

Press release: Whitby man handed community order for illegal salmon and sea trout fishing

A Whitby man has been handed a 12-month community order for illegally fishing for salmon and sea trout.

William Arthur Elwick, 53, of Abbot's Road, Whitby, must now carry out 240 hours of unpaid work after he was sentenced on Friday 24 March at Scarborough Magistrates' Court.

He had admitted two charges of gill net fishing without a licence after being caught red-handed on 4 July 2016.

Chris Bunting, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that enforcement officers caught Elwick while they were carrying out night-time patrols along the lower River Esk and tideway.

At around 12.30am near Chainbridge Riverside Retreats, Ruswarp, officers discovered a gill net that was stretched across the full width of the river. They heard splashing at several points of the net where fish had become entangled.

Another gill net was found upstream near Briggswath, again stretching across the full width of the river.

The investigating officers carried out covert surveillance of the nets and called in the police to help search for the culprit. Elwick was found hiding in a bush.

He had in his possession 23 sea trout and two salmon. These were seized, along with his nets and other equipment.

Gill nets are illegal to use within inland waters. An examination of the seized fish revealed clear signs of physical harm including lacerations along fins, with bloodied wounds and scale loss. This damage is consistent with the fish having been captured in an entanglement net, such as a gill net.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said after the hearing:

Illegal fishing of this kind is a crime, and we will investigate and prosecute anyone who is caught breaking the law.

The River Esk has a relatively small catchment and any significant illegal fishing activity will inevitably have a major impact on fish populations. The illegal netting of salmon and sea trout poses

a threat to the wider ecology of the River Esk, including the fresh water pearl mussel which relies on salmon and sea trout for their life cycle. The Yorkshire Esk is one of the few rivers in the United Kingdom that still has a population of pearl mussels.

We are grateful to North Yorkshire Police for their support in apprehending the defendant. Anyone who believes that illegal fishing is taking place should report the matter to our incident hotline on 0800 807060 so we can investigate.

A representative from the Yorkshire Esk Rivers Trust said after the hearing:

Elwick's actions were illegal and damaging to the local ecology of the River Esk. This type of crime also has a detrimental impact on the local economy. By taking these fish illegally with the intent of selling them off for personal profit, Elwick is depriving his neighbours up the Esk valley the chance to make legitimate income from these fish which studies have shown are worth about ten times as much to local businesses than the value Elwick will have gained.

Our message to local people is to be aware of where you buy your fish. Only buy from a reputable seller, and if you believe someone is trading in illegally-caught fish, report the matter to the Environment Agency.

In mitigation, the defendant told the court that he had committed the offences during a period of unemployment and that he would have sold the fish had he not been apprehended. At that point he hadn't been entitled to benefits and had no income. Elwick is now back in full-time employment.

He was also ordered to pay £2,985 in legal costs.

[Press release: Committee members sought to help shape future flood plans in Lincolnshire and](#)

Northamptonshire

New members are being sought for the Anglian Northern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) – helping shape and approve local flood defence plans, raise local levy funding and influence the future of the environment.

The Anglian Northern RFCC works with the Environment Agency on key schemes to reduce flood risk across Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire – for example the Humber Strategy, Louth & Horncastle flood reservoirs and Boston Barrier scheme.

The RFCC funds innovation and partner-led projects and plays an important role during flood incidents, supporting staff, colleagues and communities before, during and after an event.

Committee members have a critical role in supporting the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authorities. We are looking for individuals with skills or knowledge in one or more of the following backgrounds:

- Community engagement and/or flood incident management
- Partnership funding & contributions, infrastructure and the economy
- Media, public relations & communications
- General flood & coastal risk management expertise

Applicants do not need to be technical experts in flood and coastal risk management, though some understanding of the processes and impacts of flooding are desirable. We need people who can think strategically, know how to engage and influence individuals, communities and networks, and understand the need for innovation and efficiency.

The Committee meets 4 times a year, though candidates may be asked to attend additional meetings. RFCC members are all appointed as impartial individuals in their own right and not as representatives of any particular organisation. It is important that the committee members represent the communities they serve. These are unpaid roles but reasonable expenses, including travel, can be claimed.

The Environment Agency is keen to hear from anyone who may be interested. More information and details about how to apply can be found on our [Anglian Northern RFCC page](#).

The closing date for applications is Wednesday, 10 May 2017.

If you have further questions, contact the RFCC Secretariat by [email](#) or on 0203 025 5877.

Press release: Angler caught fishing with six rods in illegal fishing crackdown in Yeovil

On 23 March 2017, at Yeovil Magistrates Court, Ryan Hughes, of Fallowfield Drive, Newport, was fined £440 for fishing with an unlicensed instrument and fishing with more than 4 rods.

Costs of £170 and a victim surcharge of £30 were also imposed – a total penalty of £640 after a prosecution by the Environment Agency.

