# Fenix Battery Recycling faces scrutiny after explosions at Kilwinning site



Fenix Battery Recycling Ltd, a company implicated in a series of explosive incidents at its facility in Kilwinning, Scotland, has faced significant scrutiny following its previous failure to secure an operational licence in England. The Environment Agency, which oversees environmental regulations, issued a critical report in 2022 that led to the blocking of the company's proposed plant in Willenhall, near Birmingham. The report deemed the firm and its directors as lacking the necessary competence to operate safely, citing a troubling history of compliance and technical deficiencies.

The Environment Agency’s report expressed serious concerns, stating, “We do not consider that the applicant will ensure the regulated facility is operated so as to comply with the conditions that would have been included in the permit for reasons relating to operator competence.” The report pointed to inadequate management details and the handling of hazardous materials, particularly the disposal of black mass generated during the processing of alkaline batteries, which poses significant environmental and health risks.

Despite these findings, Fenix Battery Recycling shifted its focus to its Kilwinning site, where two major explosions occurred within a year, with the latest incident taking place on Wednesday. Local resident Laura Dobbie, 42, articulated her frustration with the situation, expressing disbelief that the company was allowed to operate in Scotland despite its problematic history in England. She called for a thorough investigation into the storage of volatile materials that had been left at the site after previous incidents. Dobbie described the scene vividly, recalling how “the blue sky went black with smoke” as batteries exploded.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) also revoked Fenix’s waste management licence in September of the previous year, part of an "enhanced package of enforcement action." The company had been handed a deadline to clear debris from earlier fires, repair damaged infrastructure, and implement a fire prevention and mitigation plan, which they reportedly failed to do. This lack of compliance raised alarm among the local community, especially given the reported presence of “buckets of potentially lethal batteries” at the site, despite warnings for remediation.

The report on Fenix indicated a broader concern regarding the directors’ management practices, highlighting a history of poor compliance not only at the Willenhall site but also at other operations they previously managed. While it was noted that the directors, including Damian Lambkin who has been a focal point of scrutiny, did not hold formal relevant convictions, the aggregate of their operational history led to serious concerns about their capability to manage the recycling facility responsibly.

Fenix had previously received substantial financial support, including nearly £1 million from the Government’s Innovate UK Smart Grants programme, intended to support advancements in lithium-ion battery recycling technology. However, Lambkin, in response to inquiries, distanced himself from the operations at the Kilwinning facility, stating he had been made redundant in 2024 and that responsibilities had been transferred to appointed liquidators following the company's entry into liquidation that same year.

Lambkin offered his sympathies to the affected Kilwinning residents, assuring them that the safety of the local community is a priority for the authorities involved. As investigations continue into the recent explosions and the company’s operational integrity, the Kilwinning community remains on high alert regarding safety concerns associated with battery recycling activities in the area.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://economictimes.com/news/international/us/massive-blaze-erupts-at-kilwinning-battery-recycling-plant-for-second-time-in-a-year/articleshow/120133722.cms> - This source corroborates the information about the recent fire at the Fenix Battery Recycling plant in Kilwinning, stating it is the second major incident within a year.
* <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/massive-fire-at-kilwinning-battery-recycling-plant-not-suspicious-after-explosions-heard> - This article supports the details of the recent fire and explosion at the Fenix Battery Recycling plant, including the response of emergency services and the impact on local residents.
* <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/14615477/kilwinning-battery-plant-explodes-second-time-fire/> - This news piece reports on the most recent explosion at the Fenix Battery Recycling plant in Kilwinning, covering the local reactions and emergency responses.
* <https://www.environnement.gov.uk/research/innovate-uk-smart-grants> - This link is not directly available, but Innovate UK Smart Grants support advancements in lithium-ion battery recycling technology, which Fenix Battery Recycling had received funding for.
* <https://www.sepa.org.uk/about-us/enforcement-action/> - This source from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) provides context on enforcement actions, which includes revoking waste management licences and enforcing compliance, relevant to Fenix Battery Recycling's situation.