

Make time to go fishing



Lincs and Northants Fisheries Update January 2019

Fisheries Enforcement - Incident Response:

As well as using our own fisheries enforcement staff as effectively as possible we have also been working with the wider incident management team. In a scenario where our enforcement staff are unable to attend an incident report in good time we can ask additional staff to respond, speeding up the initial investigation. At all times our wider on duty incident response team is managed by a local 'Area Base Controller' (or ABC). The ABC can pull in additional resources where necessary. This enables us to respond more quickly to Category 1 and Category 2 incident reports and pull in additional support if required.

Over the last 9 months we have had some success escalating incident reports that are potentially Category 1 and 2 incidents.

We received a report of illegal nets in the River Nene at Wisbech. Our on duty Fisheries Enforcement Officer was able to request support from another Area Fisheries Enforcement Officer. Both officers were able to respond in good time and confirm that no offence had been committed.

We received an out of hour's report of illegal Eel Nets in Lincolnshire. Our local Fisheries Enforcement staff were unavailable at the time of the report. As such the local ABC was able to call on staff resources from our Operations Delivery Team. Two officers attended the incident site and removed two illegal Fyke nets.

The Environment Agency regulate the use of all fresh water fishing instruments. Any fishing instrument other than rod and line must be authorised, this includes nets, traps, and electric fishing gear.



These pictures show a legally (tagged) eel net on the left and an illegal eel net on the right.

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Incident Response Performance

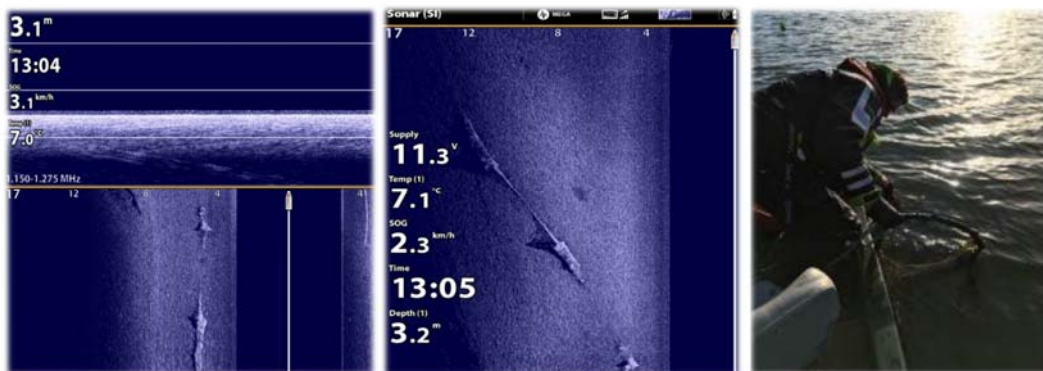
Since April 2018 our local Fisheries Enforcement staff have responded to over 167 incident reports; 5 of these incidents were classified as Category 2 or higher. We were able to respond to three of these events within the required 2 or 4 hour timeframe. Two of these events we did not attend but have recorded and logged as intelligence and future patrol planning. During the same period in 2017 we received 175 incident reports, none of these reports were classified as Category 1 or 2 incidents.

Illegal Net Enforcement – using acoustic sonars and side scanners

One of our Fisheries Enforcement Officers has put his recent boat training qualifications to great use finding and removing illegal fishing nets at Ferry Meadows Country Park near Peterborough. Working with fisheries staff from our Analysis and Reporting Team (A&R Team) and our Sampling and Collection Team (S&C Team) our Enforcement Officer used acoustic scanning equipment to identify and remove the nets.

Using the acoustic scanners we can look for illegal nets over long lengths of river or fenland drain and deep still water fisheries. The fish finder can check for nets, traps and long lines through all depths of water across the whole river channel and in all conditions. This provides us with a very effective method for enforcing the Eel Closed Season which runs from the 10 December to the 31 March each year.

Over the last 5 years Fisheries staff from our A&R Team have been putting this equipment to great use capturing data on fish distribution. In future we plan to work with our monitoring staff and undertake joint fish monitoring and fisheries enforcement work at the same time. This again provides us with an excellent tool for regulating our licenced eel and smelt fisheries.



The images above show an illegal fyke net found and removed on the bed at Overton Lake Ferry Meadows Peterborough.

Rod Licence Checks and Evasion 18/19

Q1

Area Code	Total No. of Licences Checked	No. of Multiple Checks	No. of New Licences Checked	No. of Reports Issued	Evasion Rate
Lincs & Northants	1231	7	1224	35	2.78%

Q2

Lincs & Northants	1379	157	1222	28	2.24%
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Q3

Lincs & Northants	716	177	539	14	2.53%
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Our Fisheries Enforcement Officers have been working hard and are on track to exceed our Key Performance Indicator target for licences checked during 2018/19. Some work from earlier in the year is also starting to successfully conclude with a recent case at the magistrate court of an illegal angler catching £600 in fines for flouting fishing rules.

