

Cambridgeshire waste wood company fined £26,800

A Cambridgeshire waste wood processing company has been sentenced for failing to manage the risk of fire and containment of dust at its site, and causing dust emissions that impacted on neighbouring businesses and a fishing lake.

East Anglian Resources Ltd, based at Benwick Road Industrial Estate in Whittlesey, pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing at Peterborough Magistrates' Court to breaching 2 conditions of its environmental permit. This allowed it to store and treat up to 30,000 tonnes of waste wood for recycling per year.

The company was sentenced in its absence at Huntingdon Magistrates' Court on 17 June 2021 and fined £26,800, as well as being ordered to pay costs of £29,110.18 and a victim surcharge of £170. District Judge Sheraton found the company was reckless in committing the offences, which continued over an extensive period of time.

Environment Agency officers visited the waste wood recycling site on more than 30 occasions after the permit was issued in 2016 to November 2018, and found that piles of waste wood were frequently too large and too close together, posing a serious risk of fire by spontaneous combustion. The company had a Fire Prevention Plan in place but persistently failed to comply with it. The Environment Agency suspended the permit 3 times to force the company to comply, but this had limited effect.

In addition, officers noted that dusty material was allowed to accumulate and that the dust was not suppressed. Dust escaped the site on many occasions, affecting people working at neighbouring businesses and visitors to a nearby fishing lake.

When interviewed, James Tribe, the director of the company at the time, explained that the company relied heavily on one customer taking 80% or more of its waste. On occasions when that customer's site was closed, waste built up on the site in huge piles. He accepted that waste piles were massive but said they had never had a fire. He said they had tried to find alternative outlets and had done the best they could.

Mr Tribe accepted that their activities created dust but felt they managed it properly under their Dust Management Plan.

Since the prosecution began, East Anglian Resources Ltd has abandoned its site at Benwick Road Industrial Estate and the company has gone into liquidation.

Claire Parker, Senior Environment Officer with the Environment Agency, said:

Environment Agency officers and I have tried to work with East Anglian Resources Ltd over a number of years, to improve its

operations and minimise its impact on neighbouring businesses, residents and the local environment.

Unfortunately, despite our advice and guidance, warnings and temporary suspension of its permit, the company has continued to cause dust and litter nuisance to their neighbours, and to operate in a manner that presents an unacceptable fire risk.

Taking a prosecution is always our last resort, but in this case we felt that a prosecution was in the public interest due to the significant, and prolonged, negative impact this company has had on its neighbours and the environment.

East Anglian Resources Ltd pleaded guilty to the following offences:

- Between 24 April 2017 to 17 November 2018 you, being the operator of an Environmental Permit reference EPR/BB3802CP for a regulated facility on land at Yard 1, 35 Benwick Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire PE7 2HD, failed to comply with Condition 1.1.1(a) of the said Permit by failing to manage and operate the activities in accordance with a management system that identifies and minimises the risks of pollution, including those arising from operations, maintenance, accidents, incidents, non-conformances, closure and those drawn to the attention of the operator as a result of complaints.

Contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

- Between 3 July 2017 and 12 September 2018 you, being the operator of an Environmental Permit reference EPR/BB3802CP for a regulated facility on land at Yard 1, 35 Benwick Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire PE7 2HD, failed to comply with Condition 3.1.1 of the said Permit in that emissions of substances, namely wood dust, caused pollution and you failed to take appropriate measures to prevent or where that is not practicable, to minimise those emissions.

Contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.