

Press release: Government steps up the fight against waste criminals

Waste criminals act illegally to evade landfill tax, undercut responsible waste disposal businesses, operate illegal waste sites, export waste illegally and fly-tip – blighting communities with bad smells, fly infestations and fires.

Their activity cost the English economy more than £600 million in 2015 and the review announced by the Environment Secretary today is the next step in the government's ongoing work to tackle the crime – which is already a serious offence with tough penalties.

A [Call for Evidence](#) launched today (10 June) will enable a wide group of people to have their say on ways to crack-down further on Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), who profit from waste crime.

The review will be chaired by [Lizzie Noel](#), a Non-Executive Director at Defra.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, said:

Organised criminals running illegal waste dumps and fly-tipping are blighting local communities. They cost our economy vast amounts of money, pollute our environment and harm our wildlife.

We must crack-down on these criminals who have no regard for the impact they have on peoples' lives. The time is right for us to look at how we can best tackle these antisocial and inexcusable crimes.

The review will:

- Consider the types of crimes being committed and organised crime groups involved;
- Consider the environmental, community and economic impacts of serious and organised waste crime;
- Consider how the Environment Agency, other organisations, and the law enforcement system can work together to tackle the threat;
- Make recommendations for a strategic approach to serious and organised waste crime.

Minister of State for Security and Economic Crime, Ben Wallace, said:

Organised crime groups exploit any opportunity to make money. Our local communities are being scarred by the illegal dumping of waste, while at the same time people are being conned into placing contracts with dodgy waste firms.

We are committed to ending this scourge and I look forward to exploring what more Defra, local authorities, the private sector and police can do on this issue.

More than 850 new illegal waste sites were discovered by the Environment Agency in 2016-17. While an average of two illegal waste sites are shut down every day, they continue to create severe problems for local communities and business, particularly in rural areas, as well as posing a risk to key national infrastructure.

A [study](#) by the Home Office suggests that criminals may also use waste management activities such as operating illegal waste sites as a cover for crimes such as theft, human trafficking, fraud, drugs supply, firearms supply and money laundering.

Review chair Lizzie Noel has more than 20 years' experience of senior roles in both the private and public sectors. She will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and the Call for Evidence will enable a wider group of people to have their say.

Lizzie Noel said:

The health of our communities, environment, and economy is being harmed by organised groups committing serious waste crimes.

This review is an opportunity to properly understand the extent of this criminal activity, and I look forward to working with a range of partners to ensure our response is robust and effective.

Since 2014, the Government has given the Environment Agency an extra £60million towards enforcement work to tackle waste crime. This extra investment has shown a return of about £5 for every £1 extra spent.

Today's announcement builds on a range of new measures from the government to tackle waste crime, including [new powers](#) for the Environment Agency to lock the gates to problem waste sites to prevent waste illegally building up and powers to force operators to clear all the waste at problem sites, and [extending landfill tax](#) to include material disposed of at illegal waste sites with effect from April 2018.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

Last year, we closed down two illegal waste sites a day and were granted new powers to complement our existing enforcement efforts. Our officers are also out in communities, preventing and disrupting criminals through our intelligence led investigations, and also dealing with the consequences of illegally dumped waste to the environment and the wider community.

We welcome the opportunity to review how best we deploy our resources and strengthen ties across government and with the police to target organised criminal rings behind illegal waste operations, and bring perpetrators to justice.

The Government has also [recently given councils powers](#) to hand out on-the-spot fines to fly-tippers, made it easier for vehicles suspected of being used for fly-tipping to be stopped, searched and seized, and later this year [will introduce new fixed penalty notices](#) for householders who pass their waste to a fly-tipper, subject to Parliamentary approval.

The review is due to be completed by September 2018.

