

European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment

Réseau des Procureurs Européens pour l'environnement



ENPE newsletter - Issue 23

20 December 2024

Message from new ENPE President Rob de Rijck

Dear Colleagues,

I am both proud and humble introducing myself as the new ENPE President, having taken over from Anne Brosnan at our annual conference in Cork on 10 October 2024. Proud, because of the trust put in me and because of the relevance of our network. Also humble, however, in realising how tremendous a President she was and how challenging it will be to do as well as she did.



Anne took on the role of President in 2016. Under her leadership, our network has thrived, with membership increasing from 22 in 2016 to 65 today. This growth followed the formal incorporation of the network by



Belgian Royal decree as part of the EU-funded LIFE-ENPE project (2015-20), for which she was Project Executive. Since then, ENPE has organised a great number of training, networking and awareness-raising events and significantly strengthened its ties with many institutions, organisations and other enforcement networks involved in fighting environmental crime. [photos courtesy of P Rice UCC]

This development and these activities have taken place over a period of significant international uncertainty. 'Brexit' came, and COVID passed. A war is raging in Europe, and our Ukrainian members and friends made us aware that environmental crime can take the form of war crimes. All in all, Anne served a truly remarkable presidency and she was, and remains, a role model for me. I shall have big shoes to fill and I am grateful that she will, in her capacity as ENPE Secretary-General, continue working on the ENPE Board.

I spent my career as a criminal prosecutor, specialising in combating environmental crime as of 2002. That field has fascinated me from the beginning because of its fundamental character. As to my involvement in ENPE, I have been a member of the ENPE Board since its inception in 2015.

In my first speech in my new role at the Cork conference, I roughly sketched out what I intend to do as ENPE's President. This is both building on what has been achieved, while also reaching out to new areas.

The most important of these is of course working with the EC to help implement the new Ecocrime Directive. I strongly feel that as part of that, we must invite the candidate EU Member States, specifically those whose prosecutors' offices are or might soon be ENPE members, to explore the Directive's meaning for them.

For two reasons I am confident that ENPE will be able to continue its course of growing relevance. The first is that Shaun Robinson from the English Environment Agency will carry on his indispensable work as our project manager. The second is even more important and that is you yourselves. The commitment and dedication to combating environmental crime that you always demonstrate, is the key to all of ENPE's successes. Shaun and myself wish you and your loved ones the very best for the festive period and hope that you have some time to relax and reflect on a very busy and fruitful year.

With our Best Wishes, Rob de Rijck ENPE President and Shaun Robinson ENPE Project Manager.

News from the European Commission

ENPE had an important role at the expert workshop organised by the Directorate General for Environment (DG ENV) to provide assistance to Member States in facilitating the transposition of the new Environmental Crime Directive (ECD). The workshop was held as an 'in person' event on 25 November 2024 at the Albert Borschette



building, in Brussels. We were pleased that Permanent Representative for our ENPE Full Member for the Czech Republic, **Kateřina Weissová**, who is also Vice-Chair of the ENPE Working Group on Waste and Illegal Pesticides, was able to attend and represent ENPE. The agenda focused on the notion of "unlawful" as per the new Directive, as well as the definition of environmental offences. The fruitful discussions were much appreciated by all and we are grateful for Kateřina's valuable contributions to the day.



Earlier in the year, it was noted and welcomed that the Council of the European Union formally recognised the role of the enforcement networks, including ENPE, in the implementation and application of the new ECD, with particular reference to cross-border organised environmental crime and promotion of the results of collaboration (ref 11912/24), in their conclusions following their meeting on 11 July 2024. This collaboration, between the European enforcement networks was strengthened further following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure ongoing and future co-operation, on 01 October 2024, where a commitment to "sharing common goals and objectives with regard to environmental protection and sustainable development in the present and for future generations" was formally made by all signatories on behalf of their networks.

ENPE annual conference held jointly with University College Cork; 10-11 October 2024 Cork, Ireland

(ENPE) held its annual conference this year in Cork, Ireland, on 10-11 October 2024. We were fortunate to be hosted by University College Cork's [Centre for Law & the Environment](#) at the School of Law / [Environmental Research Institute](#) on the first day in their wonderful Aula Maxima, looking its best in the Autumn sun.

