# Two men jailed in landmark case over Northern Ireland’s largest illegal landfill



Two individuals have been sentenced to imprisonment for their roles in managing the Mobuoy superdump near Derry, a site notorious for being the largest illegal landfill in Northern Ireland. This landmark case underscores a growing resolve within the judicial system to confront environmental violations strictly. The presiding judge emphasised that a discernible shift has occurred; those who engage in environmental crimes driven by monetary gain can no longer evade accountability.

For nearly a decade, the legal proceedings surrounding the Mobuoy site have seen considerable delays. Initially uncovered in 2009, the illegal waste operation involved the disposal of an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of refuse, a staggering figure that raised alarms regarding the environmental integrity of the surrounding area, particularly the River Faughan, which serves as a key drinking water source for Derry. The court was informed that the defendants, Paul Doherty and Gerry Farmer, had pleaded guilty more than two years ago, but due to various procedural setbacks—including ongoing industrial actions disrupting legal representation—the case was postponed multiple times.

The repercussions of the illegal dumping have prompted a significant response from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). As part of their remediation strategy for the contaminated area, DAERA plans to initiate a public consultation aimed at developing a comprehensive plan to address the extensive damage incurred. This consultation is expected to commence in early spring, marking an essential step toward restoring the affected environment. Meanwhile, authorities have been vocal about the need for a robust strategy to ensure the protection of water quality in the River Faughan.

Despite the guilty pleas and recent sentencing, the case has revealed an unmistakable pattern of systemic challenges within the legal framework when addressing environmental crimes. The lengthy duration of proceedings has been a point of contention among stakeholders, highlighting an urgent need for reforms in legal aid funding and the expediting of environmental cases. Commentators have noted that the scale of the offending activities, described by former Environment Minister Alex Attwood as "immense and appalling," demands not just legal ramifications but a broader societal commitment to environmental stewardship.

As the dust begins to settle on this notorious chapter in Northern Ireland's fight against environmental crime, the commitment demonstrated by judicial authorities and DAERA may herald a new deterrent for potential offenders. The Mobuoy case serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of unchecked greed and the imperative for vigilant oversight in environmental governance.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/two-men-jailed-for-purely-economically-motivated-environmental-crime-at-mobuoy-superdump-in-derry/a1530329797.html), [[4]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/01/27/news/two_men_still_to_be_sentenced_four_months_on_from_pleading_guilty_to_operating_massive_illegal_waste_site-3022902/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/two-men-jailed-for-purely-economically-motivated-environmental-crime-at-mobuoy-superdump-in-derry/a1530329797.html), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/2025/02/16/news/sentencing-of-pair-responsible-for-north-s-largest-illegal-dump-delayed-again-a-decade-on-from-start-of-criminal-action-3032902/), [[3]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/health/mobuoy-illegal-dump-duo-still-not-given-any-sentence-over-a-year-and-a-half-after-admitting-crimes-4603528)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.derryjournal.com/news/environment/mobuoy-illegal-dump-in-derry-public-consultation-being-planned-4990999), [[6]](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/guilty-pleas-heard-mobuoy-waste-case)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/2025/02/16/news/sentencing-of-pair-responsible-for-north-s-largest-illegal-dump-delayed-again-a-decade-on-from-start-of-criminal-action-3032902/), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-foyle-west-22784738)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/two-men-jailed-for-purely-economically-motivated-environmental-crime-at-mobuoy-superdump-in-derry/a1530329797.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/2025/02/16/news/sentencing-of-pair-responsible-for-north-s-largest-illegal-dump-delayed-again-a-decade-on-from-start-of-criminal-action-3032902/> - The sentencing of two men responsible for operating the largest known illegal dump in Northern Ireland has been delayed once again, a decade after the initiation of criminal proceedings. The individuals had pleaded guilty over two years prior to dumping an estimated 1.6 million tonnes of waste at the Mobuoy site near Derry, adjacent to the River Faughan, a primary source of drinking water for the city. The delay is attributed to ongoing industrial action by criminal barristers protesting legal aid funding issues. The case highlights the prolonged legal process in addressing significant environmental crimes.
3. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/health/mobuoy-illegal-dump-duo-still-not-given-any-sentence-over-a-year-and-a-half-after-admitting-crimes-4603528> - Over a year and a half after admitting to operating a massive illegal waste site, two men have yet to be sentenced. The case, which has been in the courts for nine years, involves the dumping of approximately 1.6 million tonnes of waste at the Mobuoy site near Derry. Despite the guilty pleas, sentencing has been postponed multiple times, with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) stating that remediation of the contaminated land is a priority, but the complexity of the site means it will not be a quick fix.
4. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/01/27/news/two_men_still_to_be_sentenced_four_months_on_from_pleading_guilty_to_operating_massive_illegal_waste_site-3022902/> - Nearly four months after pleading guilty to operating one of the largest illegal dump sites in Ireland or the UK, two men have yet to be sentenced. Paul Doherty and Gerry Farmer admitted to illegal waste dumping at the Mobuoy Road site near Derry, which is linked to the dumping of approximately one million tonnes of waste. The delay in sentencing is due to the court requesting an environmental impact assessment to determine the damage caused by the dumping. The case has been ongoing for nearly a decade, highlighting the challenges in addressing large-scale environmental crimes.
5. <https://www.derryjournal.com/news/environment/mobuoy-illegal-dump-in-derry-public-consultation-being-planned-4990999> - A public consultation on a draft remediation strategy for the illegally dumped waste at the Mobuoy landfill site in Derry is expected to be launched in early spring. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has approved the consultation, which aims to address the approximately 1.6 million tonnes of waste illegally dumped at the site near the River Faughan, a primary source of drinking water for Derry. The consultation is part of ongoing efforts to develop a remediation strategy for the site.
6. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/guilty-pleas-heard-mobuoy-waste-case> - Three of the five defendants in the Mobuoy waste case have pleaded guilty to a range of waste offences related to the unauthorised disposal of waste at the Mobuoy site. Sentencing was expected on 7 November 2022. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) condemned the illegal dumping, stating it shows a 'shocking and appalling disregard for the residents, the environment and the law.' The department is prioritising the protection of water quality in the River Faughan and the remediation of the site.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-foyle-west-22784738> - An investigation into allegations of waste crime in Londonderry led to the discovery of a large amount of illegal waste buried under soil and clay in the Mobouy area. Environment Minister Alex Attwood described the scale of the unlawful waste activity as 'immense and appalling,' dating back at least to 2009. The investigation uncovered tens of thousands of tonnes of waste illegally deposited in the Mobouy area, prompting the closure of a waste plant and further arrests. The operation aimed to address serious criminality and environmental vandalism.