

# Press release: Illegal waste operation leads to prison term for man and £314,000 compensation for victim

A man has been jailed for 12 months for the illegal storage of more than 5,300 tonnes of mixed waste wood at a site in Great Staughton, Cambridgeshire.

Another man involved in the illegal activity has received a suspended prison term and a company has also been fined and ordered to pay more than £300,000 compensation.

At Cambridge Crown Court on 3 May 2019 James Mervyn Williams, 38, formerly of Olton Road, Shirley, Solihull, was sentenced in his absence to 12 months in prison for his part in setting up the site.

At a previous hearing on 15 March 2019 Christopher Kerr, 74, of Vivian Close, Birmingham, who was the public face of the operation, was sentenced to 4 months in prison, suspended for 2 years.

Biowood Recycling Limited, which organised the deliveries of waste to the site, was fined £12,690 and ordered to pay £314,426 compensation to the landowner who paid to clear the waste.

In August 2014, under the name 'CGK Recycling', Kerr leased the site on part of an old WWII airfield known as Little America Industrial Estate on the Cambridgeshire/Bedfordshire border.

Kerr told the landowner the site would be used to process timber. Six weeks later the Environment Agency heard that the site was operating illegally and when officers investigated they found wood stacked 3-4 metres high, with some of it falling into hedgerows and a nearby ditch.

Because of its size and the way it was stored the waste created a significant fire risk for the local area. An Emergency Fire Plan had to be drawn up by the local authority.

Waste wood stacked at Great Staughton

Kerr registered a waste exemption which limited the amount of waste in any 7-day period to just 500 tonnes. Instead, around 1,000 tonnes were taken there every week for 5 weeks.

Kerr told investigating officers that he had been asked to run the site by Williams and had no real involvement in it. But Kerr set up a business account in his name and a total of £116,638 was transferred into it by Williams' company.

Kerr pleaded guilty to knowingly permitting the waste operation without a

permit, contrary to the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

Williams, sole director of a now dissolved recycling company (MT Recycling Ltd of Southam Works), ran a similar waste wood site and helped Kerr set up, deciding that his company would broker all the waste wood to CGK Recycling.

But as his company did not have enough customers to supply the site, he used the services of another waste broker, Biowood Recycling Ltd, based in Derbyshire, with which he had conducted business for a number of years.

Biowood sourced all the waste wood that was taken to the site. Biowood paid Williams' company £168,369 to deposit the waste, making a profit themselves of at least £38,000 from brokering the wood to the illegal site.

Williams pleaded guilty to knowingly causing the waste operation without a permit contrary to the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

Both Williams and Biowood pleaded guilty to failing to take reasonable measures as waste brokers to comply with their statutory duty of care under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to prevent a waste offence.

Sentencing Kerr and Biowood at the hearing on 15 March 2019, Judge Jonathan Cooper said Kerr had acted at his own peril and "must have been wilfully blind to the risk of offending". Biowood was "at least as reckless with its dealings with the other two defendants" and the exemption was "a fig leaf for an illegal operation", the Judge said.

In mitigation it was accepted that Kerr had no previous involvement in the waste industry. Biowood had no previous convictions and had co-operated with the Environment Agency's investigation.

Of the £314,426 compensation, £255,116 was ordered to be paid by Biowood under the Proceeds of Crime Act. In addition the company was ordered to pay prosecution costs of £20,000.

Sentencing Williams in his absence on 3 May 2019, Judge Cooper said Williams had committed the offence for financial gain motivated by his greed. Williams was also disqualified as a company director for 5 years. An application to confiscate the money he obtained from his crime will be decided at a later date. A warrant has been issued for Williams' arrest.

After the hearing, Enforcement team leader Phil Henderson said:

The illegal and uncontrolled storage of combustible waste at this location gave considerable cause for concern to both local communities and the authorities alike so we are pleased with the penalties imposed by the court.

In cases like this the Environment Agency will relentlessly pursue not only those who actually dumped the waste but also others involved in or facilitating the crime.

We pay tribute to the affected landowner who acted to remove the waste minimising risk to the public and via proceeds of crime legislation has now been rightly compensated.

More information on [waste and permitting](#).

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## [News story: Every Life matters](#)

Suicide Safer Copeland is being led by Every Life Matters, a Cumbria Suicide Prevention Charity set up in 2018.