The overarching conference theme was *Environmental Crime: Co-operation to ensure effective prosecution*, providing a forum to present, share and discuss different approaches to fighting environmental crime with judiciary, government, academic and international network contributors from across Europe and the United States. Twenty-four countries were represented by 57 delegates from 39 different organisations involved in the enforcement of environmental crime. **The conference E-zine with videos, interviews and all proceedings is available here:** <https://environmentalprosecutors.eu/conference2024>

Following the formal opening of proceedings by ENPE President Anne Brosnan, Professor John O'Halloran, President of UCC, delivered the welcome address which highlighted the importance of the conference topic, as well as the responsibilities of enforcement professionals in assisting early career colleagues through sharing experience.

The opening keynote was delivered by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Catherine Pierse who took time out of her busy schedule to offer her thoughts on environmental enforcement and opportunities the new legislation presents.



The plenary conference sessions addressed important contemporary developments including: the new directive on Environmental Crime (Directive (EU) [2024/1203](#)); the role of [Eurojust](#) in supporting cross-border judicial cooperation – with a special focus on environmental crime; [Project BIOVAL](#) – the new indicative tool for compensating nature damage; international environmental crime fighting

initiatives; Enforcing Environmental Law in Ireland – the EPA's Perspective; and the new Planning and Environment Division of the High Court of Ireland.

We were also very pleased to hear from UCC's many relevant projects and initiatives, hearing from Professor Áine Ryall, who spoke on *Tackling Environmental Crime: Insights from the*

Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, Niamh Guiry, who delivered an excellent presentation on *Wildlife Crime in Ireland: Enforcement Challenges and Opportunities*. (Rob de Rijck is pictured above left & Ann Brosnan, Catherine Pierse Director of Public Prosecution & Professor Áine Ryall are picture above right in the Aula Maxima, photos courtesy of P Rice UCC)



Day 2 included a change in venue to the nearby Kingsley Hotel, with the three ENPE Working Groups each hosting a breakout session, chaired by Dr Jorgos Sbokos (Pollution), Rob de Rijck & Katerina Weissova (Waste & Illegal Pesticides) and Lars Magnusson (Wildlife Crime). Professor Mark Poustie and Professor Owen McIntyre also led a UCC break-out session on the theme *Supporting Effective Enforcement*, with PhD candidate Julián Suárez Bohórquez acting as the session rapporteur.

The closing address was delivered by Professor Yvonne Scannell, Trinity College Dublin.

Environmental crime continues to cause serious damage to the environment and human health, as well as to the economy and society more broadly. This year's ENPE conference provided a timely opportunity to explore



the most effective approaches to ensure compliance with the law. Special thanks are due to Professors Áine Ryall and John O'Halloran at UCC for their generosity in hosting the conference, and for the College's organisation and commitment to deliver a very successful conference.

(Conference 'family photo' courtesy P Rice UCC).

ENPE Gaia award winners



Two presentations were made at the ENPE conference dinner this year, the first was the "Overall contribution in the fight against environmental crime" award for 2024, a team award won by the BIOVAL project <https://biovaltool.eu/> accepted on their behalf by ENPE Vice-President and Chair of the ENPE Wildlife Crime



Working Group, **Lars Magnusson**. The second was presented in person, and a little later than planned, to ENPE Supporting Member **Dr Paolo Gubinelli** for his for "Innovation and Excellence in combatting environmental crime" award from last year (2023), pictured above right, for his impressive body of environmental crime prosecution work, including the establishment of a specialist unit within his prosecuting office in Ancona, Italy. We warmly congratulate our winners for their outstanding contributions in fighting environmental crime.



[photos courtesy of ENPE, BIOVAL image from website]

ENPE AISBL news

ENPE Annual General Meeting & Extraordinary Annual General Meeting 26 September 2024

ENPE held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 26 September 2024, as a hybrid event with both 'in person' and online attendees. The AGM was preceded by an Extraordinary General Meeting that required the presence of a Belgian Notary to formalise the updating of the ENPE Articles of Association to reflect changes agreed last year and to ensure that ENPE was compliant with relevant Belgian legislation.

