are easy to buy from the Post Office website or by phone on 03448 005 386 prior to fishing. Anglers should always ensure they have permission to fish at a fishery and check Environment Agency byelaws.

Last year, Environment Agency officers checked more than 62,000 licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 licence cheats. Between them, they were ordered to pay fines and costs in excess of £600,000. To help crack down on unlicensed fishing, the Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal activity by calling 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Money raised from rod licence sales is reinvested in the environment, including; a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers, protecting stocks from illegal fishing, fish restocking, invasive species eradication, and working with partners to encourage people to take-up fishing for the first time.

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Press release: Suez to pay £505,000 for pollution at Cornwall's largest landfill

The waste company, Suez Recycling and Recovery UK Limited, has been ordered to pay more than £500,000 in fines and costs for a series of offences at Connon Bridge landfill site near Liskeard.

In 2012 the Environment Agency became increasingly concerned at Suez's management of leachate (contaminated water) at the site. Heavy rain caused leachate levels to rise rapidly beyond limits specified by the site's environmental permit.

In January 2013, following reports from members of the public, Environment Agency officers visited the site and found two nearby watercourses, the Widowpath and Connon Streams, smothered in sewage fungus for a distance of approximately 4km. Sewage fungus is a sign of organic pollution.

Local residents started complaining of unpleasant odours caused by inadequately controlled emissions of landfill gas at Connon Bridge. It was apparent the site operator was struggling to regain control of the landfill. Investigations by the Environment Agency found that there had been spillages of leachate onto uncontained areas of the site. Surface water had been contaminated by leachate, and leachate had compromised water quality in a groundwater drainage culvert beneath the site.

Suez resorted to unauthorised methods of disposal in an attempt to remove large volumes of contaminated surface water from the site, pumping it onto adjacent fields.



Contaminated surface water was pumped onto nearby fields

The Environment Agency started monitoring the impact of the leachate spillages on the Widowpath and Connon Bridge Streams and concluded it was the worst outbreak of sewage fungus in the area for 20 years.

Investigators also became increasingly aware of the impact of odour pollution from the landfill site on the surrounding community. As the odour problem worsened, evidence was collected from people's homes.

Simon Harry, of the Environment Agency, said:

People living close to Connon Bridge landfill will not have forgotten the appalling odours that emanated from this site in 2013. The negligent failings of the landfill operator resulted in pollution both by odour and to local watercourses. The judge in this case acknowledged, in particular, the distress caused to the local community by the odour.



Officers found that uncapped areas of the landfill contributed to the release of foul odour

Mr Harry paid tribute to local residents for their 'forbearance' and said:

We take pollution incidents very seriously and this case should send a strong message to all industrial operators of the potential consequences of failing to take adequate steps to protect the environment.

At a sentencing hearing at Truro Crown Court on Friday, 3 February 2017, Suez Recycling and Recovery UK Limited was fined £180,000 and ordered to pay £325,000 costs after pleading guilty to 6 offences under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 including failure to comply with leachate level limits specified by an environmental permit, allowing leachate to overflow from a leachate extraction point, unauthorised emissions of contaminated water, failure to comply with water quality emission limits, failing to notify the Environment Agency and causing odour pollution.

The sentencing hearing marked the end of a lengthy and complex investigation lasting 4 years. The costs awarded by the court reflected the work that went into investigating and prosecuting this complicated technical case.

Note

At the time of the offences, the defendant was known as SITA UK Limited. The company now trades as Suez Recycling and Recovery UK Limited.

Press release: Newcastle man sentenced for illegal waste operation

A Newcastle man has been handed a suspended prison sentence for running an illegal waste site.

Leonard Sutherland, 77, from Burns Close Pig Farm at Armstrong Street in Callerton, appeared at South East Northumberland Magistrates' Court on Tuesday, 7 February.

It had originally been set for trial, but on his appearance he pleaded guilty to operating a waste site without a permit at Burns Close Pig Farm.

He was sentenced to 10 weeks in prison, suspended for 12 months. He must also clear all waste from the site by 7 April.



Significant amount of waste

On behalf of the Environment Agency, solicitor Simon Crowder told the court that two Environment Officers attended the site on seven different dates between January 2015 and July 2016.

They saw a significant amount of mixed waste on the ground, with new waste

noticed on each visit. The waste had been sorted into types, and there was some evidence of burning.

On talking to Sutherland, he said it was someone else who was responsible for putting the waste on his land. This person was spoken to and evidence gathered, but there was no link between his activities and the waste at the site. Sutherland also said he was in poor health.

In March 2015, Sutherland agreed with the Environment Agency that the site would be cleared within two months and waste transfer notes would be provided. The site was not cleared.



The Environment Agency's Andy Rothery, who was involved in the investigation, said after the case:

Sutherland was repeatedly told the waste on his site was illegal and despite being given opportunities to clear it, this didn't happen. Illegal waste activity has a detrimental impact on the community and environment, as well as undermining legitimate businesses.

We'll continue to work hard to ensure enforcement action is taken against those who flout the law.