The initiative aims to reduce the number of suicides by helping people understand when someone is at risk, providing advice on how to support someone in crisis, and signposting support services for those in crisis.

### [Suicide Safer Copeland](#)

The statistics around suicide in Cumbria are stark:

- on average, 1 person a week is lost in Cumbria to suicide. More than double the number that die on the county's roads
- Cumbria's suicide rates remain higher than the national average, and a disproportionate amount of those deaths are focused on the west coast of Cumbria
- suicide remains the most common cause of death for men aged between 20-49
- one in 15 people will make a suicide attempt at some point in their life

Chris Wood, suicide safer Copeland's development manager said:

We're really pleased that Sellafield Ltd has supported the vital work we're picking up.

There are a number of mental health charities, and of course the NHS, who all do great work – but very importantly, we know that around three quarters of people who die by suicide are not in contact with any mental health services in the year leading up to their death. That means we need to start thinking about suicide prevention as a community-wide concern.

It is friends, family, work colleagues, neighbours and our network of community and voluntary organisations which all have an important part to play in saving lives. Suicide is everyone's business, and anyone can make an intervention which might save a life.

Suicide Safer Copeland will be working to reduce the stigma and increase understanding of the signs of when someone is at risk of suicide. They'll also provide resources to increase awareness of how to practically support someone experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Gary McKeating, head of community and development at Sellafeld Ltd added:

As well as making big strategic investments that help the area become more sustainable, we also donate hundreds of thousands of pounds every year to local groups at grass roots level who are doing amazing community work.

Suicide Safer Copeland is exactly the kind of organisation we are proud to support, and I'm delighted that we've been able to help them get established.

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## **[Press release: Intimidation in Public Life: a joint approach to tackling intimidation](#)**

Lord Evans, Chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, has [today written](#) to the leaders of all Westminster parties to say that [The Jo Cox Foundation](#) will act as independent support in efforts to agree a cross-party approach to tackling intimidation.

This follows the Committee's previous [meetings with the parties](#) to follow up the recommendations made in its 2017 [report on intimidation in public life](#).

Lord Evans said:

"I am delighted that The Jo Cox Foundation has undertaken to act as independent support to help make further progress towards a common approach to tackle intimidation and abuse during election campaigns.

"It is important to democracy that individuals standing for public office or campaigning are able to do so without fear of intimidation. From our meetings with them, it's clear that the political parties have done a great deal of work internally to address intimidatory behaviour and improve their own processes to call out and address unacceptable behaviour where they can. Building on that, there is goodwill and commitment from the political parties at Westminster to make further joint progress."

Catherine Anderson, Chief Executive of The Jo Cox Foundation, said:

“Jo’s murder in 2016 is a constant reminder to us that the threat of violence and intimidation towards MPs, candidates or anybody else in public life can never be acceptable. We all value vigorous political debate and freedom of speech but that should not extend to abusive behaviour designed to intimidate and silence people. It threatens our democracy itself. From our regular discussions with all the parties we know that they recognise the importance of restoring civility and respect to our public discourse and we look forward to working with them and with the committee to find an agreement on how this can be achieved.”

[Download the Committee’s 2017 report on intimidation in public life](#)

## Notes to Editors

1. Interview requests and media enquiries should go to Maggie O’Boyle on 07880 740627.
2. The independent Committee on Standards in Public Life advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK. It monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders. To find out more about the Committee’s work go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life>
3. The current members of the Committee are: Lord (Jonathan) Evans, Chairman, Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP (Labour), Simon Hart MP (Conservative), Dr Jane Martin CBE, Dame Shirley Pearce DBE, Jane Ramsey, Monisha Shah and Rt Hon Lord (Andrew) Stunell OBE (Liberal Democrat).
4. You can follow the Committee on twitter @PublicStandards.

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## [Press release: Brown trout and endangered crayfish rescued from river pollution](#)

More than 500 fish and nearly 200 protected crayfish have been rescued and moved to safety after a pollution in a Lincolnshire river put them at risk.

The white-clawed crayfish – a protected native species under threat across the country – were saved by [Environment Agency](#) ecologists and transported to safe locations where their populations can re-establish out of harm’s way.

Fast-acting fisheries experts also recovered wild brown trout, bullhead, and coarse fish, moving them away from the pollution and downstream to safety while clean-up efforts got underway.

