

Major investigation into 'sickening' illegal waste dumping

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Environment Agency and Natural England act on 30,000 tonnes of illegal waste at Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Leicestershire.

The Environment Agency, working with Natural England, has launched an investigation into the large-scale, illegal dumping of waste at the Cave's Inn Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) near Shawell, Leicestershire.

The site is well-concealed but on receiving reports of odours from the public, Environment Agency and Natural England officers visited the site last week. They discovered significant amounts of household waste had been dumped at the site, causing pollution to the SSSI.

Shredded waste found

The site is believed to hold approximately 30,000 tonnes of shredded waste in layers with soil used to cover it. The public are urged to stay away from the site whilst the investigation is ongoing.

Alongside the criminal investigation, the Environment Agency is assessing the waste to ensure there are no further environmental impacts, as well as monitoring local air and water quality.

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.

Site at Cave's Inn Pits in Leicestershire. Credit: Environment Agency/Natural England

Ian Jones, Area Director, West Midlands at the Environment Agency, said:

This is a sickening case of large-scale illegal waste dumping, and we share the public's disgust.

We have launched an investigation with Natural England to find the criminals and ensure they pay the price for their despicable actions.

We ask the public to stay away from the area, which is on private land, while we investigate.

Anyone with information about this incident should please call our 24-hour hotline.

Phil Hukin, Principal Manager, Leicestershire and Rutland at Natural England said:

This site contained some of the best remaining areas of neutral marsh in Leicestershire. It is heartbreaking to see one of England's precious sites of special scientific interest damaged like this.

Our officers are working closely with Environment Agency colleagues to investigate this appalling crime.

The Environment Agency is appealing for anyone with information to come forward and report it to their incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Background Information

Waste crime costs the UK over £1 billion every year, harms communities and undermines legitimate businesses.

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.

Over the last year the EA have stopped 743 illegal waste sites, of these 143 were high risk. For the three years up to March 2025 211 prosecutions have been secured against waste criminals.

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.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-investigation-into-sickening-illegal-waste-dumping>