

Belgravia waste crook forced to pay £1.4m compensation

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Suspended jail terms or fines for three men after countrywide crimes Illegal sites read like an A-Z: Cambridgeshire, Kent and Surrey among counties targeted

A prolific waste criminal has been ordered to hand over more than £1.4 million for illegally dumping more than 4,000 tonnes of waste across England.

A nationwide investigation by the Environment Agency uncovered a network of 16 illegal dumping sites, stretching from the South East to the North West.

Places the waste was dumped included a farm on the outskirts of Peterborough, a manor house at Ewhurst in Surrey, and a warehouse at Margate in Kent.

Varun Datta, 36, of Little Chester Street, in Belgravia, must now pay £1.1 million, reflecting the financial benefit from his crimes, plus £100,000 in compensation and £200,000 in prosecution costs. He was also hit with a prison sentence of 4 months, suspended for 18 months, as well as 30 days' rehabilitation and 200 hours of unpaid work.

The dreadful case, heard at Birmingham crown court, also saw 2 others prosecuted.

Mohammed Saraji Bashir, from Peterborough, also got a 4-month suspended prison sentence, unpaid work and period of rehabilitation, while Robert McAllister, from north London, was fined £750. Warrants for the arrest of 2 other men are still active.

A couple of other waste criminals, David Weeks and Lee Brookes, were given suspended prison sentences last year for the waste stored illegally at a rat-infested industrial unit in Margate.

Bricks and rubble, plus more baled waste, rats and flies greeted investigators at this Margate warehouse that later caught fire, burning for a month

Emma Viner, enforcement and investigations manager in the Environment Agency's National Environmental Crime Unit, said:

"We are glad to see the Datta, Bashir and McAllister brought to justice in this appalling case.

"Despite attempting to conceal their criminality, our in-depth investigation spanning the length and breadth of the country ultimately uncovered them.

"We will never stop fighting to end the scourge of waste crime that scars our environment and communities."

Environment secretary Emma Reynolds said:

"This is a shocking case of illegal waste dumping, orchestrated by a group of shameless crooks who thought they could operate above the law.

"I welcome the punishments secured by the Environment Agency - which send a clear message to criminals that they have nowhere to hide.

“The Government is committed to stamping out this type of criminality across the country by boosting funds to tackle waste crime, and introducing tougher checks and penalties for those who break the law.”

In 2018, the Environment Agency seized £131,520 in cash from Datta’s home address. In 2022, a restraint order was applied to two bank accounts ensuring that any future confiscation order could be paid.

After pleading not guilty in 2023, Datta changed his plea to guilty in June last year to knowingly causing controlled waste to be deposited at the sixteen sites. The total weight of the waste was around 4,275 tonnes - roughly the weight of 600 African elephants.

The offences were branded “reckless” by judge Paul Farrar KC. “Smell and flies were a feature at some of the illegal sites and caused a localised adverse effect to air quality,” he said, with landowners “forced to incur substantial costs in removing the illegal waste.” No environmental permit or valid exemption was in place at any of the sites, which were also spread across Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Middlesbrough and Rutland.

The court heard that Datta became a registered waste broker through his company, Atkins Recycling Ltd, in 2015. He acted recklessly by claiming the waste the company handled was being sent to a legal site at Kiveton Park, near Sheffield. However, the loads were actually diverted to unlicensed dumps around the country. It is alleged that an associate, Sandeep Golechha, 55, of Wheatley Close, Barnet, north London, helped to falsify weighbridge documents to cover up the illegal acts.

The £100,000 in compensation to be paid by Datta relates to the dumping at the former Sulzer Dowding Mills factory site in Middlesbrough, as well as the Middleton Nature Reserve, at Heysham, in Lancashire, which also gets £30,000 for its future management.

Middlesbrough Council will receive £70,000 towards the cost of the clean-up there.

Anyone who suspects illegal waste activity is asked to report it to the Environment Agency’s 24-hour hotline - 0800 807060 - or anonymously contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Background:

- Datta has been ordered to pay £1,116,432.78 by way of a confiscation order. This figure was agreed by the parties and which represents Datta’s financial gain from knowingly causing the deposit of waste.
- Mohammed Saraji Bashir, 45, of Windmill Street, Peterborough, had pleaded guilty on 3 June 2025 to knowingly causing controlled waste to be deposited at three sites. He was given a prison sentence of 4 months, suspended for 18 months. He must also complete 30 days of rehabilitation activity and 200 hours of unpaid work.
- Robert William McAllister, 55, of Iveagh Close, Northwood, London, had pleaded guilty on 7 November 2024 to failing to comply with the duty of care imposed on brokers of waste in relation to controlled waste that was deposited at 2 sites. He was fined £750.
- The court was told that Bashir and McAllister acted as brokers. They both failed to ensure that the waste transferred was going to permitted sites.
- Warrants for Sandeep Golechha, 53, of Wheatley Close, Barnet, London, and Jason Newman, of no fixed abode, are still active.
- The majority of the waste dumped was mixed municipal waste, wrapped in plastic to form bales.

- The case concluded at Birmingham crown court on 13 February.

The sites

1. Trelawny House, Straight Drove, Farcet, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
2. Yaxley Lodge Farm, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire
3. Conquest Drove, Farcet, Cambridgeshire
4. Unit P, Continental Approach, Westwood Business Park, Margate, Kent
5. Somersbury Manor, Horsham Lane, Ewhurst, Cranleigh, Surrey
6. The Drift, Sewstern, Grantham, Lincolnshire
7. Stockenhall Farm, Stretton, Rutland
8. Humby Mills Farm, Grantham, Lincolnshire
9. Sycamore Farm, Lower Bassingthorpe, Grantham, Lincolnshire
10. Peacock Farm, Muston, Leicestershire
11. Lime Tree Farm, English Drove, Thorney, Lincolnshire
12. Gill Bridge Farm, Boston, Lincolnshire
13. The Limes, Spalding, Lincolnshire
14. The Former Sulzer, Dowding and Mills Factory, Lower East Street, Middlesbrough
15. Middleton Nature Reserve, Heysham, Lancashire
16. Rhyddings Mill, Stonebridge Lane, Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire

Contact us:

Journalists only: 0800 141 2743 or communications_se@environment-agency.gov.uk.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/belgravia-waste-crook-forced-to-pay-14m-compensation>