

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.

Collection: Coal mine water treatment

The Coal Authority's work to treat mine water has directly:

- protected and improved over 350km of rivers
- protected several important regional aquifers
- enhanced biodiversity and provided local amenity land

Why do we need coal mine water treatment?

When a coal mine closes, the pumps that were used to keep the water out of the mine while the mineral was extracted are switched off and removed.

Over time the water level recovers within the mine and picks up naturally occurring minerals from the rocks, such as iron. This can coat river beds, stopping plant growth, causing wildlife to move on as they no longer have food.

How do we treat coal mine water?

Typically mine water is brought to the top of a cascade structure. Water flows down these steps, which mixes in air.

The air encourages the dissolved iron in the water to become solid.

The water then flows into lagoons where the iron has time to settle at the bottom for removal.

The remaining finer iron particles are filtered out when the water passes through a series of reed beds.

[How we treat coal mine water](#)

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.

Notice: PE28 3BS, Envar Composting 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 for:

- Operator name: Envar Composting Limited
- Installation name: Envar Composting Facility
- Permit number: EPR/GP3930DF/V003

Consultation outcome: Aviation EU Emissions Trading System: proposed amendments to UK legislation

Updated: Government response and final stage impact assessment published

This consultation will cover UK implementation of the agreed amendments to the Aviation EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS). The amendments to be implemented are:

- to extend the existing Intra-European Economic Area (EEA) scope for the

Aviation EU ETS until 31 December 2023

- to introduce simplified procedures for operators emitting less than 3,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum on intra-EEA flights; and
- to extend the exemption for non-commercial operators emitting less than 1,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year until 2030

The consultation will be of particular interest to aircraft operators, aerodrome operators, verifiers, other participants in the EU ETS and environmental groups. This consultation is not limited to these stakeholders; any organisation or individual is welcome to respond.

Our impact assessment estimates the reduction in compliance costs for aircraft operators, the reduction in the environmental benefits of Aviation EU ETS, and the reduction in government auction revenues between 2017 and 2023, as compared to a scenario where the EU and UK legislation was not amended. Consultees are invited to submit any additional evidence or other relevant information on the impacts of the policy option assessed in our impact assessment.

The measures proposed in this consultation are without prejudice to future decisions on the UK's future relationship with the EU on the EU ETS.

Postal Addresses

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Respondents in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are requested to copy their responses to:

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By email: Climate.Change@daera-ni.gov.uk

By post:

Climate Change Unit

Environmental Policy Division

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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