

# Waste Crime Action Plan - GOV.UK

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Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

March 20, 2026

## Ministerial foreword

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Our communities take pride in the places they call home – the streets where children play, the green spaces people cherish, and the landscapes that define our towns, cities and countryside. When these environments are cared for, they strengthen local identity and support the wellbeing of everyone who lives and works there. Protecting that sense of place is as much about safeguarding our environment as it is about supporting the communities who depend on it.

Yet waste crime undermines that pride. From fly-tipping that scars our streets and green spaces to organised criminals exploiting the waste sector for profit, these offences damage the environment, threaten public safety and undercut honest businesses.

Communities and businesses should not have to put up with this. Tackling waste crime is complex and deep-rooted cross-government work – it cannot be solved overnight – but we are determined to make sustained progress.

We have already pursued major reforms to build a more resilient waste sector, boosted the [Environment Agency](#)'s budget for enforcement against waste crime, and set out our ambitions to reduce waste crime in the Environmental Improvement Plan.

This Action Plan is the next step in that journey, setting out how we will tackle waste crime through prevention, enforcement, and accelerating the clean-up effort.

On prevention, we are strengthening the regulatory regime to make it harder for waste crime to take place in the first place. For example, we will tighten the rules around waste carriers, brokers and dealers to close the loopholes that criminals currently exploit and are introducing digital waste tracking to improve accountability. Local authorities and regulators will be given the powers and tools they need to act early and decisively.

On enforcement, we are committing further funding. We are exploring giving the Environment Agency police-style powers. We are investing in advanced technologies and using drones to map illegal waste sites and build stronger evidence for prosecution. This will bring more criminals to justice and those who break the law will face penalties that reflect the real damage they cause to our communities and environment.

On accelerating the clean-up effort, we are putting boots on the ground to sort out the most serious illegal waste sites. We are also exploring insurance models to better protect farmers and landowners.

To drive real and lasting change we will work across government, regulators, local authorities, industry and communities. That is the spirit in which this Action Plan has been developed, and it is the spirit in which we will deliver it.

This is a long-term effort and there is more to do, but this Action Plan sets out the next practical steps in that work – and makes clear that waste crime will not be tolerated.

Through coordinated action we will strengthen our response, protect our environment, and further bolster the pride that communities rightly feel in the places where they live, work and raise their families.

**The Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP**  
**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

## Introduction

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Waste crime is not a new issue, but in recent years it has escalated into a more sophisticated, more damaging and costly criminal enterprise. From Landfill Tax fraud and illegal waste exports to the truly shocking illegal waste dumps around the country, waste criminals are causing serious harm to our communities and environment. And with [20% of all waste estimated to be illegally managed](#) (Environment Agency, 2025), [waste crime is costing the English economy £1 billion each year](#) (Environmental Services Association, 2021).

Waste crime blights our local communities. It undermines legitimate businesses and deprives the public purse of tax income: [£150 million was lost in revenue in 2023-24 due to Landfill Tax evasion](#) (HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC.(HM.Revenue.and.Customs))). With only [27% of waste crimes ever reported](#) (Environment Agency, 2025), and the offenders often involved in other forms of serious and dangerous crime, waste criminals pose a substantial threat to public safety.

This Waste Crime Action Plan marks a significant step up in our response to waste crime. It sets out the decisive measures that we are taking in England to prevent harm, disrupt and prosecute offenders and clean up the damage that they leave behind. Through coordinated and targeted action across government, regulators, industry and local partners, we will close the gaps that criminals exploit, bring more offenders to justice and restore pride in our communities. We will not allow waste criminals to damage our environment nor undermine the legitimate businesses that depend on a fair, resilient waste sector.

## A strategic approach

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In the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2025](#), we committed to reducing both the number of illegal waste sites and fly-tipping incidents. This Waste Crime Action Plan will help realise those commitments and tackle broader illegal waste activity through 3 objectives:

- Prevent: create the necessary regulatory conditions and promote early action to deter, disrupt and stop illegal waste activity before it emerges or escalates.

