

Rural Crime Week proves a big success across Tees Valley

The Environment Agency worked with its regional partners to embrace Rural Crime Week of Action -Sunday 6th and Sunday 13th October 2019 – a national campaign aimed at identifying, tackling and putting rural and wildlife crime in to the spotlight; and encouraging increased support for the important issues will hopefully ensure communities across rural Britain are safe and feel safe.

The Environment Agency joined forces with Cleveland Police and The Angling Trust to deliver a host of different activities across Tees Valley. This included foot and boat patrols of rivers and river banks in the area, rod licence checks and awareness exercises with local anglers and food sellers.

Kevin Summerson, Technical Specialist Fisheries Enforcement Officer for the Environment Agency, said:

Rural Crime Week was a great opportunity for us to highlight the crucial work we deliver with our partners all year around, and step up the activity using Operation Checkpoint.

“We commonly experience reports of illegal fishing, game poaching, theft of livestock and agriculture machinery and criminal damage. Being able to deter the offending at a lower level tends to be the best way to alleviate higher risk crimes from being committed.

“This can come down to beneficial awareness campaigns that help to target residential, business, angling and fisheries communities. Rural Crime Week allowed us to create a bigger enforcement footprint and a wider physical presence in rural areas.”

The Rural Crime Week activities included foot and river enforcement patrols in and around Tees Valley including Scaling Dam and Lockwood Beck in Saltburn-by-the-Sea, the Tees Barrage, Hemlington Lake in Middlesbrough and Bowesfield in Stockton, all looking for evidence of serious fishing offence.

Throughout the week Cleveland Police had approximately sixty officers and staff taking part in Rural Crime Week covering the whole of the Cleveland Force area.

Paul Payne, Rural Crime Prevention Officer for Cleveland Police, said:

Rural Crime Week was a great success with something happening every day throughout the force area.

“Without partnership working we cannot make the difference to our rural communities that they deserve. Our partners have the knowledge to assist us and we can return the favour, hopefully to put a good prosecution case together or run proactive operations.”

Giles Evans, VBS (Voluntary Bailiff Service) Manager for The Angling Trust, said:

The members of the VBS who have been involved are all trained to report matters to a high standard. Whilst they are the eyes and ears of the water's edge, they also have a raised awareness of rural and wildlife matters, which can assist the police. It's key that multi-agency working is the way forward and long may these patrols continue.

In particular on Thursday 10th October there were coastal enforcement patrols of Seaton Carew and Hartlepool coastlines using the Environment Agency's ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle) this exercise involved Cleveland Police's rural team, British Nuclear Police, Border Force Police, Natural England, Hartlepool Coast Watch and Hartlepool Borough Council.

The main aspect to come out of the patrols were signs of illegal netting being found on Crimdon beach, which consisted of anchor ropes for illegal nets buried in to the sand.

Throughout Rural Crime Week the Environment Agency and The Angling Trust have also been working with other police forces across the North East including Northumbria Police, Durham Constabulary, North Yorkshire Police and West Yorkshire Police.

[For further information about Rural Crime Week of Action](#)

If you are aware of any illegal fishing or rural crime activity, you can report it by contacting the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.