

Press release: Man fined for running illegal waste site

A Gateshead man has been fined and ordered to pay thousands of pounds in compensation after he illegally stored waste at a site and then abandoned it.

John James Armstrong, 52, of Park Lane, Winlaton Mill, appeared at North Tyneside Magistrates' Court on Friday 7 April.

He pleaded guilty to one offence of operating a waste site without a permit.

He was fined £1,000, ordered to pay compensation of £7,069.49 to the landowner to cover the costs they paid to clear the site, and £1,591.26 costs.

Armstrong was Director of Canterhall Builders Limited, a construction company which dissolved on 23 May 2016.

Prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Simon Crowder told the court that on 20 April, 2016, two Environment Agency officers attended the unit at Unit 1 Felling Business Centre, Green Lane.

They saw the site was covered in construction waste, including bricks, broken concrete, wood, plaster board, insulations, pallets, old kitchen units, benches and electrical waste. There was also a skip full of building waste.

Enquiries revealed that Canterhall were tenants at the site but had abandoned it earlier in the month.

On 16 May a letter requesting removal of the waste was given to the landowner.

On 23 May Environment Agency officers traced the defendant to a site in Swalwell, where he was given a letter inviting him to be interviewed.

Two days later the site at Felling was cleared by the landowners, at a total cost to them of more than £7,000.

The defendant has no previous convictions and was co-operative during the investigation.

During an interview on 2 June he said that if it was not cost effective to hire a skip to remove waste from carrying out construction work, then he would instead transport the waste back to the unit. When there was enough waste at the unit he would then order a skip to have it removed.

He said in January 2016 more and more waste was deposited at the unit and due to financial problems he could not afford skips to get the waste removed. He said he left the unit on 10 April and had made no attempts to clear the waste.

He added he was unaware of the need for an environmental permit or registered exemptions.

The Environment Agency's Paul Whitehill said:

We take waste crime very seriously. It can cause serious pollution to the environment, put communities at risk and undermine local businesses.

The defeneded flouted the law for financial gain – he cut costs by not hiring skips at the sites where work was taking place to ensure disposal of the waste.

He also avoided the cost of an environmental permit and annual subsistence fees. Illegal waste activities that avoid regulatory controls don't have the appropriate infrastructure to protect the environment, and can have a detrimental impact on local communities.

The sentence follows calls from the Environment Agency warning landowners about criminals looking to profit by dumping waste illegally on their land.

Landowners can often find their property filled with waste and abandoned by tenants, leaving owners with an expensive clean-up bill. The Environment Agency is cracking down on waste crime and taking tough action to deal with this behaviour.

This ruling demonstrates that people can be made to pay for the cost of clearing the mess they leave behind.

Information and advice about environmental permits can be found on the Environment Agency website. To report illegal waste activity contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

[The government's approach to making working more worthwhile for families](#)

I have been sent a reminder of changes coming in this April:

There are a number of welfare reforms and tax changes that come into effect in April. These reforms are about building a stronger economy and a fairer society. We want to support people in work, as well as ensure the welfare system works as a safety net for those who need it.

The measures include:

- A further increase in the Personal Allowance to £11,500; an increase of over 70% since 2010. Since the start of this Parliament we have cut income tax for 31m people and taken 1.3m of the lowest paid out of income tax altogether.
- Increasing support for low earners by raising the National Living Wage to £7.50. This marks a £1,400 a year increase in earnings for a full-time worker on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) since the introduction of the NLW in April 2016. – a pay-rise for one million people.
- Helping working parents with childcare costs by launching Tax Free Childcare from 28 April – saving working parents up to £2000 per year for each child under the age of 12.
- Increasing income for 3 million households by reducing the Universal Credit taper rate from 65 per cent to 63 per cent.
- Ensuring young people are always better off in work by delivering the manifesto commitment to end automatic entitlement to housing support for 18 to 21-year-olds who can safely live at home for new claims to full service Universal Credit.
- Investing £330m in practical employment support to help disabled people back into work, and aligning the rate paid to new claimants who are placed in the ESA work-related activity group or the Universal Credit limited capability for work group with the job-seeking equivalent in both benefits.
- Tackling worklessness by ensuring that those in receipt of Universal Credit will be expected to prepare for employment when their youngest child turns 2 and to look for work when their youngest child turns 3.
- Aligning the benefits system between those in work and those out of work by limiting Child Tax Credits and the child element of Universal Credit to 2 children (new awards will not be made for third or subsequent children born on or after 6 April).
- Removing the higher rate of child element for the first child in Universal Credit and the family element in tax credits for claims where the eldest child is born on or after 6 April.
- Widening help so that more bereaved people get the support they need by introducing the Bereavement Support Payment on 6 April. This will replace Bereavement Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance and the Bereavement Payment for those who lose a spouse or civil partner on or after this date.

