

Press release: Company director pays cost of staying silent in waste investigation

Craig Hands, a director of Warwickshire Wood Chip Ltd, was identified as a waste broker during an investigation across the south east into illegal waste activities.

He was legally required to supply information requested by an investigating officer but repeatedly failed to do so, holding up investigations.

At Peterborough Magistrates' Court on 22 January 2019, Hands, who pleaded guilty, was fined £1,500 and was ordered to pay £2,710 costs and £120 victim's surcharge.

Wendy Foster, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, said that an investigating officer was authorised to exercise powers under section 108(4)(k) of the Environment Act to look at documents/records that were relevant to an investigation and warned of the offence of obstruction.

"From the beginning of July 2018 to the present date, various reasons have been put forward to explain why documents have not been provided," she told the court. "No documents have ever been received."

Magistrates told the court:

We consider this matter as serious. The Environment Agency does a very good job and they need our full support.

Hands, aged 52, of Cauldwell Lane, Bitteswell, Lutterworth, was taken to court to answer a charge under section 110 (2) (b) of the Environment Act 1995 that: between 19 July 2018 and 20 October 2018 without reasonable excuse you did fail to provide facilities or assistance or any information or to permit any inspection reasonably required by an authorised person in the execution of his powers or duties under by or virtue of section 108 of the Environment Act 1995.

Hands entered a guilty plea at an early opportunity and apologised for the offending.

Phil Henderson, Environment Agency crime team leader, said:

This case goes to show that you cannot ignore the law and the people whose job it is to enforce it. We will take action when people deliberately hold up our investigations and others should take note of this.