

Environmental charity windfall after companies' recycling errors

- Environment Agency enforcement action leads to civil sanctions for 3 companies
- £87,000 to go to environmental charities
- Benefits include species and habitats enhancement, community engagement, and improved visitor access to natural environments

A tech firm, a drinks company and a home furnisher will pay a total of almost £87,000 to good causes after they failed to comply with packaging waste regulations designed to protect the environment.

Softcat plc, a well-known IT infrastructure and services provider based in Marlow, has pledged £35,803.99 to the National Trust, after failing to comply with the law for more than a decade.

Meanwhile, alcoholic drinks giant Sazerac UK Limited, based in Hampton Wick, will contribute £45,088.49 to Surrey Wildlife Trust after failure to comply from 2017 to 2019.

And iconic furniture name La-Z-Boy UK Limited, based in Maidenhead, will give £5,736.89 to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, due to non-compliance in 2020.

All 3 recognised that they had failed to comply with the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007 (as amended), which ensure that businesses fund the recycling of the packaging waste that they place on the UK market.

By failing to register with a compliance scheme and to take reasonable steps to recover and recycle packaging waste, the businesses also avoided paying a charge based on how much packaging they got through in the same period.

The money paid to the charities will help provide and protect local wildlife habitats and wetland areas, and improve people's access to and enjoyment of these places.

Environment Agency senior technical officer Jake Richardson said:

Any company handling more than 50 tonnes of packaging a year, and with a turnover of above £2 million, must register with the Environment Agency or a packaging compliance scheme, and meet their responsibilities for recycling waste packaging.

If companies fail to meet their obligations under environmental law, we will take action to ensure that they change their ways.

The Environment Agency accepted proactive enforcement undertakings offers from all of the companies, a type of civil sanction which allows businesses to make amends while demonstrating how they will comply with the law in future.

The companies each agreed to register with a compliance scheme, revise internal processes and assign a responsible person.

Mr Richardson added:

The companies also agreed to take measures to ensure they comply with their packaging waste responsibilities in the future.

As well as the charitable contributions, they paid the Environment Agency's full costs.

We're satisfied that they won't repeat their mistakes.

The Environment Agency uses enforcement undertakings for suitable cases, in accordance with its enforcement and sanctions policy. It reserves prosecutions for cases where evidence shows high levels of culpability and serious environmental harm.

Anyone who spots pollution should report it to the Environment Agency via its free 24-hour incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60.

La-Z-Boy UK Limited, 6 Bell Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1BU

The offences relate to failure to comply for registration year 2020, including failure to:

The company will:

- register with a compliance scheme
- revise its internal work procedures
- assign a responsible person
- implement a new methodology
- cover the Environment Agency's costs
- contribute £5,736.89 to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

La-Z-Boy UK Limited has chosen to make a financial contribution to the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust's Moor Copse project, which aims to:

- Maintain the biodiversity of a very scarce habitat in the UK
- Increasing the number of important grassland species such as yellow rattle, common knapweed, great burnet, orchids, and crested dog's tail, on the drier grassland.
- On the wetter parts of the grassland, in hollows and furrows, maintain and increase species such as meadowsweet, water avens, ragged robin and marsh marigold
- Enhance the visitor experience.

Sazerac UK Limited, 60 Marina Place, Hampton Wick, Kingston Upon Thames KT1 4BH

The offences relate to failure to comply for years 2017 to 2019 inclusive, including failure to:

The company will:

- register with a compliance scheme
- revise its internal work procedures
- introduce director-level sign-off procedures
- implement a new methodology
- assign a responsible person
- provide regular updates and training
- cover the Environment Agency's costs
- contribute £45,088.49 to Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Sazerac UK Limited has chosen to make a financial contribution to The Surrey Wildlife Trust's 'Empowering communities' project, which aims to:

- Engage, inspire and upskill local community groups to help reverse the decline of pollinator species through creating green corridors and space for nature to move, adapt and thrive.
- Create and restore habitat within key biodiversity areas.
- Support local groups and produce toolkits for communities.

Softcat PLC, Solar House, Fieldhouse Lane, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 1LW

The offences relate to failure to comply for years 2007 to 2020 inclusive, including failure to:

The company will:

- register with a compliance scheme
- implement a new written procedure
- assign a responsible person
- cover the Environment Agency's costs
- contribute £35,803.99 to the National Trust.

Softcat Plc has chosen to make a financial contribution to the National Trust's Langham Pond Boardwalk project, which aims to:

- alleviate the impact of visitors on the surrounding landscape through the installation of 60m of boardwalks at key areas.
- Create new access to the wetland which was previously inaccessible before.
- Help maintain the natural flora, fauna and British duckweed which supports populations of some of the UK's rarest species.
- Enhance the visitor experience.

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