

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/10/six-arrested-for-illegal-waste-dumping-suspected-of-using-forced-labour>

## Six arrested for illegal waste dumping suspected of using forced labour

Migrant workers found on sites where gang arrested in dawn raids for allegedly dumping tens of thousands of tonnes of rubbish



Waste illegally dumped by the gang at a site in Newark, Nottinghamshire. Photograph: Environment Agency

[Karl Mathiesen](#)

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A gang suspected of using forced labour and illegally dumping tens of thousands of tonnes of rubbish at sites across England have been arrested in a series of dawn raids.

Six suspects were arrested at their homes and at four sites across the country on Tuesday by 40 officers from the [Environment Agency](#) (EA), supported by police, Home Office immigration officers and social services.

Seventeen migrant workers were found on the sites. Immigration officers who conducted background checks on the workers found that they were European and working legally.

Two men were originally arrested on suspicion of human trafficking. But, given the legal status of the migrants, police were investigating the conditions the workers were employed under and may press charges relating to forced labour.

Andy Higham, head of the EA's national investigation team, said: "The Environment Agency will relentlessly target organised criminals who risk damaging health, livelihoods and the environment by trading in illegal and hazardous waste for criminal gain.

“Following a covert Environment Agency investigation we have worked with the police to arrest these suspects and secure evidence. Our inquiries will continue to probe the full extent of suspected offending.”



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Environment Agency inspectors identify waste illegally dumped at one of the Newark sites.  
Photograph: Environment Agency

The syndicate originally operated a waste site in Orpington, Kent, managed by a company called Waste4Fuel. The EA began investigating after [the Orpington site was reported to have been abandoned](#), leaving a large amount of rubbish to be removed at public expense.

The group then allegedly spread out across the country, opening businesses that obtained recycling contracts and collected rubbish, then illegally stockpiled it in vast quantities.

They are said to have operated sites in Bristol and Scunthorpe, and two in Newark, Nottinghamshire. At one site, EA investigators had to wear specialist breathing apparatus because of a potentially hazardous substance. The EA was testing the material, which may be asbestos.

A spokesman for Scunthorpe police said that at a recycling centre in the town: “Two men, aged 37 and 43, were arrested on suspicion of trafficking and a third man, aged 30, was arrested on suspicion of environmental offences. Inquiries are continuing into the employment of a number of European workers linked to the business.”

Higham said the investigation was ongoing and called on anyone with more information to contact Crimestoppers.

The resource management minister Dan Rogerson said: “Waste crime causes problems for local communities, undermines legitimate businesses and costs taxpayers. While it is not appropriate to comment on these arrests, we support the Environment Agency in taking a robust approach to tackle crime.”

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