

Government unveils plans to crack down on waste

A crackdown on waste criminals has been unveiled by Environment Minister Jo Churchill today as part of fresh plans to reform the waste industry.

Proposals set out in two new consultations today will clamp down on waste crime and support people and businesses to manage waste correctly.

The reform of waste industry will see increased background checks for firms who move or trade waste, as well as making it easier for regulators across the UK take action against rogue operators.

With waste often handled by intermediaries who conceal their identities to commit serious and organised waste crime, the increased checks will ensure waste is managed by authorised persons only and in a safe manner, making it harder for unregistered operators to find work in the sector.

New plans will also see the introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking, using powers in the landmark Environment Act to overhaul existing waste record keeping. This means those handling waste will record information from the point waste is produced to the stage it is disposed of, recycled and reused. This will enable regulators to better detect illegal activity and tackle waste crime, including fly-tipping, illegal waste sites, and illegal waste exports.

Criminal activities including fly-tipping, illegal dumping, and the illegal export of waste abroad can blight our communities, harm the environment, and pose a risk to human health. In 2018/19, waste crime cost the English economy around £924 million. Local authorities dealt with nearly 1.13 million fly-tipping incidents this year alone.

The new plans build on the extra £60 million given to the Environment Agency to tackle waste crime since 2014 as well as new powers to stop illegal waste sites posing a risk to the environment, including the ability to lock up sites and force rogue operators to clean up all their waste.

Environment Minister Jo Churchill said:

Waste criminals show complete disregard for our communities, the environment and the taxpayer. We have disrupted these rogue operators by giving extra powers to the Environment Agency, with nearly 1,000 illegal waste sites now being shut down each year, while our new Joint Unit for Waste Crime is successfully disrupting criminal gangs, for example, prosecuting fly tippers illegally dumping hundreds of tonnes of hazardous waste across the countryside.

But there is more to do. Reforming the licensing system will clamp

down on abuse of the system and new mandatory digital waste tracking will greatly improve transparency in the sector and make it easier for householders to check that their waste is being disposed of legally.

Together, these reforms will stop criminals abusing the waste system and make it easier to prosecute offenders successfully.

The carrier, broker, dealer consultation will seek views from the waste industry and other stakeholders on the move from a registration to a permit-based system which would mean those transporting or making decisions about waste must demonstrate they are competent to make those decisions.

The Government and Devolved Governments are working closely together to develop a UK-wide digital waste tracking service for those handling waste. This will help businesses comply with their duty of care with regards to waste and help them make more informed choices about how their waste is managed.

Sarah Poulter, CEO of the Chartered Institute of Wastes Management (CIWM), said:

For many years, CIWM has worked with the UK waste and resource management sector to highlight the damaging effects of waste crime on local communities, the environment and the industry it represents. As such, we warmly welcome today's announcement and share the Government's ambition to crack down on illegal waste activity.

The launch of these consultations provides a valuable opportunity for the UK waste and resource management sector to influence its future direction and help eradicate practices which have tarnished its reputation and deterred much needed investment.

Correctly implemented, these developments will provide assurance for both waste producers and managers that they are dealing with responsible collectors while directly reducing the impact of waste crime on society and the environment. They will also help to support CIWM and its members in delivering more sustainable resource management practices and help us move to a world beyond waste.

Jacob Hayler, Executive Director at the Environmental Services Association (ESA), added:

This could be a pivotal moment in the fight against waste crime, a scourge which severely undermines confidence and investment at a crucial time for our sector. ESA is very supportive of the policy proposals outlined which should help to make life difficult for

criminals infiltrating our sector and making a fast buck at the expense of legitimate operators and the environment.

