

# North Warwickshire landowners warned to be vigilant

Rogue operators posing as legitimate waste businesses are known to be targeting sites in north Warwickshire, along the A5 corridor. Landowners are being approached by companies or individuals asking to become tenants and to operate a waste transfer facility. Landowners may be shown waste exemption paperwork which appears to show they are legitimate. Once on the land, the tenant allows waste to be illegally brought onto the site.

Landowners are told the waste being processed will be 'inert waste' which is soil, stones and the like. However, the waste being brought onto sites is shredded general waste, which looks very different and can be quite smelly. Soil is then used to cover these lorry loads of deposited waste in a bid to disguise it so that it can be more cheaply landfilled. The Environment Agency is sharing information and evidence with HMRC where they have found this happening.

In a bid to stop these rogue operators in their tracks, the Environment Agency, along with Warwickshire County Council is appealing to property and landowners, commercial property agents and trade associations to be on show they are legitimate. Once on the land, the tenant allows waste to be illegally brought onto the site. their guard. With the right advice and checks, landlords can help safeguard themselves against inadvertently harbouring an illegal waste site and potentially causing misery to locals due to issues like dust, odour and noise.

So far, Environment Agency waste crime specialists have successfully disrupted this illegal activity and waste has been removed from the land by those posing as legitimate business. However, the risk to landowners is significant. If waste is left abandoned on their land, landowners are responsible for clearing that waste, which, in extreme cases, could cost several hundred thousands of pounds.

A spokesperson for the Environmental Crime Team with the Environment Agency said:

We're determined to make life hard for criminals; their illegal activities damage the environment and the economy. We are proactively working to disrupt and stop waste crime.

The Environment Agency stops more than 900 illegal sites a year from operating, and with the vigilance of landowners we can do even more.

Property and landowners, commercial property agents and trade associations

are being advised to:

- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective new tenants – land and property owners have a responsibility to ensure anyone leasing their land/premises complies with regulations, so it is essential that you establish how and for what they are going to use the land/property
- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure
- It is illegal to store waste on your land without the required permits – you may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on your land or property without the relevant permissions and you could be liable to prosecution and the cost of removing the waste
- Landlords should check before signing a contract that the contract complies with regulations – you can view whether a potential tenant holds the correct permit to carry out waste operations
- The offer of payment to temporarily store waste may be a scam, the waste will likely never be collected.
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour – if you are suspicious of prospective tenants please contact the Environment Agency for more information and advice.

The economic impact of waste crime in England is estimated to be over £604 million per annum. The Environment Agency is working hard to address this. 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.

Anyone who sees waste crime taking place, or who has been a victim of illegal baled waste deposit, is advised not to approach these people as they can be dangerous. Report it by calling the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.