Helping savers with the launch of a new NS&I bond offering a market-leading interest rate of 2.2% and increasing the annual ISA limit to £20,000.

Labour launches Pensioners' Pledge Card

Speaking today (Wednesday 12 April) on a visit to an arts and crafts exhibition at Age UK Coventry's Craft and Computer Centre, the Shadow Chancellor and Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, will launch Labour's Pensioners' Pledge Card.

The Pensioners' Pledge Card lays out Labour's four promises to protect older people in our communities:

- Protect pensioner incomes by legislating to keep the Triple-Lock on state pensions up to 2025
- End Tory unfairness on the women's pension age, compensating those worst affected
- Protect the pensions of UK citizens living overseas
- Keep the Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus passes for pensioners

Alongside the pledge card, Labour will publish new analysis from the House of Commons Library showing pensioners will be at least £650 better off by the end of the next parliament from keeping the triple-lock.

Highlighting an increase in pensioner poverty over the last year, Labour will also commit to compensating women worst affected by the Government's speeding-up of the state pension age; protecting pensioner benefits and protecting the pensions of UK citizens living abroad.

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, will say:

"I am delighted to be launching this pledge card that will inform many elderly people in our communities that Labour is not only promising to stand up for pensioners; but is determined to ensure they keep the hard-won entitlements they currently hold.

"It's a national scandal that pensioner poverty is rising and the Tories are refusing to commit to keeping the triple-lock or compensate women worst affected by the speeding up in the state pension age.

"Only a Labour Government will stand up for pensioners and protect them throughout the next parliament."

LABOUR'S PROMISE TO PENSIONERS

- ✓ Protect pensioner incomes by legislating to keep the Triple-Lock on state pensions up to 2025.
- ✓ End Tory unfairness on the women's pension age, compensating those worst affected.
- ✓ Protect the pensions of UK citizens living overseas.
- ✓ Keep the Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus passes for pensioners.

 Labour

STANDING UP
FOR YOU

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[News story: Defence minister meets teenagers taking part in pilot Army supercamp](#)

The 60 teenagers mainly from local communities in Yorkshire were taking part in a pilot scheme to allow teenagers to learn about Army life by participating in a variety of fun but challenging tasks, including camouflage techniques and assault courses.

Defence Minister Earl Howe, who met students from Keighley University Academy and Bradford Youth Services Group, said:

These camps will educate young people and help the Army build close and long lasting ties with local communities.

An incredible amount of work is being done to ensure these 'Supercamps' are a success and I look forward to seeing more of them taking place across the country.



The teenagers from local communities in Yorkshire were taking part in a pilot scheme to allow teenagers to learn about Army life. Crown Copyright

The two week pilot, which includes 290 students, is being run by 4th Infantry Brigade, the regional brigade for Yorkshire and the North East.

Lt Col Mark Hunter, who is overseeing the camp, said:

This supercamp brings together people from all communities around Yorkshire, providing them with positive skills to take home leadership and team working skills.

It also provides them with an opportunity to learn about the different things that the Army does, and to know more about the Armed Forces.

Towards the end of his visit Lord Howe presented special certificates to students who took part in the supercamp and also met many of the course instructors.

Press release: Environment Agency tests new powers for volunteer bailiffs

The Environment Agency and Angling Trust are running a pilot project, funded by the fishing licence, testing the benefits of giving members of Voluntary Bailiff Service powers to make fishing licence and byelaw checks. If successful, the initiative's expansion would allow Environment Agency fisheries officers to focus on investigations into other types of fisheries crime.

In the first phase of the project, the Angling Trust recruited over 300 volunteers across England to help Environment Agency fisheries officers by providing information and reporting suspicious incidents on riverbanks and lakes.

In the second phase, the pilot project has now trained 10 of the Voluntary Bailiff Service members from the south east to undertake fishing licence and byelaw compliance checking patrols, reporting offenders in the same way that Environment Agency enforcement officers do.

Judy Proctor, head of fisheries at the Environment Agency said:

The volunteer bailiffs already provide a great service to angling by helping our officers catch people fishing illegally. We will be evaluating the pilot carefully to see what more can be done and how we can improve the service.

There is no excuse for illegal fishing. A fishing licence costs from just £30 for a whole year and you can get one on GOV.UK. Anyone fishing illegally can expect to be prosecuted and face a fine of up to £2,500 and up to £50,000 for byelaw offences. In 2015/16, the Environment Agency's patrols checked 62,076 rod licences and brought 2,043 successful prosecutions for fisheries crime.

The Voluntary Bailiff Service recently inducted a further 35 new Phase 1 recruits in the North East and is currently recruiting in the rest of England. Induction and training days are being held this spring and anyone expressing an interest in joining the VBS should email karen.sarkar@anglingtrust.net