

SEPA to end exemptions for burning farm plastics

31 August 2018

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has announced its next steps to stem the plastic tide by confirming it will end exemptions for burning most types of agricultural waste from 1 January 2019.

- SEPA confirms its next steps to stem the plastic tide by announcing that burning farm plastics, and most types of agricultural waste, will not be allowed under exemption from 1 January 2019.
- Whilst a change in Scotland's environmental regulations in 2013 meant farmers could continue burning plastics only under an exemption, SEPA is moving to reduce the environmental impacts of farm waste.
- SEPA has engaged extensively with NFU Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland to support Scottish farmers through a simple set of online resources, including a list of Scottish recyclers who stand ready to help farmers get plastic waste sorted.

Whilst a change in Scotland's environmental regulations in 2013 meant farmers could continue burning plastics only under an exemption, the agency is moving to reduce the environmental impacts of farm waste.

The move, which will affect silage wrap, crop covers, fertiliser bags and containers, follows extensive engagement between SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland. SEPA has also worked closely with NFU Scotland to roll out the change which will feature ongoing dialogue with farmers and crofters over the coming months.

Ending the exemption will not only align with the legal requirement for all Scottish businesses to present plastics and other items separately for collection, but will help boost the Scottish market for recycled plastics.

SEPA's Gary Walker, Waste and Landfill Tax Manager, and Stephen Field, Land Unit Manager, and NFU Scotland Vice President Martin Kennedy and Director of Policy Jonathan Hall today (Friday 31 August) visited RPC bpi recycled products in Dumfries, one of the largest polythene film recyclers in Europe, which will help farmers as they join the global challenge to reduce their plastic usage.

The company has the scope and expertise to recycle up to 120,000 tonnes of plastic each year across Europe with plastics, including silage wrap and fertiliser bags, being recycled into refuse sacks and Plaswood lumber, made from 100% recycled plastic. Plaswood can then be fabricated into products such as boardwalks, fencing, gates and garden furniture as part of a circular economy.

SEPA, NFU Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland have developed a simple set of

resources for Scottish farmers, including a list of Scottish recyclers who stand ready to help farmers get plastic waste sorted. Further information is available from www.sepa.org.uk/farmplastics.

Speaking at RPC bpi recycled products' site in Dumfries, SEPA's Gary Walker, said:

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment and ending the exemption for burning farm plastics is an important next step in stemming the plastic tide by reducing the environmental impacts of farm waste.

"From 1 January 2019 farmers will no longer be able to burn plastic and most types of agricultural waste and, whilst many farmers have been recycling this type of waste for years, it is important that all farmers take steps now to ensure they are ready. By recycling farmers are once more doing their bit for the environment, supporting their local community and helping ensure that plastic materials are kept in use for as long as possible by maximising the value that can be extracted from them.

"Working with our partners a simple set of resources has been developed for Scottish farmers which will help them to get their plastic waste sorted. We will continue to work with farmers over the coming months as we move towards 1 January and SEPA officers are always here to help if farmers have any questions."

Mike Baxter, External Affairs Director for RPC bpi recycled products said:

We are absolutely delighted to be a partner in this joint stakeholder initiative. By increasing collection rates of farm plastics there are huge benefits for the environment and the Scottish Circular Economy. We have recycled used farm plastic films at our Dumfries factory since 1996. The plastic pellets we produce from our recycling process are used to manufacture second life products – such as Plaswood plastic lumber and furniture, refuse sacks used by Scottish NHS and at RPC bpi indupac, located in Ardeer, we manufacture heavy duty agricultural plastic films."

NFU Scotland Vice President Martin Kennedy said:

Recognising that the spotlight is focussed on plastics, it is incumbent on all stakeholders that we help farmers and crofters do the right thing when dealing with the forthcoming ban on burning farm plastics.

"There is a short window for change but we have been working closely with SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland on clear messages and

practical measures that farmers can follow. That involves meaningful, simple guidance on what can and can't be done; what is and what isn't recyclable, and what the options are for farm plastics deemed non-recyclable. We also want to ensure the collection centre network is as comprehensive as possible so those in more remote areas have realistic options to have this material disposed of properly in the future.

"Where there are gaps in information, guidance or disposal options, we will work quickly with others to fill them with solutions."

ENDS

Notes to editors

If a land manager carries their own waste off site to another site for onward recycling or disposal then they need to register for FREE with SEPA as a Professional Collector and Transporter of Waste (PCT).

Online registration is available via sepa.org.uk/pctw, and a paper form can also be downloaded from the SEPA [website](#). This form must be completed and returned to your nearest SEPA Registry Office detailed on the form.

There is currently no fee for registration as a PCT and the registration is valid indefinitely unless it is cancelled.

If a land manager carries anybody's waste other than their own, even if it is from another land manager, then they must be a registered waste carrier (RWC).

Online registration is available via the SEPA [website](#) and a paper form can also be downloaded from the SEPA [website](#). This form must be completed and returned to your nearest SEPA Registry Office detailed on the form.

There is a fee payable for registration as a RWC. This is detailed in our Waste Management Fees and Charges (Scotland) Scheme available on the SEPA website on the current charging schemes page. The fee for 2018 is currently £210. Registrations are valid for three years unless revoked or cancelled.