The officer changes as proposed by the ENPE Board on 12 April 2024, were revisited for formalisation via the Notary and new Articles. These changes include the new ENPE President, Rob de Rijck, taking over from Anne Brosnan, who takes on the role of Secretary General from Lars Magnusson. Lars becomes the ENPE Vice-President. These moves were formalised through a vote [all members present agreed unanimously]. Anne Brosnan, as meeting Chair, also asked for any expressions of interest in Board positions from member present, of which there were none. *Anne was warmly congratulated by all for her 8 years of service as ENPE President.* The topic of membership fees for the next financial year (2025) was discussed. It was agreed to consider the possibility of introducing a membership fee for ENPE members in the future. Members should contact Shaun Robinson with thoughts and views on this.

Reports were presented to the membership from the President, Anne Brosnan, The Secretary General, Lar Magnusson and the ENPE Treasurer, Aisling Kelly (presented by Shaun Robinson). The Board was delighted that so many ENPE member and Observers attended and look forward to another fruitful year in their new roles.

ENPE Membership update

Since our last newsletter in May 2024, ENPE has received and approved a Full Membership application from the General Prosecutor's Office of the **Slovak Republic**, who have nominated **Mr Branislav Delej** as their Permanent Representative. We have also received and approved ENPE Supporting Membership applications from **Mr Angus Innes** and **Ms Kate Robinson** both involved in environmental enforcement, based in Australia as well as **Cork County Council County Solicitor's Office - Comhairle Contae Chorcaí Oifig Aturnae an Chontae** and the **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions - Stiúrtóra Ionchúiseamh Poiblí** with **Mr Kevin O'Leary** and **Ms Eveleen Healy** nominated as Permanent Representatives for each organisation, respectively. We were also pleased to receive and approve an application for Supporting Membership from **Dr Diana Russo** from the Italy Ministry of Justice (Italy), General Directorate for International Cooperation. ENPE Observer membership applications were received and approved from the **Prosecutors Association of Serbia**, with **Ms Lidija Nikolic** as Permanent Representative, and from the Ministry of Justice of North Rhine Westphalia, with **Dr Marc Sotelsek** as Permanent Representative.

We are very pleased with our continuing growth and expansion into new geographical and enforcement areas and welcome all new members to the ENPE network.

ENPE Board Member Dr Antonio Vercher Noguera is CCEP 2025 President

The Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCEP), held its 19th plenary meeting in Strasbourg, France on 28-29 October 2024. Amongst many of the important items discussed and decisions taken at the meeting, **Dr Antonio Vercher Noguera**, ENPE Board member, was elected to the role of President for 2025. We congratulate Antonio on this prestigious appointment and look forward to hearing more on the Council's work, going forward. [photo from CCEP website]



ENPE project manager long-service award



courtesy of N Augustin]

Shaun Robinson, who provides the ENPE network with project management and secretariat support, recently collected his 30-year service award which acknowledged 30 years spent working at the Environment Agency (England, UK) and predecessor bodies. Starting out as a Waste Regulation Officer, Shaun has worked in various roles in environmental protection, waste regulation and contaminated land capital projects at the Agency since its inception in 1996 and has been part of the ENPE network for nearly 9 years. Shaun is pictured receiving the certificate from ENPE Secretary General in London on 17 December 2024. [photo



UNDP Bosnian Delegation visit to ENPE office at Scotland House, Brussels, 26 September 2024



Prosecutors and judges involved in environmental crime enforcement from Bosnia and Herzegovina were welcome visitors to the ENPE registered office at Scotland House as part of a visit to European environmental enforcement bodies in Brussels on 26 September 2024.

The group were part of a delegation organised and hosted by the United Nations Development Programme Eco-Justice project which seeks to strengthen environmental Rule of Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina region through concerted efforts in *improving access to environmental justice, promoting human rights and supporting people-centered environmental public policies and services* (from the project website). For more details on this project please see: [ECO-JUSTICE Project | United Nations Development Programme](#)

The delegation met with ENPE Board members and Permanent Representative for the Czech Republic, **Kateřina Weissová**, who had also previously contributed to the project through presenting on European Union Directives in relation to environmental enforcement at their seminar in April 2024. The delegation and ENPE representatives are pictured right together with Sanja Ćorović, Project Officer, UNDP and Alma Mirvić, Project Manager of the Eco-Justice project, UNDP. [image from UNDP website, photo from S Robinson]



ENPE Waste & Illegal Pesticides Working Group & UNODC Workshop; Vienna, Austria; 28-29 November 2024



