

## [DAO 02/21 EU Law references in Managing Public Money](#)

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## [Successful first year for waste crime taskforce despite pandemic](#)

Criminals operating in the waste industry are being warned that the Covid-19 pandemic is not stopping the authorities from cracking down on their illegal activities, as the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) heralds a successful first year in operation.

[Launched in January 2020](#), the multi-agency taskforce was the first of its kind to formally bring together environmental regulators and law enforcement agencies to tackle serious and organised waste crime which is estimated to cost the UK economy at least £600 million a year and cause great harm to the environment, local communities and businesses.

Despite the Joint Unit being in its infancy when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, the taskforce has wasted no time in sharing intelligence, identifying illegal activity and conducting numerous operations to disrupt illegal activities, leading to arrests of suspected waste criminals and bringing them to justice. The taskforce has also strengthened in number, with the British Transport Police and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency joining the Unit in September.

Nicola Lawton, JUWC Deputy Director for Enforcement, said:

The JUWC is crucial to our fight against serious and organised waste crime, and despite the Covid-19 pandemic we have continued to target and disrupt the criminal networks who are undermining the waste industry and the environment.

In the last year we have conducted numerous multi-agency operations against groups and individuals who are causing serious harm, and the Unit is now leading over 20 operations into offending that

spans the UK and involves not only waste crime but other criminal activities including firearms, drugs, vehicle theft and money laundering.

The Joint Unit has entered 2021 stronger and more determined than ever to tackle those engaged in serious and organised waste crime.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

The past year has been a real challenge for our enforcement agencies as they carry out their important work, and I commend the Joint Unit for Waste Crime for its vital efforts in disrupting the criminals and gangs who show complete disregard for our waste industry, local communities and the environment.

We are absolutely committed to clamping down on waste crime and I look forward to seeing the Joint Unit go from strength to strength over the coming years as it protects the public and the environment from harm and brings waste criminals to justice.

Much waste crime is carried out by gangs and individuals who operate bogus waste services, accepting payment for disposal without having the necessary permits for transportation or storage. Waste is then illegally dumped on private and public land to avoid fees and landfill taxes, which causes significant harm to businesses, local communities and the environment.

## **JUWC case studies**

- In May 2020, the JUWC started an investigation into a hostile waste operation where local Environment Agency officers had previously been intimidated and threatened. JUWC officers commenced a surveillance operation and worked with the local council, HMRC, the DVSA and the RSPCA on a targeted plan for the site. This led to a warrant being executed in August 2020 by JUWC officers and the police. The JUWC are now reviewing the evidence gathered and will take enforcement action for any offences committed.
- In September 2020, the JUWC was invited by the Government Agency Intelligence Network to attend a site raid in Kent which was supported by over 300 Metropolitan Police firearms officers. Seven people were arrested on suspicion of an array of offences after police discovered drugs, stolen vehicles and an arsenal of weapons including a loaded shotgun, 17 air weapons, CS gas and a machete. Two people found at the site were cared for by the force's modern slavery team and 49 stolen dogs seized, with most now returned to their owners.

- In October, JUWC officers from the Environment Agency and the British Transport Police undertook a week of action tackling waste and metal crime. Over 1,100 vehicles were stopped and 550 sites were visited. Over 150 offences were detected and 29 arrests made.

In addition to the JUWC, the Environment Agency (EA) conducts its own operations to disrupt criminal waste activity. In 2019, the Agency stopped illegal waste activity at 912 sites – 12 per cent more than the previous year. As a result of prosecutions taken by the EA, businesses and individuals were fined almost £2.8 million for environmental offences in 2018.

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## [UK statement on Israeli settlements, January 2021](#)

News story

The UK government has set out its position on the Government of Israel's decision to approve new settlements in the West Bank.



A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

The UK is seriously concerned by the Government of Israel's decision to approve the construction of 780 new settlement units across the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including areas deep within the West Bank which could threaten future peace negotiations.

Settlements are illegal under international law and risk undermining the physical viability of the two state solution. We call for the construction of these in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank to cease immediately.

## **37th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Micronesia**

Thank you, Madam President,

The United Kingdom appreciates the Federated States of Micronesia's continued participation in the UPR process. We commend [the Federated States of] Micronesia's efforts to implement the recommendations from its last review, despite capacity and resource constraints, and we welcome the ongoing consultation with civil society in this process.

