

Kent Angler convicted for unlicensed fishing and public order offences

The [Voluntary Bailiff Service](#) partnership between the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust proved its value after a recent trial for unlicensed fishing and public order offences.

Nigel Hilden (50) of Rigden Road, Ashford, Kent had pleaded not guilty to charges of unlicensed fishing and using threatening, abusive and insulting words towards an Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer at Hawkhurst Fishery, Kent on 13th June 2019.

However, following evidence given in court by a member of the Voluntary Bailiff Service and an Environment Agency officer, Hilden was convicted at Hastings Magistrates Court of the offences on 28th January 2020. Magistrates imposed a total penalty of £1723.11.

The court heard how Hilden had been using 4 rods and was seen to reel in one of these by the Environment Agency officer. Hilden did not have a licence for the fourth rod and became abusive and threatening as the officer issued an offence report form. At this point, the Volunteer Bailiff joined the officer and his presence decreased Hilden's initial aggression.

In announcing their verdict, Magistrates commented on the clear and credible evidence given by both the Environment Agency's Volunteer Bailiff and Fisheries Enforcement Officer.

Magistrates heard of Hilden's previous 72 convictions, including a prosecution for unlicensed fishing in April 2019.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

Abusive and threatening behaviour towards Environment Agency Officers and volunteers working with us will not be tolerated.

We will not hesitate to take enforcement action against anyone who attempts to intimidate officers or volunteers in this way. Anyone wishing to use 4 rods, where allowed, should ensure all are licensed.

Angling Trust National Enforcement Manager, Dilip Sarkar MBE, said:

We are extremely proud of our Phase 2 Volunteer Bailiff, whose conduct in supporting the Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer was exemplary, as was his performance in the witness box, which was recognised by the Justices.

This is firm evidence of the value and success of Phase 2, which we are pleased to see being extended into East Anglia, whilst further recruits will be trained for this work in the south-east.