Today's consultations build on significant work to protect the environment from waste crime:

- Between 2017 and 2020, the EA stopped illegal waste activity at 2,700 sites and initiated 191 prosecutions for illegal waste sites, with 39 prison sentences handed down. It also issued fines of over £1.1m for illegal waste sites, plus £5.5m in Proceeds of Crime Act (PoCA) confiscation orders.
- The UK is committed to tackling illegal waste exports, and individuals and businesses found to be exporting incorrectly described waste can face a two-year jail term or an unlimited fine. In 2018/19, the Environment Agency prevented 12,690 tonnes of waste illegally being exported through intervention at sites and ports.
- Recognising the difficulties experienced by some countries in managing imports of plastic waste the Government has committed to consult on banning the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries.
- The Government has set up the Joint Unit for Waste Crime to disrupt serious and organised crime and reduce its impact on the environment and the economy. The Unit brings together agencies from across the UK including the Environment Agency; Natural Resources Wales; the Scottish Environment Protection Agency; the Northern Ireland EA; the police; HMRC, the British Transport Police and the National Crime Agency.
- Through shared intelligence and enforcement, the Joint Unit is identifying, disrupting and deterring criminals and making them pay for the damage they have done to communities and the environment.

[Government backs Britishvolt plans for Blyth gigafactory to build electric vehicle batteries](#)

Once complete, the factory will produce enough batteries for over 300,000 electric vehicles each year, significantly supporting the UK automotive industry's transition to a zero emissions future and increased production of electric vehicles.

The government's support for the gigafactory will help to unlock a significant amount of further support from private investors. Alongside private sector investment, the project is set to create 3,000 direct highly-skilled jobs and another 5,000 indirect jobs in the wider supply chain.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said:

Britishvolt's plan to build a new gigafactory in Northumberland is a strong testament to the skilled workers of the North East and the UK's place at the helm of the global green industrial revolution.

Backed by government and private sector investment, this new battery factory will boost the production of electric vehicles in the UK, whilst levelling up opportunity and bringing thousands of new highly-skilled jobs to communities in our industrial heartlands.

Kwasi Kwarteng Business Secretary, said:

Today's news is a major boost for Britain and a resounding vote of confidence in the North East economy.

Britishvolt's planned gigafactory will not only enable the UK to fully capture the benefits of a booming electric vehicle market, but will bring thousands of highly-skilled, well-paid jobs to the North East.

In this global race between countries to secure vital battery production, this government is proud to make the investment necessary to ensure UK's retains its place as one of the best locations in the world for auto manufacturing.

Minister for Investment Lord Grimstone said:

Our support for Britishvolt's gigafactory is not only set to bring new jobs to the people of Northumberland, but by unlocking huge amounts of additional investment, we are helping to turbocharge the local economy. All of which will not only transform Blyth, but also help us build the batteries that will power our electric vehicles for a cleaner, greener future.

Through our Plan for Jobs the whole of the government is focused on protecting, supporting and creating jobs across the country. The government is investing millions to develop the supply chain for cleaner vehicles in the UK, while working with our auto industry to ensure it remains competitive for years to come. As part of the Net Zero Strategy, we recently announced £350 million of funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund. This is additional to the £500 million already announced as part of the 10 Point Plan. Ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in the UK by 2030 will put the UK on course to be the fastest G7 country to decarbonise cars and vans.

Unnecessary train announcements binned in 'bonfire of the banalities'

- government to review and remove train announcements that add unnecessary noise and disruption to journeys
- the Department for Transport will ensure train operating companies retain important safety messages and work with accessibility groups so that passengers receive the necessary information
- announcement follows the publication of the government's Plan for Rail, which puts passengers back at the heart of the railways

Quieter train journeys are set to become the norm after the government announced it will identify and remove repetitive and unnecessary onboard announcements on trains in England.

The changes mean that passengers will no longer be bombarded with unnecessary 'tannoy spam' that distracts from important safety-critical messaging.

Working closely with the Rail Delivery Group, passenger groups including Transport Focus, and train operators, the Department for Transport (DfT) will identify how the vast number of announcements can be cut or reduced while maintaining vital obligations to ensure train travel remains accessible for all. Messages that play a safety critical role, or that ensure the railways are accessible for all, will remain.

