

# Stobart Biomass fined £14,000 over waste wood pollution risk

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A Penrith-based wood biomass company has been fined £14,000 after one of its waste wood stores in Hull caused a risk of pollution.

Stobart Biomass Products Ltd, which has its headquarters on the Penrith Industrial Estate in Haweswater Road, Penrith, was handed the fine yesterday (Tuesday 3 June) by Hull and Holderness Magistrates Court.

The firm was in court over its waste transfer operation at Albert Dock in Hull, where it was storing waste woodchip in 2011 and 2012 for the energy from waste industry.

The Environment Agency had given Stobart Biomass some guidance to ensure the stored wood would not cause any problems to the local environment or nearby communities.

But when investigating officers visited the site they saw that dust from the wood piles was not being prevented from being blown onto nearby areas during high winds in dry conditions.

Sarah Middleton, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that dust problems did arise as some local residents reported brown dust being blown onto their properties, windows and cars.

Stobart Biomass had also failed to protect the dock from the waste. Piles of wood were seen located on a concrete surface but some had no containment to prevent water run-off from entering the water.

And one pile of woodchip and household waste was situated so close to the dockside that some of the waste was falling into the water, posing a risk to the Humber Estuary.

Environment Agency officers requested that this pile be moved away from the dock edge, and as this work was carried out, significant amounts of waste woodchip, dust and debris blew along the dock.

Stobart Biomass admitted one charge of keeping controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution or harm to human health. In mitigation, the firm said a dust management plan had been drawn up and passed to a stevedore company, but this other firm had failed to manage the risk appropriately.

Joanne Holt, Environmental Crime Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said: "Waste management operations can potentially cause many problems to the local environment and neighbourhood – that's why it is vital that companies ensure they meet all of their environmental obligations.

"In this case, Stobart Biomass were warned about the potential problems that waste wood piles could cause, but they failed to ensure that it was stored in an appropriate manner."

As well as the fine, the company was ordered to pay legal costs of £5,512.73 and a victim surcharge of £15.