

Drones offer extra eyes to combat illegal fishing activity

Press release

Fisheries Officers in the South West are clamping down on illegal activities with the help of the Avon and Somerset Police drone unit.



Drone footage of the River Huntspill in Somerset

The unit is working in partnership with the Environment Agency to support fisheries officers in checking for illegal nets and out-of-season fishing.

A drone can scan miles of river bank in quick time and alert the Environment Agency to the presence of suspicious activity which may require further investigation on the ground.

Fisheries Officer, Richard Dearnley, said:

We take illegal fishing seriously. It's through partnership working like this that we can send a clear message to those who break the law.

Anyone committing offences can expect to be prosecuted and face a substantial fine. Not only does illegal fishing damage the sport, it also poses a serious risk of spreading fish diseases and invasive species.

The irresponsible and illegal actions of a few can have widespread consequences for fisheries.

Sergeant Colin Powell, at the Avon and Somerset Police drone unit, said:

Drones offer a supplement to officers on the ground and are

increasingly used by police to assist in searches and to offer a different angle to crime scenes and major incidents.

It's been great to join up with the Environment Agency and expand the use of our drones in combatting illegal activity.

If you suspect illegal fishing to be taking place please report the matter to our hotline on 0800 807060 or to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Anyone fishing illegally can expect to be prosecuted and to face a fine of up to £2,500. Anyone who uses illegal methods faces a prison sentence of potentially two years and a fine of up to £50,000 for byelaw offences.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – you can [buy them online](#), starting at just £6.

Money raised from rod licence sales is reinvested in the environment, including a whole range of projects to improve facilities for anglers, protect stocks, plus fish restocking, invasive species eradication. The money is also used to work with partners to encourage people to take-up fishing.

Published 10 May 2022