

Environment Agency targets Croydon metal sites

Waste sites in Kent and South London got a surprise early knock on the door last week from Environment Agency officers working with the British Transport Police (BTP), Kent Police, the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) and Openreach.

Officers from the Environment Agency's Kent, South London and East Sussex area visited 6 sites in Croydon and Dover as part of a multi-agency week of action targeting metal and vehicle recycling businesses.

They are currently investigating one site found to be illegal where they are carrying out enforcement action to improve compliance with regulations. Meanwhile, a number of vehicles stopped during the week were found to have no waste carrier's licence or duty of care paperwork.

The intelligence led visits were part of a wider BTP operation targeting the theft of cabling and vehicle catalytic converters, which has been rising across the south east this year.

BTP officers searched sites for stolen metal, in particular catalytic converters that are stolen for the precious metals they contain. A surge in the value of these metals has prompted a significant increase in thefts. A number of stolen vehicles were also recovered during the week. They also checked waste companies' financial records to ensure they adhered to the 2013 Scrap Metal Dealers Act.

Matt Higginson, Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

This should serve as a warning to those who would flout the law that we and our partners are rooting out waste crime and we won't hesitate to take action.

Unscrupulous scrap metal sites are accepting stolen catalytic converters and cabling, further fuelling their theft across the south east.

Joint investigations and enforcement will continue and if convicted, those responsible could face extensive fines and even prison sentences.

Phil Davies, Joint Unit for Waste Crime Manager, said:

This week of action is another example of how the JUWC together with other partners and agencies are targeting criminals who exploit the waste industry and harm the environment. Utilising the

skills and expertise across agencies we will continue to identify further opportunities to impact upon waste crime.

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.

You can check your waste collectors [waste carriers registration](#).

See the [British Transport Police press release for details of its activities during the week](#).

The [Joint Unit for Waste Crime](#) was launched in 2020 by the Environment Agency and partners. It brings together environmental regulators and law enforcement agencies to tackle serious and organised waste crime, which is estimated to cost the UK economy at least £600 million year. It also causes great harm to the environment, local communities and businesses.

Everyone involved in the inspections made sure they complied with social distancing rules with correct PPE to make sure everyone involved was safe.