A workshop on Illegal Pesticides was organised by ENPE's Waste and Illegal Pesticides (W&IP) Working Group and hosted by our colleagues at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 28-29 November 2024. In total 26 delegates representing 13 different European countries gathered to hear presentations from the Basel Convention



Secretariat, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the workshop hosts, UNODC. We were also pleased to hear from ENPE members and prosecutor colleagues who shared case studies -

Teodor Nita from Romania, **Tina Depoorter** from Belgium and **Lucia Giron** from Spain. Concluding remarks were summarised by the co-chairs, **Rob de Rijck** and **Kateřina Weissová** as:

- More exploration of EU regulations and other legislation in relation to the enforcement of illegal pesticides is needed
- Safe disposal is clearly a huge issue, with more multi-agency collaboration needed in this regard
- The sharing of case studies is a very valuable and worthwhile way to improve enforcement
- There is much more to learn.

After considerable discussion and interesting feedback from the many countries represented, agreed concrete Next Steps, at the end of the workshop were:

- To convene a follow-up event, possibly an online meeting (TBC by the ENPE W&IP working group)
- A need to go deeper into the new Environmental Crime Directive EU 2024/1203 and its relevance to illegal pesticides enforcement.

Our thanks go to Professor Tanya Wyatt of the UNODC as our main host and point of contact for organising everything on the Austrian side, to all the speakers including Tatiana Terekhova from the Basel Convention Secretariat, Carmen Bullon of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and Martin Raithelhuber of UNODC, and to the participants who all contributed so fully to the event. [photos courtesy of S Robinson]



ENPE outreach and representation at recent events BIOVAL workshop, Brussels, 12-13 December 2024

EU FORUM OF JUDGES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
UE FORUM DES JUGES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT

RESEARCH INSTITUTE
NATURE AND FOREST

IMPEL

European Union Network for the
Implementation and Enforcement
of Environmental Law

ENPE

Funded by the
European
Commission

BIOVAL WORKSHOP 2024

Friday 13 December 2024, Brussels

Herman Teirlinck building Flemish Government
Havenlaan 88, 1000 Brussels

[image BIOVAL programme document]

On the 13th of December 2024 some 80 participants attended the BIOVAL workshop in Brussels. The aim was to provide training for environmental enforcers, prosecutors and judges on the BIOVAL tool.

Former environmental judge, and one of the driving forces behind the project, Jan van Den Berghe kicked off the meeting by presenting a brief history of the origins of BIOVAL. The project was set up by EUFJE, ENPE and IMPEL to develop and disseminate a practical, indicative tool to value damage to nature in court. BIOVAL focuses on financial compensation of damage to nature when restoration 'in natura' is no longer possible.

Jomme Desair of INBO, the Research Institute for Nature and Forest in the Flemish Region of Belgium, explained how the calculation method and the indicative list of compensation amounts for 100 protected species in Flanders were developed.

After a first round of questions, followed by a networking opportunity during the coffee break, the floor was taken by EUFJE's Farah Bouquelle and Ariane Samson, who presented the first court cases using BIOVAL and guided

the participants through the website. Also, the relation to the EU Environmental Liability (ELD) and new Environmental Crime (ECD) Directives were discussed. The first half of the workshop was rounded off by a second opportunity for debate.

After the lunch break, the participants were split up in break-out groups for a brainstorming session about the operationalisation of the BIOVAL tool in the context of other Member States. The findings of the five groups were to be shared and discussed in the final plenary session. In their closing words, the organisers looked forward to the next steps, taking with them the issues raised in the course of the workshop.

The general conclusions were that BIOVAL is a very useful tool for legal professionals, but also that the work is far from finished. The next mission is to disseminate the use of the tool in all the Member States by means of training, lifting legal obstacles and fine-tuning BIOVAL, based on the experience gained.

With thanks to ENPE Wildlife Crime Working Group Vice-Chair, **Bart Van Vossel** for attending on behalf of ENPE and for providing this excellent summary of the day.

TAIEX-EIR Multi-country Workshop on new aspects in the cross-border cooperation against environmental crime & EnviCrimeNet AGM 19-20 November, Budapest, Hungary

The aim of this workshop was to foster cross-border cooperation and strengthen collaboration among European law enforcement agencies, policymakers, and environmental crime experts.

