

Press release: Demolition company fined for illegal waste site

A County Durham demolition company has been ordered to pay £6,180.46 after pleading guilty to breaking environmental laws.

PTS Demolition and Dismantling Ltd, which operates out of Hackworth Industrial Estate, Shildon, Bishop Auckland, was prosecuted for operating a waste transfer station without a permit at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on 5 July 2017. The court ruled it was a deliberate offence and ordered the firm to pay a fine of £3,500 and £2,680.46 costs.

The charges brought by the Environment Agency relate to the company's attempts to reduce costs by starting its own waste transfer station.

An Environment Officer and a colleague from Durham County Council visited the site in July 2014 to provide advice on how to apply for an environmental permit and planning permission to do this.

In 2015, Environment Officers visited a further five times to give additional advice and guidance. At the same time they recorded evidence that the company was operating a waste transfer station illegally, including storing 100 tonnes of crushed aggregate, 15 skips full of mixed waste and a store of fire extinguishers.

In February 2016, PTS Demolition submitted a permit application, which was returned for failing to include the application fee. Following a further visit by Environment Officers to give more advice, the company submitted another application. This was also returned for failing to include a Fire Prevention Plan (FPP). Again, officers provided advice on how to complete an FPP.

Officers returned to the site on 11 August 2016. The levels of waste had reduced but some skips of mixed waste remained, along with a number of wooden railway sleepers and a skip containing glass.

Company given 'every possible opportunity' to comply

Jamie Fletcher, Environment Agency Area Environment Manager, said:

The regulations exist to protect the environment, legitimate business and local communities from the risk of harm. Every business dealing in waste, whether they produce, carry, sort, recycle, ship or dispose of it, has a responsibility to fully understand and comply with environmental laws.

We gave PTS Demolition every possible opportunity and extensive support to comply. However, not only did they store waste illegally, the company repeatedly ignored advice and failed to shut

down operations.

Those that repeatedly fail to comply with regulations pose a heightened risk to the environment and undermine legitimate business. In such circumstances we will have no hesitation prosecuting to ensure that waste crime doesn't pay.

Public consultation identifies challenges for future Common Agricultural Policy

European citizens believe that agricultural policy should continue to be managed at the EU level, and that helping farmers and protecting the environment should be its two main goals.

These are among the key findings of the [public consultation](#) published today on modernising and simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which received more than 322,000 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, including farmers, citizens, organisations and other interested parties

Speaking at "[The CAP: Have your say](#)" conference today in Brussels, where the findings were disclosed, Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, said: *"Today is another milestone on the journey towards the future of the Common Agricultural Policy and an opportunity for stakeholders to contribute further to the debate. The response to the public consultation shows the level of interest that there is in the CAP, which continues to support a dynamic agricultural sector, ensures safe and high quality food for 508 million citizens and provides for significant investment in rural areas."*

The high level of participation in the consultation shows that agriculture and its role in society has become an increasingly important issue for many European citizens. The vast majority of respondents (90%) are also clear that there is a real added-value in managing agricultural policy at the European level, as it ensures a level playing field within the single market and ensures that agriculture can respond more effectively to the shared challenges such as environmental protection (85%) and tackling climate change (73%). The need to maintain economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU (86%) as well as the need for a common framework of sharing best practices (91%) was also frequently mentioned.

Clear aims

The findings of the consultation are also clear about what the Common Agricultural Policy should achieve. Ensuring a fair standard of living for

farmers is a key demand, with a majority of respondents (88%) recognising that farm incomes are lower than the EU average and that farmers receive only a small amount of the final consumer price for food (97%). Direct income support for farmers is considered the best way to achieve this (66% of respondents).

The other main aim of the CAP should be to ensure that farmers are encouraged to play their part in tackling climate change and protecting the environment, protecting biodiversity, reducing soil degradation and ensuring a more sustainable use of pesticides and fertilisers.

It is also clear from the findings that citizens and farmers alike want the future CAP to be simpler and less bureaucratic in order to more effectively rise to these challenges.

The findings of the consultation will feed into the Commission's ongoing reflection on the future of food and farming. A Communication on modernising and simplifying the CAP will follow an impact assessment of possible future policy proposals.

Background

The online public consultation on modernising and simplifying the CAP was launched on 2 February 2017 and ran until 2 May 2017. It was open to all interested citizens and organisations and organised through a questionnaire in all 23 official EU languages.

The aim of the consultation was to gather views from farmers, organisations and any other interested parties on three main issues: agriculture, rural areas and the CAP today; objectives and governance of the CAP; and agriculture, rural areas and the CAP tomorrow. It included 28 closed questions (multiple choice), five open questions and the possibility to upload position papers.

For More Information

All replies to the consultation and a summary of the results will be published [here](#).