Further information:

- Serious organised crime is the planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks
- Lizzie Noel will be supported by an advisory panel bringing a wide range of experience in serious organised crime, security, and waste. The panel comprises Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire, Colin Church, Chief Executive Officer at Chartered Institute of Waste Management, and Craig Naylor, Deputy Chief Constable in Lincolnshire Police.
- Householders can check if a waste carrier is an approved carrier on the Environment Agency [website](#).
- The cost of waste crime to the English economy being over £600m in 2015 is from [Rethinking waste crime](#), Environmental Services Association Educational Trust, 2017.
- The figure of the extra investment in the EA having shown a return of about £5 for every £1 extra spent on tackling waste crime is from [Waste crime interventions and evaluation project report](#).
- The Home Office study referred to is [Understanding organised crime: estimating the scale and the social and economic costs](#), October 2013.
- For further information please contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7317 or out of hours on 0345 051 8486

Terms of Reference

- The Serious and Organised Waste Crime review is initiated by, and will report to, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Purpose

- To consider, in depth, serious and organised waste crime – including our response to it – so that we can make actionable recommendations for a strategic approach to waste crime.

- This review will directly inform a strategic approach to waste crime, which will be published in the new resources and waste strategy. This strategy is part of the Government's environmental policy following the 25-year plan and the Clean Growth strategy. The review will also help shape future direction of work in this area.

Objectives

The review will:

- consider the extent and nature of crimes being committed, and the types of organised crime groups involved
- consider the environmental, community and economic impacts of serious and organised waste crime
- consider how the Environment Agency is responding to the threat
- consider the ability of the Environment Agency, other organisations, and the law enforcement system as a whole, to work together to tackle the threat
- make recommendations for a strategic approach to serious and organised waste crime
- make recommendations for the future direction of work

In implementing the review, the review team should also take account of:

- the enforcement landscape and the multiple organisations involved
- the sustainability, scalability, deliverability and cost-benefit trade-offs of responses to serious and organised waste crime
- wider work underway in Defra, the Home Office and the Environment Agency
- lessons learnt and examples of best practice from a wide range of stakeholders

Scope

- The review will take a broad approach, to understand the scale, nature and impact of serious and organised crime and current and potential response to it. The focus will be on England only.
- The review will concentrate on organised criminal involvement in waste crime, characteristics of criminal enterprises, intelligence gathering and enforcement effectiveness. It will consider fly-tipping and smaller waste crime incidents only in connection to the review's understanding of organised criminality.

Roles and responsibilities

- The review will be chaired by Defra Non-Executive Director Lizzie Noel. The review will report to the Defra Secretary of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Ways of working

- The Chair will be responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and progress of the review and delivery of the final report. The Chair will

work closely with the Head of Waste and Recycling, who will oversee the review within Defra. Progress reviews will be conducted monthly.

- The Chair, with advice taken from the core working group, may seek to access wider expertise dependent on need.
- The review will be supported by a Secretariat within Defra, and by staff within Defra and the Environment Agency throughout.
- A communications strategy and stakeholder engagement plan will be developed. All communication with the media will be undertaken through Defra Communications Team or the Environment Agency Communications team.

Timing

- The review will commence in June 2018 and is due to be completed by September 2018.

Reporting

- An evidence-based report will be submitted to Defra Ministers for consideration, detailing the findings of the review.

Press release: Work starts on Northumberland flood defence

Work will start on Monday (11 June) on a £65,000 flood embankment which will protect homes in Hexham from flooding.

Storm Desmond saw flooding to 15 properties at Tyne Green, Hexham, on 5 December 2015.

Properties flooded as a result of water from the River Tyne flowing through an underpass beneath the Newcastle-Carlisle railway line near to Tyne Green Golf Course.

The Environment Agency prioritises delivery of new and improved flood defences using government funding over a rolling six year programme, to schemes which provide the greatest benefits to protect properties from flooding.

Due to the small number of properties that would benefit, against the cost of delivering a flood scheme at Tyne Green, the Environment Agency had been unable to deliver new flood defences in the area.

Funded by residents

The work is being uniquely funded by residents who have pooled individual grants made available to them following flooding over the winter period of 2015/16.

The Environment Agency and Northumberland County Council worked closely with Tyne Green residents, Northumbrian Water and Network Rail to provide a creative solution.

The work will take around three weeks to complete and will be marked by a celebration event with the local community later in the summer.

The flood embankment, to be built by Breheny Civil Engineering, has been designed to protect against a flood event similar to that experienced by Tyne Green residents during Storm Desmond.

