

Construction firm fined as HSE inspection identifies catalogue of failures

A renovation company in South Wales has been sentenced after defying enforcement notices from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Inspectors say Greenlife Property Developments Ltd failed to heed their warnings about the dangers posed to workers by a two-and-a-half metre deep excavation of the entire back garden of a house in Pit Place, Cwmbach, Aberdare.

The HSE inspection of the refurbishment works in September 2023 followed up on reports of unsafe construction work. It found that:

- Employees were observed working within the excavation, which was approximately 2.5 metres deep.
- The sides of the excavation were vertical, leaving a risk of rubble subsiding or collapsing without warning.
- The site had not been secured to prevent unauthorised access.
- There was no risk assessment for the refurbishment works and no safe system of work.
- Craig Lewis, managing director at Greenlife Property Developments Ltd, was present on site at the time.

Following the inspection HSE served Greenlife Property Developments Ltd with a Prohibition Notice, requiring the firm to stop construction work within the excavation until it had corrected defects under a safe system of work. There was an immediate risk of serious injury to employees, working inside the excavation, including of burial from falling rubble.



Two Improvement Notices were also served, one requiring the company to secure the site, preventing unauthorised access, while the other ordered the firm to obtain advice on the risks to workers inside the excavation and implement a safe system of work.

A subsequent HSE investigation found Greenlife Property Developments Ltd breached the Prohibition Notice by continuing construction work inside the excavation. The company also failed to comply with one of the Improvement Notices as it did not obtain advice on the risks to workers inside the excavation and implement a safe system of work. Mr Lewis ignored repeated attempts by HSE to contact him in relation to the notices served and the conditions on site, and attempted to deceive HSE by providing false information in relation to the actions taking by the company to comply with the notices.

HSE guidance states that excavation work must be properly planned and carried out to prevent accidents. Precautions should be taken, including against collapse of the sides, materials falling onto people working in the excavation, and undermining nearby structures. Further guidance can be found [here](#).



Greenlife Property Developments Ltd, of Gurnos Estate, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Gwent, Wales, was found guilty of breaching Section 33(1)(c) and two breaches of Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay £5,812.57 in costs at Merthyr Tydfil Magistrates' Court on 20 January 2025.

HSE inspector Rachael Newman said: "Every year people are killed or seriously injured by collapsing and falling materials while working in excavations.

"Workers are not standing on solid ground when they are inside an excavation. There is almost no excavated ground that can be relied upon. One cubic metre of soil collapsing into an unsupported excavation can collapse without warning and weigh as much as one tonne."

"Greenlife Property Developments Ltd failed to heed the warnings we evidently gave in our enforcement notices. They made no attempt to prevent the excavation from collapse. The company failed to comply with two enforcement notices which were served to remove the risk and secure compliance with the law.

"The attempts to evade us were a deliberate breach and flagrant disregard of the law.

"The fine imposed on Greenlife Property Developments Ltd should highlight to everyone in the construction industry that the courts, and HSE, take a failure to comply with the law and enforcement notices extremely seriously. We will not hesitate to take action against companies which don't do all they should to keep people safe."

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Matthew Reynolds and supported by HSE paralegal officer Jason Dix.

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences in England and Wales can be found [here](#) and for those in Scotland [here](#).