

Suspended prison term for north London fly-tipper...

An uncle and nephew have been convicted of dumping waste from household refuse on derelict land in north London.

Thomas Stokes, 51, and Brian Stokes, 32, discarded several van-loads of construction material between them at Stonehill Business Park in Edmonton in 2017.

The Environment Agency prosecuted the pair after they were caught on CCTV ditching the waste on open land close to the North Circular Road.

Thomas Stokes towed a caravan onto the land on 11 November. Later that month, Stokes, of Oak Lane, Billericay, unloaded waste from his black and white tipper van at the former auction site twice in barely more than an hour. Not a fortnight later, on 5 December, with the van again full of waste, he dumped it like he had done before.

In January 2018, crime officers from the Environment Agency followed Stokes's van to another address in Edmonton where they identified him on security cameras. The officers later used powers to seize the van at a pub in Welwyn Garden City, and crush it.

Back in December 2017, a week before Christmas, Brian Stokes arrived at the business park to do the same thing as his uncle had – dump waste illegally.

The younger Stokes, of Lyncroft Avenue, Pinner, was driving a different tipper van, but just as uncle Thomas was caught on CCTV, Brian was seen dumping construction waste from the vehicle before driving off.

CCTV proved crucial in bringing the men to court.

The convictions are part of Operation Angola, a joint effort by the Environment Agency and various agencies to target gangs of criminals like the Stokes pair who dump significant amounts of waste across the South East. It is often innocent members of the public targeted, oblivious their waste will be dumped illegally.

Emma Viner, area enforcement manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Thomas and Brian Stokes clearly didn't care, knowing full well they were taking advantage of unoccupied land on which to dump rubbish.

The waste came from innocent members of the public, unaware the rubbish from home improvements was dumped illegally.

Through the persistent intervention of our officers, the Environment Agency has seen a reduction in the number of offences

linked to Operation Angola. Our conviction of Thomas and Brian Stokes shows we pursue law-breakers from the crime to the courtroom.

Sitting at Ealing magistrates' court on 11 June, deputy district judge Martin Steen sentenced Thomas Stokes to 16 months in prison, suspended for a year. He was also ordered to complete 100 hours unpaid work and pay £500 in costs and a £85 victim surcharge.

Appearing at the same court, Brian Stokes was told he faced prison if he visited any illegal waste site before 2029, or offered to take away someone's waste in the same period. Like his uncle, he was ordered to pay costs of £500 and a victim surcharge of £85. He is also due to undergo a rehabilitation programme designed to curb his offending.

Last year, magistrates in east London also convicted Brian Stokes of dumping waste. He was given 100 hours unpaid work for that offence, with costs of £1,500 awarded against him after he tipped builders rubbish onto empty land at Romford in 2016.

In this new case, both men pleaded guilty to multiple breaches of environmental law.