

Baroness Sheehan

Chair, House of Lords Environment & Climate Change Committee
House of Lords
SW1A 0PW

24 March 2026

Dear Baroness Sheehan,

Waste crime pre-questions

Ahead of the Environment Agency's oral evidence session with your Committee on 25 March, the Committee clerk has requested our written response to two questions. Please find below our responses:

Q1. How many illegal dumps over 20,000 tonnes are currently active in England?

Your committee has asked the Environment Agency (EA) on several occasions for specific numbers of illegal waste sites on the basis of size or waste tonnage. Whilst we have listed the sites meeting this criteria below, I would like to re-emphasise waste tonnage should not be used as a simple indicator of risk or harm. Some larger sites may comprise soils and aggregates which are inert and low-risk, while some smaller sites may comprise toxic materials that pose a higher risk to the environment or human health. Devising a list on the basis of volume or waste tonnage alone therefore does not inform us about the true environmental impact of such sites.

In addition, our tonnage figures for individual sites are estimates only. It is not feasible for us to accurately calculate the tonnage for every illegal waste site in England, for example, waste may be buried under a visible pile, the composition of the waste (e.g. if it includes metal) impacts the weight and can only be assured with extensive testing, and waste will settle over time making visual estimates unreliable. However, in recent weeks we have done further analysis of some sites and revised estimates are now available which I provide below. Given the above complications, we cannot give an assurance that these numbers will remain static. The nature of illegal waste dumping means that this is a dynamic picture. Both the numbers of illegal waste sites that we are aware of and the numbers of illegal sites that are estimated to be over a certain tonnage will continue to change over time.

In late 2025 the Environment Agency was asked for the number of sites that were similar or bigger in size to Hoad's Wood. We shared a list of 6 sites, which are below. The estimated tonnage for these sites has been updated as follows:

Illegal Waste Site Name/Location	Estimated Tonnage of waste on site
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ME9 8SL - Raspberry Hill Park, Raspberry Hill Lane, Iwade, Sittingbourne	36000
BB11 3QS- Copy Wood Farm-New Road, Burnley	666000
BB11 5PZ- Lower Micklehurst Farm-Rossendale Avenue, BURNLEY	50000
CW97RR - land off Cookes Lane/Holford Forest Farm Limited, Cookes Lane, Lostock Green, Northwich	400000
Pendarvon, Camborne	560000
NR21 7RF- TP1 LTD, Tyre Pile, Georgia Rd, Tattersett Business Park, Fakenham	35000

As of 18 March 2026 there are 537 active illegal waste sites. Based on recent work and enhanced intelligence, we have identified an additional 8 active sites with over 20,000 tonnes.

Illegal Waste Site Name/Location	Estimated Tonnage of waste on site
PL17 7HW - Charwell Farm, Cadson Lane, Callington	40500
DN22 8NH - Lake View industrial estate, Common Lane, Ranskill	59000
ME13 9EY - Eva Luna, Plum Pudding Lane, Dargate, Faversham	30000
RG42 5QD - Oak Tree Farm, Twyford Road, Binfield, Bracknell	32000
BH21 3QZ - site in Wimborne, Dorset.	28500
L34 9EN, M57 Junction 4, Knowsley	30000
L24 9HL Goodlass Road, Liverpool	25000
BD23 4SB, Pyethornes Farm, Wigglesworth, Skipton	20000

This number is subject to change as new sites are found and active sites are stopped.

Q2. How many illegal waste dumps has the EA secured the clearance/remediation of in 2024 and 2025? (This includes sites cleared by both the EA and by others where the responsibility to do so has been established – e.g. remediation either secured from the perpetrator of the illegal activity or from the landowner).

The Environment Agency is clearing 3 sites in total. Further details of clearance for these three sites, and the decisions to clear them are set out below:

Kidlington, Oxford – High Fire Risk, EA Decision 2025

- Estimated up to 20 000 tonnes of mixed commercial and industrial shredded waste illegally buried and deposited on site.

- The decision to clear the waste from the illegal waste site at Kidlington was based on the significant economic, social, and environmental risk posed by the scale of the fire risk at the site.
- The Fire and Rescue Service assessed the site. The potential closure of the A34 major highway, which was a risk if the site caught fire, could cost up to £9 million per day (National Highways estimate).
- Based on the exceptional circumstances the Environment Agency made the decision to clear the site.
- Funded from EA budget

Hoads Wood, Kent – Ministerial Direction 2024

- Estimated 30,000-34,000 tonnes of waste; which includes shredded industrial waste (including some hazardous waste)
- Area is an SSSI woodland, with watercourses flowing through.
- EA directed by then Secretary of State Steve Barclay under Section 40 of Environment Act to clear site.
- Funded from EA budget
- As of 23 March 2026, 24 800 tonnes of waste has been cleared from the site. Arrests made by Kent Police in 2025; works continue (access track removal).

Twyford House, Stoke on Trent – High Fire Risk, Secretary of State/EA Decision 2022

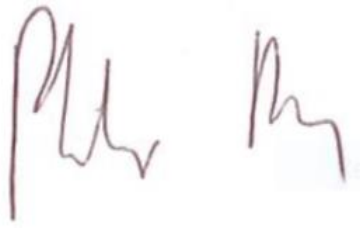
- 22,640 tonnes of mixed baled waste and posed a risk of serious pollution, stored inside fire-damaged multistorey buildings with no safe access or egress.
- A major fire would disrupt critical infrastructure, including the national rail network, major roads (A500, A53), and a nearby hospital, with potential economic impacts exceeding £90 million.
- Then Secretary of State George Eustice requested the Environment Agency use its reg 57 powers to 'pursue rapid site clearance'.
- The site was fully cleared in February 2023.

In relation to instances in which the landowner or other parties may have cleared the land, since the beginning of 2025 the EA has recorded 971 closed Illegal waste sites. For 259 of those sites (27%) we have already either secured clearance of the waste or have brought an illegal operator into compliance. Centrally we record those as positive outcomes, but do not record the number where waste was cleared separately.

As part of our commitment to transparency in our regulatory role, we will publish information on illegal waste sites through our new Waste Hub. This initiative is designed to strengthen accountability and provide greater clarity for local communities and the wider public. The Hub will set out details of identified sites and the actions we are taking in response. This approach has already commenced and will continue to be expanded over the course of the year.

I will also arrange for a copy of this letter to be made publicly available.

Yours sincerely



Philip Duffy

Chief Executive Environment Agency