

Press release: Seven guilty of illegally fishing in Lincolnshire

Fishing without a licence has landed seven Lincolnshire anglers with penalties totalling more than £4,000, the Environment Agency reports.

Lee Bakes of Munster Court in Grimsby, Wayne Muress of Weelsby Street in Grimsby, Gareth Browne of Wellington Street in Grimsby, Lyndsey Russell of Parker Street in Cleethorpes, Ashley Ardon of Steve Newton Avenue in Horncastle, Dean Pocklington of Small End in Boston, and David Freeman of Dennis Estate in Boston, were all guilty under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

They were caught at Pigeon Pond in North Somercoates, Oasis Lakes in North Somercoates, River Bain in Horncastle, and Westwood Lakes in Wyberton.

They were spotted by Environment Agency bailiffs and PCSOs on regular patrols designed to catch unlicensed anglers in the act – and protect the sport for those who do follow the rules.

The seven offenders were tried on Monday 13 February at Boston Magistrates' Court. Fines totalled £2,900 but with costs and victim surcharges included, the five paid out penalties totalling £4,086.29. A rod licence currently costs from just £27.

Adam Basham, Environment Agency enforcement team leader, said:

Monday 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.

It makes no sense to have the embarrassment of a court visit, a criminal conviction and a bill for potentially thousands of pounds when an annual licence is currently just £27. 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 rod 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, which could land them with a fine of up to £2,500 and a criminal record.

In 2015/16, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire enforcement officers checked 3,710 licences and reported 73 for fishing illegally, bringing in fines and

costs totalling £16,810.

Last year in England, 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.

Any angler aged 12 or over, fishing on a river, canal or still water needs a licence. A full rod licence costs from just £27 (concessions available) and is available from the Post Office either online or in a local branch, 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, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating 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 people to report illegal activity by calling its incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Notes to editors:

- Lee Bakes, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £440 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £44, making the total penalty £611.47. Mr Bakes was caught on 15 July 2016 at the Pigeon Pond, North Somercotes.
- Wayne Muress, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £440 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £44, making the total penalty £611.47. Mr Muress was caught on 15 July 2016 at the Pigeon Pond, North Somercotes.
- Gareth Browne, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £440 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £44, making the total penalty £611.47. Mr Browne was caught on 15 July 2016 at the Pigeon Pond, North Somercotes.
- Lyndsey Russell, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £440 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £44, making the total penalty £611.47. Ms Russell was caught on 4 July at Oasis Lakes, North Somercotes.
- Ashley Ardon, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £440 and

ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £44, making the total penalty £171.47. Mr Ardon was caught on 6 July 2016 on the River Bain, Horncastle.

- Dean Pocklington, who pleaded guilty, was fined £440 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £44, making the total penalty £611.47. Mr Pocklington was caught on 6 July 2016 on the River Bain, Horncastle.
- David Freeman, who pleaded guilty, was fined £260 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £30, making the total penalty, £617.47. Mr Freeman was caught on 13 February 2017 at Westwood Lakes, Wyberton.
- All were found fishing for freshwater fish or eels with an unlicensed instrument in a place where fishing is regulated, contrary to Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.