

Press release: Rogue recycler found guilty for mattress mountain

The operator of a waste mattress and bed recycling site in Smarden has been found guilty for failing to comply with relevant waste exemptions as well as failing to comply with an Enforcement Notice issued by the Environment Agency. Sentencing is due on 3 February 2017.

The charges were brought against Mr Lewis Bertram, trading as Eco Matters, Units Y & E2 Smarden Business Estate, Smarden, Ashford, Kent after an Environment Agency investigation discovered that he was operating outside of the terms of registered waste exemptions, posing a pollution and fire risk to the surrounding environment, neighbouring units and residential properties. Mr Bertram pleaded not guilty to the charges presented at Magistrates court early in 2016 and elected for the case to be heard at Crown Court. The jury returned guilty pleas to all three charges brought before the court.

Mr Bertram had been operating a mattress recycling business at the two units, which lie within close proximity to several residential properties, since July 2013. Environment Agency visits in December 2014 and January 2015 found that the activities were not compliant with the terms of the registered waste exemptions. Environment officers informed Mr Bertram that he was committing an offence by operating the site outside of the terms of these waste exemptions and gave Mr Bertram the opportunity to comply with the specific conditions and relevant objectives in the first instance.

Further visits to monitor the situation on site in March and early April 2015 revealed that activities on site were continuing to be conducted outside of the terms of the exemptions and the volume of waste stored on site continued to increase. The Environment Agency de-registered the waste exemptions and Enforcement Notices were issued on Mr Bertram in March 2015 instructing that all waste be removed from Unit E2 and the volume of waste at Unit Y to be reduced to the 1,000 tonne limit of textiles permitted for storage under the waste exemptions by 29 May 2015.

Mr Bertram maintained a not guilty plea in relation to the non-compliance with these two notices to clear the waste for which the charges will be referred back to a magistrate's court.

No further waste had been brought to site by Mr Bertram since the de-registration of the exemptions in May 2015. However, further visits to the site conducted by environment officers in June 2015 revealed that Mr Bertram had not complied with the Enforcement Notices requesting for the removal of waste from site.

The Environment Agency worked closely with Kent Fire and Rescue Service throughout 2015 and 2016 to monitor the fire risk posed by the site and to ensure that the situation on site did not get any worse.

The site at Units Y and E2 are still full of waste mattresses, divan bed bases and their associated parts which we will continue to deal with to ensure that they are removed by those responsible.

Alan Cansdale, Environment Manager from the Environment Agency said:

His actions showed blatant disregard for local residents and businesses putting the environment and local amenity at risk. Mr Bertram ignored numerous opportunities given to him by our officers to bring the operations back into compliance.

Waste exemptions are designed for activities deemed to be of low risk to the environment and have strict conditions that must be complied with.

While we will work closely with businesses to help them comply with such legislation, in cases where individuals consistently operate illegally and in this case outside the terms of an exemption, we have no hesitation in prosecuting them to make sure that waste crime doesn't pay.

There are photos available on our [flickr account](#)

News story: Views sought ahead of review into residential special education

A [call for evidence](#) has today (23 January 2017) been launched to seek views on the educational experiences and outcomes for some of the country's most vulnerable children.

Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families Edward Timpson has asked Dame Christine Lenehan to conduct an independent review looking at the outcomes and experiences of children and young people attending residential special schools and colleges.

The review is designed to find practical outcomes for the government and other agencies who work with this group of young people, who often have the most complex needs and require more intensive support.

It will look at the characteristics of this group, how and why they are placed in residential special schools and colleges, the support that's available to them during and after their placement and the ways in which families say their experience of these settings could be improved.

To ensure that the review is informed by a wide range of views and evidence from the sector, Dame Christine has launched a call for evidence and is asking for contributions from people working in residential settings, students attending these residential schools and colleges, their parents or carers, and children, young people and adults who have now left these settings. Councils, academics and other sector groups are also encouraged to take part.

Director of the Council for Disabled Children since 2003, Dame Christine will be supported in the review by Mark Geraghty, chief executive of the Seashell Trust, which runs an outstanding residential special school and college for children and young people with complex needs.

A Department for Education spokesperson said:

Every child, no matter the obstacles they face, should have the same opportunities for success as any other. This independent review will look at how the experiences of children and young people attending residential special schools and college can be improved, to ensure the right support is in place.

