

Press release: Sutton Coldfield angler fined for fishing illegally

On 4 July 2017 at Nuneaton Magistrates' Court, Matthew Hitches of Harvest Fields Way, Sutton Coldfield was fined £220 for fishing without a licence. Hitches was also ordered to pay costs of £580.17 and a victim surcharge of £30 following a prosecution by the Environment Agency.

The offence took place on 17 September 2016 at Kingsbury Water Park.

At his initial hearing on 25 April, Hitches, aged 40, entered a plea of not guilty which forced the case to go to trial. This accounted for the high costs awarded in this case. Hitches failed to attend the court for his trial and the case against him was proved in his absence.

Andrew Eardley from the Environment Agency said:

The majority of anglers fish legally. The minority of anglers that fail to buy a fishing licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport.

An annual licence costs just £30. It seems ridiculous that anglers risk significant fines and costs, a criminal conviction and the loss of their fishing equipment for such a small fee.

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. Licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency rod licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. Buying a rod licence is easy, simply visit [buy a rod licence](#) on GOV.UK.

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.

[Press release: Flood defence improvement plans shared at Burton regatta](#)

On 9 July 2017, visitors to Burton's famous regatta had an opportunity to find out about the planned £17 million improvement works to the town's flood defences. Staff from the Environment Agency were at the event to discuss the scheme and also spread awareness about being more flood resilient.

Burton has flooded regularly over the centuries. Ten years ago during summer the defences were put to the test when England and Wales suffered its worst ever flooding, with 414mm (16 inches) of rain between May to July, the most since records began in 1766.

The planned works to the Burton flood defences will see improvements to the 9km of existing defences that already protect more than 7,000 homes and businesses in the town, with a further 3,358 properties set to benefit. The work, due to start in October 2018, with a completion date of March 2020, will enable further transformation of the town centre to allow it to become more sustainable.

Mark Swain, who heads the Environment Agency's Staffordshire flood risk team, said:

Burton is a major transport and business centre. The defences have prevented flooding for 100 days in the last 30 years. The cost to families and businesses if those defences had not been there would have been astronomical.

But we can't afford to rest on our laurels; we're working with our partners and the people of Burton to protect thousands more homes and businesses for the future.

That's why it was so important for us to be at the regatta, explaining our plans and how everyone can do their bit to reduce flood risk.

As well as the plans for the new works and how to become more resilient, visitors to the regatta were also able to find out how the Environment Agency's remote-control survey boats work and what is being done across Staffordshire to protect people and properties from flooding.

[Press release: Environment Agency minded to approve application at Horse Hill](#)

The application is for a bespoke environmental permit to drill a new well, drill a side track to the existing well and to carry out flow testing. Horse Hill Developments Limited have also applied for a Standard Rules Permit to store oil on site. In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, the Environment Agency will take into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

Before the Environment Agency grants the bespoke environmental permit there will be a further consultation period, which closes on 4 August 2017, to allow people to comment on the application.

[Further information on the bespoke application, a copy of our draft decision document and details of how to comment.](#)

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that a site must adhere to. We will not issue an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

Although we are minded to approve the application for the bespoke permit we are still in the determination process and a final decision has not yet been made. We want to hear from the public and understand peoples' views on the application. Everybody has the chance to see what the bespoke permit may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

- [How you can participate in decisions on applications for environmental permits](#)
 - [Information on the environmental permits and permissions you need for onshore oil and gas operations in England](#)
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Press release: Water companies make environmental improvements but Environment Agency urges more action

The majority of the UK's water companies achieved close to or exceeded targets set to improve water quality, according to a new report published by the Environment Agency today.

Wessex Water and United Utilities were the top performing water companies, repeating last year's success.

In a year when the Environment Agency introduced tougher standards, water companies made good progress in meeting the new targets. However, the total number of pollution incidents increased by 160 in 2016, the first increase since 2012.

While water companies continue to improve their reporting of pollution to ensure impact can be minimised and wildlife protected downstream, the Environment Agency has urged some water companies to make significant improvements to bring down pollution levels.

The report which ranks the nine big water and sewage companies in England on a range of measures needed to protect the environment also showed:

- All companies achieved the target to complete work to build and upgrade infrastructure which will improve water quality, water resources and river biodiversity.
- Eight out of nine water companies gained full marks for protecting water supply security. This is crucial following the dry winter as some rivers, reservoirs and groundwaters are lower than normal for the time of year but there are no water supply issues.
- Safe recovery or disposal of sewage sludge took place 99.9% of the time and was mostly used to improve agricultural land, generate heat or power. And compliance with permits at sewage treatment and water treatment works is at 98.6% on average, while good is still short of the 100% target.
- The number of serious pollution incidents has continued to decline. However there was an increase in total numbers of incidents and of the most damaging pollution incidents, nine up from four in the previous year.

Dr Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations for the Environment

Agency, said:

Water companies work hard to protect the environment. We have set more stringent targets and we are glad to see overall improvements but want to see more effort to avoid pollution incidents.

As a fair and effective regulator we are committed to publishing results, highlighting best practice but also taking action to address any poor practice.

While we welcome the good progress being made we will continue to address any failings and will take enforcement action in the most serious cases.

2016 was also the first year to see several million pound fines handed out by the courts to water companies for pollution incidents.

All water companies provide an essential public service and affect the health of rivers and how water can be used downstream by others. High environmental performance from water companies protects rivers and seas, supports wildlife and ensures people can enjoy the environment. Water companies also contributed £127 million last year to reduce risk of sewers flooding homes and protect local communities.

Annual water and sewerage company environmental performance reports are available on GOV.UK.

Press release: Calstock flood defence improvements

The existing Calstock flood embankment was improved in the 1980s following a significant flood in the village. It still plays an important role in reducing flood risk in Calstock, but requires periodic repairs.

In 2012/13 the Environment Agency carried out emergency work on just over 100 metres of the embankment. This work incorporated less than 10% of the total embankment length, but cost in excess of £300,000. Maintaining the current embankment in its existing location on a 'patch and repair basis' is not sustainable.

The Environment Agency is now looking at ways to continue to manage flood risk in the village. Likely options will include moving the existing embankment inland away from the river where it will be under less pressure from erosion.

Project manager Dan Boswell said:

It's our priority to do everything we can to protect people from flooding.

Unfortunately the current embankment is no longer viable so we have to look at other options to maintain the current level of flood protection for Calstock. One of the options involves moving the existing embankment inland.

In addition to flood risk management benefits, moving the embankment would enable the creation of reed-bed habitat attracting additional wildlife. It is important to note that we are looking at all options which may be available to us. We will be talking to the community about these before final decisions are made.

The Environment Agency is looking to work with local partners to ensure that people can still use this area recreationally. Currently the Environment Agency has granted a permissive footpath across the embankment and they are keen that the footpath should continue in some form, but this will require the collaboration of local partners.

Over the next few months the Environment Agency's consultants will be carrying out ground investigations and topographic surveys to help them develop suitable options. When they have developed these the Environment Agency will arrange a drop-in session in Calstock for the community to come along and view and comment on proposals. This is likely to take place in the autumn.

The Environment Agency is spending more than £2.5 billion to build flood schemes around the country, which will better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.