By addressing the latest trends in environmental crime, the workshop aim was to promote the effective implementation of the Environmental Crime Directive and explore best practices, case studies, and innovative strategies for combating environmental crime. The event also provided a platform to discuss the challenges of transboundary environmental crime, exchange insights, and reinforce partnerships with other European networks and institutions.



As a part of this workshop, the first Annual General Meeting of the international non-profit organization EnviCrimeNet was held, during which its steering group members were elected. **Dr Katalin Serfozo**, Permanent Representative for the ENPE Full Member The Prosecutor's Office of Hungary, provided an introduction and overview of activities for ENPE. We are very grateful to Dr Serfozo

pictured left, for participating & representing ENPE at this historic event. [photo courtesy of K Serfozo]



AELERT - INECE 2024 GLOBAL SUMMIT

Implementing and Enforcing Environmental Law

[image AELERT website]

Our Australian ENPE Supporting Members, **Kate Robinson** and **Angus Innes** both attended and delivered presentations on behalf of ENPE at the joint Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network (AELERT) and International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE) 2024 Global Summit, held from 6-8 November 2024 both virtually and in person on Turrbal and Yuggera land (Brisbane), Australia.

The summit attracted 390 delegates from over 20 countries from across the globe, and had an aim to build connections that will fuel how environment regulators collaborate, innovate and grow together. Collaborative working was a key theme: *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”*.

Other clear themes arising from the presentations and discussions included:

1. Listen, learn, especially listen to First Nations voice and learn from First Nations knowledge.
2. Collaborate, share, cooperate- in partnerships/networks
3. Be transparent, holistic and inclusive -there's strength in diversity
4. Build public trust and confidence.

Kate Robinson, pictured right, presented on her experience of environmental law enforcement, including ENPE's role and activities. She also reported back on the key themes arising including the increased involvement of NGOs as participants and advisors, with many environmental regulators want to understand how to leverage technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve their work.



There were some valuable insights in relation to regulators needing to hear and respect *First Nations voices*

In particular around stewardship with citizenship and how Western Cultures

need to act to ensure a Duty to care for the land. In this regard it is imperative that regulators

- Listen
- Work meaningfully and collaboratively
- Be transparent

Greg Abood, Chief Executive Officer for AELERT spoke of Strength in diversity with the Moreton Bay Fig Tree chosen as a symbol for the summit. Justice Benjamin from Brazil noted that the regulatory circle is incomplete if you're not including judges, so conversations, connection and training is crucial with realistic expectations for

judges. The Chinese prosecutors presenting noted the value of environmental policies – “green is gold” with strong law needing to be holistic. They are doing fantastic work with large numbers of cases keeping government agencies accountable for their actions.



Our colleagues from IMPEL, also in attendance, spoke of value of site inspections and joint operations, again noting the importance of collaboration in enforcement. **Angus Innes**, pictured left, speaking in a specific session covering Wildlife Crime, presented the work he had led in developing a training package which focussed on tackling the Illegal Taking and Killing of Migratory Wild Birds in the Mediterranean region of Europe conjunction with the UN Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

The devastating effects of illegal removal of these migratory birds were described, as well as the enormous efforts made by prosecutors and specialists to combat this illegality. The training had since been translated into several languages, including Arabic and used to good effect by prosecutors across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. We are hugely grateful to both Angus and Kate for their presentations and for representing ENPE at this important event. [photos courtesy of A Innes and K Robinson LINKEDIN]

More details, including the summit programme can be found here:

[AELERT-INECE Summit 2024](#)

ESA & EC Workshop on the use of Earth observation 11-12 June 2024

On June 11 and 12, 2024, a workshop on the use of Earth observation to investigate and prosecute environmental crime was held in Frascati, Rome. This workshop was a joint initiative of ESA and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) to promote greater acceptance of Earth observation technology in ensuring environmental compliance. ENPE Wildlife Crime Working Group Vice-Chair **Bart Van Vossel** and **Koenraad De Maesschalck**, both operational prosecutors dealing with environmental crime and based in Gent, Belgium, attended and presented on behalf of ENPE.

