

Press release: MJ Curle Ltd ordered to pay £32,920 for environmental waste offences

On Thursday 26 January 2017, Stuart Curle, director of MJ Curle Ltd, Sunnymead Farm, Shifnal, Telford, pleaded guilty at Telford Magistrates' Court to operating a regulated facility that was not authorised by an environmental permit, both on behalf of the company, MJ Curle Ltd and separately in his capacity as the director of the company.

The 45-year-old was fined £1,200 and ordered to pay in excess of £25,000 in compensation and costs to the Environment Agency, along with a £120 victim surcharge. Additionally, the company was fined £6,600. The court also ordered that the 1,700 tonnes of waste that remains on-site is to be removed within the next 6 months, by 25 July 2017.

Environment Agency officers visited the site on 13 January 2015 to carry out an inspection. They found a large number of skips containing a variety of waste, including cardboard and green waste. Other parts of the site were used for storing and sorting a variety of waste, some of which originated from demolished conservatories. There was also evidence of waste being burned on the site.

The activities undertaken on the site require an environmental permit. However, the defendant never applied for one. As a result the defendant avoided application and subsistence fees in excess of £14,000. Around 1,700 tonnes of waste were found on the land. To dispose of this legally it will cost MJ Curle Ltd approximately £130,000.

Under caution, Stuart Curle admitted to a range of waste being brought to the site as a result of a business relationship with a local company. He also accepted that MJ Curle Ltd had been collecting skips full of waste and once they were transported back to the site, the waste was sorted and stored. He accepted that the activity required an environmental permit, something which the Environment Agency had warned him about in 2008.

During the hearing at Telford Magistrates Court, the Bench found that the previous warnings given by the Environment Agency to the defendant regarding the illegal activities on the site, in 2008, were a seriously aggravating feature of the current offending. However in mitigation the defence raised the defendant's serious ill health and the financial difficulties that have blighted the family as a result. The defendant also asked the court to take into account the defendant's co-operation with the Environment Agency and his admissions in interview.

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

When we entered the site in 2015, there was clear evidence of a deliberate and unlawful waste processing and storage operation. Stuart Curle was previously spoken to by Environment Agency officers about the need to obtain an environmental permit to undertake this activity. Unfortunately he failed to heed that guidance. We are pleased with the outcome of this case and we will actively bring prosecutions where deliberate unlawful processing and storage is identified.