- Enforce: strengthen our intelligence capabilities to improve identification of waste crime, increase prosecution rates and ensure offenders receive sentences of appropriate severity.
- Remediate: support landowners to clear and remediate illegal waste sites and directly clean up the most egregious sites posing the most immediate harm to local communities and the environment.

Waste crime is a complex issue that demands a coordinated and intelligence-led approach. We will continue to work with the Environment Agency – the national lead for waste crime – alongside other government departments, the Police, fire services, local authorities, landowners, industry and community groups. We will harness this partnership to share intelligence, unite our capabilities and expertise, and take decisive action to stay ahead of those who seek to profit from waste crime.

## Taking action

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This government has taken significant strides to tackle waste crime. From July 2024 to the end of 2025, the Environment Agency stopped illegal waste activity at 1,205 sites where waste is deposited, treated or stored without the necessary permit, meaning that the dumping of waste ceased or the site was brought into regulatory compliance. During this same period, they achieved 122 prosecutions, leading to 10 immediate custodial sentences.

We are now stepping up our response. The Environment Agency has published details of their [tougher operational approach on waste crime](#), committing to act earlier, faster and smarter across the whole waste supply chain. This means stronger intelligence capabilities, more decisive use of enforcement powers and better collaboration with the police and local authorities.

In the following section, we build on this work and outline the key measures that we are taking across government to combat waste crime through prevention, enforcement and remediation. A full list of measures contained within this Action Plan can be found in Annex A.

## Objective 1: prevent

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Stopping waste crime means tackling it at its source. This government is systematically closing the gaps, creating a modern and futureproof regulatory environment that is more resistant to criminal activity. We will equip citizens, local authorities and regulators with the necessary tools and ensure we optimise use of existing data and powers. Here we outline our actions to create the fair, resilient and transparent waste sector that will help to prevent future waste crime.

### Regulatory reform for prevention

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The [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)\)](#) is progressing 3 major reforms to shape a waste sector that is safe from exploitation.

Firstly, through the carriers, brokers and dealers (CBD (carriers, brokers and dealers)) reforms, Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) is moving the regulation of waste management and transport from a light-touch registration system into the environmental permitting regime. The reforms will ensure waste is managed in a safe manner by authorised persons only and will make it easier for people to identify legitimate waste service providers. These reforms will give the Environment Agency more powers and resources to ensure compliance and will increase the penalties for offenders in this area to up to 5 years' imprisonment.

Complementing the CBD (carriers, brokers and dealers) reforms, Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), along with the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, is replacing outdated paper-based methods for monitoring waste movements by introducing digital waste tracking. This digital system will provide environmental regulators with a single UK-wide platform to track waste movements in near real-time, improving transparency and accountability.

Digital waste tracking will become available in April 2026 for all licensed or permitted waste receiving sites like recycling centres and treatment facilities, and then mandatory in October 2026. The expansion of the service for other operators will follow.

By giving the Environment Agency access to consistent high-quality data across the entire waste chain, the digital waste tracking system will enable a more intelligence-led approach to regulation. This richer insight will allow the Environment Agency to identify unusual patterns, pinpoint high-risk operators, intervene earlier and shape targeted initiatives, supporting a shift from reactive investigation to proactive prevention.

Waste permit exemptions constitute the third area of regulatory reform. Waste permit exemptions are widely used with around 500,000 registered with the regulators across more than 100,000 sites in England and Wales. Exemptions are valuable in providing light-touch regulation for small-scale, low-risk waste management activities, however they have previously been exploited.

Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) is removing 3 exemptions and tightening the conditions of 7 others that have long caused problems and been abused. Waste exemption holders will also be required to keep more accurate records and limits will be imposed on how exemptions can be managed at one site. In addition, we are giving the Environment Agency the power to make further changes to exemptions, subject to certain safeguards, without legislation in the future. This change will allow them to act more swiftly if it becomes clear that other exemptions are being abused.

## **Tools, data and capabilities for prevention**

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Tackling waste crime requires action at every level. The government has therefore equipped regulators and local authorities with the powers to stop illegal activity. The public too play an equally important role: reporting suspected criminal activity is one of the most effective ways to build our intelligence picture.