Press release: New Northumberland fish passes open up stream

Two new fish passes on a Northumberland stream are giving salmon and sea trout easier access to 22km of watercourse.

The work by the Environment Agency and Northumberland Rivers Trust at South Low, in north Northumberland near Berwick, is making it easier for fish to migrate and spawn.

Two large weirs were preventing fish movement upstream, but both weirs have been changed to make it easier for sea trout and salmon to make their way to their spawning grounds.

It follows work to make it easier for fish to pass through Environment Agency tidal gates at the coast, where the sea meets the stream.

Since then, work has been taking place to make it easier for fish to move further upstream.



Upstream weir before it was altered to make it easier for fish migration



The new upstream fish pass after alterations were made to the weir to make it into a rock pass

Easier for fish

Robbie Stevenson, Fisheries Technical Officer with the Environment Agency, said:

We've worked closely with partners to carry out a lot of positive work in this area, to look at issues which might be having an impact on fish populations.

The alterations to the weirs will open up 22km of watercourse for fish and make it far easier for them to travel upstream.

We've worked really hard together with our partners over the years to make dramatic improvements to water quality.

But there is always more we can do and this project at South Low is the sort of work which is taking place right across the North East and the country to protect and enhance our rivers and streams.

The £100,000 project has been part funded by the Environment Agency, supplemented by private landowner contributions and the work carried out by volunteers.

Important fish passes

Peter Kerr, Director of Northumberland Rivers Trust, who was also designer and project manager for this project, added:

We are delighted to have been able to add these two important fish passes by working in partnership.

The contractors, WL Straughan and Son, did an excellent job in some challenging weather conditions, including the floods following Storm Angus.

After we completed the lower of the passes we saw some big sea trout trying to get past the upper weir, so we are confident that the lower one works well and that there are many migratory fish trying to return to the South Low.

The recent completion of the upper pass will now let these fish access many miles of spawning gravels.

Press release: Work begins on major £18 million Newhaven flood defence project

Construction work on the Newhaven flood alleviation scheme started on 3 January 2017, after 2 years of development including consultation with the local community. After a competitive tendering process, the Environment Agency has employed the services of contractors JacksonHyder to carry out design and construction of this scheme.

The Newhaven flood alleviation scheme has been developed in partnership with Lewes District Council, East Sussex County Council, the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and South East LEP to reduce the flood risk to approximately 431 homes and 387 commercial properties by significantly improving the standard of existing tidal defences in the East Sussex town.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This £18 million flood defence scheme is a great example of our commitment to better protect the Sussex coast from the kind of devastating flooding experienced in 2013.

All along this coastline, communities are thriving and growing. But we understand the region's full potential cannot be realised without tackling flood risk. That's exactly what we're working with our partners to achieve in Newhaven and throughout the country.

Gordon Wilson, Environment Agency Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, said:

I am delighted that construction has started and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Newhaven community for their invaluable feedback and support throughout the design, consultation and planning processes.

In order to improve the current aging flood defences, unavoidably there may be some disruption whilst essential construction work takes place. We always aim to keep any disruption to a minimum and we thank the community in advance for their ongoing support.

When the whole project is complete in 2019, the scheme will reduce the tidal flood risk to hundreds of homes and a significant number of commercial properties in the area, as well as protecting important local infrastructure such as the road network, railway tracks and the train station. This scheme will also support the wider regeneration of Newhaven, helping to bring new investment, jobs and homes to the area.

Councillor Andy Smith, Leader of Lewes District Council, said:

I am very pleased that work is underway on this hugely beneficial project for the future of Newhaven and its residents.

Most importantly, it will give a high level of protection to homes and businesses as well as the transport network, greatly reducing the risk of a repeat of the 2013 floods which caused widespread damage and upset. In addition, the scheme also supports the wider regeneration of Newhaven and will help to bring new investment, jobs and homes here.

Councillor Rupert Simmons, lead cabinet member for economy at East Sussex County Council, said:

We're delighted that the Environment Agency has started work to improve flood protection for Newhaven. When the scheme is completed it will significantly reduce the risk of flooding, benefitting residents and providing a real boost for businesses in the town.

Councillor Steve Saunders, Town Mayor of Newhaven, said:

I welcome the start of work on these flood defence works by the Environment Agency. This is good news for Newhaven because they will provide much needed protection to local homes, businesses and infrastructure as well as enabling regeneration to take place in the town.

The Coast to Capital LEP and South East LEP are each contributing £1.5 million, as part of their wider commitment to regeneration in Newhaven. This funding has allowed the scheme to start construction in January 2017.

Tony Middleton, chief operating officer at Coast to Capital LEP, said:

It's exciting to see the flood defence project starting to come to life. The LEP has funded this scheme because the construction of the defences will act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Newhaven and continue to protect the vital local infrastructure surrounding the area, drawing in new investment, jobs and homes for the area.

Chris Brodie, Chairman, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, said:

South East LEP welcomes this important milestone and is pleased to be able to support this vital project which is important, not only in protecting the existing business community of Newhaven and local infrastructure, but significantly improves future opportunity for investment in new jobs and homes.

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