

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.

News story: Decommissioning milestone at Oldbury nuclear site in Gloucestershire

A total of 109 low level waste skips, the containers which were used to hold fuel elements once they had been removed from the reactor, have now been safely taken out of the ponds; processed and packaged for storage.

It marks a significant step along the journey to fully decommissioning the cooling ponds.

Work at the site will now focus on removing the pond furniture and remaining skips, which are currently storing other components, before the end of the year.

This will be followed by draining of the pond water and stabilisation of the surfaces, due to take place in 2018.

Rob Taylor, Magnox Ltd Ponds Campaign Manager at Oldbury, said:

The work was completed in challenging conditions but was delivered ahead of schedule.

The achievement is a significant one for the site as we work towards decommissioning the facilities that once allowed it to operate, in a safe and efficient manner.

[Ponds decommissioning milestone delivered at Oldbury site](#)

[Find out more about Oldbury nuclear site in South Gloucestershire](#)

[Find out more about radioactive waste in the UK](#)

News story: Asian hornet identified in Devon

The [National Bee Unit](#) has confirmed a sighting of the Asian hornet at an apiary near Woolacombe in Devon.

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native hornet and poses no greater risk to human health than a bee. However, they do pose a risk to honey bees.

This is the first confirmed sighting since last year, when a nest was discovered in the Tetbury area in Gloucestershire. That Asian hornet incursion was successfully contained by bee inspectors who promptly tracked down and destroyed the nest.

Work to identify, destroy and remove any nests is already underway, which includes:

- setting up a surveillance zone around North Devon
- opening a local control centre to coordinate the response
- deploying bee inspectors across the area who will use infrared cameras and traps to track hornets and locate any nests
- readying nest disposal experts who will use pesticides to kill the hornets and destroy any nests

Nicola Spence, Defra Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, said:

While the Asian Hornet poses no greater risk to human health than a bee, we recognise the damage they can cause to honey bee colonies. That's why we are taking swift and robust action to locate and destroy any nests in the Devon area following this confirmed sighting.

Following the successful containment of the Asian hornet incursion in Gloucestershire last year, we have a well-established protocol in place to eradicate them and control any potential spread.

We remain vigilant across the country, working closely with the National Bee Unit and their nationwide network of bee inspectors.

A local control centre will be opened this week in North Devon and bee inspectors from APHA National Bee Unit will be carrying out surveillance and monitoring initially in a 1-2 km radius around the initial sighting.

They will be supported by nest disposal experts who will use an approved pesticide to destroy any hornets and remove any nests.

The free [Asian Hornet Watch](#) reporting app, launched last March and downloaded 6500 times already, allows people to quickly and easily report possible sightings of the invasive species and send pictures of suspect insects to experts at the National Bee Unit.

- The cost of eradication on private land will be met by [APHA](#).
 - Anyone who believes they have found a nest should not go near it and report it using the [Asian Hornet Watch](#) app which is available to download from the [Apple](#) and [Android](#) app stores.
 - The hornet found near Woolacombe is currently undergoing both DNA testing at the [National Bee Unit](#) in North Yorkshire to help establish how it arrived in the UK.
 - Members of the public can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat [website](#).
 - The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their [website](#).
 - For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet please can be found on [Bee Base](#) guide or the [non-native species identification guide](#).
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Research and analysis: Continued development of standardised methods for describing environmental pressures and sensitivities

Requirement R104

Requirement detail

Human use of the marine environment exerts a range of pressures on marine species. Depending on the pressure type, pressure intensity, and sensitivity of the species to that pressure, significant negative impacts may occur.

To ensure robust, transparent and integrated decision making, the MMO seeks to identify and agree standardised methods applicable across scales that describe and define; the types of pressures generated by marine activities, pressure intensity and distribution in space and time, sensitivity of

habitats and species to pressures in space and time and ranges and thresholds at which pressures impact species ultimately to support decision making.

Research and analysis: Novel technologies to reduce risks to marine protected areas

Requirement R109

Requirement detail

Management measures for marine protected areas preclude certain activities because of the environmental risk resulting from the likely impacts of those activities. Novel solutions that can reduce the impact of activities on marine features, may potentially enable those activities to occur.

This work looks to identify current issues preventing access to marine protected areas for marine fishing and recreation activities to support development of novel technologies to address issues and inform adjustments to management measures.

This work would not require MMO itself to develop/test new technologies.