We are grateful to Dame Christine Lenehan and to Mark Geraghty for conducting this review. Together they bring a wealth of experience from across the education and social care spectrum.

The [call for evidence](#) runs until March 17. The review will report back to the government later this year.

[News story: Liam Fox welcomes industrial strategy commitment to UK trade](#)

Following the launch of the industrial strategy green paper today – International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, visited a leading advanced technology business in Oxfordshire to reiterate the government's commitment to supporting UK business to grow at home and abroad.

On the visit to Prodrive in Banbury – a successful independent British engineering innovation business – the International Trade Secretary outlined the steps government is taking to support trade and investment across the country which can have a crucial impact on the growth of local economies.

The industrial strategy green paper sets out a plan to improve living

standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. To achieve that goal, the green paper sets out ten strategic pillars to underpin a new government approach.

Encouraging trade and inward investment policy is one pillar and is key to opening up markets for UK firms, boosting productivity and growth across our economy, including by increasing competition and helping to bring new ways of doing things to the UK.

The Secretary of State for International Trade, Dr Liam Fox, said:

Trade and investment is a vital part of building an economy that works for all, creating jobs and transforming local communities and industry.

Across the UK we're pioneering a whole host of new technologies, working with industry and universities to ensure Britain remains the location of choice for many sectors, such as the next-generation automotive industry. Prodrive is a fantastic example of innovative British automotive engineering at its best and a great illustration of our how we can and should be exporting our world-class expertise to benefit our economy.

The UK is open and ready for business and the launch of the Industrial Strategy today shows our commitment to improving growth and productivity across the whole country.

The Department for International Trade is leading government work to continue to champion free trade and ensure it helps deliver an economy that works for everyone.

The strategy lists how the department will:

- build future trade relationships – The UK remains committed to pursuing free trade. That includes seeking to achieve continuity in our trade and investment relationships with third countries thereby minimising disruption for business as we leave the EU
- build global prosperity
- improve market access for exporters
- create a more active approach to winning overseas contracts
- increase defence exports
- double export finance capacity
- make government trade services easier to use for firms – the department has recently launched a [ground breaking new digital platform](#) to provide digital services to help exporters and investors;
- join up trade and inward investment promotion with local areas
- strengthen the value from trade shows and
- develop a new, more strategic approach to inward investment

Following the decision to leave the European Union, the UK has the opportunity to develop its new trading arrangements and take forward its

ambition to become a global trading nation and champion of free trade.

On the visit to Prodrive the Secretary of State had a tour of the factory and saw first-hand how the company makes bespoke parts for race and rally cars using traditional metalworking techniques and the advanced technology workshop where the company develops innovative projects for some of the company's biggest clients such as Jaguar Land Rover, Volvo and McLaren.

Further information

The [Automotive Investment Organisation](#) which now sits within DIT, has since it was set up by the Automotive Council in 2013, helped create or safeguard over 20,000 jobs in the UK automotive supply chain, and by attracting inward investment helped increase local content in UK-built cars from 36% to 41%.

Car-making in the UK is thriving – with more cars built last year than any year since 1999.

Speech: Rob Wilson's speech to the London Library Ambition sector forum

I am delighted to join you this morning to support the publication of our new Ambition document. I hope it's a great opportunity to really look at some of the practical proposals it makes to help libraries thrive in the future.

It's the first time central and local government has joined with sector stakeholders to draw up a strategy for public libraries in England and commit to a plan to deliver that. It's built on – and I hope you would recognise this – extensive consultation and input from the sector. We have all signed up to what it says, and to a successful future for libraries.

And why have we done that? Libraries are hugely important for the communities they serve. They not only provide access to books and other literature, but also help people to help themselves and improve their own opportunities. They bring people together and they provide practical support and guidance.

And libraries support people in different ways at each stage of their lives, and they can help government to achieve strategic priorities by delivering services in communities – whether related to health, social cohesion, information and digital literacy, jobs and business support or the enjoyment that literature and cultural activity brings.

Now I've been a councillor myself; I know councils have to make important decisions about resources, to meet local needs and also legal requirements as well.

