

Press release: Nine anglers fined over £6,200 for illegal fishing in Staffordshire

Just a few months after penalising 17 Staffordshire anglers, North Staffordshire Justice Centre Magistrates' Court issued combined fines of £6,217 to a further 9 anglers for fishing offences. The court has now issued more than £17,000 fines this year for angling offences.

On 26 June 2017, North Staffordshire Justice Centre Magistrates' Court heard how 9 anglers were caught fishing illegally over the past 9 months. Most fined on 26 June were caught fishing illegally in February this year.

All 9 were caught fishing without a rod licence by Environment Agency officers out on regular patrols. Six anglers pleaded guilty and 3 failed to appear in court so were proved guilty in absence. The lowest total fine was £457 and the highest was £942; that's over 30 times more than an annual £30 licence!

The following were all found guilty under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975:

- James Morrison of The Chartway in Walsall
- Connah Reynolds of Brierley Park in Buxworth
- Ben Brammer of Handley Street in Stoke on Trent
- Ben Gee of Villa Close in Biddulph,
- Julian May of Wolseley Street in Birmingham
- Ryan Scarisbrick of Richmond Street in Burton upon Trent
- Matthew Bains of Hillside Drive in Leek
- Leslie Keeley of Hawthorne Grove in Wallasey
- Craig Hall of Orchard Close in Willenhall

Craig Hall was also summoned to court for failing to state his name to a water bailiff when requested.

Magistrates heard that Environment Agency enforcement officers found these anglers fishing without a rod licence at pools near Stoke on Trent, Stafford, Burntwood, Leek and Wolverhampton; and on the River Trent at Burton.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

I can't understand why a minority of anglers continue to risk prosecution for fishing without a licence. A licence costs just £30 and now lasts for 12 months from the day you buy it. Fishing licence money is invested into England's fisheries and rivers; improving the sport of angling.

The minority of anglers that fail to buy a fishing licence are

cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. Fishing licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers, including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Fishing licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

Children under 12 fish for free. Anyone aged 12 to 16 also fish for free, but do need to have a valid Environment Agency fishing licence. Anyone over 16 must pay for an Environment Agency fishing licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England.

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

Speech: Association of Electoral Administrators: Chris Skidmore speech

Thank you very much for the introduction.

I wanted to fly up from London to be here with you today, as I felt that it was important as Minister for the Constitution, and the minister responsible for elections and democratic engagement to speak with you directly, and to say thank you.

To thank you for the time and effort that all of you as electoral administrators, registration officers and returning officers, have given over the past trying few months.

To thank you for the role that you have played in making not only the Local Elections and the Mayoral Elections run as smoothly as possible, but also the integral role that you all performed in ensuring that the snap General Election took place without any significant problems.

And to thank you for the personal and family sacrifices that each and every one of you, together with your staff, have made to ensure that our democracy has been able to function seamlessly over these past few months.

As the minister responsible for the smooth running of the elections that have taken place this year, I will be writing to every Electoral Registration Officer personally, to thank them and their teams for the work that they have undertaken: but my thanks extends to all of you here in this room today.

To the casual observer or the media, reporting on General Election night, as images of ballot boxes being rushed into counting halls across the country filled the TV screens, of teams of counters sifting through thousands of ballots at counts across the country, it is all too easy to forget that behind each and every result that night was not just a political story of which party gained or lost seats, whose share of the vote went up or down, but also a story of dedication: your dedication to ensuring that our British democracy is the best it can be, and indeed the best in the world.

I know that it has not been easy, even if you have made it look that way.

At every stage, you have been tried and tested, but have come through with flying colours.

And you have done so because I know that each and every one of you believes passionately in giving every person who can vote in our democracy the right to have their say at the ballot box.

Over the past year as Minister for the Constitution, I have toured every region of the country in an effort to ensure that we can build a Democracy that Works for Everyone. What has struck me as I have spoken and discussed issues with Electoral Registration Officers at the roundtables and meetings I have held, is your determination and your commitment to your vocation; a vocation that I believe deserves to be held in the highest regard. For there can be fewer duties more important than ensuring that democracy prevails.

At a time when, across the world, questions and challenges are being raised about the security of democratic processes and elections, I want you to know how proud I am, as the minister responsible for our electoral community, of your ability to deliver time and again polls which no observer, foreign or domestic, calls into question.

I know that I am addressing you here today as the Association of Electoral Administrators; however, in my mind you are not just 'administrators' but professionals, whose profession belongs to one of the finest traditions of public service. A public service that, at its core, I believe, runs that same devotion to social justice as you witness in our education or health services.

