

Northumberland man jailed for dumping and burning waste illegally

Dominic Allen, 25, of Old Swarland, Northumberland appeared at Newcastle Crown Court on Tuesday 2 August for sentencing after previously pleading guilty to 2 offences of operating a waste site without an environmental permit, and 3 offences of burning waste.

He was sentenced to 12 months in prison, ordered to pay £1,000 in costs and has 18 months to clear the site.

Prosecuting for the Environment Agency, Andrea Parnham told the court that an investigation into illegal activity on the land next to Allen's property at Old Swarland began in February 2020 after Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service attended a fire at the site. The investigation revealed that Allen had been operating without any authorisations to transport, deposit or sort waste.

On 16 March 2020 Environment Agency officers visited the site and saw several piles of waste including household goods and construction waste and evidence of burning. Letters requiring the site to stop taking in waste and for it to be cleared were sent but the fires continued, including a significant fire on 31 May 2020 which the fire service extinguished.

Following a number of visits to the site and more waste dumped including garden waste, electricals and vehicle tyres, a statutory clearance notice requiring the site to be cleared was issued in July 2020.

Waste dumped on the site at Old Swarland

Restriction Order granted

When the deadline for that passed, the waste had not been removed so the Environment Agency blocked access to the land through a court order to prevent further offences from taking place.

In October 2020 a Restriction Order was granted – the first time the powers have been used in the North East – which prohibited anyone from entering or depositing waste on the site to reduce the impact on the local community while the criminal investigation into activity at the site was ongoing.

Environment Agency officers locked the site's access gate and placed a warning notice at the entrance.

In defence, the court was urged not to impose a custodial sentence, stating that this would impede efforts to clear the site and also mean the defendant would lose his job.

But in passing sentence Recorder Mullarkey said that he could have no confidence in Allen complying with any suspended sentence requirements. He ruled that the offending had been deliberate, persistent and financially motivated, with all offences committed while Allen was on bail for other matters.

Waste dumped on the site at Old Swarland

Allen showed 'blatant disregard' for the law

John Crowl, Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader in the North East, said:

This result should serve as a warning for others that we take illegal waste activity extremely seriously and we won't hesitate to take enforcement action against those who flout the law.

After working closely with our partners at Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, we used the powers at our disposal to block access to the site to protect the community while the criminal investigation was ongoing and this proved successful.

Allen showed a blatant disregard for the law and we are determined to make like tough for those who damage the environment and blight local communities.

A Northumbria Police spokesperson added:

This sentence was only made possible thanks to the diligence of our colleagues at the Environment Agency and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service. We have proven we are stronger by working together, and that a joint approach to tackling this type of blatant offending has seen a man jailed.

We welcome this sentence and hope it sends a clear message to others who think they are above the law – we will not tolerate this type of criminality. You will be pursued and you will be brought to justice.