

Oxfordshire wood-chipping company caused fire-risk

A company on the edge of the Chilterns that recycled wood has been fined, and its director banned from similar roles, after investigators found it was storing nearly 4 times as much waste allowed by law.

In what a district judge called “blatantly criminal,” the Environment Agency estimated Red Jon Ltd held 1,790 tonnes of wood at the site in Pyrton, near Watlington, whereas no more than 500 tonnes can be kept in one place in any 7-day period.

Oxford magistrates’ court heard the mountains of wood posed a significant fire-risk to the area, which included two schools, residential property and a park.

Julia Leigh, senior environmental crime officer for the Environment Agency in Oxfordshire, said:

I visited the site on numerous occasions, explaining which activities were and weren’t allowed, but Red Jon were not able to make sufficient changes to comply with the law and reduce the risk to the environment and the local community.

Waste crime can undermine legitimate businesses. The Environment Agency works closely with businesses to help them comply with the law. In cases like this, where individuals consistently operate illegally, we have no hesitation in prosecuting them, as we want to make sure waste crime doesn’t pay.

On Wednesday 8 January 2020, district judge Kamlesh Rana fined Red Jon Ltd, formerly of Shirburn Road, Pyrton, £15,000, and company director Patrick Cassidy £860. The two were ordered to equally share costs of £28,000, Cassidy also paying a victim surcharge of £86.

Cassidy, 68, of Sneyd Hall Road, Bloxwich, West Midlands, is now banned from being a company director.