

[News story: Procurement for apprenticeship training in smaller employers](#)

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has carefully considered the applications made in response to the recent procurement for apprenticeship training provision for non-levy-paying employers.

This procurement was markedly oversubscribed, a sign of the significant level of interest from the training provider market in the apprenticeship reforms. In response, ESFA intends to pause the current competition. This will allow us to review our approach to ensure that we achieve the right balance between stability of supply and promoting competition and choice for employers. It is important that we fully consider how best to achieve these outcomes in a way that achieves the best value for employers and apprentices as we move to a fully employer-led system.

We will undertake further engagement with the market to clarify our approach, and ensure that this meets the government's wider objectives of securing stability in the market, good sectoral and geographical coverage of provision, and a market which meets the skills needs of employers. We will issue further guidance shortly.

In order to maintain stability in the system through the start of the next academic year, in the interim period we will extend existing contracts held by all current providers until the end of December 2017. To maintain our quality standards, current providers with extended contracts will be able to undertake new starts on those contracts provided they are on the [Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers](#). The ESFA will notify providers of specific arrangements shortly so that amended contracts are in place ahead of 1 May.

This will not affect training provision for existing learners. Extending existing providers contracts means employers can be confident in taking on new apprentices without disruption over the months ahead.

[Press release: Man fined for running illegal waste site](#)

A Gateshead man has been fined and ordered to pay thousands of pounds in compensation after he illegally stored waste at a site and then abandoned it.

John James Armstrong, 52, of Park Lane, Winlaton Mill, appeared at North

Tyneside Magistrates' Court on Friday 7 April.

He pleaded guilty to one offence of operating a waste site without a permit.

He was fined £1,000, ordered to pay compensation of £7,069.49 to the landowner to cover the costs they paid to clear the site, and £1,591.26 costs.

Armstrong was Director of Canterhall Builders Limited, a construction company which dissolved on 23 May 2016.

Prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Simon Crowder told the court that on 20 April, 2016, two Environment Agency officers attended the unit at Unit 1 Felling Business Centre, Green Lane.

They saw the site was covered in construction waste, including bricks, broken concrete, wood, plaster board, insulations, pallets, old kitchen units, benches and electrical waste. There was also a skip full of building waste.

Enquiries revealed that Canterhall were tenants at the site but had abandoned it earlier in the month.

On 16 May a letter requesting removal of the waste was given to the landowner. On 23 May Environment Agency officers traced the defendant to a site in Swalwell, where he was given a letter inviting him to be interviewed.

Two days later the site at Felling was cleared by the landowners, at a total cost to them of more than £7,000.

The defendant has no previous convictions and was co-operative during the investigation.

During an interview on 2 June he said that if it was not cost effective to hire a skip to remove waste from carrying out construction work, then he would instead transport the waste back to the unit. When there was enough waste at the unit he would then order a skip to have it removed.

He said in January 2016 more and more waste was deposited at the unit and due to financial problems he could not afford skips to get the waste removed. He said he left the unit on 10 April and had made no attempts to clear the waste.

He added he was unaware of the need for an environmental permit or registered exemptions.

The Environment Agency's Paul Whitehill said:

We take waste crime very seriously. It can cause serious pollution to the environment, put communities at risk and undermine local businesses.

The defended flouted the law for financial gain – he cut costs by

not hiring skips at the sites where work was taking place to ensure disposal of the waste.

He also avoided the cost of an environmental permit and annual subsistence fees. Illegal waste activities that avoid regulatory controls don't have the appropriate infrastructure to protect the environment, and can have a detrimental impact on local communities.

The sentence follows calls from the Environment Agency warning landowners about criminals looking to profit by dumping waste illegally on their land.

Landowners can often find their property filled with waste and abandoned by tenants, leaving owners with an expensive clean-up bill. The Environment Agency is cracking down on waste crime and taking tough action to deal with this behaviour.

This ruling demonstrates that people can be made to pay for the cost of clearing the mess they leave behind.

Information and advice about environmental permits can be found on the Environment Agency website. To report illegal waste activity contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

[£6m funding for third sector organisations](#)

£4.5m of core funding has been allocated to Third Sector Support Wales to help them provide advice and training to third sector organisations across the country for key activities such as fundraising and governance.

A further £1.3m has been awarded to the Volunteering Wales grant scheme to provide support to volunteer-involving organisations and £41,000 has been awarded to the Community Foundation in Wales, a charity which distributes grants to community groups and voluntary organisations throughout Wales. The money will part fund two posts at the charity.

The remaining funding will be used to compensate Third Sector organisations who are members of the Third Sector Partnership Council for the time spent working with the Welsh Government and organising network events to share Welsh Government priorities and research the views of the sector to share with Ministers.

Announcing the funding, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“Third Sector organisations play a vital role in Wales, whether that is providing services, supporting vulnerable people, improving their communities or providing opportunities for people to build confidence and learn new skills. I am therefore delighted to be awarding this funding to support them to continue the excellent work they do and to build on it for the future.”

Labour launches Pensioners' Pledge Card

Speaking today (Wednesday 12 April) on a visit to an arts and crafts exhibition at Age UK Coventry's Craft and Computer Centre, the Shadow Chancellor and Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, will launch Labour's Pensioners' Pledge Card.

The Pensioners' Pledge Card lays out Labour's four promises to protect older people in our communities:

- Protect pensioner incomes by legislating to keep the Triple-Lock on state pensions up to 2025
- End Tory unfairness on the women's pension age, compensating those worst affected
- Protect the pensions of UK citizens living overseas
- Keep the Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus passes for pensioners

Alongside the pledge card, Labour will publish new analysis from the House of Commons Library showing pensioners will be at least £650 better off by the end of the next parliament from keeping the triple-lock.

Highlighting an increase in pensioner poverty over the last year, Labour will also commit to compensating women worst affected by the Government's speeding-up of the state pension age; protecting pensioner benefits and protecting the pensions of UK citizens living abroad.

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, will say:

“I am delighted to be launching this pledge card that will inform many elderly people in our communities that Labour is not only promising to stand up for pensioners; but is determined to ensure they keep the hard-won entitlements they currently hold.

“It's a national scandal that pensioner poverty is rising and the Tories are refusing to commit to keeping the triple-lock or compensate women worst affected by the speeding up in the state pension age.

“Only a Labour Government will stand up for pensioners and protect them throughout the next parliament.”

LABOUR'S PROMISE TO PENSIONERS

- ✓ Protect pensioner incomes by legislating to keep the Triple-Lock on state pensions up to 2025.
- ✓ End Tory unfairness on the women's pension age, compensating those worst affected.
- ✓ Protect the pensions of UK citizens living overseas.
- ✓ Keep the Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus passes for pensioners.

 Labour

STANDING UP
FOR YOU

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UKIP to continue fight against New Thames Crossing

Today's announcement that the Conservative Government will be pressing ahead with the Option C, Variant 3 option for a new Lower Thames Crossing, which will devastate the local community in Thurrock, is incredibly disappointing.



Cllr Tim Aker MEP said: “Highways England received their largest number of responses in any consultation in objection to another Thames Crossing. Their persistence shows that this was a sham consultation, a PR exercise by a Government with its fingers in its ears.

“Thurrock suffers from high pollution levels, congestion and infrastructure under strain as it is. Adding more traffic to this will destroy the standard of living we have here in Thurrock. This new crossing will cost billions and will only take 14% of traffic from the Dartford Crossing. As our population increases and new pull factors on the borough emerge, this will do nothing.

Nothing about the Government's ridiculous plans make sense. They just want to dump on Thurrock – again.