

# Foul-mouthed landowner fined for obstructing and abusing Environment Agency officers

Press release

A man from County Durham has been ordered to pay £1,251 in fines and costs for obstructing and abusing Environment Agency officers who wanted to conduct a site inspection.



Michael Cliff, 57, of Bishop Auckland, appeared at Peterlee Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 22 February where he pleaded guilty to four offences brought forward. These charges included failing to allow an inspection by Environment Agency officers and causing them alarm and distress through threatening behaviour and abusive words.

He was fined a total of £320 for the offences and ordered to pay legal costs and a victim surcharge amounting to a total of £931.

The Prosecuting solicitor for the Environment Agency told the court that on Tuesday 27 April 2021, two Environment Agency officers attended Beckfield Stables in response to information received regarding burning waste at the site.

Mr Cliff confronted the attending Environment Agency officers, using foul language and threatening behaviour, which forced both officers to leave.

Andrew Turner, Team Manager for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

Our officers do an important job when investigating reports of waste crime, helping to protect the environment by ensuring people and companies operate within the law. We have a zero tolerance policy on abuse and will take appropriate action on any offences committed against our officers.

In mitigation, Mr Cliff explained that he felt unfairly targeted by the authorities and combined with a decline in health and personal issues, resulted in his short temper and angry nature that day, for which he later apologised.

The court did consider a community penalty for Mr Cliff, however due to his ill health, decided to penalise him with a fine. The Magistrate chairing the hearing commented that the incident "was an expensive loss of temper."

Published 25 February 2022