

Four sentenced to prison for ruthless waste-dump operation across London

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Waste criminals get prison sentences following major Environment Agency investigation

Following a major investigation by the Environment Agency, a gang of four has been sentenced to prison for conspiracy to illegally dump controlled waste across six sites in London.

Patrick Doherty received 28 months, and Martin Ward received 18 months. Michael Ward (also known as Martin McCann) and Simon O'Donnell both received 14 months suspended for 2 years.

The group carried out a sophisticated and calculated criminal operation that caused devastation to businesses and landowners.

The men were found guilty at Kingston-upon-Thames Crown Court of conspiracy to illegally dump controlled waste, such as tyres and waste from house clearances and construction, following a pattern of offending that spanned a year.

Members of the gang unlawfully occupied six vacant sites across London, and within hours turned each location into an illegal waste dump. Tipper trucks arrived in convoy and filled the site with waste before they packed up and moved on to their next target.

CCTV footage, obtained by the Environment Agency, showed the men breaking into and then taking control of sites, interfering with CCTV cameras, directing tipper trucks loaded with waste whilst frequently hiding their own faces, and removing and covering vehicle registration plates to cover their tracks. Landowners were left with clean-up bills running into hundreds of thousands of pounds - and the gang repeated the same playbook, site after site.

Environment Secretary Emma Reynolds said:

The actions of these shameless waste criminals are unacceptable and have rightly been punished.

My message is simple - break the law by dumping waste and we will come after you.

This Government is stepping up action, through our Waste Crime Action Plan, with new powers and more funding for the authorities and tougher punishments for criminals.

Matt Higginson, Environment Manager for the Environment Agency said:

This verdict is justice for residents who have had to endure misery and environmental damage at the hand of this gang.

We are laser focused on tackling illegal waste crime and are stepping up action with better intelligence, faster interventions and naming and shaming rogue operators.

I would urge anyone who suspects illegal waste activity to report it anonymously so we can tackle these crimes head on.

At Imperial Way in Croydon, the landowner was left £300,000 out of pocket. Security cameras were smashed, and a company representative was threatened and refused entry.

At Station Road in Colliers Wood, the gang issued a chilling ultimatum to a site worker: pay £5,000 or “I will fill this unit to the brim”. The money was not paid, and waste was piled five feet high, costing £15,000 to clear.

Despite repeated attempts to disable CCTV equipment and conceal the criminals and their vehicle identities — removing registration plates, wearing masks, stripping identifying labels from waste — the EA’s investigators were able to gather enough evidence against them. Nearby cameras, council CCTV and police body-worn footage captured their activities in detail.

The Environment Agency has recently released their ‘10 point plan’ to combat waste crime, which marks a step change in the way illegal activity is tackled in the waste sector.

Waste crime costs the UK over £1 billion every year, harms communities and undermines legitimate businesses and the Environment Agency is taking faster, more targeted action against those who break the rules. Enforcement teams, intelligence analysts, and regulatory specialists are working together to identify and act against illegal waste sites.

As part of its crack-down on waste crime, the government has recently backed the Environment Agency’s enforcement budget by an additional £45 million over the next three years. The money will help to put more boots on the ground and support investigations like this and comes on top of the £5.6 million increase for this financial year announced previously.

The government’s new Waste Crime Action Plan sets out a zero-tolerance approach, stopping waste criminals in their tracks and making them pay with new measures such as clean-up squads for offenders and police-like powers for EA enforcers.

The Environment Agency encourages anyone who suspect illegal waste activity, report it anonymously to our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/four-sentenced-to-prison-for-ruthless-waste-dump-operation-across-london>