

Game-changing digital tracking takes fight to rogue waste traders

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New digital waste tracking service to be introduced.

Waste criminals are running out of places to hide as the government launches its Digital Waste Tracking service to follow every piece of permitted waste across the country in real time.

As part of its major crackdown on waste crime under the government's Waste Crime Action Plan, new laws being laid in parliament will require businesses to create a real-time audit trail for the waste they handle.

At the moment, waste consignments are tracked using a largely paper based and outdated system that is overly bureaucratic for legitimate operators and fails to give law enforcement the vital intelligence they need to build cases against waste criminals.

The new approach for tracking waste will provide faster, more reliable data, helping to identify suspicious activity and support enforcement bodies to target action against rogue operators breaking the law. It will also make it easier for waste producers and legitimate operators to meet their reporting requirements.

The service will become mandatory for permitted waste receiving sites in England, Northern Ireland and Wales from October 2026 and Scotland in January 2027, giving businesses time to prepare for the new requirements. Phase 1 will apply to around 12,000 permitted waste receiving sites. As the service expands, over 100,000 operators are set to be in scope.

Mary Creagh, Minister for Nature, said:

Waste crime is a wicked business and the paper system we inherited was not fit for purpose. Through our Waste Crime Action Plan, we are tightening the net on the waste cowboys.

Our Digital Waste Tracking Service will give authorities better, more reliable evidence to go after rogue operators and shut them down.

It will also speed paperwork up for legitimate operators and cut red tape at the same time.

Executive Director of the Environmental Services Association (ESA), Jacob Hayler, said:

Today marks a significant milestone of progress towards implementing Digital Waste Tracking, which is another important weapon in the arsenal needed to fight waste crime.

Implemented successfully, Digital Waste Tracking should make it easier for waste producers to be sure that they are dealing with legitimate operators, while also

providing useful and timely data to regulators to help them crack down on cowboys.

ESA urges operators across the industry to engage with the beta testing phase, and we look forward to working with Government to refine and successfully roll out the process ahead of mandatory adoption.

From October 2026, the new single, streamlined way of recording movements will commence, starting with permitted waste receiving sites. This will be expanded to other operators in the waste industry under a phased approach.

A voluntary beta test for the digital waste tracking service opens on 28 April, with permitted waste receiving sites and software developers for the waste sector encouraged to take part and help refine the system ahead of full rollout.

Waste crime action

Waste crime is a growing problem across the country, costing the UK economy around £1 billion each year which the government is determined to tackle.

Through our new Waste Crime Action Plan, we are stopping waste criminals in their tracks and making them pay through:

- Points on driving licence for fly-tipping
- Clean-up squads for offenders Police-like powers for EA enforcers
- We are also giving the Environment Agency the tools they need to fight back - with an additional £45 million over the next three years to strengthen their enforcement budget.

Notes to editors:

- Similar legislation has already been laid in Scotland and Wales.
- Further information is available.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/game-changing-digital-tracking-takes-fight-to-rookie-waste-traders>