Shutting down waste crime before it becomes established is a core element of prevention. The Environment Agency is therefore expanding its use of restriction notices, which require operators to cease activity immediately where there is serious risk of environmental harm. Breaching a restriction notice could result in 51 weeks' imprisonment, a fine or both. The Environment Agency will also use Fixed Penalty Notices and other enforcement tools to deter anyone who enables or cooperates with waste criminals at these sites.

Where intelligence indicates that operators or waste carriers are diverting waste from the legitimate supply chains, the Environment Agency will deregister authorisations or suspend or revoke permits. If a permit is revoked, the operator or waste carrier must permanently cease operations. If a permit is suspended, they may restart operations when they meet the conditions of the suspension notice.

The Environment Agency is also taking action to stop permits being transferred to unscrupulous operators with new fit and proper permit checks. Additionally, where they see persistent poor performance at permitted waste treatment, transfer and disposal sites, the Environment Agency will suspend or revoke permits. They will engage stakeholders on strengthening these approaches in the coming months.

Meanwhile, we are taking stronger action to ensure unregistered or non-compliant operators can no longer undercut legitimate businesses and evade tax. [HMRC \(HM Revenue and Customs\)](#) is expanding tax-check rules to the waste sector and looking at future models to make some waste permit renewals dependent on applicants passing checks on their tax record. This action will block rogue operators, improve compliance and create a fairer and more accountable waste system.

Local authorities also need the tools and capabilities to effectively prevent waste crime at all levels of severity. Unchecked littering erodes pride in our local communities and wastes public money: [local authorities spend around £1 billion on cleaning up litter each year](#) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025). [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) recently laid guidance on [Litter Enforcement Powers](#) in Parliament, making existing guidance statutory. Local authorities therefore have a legal duty to follow the guidance, which will lead to a more consistent approach to tackling litterers across the country.

[Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) has also laid an updated [Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse](#) in Parliament, which explains how local authorities should keep different types of land clear of litter and refuse. The code had not been updated since 2006. This new edition will help to bring anti-littering methods into the modern era and make our streets visibly cleaner.

Furthermore, local authorities already have powers to seize vehicles that they suspect are linked to waste crime, which can ultimately lead them to keeping, selling or disposing of the vehicle. To support local authorities in better using this enforcement tool, [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) recently published [best practice guidance](#) and [case studies](#) related to vehicle seizures. This will help expand our efforts to keep the vehicles perpetrating waste crime off our streets.

And crucially, the public are the eyes and ears for reporting illegal waste activities. They have a right to complete and accessible information on their environment. The Environment Agency has therefore launched an online [Waste Hub](#) to provide greater transparency and improve public access to trusted information and data on known illegal waste activities.

## Further research on prevention

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Building a futureproof waste sector is integral for long-term prevention of waste crime. However, illegal waste crime in England is driven by complex economic, regulatory and criminal factors that are not yet fully understood. To address this evidence gap, Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) will commission and publish research to consolidate existing knowledge and further understand the specific drivers and impacts of waste crime activity. This research will include looking at international examples. The findings will strengthen future policy design and support more effective prevention strategies.

## Objective 2: enforce

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Prevention is essential, but this government is equally determined to pursue those who have committed waste crimes with every tool at its disposal. Waste criminals are sophisticated, well-resourced and increasingly connected to wider organised crime. Our response must match that with cutting-edge technology, advanced intelligence and cross-agency collaboration to ensure offenders are disrupted and punished.

Since July 2024, the Environment Agency's Economic Crime Unit has progressed 26 money laundering investigations and obtained 42 confiscation orders. Here we outline the actions that we are taking to build on these previous successes and enhance our enforcement activities.

## More boots on the ground

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Successful enforcement requires skilled teams of professionals focused on catching the waste criminals eroding our communities. We are now committing an additional £45 million for the Environment Agency to spend on waste crime enforcement over the next 3 financial years, on top of the £5.6 million increase for this financial year announced previously. This new funding will enable the Environment Agency to expand its on-the-ground enforcement activity and ensure waste criminals face the consequences of their actions.