For we must recognise that the effective running and performance of elections is something which is not simply an administrative issue, focused on the technical measures of the elections process, but an essential public service. What you do, and what you have done so brilliantly over these past few months, has ensured that every member of our society, regardless of where they live, their background or whether they have a disability or health condition, has been able to have that equal chance, that equal right, to participate in our democracy, and to have their say.

This is social justice at its heart, and we, you, should not be afraid to say so.

For the first time voter, entering a polling station for the first time; for the unwell unable to vote who needed an emergency proxy; for military service personnel away on tour needing a postal vote; to the blind and partially sighted or those with a disability needing assistance, you were there to help each and every one of them be a part of our democracy.

Over the past year, I calculated that, taking the EU referendum, the PCC and local and mayoral elections and the General Election together, there has been nearly 114 million ballots cast across a period of less than a year. I believe that is a record number of votes cast in a single period of a year in the history of British democracy; testament not only to the strength of our democracy, but to your ability to have made this happen. Thank you.

In my last speech to Parliament before the General Election took place, I spoke about politicians being very much actors on the democratic stage; a stage which, behind the scenes, is managed and run smoothly by yourselves, the producers of these democratic displays that are our elections.

This year, your success has been particularly notable, not least when it has come to managing and processing the number of people who have registered to vote. Back in March, just under 24 million people had accessed the online IER system to register to vote since its creation, and I previously had been talking to officials about a plan to celebrate us passing the 25 million mark. The General Election was then called, resulting in the number of people who have now registered to vote using the system reaching over 27 million (27,633,473 to be precise).

On the deadline day for registration for the recent General Election as we approached the midnight deadline, over 622,000 people applied to register to vote, compared with 525,000 on the last day for the EU Referendum and 485,000 on the last day for the 2015 General Election.

Informal estimates suggest that the number of people registered to vote now stands at a record high of 46.9 million, up from 46.4 million in 2015.

And while this is cause itself to celebrate the growing levels of participation in our democracy, I recognise the challenges that this brings to each and every one of your staff and offices. Challenges that I want to work with you to help resolve, and to assist you in the work that you already do so brilliantly.

I have not come here today to make a brand new policy announcement. The General Election, along with the local and Mayoral elections, provides a period of important reflection to learn what needs improvement, and what can be done better, and I look forward to the AEA's own reports on these issues. I want to continue my full engagement with your organisation, and for you to know that if there are issues that you wish to raise through your own executive, my door is always open to listen and engage with the AEA.

I want to ensure that your relationship between government, through the Cabinet Office, and the AEA remains a strong one, where we work together for the people who, together, we both serve: the voters whose experience of electoral registration and at the ballot box deserves to be the best it can be.

When I last addressed the AEA at your conference in Brighton earlier this year – a different world politically – I announced the establishment of an Electoral Summit, to be held with the AEA's participation. I am still planning on holding this event later this year, and I hope that, through the AEA executive, it will provide a crucial means of reporting feedback into government, and strengthening and improving our electoral processes.

I am also still intending on launching the government's Democratic Engagement Strategy later this year, and I hope that, when this is complete, I will be able to build on the strong working relationship we have with the AEA, who have kindly been a constant presence at the roundtables that I have held exploring early work on this Strategy, by ensuring the AEA and the voice of electoral administrators and EROs will be heard in that process.

2017 has been a remarkable electoral year. But if I may end by turning to next year, 2018: not to discuss the local elections, though I am sure you are already turning your minds to your preparations for these, but to the fact that on 6 February, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote. Of course, that was not even the equal right to vote, which came in July 1928, just ninety years ago.

For while we can talk of our democratic traditions being some of the oldest in the world, making reference to Magna Carta and the institution of Parliament, we all know in this room, that when it comes to the real face of democracy, with every person in every region across the country being given an equal right to vote, regardless of their gender or background, our democratic history remains a young one.

But in our shared history, we should not only recognise the enormous progress that has been made, celebrating those unsung heroes who fought for reform but also to recognise and celebrate the silent work of those who made it actually possible for ballots to be cast, the dedication of electoral administrators past and present.

And in reflecting upon our democratic history over these past hundred years, we can perhaps also reflect on not only how far we have come, but also what more we can do, together, to ensure that everyone who wants to make an application to register to vote, and go that one step further by casting their ballot, is given the opportunity to do so; to remove the last remaining barriers that still prevent certain groups of society from participating in elections through no fault of their own; and to make ours a democracy that works for everyone.

In this endeavour I look forward to continue to working with yourselves and the AEA.

