

Petroleum Minister meets Mr Showkutally Soodhun, Vice-Prime Minister of Mauritius

Minister of State (I/C) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan met H.E. Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Lands of Mauritius, Mr Shokutally Soodhun. Mr Soodhun is on a three day visit to India for the meeting of the Joint Committee on Hydrography and to further strengthen India-Mauritius bilateral maritime cooperation.

Dr. Harshvardhan inaugurates the 1st Grand Challenges India (GCI) Meeting

Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr. Harsh Vardhan presided over as Chief Guest and inaugurated the 1st Grand Challenges India (GCI) meeting here today. The meeting is being hosted by the Program Management Unit at BIRAC (PMU-BIRAC) from 21st to 24th March, 2017

Press release: Ruthless fly-tipper jailed

A fly-tipper who left a trail of waste across the Devon countryside was finally brought to justice today when he was sentenced to 20 months in prison.

Martin McDonagh, 23, failed to turn up at Plymouth Crown Court and was made the subject of a European Arrest Warrant following the sentencing hearing. Judge Ian Lawrie described him as a 'persistent offender who showed a ruthless determination to dump waste wherever it suited.'

McDonagh, who is believed to have fled to the Republic of Ireland, was also ordered to pay a total of £7,000 costs for illegally depositing commercial and household waste at numerous sites in South and West Devon. The court also issued a Criminal Behaviour Order that prohibits McDonagh from being involved in any business enterprise involving the collection, carrying or transport of

waste.

The van used during his crime spree was seized and destroyed by the Environment Agency. It is the first time, in the South West, that the agency has ordered the destruction of a vehicle used to commit waste crimes.

The defendant was caught following a joint investigation led by the Environment Agency, with support from Teignbridge District Council, Plymouth City Council, West Devon District Council, South Hams District Council and Devon and Cornwall Police.

Adrian Evans, senior environment crime officer for the Devon and Cornwall area, said:

This case serves as a reminder for people to be vigilant when transferring waste for disposal. Any person who collects and disposes of commercial or household waste must be a registered waste carrier, authorised by the Environment Agency.

Everyone has a duty of care to ensure their waste is disposed of safely and doesn't harm the environment. You should ask to see an operator's waste carrier licence and whether your waste is being taken to an authorised site. Do not let your waste be removed if you are in any doubt. These simple steps can stop rogue fly-tippers in their tracks.

The illegal disposal of waste in the countryside and local beauty spots causes annoyance and upset to local people and visitors. The serial fly-tipper in this case was caught as a result of agencies working closely together, sharing intelligence and resources to protect our environment.

McDonagh cold-called people across Devon offering to take waste away for cash. He told them the waste would be taken to a local tip, but instead he dumped it in the surrounding countryside, including local beauty spots.

Several witnesses said they felt pressured into giving him their waste. One woman, who was at home with a sick child, described the defendant as 'extremely pushy' and said she felt 'increasingly uneasy'. She only agreed to pay for him to take her waste to 'get rid of him'.

Another householder, in Exeter, became suspicious and told McDonagh she didn't want him to fly-tip her waste. McDonagh laughed and replied, 'of course not.'

Sometimes the defendant would ask for more cash after he'd loaded waste onto his van. One woman paid him £75. He returned after she had done some more clearing and tidying of her property and asked for £125 to take the rest of the waste claiming he was 'out of pocket' for the first lot he'd taken to the tip.

Victims of his scam were traced using documents and paperwork found in the fly-tipped waste. Most said they'd been approached by a man driving a 'tatty' blue van.

Up to 40 bags of mixed household waste were deposited at a time at numerous locations. Teignbridge sites included a car park on Little Haldon, a council gravel store off Greenway Lane in Ashcombe, a compound at Teignmouth Golf Club, a bus stop on the A381 near Ware Farm, an unclassified road near Shaldon and beside a road junction in Newton Abbot.

McDonagh also dumped waste at Cold Harbour Cross in the South Hams, a car park on the A386 near Clearbrook and at Calisham Cross in West Devon. The offences were committed over a 12-month period from July 2015.

The defendant was paid between £50 and £400 to remove waste – always in cash. He also offered other services including roofing, decking and power washing.

In August 2015, McDonagh was seen transferring concrete rubble from his Ford Transit van to a similar van parked nearby in Lower Brimley Road, Teignmouth. Teignbridge District Council decided to remove the second vehicle after it was found to have been abandoned.

However, a contractor hired to remove the van was unable to take the vehicle away after he saw what he believed to be asbestos in the back, along with other waste. Police closed Lower Brimley Road for a day while specialist contractors decontaminated the abandoned van. Subsequent analysis of the waste confirmed the presence of asbestos. The vehicle was later destroyed.

Councillor Roger Croad, Devon County Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment, said:

The high level of co-operation between the different agencies and councils involved in this investigation was critical in bringing this offender to justice. The Devon and Somerset Trading Standards Service will continue to do all it can to protect residents and legitimate local businesses from such illegal trading activities.

