

**From:** [Finnie, Peter](#)  
**To:** [Barbara Elborn](#)  
**Subject:** Disrupting Criminal Dumpers  
**Date:** 26 March 2024 10:20:33  
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Barbara Elborn  
Secretary  
Newcastleton and District Community Council

26 March 2024

Dear ,

[Disrupting Digital Dumpers – SEPA tackles online waste criminals with new digital pilot.](#)

Following observation from a number of Community Councils that they had not received my email of 21 March about SEPA's campaign against waste criminals, and a review of Community Council contacts held, I am resending the email. Please kindly observe any changes in officer positions – note that I will potentially have written to more than one officer.

As the number of adverts on digital platforms promoting illegal waste collection services hits an all-time high, SEPA, Scotland's environmental regulator is tackling environmental criminality in the online world.

**You could help this campaign and increase public awareness [by sharing this story](#) and our asset below, on your social media and sharing with local community/interest groups.**

The digital regulation pilot led by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has already identified that between 50 to 60% of businesses advertising on social media could be breaking the law by operating without holding the required waste carrier licence – and people handing over their waste may be contributing to flytipping and other waste crime.

Working closely with partner agencies, SEPA's pilot work is already seeing results. So far seven social media profiles and all their associated posts have been removed from online platforms, protecting householders from inadvertently giving their waste and their money to criminals. SEPA Officers are also pursuing several lines of enquiry for follow up investigation as a result of identifying unlicensed operators on social media.

The work, supported by additional funding from the Scottish Government, is being undertaken as part of the [National Litter and Flytipping Strategy](#) which sets out a refreshed approach to tackling litter and flytipping in Scotland.

**Don't give waste criminals a chance!**

Social media users will be familiar with adverts offering junk removal, waste clearances, man with a van and tip collection services. They may look professional and legitimate, but SEPA's investigations have confirmed this is not always the case.

Corrupt operators advertising their services online may dispose of the waste they collect through flytipping

and burning, blighting Scotland's environment. This activity can quickly escalate into more serious and significant waste crime impacting compliant businesses in the waste sector.

There are several telltale signs that the business you are thinking of hiring may not be legitimate. The public should look out for online adverts that:

- Offer cheap or same day waste collection – if it sounds too good to be true it probably is. Make sure you're not pressured to decide.
- Claim to be "SEPA insured" – SEPA do not provide insurance.
- Claiming "waste is all recycled where it can be" – where are they taking the waste?
- Don't provide any way to contact them other than Direct Messaging.

Everyone can play their part by not falling foul of digital scammers – when choosing a service provider – by always asking for their waste carrier number and checking that they are [registered with SEPA](#), confirming where that they will take your waste and pay a fair price for the service. Anyone can also contact SEPA to check a Waste Carrier Licence number they have been given if you cannot find it online.

If they are reluctant to give you information or you are in any in doubt, do not give them your waste. If you suspect they may be operating illegally, report it to SEPA [online](#).

Jennifer Shearer, Head of Enforcement at SEPA, said:

"Since the pandemic, we have seen a growing trend of waste collection and junk removal adverts moving online to social media platforms. These businesses can look very professional and legitimate, with engaging adverts and reviews of great services - but what we are finding is they are often illegal. Capitalising on householders looking for a quick, same-day service, these rogue traders are operating unlawfully, without the correct licences, and are often illegally disposing of the waste in Scotland's environment.

"Through our new pilot, we are finding new ways to detect, disrupt and remove illegal operators advertising on social media and taking further enforcement action when necessary. We are also highlighting to householders what they can do to protect themselves and the environment from the impacts of these illegal operators."

Lorna Slater, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity said:

"Increased action to detect and disrupt flytippers – including unregistered waste carriers advertising online - is a key element of our National Litter and Flytipping Strategy. The Scottish Government is determined to tackle waste crime and the scourge of flytipping, so I am very pleased to see our funding is already delivering results through initiatives like this."

"I look forward to seeing further progress which will make an important contribution to keeping our streets, communities and countryside beautiful and protecting our environment and wildlife."

In the coming months, SEPA will continue to identify profiles used to advertise online waste collection services and investigate if they are operating legally, allowing a better understanding of the scale of the problem as well as enabling appropriate regulatory and enforcement action to disrupt criminal activity.

Regards

*Peter*

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### **Additional Notes**

Illegal waste disposal and flytipping is a serious offence with significant consequences and those caught risk a criminal conviction and a fine of up to £40,000 and/or imprisonment.

National Litter and Flytipping Strategy [Year 1 Action Plan](#).

### **Check**

- Use the waste carrier licence number to check the company is [registered with SEPA](#)
- You can also contact SEPA to check a Waste Carrier Licence number you have been given if you cannot find it online.
- Remember companies that operate in different parts of the UK may be registered with the [Environment Agency](#) or [Natural Resources Wales](#)
- A registration with SEPA, the EA or NWR is valid in any of these three countries. Your carrier will tell you where they are registered.

### **Report**

- Report flytipping to your local authority
- Report anonymously through [Crimestoppers](#)
- More information on flytipping can be found on our website at [sepa.org.uk/flytipping](http://sepa.org.uk/flytipping)