Thank you.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the continued Gulf tensions](#)

I welcome Qatar's statement that it will respond to Kuwait today (3rd July) on the concerns raised by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt. I also welcome the joint statement by these four countries agreeing to Kuwait's request for more time to enable Qatar's response to be received.

This is an important step in building confidence between the parties. We strongly support Kuwait's mediation efforts. I hope that progress can continue to be made to restore Gulf Cooperation Council unity, which is a key element of stability in the Gulf region.

[Press release: The OTS points the way to simplify corporation tax](#)

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) is the independent adviser to government on tax simplification. The OTS responds to calls for corporation tax to be modernised and simplified in its report [Simplification of the Corporation Tax Computation](#) published today 3 July 2017.

This report sets out some significant steps towards creating a 21st-century corporation tax system in the UK, responding to calls from businesses of all sizes to make the calculation of corporation tax simpler, with fewer changes and more time to plan. It also recognises the importance of reducing the burdens on small business, and keeping this country an attractive destination for trade and investment in a post Brexit world.

The report takes a bold look across four broad themes

- simpler tax for smaller companies
- aligning the tax rules more closely with accounting rules where appropriate

- simplifying tax relief for capital investment
- a range of further issues affecting the largest companies

It also highlights the links with HMRC's work on Making Tax Digital, which offers a real impetus to move towards a simpler system by use of technology.

Angela Knight CBE, Chair of the OTS Board, said:

Despite the attention corporation tax has received in recent years, in particular regarding multi-nationals, there has been little focus on making the tax simpler. In response to a clamour from companies of all sizes and types, the main recommendation is that the government should develop a clear and coherent roadmap for corporation tax simplification to give certainty for all companies.

Paul Morton, Tax Director, said:

A simpler approach would be to align the tax more closely with a company's accounts, making it more intuitive, reducing compliance costs and saving time. This is particularly attractive for smaller incorporated businesses, which represent the overwhelming majority of companies.

The report makes recommendations to achieve this objective in a variety of innovative ways. In addition, it sets the scene for further work on the costs and benefits of moving to a depreciation-based approach to giving relief for capital expenditure which could offer a significant simplification for companies of all sizes.

Main recommendations

A corporation tax simplification roadmap

Small companies

- For the very smallest companies, to use the accounting profit prepared under accounting standard FRS105 as the taxable profit without any adjustments.
- For slightly larger companies, the proposal is that companies should only need to consider a set list of five or six potential tax adjustments.

Aligning tax with accounts

Across the whole range of companies, for

- the tax definition of capital and revenue to be more closely aligned to the accounts definitions,
- the rules for trading and management expenses to be aligned
- the 19th century schedular system (under which different types of income are calculated separately subject to slightly different rules) to be replaced with a “whole business” approach, in line with most other countries

Capital expenditure

For the OTS to undertake further work on capital expenditure to explore the issues involved in replacing the present capital allowances system with an accounts depreciation approach, recognising the need to consider the impacts on particular industry sectors.

Large companies

For improvements to be made in a number of technical areas, in the context of promoting stability and certainty in the corporation tax system.

Notes for editors

The OTS advises the Chancellor on tax simplification, challenging tax complexity to help all users of the tax system; it does not implement changes – these are a matter for government and for Parliament.

The OTS team is led by Chairman Angela Knight CBE and Tax Director Paul Morton and has a small staff drawn from HM Treasury, HM Revenue & Customs and the private sector.

The OTS works to improve the experience of all who interact with the tax system. It aims to reduce the administrative burden – which is what people actually encounter in practice – as well as simplifying the rules. Simplification of the technical and administrative aspects of tax are each important, both to taxpayers and HMRC.

The vast majority of companies are small: Of the 1.75 million UK private sector companies in 2016: 1.5 million have under 10 employees.

Press Enquiries only please contact Ed Rowley, OTS Press Officer Phone: 03000 585 028

[News story: Animal medicines prosecution: Horse Health Wessex Ltd](#)

Details of the prosecution of Horse Health Wessex Ltd. Published in July 2017.

On 21 June 2017 at Southampton Magistrates Court, Horse Health Wessex Ltd pleaded guilty to placing a veterinary medicinal product on the market, contrary to regulations 4(1) of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013.

HORSE HEALTH WESSEX LTD between 1/10/2013 and 26/02/2017 at Southampton, placed a veterinary medicinal product on the market referred to as Sarcoid Cleansing Salve and Super-S Cleaning Salve, whereas the product has not been granted a marketing authorisation by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

The company was given credit for an early plea and ordered to pay a fine of £5,000 with a victim surcharge of £150 and costs of £250.