Councillor Sylvia Russell, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing at Teignbridge District Council, said:

This is a great outcome for taxpayers and involved a tremendous amount of effort by investigating officers. Tackling the scourge of fly-tipping is a top priority for Teignbridge Council, which works hard to protect the environment. Dealing with fly-tipping is costly, time consuming, frustrating for law-abiding citizens and wholly avoidable. We will continue to work with the Environment Agency and our partners to find out who is responsible so we can prosecute.

Councillor Rufus Gilbert, South Hams District Council's Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services, said:

We are taking a very robust line on fly-tipping in the South Hams and have issued 13 fixed penalty notices against offenders. We are delighted that these cases are now coming to court. I assure you, we will continue whenever possible to prosecute future offenders.

Councillor Robert Sampson, West Devon Borough Council's Lead Member for Commercial Services, said:

It is crucial fly-tippers are traced and prosecuted for the damage they do to our countryside. This case shows what can be achieved by working closely with our partners.

At an earlier hearing, McDonagh, of Pemros Road, St Budeaux, Plymouth, pleaded guilty to 2 offences under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, of illegally depositing controlled waste at various sites across Devon. He also pleaded guilty to an offence under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, of transporting controlled waste without being registered as a waste carrier.

The second offence under the Environmental Protection Act was for depositing building waste (including asbestos) at Lower Brimley Road, Teignmouth on 9 July, 2016 in a manner likely to cause pollution or harm to human health.

Judge Lawrie said McDonagh would have faced a 2-year prison sentence had he not submitted a guilty plea. Upon issuing the arrest warrant Judge Lawrie said, 'bring him back before the court.'

Members of the public can report waste crime by calling the Environment Agency's free 24-hour hotline 0800 80 70 60 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. [Find further information on waste collection.](#)

Statement to Parliament: Additional airline security measures on some routes travelling to the UK

Today the government announced there will be changes to aviation security measures for selected inbound flights to the United Kingdom. The House will be aware that the United States government made a similar announcement earlier today regarding flights to the United States and we have been in

close contact with them to fully understand their position.

In conjunction with our international partners and the aviation industry, the UK government keeps aviation security under constant review. The UK has some of the most robust aviation security measures in the world and at all times the safety and security of the public is our primary concern. We will not hesitate to put in place measures we believe are necessary, effective and proportionate.

Under the new arrangements, phones, laptops and tablets larger than:

- length: 16.0cm
- width: 9.3cm
- depth: 1.5cm

will not be allowed in the cabin on selected flights to the UK from the countries affected. Most smart phones fall within these limits and will continue to be allowed on board. However, devices larger than these dimensions may not be carried in the cabin. This is in addition to other existing security arrangements. This will apply to inbound flights to the UK from the following locations:

- Turkey
- Lebanon
- Egypt
- Saudi Arabia
- Jordan
- Tunisia

Passengers are therefore advised to check online with their airline for further details.

We understand the frustration that these measures may cause and we are working with the aviation industry to minimise any impact. Our top priority will always be to maintain the safety of British nationals. These new measures apply to flights into the UK and we are not currently advising against flying to and from those countries. Those with imminent travel plans should contact their airline for further information. More information can be found on the Department for Transport website and the travelling public should consult the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office's travel advice](#) pages on GOV.UK.

I know the House will recognise that we face a constantly evolving threat from terrorism and must respond accordingly to ensure the protection of the public against those who would do us harm. The update we are making to our security measures is an important part of that process.

We remain open for business. People should continue to fly and comply with security procedures.

[Press release: Nine anglers face combined fines of over £5,500 for fishing illegally in Staffordshire](#)

Just one month after penalising eight Staffordshire anglers, the same court issues a combined fines of £5,500 to another nine anglers for fishing offences.

On 20 March, North Staffordshire Justice Centre Magistrates' Court heard how nine anglers were caught fishing illegally last summer.

All nine were caught fishing without a rod licence by Environment Agency officers out on regular patrols. Six anglers pleaded guilty but the fines were much higher for those who didn't submit a plea and didn't appear in court. And with an annual fishing licence now costing £30 these nine are probably wishing they'd chosen the cheaper option!

Connor Grey of Oak Grove in Cheadle, Nicholas Mills of Neale Place in Stoke on Trent, Samuel Smith of Moston Street in Stoke on Trent, Ashley Gould of Thornewill Drive in Burton on Trent, Stephen Clarke of Sandwood Crescent in Stoke on Trent, Ashley Taylor of Birches Head Road in Stoke, David Pickerill of Hoveringham Drive in Stoke on Trent, Michael Horton of Chapel Drive in Walsall and Ryan Marriette of Skipton Road in Liverpool were all found guilty for fishing without a licence under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Magistrates heard that in August and September Environment Agency enforcement officers found these anglers fishing without a rod licence at pools in Stafford, Cannock, Burntwood, Leek, Newcastle under Lyme and Burton.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. With anglers now being able to buy a licence online for a number of rods to cover any 12 month period it seems ridiculous the minority still risk a significant fine like these we've seen here.

The minority of anglers that fail to buy a rod licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. Fishing licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is

used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency Rod Licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. Buying a rod licence is easy, simply visit www.gov.uk/fishing-licences/buy-a-fishing-licence.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline, 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.