

Two Surrey boaters fined for avoiding registration fees on River Thames

The owners of two boats found navigating the River Thames without valid registrations have been convicted by Redhill Magistrates this week.

Christopher Ackerman of Wellington Court, Kingston-Upon-Thames was ordered in his absence to pay a total of £1181.15 for failing to display a valid registration plate. Ackerman was fined £440, ordered to pay compensation to the Environment Agency in respect of the unpaid registration fee of £612.15, prosecution costs of £85 and a victim surcharge of £44.

Khameel Malbocus of The Retreat, Surbiton, Surrey - pleaded guilty by post for failing to display a valid registration plate on her boat and ordered to pay a total of £673. Malbocus was fined £220, £371 in compensation to the Environment Agency, prosecution costs of £60 and a victim surcharge of £22.

Ackerman's vessel *Longwood Lady* was spotted by an Environment Agency Waterways Officer without a valid registration on 17 September 2015 at Teddington Towpath, Ham Common. The vessel was booked for being unregistered and the defendant was made aware in writing that he needed to comply to avoid prosecution, however he failed to do so.

Malbocus was also observed not displaying a valid registration during the same routine inspection along the Teddington Towpath. Again, her vessel *Sirius* was booked for being unregistered and Malbocus warned in writing that as owner, she faced prosecution if she failed to register her boat. Despite being given numerous opportunities by the Environment Agency, the defendant failed to do so.

Malbocus told the court by email that she was currently working part time but was not working at the time of the incident so could not afford the fees and she was trying to get her boat fixed.

The Inland Waterways Order 2010 requires all vessels 'kept' or 'used' on the River Thames, to be registered with the Environment Agency and display a valid annual boat registration plate (similar to a vehicle tax disc).

The Environment Agency carries out checks along all 135 miles of the navigable non-tidal River Thames to ensure that all boats kept or used on it have a valid registration plate. It takes enforcement action against all those which don't.

It also takes enforcement action against a wide range of other offences relating to boating, often working as part of a multi-agency approach with the Police and local councils.

A series of multi-agency action days in Surrey and other areas along the lower Thames has seen a number of illegally moored boats moving on, illegal mooring poles being removed, and a significant reduction in the amount of littering and other anti-social behaviour taking place.

Nick McKie-Smith, Environment Agency Waterways Enforcement Manager said, "The income we raise from boat registration is imperative for the upkeep of the non-tidal River Thames. It is used to improve and maintain the navigation and lock structures as well as providing facilities such as sewage disposal, water points and electricity charging points. By not complying, we lose vital revenue which damages the future of these great waterways.

"Owners of boats not displaying valid registration plates could face prosecution, so it is important that they are aware of and adhere to this requirement. Ignorance is not an excuse."

Ends

Notes to editor

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