Magistrates heard that on 6 September 2016, an Environment Agency enforcement officer found Mr Hughes fishing at Pavyatt Mill Lakes, Yeovil, with an unlicensed instrument – namely rod and line – contrary to Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. On 6 September, Mr Hughes also fished with more than 4 rods and lines at the same time contrary to Byelaw 8(3) of the Environment Agency National Byelaws. Mr Hughes was convicted in his absence.

Richard Dearnley, of the Environment Agency, said:

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. We invest the money from rod licences back into fisheries improvements, fish stocks and fishing, this is essential for the future of the sport.

The minority of anglers that fail to buy a rod licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. In addition rod licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

During 2015-16 the Environment Agency checked more than 62,000 rod licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 anglers for rod and line offences resulting in fines and costs in excess of £500,000.

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

You need a valid Environment Agency fishing licence if you are aged 12 or over and fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England.

Press release: Big fines for two Kent anglers caught fishing without a licence

The 2 illegal Kent anglers had their day at Maidstone Magistrates Court last Thursday (23 March), with one of them now having to pay out over £600.

Bill Haythorpe of Yalding, Maidstone was caught at Monk Lakes, Staplehurst on 18 August 2016 and fined £440 for 2 offences (fishing without a licence and failing to state his address) plus £127 costs and £30 victim surcharge leading to a total bill of £597.

Ryan Zuczok of Chatham was caught fishing without a licence on the Medway in Maidstone on 20 August 2016 and fined £440 plus £127 costs and £44 victim surcharge, a grand total of £611. This was the second time Mr Zuczok was apprehended within a month. He had previously been caught on 23 July 2016, also on the Medway. Neither Mr Haythorpe nor Mr Zuczok entered a plea.

Environment Manager Dave Willis said:

We are seeing higher and higher fines for fishing without a licence. It makes no sense to have the embarrassment of a court visit, a criminal conviction and a bill for over £600 when an annual licence is just £30 (post 1 April 2017). We think these cheats will think twice before picking up a rod illegally again and if they don't, our officers are ready and waiting.

The money from licence sales supports fish, fisheries and fishing, and protects the future of the sport. A small number of anglers refuse to buy a licence, cheating the sport and their fellow anglers. For the minority who flout the rules, the most common offence is fishing without a valid licence. Fishing without a valid licence could land you with a fine of up to £2,500 and a criminal record.

Dave Willis added:

Last Thursday was a good day for the near million anglers that fish legally every year, respecting each other and the sport. There really is no excuse; if you don't have a licence, pick one up from the post office or online, before we pick you up.

In Kent, South London, Surrey and East Sussex, since April 2016 our fisheries enforcement officers have checked 4,252 licences and reported 269 people for fishing illegally.

Last year, in England, the Environment Agency checked over 62,000 rod licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 anglers for rod and line offences, resulting in fines and costs in excess of £500,000.

From 1 April 2017 a full rod licence costs from just £30 (concessions available) and a junior rod licence (for 12 to 16 year olds) is free. You can buy your rod licence from your local Post Office or by phoning 0344 800 5386.

Money from rod 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, mitigating pollution and disease, restoring fish stocks through restocking, control of invasive species, and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

To help crack down on unlicensed fishing the Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal activity by calling the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

For more information, contact the press office on 0800 141 2743.

[Press release: Do you want to make a difference to flood risk in the South West?](#)

The Environment Agency is looking for enthusiastic applicants from all walks of life to fill a vacancy on the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC). Being an RFCC member is an exciting opportunity to help guide local flood and coastal management across the whole region.

The South West RFCC covers [Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly](#).

The successful applicant will play an important role in:

- deciding on local priorities
- approving programmes of work
- supporting the Environment Agency and lead local flood authorities in working with communities and other partners.

They will have a key role in balancing local priorities and making sure that investment is co-ordinated at the river catchment and shoreline scale, as well as promoting the consideration of climate change impacts in local decision making.

The Environment Agency is recruiting for one member to represent nature, conservation and wider environmental issues. This member will need to provide an environmental perspective at meetings, helping the committee to understand the conservation impact of specific plans or projects.

The member will also:

- monitor and review programmes of flood and coastal risk management work and the conservation issues to be addressed
- provide a link between the committee, Natural England and other conservation organisations in the committee's area.

A key role will be ensuring the aims of the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy are embodied within the committee's decisions and to ensure consistency between strategic and local plans.

People from a wide range of backgrounds are invited to apply for this post, especially those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and women who are currently under-represented on regional flood and coastal committees.

Further information and an application form is [online](#), or from sarah.harding@environment-agency.gov.uk or call 0203 025 32478 or 07976 256 299.

The closing date for applications is on Wednesday 12 April 2017 at 5.30pm.