

Arrests made in multi-million pound waste fraud case

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Dawn arrests in Cornish town as part of Environment Agency investigation.

Two individuals in Penzance have been arrested as part of an investigation into waste packaging fraud and money laundering, the Environment Agency has announced today (Wednesday 25 February 2026).

In an early morning operation on Monday, officers from the Environment Agency worked with Devon and Cornwall Police to apprehend a man and a woman, both aged 47, for their role in the offending. Arrests took place in properties in Penzance, Cornwall.

The arrests relate to alleged fraud within the Packaging Producer Responsibility regime. This is a system where reprocessors accredited by the Environment Agency can sell credits for packaging waste they recycle. Producers must then purchase these credits to pay towards the cost of recycling their packaging.

In this case, those involved sold more than £6 million in credits for packaging they claim to have reprocessed. However, it is suspected that a large proportion of this never actually took place and the reprocessing figures have been inflated. The individuals are also suspected of laundering the money made from this offending.

After being interviewed, the suspects were released pending further investigation. Evidence gathered during the arrests will support action going forward.

Emma Viner, Enforcement and Investigations Manager in the Environment Agency's National Environmental Crime Unit, said:

These arrests mark another important step in our war against waste criminals.

Whether it's defrauding the waste sector or dumping rubbish in our towns and cities, the Environment Agency is working tirelessly to catch those responsible. We will follow the money and act against those profiting from waste crime.

Our officers are now thoroughly examining all the evidence gathered to further progress this investigation and deliver justice.

Circular Economy Minister Mary Creagh said:

This shocking case of waste packaging fraud has harmed legitimate businesses and robbed communities of funding for their recycling services.

I welcome these arrests by the Environment Agency - which send a clear message that no stone will be left unturned in our war on waste crime.

This government is tackling waste cowboys by boosting funds to tackle waste crime and

introducing tougher checks and penalties for those who break the law.

The Packaging Producer Responsibility Regulations were introduced to make producers of waste packaging, such as glass and plastic, cover the cost of recycling and disposing their waste.

Legitimate businesses are required to prove they have made a financial contribution by buying credits from firms which dispose of waste properly. However, the credits have a monetary value and, in recent years, have been exploited by criminal gangs looking to infiltrate the sector and line their pockets. Criminal behaviour like this takes money away from hard-working businesses and investment that could go into improving the UK's recycling infrastructure.

The Environment Agency's Economic Crime Unit is working hard to tackle money laundering and carry out financial investigations in the waste sector.

Today's arrests mark another vital step in the Environment Agency's war on waste crime. In the last two months alone, Environment Agency investigations have led to 18 arrests linked to waste crime. Recent successes include a serial waste crook being forced to pay over £1.4 million for widespread illegal dumping, as well as more arrests being made as part of an investigation into illegal tipping at a site in Kidlington.

Two arrests were also made earlier this month in relation to waste dumped in a field near Romford, with a lorry seized and mobile phones and a laptop recovered as evidence.

If a member of the public has any information that may help with this investigation, they should call the Environment Agency's hotline on 0800 807060. They can also report it anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 or their website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/arrests-made-in-multi-million-pound-waste-fraud-case>