

Press release: Over 300 volunteer bailiffs help fight against illegal fishing

From Cornwall to Cumbria, an army of dedicated anglers is helping the fight against illegal fishing and fish theft. They are the recruits of the Angling Trust and Environment Agency's Voluntary Bailiff Service (VBS) who act as the "eyes and ears" on riverbanks and lakes, reporting suspicious incidents and providing crucial information to the Environment Agency and the police.

VBS began as a pilot project in the South East in 2012 following a formal partnership between the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust. It was rolled out across the country in spring 2015 and, following inductions last autumn, proudly boasts more than 300 volunteers.

Bailiffs are unpaid and rigorously vetted before they are selected. Successful candidates receive an intensive training course on what is expected of them from enforcement professionals, including the Angling Trust, the Environment Agency and the Head of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Volunteers are trained on fisheries enforcement law, signs of illegal fishing and how to record information in a way that could be used as evidence. First-hand learning includes attending joint patrols with the police and Environment Agency.

Volunteers recently gained valuable experience when they joined police and Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers on a joint patrol of the River Severn and at a number of stillwaters. Even at a relatively quiet period of the year they found reports of illegal fishing.

It's not just rod licence offenders that are being reported either. On other patrols people have been cautioned by the police for going equipped for poaching, motoring offences and possessing drugs and weapons.

Dilip Sarkar MBE, the Angling Trust's National Enforcement Manager, said:

All of our volunteers are valued and we now have the sound foundation to move forward, increase engagement and provide more practical training. We have come a very long way, since the formal partnership and although we still have far to go, this activity is already making a difference.

Graeme Storey, National Fisheries Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

All money raised through rod licence sales is used to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries benefiting anglers. The Voluntary

Bailiff Service is our latest move to tackle illegal fishing and to protect that revenue. The vast majority of anglers who fish legally deserve to see those who flout the law brought to account but to that criminal minority our message is clear: we won't hesitate to take action.

The Angling Trust and Environment Agency are appealing for more anglers to join the VBS. Induction and training days are being run this spring and anyone interested in joining the VBS should email karen.sarkar@anglingtrust.net

[News story: More people to receive help to stay warm in their homes thanks to new energy reforms](#)

Homes across the UK will get extra support to keep warm during the colder months [thanks to reforms published today](#). Changes to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) will make sure energy companies provide necessary support to people struggling to meet their heating bills. Plans to extend the scheme from April 2017 to September 2018 were also published today.

The reforms which were consulted on last year will usher in a simplified scheme, with energy companies required to provide struggling households with free energy efficiency measures to make their homes warmer and bring their bills down.

Minister for Energy and Industry, Jesse Norman said:

The Government is committed to tackling fuel poverty, and a key part of that is to help people keep bills down by living in more energy efficient homes. These changes will move the UK a further step towards the goal of insulating a further 1 million homes by 2020.

As well as an increased focus on low income and vulnerable homes, eligibility will be extended to social housing tenants in EPC bands E, F and G, and local authorities will also be able to help match people with energy suppliers.

Suppliers will also be required to install a minimum 21,000 solid wall insulations per year, up from the consultation figure of 17,000.

There will be continuing protection for the delivery of energy efficiency measures in rural areas, with a requirement that 15% of suppliers' Carbon

Emission Reduction Obligation be delivered in these areas.

ECO has proved a very effective delivery mechanism with over 2 million measures installed in around 1.6 million properties between 2013 and the end of November 2016.

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Consultants and researchers behind an innovative project which improved milk quality and boosted cheese yield have been shortlisted for the prestigious Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards.

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