But I believe that if councillors think imaginatively about how libraries can help deliver their priorities, providing real leadership, then Local Authorities will start to see libraries as an asset to be developed. Ambition challenges government at all levels to think 'Libraries First' in planning services for communities – and I'll be championing that message with ministerial colleagues and councillors.

Ambition challenges councils and the library services they run to think and act differently. Standing still isn't an option. The way people use libraries and other public services is continuing to change. So we all need to think in innovative ways.

There are great examples of Local Authorities doing interesting and positive things – the Taskforce shares stories and ideas through its blog to stimulate original thinking. I've seen some great approaches during my own library visits; so for example,

- the new Curve in Slough, which is a part of the entire town's regeneration process. Alongside the library, it hosts Slough Museum, a multi-purpose community and performance space, community learning spaces, the Council's registrars services and a café with garden terrace.
- And Farnham Common, a thriving library run by a community group with financial and professional support from the council. It raises extra income to support the library service from renting space to the children's centre and police who share the building and also through community events and fundraising.

Councils should embrace change; should seek to do things differently, and to be as bold as possible. If they do, DCMS will help them. We are already helping to spark creative new approaches – for example through grants from our new £4 million 'Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone' innovation fund to assist libraries helping people living in disadvantaged areas. We've received over 100 bids, which Arts Council England is currently evaluating.

We're also providing advice and support to councils that want to find different and more effective ways to run their library services, such as public service mutuals; 4 library services have already successfully gone down this particular route.

I believe this is a really positive direction to take as I want to see more staff owning part of the service they run – so we will offer support to Councils who want to do go down this route. The challenge is to think strategically about reform and service delivery and not to tinker piecemeal.

Some changes will of course be more challenging. People often think of libraries as buildings – But it's not just the buildings that make libraries, it's the service that's important. Sometimes their location or layout no longer suits the things local councils and local communities want.

If so, then changes – such as co-location with other services or sometimes closures may be actually justified, and indeed required, in favour of providing library services in other ways; maybe through outreach into communities or online.

But, and I want to make this absolutely clear, councils should make decisions like this based on robust evidence – rather than reducing provision in ad-hoc or very reactive ways.

Councils should be marshalling evidence about local needs, then actively discussing options to meet these with the community and with library professionals. I'll also expect councils to consider a full range of funding and delivery options before making significant reductions to their library services.

And if we receive complaints as part of our superintendence role, and where local authorities do not appear to be meeting their statutory duties, we will investigate. Where needed, I will take action under the 1964 Act. Libraries will not be seen as a soft option.

These sector events today and around the country are a start – I hope a useful and enjoyable start – to spreading the word about Ambition and sharing learning about things we can all do to help libraries succeed. But they aren't the end – keep an eye out for future masterclasses the Taskforce will be running to delve into some of these areas in more depth.

That way we can all work together to take library services forward into a sustainable and successful future.

Press release: Industrial Strategy will help unlock Northern Ireland's potential

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Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Brokenshire, today hailed the launch of a modern Industrial Strategy which will build on the UK's strengths and tackle its underlying weaknesses to secure a future as a competitive, global nation.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

The Industrial Strategy is a vital part of the plan set out by the Prime Minister last week to drive growth across the whole United Kingdom and create more high skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities.

New Sector Deals and investment in research and development will support the industries of the future where the UK – and Northern Ireland in particular – has the potential to lead the world, from electric vehicles to biotech and quantum technologies.

My engagement with the Northern Ireland business community over the last six months has left me in no doubt about the opportunities that Northern Ireland can unlock. Today's Strategy Green Paper offers Northern Ireland businesses a valuable opportunity to address sector-specific challenges and work with government on solutions that can help.

I will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland to explore how to maximise the positive impact that this Strategy can have in Northern Ireland, particularly in exploring Sector Deals, removing barriers to innovation and growth and developing new trade and investment deals to increase exports.

I will also be making the case for political stability as a fundamental basis for industrial success. Securing strong, stable devolved institutions in Northern Ireland that will provide leadership, support innovation and boost skills will be vital to delivering on Northern Ireland's potential as a place to invest and do business.

There is a pedigree of achievement in Northern Ireland to build upon with 54,000 more people in work than in 2010. Now is the time to build on that success and look ahead to future opportunities, as the government steps forward to help build a United Kingdom that works for everyone.