The angler was caught fishing on the River Nene during the closed season without a rod licence. Working with our Communications Team we aim to use this example to raise the profile of the team's great work within the angling community. We hope this will help to increase rod licence sales which will help to generate additional fisheries income and improve rod licence compliance.

Video highlights Bryan's passion for wildlife

Bryan Seagroatt, our Fisheries Enforcement Officer covering the Witham catchment area, attended the East of England Fisheries Enforcement Workshop run by the Angling Trust.



A video features Bryan and Paul Thomas from the Angling Trust talking about their passion for wildlife, and explains how the partnership between EA enforcement officers and volunteer bailiffs is having a real impact in tackling illegal fishing and fisheries crime.

The Anglian Trust are using the video to promote the importance of enforcement and encourage volunteers, and can be viewed:

Recent social media posts have received 10 likes, 43 shares and 3.3k viewers

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Pennywort Nene and Witham

Fisheries Biodiversity and Geomorphology (FBG) Team continue the battle against floating pennywort. Floating pennywort is a non-native invasive aquatic plant that can dominate areas of open water causing huge problems for river ecology while also creating massive problems for all water users including anglers.

In an ongoing programme against the invasive species FBG and contractor staff surveyed and treated approximately 25km of the Fosdyke and River Till. Large areas have been destroyed, and follow-up treatments will continue to ensure total eradication in future years.

The River Nene has been successfully treated since 2008, and has now been pennywort-free for 5 years. Team members have also been delivering biosecurity training, making site visits, and giving advice to weed boat operatives. As a result, contractors have been able to identify pennywort at a new location on the Witham where a 'hunt and kill' operation is in place. FBG are optimistic that this early intervention will go a long way to reduce the spread of the plant and the financial implications this has on the Environment Agency. This work is funded by a range of different functions across the Agency however rod licence funding is not used. The treatment work cost £6k this financial year.

Witham Pollution Incident Update

The Environment Agency has issued agricultural and fertiliser company Omex Agriculture Limited with a 'notice of liability' under the Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2015.

The notice is the second the Environment Agency has issued since the regulations came into force and requires the company to develop plans for repairing the environmental damage caused when ammonia entered the river in March 2018.

2018 Dry Weather Incident Debrief

Planning helped minimise summer event –

FBG delivered two training activities this year which helped to minimise the impact of the prolonged dry weather incidents during the summer. An inter team incident training session on the River Nene at Whiston in early summer provided practical experience in the deployment of incident response field equipment. We also delivered training to field river maintenance operatives, contractors and staff from local Internal Drainage Boards. The training consisted of a theory session, followed by a practical session where staff were able to practice using Dissolved Oxygen meters. Staff were encouraged to decide if the conditions were suitable to carry out a weed cut. The oxygen readings were compared to our Weed Cutting Risk Matrix which is a helpful tool for assessing environmental conditions.

River maintenance work and aquatic weed control can disturb silt on the river bed. In some circumstances for example high temperatures and low water flows, oxygen levels can drop to levels that can harm local fish populations. In these conditions, the risk of a fish kill occurring is significantly increased. It is critical that operatives are working within our guidance and can use all the tools available to them. Since receiving the training, FBG have had a number of positive reports of staff stopping work in order to prevent an incident occurring.

We are slowly debriefing from the summer events and making sure we are as well prepared as we can be for 2019/20.

Coarse Fish Close Season Consultation

The Environment Agency are consulting anglers on possible changes to the coarse fish close season. The consultation period is 14th January to 11th March 2019. This is not a vote for your preferred outcome it is your chance to comment as an individual angler or to represent your organisation.

The consultation is looking at three options;

1. To retain the current statutory close season
2. To remove the statutory close season
3. To retain a statutory close season but change the start and end dates to 15th April and 30th June inclusive.

You can respond to the consultation online at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fisheries/consultation-on-the-review-of-the-close-season>.

Alternatively, you can respond in writing:

- Please email us at: fisheries@environment-agency.gov.uk
- Write to use at:

Coarse Fishing Close Season Consultation
Environment & Business Environment Agency Fisheries Team
Horizon House
Deanery Road
Bristol BS1 5AH.

Aquatic Weed Control Work Shops

I would like to bring to your attention a free one day workshop on Aquatic Weed Control to be delivered by the IFM (Institute of Fisheries Management) on behalf of the Environment Agency.

The event will be held on Saturday 9th February 2019 at Holmfirth Civic Hall in West Yorkshire. This is a pilot workshop principally aimed at clubs and fisheries in the North of England. I understand this is a good distance away from the Lincs and Northants Area but if you are interested please get in touch with Hugh Bunker or Darren Randall who will be able to pass on your details. The workshop is free to attend as it is being funded by the Environment Agency using rod licence income.

The management of aquatic vegetation is one of the main issues faced by still water fisheries and the workshop aims to pass on information on a range of control methods. Speakers will cover techniques including dyes, benthic barriers, mechanical removal and biological control. There will also be a number of trade stands where you can get further information.

2017/18 Annual Fisheries Report

A reminder that the Environment Agency will be publishing on-line copies of the Annual Fisheries Report for 2017/18 this month. This is a comprehensive report on all fisheries funded activities across the Country.

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