

Arrest made in multi-million pound waste packaging fraud case

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Early morning raid sees man arrested for packaging fraud and money laundering offences.

An individual in Birmingham has been arrested as part of an investigation into waste plastic packaging fraud and money laundering, the Environment Agency has announced today (Thursday 26 March 2026).

In a dawn operation taking place yesterday (Wednesday 25 March 2026), officers from the Environment Agency worked with West Midlands Police to arrest a 49 year old man for conspiracy to defraud and money laundering.

The arrest relates to a complex investigation which involves fraud within the Packaging Producer Responsibility (PPR) regime. This is a system that allows exporters and reprocessors, accredited by the Environment Agency, to sell credits for packaging waste they export or recycle. Producers of waste must then purchase these credits to help pay towards the cost of recycling their packaging.

This investigation focuses on the unlawful selling of more than £2 million in credits for exports that are suspected of never actually taking place. The male was also arrested in respect of laundering the proceeds of this crime.

Officers from the Environment Agency's Investigation and Disruption Team are continuing their enquiries and evidence gathered during the arrest will be assessed.

Lauren Pigg, Environment Agency's Deputy Director for Waste Markets and Shipments, said:

This arrest sends a clear message to waste crooks - we will hunt you down.

With West Midlands Police, we have been working relentlessly to progress this highly complex investigation and stop this fraudulent activity.

Through our new 10 Point Plan, we will take the fight to waste criminals by acting faster and putting an end to the damage they cause to our communities and environment.

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.

Waste producers are required to prove they have made a financial contribution towards recycling 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. This criminal behaviour takes money away from decent businesses and investment that could improve 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. Last month, the Agency arrested two individuals in Penzance as part of an investigation into waste packaging fraud, worth more than £6 million.

The Environment Agency has also published its new 10 Point Plan to tackle waste crime, in which it set out how it will act earlier to address illegal activity and deliver more consistent enforcement action.

The Environment Agency will create a new Operational Waste Intelligence and Analysis Unit to hunt down waste criminals using every tool available – from aerial surveillance to financial data – and ensure enforcement is faster and smarter. For the first time, illegal waste operators will be named and shamed with information shared across the waste sector to put waste criminals on notice.

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/arrest-made-in-multi-million-pound-waste-packaging-fraud-case>