

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](#)

[Green Party responds to Supreme Court judgement](#)



24 January 2017

Caroline Lucas, the co-leader of the Green Party, has responded to today's Supreme Court judgement.

She said:

"This case is a win for parliamentary democracy, and a blow for those minister who planned to railroad Brexit through without any proper scrutiny.

"The spotlight now falls on MPs – and in particular the Labour Party – to properly scrutinise the Government's plans and act accordingly. That must mean that Labour rethink the support they've given to triggering article 50 prematurely, and instead join those of us who refuse to be pushed into Theresa May's artificial Brexit timetable.

"It's astonishing that Ministers ever thought it was right to trigger Article 50 without a vote in Parliament – and their battle in the courts really does

expose a contempt for the democratic process within the Conservative party.

"I will not be capitulating to the Tories over Brexit – and will vote against prematurely triggering Article 50 in the Spring. As the co-leader of a Party which stands for environmental, social and economic justice I will not support a Government offering no assurances to EU nationals living in Britain, threatening to turn this country into a tax haven and planning to throw us off the Brexit cliff edge by ending our membership of the Single Market and Customs Union."

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[China plans huge spending on farmland improvement](#)

China plans huge spending to improve farmland quality in the next few years in hopes of propping up grain supplies as shrinking arable land has put the populous country under pressure to feed its people.

A total of 600 billion yuan (around 88 billion U.S. dollars) will be pumped into the field by 2020, Han Jun, deputy director of the central agricultural work leading team office, said on Tuesday at a press conference.

The central and local governments will provide the funds, Han said, adding that he hopes the efforts will also attract private investment.

It was the latest move in a nationwide official program to build "high-standard cropland," which, according to official documents, refers to large-scale, contiguous plots of land with fertile soil and modern farming facilities. This type of farmland can maintain stable and high yields and has sound ecological condition and strong capacity to resist natural disasters.

China improved around 26.87 million hectares of farmland to meet those standards from 2011 to 2015. The Ministry of Land and Resources estimates there will be a 10- to 20-percent rise in grain production capacity.

With the new investment plan, improvement of another 26.67 million hectares can be completed by 2020, Han said, adding the government will try to hit 40 million hectares.

China's arable land reserves have been falling in recent years, some occupied by construction of new homes and factories and some replanted with trees and grass for ecological protection. The phenomenon, along with the first drop in

grain output in more than a decade last year, has added to concerns about food security.

The country still had a shortfall of about 20 million tonnes in the amount of grain it produced and consumed, according to official calculations.

China is eyeing the farmland-improvement program to help boost grain yields and modernize agriculture.

Efforts must be made to stabilize farmland area and improve its quality to ensure grain self-sufficiency and food security, according to a document released Monday by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council.

The document demanded more efforts to replenish, as much arable land is currently occupied by non-agricultural construction.

China aims to retain at least 124.33 million hectares of arable land in 2020, and the figure was 133.3 million hectares at the end of 2015. The government has set a warning level of 120 million hectares and reiterated the level must not be breached.

The arable land should be protected “the way we protect pandas,” according to the document.

Corporate report: Government Office for Science annual report: 2015 to 2016

This annual report sets out the activities and achievements of the Government Office for Science from April 2015 to March 2016. It covers:

- our responsibilities
 - highlights of 2015 to 2016
 - responding to emergencies
 - Foresight projects
 - Council for Science and Technology projects
 - financial information
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Central China province reports new H7N9 case

Another human H7N9 avian flu case has been reported in central China's Hunan Province, bringing the total number of infections in the province to 16, including five fatalities, this year.

The female patient, 37, was diagnosed in Yueyang City Monday. She had contact with poultry before falling ill and is in critical condition, according to the Hunan provincial disease control and prevention center.

People who had close contact with the patient have not shown symptoms of fever or coughing.

In addition to Hunan, human H7N9 infections have also been reported in the provinces of Guangdong, Guizhou, Hubei, Henan, Jiangxi and Shandong, as well as in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macao.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in March 2013 in China. It is most likely to strike in winter and spring.