

Norfolk man jailed for 8 months over illegal waste

A Norfolk landowner has been imprisoned for 8 months for storing and burning waste illegally at a site in Outwell, near Downham Market. Despite repeated warnings from the Environment Agency.

Trevor Sieley, 63, of Langhorns Lane, Outwell, was also ordered to pay a £140 victim surcharge. He was also ordered to pay £10 for breaching a suspended sentence order during the hearing at Norwich Crown Court on 6 April 2022.

In addition, he was served a court order requiring him to remove all waste from the site by 30 June 2023. He also needs to provide the Environment Agency with all paperwork by 7 July 2023.

Sieley pleaded guilty to storing and disposing of waste without an environmental permit. The waste included agricultural vehicles and equipment from his former contracting business, plus scrap metal, which he planned to sell. He also disposed of commercial waste for family and friends. Some of which he burned, and acknowledged that his actions had saved them from paying for the correct disposal of the waste.

The court heard that Sieley's burning of waste would have produced fumes that would be harmful to human health and adversely affect the environment. A number of residential buildings and businesses, other than those of Sieley, lay some 200 metres away.

Environment Agency officers attended the site on 7 occasions and observed the charred remains of general rubbish, some of it shredded. This included plastics and metals, as well as hazardous items such as a vehicle engine and a television. These had been burned in a specially constructed 'bund' or pit. The presence of an excavator suggested a large amount of waste had been stored and burned.

Sieley was served a notice by the Environment Agency in September 2019, ordering him to clear the site. However, subsequent visits showed he was continuing to bring waste onto the property and burn it. He had taken no action to clear the site.

Prosecuting for the Environment Agency, solicitor Sarah Dunne told the court that the Environment Agency had made every possible effort to work with Sieley. He had been given the chance to put things right but, at every turn had been "met with obfuscation and contempt."

He evaded repeated attempts by Environment Agency officers to discuss the matter with him. A warrant for Environment Agency officers to enter the site was issued in December 2019.

Defending barrister John Farmer told the court that Sieley had done his "inadequate best" to clear the site. However, His Honour Judge Shaw described

Sieley as "arrogant" and told him: "You are someone who thinks the criminal law doesn't apply to you. You haven't just not made it better, you have made it worse."

Judge Shaw pointed out that he had breached environmental laws since 2008. Notching up 2 previous sets of environmental convictions and being made subject to a suspended sentence for permitting the cultivation of cannabis at the same site.

The judge also observed that the 2 year Covid lockdown had given Sieley ample opportunity to clear the site yet he continued to accept more waste. He continued to frustrate Environment Agency's efforts to discuss the matter with him.

Phil Henderson, Enforcement Team Leader for the Environment Agency, said:

Storing and burning waste in this way saved the cost of legal disposal and put the environment at real risk. Mr Sieley was able to operate at a commercial advantage and undermine his lawful competitors.

We welcome this sentence which sends a powerful message to anyone in Mr Sieley's position that waste crime will not pay.

The offences took place between 29 July 2019 and 17 December 2019.

Sieley was prosecuted under regulations 12(1)(a) and 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations.