

# Essex man hinders probe into illegal waste in Kent

A building contractor has been convicted after failing to provide assistance to a criminal investigation.

Raymond Burling came to the attention of the Environment Agency looking into the illegal dumping of bales of mixed waste in a warehouse in Kent.

Information obtained by investigating officers led them to believe Burling was likely to hold documents that would assist the wider enquiry.

The Environment Agency wrote to the-then 70-year-old in August last year, asking him to supply the papers.

Peterborough magistrates were told Burling, of Hemnall Street, Epping, had 2 weeks to respond to the letter, but didn't make any contact with officers.

When the deadline to reply passed, officers sent a second letter, repeating their request for Burling to provide original papers or copies that could help the investigation. However, despite the letter clearly stating failure to respond was obstruction and could result in prosecution, officers heard nothing back.

Investigators left a contact card at Burling's address at the end in September, almost 2 months after first trying to make contact with him. Burling ignored this request as well.

A further visit was made in October, when officers were finally able to speak to Burling. He was given a copy of the original letter and told the seriousness of the matter, and the importance of responding to the officers' request.

Burling still failed to make any contact with the agency or provide the requested information.

Phil Henderson, enforcement team leader for the Environment Agency for East Anglia, said:

The effect of Burling's refusal to assist hampered a major investigation into waste crime.

Burling's conviction for frustrating Environment Agency staff shows we don't only put waste criminals before the courts, but also those who block our attempts to do so.

Anyone who suspects waste crime can contact our 24-hour incident hotline, on 0800 807060, or Crimestoppers, confidentially, on 0800 555 111.

On 9 December 2020, Peterborough magistrates' court fined Burling £660 for 'failing to provide facilities or assistance or any information or to permit any inspection' in relation to a criminal investigation. He was also ordered to pay the Environment Agency's full legal and investigation costs of £2,793.93 and a victim surcharge of £66.

The original investigation into illegal baled waste continues.