CONSILIUM
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WASTE CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

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UNDERSTANDING THE LASTING DAMAGE CAUSED BY WASTE CRIME



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Introduction

When people think about waste crime, they often focus on the waste itself. Images of fly-tipping, illegal waste sites and discarded rubbish can dominate headlines and discussions.

However, the true impact of waste crime extends far beyond the physical waste.

Waste crime affects our environment, harms communities, undermines legitimate businesses and can significantly influence public confidence in local services, regulators and enforcement agencies.

Why Does Waste Crime Matter?

Understanding how waste crime impacts the environment, communities, public confidence and the economy is essential is we are to develop effective and long-term solutions.

Environmental Impact

Illegal waste disposal can result in:

- Land contamination
- Water pollution
- Air pollution
- Soil degradation
- Habitat destruction

In some cases, environmental damage can remain for many years after the initial offence has occurred.

Think about: What environmental damage remains even after the waste has been removed?

Community Impact

Waste crime can have a significant effect on how people feel about where they live. Residents may experience frustration, reduced community pride, anxiety, stress and a reduced quality of life. Persistent waste problems can affect people's willingness to use public spaces and communal areas.

Organisations may see an increase in complaints, growing resident dissatisfaction, reduced use of local facilities, and community disengagement.

Fear of Crime and Perceptions of Safety

Research and practical experience show that visible signs of disorder can affect perceptions of safety. Waste crime can contribute to fear of crime, perceptions of neglect, reduced confidence in neighbourhood management, and concerns around anti-social behaviour. Even when actual crime levels remain unchanged, residents may feel less safe when waste crime is present.

Here's a question: What message does a fly tip send to residents about the area they live in?

Impact on Public Confidence

Residents often judge organisations by what they see happening within their communities. Where waste-related issues remain unresolved, people may question:

- Whether reports are acted upon.
- Whether offenders are being identified.
- Whether enforcement action is taking place.
- Whether their concerns matter.

Organisations can support public confidence through visible action, communication, resident engagement, partnership working and sharing successful outcomes.

Impact on Legitimate Businesses

Waste crime creates an unfair advantage for offenders. Whilst legitimate operators invest in things such as compliance, permits, training, waste disposal costs and environmental protection measures, waste criminals seek to avoid these costs entirely.

This means that there is unfair competition, financial losses, damage to industry reputation, and reduced confidence in the waste sector. Supporting legitimate businesses is an important part of tackling waste crime.

Economic Impact

Waste crime cost money. There are costs associated with waste removal, site remediation, investigations, enforcement activity, environmental restoration and increased security measures. These costs are often borne by local authorities, housing providers, landowners, businesses and taxpayers.

The Link to Anti-Social Behaviour

Waste crime and anti-social behaviour often overlap. Examples include:

- Repeated fly tipping hotspots.
- Waste accumulations affecting neighbours.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- Burning of waste.
- Littering.
- Contaminated bins.
- Excess waste in bin stores.

In many cases, waste crime contributes to a wider perception that an area is poorly managed.

Reducing the Impact

Organisations can help reduce the impact of waste crime by:

- Prevention
  - Undertaking public awareness campaigns.
  - Resident education around waste disposal.
  - Duty of care messaging.
- Environmental improvements
  - Improved lighting.
  - Better waste facilities.
  - Secure bin stores.
  - CCTV.
  - Signage.
- Enforcement
  - Intelligence-led investigations.
  - Partnership operations.
  - Targeting repeat offenders.
- Communication
  - Sharing outcomes.
  - Updating communities.
  - Building confidence.

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#WasteCrimeAwarenessWeek
#WCAW2026
#KnowTheRiskStopTheHarm



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