

Top high street chain pays for its recycling error

Four companies paid a total of £26,000, plus costs, after they failed to comply with packaging waste regulations designed to protect the environment.

A well-known high-street name is among 4 retailers contributing thousands of pounds to charity after failing to comply with the law. For 5 years, Zara Home UK Ltd, which sells homeware products in stores and online, broke rules which ensure that businesses fund the recycling of the packaging waste that they place on the UK market.

Zara also avoided paying a charge based on how much packaging the company got through in the course of its business in the same period, between 2010 and 2015.

In addition to Zara Home, 3 other clothing retailers similarly failed to comply with the packaging waste regulations over a number of years: Bershka UK Ltd, Pull & Bear UK Ltd, and Massimo Dutti UK Ltd. All 4 businesses, which are owned by the same parent company, identified their non-compliance and worked alongside the Environment Agency to address their failings.

Environment Agency officer Jonathan Coldicott said:

Any company producing more than 50 tonnes of packaging a year, and with a turnover of above £2 million, must register with the Environment Agency or a packaging compliance scheme, and meet their responsibilities for recycling waste packaging.

If companies fail to meet their obligations under environmental law, we will take action to ensure that they change their ways.

The Environment Agency accepted enforcement undertaking offers from all 4 companies, a type of civil sanction which allows businesses to make amends for environmental damage and breaches, while demonstrating how they will comply with the law in future.

As part of the enforcement undertakings, the companies have put in place additional compliance measures and are making financial contributions to 2 charities working to help the environment:

- Keep Britain Tidy will receive a total of £13,000 towards its EcoSchools project, educating children to take action on litter and waste
- The Marine Conservation Society will also receive £13,000 towards its Beachwatch Programme, which funds litter-picks on UK beaches

Jonathan added:

The companies also agreed to take measures to ensure they comply with their packaging waste responsibilities in the future.

As well as the charitable contributions, they paid the Environment Agency's full costs.

We're satisfied that they won't repeat their mistakes again.

The Environment Agency uses enforcement undertakings for suitable cases. It reserves prosecutions for cases where evidence shows high levels of culpability and serious environmental harm.

Anyone who spots pollution should report it to the Environment Agency via its free 24-hour incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60.