The United Kingdom commends [the Federated States of] Micronesia on the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We further welcome the Government's preparation of a report into the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage further action in this regard.

The United Kingdom acknowledges the challenges facing [the Federated States of] Micronesia in their efforts to address their human rights obligations, especially in the face of the growing impact of climate change, and we encourage the Government to draw on available international technical assistance and expertise in this area.

We recommend the Federated States of Micronesia;

Thank you, Madam President.

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## **Satellite-powered app to spot loneliness in hotspots in UK cities**

The satellite-enabled Care View application tackles social isolation and loneliness in urban areas by enlisting the help of an army of professional volunteers across a city, including police officers, postal workers and charity workers, who register on the app when they see signs people may be experiencing social isolation. The app provides a digital tool to help volunteers find people in need of help.

Today's announcement comes on what is known as Blue Monday (18 January), said

to be the most depressing day of the year with post-Christmas blues and dark cold nights.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The social restrictions necessitated to tackle coronavirus, while essential, have brought into sharp focus just how much we all rely on face-to-face interaction in our everyday lives.

Addressing loneliness in our communities is an issue that is particularly close to my heart and this pioneering satellite-enabled app will tap in to the goodwill of our heroic frontline workers and volunteers so that they can identify and help those most in need of support through the pandemic and for years to come.

People out in a community can tap the app when they spot signs that a householder may be struggling, like rubbish dumped in the garden or curtains that always remain shut. Through satellite technology, this 'App Tap' generates a heat spot on a web-based map of the city, and if there are multiple 'App Taps', this creates heat-maps pinpointing streets and homes where people might welcome assistance of some kind.

The heat map – generated by the GNSS data – shows where volunteers can best focus their outreach efforts, with homes then leafleted and visited to create referrals into the NHS social care process. By helping people reach services like counselling or housing support, the app increases the likelihood of finding people in urgent need and helps prevent many people's issues from becoming more acute. Joining people up with support services at an early stage helps to avert the need for more costly interventions.

Experts are worried about rising numbers of people across the UK experiencing loneliness, particularly among young people and older adults. According to figures published by the Office for National Statistics, around 6% of adults in England are always or often lonely.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

Many of us have learned this year that pandemics can be lonely times, and that we all benefit from some amount of companionship.

This application channels the power of space to help locate and give a helping hand to people in need of help. It may rely on satellite data, but its real power comes from the altruism of its users.

Social support is incredibly important in times of stress, and I am delighted that this application we have backed is going to help lift people out of solitude and isolation.

Care View, which runs on almost all types of smartphone, was developed by the Urban Sustainable Development Lab and has been used by Public Health teams, charities and Fire and Rescue Services to discover and support vulnerable people.

The application helps join up healthcare provision – something that every Council is trying to achieve – by supporting collaboration between charities, the Council and emergency services.

Abhay Adhikari, founder of the Urban Sustainable Development Lab, said:

During the pandemic, the opportunity to work with teams from West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester has been a humbling experience. Everything we've learned so far will help us ensure that Care View continues to play a role in helping cities support socially isolated communities in the coming months and post-COVID recovery.

Jon Hindley, Public Health Localities and Primary Care Team at Leeds City Council, said:

Care View has allowed us a window into the sometimes lonely and isolated world of vulnerable citizens within our poorest neighbourhoods. This has been the catalyst to help people we wouldn't have otherwise known about to reconnect with their communities, improve their health and keep it that way.

The UK Space Agency funding has allowed senior commissioning managers at the council to recognise Care View's importance and consequently incorporate Care View into council-commissioned outreach services currently under review such as Better Together.

The new technology that has been added will enhance the effectiveness and drive the dynamics of our community health outreach teams more than ever before. This dynamism and technological functionality can play a vital part on the road to recovery and resilience for our local Leeds residents in a post pandemic world.

The app does not require additional storage space on a smartphone, and its potential for social good has been recognised by Nesta and The Observer, who named it one of the UK's most radical social innovation projects.

In 2017, the government appointed the first Minister for Loneliness, Tracey Crouch, and in December announced an extra £7.5 million funding package to help tackle loneliness over the winter period.