

Evidence

Waste crime intervention and evaluation

Project summary

An evaluation by a team of experts from the Environment Agency and Ricardo PLC has shown that the Environment Agency's activities in tackling waste crime have a net positive effect on both people and the environment, and offer good value for money to the taxpayer.

Waste crime diverts revenue from legitimate business, defrauds the tax system and can have significant environmental and social impacts.

In March 2014, the government allocated £5 million from the Landfill Communities Fund to the Environment Agency to set up the Waste Crime Intervention and Evaluation (WCIE) project; an additional £800,000 was made available to the project by HM Treasury in 2015.

The WCIE project ran for 2 years and tackled 3 priority areas:

- reducing the risk from illegal waste sites (£3.1 million funding)
- reducing the mis-description of waste (£1.9 million funding)
- reducing the illegal export of waste (£800,000 funding)

Combined benefits

The 3 activities funded by the project produced potential combined benefits of at least £29 million to the UK. This means that, for each £1 invested, at least £5 worth of potential benefits were identified. The biggest proportion of these are in the form of tax receipts (£23.5 million), followed by avoided harm to the environment and society (£4.6 million). Within this total, businesses could make additional profits of £726,000, generated from additional revenue of £14.5 million.

Illegal waste sites

An estimated 530 extra illegal waste sites, holding 429,000 tonnes of waste, were stopped. Stopping these sites and diverting waste into the legitimate waste industry led to estimated benefits of £10.5 million to legitimate businesses, government, society, and the environment.

Deliberate mis-description of waste

The work to quantify the scale of this type of waste crime identified 630,000 tonnes of potentially mis-described waste. This led to 63 sites being referred to HM Revenue and Customs for tax investigations. The potential benefits of this work are at least £18 million.

Illegal waste exports

The project prevented an estimated 191 additional shipping containers containing 4,000 tonnes of waste from being illegally exported. Stopping this activity led to potential benefits of at least £400,000 to the UK – not accounting for the benefits to receiving countries. It is estimated that up to 480 further shipping containers containing 10,500 tonnes of waste were prevented from being exported through the project's direct work with industry and its deterrent effect.

This summary relates to information from the following project:

Title: Waste Crime Intervention and Evaluation project

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Research Contractor: Simone Alpine, Ricardo PLC

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