

Soiled nappies among banned waste exported to Turkey

Illegal export of waste from Kent has left P&D Material Recovery Ltd handing over thousands of pounds to an environmental charity.

In March 2019, the company filled 11 containers with plastic contaminated with banned waste at Chatham Dockyard, Gillingham. The 2 shipments described as plastic scrap, totalling approximately 220 tonnes, was to be sent to a facility in Turkey.

P&D Material Recovery tried to ship nappies and other items against the law

However, intervention and enforcement action by the Environment Agency has meant a bird charity in Sandwich has now benefitted from £13,000 to improve local habitats. P&D has also paid the Environment Agency's costs of nearly £11,000 from the investigation.

This breach in international law on the export of illegal waste was discovered during a routine inspection. The containers were found to include plastic contaminated with soiled nappies and sanitary towels, but also condoms, cotton buds, glass, textiles, including old underwear and tin cans.

Tin CAN'T! The Environment Agency held the banned cargo, including drinks cans

The company accepted that the contents inspected were unsuitable for export, and that it had returned the containers to its facility and sent them for incineration.

To prevent further breaches, the company has agreed to employ additional staff and employ a company that specialises in the manufacturing of waste sorting stations to design a secondary clean-up system and an additional picking station.

Stephen Young, lead investigator for the Environment Agency on this case, said:

We want all producers and waste companies to be responsible and make sure they only export material that can be legally and safely sent abroad for recycling.

Illegal waste exports blight the lives and environment of those overseas.

All UK waste exports should meet regulations on waste shipments,

and the Environment Agency has a system of inspections in place to verify compliance.

P&D Material Recovery Ltd made the £13,000 payment as a civil sanction, also known as an enforcement undertaking. The Sandwich Bay Observatory Trust, who are committed to the conservation and recording of the natural environment in the Sandwich Bay area, used the money on its 'Restharrow Scrape Project.'

A scrape is an artificial wetland and acts as a refuge for many ducks and wading birds. The charity redesigned and enlarged a shallow lake to benefit resting, migrating and breeding birds, and to include an accessible hide. Birds found here include black-headed gulls, lapwings, oystercatchers, as well as several pairs of avocets who have nested here in recent years, the first-ever in this corner of east Kent.

P&D Material Recovery Ltd, from St Mary's Island, Chatham, will pay the Environment Agency's costs of £10,845.60 as they breached the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 2007 and the attempted export of illegal waste.

ENDS.

Notes to editors

- Under enforcement undertakings companies and individuals can make good some of the environmental damage they cause, including through a financial contribution to a local project. The Environment Agency must also be satisfied that the offender will make changes to its operations to prevent similar damage in the future.
- While agreeing to enforcement undertakings, the Environment Agency continues to prosecute organisations and individuals where evidence shows high levels of culpability and serious environmental harm.

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