The review will take place over the course of this year, with redundant messages identified and starting to be removed in the coming months.

Banal announcements set to be culled include self-evident instructions, such as having your ticket ready when leaving the station and contradictory calls for passengers to keep volume levels low while onboard announcements blare out. There will also be new curbs on the maximum frequency at which remaining announcements will be heard.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Train passengers are all too often plagued by an endless torrent of repeated and unnecessary announcements.

In line with the passenger improvements, we are rolling out with our Plan for Rail we want to see improvements to the railways for those who use them day in day out.

That's why I'm calling for a bonfire of the banalities to bring down the number of announcements passengers are forced to sit through and make their journey that little bit more peaceful.

As passengers come back to the railways, DfT will continue to ensure journeys

are more comfortable to all users and that passengers continue to receive the important information they need about their journey.

Officials will work with accessibility groups to ensure that access for all is maintained.

The [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#), launched last year, puts passengers at the heart of the railway. To improve the comfort and enjoyment of train travel, customer service will be modernised and upgraded across all stations and, on trains, focused on providing passengers with better communication and a more personalised service.

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive of the independent watchdog Transport Focus, said:

Passengers will welcome a review intended to cut out unnecessary announcements. Transport Focus looks forward to helping with the review so passengers get the information they want, including those with additional accessibility needs.

Jacqueline Starr, CEO of the Rail Delivery Group, said:

We know people want the most relevant and timely messages on their journeys and to help with this, train operators are continuing their work to improve customer information, including cutting unnecessary onboard announcements.

We're also going further by asking customers what they want to know and using their responses to plan more useful and consistent announcements across the network, helping people have a better experience travelling by train.

Dangers of operating before a licence is granted

Press release

The company was found to have in effect already started operating HGVs, despite director Ian Newman's assurance in August 2021 that it would not do so in advance of authority being granted.



In a case early this year, Traffic Commissioner Nick Denton has refused an application for a standard national goods vehicle operator's licence made by REL Haulage Ltd.

The company was found to have in effect already started operating HGVs, despite director Ian Newman's assurance in August 2021 that it would not do so in advance of authority being granted.

Andy Scott, an offshore investor, stated that he was using his vehicle, REL Capital Ltd, to help save struggling businesses. The purpose of REL Haulage was to bring together the profitable elements of several distressed haulage companies. It was a long-term investment, with Ian Newman running it day-to-day as director and Adam Lewis having an overseeing role.

The commissioner found that Andy Scott and Adam Lewis have a long history of failed road haulage companies behind them – companies that enter liquidation owing large sums of money to HMRC and other creditors. They hive off the profitable parts into new companies, leaving creditors of the old companies high and dry.

He found a similar intention lay behind the application from Haulage: it was intended to be a vehicle for the profitable parts of REL Storage, leaving the rest of Storage to go into liquidation owing money.

The traffic commissioner said "Before the inquiry, I was shown a letter, dated the very day of the inquiry, threatening staff with redundancy as a result of the traffic commissioner's decision. This was a repugnant attempt to influence my decision and not the act of a reputable company. The people behind this application are not of good repute and are not a business or people in whom I could have any trust. It is just the latest domino in the series of failed companies overseen by Messrs Scott and Lewis."

Further details can be found [here](#).

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PM call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz: 20 January 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz about the situation in Ukraine.



The Prime Minister spoke to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz this evening about the situation in Ukraine.

The leaders discussed the concerning developments on the Ukrainian border, and agreed further military aggression would come at a high cost for Russia.

They shared their deep concern at the ongoing destabilising action by Russia in Ukraine, and said any invasion into Ukraine would be a severe strategic mistake.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of NATO allies working together on a coordinated response.

The leaders agreed to stay in close contact on the issue, and the Prime Minister said he looked forward to working closely with Chancellor Scholz throughout their G7 presidency.

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