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Well-loved local beauty spot in Kent cleared of 39,500 tonnes of illegal waste.

A notorious illegal waste dump that blighted the beloved Kent beauty spot Hoad’s Wood has been completely cleared, the Environment Agency announced today, as the government’s crackdown on criminal waste gangs continues.

The ancient woodland, a Site of Special Scientific Interest with rare plants and wildlife, had been targeted by organised criminals. They piled waste up to 15 feet high in places before officers shut the operation down.

In total, 39,500 tonnes of commercial waste have been removed from the site, in an operation led by the Environment Agency and carried out by Acumen Waste Services Ltd. More than 50 specialist workers took part in the massive dig-out.

With the clearance finished, focus now shifts to healing the land. Access to the site will be restricted, giving nature the space and time it needs to recover.

The Environment Agency is working with the Joint Unit for Waste Crime and Kent Police to track down the criminals behind the dumping, and three men have already been arrested as part of the investigation. This follows the Prime Minister’s announcement of a crackdown on waste crime, with the government and Environment Agency working together to ensure serious, organised criminal gangs have nowhere to hide.

Environment Secretary Dame Angela Eagle said:

> This government is taking action on the illegal waste sites that have blighted communities.
>
> Handing this ancient woodland back to local people, alongside our nationwide clean-up of waste sites, shows just how serious we are about restoring the places people love.
>
> We will find those responsible and make sure they face the consequences.

Matthew Higginson, Environment Agency Area Environmental Manager, said:

> It’s fantastic to see this important site cleared and set on the path to recovery.
>
> We are working hard to prevent this sort of dumping from happening in the first place, removing the criminals and corruption from the waste system and improving the exchange of intelligence between agencies.
>
> We’ve made three arrests as part of our investigation into this site, and thirty-three since

April across our wider work to tackle waste crime under our 10 Point Plan - strengthening prevention, improving detection and delivering more consistent action.

This is another step in the government's clean up of some of the country's most egregious illegal waste sites, including Bolton House Road in Wigan and Midland Road in Bradford. These sites were prioritised on scale, risk to nearby communities, environmental damage, and links to persistent non-compliance and organised waste crime.

To tackle waste crime at its source, the government is increasing the use of drones, giving Mayors and the police a bigger role, and introducing a dramatic rise in fines to deter those who dump illegally. Alongside this, a new Waste Crime Crackdown Group, chaired by Environment Secretary Dame Angela Eagle, will bring regulators and law enforcement together to dismantle criminal operations and deliver results.

The government is also giving the Environment Agency stronger powers to punish those who break the law. Rogue actors who dump waste illegally or fail to treat it correctly are set to face fines of up to £5,000, up from the current maximum of £300, while those responsible for serious offences can already face much tougher sanctions, including prosecution and imprisonment.

Beyond fines and prosecution, the government will ensure that criminals pay for their actions in full. The Environment Agency's powers to confiscate cash, cars, houses and other assets bought with the proceeds of waste crime will grow, backed by new powers in the Crime and Policing Act 2026 to speed up confiscation orders. Through its 10-Point Plan on waste crime, the Environment Agency is also tackling illegal activity more widely, including suspending or revoking permits and naming and shaming illegal operators.

The Environment Agency urges anyone with information that may assist the Hoad's Wood investigation to call the 24-hour hotline on 0800 807060. Alternatively, the public can report it anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 or their website.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/illegal-waste-at-hoads-wood-fully-cleared-as-crackdown-continues