

New powers to tackle waste crime

Most of the waste industry operates responsibly but there are a small number of operators whose activities either fail to meet the required standards of their permit /exemptions or operate illegally with no permit or exemption in place.

These sites can cause pollution to the environment and endanger human health. They pose a risk of fire, water pollution and cause other issues such as odour, litter and fly infestations which affect surrounding communities.

Following a plenary debate yesterday, the National Assembly for Wales approved The Waste Enforcement (England and Wales) Regulations 2018. These regulations are part of a range of measures aimed at tackling waste crime and poor performing waste sites in Wales.

Natural Resources Wales will now be able to act quicker at problematic waste sites, for example, by locking the gates to stop more waste entering the site in order to prevent a risk of serious pollution or to stop pollution from continuing.

Meanwhile, to reduce the impact of abandoned waste, Natural Resources Wales and Local Authorities will also have the powers widened to take action on occupiers and landowners requiring them to take action to remove waste unlawfully present on a site regardless of whether they were originally deposited lawfully under a permit or exemption. Action needs to be taken to eliminate or reduce any consequences caused by the keeping or disposal of waste on land.

Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn said:

“We have worked with Natural Resources Wales to identify what more can be done to prevent problematic and abandoned waste sites and I have listened to the views of industry”.

“These regulations provide two new powers. The first will enable Natural Resources Wales to restrict access to a waste site to stop more waste coming on the site while the second gives Natural Resources Wales and Local Authorities the ability to serve a notice on an occupier or land owner requiring them to take action to remove wastes unlawfully present.”

“These new powers to take action against illegal waste operators will create a level playing field and help ensure operators who comply with the rules do not lose out to those who undermine and undercut the law-abiding majority.”

Ceri Davies, NRW’s Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting said:

“These new powers will be an invaluable weapon in our continuing fight against waste crime.

“Unscrupulous operators pose a threat to the environment, the health and wellbeing of the communities in which they operate and undermine the Welsh economy.

“But now, thanks to the new regulations, we will be able to deal with them more effectively and reduce the impact of their illegal activity.”