

Press release: Melksham Metals boss to pay £1.99 million or be jailed for 8 years

The owner of a Wiltshire scrapyards and recycling company has been ordered to pay almost £2 million he made from running an illegal waste site in Melksham.

In July, Lee Hazel appeared before Swindon Crown Court where he was warned he'd face an 8-year prison sentence if he failed to pay the full amount owed under a confiscation order made under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

The ruling marked the culmination of a 5-year investigation into Lee Hazel and Melksham Metals Recycling Ltd by the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Police. Wiltshire Police conducted the financial aspects of the investigation

The original confiscation order was for £2.74 million, but this figure was reduced at Swindon Crown Court following an application to amend the earlier judgement under a legal clause known as the 'Slip Rule.'

Hazel's lawyers successfully argued it had been wrong to include a figure for VAT when calculating how much their client had benefited from crime. They also alleged that, in preparing its prosecution, the Environment Agency had mistakenly included invoices for ferrous metals.

After hearing evidence for the defence, Judge Tim Mousley QC, reduced the confiscation order to £1.99 million from the original figure of £2.74 million.

Hazel was warned on several occasions about unlawful waste activities including the illegal disposal of waste on farmland and depositing and processing waste without an environmental permit. He is both the owner and sole director of the company.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

These were serious offences committed by a waste operator who has little respect for the law and the environment. He was motivated by financial gain and carried out unauthorised activities over a number of years.

This case should serve as a warning to anyone in the waste industry who thinks they can flout the law. Where we have the evidence, we won't hesitate to prosecute offenders.

Investigations revealed that he and his company dumped stone off-cuts and sludge at a farm on the outskirts of Melksham beside an old canal, as well as carrying out unauthorised activities at his Station Yard premises in Bath

Road, Melksham.

In February 2016, [Hazel received an 18-month prison sentence, suspended for two years, for running an illegal waste operation](#) at Station Yard and for the dumping of waste at a farm. The court heard the Environment Agency had revoked Melksham Metals' operating licence and the site had closed down.

Hazel was caught after an enforcement officer from Wiltshire Council found various waste materials including chalky stone, tarmac road planings and concrete pipes dumped in fields at Queenfield Farm beside the disused Wiltshire to Berkshire Canal. The officer followed a line of 'chalky liquid' in the road outside the farm back to Station Yard. He reported the incident to the Environment Agency.

Last year's hearing followed 2 earlier trials at Swindon Crown Court in June 2014 when Hazel and the company were found guilty of 4 charges in relation to the dumping of waste at Queenfield Farm, Melksham.

The court heard Melksham Metals had a contract to remove waste stone from a local stonemasons yard. The waste should have been taken to a licensed site, but was dumped at Queenfield Farm instead.

In November 2015 Lee Hazel and the company pleaded guilty to a further 5 charges each relating to unauthorised waste activities at his Station Yard premises.

They admitted the unauthorised treatment of controlled waste at Station Yard from 2004 to 2008, breaching a waste control licence, operating a regulated facility without a permit and having waste without authorisation.

Hazel was warned that even if he was sent to prison, he would still have the debt hanging over him.

In addition, Melksham Metals Recycling Ltd was ordered to pay a £100 fine for each of the 7 offences it pleaded guilty to. Only a nominal fine was imposed on the company because of the size of the confiscation order.

[Press release: Pupils design new Flood Warden logo](#)

Hundreds of creative youngsters across the north east have completed designs in a competition to produce a new Flood Warden logo.

The Environment Agency's four community engagement officers— appointed to help north east communities be more flood resilient – have visited schools in the region to launch the competition.

They've received designs from more than 300 children, which will be looked at

by an Environment Agency judging panel at the end of the month.

The winning design will be printed onto all Flood Warden jackets across the region.

Flood Wardens are community volunteers who support their communities during flooding incidents – including activating a community's flood action plan, ensuring the most vulnerable in their community are safe and working closely with the Environment Agency.

