

Press release: Suspended sentence for farmer who admitted illegally burning fridges and animals

Today (May 1, 2019) King's Lynn magistrates ordered Mr Rutterford to serve a prison sentence of 12 months but suspended that sentence for a period of 2 years on condition that he remains of good behaviour.

Mr Rutterford was ordered to pay costs and a Victim Surcharge totalling of £18,051.50.

The 71-year-old had, at an earlier hearing, admitted operating an unpermitted site at Blackdyke Farm in Hockwold-cum-Wilton, near Braordon, illegally depositing and burning waste at that site.

Environment Agency prosecutor Mrs Sarah Dunne told the court that despite warnings from officers in November 2017 and at least 3 follow-up visits and emails, Rutterford continued his illegal activities – even days before a formal interview with environmental investigators.

He allowed other people to take waste to his farm to burn and told his employees to bring waste from his own rental properties to burn there.

Mrs Dunne told the court that in November 2017 officers found a fire burning with about 5 skip loads of waste. Despite being told by Rutterford that it was from his farm, it was clear that it was not. It included kitchen unit doors as well as plastic, rubber and metal items.

“During the visit a flatbed trailer loaded with a mattress and wooden furniture was seen driving onto the site. It turned and left when the driver saw the environment officers,” Mrs Dunne said.

Most businesses that use, treat, recover, store or dispose of waste need an environmental permit, although some waste operations are exempt and can operate under a waste exemption instead.

Rutterford had no permit and his activities did not fall within the scope of an extension. He was told to stop burning waste and to clear the site within 90 days. Instead, a week later he registered a number of exemptions, none of which would have covered his previous activities.

When officers returned to carry out further inspections, they found that more waste had been deposited including partially burned and rotting animal carcasses and fridges and freezers which, when burned, release climate-changing chemicals.

Mrs Dunne told the court that as an experienced businessman with a history of dealing with the Environment Agency, Rutterford must have known that burning on a large scale was not allowed. “He deliberately and audaciously flouted

the law," she said.

After the hearing Environment Officer Naomi Daniel said: "Burning waste saved the cost of legal disposal and put the environment at real risk. Burning fridges and freezers releases climate-changing chemicals and pollutes the atmosphere."