

PRESS RELEASE

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Audit office report illustrates why waste sector is “soft target” for criminals

The Environmental Services Association (ESA) has today (27/04/2022) responded to the findings of the National Audit Office (NAO) **investigation into government’s actions to combat waste crime in England**.

Executive Director of the ESA, Jacob Hayler, said: “The findings of the NAO report illustrate perfectly why the waste sector is viewed as a soft target by criminals.

Strong and timely enforcement by regulators is vital to tackling this issue and, while we understand resource pressures and the impact of covid 19, it is disappointing to see that the number of prosecutions has dropped considerably while the incidences of waste crime have continued to rise. It is also frustrating that investigations, on average, are becoming drawn out across many years – taking an average of 1500 days.

Illegal sites cause significant misery for local communities, harm the environment and discourage investment in the sector by legitimate operators, so it therefore does not seem proportionate that only 5% (28) of the 632 illegal waste sites discovered in 2020/21 led to a prosecution.

We are pleased that the NAO report draws extensively on data produced by ESA in our ***Counting the Cost of Waste Crime Report*** and also mirrors several recommendations that we have made previously.

In particular we fully support the NAO’s recommendation for better data to measure the prevalence of waste crime, as well as KPIs to measure progress in tackling waste crime. Whilst we support the various government initiatives both planned and already implemented to tackle this issue, waste crime continues to get worse rather than better, and government and regulators need to get an urgent handle on this so that we start seeing a significant measurable reduction in the prevalence of waste crime once and for all.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

A. The **Environmental Services Association** (ESA) is the trade association representing the UK’s resource and waste management industry. Our members are directly transforming the way the UK’s waste is managed in pursuit of a circular economy and are leading the sector in an effort to decarbonise recycling and waste management operations. The ESA works with all levels of government, regulators and the public in pursuit of a more circular economy across the UK. You can find out more about us and our members in our **Annual report** for 2020/21.

For further details please visit www.esauk.org

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