The Environment Agency is creating a new Operational Waste Intelligence and Analysis Unit to bring together satellite, drone and other visual imagery, financial and criminal data and other intelligence in one place for the first time. This unit will spot unusual activity sooner, flag risks before they escalate and accelerate enforcement action.

The [Joint Unit for Waste Crime \(JUWC \(Joint Unit for Waste Crime\)\)](#) unites regional environment watchdogs, police forces and the National Crime Agency to disrupt serious and organised waste crime. The Environment Agency has increased capacity of the [JUWC \(Joint Unit for Waste Crime\)](#) to 20 staff by recruiting additional specialists, including former police officers. This extra resource will significantly support their efforts to disrupt serious and organised crime.

Waste crime has evolved and expanded since the JUWC (Joint Unit for Waste Crime) was established in 2020. Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council will therefore undertake a detailed review of the multi-agency response to waste crime from local to national, proactively identifying and pursuing opportunities to prevent, disrupt and prosecute offences. This will strengthen our collective operational response and ensure that our joint capabilities, including the JUWC (Joint Unit for Waste Crime), continue to develop and reflect the severity of waste crime today.

## **Enforcement powers**

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Having enough boots on the ground is one factor in effective waste crime enforcement, but officers must also have the appropriate powers. The Environment Agency's current enforcement powers are limited by fragmented environmental legislation, restricting its ability to tackle waste crime effectively. Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the support of the Home Office, will explore how the Environment Agency's powers to address waste crime can be bolstered. Together, they will consider how additional measures within the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, Proceeds of Crime Act or other relevant legislation could achieve this. This work will ensure the Environment Agency has stronger tools to bring more criminals to justice, intervene earlier and disrupt the criminal finances undermining the waste system.

## **Cutting-edge technology and data**

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Satellites, drones, artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies are all central to gathering the high-quality evidence needed for effective prosecution. We are increasing our use of these capabilities to support our aim of bringing more waste criminals to justice.

The Environment Agency has increased its drone surveillance capabilities, with 33 trained pilots now able to investigate waste crime. Certain drones in the fleet will soon carry Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging)) technology, enabling the Environment Agency to create detailed maps of illegal waste sites. Moving LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) onto drones will allow the Environment Agency to detect changes to topography, height or volumes of waste that indicate changes to illegal waste dumps. This will improve the quality of evidence that can be used in court and see more criminals face the justice that they deserve.

The Environment Agency has also developed new technology, which uses Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle)) operator licence applications to catch waste criminals. The screening tool combs through HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) licence applications, cross-checking them against the register of waste permit holders and waste carriers. This approach allows Environment Agency officers to identify businesses that may be carrying waste illegally. A successful trial in East Anglia has helped the Environment Agency to uncover a waste company that had secretly relocated its HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) operations to evade enforcement. The software flagged the new operating centre within a week, allowing Environment Agency officers to intervene and prevent a licence from being approved.

The Environment Agency relies on a wide range of data sources to support intelligence development and criminal investigations. [HM Land Registry](#) will support the Environment Agency in accessing the data needed to take a more proactive approach to identifying and preventing emerging waste crime activity. With broader information on land ownership, the Environment Agency will be better placed to identify unusual patterns at an earlier stage and combine them with other intelligence to trigger more timely interventions.

Data from satellites are also crucial. [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) is working with the Environment Agency to deploy cutting-edge geospatial imaging technology to provide sharper, more timely intelligence on illegal waste activity. This will enable faster detection of emerging sites and more targeted enforcement.

Historically, the Environment Agency has struggled to build an understanding of the scale and breadth of waste shipments due to a lack of data. After an initial operation at the port of Dover, data sharing agreements between the Environment Agency and [HMRC \(HM Revenue and Customs\)](#) are now in place to address this challenge. These agreements will improve live data support, enhance data analysis capabilities and create a more comprehensive intelligence picture of the sector. This includes areas with previously low levels of data visibility, such as Roll On Roll Off shipments (cargo that can be driven on and off a vessel). Through this work, Environment Agency officers have been able to actively target shipments at ports which they could not previously.