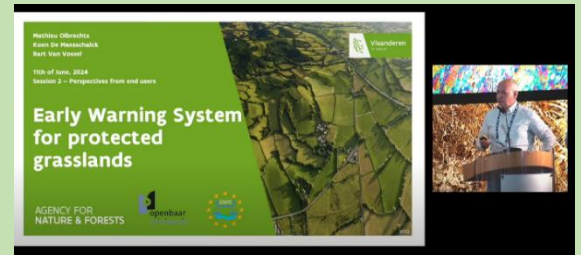
Recent years have witnessed transformative developments in the field of Earth observation, especially satellite-based platforms. Earth observation-based intelligence offers clear advantages for investigating environmental crimes and significantly enhances monitoring and inspection capabilities. However, it also



brings specific challenges, including concerns about data privacy, data quality and availability issues, as well as legal constraints regarding the admissibility of geospatial evidence in court. Over two very interesting days, participants were captivated by engaging speakers from the four European Enforcement networks: IMPEL, ENVICRIMENET, EUFJE and

ENPE, interspersed with testimonials from a more global ecological, socio-cultural and scientific perspective.

The numerous application areas of and services offered by the Copernicus program in the fields of security, emergency management and climate change were discussed in detail. Best practices presented by end users illustrated the possibilities in investigating and prosecuting a variety of environmental crimes such as pollution, deforestation, waste crimes and wildlife crimes. The organisers were interested to hear about difficulties on the field to further improve availability and usability of Earth observation technology. By participating in this workshop, ENPE wants to contribute to raising awareness and making this versatile technology more accessible as an important additional tool in the fight against environmental crimes. Bart and Koenraad are pictured presenting at the event (photos courtesy of B Van Vossel).



ENPE Board members attend the 17th Congress of the Association of African Prosecutors - “Environmental Crime and the Role of Justice in Combatting it”, Marrakech, Morocco; 11-12 July 2024

It was an honour for ENPE to be invited by the Presidency of the Public Prosecutor of the Kingdom of Morocco, sent by the Moroccan Embassy in London, to attend the seminar on “Environmental Crime and the Role of justice in Combatting it”, as part of the 17th Congress of the Association of African Prosecutors in Marrakech, Morocco on 11-12 July 2024.

Board Member **Dr Antonio Vercher Noguera** and International Vice-President **Jean-Philippe Rivaud** both



attended, representing ENPE and presenting at the seminar, providing an overview of ENPE’s current activities and future commitments in relation to strengthening the fight against environmental crime. Morocco and ENPE have worked collaboratively for some time, with the Presidency of the Public Prosecution of the Kingdom of Morocco being Observer members of ENPE and having welcomed their representatives at training events and conferences in the past. The seminar was an excellent opportunity to continue our work together and both



Jean-Philippe and Antonio, pictured during their presentations on the right and left respectively, were very enthused by the event. We look forward to continuing this fruitful relationship with our Moroccan colleagues [Photos courtesy of A Vercher Noguera].

Interesting cases

Brussels, Belgium 03 October 2024; third Belgian BIOVAL case

Grey heron case - Criminal Court of Brussels 03 October 2024

The illegal killing of 1 grey heron (*ardea cinerea*) has resulted in a fine that was calculated using the BIOVAL indicative tool for compensating nature damage <https://biovaltool.eu/> imposed by the Criminal Court of Brussels and reported on 03 October 2024.

In this case, restoration 'in natura' by breeding and reintroducing a grey heron (application of article 16.6.6 of the Flemish Region Decree of 5 April 1995 on General Environmental Policy), was impossible and prohibited (Flemish Species Regulation of 15 May 2009).

Financial compensation instead of restoration, using the BIOVAL tool calculation method was applied calculated as 5.000 euro / grey heron (based on the grey heron being a "large long-living species, least concern, normal cultural significance, normal ecological significance and normal contribution to welfare" through the BIOVAL application). The defendant was ordered to pay 5.000 euro to the Flemish Environment and Nature Fund within 4 months.

UK, England – Environment Agency prosecutes 13 people involved in illegal waste site

From Environment Agency Press Release 24.06.24:

13 people have been convicted following an investigation by the Environment Agency (EA) into an illegal waste site in rural Lincolnshire, near Newark in the East of England, UK.

The findings of the investigation, named 'Operation Lord', led to 10 defendants pleading guilty. Following an eight-week trial at Nottingham Crown Court which concluded in late June 2024, three defendants who had pleaded not guilty were found guilty.

