

Greater Manchester agencies unite to tackle waste crime

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Agencies from across Greater Manchester joined forces for the region's first waste crime summit, strengthening the collective fight against illegal activity.

Friday's event (20 March) - attended and supported by Deputy Mayor Kate Green - brought together representatives including the Environment Agency, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and all 10 Greater Manchester local authorities.

It built on the existing coordinated action against waste criminals who blight communities, damage the environment and undermine legitimate businesses.

The conference focused on the current scale of waste crime in Greater Manchester and the distinct roles authorities play in tackling it, including the different enforcement tools available.

Currently only one in four waste crimes are reported, with the event also aiming to increase the amount of information received by the public.

It took place on the same day the government and Environment Agency announced a waste crime crackdown, unveiling a sweeping package of measures targeting illegal dumping.

As part of it the government will directly fund the clean-up of some of the worst illegal waste sites, including at Bolton House Road in Bickershaw, Wigan. The Environment Agency has already conducted preliminary assessments of these sites, with further clean-up assessments to come.

Ian Crewe, Area Director for the Environment Agency in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, said:

We will not tolerate waste crime and are already targeting the worst offenders along with shutting down illegal operations across Greater Manchester.

But this isn't an issue that any single agency can solve alone. The summit brought together agencies to tackle this collectively and build on the work already taking place.

By sharing intelligence and resources we can help prevent waste crime and disrupt the criminal networks behind it.

Deputy Mayor, Kate Green. Credit: Edward Garvey, GMP.

'Turning point' in fight against waste crime

Kate Green, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester said:

Last week marked a turning point in the fight against waste crime, and a commitment to work together to prevent, enforce, disrupt and resolve issues quickly, if and when they arise.

We need to understand the relationship between waste crime, other criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, so that we can work together to disrupt the networks that are blighting the lives of local residents and costing the health of local people, especially children who attend schools or play in parks close to these illegal dumping grounds.

There is no place for fly-tipping, large scale illegal dumping, unpermitted development and nuisance behaviour in Greater Manchester. Those responsible will be made to pay for its clean up.

Greater Manchester Police's Assistant Chief Constable Chris Sykes added:

Our involvement at the waste crime conference sends a clear message about the role GMP plays in working with our partners, to protect our communities.

Being part of this conference shows our commitment to support the Environment Agency in tackling waste crime.

There's a clear expectation that we look after the environment as well as enforce the law, and that starts with how we operate as an organisation. Our visibility at the conference reflects that commitment.

Helen Dennis, Assistant Director, Wigan Council, and Mark Easedale, Area Environment Manager, Environment Agency. Credit: Edward Garvey, GMP.

Waste crime action plan

The new Waste Crime Action Plan sets out a zero-tolerance approach, with action to prevent waste crime at its source by closing loopholes and equipping regulators with the tools they need to stop waste criminals.

Expanding enforcement activity is key, and the Environment Agency will increase its on-the-ground activity against waste criminals - intervening earlier on larger sites.

Backed by an additional £45 million from the government over the next three years, this will strengthen enforcement activity and ensure waste criminals face the consequences of their actions.

Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Emma Reynolds said:

Waste criminals have been damaging our communities, countryside, environment and economy for too long.

In our new Action Plan, we send a clear message: dump illegally and you will face the full consequences.

Waste criminals will be forced to join clean up squads and made to pay for the clearing of illegal waste sites. We will give enforcement officers new police-style powers to bring offenders to justice."

At Friday's summit, the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) spoke with agencies about organised

criminal gangs and their involvement in waste crime and associated criminality.

The JUWC is hosted by the Environment Agency and was formed in 2020 to tackle serious and organised crime in the waste sector. Since then, it has grown to include 12 partners.

The agencies also discussed ongoing joint enforcement visits and increasing public awareness to help residents, landowners and businesses recognise the signs of waste crime and know how to report it.

Last year, the Environment Agency delivered on its commitment to tackle waste crime by stopping 743 illegal waste sites, including 45 in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.

Anyone who suspects illegal waste activity to report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or to the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greater-manchester-agencies-unite-to-tackle-waste-crime>