## **Appropriate punishment**

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The penalties for waste crime must match the harm it causes. Building on the existing penalties regime, [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) will work closely with [Ministry of Justice](#) and their partners to explore what more could be done to further ensure that those who commit these types of offences are appropriately punished. This would aim to reinforce the effectiveness of current systems and strengthen our overall approach to tackling illegal behaviour.

[Local authorities in England deal with 1.26 million fly-tipping incidents each year](#) ([Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#), 2026). Under new powers, drivers will be awarded penalty points on their driving licences for fly-tipping offences, which may ultimately lead to drivers being disqualified. These changes will ensure that the penalties for fly-tipping act as a meaningful deterrent and make it harder for repeat offenders to continue dumping illegally.

In addition, the government committed in its manifesto to force fly-tippers and vandals to clean up their mess. [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) will soon consult on giving local authorities the powers to issue fly-tippers with conditional cautions, one of a range of pre-court community-based sanctions. These cautions could see offenders complete up to 20 hours of unpaid work, cleaning our streets or parks, and pay back the cost of cleaning up the waste that they have dumped on public land. If an offender admits to the crime, agrees to the caution and complies with the conditions, they will not face prosecution.

Furthermore, ignorance must not be an excuse for those choosing to work with unscrupulous operators nor allow offenders to conceal their crimes. Businesses already have a duty to ensure their waste is lawfully managed. The Environment Agency will make full use of its powers to hold those responsible for illegal waste operations accountable. Additionally, the Environment Agency will now publicly name and shame illegal waste operators so that those working in the waste sector understand who has been involved in mishandling waste.

Similarly, [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) will work with local authorities to explore how they can build on approaches already used in parts of the country to publicly name and shame those responsible for fly tipping. This work will assess, and support local authorities to implement, the best mechanisms for increasing transparency that improve deterrence, enable intelligence gathering and strengthen public confidence.

Finally, unhindered access to finance enables illegal activity. [Defra \(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs\)](#) and the [Home Office](#) will explore the mechanisms by which government and enforcement bodies can share information with banks and financing companies to inform them of waste criminality. Such knowledge sharing would aim to allow financial organisations to make informed decisions on whether to keep doing business with the companies concerned.

### **Objective 3: remediate**

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Enforcement alone is not enough. Where waste crime has already caused harm, this government is committed to putting it right. Removing illegal waste sites and remediating the land is vital for restoring community pride, improving citizens' health and protecting the environment.

Landowners are responsible for securing their land and are liable for cleaning up the land if waste is dumped. However, the clean-up process can be complex and expensive: costs can reach over £100 million for a large-scale hazardous site. Here we present our plans to clear the most egregious illegal waste sites and support landowners and local authorities in future.

#### **Clearing the top illegal waste sites**

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Normally, landowners are responsible for securing their land against the illegal dumping of waste and for clearing illegally dumped waste from their land. This follows the polluter pays principle. The Environment Agency will step in on an exceptional basis to clear sites where that waste presents an untenable risk to the public and the environment. In these cases, the Environment Agency will still pursue criminal prosecution and seek to recover the costs of clearance. This intervention was seen at Kidlington, Oxfordshire, where the Environment Agency announced in December 2025 their plans to clear the site. Authorities have since made 4 arrests in relation to illegal activity at the site.

To accelerate the remediation process and restore our communities and environment, government is now committing to clearing up an additional number of the most egregious illegal waste sites.

Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), working with other departments, has developed criteria to objectively identify those sites with the most compelling cases for clearance. These criteria are based on operational, community and environmental factors and are detailed in Annex B.

The sites selected under these criteria were subject to preliminary assessments and will now undergo detailed site-specific assessments to confirm their feasibility for clearance. These feasibility assessments will consider factors like the accessibility of the site, the logistics of a clearance operation, and more. Government will wait for the outcome of these assessments before committing to clear particular sites. On-site assessments will begin immediately at:

- Alan Ramsbottom Way (Hyndburn)
- Worthing Road (Sheffield)
- Bolton House Road (Wigan)

## **Additional remediation support**

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The cost of waste clearance on private land currently falls to the landowner regardless of their involvement in the criminal activity. Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) will work with the insurance industry to explore any barriers to an accessible insurance market that would allow farmers, businesses and landowners to be indemnified against illegal waste dumping on their land.

