

## Press release: Arrests made following dawn raids

Today (Thursday 20 April 2017), the Environment Agency and police carried out 5 dawn raids following an in-depth investigation into illegal dumping of waste. There were 2 people arrested pending further enquiries. A third person will also be helping Environment Agency officers with their enquiries.

Enforcement action took place at 5 separate addresses in Staffordshire, Herefordshire and Hertfordshire this morning following an investigation into illegal dumping of 20,000 – 25,000 tonnes of waste at 17 sites across the Midlands, North West and North East.

More than 25 Environment Agency investigators, supported by over 20 police officers from Staffordshire, West Mercia, Warwickshire and Hertfordshire Police forces were in action at suspects' homes and business addresses seeking evidence as part of Operation Cesium.

The investigation will now continue with the evidence seized today. This investigation is expected to continue for many more months.

Paul Clarke, lead investigator in the Environment Agency's National Investigation Team, said:

The Environment Agency takes waste crime seriously and we will persistently pursue those suspected of illegally dumping waste.

In this case we have 17 landowners and communities blighted by significant amounts of dumped waste. We've already seen some of these sites catch fire, causing significant impact on communities, the environment and our emergency services partners who have to tackle them.

Illegal waste activity of the likes we're investigating here diverts £1 billion from legitimate businesses and the treasury, and at the Environment Agency we do everything we can to bring those responsible to account.

This investigation has been ongoing since last summer and enquiries will continue to examine the evidence to determine the full extent of the suspected offences.

The Environment Agency takes waste crime extremely seriously. This is a live and complex investigation, anyone with further information should contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.