

# Press release: Environment Agency warns of illegal waste being dumped empty commercial units

Empty industrial units across the country are being targeted by waste criminals to dispose of thousands of tonnes of illegal waste.

The growing trend sees criminals pose as legitimate tenants to rent properties used to store illegal waste. Once discovered, landlords, property managers and farmers are burdened with thousands of pounds in clear up costs and face possible criminal prosecution, fines and even custodial sentences for failure to operate without an environmental permit.

The waste, mainly made up of potentially hazardous materials, poses a serious pollution and fire risk and undermines legitimate business.

With hundreds of commercial properties across the country thought to be empty, the Environment Agency is calling for landlords to be extra vigilant when letting out their properties. The regulator is also calling on businesses, organisations and individuals to manage their waste responsibly to prevent it from getting into criminal hands in the first place.

During the period Dec 2016 – Nov 2017 the Environment Agency investigated the dumping of 18,244 bales of waste – each bale being approximately 1 ton. It's estimated that at a low end price of £70 per bale this would amount to £1,277,000 for correct disposal of the waste.

The Environment Agency reveals the top four land types which are most susceptible to illegal dumping. The land type descriptions key dump sites are:

- Farms 34%
- Industrial Unit 24%
- Abandoned factory 10%
- Derelict site 7%

Nicky Lawton, Deputy Director – National Enforcement Service, said:

Unsuspecting landlords and property managers are failing foul of waste criminals and as a result are being made to pick up hefty bills to clear up the waste – often running into the hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Landlords can avoid this by carrying out checks to prospective tenants to ensure their sites will not be used as part of an illegal waste operation.

Waste crime, which costs the economy £604 million a year, is a

serious problem that we're using all our available resources and powers to curb.

Landlords and property managers are urged to take the following steps to avoid being a victim of waste crime:

- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective new tenants.
- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure.
- It is illegal to store waste on your land without the required permits. You may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on your land or property without the relevant permissions and you could be liable to prosecution and the cost of removing the waste.
- Landlords should check before signing a contract that the contract complies with regulations. You can view whether a potential tenant holds the correct permit to carry out waste operations at [public register](#)
- The offer of payment to temporarily store waste is a scam, the waste will likely never be collected.
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour. If you are suspicious of prospective tenants please contact us for more information and advice.
- If you are approached to store baled waste, even on a short term basis, refuse the material and call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

The Environment Agency's Prevention & Disruption teams are working hard to address waste crime, exercising new regulatory powers to lock up and block access to illegal waste sites.

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## **[Press release: Critical asset for early flood warning in York being built](#)**

The channel is being built in the river where it passes under the A59 at Skipbridge, Green Hammerton, between York and Harrogate.

Once the channel has been built an ultrasonic sensor will be attached under the bridge so accurate flow readings can be achieved.

This is important for predicting floods in York because the River Nidd is the last major watercourse flowing into the Ouse.

Project manager Oliver Wilson said:

This is one of the Environment Agency's critical assets for our flood warning service and for managing water resource available for abstraction.

Having an early warning that the Ouse could overtop in York means we can act early to prevent flooding by closing flood gates in the city.

So that the concrete lined channel can be built a cofferdam has been put in place.

One half of the river is dammed off to create a dry working area to enable construction on that side, before the other side is dammed and the new channel structure can be completed.

There was an existing concrete channel built a number of years ago but due to the design and flow dynamics it created in the river the bed got silted up, causing incorrect flow readings and it not working as an effective gauge station.

The new channel is designed to make sure sediment passes through it and flow readings are accurate.

Mr Wilson added:

Lower river levels have enabled us to make really good progress and we expect the gauge station to be fully functioning this winter.

North Yorkshire County Council's Highways Department has carried out work on the bridge and road earlier this year and Northern Powergrid also recently installed an electricity line across the bridge.

To view river levels [click here](#)

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# **News story: The Environment Agency Publishes Annual Report 2017-18**

**Today the Environment Agency has published its Annual Report and Accounts for 2017-2018 outlining what has been achieved in the last financial year.**

This report lays a positive foundation for the government's 25 Year Environment Plan which has a clear ambition for our generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. The Environment Agency was closely involved in shaping the Plan, and it is now one of our main responsibilities to deliver it.

This year's report highlights considerable progress that the Agency has made towards fulfilling the goals set out in our Action Plan up to 2020.

