

2 arrested after raid on Lincolnshire illegal waste site

2 people have been arrested in a raid on an illegal waste site the size of a football pitch in Lincolnshire yesterday.

Environment Agency officers and Lincolnshire Police also seized an excavator and a lorry which were actively depositing more waste at the site on Fen Lane, Long Bennington, when officers arrived.

The move comes after intelligence revealed that lorry-loads of waste, including plastics, commercial waste and household furniture were being accepted onto the site and burned illegally.

The smoke from the burning waste piles – some of which were the size of bungalows – was having a significant impact on local people and putting the environment at risk.

Environment officers observed this activity intensifying in recent weeks – despite the strict lockdown conditions while the country battles Coronavirus – and took action to bring it to a halt.

The site has been subject to ongoing investigations for illegal waste activity while successive businesses have taken over operations before going bust.

Officers last visited the site at the end of January, arriving unannounced with police and planning enforcement officers from Lincolnshire County Council to carry out a full regulatory inspection.

But now legal notices have been issued, all entrances to the site have been blocked off, and activity on the site has been halted.

Norman Robinson, Area Director for the Environment Agency, said:

It's our job to protect people and nature even in these uncertain times, which is why our regulatory and enforcement work continues while we adhere to the government's guidelines around coronavirus.

Deliberately stockpiling and burning waste that should be safely disposed of is dangerous enough, but doing so in the current situation while people and legitimate businesses are so restricted shows a shocking disregard for our communities, society and the environment.

This should serve as a warning to those who would flout not just

the law, but the lockdown – we and our partners are still fighting to put a stop to waste crime and we won't hesitate to take action.

Chief Inspector Phil Vickers, Local Policing, Lincolnshire Police, said:

Lincolnshire Police have supported this Environment Agency led operation on a site that was causing harm to the local community, to the environment and to legitimate businesses who operate responsibly and lawfully. We will work with partners and continue to enforce against offenders who operate illegally during the lockdown period and to protect our rural communities.

Responsible waste management is everyone's responsibility – we work with the EA, County Council and all of the District Councils across Lincolnshire to protect our countryside and to keep rural communities safe, we are grateful for the support from Long Bennington residents in ensuring this large-scale site could be subject to enforcement today.

Joint investigations will continue and the Environment Agency will continue to monitor the impacts of the site and work with partners to ensure the waste is removed. If convicted as a result of legal action, those responsible could face extensive fines and even prison sentences.

Anyone who suspects illegal waste activity is reminded to report it to our 24-hour hotline by calling 0800 80 70 60, or anonymously contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Earlier this year the Environment Agency and partners launched the Joint Unit for Waste Crime, aiming to stop serious and organised crime in the UK Waste Industry. You can find out more about the initiative on our [website](#).