Furthermore, government is aware of concerns that Landfill Tax can be a blocker to clearance of high-risk illegal waste sites and will therefore develop with local authorities a rebate scheme for Landfill Tax to tackle this issue.

## **Next steps**

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Waste crime has grown more organised, more sophisticated and more damaging. This government's response is growing to match it. Through the measures set out in this Action Plan, we are strengthening our operational, regulatory and judiciary systems. We are boosting our surveillance and intelligence capabilities and taking steps to protect our environment, communities and legitimate businesses.

We will use strengthened relationships across government, regulators, industry and the public to disrupt criminal networks, share intelligence and deliver coordinated action. We will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken and adapt our approach as the threat evolves.

Through this Action Plan, we are adopting a zero-tolerance approach to waste crime. We are determined to restore pride in our communities, catch and prosecute the criminals responsible and build a resilient waste sector safe from exploitation.

## **Annex A: list of measures**

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The full list of measures described in detail in the Waste Crime Action Plan.

## Objective 1: prevent

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Measure	Lead department or agency
Carriers, brokers and dealers (CBD (carriers, brokers and dealers)) reforms	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Digital waste tracking	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Waste permit exemption reforms	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Use of restriction notices, Fixed Penalty Notices and other enforcement tools	Environment Agency
Permit suspensions or revocations and deregistering of authorisations	Environment Agency
Expand tax-check rules to waste sector	HM Revenue and Customs
<a href="#">Statutory Guidance on Litter Enforcement Powers</a> and updated <a href="#">Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse</a>	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
<a href="#">Best practice guidance</a> and <a href="#">case studies</a> related to vehicle seizures to support local authorities	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Online <a href="#">Waste Hub</a>	Environment Agency
Further research on the drivers and impacts of waste crime	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)

## Objective 2: enforce

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Measure	Lead department or agency
Increased Environment Agency budget for waste crime enforcement	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Environment Agency, HM Treasury
New Operational Waste Intelligence and Analysis Unit	Environment Agency
Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC (Joint Unit for Waste Crime)) expansion	Environment Agency

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Lead department or agency</b>
Review of multi-agency response to waste crime	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council
Bolstering Environment Agency's enforcement powers	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Home Office
Upgraded drone surveillance capabilities	Environment Agency
Screening HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) operator licence applications	Environment Agency
Data sharing between HM Land Registry and Environment Agency	Environment Agency, HM Land Registry
Enhanced geospatial imaging technology	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Environment Agency
Data sharing agreement between Environment Agency and HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs) for waste shipments data	Environment Agency, HM Revenue and Customs
Build on the existing penalties regime to understand how to further deter waste crime	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Ministry of Justice
Penalty points on driving licences for fly-tipping offences	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), <a href="#">Department for Transport</a>
Consult on giving local authorities the powers to issue fly-tippers with conditional cautions to clean up waste	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Ministry of Justice
Make full use of powers to hold those handling waste illegally accountable	Environment Agency
Name and shame illegal waste operators	Environment Agency
Increased naming and shaming of fly-tippers by local authorities	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Information sharing with banks and financial organisations on waste criminality	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Home Office

### **Objective 3: remediate**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Lead department or agency</b>
Clean up a number of illegal waste sites	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), Environment Agency

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Lead department or agency</b>
Insurance model for landowners to be indemnified against illegal waste dumping on their land	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Develop with local authorities a rebate scheme for Landfill Tax	Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), HM Treasury, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, HM Revenue and Customs

## **Annex B: site clearance criteria**

The sites to be assessed for potential clearance have been selected based on objective criteria using the best available evidence at the time of the analysis. Some site characteristics require detailed inspection and the government does not hold perfect data on every illegal waste site that we know about. These uncertainties have been transparently caveated.

### **Criteria**

Sites were assessed using 3 equally weighted categories: operational factors, environmental risk and community impact. This framework seeks to identify those locations where clearance of the waste would bring the greatest benefit for the environment and the local community.

