

Press release: Waste criminals dump £750,000 clean-up bill on landowners

Criminals who illegally dump thousands of tonnes of baled waste have cost land and property owners in the North East an estimated £750,000 in the last year, according to the Environment Agency.

The figure, which relates to the cost of removing waste dumped in fields and empty commercial properties lawfully, could be even higher if land is contaminated or insurance premiums rise as a result. Dumped waste is also a major fire risk.

In a bid to stop waste criminals in their tracks, the Environment Agency is reaching out to property and land owners, commercial property agents, trade associations and local authorities. Their aim is to warn of the dangers posed by waste criminals and advise them, their clients and their members how they can better protect themselves.

Jamie Fletcher, Area Environment Manager, from the Environment Agency said:

Waste criminals operate throughout the country, offering to remove waste cheaply and then dumping it in fields or empty warehouses. They tend to move to new areas as enforcement agencies become wise to their activities. We know it's only a matter of time before they target us again so we're sending out a strong message: Waste criminals are not welcome here and we're doing everything in our power to deter and catch them.

We can't do it alone. We work closely with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity. And we're encouraging everyone to do their bit: for property and land owners to be vigilant and better protect themselves and for all businesses, organisations and individuals to manage their waste responsibly, preventing it from getting into criminal hands in the first place.

Land and property owners are advised to:

- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure.
- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective and new tenants. Land and property owners have a responsibility to ensure anyone leasing their land/property complies with regulations. They may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on land or property without the relevant permissions and could leave them liable to prosecution
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour.



Advice for businesses

There are around 4,000 commercial properties across the North East thought to be empty, which are owned by up to 1,500 businesses and organisations, including fund management companies and local authorities.

The Environment Agency is also advising businesses and organisations of their responsibility to ensure their waste is managed appropriately. Anyone who produces, stores and manages waste is obligated to ensure waste does not cause harm to human health or pollution to the environment under waste under Duty of Care legislation.

Waste crime diverts as much as £1 billion per annum from legitimate business and the treasury. Since April 2011 the Environment Agency has invested £65.2 million nationally to address it. Its specialist crime unit uses intelligence to track and prosecute organised crime gangs involved in illegal waste activity and to ensure any necessary action is taken against them.

The Environment Agency also works with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity and to put in place contingency plans to reduce the risk from a small number of abandoned sites at risk of fire.

Anyone who sees waste crime taking place is advised not to approach as these people can be dangerous. Report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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[News story: PM statement on Saudi women gaining right to drive](#)

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

As a long standing friend of Saudi Arabia I welcome the Kingdom taking this important step towards gender equality. The empowerment of women around the world is not only an issue I care deeply about, it is also key to nations' economic development. The UK will continue to work in close partnership with Saudi Arabia as it builds on this progress and delivers its ambitious programme of reform, Vision 2030.

Speech: “Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Afghanistan

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you Special Representative Yamamoto for your briefing today. At the outset I want to express my gratitude, and that of my government, for the work that you and your team are doing in extremely challenging circumstances. I thank you too Foreign Minister Rabbani for your intervention today.

As you have both made clear, we simply cannot afford to lose sight of Afghanistan. Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges. And the human cost, after years of fighting, years of violence, only continues to grow.

So our work is not done. And it is clear that UNAMA still has a vital part to play. But just as Afghanistan today is not the same as it was 10 years ago, it is right that UNAMA changes too to fit the current realities on the ground. So we welcome the review into how the mission can best support Afghanistan in a way that aligns with the government’s own priorities.

We share much of the analysis in the review, with its focus on streamlining the work of the Mission towards a targeted set of outcomes. The report contains a number of recommendations that should strengthen its work – the key thing now is implementation.

We will continue our close work with UNAMA on donor coordination, rule of law, anti-corruption and support for human rights, especially women’s rights. We welcome recognition of the importance of the national civilian presence offered by UNAMA’s network of field offices and the UK strongly supports a continued national presence. These offices are an important symbol to local communities. They will also have a role to play in delivering successful elections in 2018 and 2019, and can make a contribution to underpinning local peace negotiations in the future.

The report sets out three strategic priorities, corresponding to support for political stability, peace, and economic and social development. We believe that putting greater focus on support for an Afghan-led peace process is the right way forward.

Only by establishing a credible peace process can Afghanistan move forward. We all have a role to play in that, including the UN. We very much hope therefore that members of this Council can agree to adjust the mandate of UNAMA in order to incorporate these recommendations. This would ensure that

UNAMA is better able to focus on the critical task of supporting the peace process. We look forward to discussing this with Council members in the weeks ahead.

