

Press release: Environment Agency's Christmas stocking for Berkshire anglers

Updated: Photos updated.

The Environment Agency is delivering an early Christmas gift to anglers in Berkshire this week, when it carries out a Christmas stocking of young adult fish into the River Cut at Jocks Lane recreation ground in Bracknell.

Thousands of fish, including roach, dace and chub, will be added to the river's existing fish population this Thursday, 14 December. This will provide an immediate boost to numbers, which will be multiplied many times over when the new arrivals settle into their new homes and begin to produce offspring.

Stuart Keable, a fisheries officer for the Environment Agency, said:

We carry out a number of fish stockings every year. Sometimes it is to help fish populations recover when they've suffered from a pollution incident, or through flooding, which can push large numbers of fish downstream, and many never return.

The River Cut has suffered from recurrent pollution near Jocks Lane recreation ground in 2017, where uncontaminated water from a large proportion of Bracknell drains into the Cut. Environment Agency officers have been working closely with Thames Water, which manages the surface water network, to investigate the source of the pollution. The partnership has also resulted in pollution-prevention visits to nearby industrial estates, where officers advised businesses on oil and chemical storage compliance, hazardous waste disposal and the risk to streams and rivers.

Rachel Brown, an Environment Agency team leader in east Berkshire, said:

The Environment Agency has responded to a number of incidents on the River Cut this year, reported to us through our incident hotline. We have been working with Thames Water to find why the river was polluted, whilst also reducing the impact to the environment. We have carried out pollution-prevention visits at the nearby industrial estates, to raise awareness of the surface water drainage network and correct disposal of waste. Information provided by the public is vital in helping us with these ongoing investigations, and we urge anyone witnessing an environmental pollution to call our 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Christmas is a good time to introduce the fish into rivers, as it enables them to acclimatise to their new surroundings, ahead of their spawning season in the spring. Fish also play a critical role in sustaining a river's finely-balanced eco-system, so the wider natural environment will also get a festive boost.



Environment Agency vehicle with oxygenated tanks for transporting live fish.

Stuart Keable added:

The River Cut has undergone some fantastic enhancements recently. We've done a lot of that ourselves, but we increasingly work with local angling clubs, Bracknell Town Council, community groups and volunteers to get bigger and better results. The council has already installed 10 fishing platforms on the upstream section of the river at Jocks Lane, which will eventually see a wheelchair ramp installed for disabled access to this area. These improvements were made through the Angling Trust's Angling Improvement Fund.

Through the Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme, we have started on some major habitat improvement work in the river itself. In November, we installed the first of 10 marginal berms to provide a more diverse habitat for fish, insects, birds and plants, as well as push silt out of the system. This work will be ongoing throughout the winter. The collective contribution from our various partners to the wellbeing of the river has been immense.

The fish are being brought to site in oxygenated tanks from their birthplace and home for the last 12-18 months, the Environment Agency's own Calverton Fish Farm in Nottingham. Funded through rod licence fees, Calverton produces some 450,000 coarse fish each year which are used to help the vitality and diversity of fish populations in rivers, lakes and ponds throughout England.

Consultation outcome: Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Business Plan 2018 to 2021

Updated: Final NDA Business Plan published.

We sought views from members of the public, nuclear regulators, employees within our Site Licence Companies, trade unions, local authorities, Site Stakeholder Groups, Non-Governmental Organisations, other organisations and public bodies.

Notice: EX17 3DH, Crediton Milling Company Limited: environmental permit issued

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the permit and decision document for:

- Operator name: Crediton Milling Company Limited
 - Installation name: Fordton Mill
 - Permit number: EPR/LP3439DP/A001
-

£2m investment in SRUC Centre of Excellence for Digital Agriculture and Animal Health

SRUC today confirmed plans for a £2 million investment at Inverness Campus expanding their existing research and commercial operations.

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.