Chris Hood, Project Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

The start of this work marks the final step in what has been a long and difficult journey for local residents. I would like to thank them for their support and continued patience while we have worked together with Network Rail and others to find the best and most cost-effective solution at Tyne Green.

They have used their initiative and all worked together to pool their grants which has allowed us to be able to build this flood bank. We hope this protection afforded by the new defence will now provide local residents with peace of mind when bad weather threatens in the future.

Innovative solution

Northumberland County Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services, said:

It shows what a big impact Storm Desmond had on our county when improvement schemes are still ongoing more than two years after the event.

This is another fine example of agencies working with local communities to find innovative solutions to improve their areas and prevent flooding events damaging their homes in the future.

County Councillor for Hexham Central with Acomb Trevor Cessford added:

This is great news for local residents and should hopefully provide peace of mind and security for the future. I would also like to say a huge thanks to all the residents for their patience and understanding in this drawn out matter and for the selfless financial contributions they themselves have made towards the project.

The Environment Agency is urging people to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' by

visiting the [Floods Destroy website](#) and do three things to prepare for flooding.

- check your postcode and find out if you are at risk of flooding
 - sign-up for free flood warnings if you are at risk
 - view and save the 3-point flood plan so you know how to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' in a flood
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Press release: Supporting flooded communities in Sparkhill and Selly Park

People living and working in Sparkhill and Selly Park are invited to meet the Environment Agency, Birmingham City Council and National Flood Forum teams working to support flooded communities in the West Midlands.

Following extreme rainfall across the region, communities in Sparkhill and Selly Park were badly affected by flooding.

The Environment Agency is working alongside Birmingham City Council and the National Flood Forum to support these communities, investigate the causes of flooding and identify what could be done to reduce flood risk in the area in the future.

A series of drop-in events are being hosted over the coming fortnight (6 to 12 June 2018) to give local people the opportunity to speak to the teams involved.

Emma Smailes, from the Environment Agency said:

Our thoughts are with those who have been affected by recent flooding. We're continuing to work in the communities affected and our teams are working round the clock to monitor flood risk, issue flood alerts and warnings and keep waterways clear of debris.

We want to meet local people so they can share their experiences with us, ask us questions and so that we can work together to investigate what happened and identify ways of reducing flood risk in the future.

The drop-in events are planned for the following times and locations:

For people affected in Selly Park the National Flood Forum and Environment Agency will be around to talk to members of the public on the following dates:

- Wednesday 6 June 2018, 2pm to 8pm
- Thursday 7 June 2018, 2pm to 8pm

at

Selly Park Tavern Car Park

592 Pershore Rd

B29 7HQ

For people affected in Sparkhill the National Flood Forum, Birmingham City Council and Environment Agency will be available to talk to members of the public on the following dates:

- Monday 11 June 2018, 2pm to 8pm
- Tuesday 12 June 2018, 2pm to 8pm

Percy Road Park

Sparkhill

B11 3JS

Press release: New £63 million defence scheme is turning the tide against floods in Rossall

A multi-million pound coastal defence scheme to shore up Rossall's sea defences while reducing flood risk to 7,500 homes has been officially opened today (1st June 2018). It is one of the single biggest investments in a single coastal flood scheme to date.

Led by Wyre Council, in partnership with the Environment Agency and main contractor Balfour Beatty, the new scheme is made up of two kilometres of sea defences. It forms one of the three projects being delivered by the Fylde Peninsula Coastal Programme Partnership, alongside the recently completed Anchorholme Coastal Protection Scheme in Blackpool and the Fairhaven to Church Scar Coastal Protection Scheme in Lytham.

Designed for the next 100 years to hold back the Irish Sea during major storms, the Rossall flood defences will provide better protection to the town's tramway, hospital and schools whilst reducing flood risk to 7,500 homes. The scheme comprises of 1.84km of sheet piles, more than 10,000 specially manufactured precast concrete units, 211,000 tonnes of stone, 46,000m³ of insitu concrete and 327,000 tonnes of locally sourced rock from 12 quarries across the north of the UK. The scheme is one of the single biggest investments the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), has made in a coastal flood scheme to date.