The rescue was undertaken after a tractor overturned last week, spilling fertiliser into Gunby Brook, a tributary of the River Witham. Samples showed high levels of ammonia in up to 4km of watercourse – putting the river's delicate ecology at risk.

Environment Agency officers were swift to respond, working with the landowner to contain the pollution behind a series of temporary dams, carrying out sampling and monitoring conditions, and providing specialist advice on clean-up.

The affected water is now being treated and some of the temporary dams are being removed, where it is safe to do so, in order to restore the natural flow within the river.

An investigation is now underway into the circumstances surrounding the incident, which could lead to further action in the future.

Pete Reilly, Area Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

This is a prime example of how we aim to protect wildlife and nature – undertaking this rescue meant we were able to save hundreds of creatures which otherwise could have been killed even as we were working non-stop to control the pollution.

The spill is now contained and clean-up is ongoing, but our teams are still closely monitoring conditions and an investigation is underway.

Protecting people and the environment is our priority and we take every pollution seriously, so please report any environmental incidents to us on 0800 80 70 60 so we can respond as quickly as possible.

Native white-clawed crayfish have been in decline since the 1970s, when the invasive American signal crayfish escaped into UK waters. These invasive crayfish carry a plague that kills off the native species, and outcompetes them for food and habitat.

The UK is home to a quarter of the world's white-clawed crayfish and the river Witham and its tributaries are home to tens of thousands, making it one of the largest strongholds in the country.

The rescued 58 male and 41 female crayfish, plus juveniles and eggs, have been moved to safe locations in the nearby Cringle Brook and Wyville Brook.

Read more about the Environment Agency's [work to protect native crayfish in Lincolnshire](#).

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# News story: F-35 Lightning aircraft take off for inaugural overseas exercise

Several F-35B Lightning aircraft from 617 Squadron, "The Dambusters," flew from their base at RAF Marham in Norfolk to spend six weeks at RAF Akrotiri as part of Exercise Lightning Dawn.

RAF Marham Station Commander, Group Captain Townsend said:

It's just over 76 years since 617 Squadron formed to conduct ground-breaking operations, they are once again called upon to take a capability forwards for the first time. The exercise in Akrotiri will prove our ability to operate F-35 away from RAF Marham and allow us to learn the lessons of operating the air system whilst on deployment.

Today's departure reflects a tremendously collegiate effort from the RAF, Royal Navy and industrial partners who are now focused on ensuring the deployment is as successful as the preparation phase.

Owned and operated by the RAF, the Lightning Force is jointly manned by both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. This training exercise will allow personnel from both services to gain vital experience in maintaining and flying the aircraft in an unfamiliar environment.

The exercise will also examine all aspects of moving this aircraft to a new location, including logistics, maintenance, and sustainment of all the equipment and crew that comes with this impressive aircraft, whilst also enhancing its preparedness for its first operational carrier deployment.

Station Commander RAF Akrotiri, Group Captain Christopher Snaith, said:

It is a privilege to welcome 617 Squadron and the F-35B Lightning aircraft to RAF Akrotiri. This is the first overseas training deployment of the aircraft and marks another key milestone for the aircraft in UK service.

Akrotiri has been home for British Forces personnel for nearly 70 years; we are hugely grateful for the support and hospitality from the people of Cyprus and I know that all those involved in the F-35 programme, both Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, are delighted to be here.

What is important now is to maximise the opportunities that being in Cyprus presents and ensure we learn the lessons from what I know

will be an incredibly successful deployment.

The Lightning, as the aircraft is known in the UK, is the first to combine radar-evading stealth technology with supersonic speeds and the ability to conduct short take-offs and vertical landings. With the ability to operate from land and sea, the F-35 forms a vital part of delivering a 'carrier strike' capability to the UK when combined with Britain's new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

The UK currently owns 17 F-35B aircraft with the reformed 617 Sqn arriving back in the UK last year. More jets are due in Britain over the coming years, and there is an overall plan to procure 138 aircraft over the life of the programme.

The F-35 is the world's largest defence programme at over \$1.3 trillion, with UK industry providing 15% by value of every one of over 3,000 jets set for the global order book. That makes the economic impact greater than if we were building 100% of all 138 aircraft which we intend to buy. The programme has already generated \$12.9 billion worth of orders and at peak production will support thousands of British manufacturing and engineering jobs.