Operation Lord saw Environment Agency officers spend months building a picture of evidence of the illegal waste site on Fen Lane, Long Bennington. A raid on the site was then conducted in April 2020 with Lincolnshire Police.

Intelligence had revealed lorry-loads of shredded waste were regularly being accepted onto the site the size of a football pitch. Waste was burned daily and buried. This activity intensified during the first Coronavirus lockdown in March 2020, and so action was taken to bring it to a halt.

The investigation used static and mobile surveillance, seized site security CCTV, used (for the first time in an EA prosecution), ground penetrating radar scanning to determine over 16,100 cubic metres of waste was buried. A further 12 trial pits were then dug to confirm the material, using an excavator guided by the radar

information to demonstrate the volume and extent of buried waste. Over 8000 cubic metres of waste had been deposited above ground which was surveyed using LIDAR, with the waste being deposited in lorry loads, and then constantly burned, a practise which intensified during the first Covid Lockdown in February/ March 2020. Restriction Orders were used with concrete blocks to prevent further access into the site, still in place today.

The movement of money was traced and arrests were made in the West Midlands area of England, UK for some of the operators. Drones were also used to capture the extent and scale of the site. There was a large waste fire in September 2021 when someone, it is believed, deliberately set fire to the waste above ground, which burned for approximately a month until it was extinguished by the Fire Service and an excavator to compact and pull the embers out in October 2021. Environment Agency officers also seized an excavator and a lorry which were actively depositing more waste at the site when officers arrived. Two arrests were made.

The prosecution was brought against individuals that ran the illegal waste site; burned the waste; drove waste to the site and the landowners. Two waste brokers were also prosecuted.

A sentencing for all defendants will be scheduled for a later date.

Environment Agency v Platinum Group Metals Recycling Ltd & Edvars Stancik Platinum Metals Limited

From UK Government .GOV website Press Release 06 September 2024:

Catalytic converters are components in car exhausts. They contain small amounts of precious metals contained within a metal case making them valuable. However, catalytic converters also contain carcinogenic



fibres which, if ingested, can cause serious and irreversible lung disease. [Catalytic converters pictured at a site in Lincolnshire, England, UK photo from .GOV website].

The Environment Agency prosecuted the director of a metals recycling company in September 2024 with the court hearing that, between December 2019 and September 2021, Edvars Stancik, 30, acted as a director of Platinum Group Metals

Recycling Ltd. It was through this company that he traded catalytic converters on a colossal scale.

The dangerous fibres present in the converters can attach to shoes and clothing and be transported from one place to another. It is therefore extremely important that catalytic converters are handled only under the strict conditions of an environmental permit, supervised by the Environment Agency.

A jury heard that neither Stancik nor his company had obtained an environmental permit before buying and selling thousands of catalytic converters. Stancik stored the containers at his home address and at containers in Lime Walk, Long Sutton. The devices were stored in an irresponsible manner giving rise to an unacceptable risk to human health.

Prosecuting for the Environment Agency, barrister, Barnaby Hone told the court that the agency had been investigating Stancik and Platinum Group Metals Recycling Ltd. The investigation found that Stancik and his company had been buying large quantities of catalytic converters and had sold at least 71 tonnes of them for recycling. Further investigations revealed that the business had turned over millions of pounds

A warrant was executed at the 2 Long Sutton addresses where Environment Agency officers, working with Lincolnshire Police, found a large number of catalytic converters. Many of these devices were damaged, exposing their dangerous innards.

It took the jury less than half an hour to reach unanimous guilty verdicts.

The case has now been adjourned for consideration of the confiscation of the proceeds of crime and the recovery of the Environment Agency's costs. Edvars Stancik and Platinum Group Metals Recycling Ltd will be sentenced at a later date. A warrant has been issued for the arrest of Edvars Stancik.

Paul Salter, Senior Environmental Crime Officer for the Environment Agency, said: "Edvars Stancik and Platinum Group Metals Recycling Ltd crimes were not just illegal, but dangerous. Not only do we use environmental law to prosecute those who abuse the environment, but we also use the Proceeds of Crime legislation to ensure that criminals are deprived of the benefits of their illegal activity." For more details please see: [Firm and Director guilty of illegal catalytic converter trading - GOV.UK](#)

Contact

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