

Councils urged to crush more fly-tippers' vehicles

25.2.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

New government guidance outlines how offenders' vehicles should be searched, seized and destroyed.

New guidance issued today will help local authorities crack down on waste crime, as new statistics reveal there were 1.26 million incidents of fly-tipping last year.

For the first time, government guidance will advise local authorities how to seize and crush vehicles used to dump waste.

The new guidance will provide the first comprehensive overview for councils, offering clear instructions on identifying, seizing, and disposing of vehicles involved in fly-tipping, as well as advice on taking cases to court and securing convictions against vehicle owners.

To strengthen deterrence, councils are expected to name and shame those involved on social media, while also sharing images and videos of their vehicles being crushed. The guidance offers suggestions for maximising engagement and awareness of council enforcement on social media, including repurposing seized vehicles for use to clean up other incidents of fly-tipping.

Overt and covert surveillance techniques, such as CCTV, drones and Automatic Number Plate Recognition should also be deployed to catch criminals in the act.

Circular Economy Minister, Mary Creagh said:

We are empowering local authorities to clamp down on waste cowboys and restore pride in our local areas.

I share the public's fury at seeing our streets, parks and fields used as dumping grounds. Fly-tippers should know – if you use your van to trash our countryside, don't be surprised when it ends up on the scrapheap.

This government is investing in cutting-edge technology and boosting Environment Agency funding to put more waste crime officers on the ground, while introducing tougher checks and penalties for those who break the law.

Councils across England already have powers to seize vehicles involved in fly-tipping, with figures published today showing 139 were seized by enforcement officers from 41 councils in 2024/25. New case studies of councils seizing vehicles as part of enforcement activity against fly-tipping and organised waste crime, alongside instructions on how to conduct successful vehicle seizure operations, will set a model for local authorities to follow.

The new guidance also calls on local authorities to share intelligence with the police, the Environment Agency and National Trading Standards to build cases and run joint operations.

Today's announcement follows the publication of new statistics on fly-tipping incidents across

England. Statistics show that local authorities carried out 572,000 enforcement actions in 2024/25, an increase of 8% from 530,000 in 2023/24. These actions included issuing fixed penalty notices, 69,000 of which were issued in 2024/25 – an increase of 9% from 63,000 in 2023/24.

The government is making around £78 billion available to council budgets in England this year as part of the first multi-year funding settlement in over a decade to help fund key responsibilities like fly-tipping.

Convicted fly-tippers can receive a significant fine, a community sentence or even a prison sentence. Money raised from fly-tipping funds is ring-fenced by councils to clean up land impacted by waste dumping.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The new guidance is available on GOV.UK.
- Footage of a vehicle being crushed by a council is available for use here.
- Fly-tipping is the specific, illegal act of dumping waste on land or in water, while waste crime is a broader term encompassing all illegal waste activities, including dumping, operating unlicensed sites, and breaking environmental permits. Fly-tipping is a type of waste crime, often driven by avoiding disposal costs.
- Defra chairs the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG), through which they work with a wide range of interested parties such as local councils, the Environment Agency, National Farmers Union and National Police Chiefs Council, to promote and disseminate good practice with regards to preventing fly-tipping.
- Government is bearing down on waste criminals by:
 - increasing the Environment Agency's enforcement budget by over 50% to £15.6m
 - bolstering the Joint Unit for Waste Crime with more former police officers
 - introducing tougher checks and penalties to disrupt illegal operators
- Local authorities are responsible for keeping their public land clear of litter and refuse and they have been given enforcement powers to help them tackle fly-tipping. We encourage local authorities to investigate all incidents of fly-tipping, including those on private land, and make good use of their enforcement powers.
- While the responsibility for clearing waste from private land rests with landowners, we recognise the burden this places on them.
- Where there is sufficient evidence, fly-tippers can be prosecuted. On conviction, a cost order can be made by the court so that a landowner's costs can be recovered from the perpetrator.
- Central government generally does not compensate individuals for non-violent crime they are a victim of. Compensating landowners for the costs of removing fly-tipping may risk creating a perverse incentive for some people to dump, or facilitate the dumping of, waste.
- We urge landowners to take reasonable steps to secure their land and to report any incidents of fly tipping to their local council immediately.
- We are looking at reforms to the waste carrier, broker and dealer regime. Proposed reforms will mean those transporting or making decisions about waste must demonstrate they are competent to make those decisions, face proper background checks when applying for permits and will be required to display permit numbers on advertising.
- Mandatory digital waste tracking will help to reduce threats to the circular economy such as waste crime, including fly tipping and illegal waste exports. By connecting fragmented systems and digitising record-keeping, it will make it easier for waste producers and legitimate waste companies to comply with reporting requirements, while making it much harder for rogue operators to compete in the industry.

Case study:

One success story is in the London Borough of Croydon, where the local council used its powers against George Smith, a repeat offender responsible for multiple fly-tipping incidents across London and Surrey. Smith trawled around neighbourhoods and building sites looking for waste, then posed as a legitimate operator to offer illegal clearance and disposal services.

Following a detailed investigation, Smith received a 52-week prison sentence. Three of his vehicles were seized and destroyed. The council also released CCTV footage of his activities, which was widely shared, exposing the scale of his offending and sending a clear message about the consequences for those who choose to flout the law.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-urged-to-crush-more-fly-tippers-vehicles>