

M25 waste dump shut

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Environment Agency closure comes after arrests. Bumped-up drone squad takes off to fight dumpers from the sky.

As more drones in the air fight the war on waste on the ground, a suspected illegal dump near the M25 is the latest to be shut by the Environment Agency.

In yet more forceful action, concrete blocks now guard the entrance to a field in the quintessentially English village of Stapleford Tawney, in unassuming stockbroker belt Essex.

But it's business of a much darker kind that occupies investigators, whose numbers are also going up from today – the illegal trade in waste and its links to organised crime.

A court agreed the Essex land could be closed off, preventing more rubbish from being dumped.

The Environment Agency's criminal investigation continues at speed to find who was behind the dumping of construction, demolition and processed waste beside the motorway, near its junction with the M11. There have been 2 arrests so far.

A 55-year-old man, from Horley, in Surrey, and another, 25, of Mullaghbawn, in County Armagh, were detained earlier this month on behalf of the Environment Agency when Essex Police pounced on the site after a 999 call.

The arrests came days before a London man was ordered to pay up £1.1m gained from his waste crime, plus compensation and costs, and the rest to fund public services. Two other men were prosecuted after waste was dumped at 16 sites across England. Two of the three were given suspended prison sentences.

Back in Essex, a local man contacted police when he became suspicious at the amount waste he saw. He'd originally gone to help the men when their lorry got stuck in mud. Our officers also passed on reports from members of the public to Essex Police.

The lorry, 2 phones and a laptop were all seized, to be examined for evidence connected to waste crime.

Barry Russell, environment manager for the northern home counties at the Environment Agency, welcomed the closure order being granted:

"I share the public's anger at waste crime, where those responsible have no care for the environment.

"The restriction order means no more waste can be dumped in the field, as the criminal investigation carries on.

"Closing off land is just one way the Environment Agency fights the scourge of waste crime. We will pursue anyone we believe is responsible in any way for shamelessly dumping waste illegally, and always put cases to court with the stiffest penalties in mind.

"Like the man who contacted police, if anyone has information that could help us investigate this site

or others, please contact the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline, on 0800 807060, or CrimeStoppers, on 0800 555111. All information is treated in confidence."

The 2 men were bailed to return to Harlow police station on 26 February. They must not contact each other, transport waste, or be in a vehicle involved in waste management.

More drone flights to track illegal waste sites, more specialist staff to pull apart organised crime gangs, and new tech to match lorry licences to waste permits will all help the Environment Agency spot dumps quicker, disrupt illegal activity sooner, and flag suspect operators before they can move waste illegally.

Background:

- The restriction order for the site at Stapleford Tawney was granted by Barkingside magistrates' court on 18 February, and will apply for 6 months. The Environment Agency will return to court if it needs to extend the order.
- The Environment Agency has worked closely with police forces and other agencies to bring about several arrests in relation to waste crime and other alleged offences around England in recent weeks:
 - Essex pair arrested in connection with illegal waste dumping
 - Greater Manchester duo arrested in connection with illegal waste dumping
 - Fourth arrest in relation to Kidlington waste
- Arrest made and vehicle seized in waste investigation in Merseyside
- In Norfolk, 3 men were also arrested on suspicion of involvement in the dumping of almost 1,200 tonnes of mixed household, commercial and industrial waste at Kirby Cane, near Norwich.
- Since 2020, almost 200 people have been arrested as part as investigations by the Joint Unit for Waste Crime, a partnership between the Environment Agency and other law enforcement bodies.
- In 2024/25, the Environment Agency successfully stopped activity at 743 illegal waste sites, of which 143 were high-risk.

Contact us:

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/m25-waste-dump-shut>