The winning youngster will also be presented with their own flood warden jacket as a thank you for their help.

Taryn Al-Mashgari, Community Engagement Officer who covers the Tyne and Wear area, said:

Community Engagement Officers are working closely with schools to educate children about what it means to be flood resilient and to help them understand the impact of flooding, ensuring our messages have a long-term impact for future generations.

We've talked to them about the importance of Flood Wardens and what they do and it's been fun for the children to come up with a new design.

The winning logo will be worn by wardens right across the north east so it's an important job for these youngsters!

The four new community engagement officers are funded by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC).

Emma Craig works in Northumberland, Taryn in Tyne and Wear, Anna Caygill in Durham and Darlington, and Sarah Pearce in Cleveland.

Their work includes helping businesses and residents to understand their risk of flooding and ensuring those in flood risk areas are signed up to receive free flood warnings.

They're also helping communities prepare themselves for flooding, such as supporting them to develop community flood plans and recruit volunteer Flood Wardens in at risk communities.

[**Press release: New fish pass opens up**](#)

County Durham beck

A new fish pass on a County Durham beck is giving fish access to an additional 6km of habitat.

The new rock ramp fish pass at Goodwell Ford in Brancepeth Beck is the latest in a number of fish passage improvements along the beck carried out over the past three years.

It's hoped that these improvements will increase fish numbers across the whole river catchment.

Habitat upstream of this previously impassable structure used to be almost completely devoid of fish but will now act as a nursery for juveniles as adult fish reach their natural spawning grounds.

It's the latest in a series of improvements to fish passage on the beck. Wear Rivers Trust have been working in partnership with Brancepeth Castle, Brancepeth Estate and Brancepeth Castle Golf Club on a project funded by the Environment Agency to modify structures such as culverts, weirs and bridge aprons which were proving to be obstacles to the movement of fish.

The project is already reaping rewards as it was announced last year that fish had been seen moving freely up the beck for the first time in over 150 years once a 3m high weir had been modified.



The newly constructed rock ramp at Brancepeth Beck

'Great to hear about fish returning'

Steve Hudson, Wear Rivers Trust, said:

The size and density of the structures along this beck made the project particularly challenging but we have had great support from local landowners and volunteers to enable us to deliver some great improvements.

Now most of the fish passage works are complete, it is great to hear about fish returning to previously inaccessible parts of the beck and we are very much looking forward to continuing the hard work with the help of our dedicated volunteers.

Goodwell Ford is the sixth structure to be improved following support by volunteers to identify barriers on the beck. Two remaining structures will be monitored with a view to work being carried out in the future.

[Brancepeth Beck fish pass construction](#)

Positive work

Paul Frear, Fisheries Technical Officer for the Environment Agency in the north east, added:

We've worked closely with partners to enable Wear Rivers Trust to carry out lots of positive work in this area to look at structures and issues impacting on fish migration.

This new fish pass opens up another 6km of watercourse for fish and make it far easier for them to travel upstream. The whole project is already reaping rewards. We've worked really hard together with our partners over the years to make dramatic improvements to water quality.

But there is always more we can do and projects such as this at Brancepeth is an example of the sort of work taking place across the region to enhance our rivers and streams.

[Consultation outcome: Waste electrical and electronic equipment: amending the](#)

[2013 UK regulations](#)

Updated: Summary of responses document replaced to correct some formatting issues within the document.

We want to know what you think about plans to amend the UK's 2013 regulations for waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). The changes will include:

- introducing "Open Scope" requirements, which extends the regulations to all electrical and electronic equipment unless specifically exempt
- making membership to the Producer Balancing Scheme compulsory
- changing how producer fees are allocated in the UK

We also want to know what you think of the 2013 WEEE Regulations. Have they improved the environment at a proportionate cost to business? We will use these views to inform the Post Implementation Review next year.

[Form: Application for an environmental permit: part E3 notification of surrender \(flood risk activities\)](#)

You will need to fill in this part of the form E3 together with part F3, if you are surrendering all or part of your permit.