"The CAP: Have your say" – conference reports and documents will be available [here](#).

[Highlights: Launch of EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in](#)

the EU 2016

On 5 July 2017, EASO organised the **Launch of the EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU+ 2016**, which was held in **Brussels**.

The 2016 [EASO Annual Report on the Situation of the Asylum in the EU+](#) aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation of asylum in the EU+ (EU Member States plus Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein) by examining requests for international protection to the EU, analysing application and decision data, asylum trends, including key challenges and responses during the year, major institutional and legal developments and providing an overview of the practical functioning of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). According to the main findings and figures presented during the launching event:




- There was significant increase in asylum applications over the past two years led to a growth in decisions issued at first instance: in 2016, EU+ countries issued close to 1.15 million first-instance decisions, an increase of 84 % compared to 2015.
- The highest numbers of asylum applicants recorded were citizens of Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Nigeria.
- The main receiving countries were Germany, Italy, France, Greece and Austria. There were 7 % more applicants awaiting a final decision on their application compared to 2015 which continued to put pressure on the asylum and reception systems of the EU+ countries.
- The crisis in Syria continued to be a key factor in the number of applications for international protection in the EU+. Syria was the top citizenship of applicants reported with its citizens accounting for 26 % of all applications in the EU+ while more than 65 000 unaccompanied minors (UAMs) applied for international protection in the EU+, 37 % less than the previous year. Afghan nationals lodged 37 % of all UAM applications in the EU+.



Commenting on the main findings, **Jose Carreira, Executive Director of EASO**, highlighted: *The launch of the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU represents an excellent opportunity to identify the key changes, developments and trends in the field of international protection in 2016, so that we can better assess where we stand now and what should continue to be the focus of our efforts. The current situation of asylum in the EU and the fast pace in which the Agency is scaling up its operational capacity, makes this the right time to think about the future evolution of EASO.*

[Click on photo to watch video](#)

 A panel discussion on **EASO activities and operational work in the context of the hotspots**, also held during the launching event with the participation

of European Commission, representatives of EASO and national authorities. Among main topics discussed was the state of play on [EU Relocation Programme](#) and the implementation of the EU-TR Statement. According to statistics, more than 23 03 applicants relocated as of 3 July 2017, stated during the discussion.

[Click on photo to watch video](#)

Contributions to the Annual Report were also specifically sought from civil society with an open call for input from the EASO Executive Director to the members of the [EASO Consultative Forum](#) and other civil society stakeholders, inviting them to provide information on their work relevant for the functioning of the CEAS.

✘ This year's launching of EASO's Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU was also marked by a **Relocation Café concept event** which was organised by EASO with the participation of Belgian Asylum Authorities. The meeting aimed at providing factual information referring to the support provided by EASO to Greece and Italy in the context of the EU Relocation Programme. The Relocation Café offered the participants the opportunity to discuss important aspects of the EU Relocation Programme, as well as latest developments, with EASO's asylum experts, in the active presence of successfully relocated persons from Greece and Italy to Belgium.

Click here to see more [photos](#) and [videos](#) of the event

[Click on photo to watch testimonial from Relocation Cafe](#)

[Click here to watch videos of Relocation Success Stories](#)

EASO will continue its work within its mandate, as it may be strengthened to respond to current needs, while delivering on its core tasks in all areas, including: operational support, capacity building and training, facilitating practical cooperation among EU+ countries, collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative information and information on countries of origin, and external dimension.

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[Three former senior officials charged with bribery](#)

The Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) announced Friday that three former senior officials have been charged with violations including taking bribes.

The three officials facing legal action are Wang Min, former Party chief of Jilin and Liaoning provinces, Wu Tianjun, former member of the standing committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Henan Provincial Committee, and Yao Zhongmin, former chairman of the board of supervisors at China Development Bank (CDB).

Luoyang City People's Procuratorate in central China's Henan Province filed the charge against Wang with Luoyang Intermediate People's Court.

According to the indictment, Wang took advantage of his various posts to seek benefits for others, accepted "a huge amount" of bribes, and embezzled public funds while he served as Party chief in Jilin.

Wang, who is notorious for being responsible for serious electoral fraud, was also charged with dereliction of duty. His negligence had resulted in "major losses in the national and people's interests and had an especially vile social impact," according to the indictment.

Prosecutors filed the cases of Wu and Yao to the intermediate people's courts in the cities of Xiangyang, Hubei and Baoding, Hebei respectively, with both indicted for taking advantage of their posts to seek benefits for others and accepting "a huge amount" of bribes.

President Xi's speech on HK's 20th return anniversary published

A speech given by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the gathering to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland has been published by the People's Publishing House.

The gathering on July 1 also saw the inauguration of the fifth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The publication is available at Xinhua Bookstore outlets nationwide, the publisher said Friday.