

Press release: Custodial sentence for operating illegal waste site

Mr Bruce had pleaded guilty to these offences on an earlier occasion, and was referred to Worcester Crown Court for sentencing.

Mr Bruce received an immediate custodial sentence of 26 months. No order for costs was made at this stage, pending the outcome of confiscation proceedings under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, which will be resolved in due course.

The charges were brought by the Environment Agency under Regulations 38(1)(a) and 12(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010; Section 33(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; Section 161D (1) of the Water Resources Act 1991; and Regulation 10 of the Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agriculture Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010.

Mr Bruce ran a waste disposal operation centred on a site at Ridgeway Park Farm, Throckmorton Airfield, near Pershore, for 3 and a half years, between 2011 and 2014 without any permit. He brought waste onto the site and either dumped it, buried it or burned it.

Responding to complaints from local residents, Environment Agency officers met with Mr Bruce on a number of occasions, conducting site inspections and enforcing environmental regulations. Warnings were issued following evidence that burning had been taking place on the site.

Throughout March and April 2013, Mr Bruce treated and disposed of waste by burning large quantities of it at Ridgeway Park Farm. For several weeks fires were continually burning at the site causing misery for local residents, endangering health and polluting the air in the area. There was a major impact on the quality of life for local residents, as Mr Bruce burnt a large amount of plastic waste, causing plumes of putrid black smoke across the nearby village.

In April 2013, a fire at the site was attended by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency, yet Mr Bruce repeatedly ignored the interventions of the Environment Agency and the Fire Service.

The waste on site consisted mainly of construction and demolition waste, some of which included aluminium waste products, which is classified as a hazardous waste. In total, approximately 26,000 cubic metres of waste was brought onto the site by Mr Bruce during the offending period.

Mr Bruce kept his herd of cattle on site grazing amongst the waste and in conditions where polluting effluent was not contained. Environment Agency officers also noticed that waste gypsum powder was being used as animal bedding and advised Bruce that this practice was unlawful. They also noted that the cattle bedding also contained mixed waste, electric cables, drink

cans and plumbing parts.

Brown liquid was seen seeping from storage areas, pooling and flowing in the direction of a small watercourse, approximately 100m away. Officers reported evidence of hazardous waste buried and the potential for discharge substances to enter the groundwater and the Piddle Brook.

In sentencing, the Judge commented that this was serious environmental offending and that there was a clear need for a deterrent sentence. Mr Bruce was given some credit by way of a discount on his sentence as he had pleaded guilty and avoided the need for a trial.

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

Waste crime is a serious offence with tough penalties. It can damage the environment, blight local communities and undermine those who operate legally.

Mr Bruce has shown a blatant disregard for the environment and local community, subjecting local residents to months of misery by bringing on large quantities of waste and burning it on the site.

Everyone who disposes of waste has a duty of care to ensure their waste is handled correctly. Whether you are a business, local authority or householder you must make sure you know where your waste goes so it doesn't end up in the hands of illegal operators.

You can help disrupt and prevent waste crime activity by reporting. The Environment Agency urges people to report waste crime on their incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.