The 3 categories for assessing sites are made up of several underlying criteria. Total score is cumulative. Those sites that scored highest were deemed most desirable for potential clearance.

#### **1. Operational factors**

The operational factors category considers the characteristics of a site to determine the overall risk profile. It covers the following:

- The amount of waste present in tonnes. This is scored by splitting the data into quartiles and then dividing by 2. This is to ensure that the maximum score for the criteria is 2, which represents the score for the largest sites.
- If the waste is hazardous. If so, it gets a score of 1.
- How long the site has been active. This is analysed by splitting the data into quartiles. Sites that have been present for the longest time get a score of 4.
- The likelihood of the polluter being held responsible. This is based on investigation status and possibility of recovering costs. This has a negative score and can be up to -2 for sites undergoing major investigations and there is a high chance of cost recovery from the polluter.
- Any specific site challenges identified by Environment Agency experts and not included elsewhere are given a score of 1.

## 2. Environmental risk

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Environmental risk looks at the risk that a site poses to the natural environment and if removal of the waste will benefit the environment. It considers:

- If the site is on or near protected natural areas. A site that is situated on one protected natural area will receive a score of 1. A site that is situated on 2 or more protected natural areas will receive a score of 2.
- The likelihood of protected species being affected. The position is judged as low (1), medium (2) or high (3), with the associated scores in brackets.
- If removing the waste would benefit the local environment. If so, then the site will receive a score of 1. If removing the waste could actually cause more harm to the environment than benefit, then the site will receive a score of -1.
- Proximity to rivers, parks, and other public natural spaces (within a 250m radius). This is scored by adding a point for proximity to rivers and another point for proximity to green spaces.

## 3. Community impact

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Community impact reflects how severely a community is being impacted by an illegal waste site and how many homes can feel the negative amenity effects of an illegal site. It assesses:

- The level of public concern reported to the Environment Agency. Where there have been reports by local residents to the Environment Agency (including via their MP) and local media reporting of the site, the site will receive a maximum score of 2.
- The number of nearby households is split into quartiles and sites. Sites with the largest number of households within a 500m radius will receive a maximum score of 4.
- The presence of public spaces and amenities such as schools. A score of 2 is given to the site if multiple amenities are present and a score of 1 is given where only one amenity is present.

## Criteria application

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The criteria have been applied to all sites that the Environment Agency already considered to present an elevated (but not necessarily untenable) risk to the environment or to the public.

Several analytical scenarios were run on the data. Each scenario removed a component of the criteria in order to test how that criterion affected the total scores. This process ensured that no single factor disproportionately influenced the overall scores.

The sites chosen for feasibility assessments ahead of potential clearance were those that consistently scored highly across all analytical scenarios. These sites typically:

- have large quantities of waste
- have hazardous material
- have been active for a long period
- are located near the largest number of homes and public amenities

- are close to sensitive natural habitats
- have generated strong community concern

Sites that consistently scored lower tend to exhibit the opposite characteristics.

The top scoring sites were subject to preliminary assessments and will now undergo detailed operational assessments to fully test their feasibility for clearance and to ensure that clearance will present sufficient value for money. Operational assessments will consider factors like how easily the site can be accessed, the feasibility of operating heavy machinery on site, the risk that clearance activity poses to the local environment, and whether clearing the site will generate any benefit for waste criminals.

## **Limitations**

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The criteria detailed above have been applied to data collected by the Environment Agency. Much of these data are subjective but based on expert input - this reflects the operational reality of monitoring an illegal waste site. The data have some qualitative inputs, which are updated frequently by the Environment Agency. The analysis was based on the data available in February 2026. Proximity data were obtained from the open geography portal using QGIS mapping. A site assessment will be conducted for each shortlisted site to determine whether clearance is definitely the right option for the site.

Some environmental impacts can only be fully assessed following detailed site visits. National fire risk data for illegal sites remain limited. Household estimates rely on averages that may not capture local variation. Proximity scoring may also favour urban areas because of higher household density. Some sites have missing data points, which have been treated as unscored - this creates a risk that some sites are underrepresented.