

Southampton targeted for illegal waste exports

A former company director has been fined for exporting banned household waste from Southampton.

The illegal cargo bound for Indonesia in 2019 included nappies, clothing, textiles, tins and electrical items sent from a site in Worcestershire.

Tianyong Wang, of Solihull, pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to causing his dissolved company, Berry Polymer Ltd, to export the waste. Shipping documents described the waste as plastic, which can be exported to Indonesia for recycling.

Howard McCann, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told Kidderminster magistrates that between 27 June and 5 July 2019, Wang had caused his company to export some 382 tonnes of household waste in 22 sea containers from its site in Droitwich via Southampton and Felixstowe, including 17 from the south coast port.

The waste included 1,590 nappies and sanitary items, 1,338 electrical items and 33,639 tins and cans.

Other contaminants found in searches by investigators from the Environment Agency were items of clothing, textiles and rags, unopened plastic bags, glass, wood, golf balls, toys, a used toilet brush and food and drink cartons.

Mr McCann told the court Wang was the sole director of Berry Polymer, which has since been dissolved.

Wang had agreed to sell 500 tonnes of plastic bottle waste to a broker at £270 per tonne. A purchase order confirmed the load site of the waste as 'Berry Polymer Ltd, 20 The Furlong, Droitwich WR9 9AH'. Berry Polymer invoiced the broker £103,210.20 for 382.26 tonnes of 'plastic bottles'.

The offence was discovered on 4 July 2019 by Environment Agency officers who conducted initial inspections of some of the 22 containers sent to Southampton and Felixstowe.

The inspections recorded significant evidence of contamination, flies and, in some containers, a rotting decomposing smell.

The containers were deemed unfit for export at that stage and prevented from onward shipment to Indonesia.

Five of the containers were transported to the Environment Agency's inspection facility at Felixstowe for full examination. One of the bales was so badly contaminated, it made an officer physically sick.

All the containers were returned to the site in Droitwich for reprocessing.

Wang told the Environment Agency the material supplied was not as described because his company's usual bale-inspection had either not happened or was sub-standard.

In sentencing, district judge Ian Strongman said this was a 'blunder' by Wang that cost him his business and his reputation.

Sham Singh, a senior investigating officer for the Environment Agency, said:

This prosecution sends out a strong message we will investigate and, where necessary, prosecute anyone found to be involved in exporting waste illegally.

Waste crime can have a serious environmental impact and puts communities at risk. It undermines legitimate business and the investment and economic growth that go with it.

We support businesses operating within the law by stopping the illegal waste exports.

At Kidderminster magistrates' court on 10 August, Tianyong Wang, 43, of Welcombe Grove, Solihull, was fined £1,200 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000.

He was charged with breaching regulation 55(1) of the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 2007, by causing Berry Polymer Ltd to transport 22 containers of waste collected from households to Indonesia illegally between 27 June and 5 July 2019. This was contrary to regulation 23 of the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 2007.

If anyone suspects a company is doing something wrong, please contact the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.