The Environment Agency builds climate change projections into the design of all of its flood defences to make sure they are fit for the future. So, aside from being an impressive piece of infrastructure within its own right, the Rossall scheme is helping in the fight against climate change by taking into account changing circumstances in sea level rise and weather patterns over the next 100 years.

Construction of the scheme has also allowed for improvements to the local environment as part of the new defences. This has included the creation of a new ecology park on the landward side of the defences to enhance the area through its visual impact and environmental footprint.

Known as Larkholme Grasslands, the park has been designed by Lancashire County Council with bridges and artwork by Stephen Broadbent, a British sculptor who specialises in public art. This strip of grassland, from West Way to Fleetwood Golf Club, is already classed as a Biological Heritage Site because of the rarer species of flora and fauna that grow there.

The completion of the scheme delivers on a long-held vision to not only create a lagoon area behind the new defences – to act as an additional flood storage for spray coming over the seawall – but also to provide a home for local wildlife and a new green space for residents and tourists to enjoy.

The park will also feature specially created sculptures by Stephen Broadbent, and, in a nod to the folklore and myth surrounding the local coastline, the new seawall at Rossall continues the story of The Sea Swallow, cementing its place on the Mythic Coast.

Beginning at Cleveleys, visitors to the site can follow an artwork and poetry trail from the popular children's book until the story ends at Rossall Point Observation Tower. Characters from The Sea Swallow, including a giant stainless steel seashell and sea ogre carved from limestone, can also be spotted along the picturesque walk.

Councillor Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder at Wyre Council said:

I'd like to thank all our partners for helping us to deliver the new sea defences. The completed scheme will not only protect our residents, their homes and our businesses and infrastructure, but also has provided us with a visually stunning promenade for walkers

and cyclists. Locals and visitors alike will be able to enjoy the magnificent coastline, whilst the grasslands will give a contrasting green and natural landscape.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency chief executive, said:

This is one of the biggest investments ever in a coastal flood scheme. It will reduce flood risk to 7,500 homes, create new green space and benefit the local economy, including by using locally sourced materials. It's a great example of partnership: by working together the Environment Agency, Wyre Council, our other partners and the local community have helped create an even better place for people and wildlife.

Defra Minister David Rutley said:

Rossall's new coastal defence scheme has been made possible thanks not only to significant government funding, but also the huge support of local government and other partners. The result is positive news for the community – regenerating the area, creating an ecology park and providing better protection for 7,500 properties from the risk of flooding.

I also welcome the fact these vital defences have been constructed using local materials and expertise, supporting industry and the economy in the North West of England.

Dean Banks, Balfour Beatty Chief Executive Officer for UK Construction Services, said:

We are delighted that the local community and visitors to the Fylde coast can now fully experience the extensive benefits of the Rossall scheme, which will protect thousands of nearby properties from the risk of flooding and offer a captivating promenade for people of all ages to enjoy.

The project's success is a testament to the skills and collaborative working relationship between the fully integrated delivery team, with Wyre Council and the Environment Agency.

Notes to editors

327,000 tonnes of rock is the total of underlayer and main rock armour that make up the scheme. This is made of 86,342T of under layer placed and 241,000T of rock armour.

The Rossall Coastal Protection Scheme has been fully funded through DEFRA

grant in aid totalling £63.2m (protecting 7,500 properties).

Press release: Consultation seeks your views on Alkane Energy environmental permit application

Alkane Energy UK Ltd has applied to the Environment Agency for an Environmental Permit under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 for a site at Rufford Hills Farm, Off Rufford Lane, Rufford, Nottinghamshire.

As part of this exploration the company plan to carry out the drilling of a borehole to extract gas from old mine shafts.

This is a well-established technique that the company use at several sites in the area, with the gas then converted into electricity.

The Environment Agency is seeking views from the local community and interested groups on the application. The consultation will run until Monday 6 June 2018. The application documents have been placed [online](#) for people to view and provide comments.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency, said:

We insist that where a permit is required our standards are met and that we have evidence that the process can take place safely. We will thoroughly assess the application to ensure that people and the environment are protected.

The consultation runs from 31 May 2018 until Midnight of 28 June 2018.

People now have the chance to comment on the proposals by emailing: You can email your response to pscpublicresponse@environment-agency.gov.uk or you can post you response to:

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