



environmental
services
association

ESA PRESS STATEMENT

Recycling industry says war on plastic shows need for stronger regulation

LONDON, 11 June 2019: Following the screening of the first episode of “War on Plastic with Hugh and Anita”, the UK’s recycling sector has emphasised its commitment to ensuring the responsible processing of waste with a focus on maximising recycling opportunities.

The Environmental Services Association (ESA), which represents the sector, has called for greater regulation to prevent criminals undermining the efforts of responsible waste management companies. Each year the UK collects over 12m tonnes of material for recycling from households and employs more than 95,000 people.

ESA’s Executive Director Jacob Hayler said:

“The waste and resource sector goes to great lengths to ensure the material it handles is only passed on to legitimate companies. The illegal export and disposal of waste is unacceptable, and criminal behaviour, whether in the UK or abroad needs to be stamped out. The cost of waste crime is more than £600m per year in England alone. As an industry we have been crying out for greater regulation to stop criminals entering the waste and resources sector. They damage the environment, make people’s lives miserable and undercut legitimate business.”

Hayler said:

“One way to actively prevent waste crime is to build up domestic reprocessing so that more materials can be recycled here in the UK. The Government’s recently published Resources and Waste Strategy supports the growth of new domestic infrastructure and ESA’s members are already backing this up with investment in new reprocessing facilities. However, industry investment must be accompanied by increased regulation to prevent criminals undermining these efforts.”

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Notes to editors:

1. The **Environmental Services Association** (ESA) is the trade association representing the UK's resource and waste management industry, which is leading the transformation of how the UK's waste is managed.
2. We work with all levels of government, regulators and the public to deliver a more sustainable waste and resource management solution for the UK. ESA's recent Circular Economy report '*Going for Growth – A practical route to a circular economy*', which outlines how a Circular rather than a linear economy can help manage resources sustainably, can be downloaded [here](#).
3. ESA's Members manage waste on behalf of the whole of society and we are recovering more than ever before. For example, the industry has helped quintuple the UK's household recycling rates over the last decade.
4. **The sector at a glance**
 - Total turnover: **£11 billion**
 - Direct Employment: **106,000 people** (*including waste collection, treatment and materials recovery*)
 - Municipal waste handled each year: **27 million tonnes**
 - Energy generated (across landfill gas, anaerobic digestion and energy from waste) each year: **approximately 11,867 GWh**, which is 3.5% of the UK's electricity
 - **9,083 GWh of that was renewable electricity** (taking out non-biodegradable portion of EfW) which is **11%** of UK's renewable electricity
 - Greenhouse **gas emissions down by 70% since 1990**.
 - The **top seven companies account for approximately 40% of turnover**. Many hundreds of SMEs provide either localised or more specialised services
 - Waste & recycling is the **most highly rated of all council services** by the public (2016 survey)

For further details please visit www.esauk.org

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