Mr President,

Before concluding I want to say a word on the outcome of the US South Asia strategy review.

The UK and US are close partners in Afghanistan, so we welcome the US's long term commitment to the people and government there. Despite the challenges, which we have heard a lot about today, we agree that it is important that we continue to provide support on issues such as security, development and governance. This is crucial to building a stable Afghan state and reducing the terrorist threat to us all.

It's in all our interests that Afghanistan becomes safer and more prosperous: that's why we announced our own troop increase back in June and confirmed development support of up to a billion dollars to 2020.

We also welcome the restated commitment that – ultimately – the only way to a political settlement will be through negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taleban. This is why we encourage you, Foreign Minister Rabbani and your colleagues in government to take this opportunity to reach out to the Taleban to establish a credible peace process.

We owe it to the people of Afghanistan who have suffered so much during decades of violence, to do all that can be done to institute a peace process. It will be beholden on all of us, within this Council and in the UN system more broadly, and of course the government of Afghanistan to support such a peace process.

Thank you.

Speech: “Suffering on this scale cannot be allowed to continue. South Sudan cannot continue on its current path.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative, at the Security Council briefing on South Sudan

Thank you Mr President. At the outset, let me take the opportunity to thank

the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Shearer and also President Mogae for their briefings, and to reiterate the UK's full support to the vital work of UNMISS and JMEC in difficult circumstances in South Sudan.

Mr President, two years ago the people of South Sudan rejoiced at the signing of the 2015 Peace Agreement. It was a symbol of hope for this young country which had so quickly been plunged again into war by the rivalries of its leaders. Now that document is a stark reminder of all the Government has failed to deliver for South Sudan. As the Secretary-General said, the signatories to the Peace Agreement have demonstrated time and again that they are deaf to the distress of their own people and unmoved by calls for peace from the international community.

Conflict, hunger and horrific sexual violence have become commonplace: there has been gang rape, recruitment of child soldiers, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Nearly 2 million people are on the brink of famine and half the population are food insecure.

And yet, NGOs report that those starving are often too afraid to collect life saving aid for fear of being attacked on the way home by those charged to protect them. We cannot even begin to imagine the choices that the people of South Sudan are being forced to make. This suffering is forcing millions of civilians to flee, creating the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the fastest growing in the world.

And today, we have been presented with yet another set of reports which demonstrate that the Government's declared "ceasefire" is meaningless. Government forces continue large-scale military operations, causing dire humanitarian consequences and disrupting life-saving humanitarian operations. Suffering on this scale cannot be allowed to continue. South Sudan cannot continue on its current path.

As President Mogae has rightly stated, the international community must act and speak with one voice. And in this vein, the UK strongly welcomes the joint efforts of the United Nations, the regional countries in IGAD and the African Union to bring the suffering of the South Sudanese people and the fighting to an end.

These messages were reiterated at the High Level Meeting on South Sudan last week and echo many of the calls that this Council made in March in our Presidential Statement. And we welcome the leadership shown by the regional countries of IGAD in launching the High Level Revitalisation Forum and we offer our full support, as I believe all in this Council do, to this initiative in its objective of revitalising the peace agreement. If this is to succeed, Mr. President, it will take a concerted and united push from all countries in the region and a commitment to stay the course.

Now the first priority for this process must be the laying down of all arms once and for all. There is no military solution to this crisis. Lasting peace will only be achieved through the inclusion of all groups, both armed and non-armed. We cannot expect success overnight. We must see the Revitalisation

Forum as a process, not a one off meeting, although we must also guard against drift.

Success will also require all the parties, particularly the Government, to demonstrate the commitment and political will to pursue peace. Thus far this has been lacking. The UK therefore calls on all parties to the Agreement, as well as estranged and other opposition groups, to respond positively and constructively to this opportunity for dialogue. And we agree with others that at this stage elections would be premature.

The United Kingdom has repeatedly set out that there must be consequences for those who seek to obstruct peace, and has long-called for sanctions against spoilers. We therefore support last week's African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué in its call for all necessary steps, including sanctions to be considered against all those that continue to obstruct efforts towards the restoration of peace and security in South Sudan.

The international community including this Council must be prepared to act against those that continue to impede progress towards peace. We should be clear to those who reject peace and continue the suffering of the South Sudan people, that they will face sanctions if they do not participate fully in IGAD's process.

As that communiqué says, South Sudan can no longer be treated in a routine manner. The United Kingdom stands ready to support the region and to use all the tools at our disposal, both collectively and individually, to compel the parties to choose peace.

Thank you Mr. President.