Over the past year the Environment Agency has:

- Invested 1.3bn into protecting the environment.
- Reduced its carbon footprint by 45% against the 2006 – 2007 baseline year.
- Enhanced over 2,000km of river habitats.
- Created over 1,500 acres of new habitat for wildlife.
- Better protected over 45,000 additional homes from flooding this year.
- Informed over 1.4 million people about our free Flood Warning Service.
- Trained 6,500 staff to respond to flooding.
- Reduced the number of serious and significant pollution incidents to their lowest levels since 2011.

**Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:**

The report demonstrates the commitment of all those who work for the Environment Agency to do the right thing for the environment, to create a better place for people and wildlife, and to go the extra mile for the communities we serve.

Over the course of the past year the Environment Agency has made good progress towards the goals set out in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, reducing pollution, enhancing habitats, protecting more homes from flooding and strengthening our incident response capabilities.

The Environment Agency is here to create a better place for people and wildlife, delivering flood protection and water security, regulating industry and supporting sustainable growth across the country.

To read the report click [here](#).

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## [Press release: Operation CLAMPDOWN and licence blitz target illegal fishing](#)

The close season campaign was supported by nearly 500 volunteers from the Voluntary Bailiff Service (VBS), whose 'eyes and ears' coverage on the riverbank is invaluable in supporting Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers.

The volunteer bailiffs undertook 6555 man hours of patrols as part of Operation CLAMPDOWN 6, reporting 111 incidents to the Environment Agency and 34 to the police. A total of 77 intelligence logs were submitted to the Environment Agency and police.

The latest national fishing licence blitz, covering the first two weekends of the new season, checked 1461 licences and reported 88 fishing illegally without a licence. Those found guilty of unlicensed fishing by the courts face a criminal conviction and a fine of up to £2500.

Graeme Storey, Fisheries Manager, Environment Agency said:

Environment Agency fisheries enforcement patrols continue all year round. Anyone tempted to fish illegally should know that they are likely to be challenged at any time of the day or night. With the support of our partners and the VBS there is an increased likelihood of being caught out – don't risk it.

Dilip Sarkar MBE, National Enforcement Manager with the Angling Trust said:

This is our most successful Operation CLAMPDOWN yet, with a record number of volunteers trained and available and over 70 joint patrols with the Environment Agency or police. The VBS is now making a tangible contribution to tackling illegal fishing, which is welcomed by the Angling Trust and our partners.

For more information on the Voluntary Bailiff Service and the six free Fisheries Enforcement Workshops that will be held around England this autumn, please go to the [Angling Trust's website](#).

- Enjoy fishing and make sure you fish legally
- Annual fishing licences from only £30
- It's easy to buy online. [Get a Fishing Licence](#)
- All fishing licence income is used to fund work to protect, improve and develop fisheries, fish habitat and angling.
- Go fishing – Find out about angling events, fisheries and venues so you

can [go fishing](#)

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## **Press release: Flood wardens needed in Northumberland town**

Teams of volunteer Flood Wardens across the North East are playing a vital role in helping protect their communities.

The eyes and ears on the ground, they act as a link between the Environment Agency and communities at risk – getting vital information out to local residents.

And now the Environment Agency is calling on people to play their part in Ponteland.

At the River Pont in Ponteland there are 520 properties in the flood warning service area, with 69% of people signed up to receive free flood warnings.

And at the River Pont at Darras Hall, Kirkley Mill and Prestwick Carr there are 57 properties in the flood warning service area, with 33% of people signed up.

### **Flood Wardens play ‘vital role’**

Colin Hall, who is the Environment Agency’s Flood Community Engagement Officer for Northumberland, is working with Ponteland Town Council. He said:

Being flooded is absolutely devastating and Flood Wardens play a vital role in supporting their community before, during and after a flood event.

It includes things such as checking water levels, reporting blockages in the river and monitoring weather forecasts to be a step ahead of a flood.

We also work with them to develop a Community Flood Plan, with key contacts and responsibilities to carry out in the event flooding takes place.

The local knowledge that wardens can provide on the ground is invaluable and helps communities be more flood resilient.

### **Raise awareness of flooding issues**

Flood Wardens help ensure the Environment Agency’s flood warning messages

reach the local community and are acted upon, and have a direct line through to the Environment Agency's Area Incident Room in Newcastle.

Outside of a flood event, they can help raise awareness of flooding issues in the local community, encourage people to register to receive free flood warnings and provide information to partners about vulnerable people or properties in the flood plain.

Anyone interested in becoming a Flood Warden or for help creating a Community Flood Plan contact [Colin.Hall@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Colin.Hall@environment-agency.gov.uk) or call 020 7714 0547.

Residents can also sign up to receive flood warnings and find out what action they can take to protect themselves and their property by visiting the [Environment Agency website](#)