

Immediate Release

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UK's used tyre processors face similar collapse as Britain's plastics recyclers warns TRA

UK is 'sleepwalking' into a used tyre crisis

The Tyre Recovery Association (TRA) today issues a stark warning that the UK's tyre recycling industry is likely to face a similar collapse as the plastics sector. Market pressures have led to a recent spate of UK plastic recycling plants closing down. Plastics industry insiders have pointed to the lack of a level playing field leading to the closures – a core issue that also undermines the UK's significant but underutilised used tyre processing capacity.

The UK currently exports an estimated **1,000 tonnes of whole waste tyres every day**, much of which is destined for uncontrolled and often illegal processing abroad.

With legitimate used tyre processors facing an increasingly hostile operating environment, the TRA continues its call for urgent government action to reform legislation. This includes implementing a *shred only* policy for waste tyre exports, a successful policy already introduced in Australia. Defra's announcement at the start of the summer to end the T8 exemption is a significant step forward, though yet to come into effect.

Following the Environment Agency's publication of their inquiry waste tyre exports the TRA has not only published the **Road to Reform**, a five-step plan that sets out straightforward measures that would implement the inquiry's findings, but also are awaiting to hear on their offer to meet the Environment Agency to provide further assistance as soon as possible. The Environment Agency said it is committed to working with industry stakeholders to introduce reforms.

Peter Taylor OBE, Secretary General of the Tyre Recovery Association said:

"The recent news of major plastics recycling plants closing is a canary in the coal mine for the wider UK recycling industry. As one of Biffa's senior managers rightly said, these sites are closing because there isn't a level playing field. That is exactly the same problem our sector faces. We are sleepwalking into a crisis where UK jobs and domestic capacity are sacrificed for the sake of cheap exports of our environmental problems."

He continued:

"Our '[Road to Reform](#)' action plan, submitted to the Environment Agency, provides a clear, five-step path to enhance verification and better enforce existing regulations. We are keen to meet with them at the earliest opportunity to discuss the plan and see the overdue reforms come into effect. The technology is available right now to create a digital chain of custody that would ensure our waste is accounted for. The government must take the action the Waste Minister promised to stop the export of our environmental responsibilities. We must see that action before the same fate that has befallen the plastics industry hits our members."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Tyre Recovery Association (TRA) is the representative body for the UK tyre recovery industry.
- The TRA continues to call on the Government to introduce a "shred only" policy for waste tyre exports.
- The BBC File on 4 documentary, "The Tyre Scandal," aired on Wed 26 Mar 2025, and investigated the export of used tyres for processing abroad.
- About the Tyre Recovery Association (TRA): The Tyre Recovery Association (TRA) is the representative body for the UK tyre recovery industry. Its members account for the majority of used tyres collected and processed in the UK. The TRA promotes the safe, sustainable and environmentally sound recovery and recycling of end-of-life tyres, advocating for responsible industry practices and robust regulatory frameworks.