

**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**15 February 2017**

**STAFFORDSHIRE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES URGED TO HELP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLICIT WASTE**

Residents and businesses in Staffordshire are being urged to help in the fight against illicit waste.

The call comes from a Staffordshire wide group, set up to address the issue of illicit waste, after a number of large high risk sites were identified in the county. The group is made up of representatives from all of the local councils, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Staffordshire Police, the Environment Agency, the DVSA and Highways England.

Director of Response for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Tim Hyde, who is chairing the multi-agency group said: “This is a serious issue that we collectively need to address as soon as possible and we need the support of local residents and businesses. The recent highly publicised waste fire in Stoke-on-Trent was really just the tip of the iceberg. We have identified high risk sites that should fires occur, there will be massive disruption to road and rail networks in addition to the devastating environmental impact.”

Residents are being urged to report to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111, giving the registration details of any suspicious vehicles that may be going to and from sites where dumping has already occurred or sites such as rural land or vacant buildings, that large vehicles wouldn’t be expected to travel to at unusual hours.

Businesses are being reminded that they are liable for the correct disposal of their waste and therefore they need to use reputable suppliers with the correct paperwork to avoid prosecution. These offences are punishable in a Magistrates’ Court by an unlimited fine or imprisonment and in Crown court by an unlimited fine or 5 years imprisonment.

Landlords are also being asked to be vigilant and to be more cautious about leasing land/buildings to individuals who offer large sums of money. There have been a large number of cases where this has happened only for the land/building to be filled with illegal waste which the landlord is then responsible for clearing at their own expense, which can run into millions of pounds.

For more information about correctly disposing of waste visit the Right Waste, Right Place website <http://www.rightwasterightplace.com/>.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

We are not in a position to reveal the location of the highest risk sites because of the potential for them to become a target for further dumping and/or arsonists. We would kindly ask that the media support us with this request by not revealing specific locations that they may identify via other means.

This press release has been issued by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of The Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) partnership which consists of 24 of Staffordshire's public sector organisations. These are the emergency services, all ten local authorities, 10 health organisations and the Environment Agency.

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