# Fenix Battery Recycling faces scrutiny after explosions at Kilwinning facility



Fenix Battery Recycling Ltd, a company with a controversial safety record, has faced significant fallout following multiple explosions at its battery recycling facility in Kilwinning, Scotland. The firm was denied a licence to operate a new site in England last year, after a scathing report from the Environment Agency (EA) highlighted serious concerns regarding the company’s competence and compliance history.

The EA report, which emerged in April 2022, stated that Fenix was not deemed capable of effectively operating a facility in Willenhall, near Birmingham. It cited “previous poor history of compliance” and issues related to the technical competence of the company's directors. The report unequivocally concluded that the applicant was unlikely to adhere to the regulatory conditions that would have been imposed on the permit, stating, “We do not consider that the applicant will ensure the regulated facility is operated so as to comply with the conditions,” underscoring the concerns over operator competence.

Following the refusal to grant a licence in England, the director of Fenix, Damian Lambkin, indicated a pivot towards their existing plant in Scotland, suggesting they would “focus its attention on its new plant at Kilwinning.” However, the situation deteriorated dramatically when the Kilwinning facility experienced two explosions within the span of a year, the latest of which occurred last Wednesday.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) has since launched an investigation into the incidents. Local residents have expressed their anger and concern regarding the safety of the facility, particularly in light of its precarious history. Laura Dobbie, a 42-year-old resident, voiced her frustrations, stating, “This beggars belief. Surely anyone handling such dangerous material should be taking zero chances.” She called for an investigation into how potentially hazardous materials were allowed to remain on-site, leading to the recent explosions. Dobbie described the intense fear experienced by the local community as smoke blackened the sky and batteries were seen igniting in the air.

In September 2022, Sepa took decisive action by revoking Fenix’s waste management licence, citing the company's failure to meet regulatory requirements after setting a deadline for the removal of fire debris and the implementation of a robust fire prevention strategy. The company's directors, including Lambkin, faced scrutiny over their management practices; the EA report indicated that while they lacked formal criminal convictions, there was a longstanding concern over their compliance with safety regulations at not only the Willenhall site but other locations they managed.

The facility in Kilwinning has featured in a broader discourse concerning battery recycling and safety, particularly given the financial unraveling of the company, now reported to be in liquidation with debts amounting to £2 million. Fenix had previously secured nearly £1 million in funding through the UK Government’s Innovate UK grant programme to explore advancements in lithium-ion battery recycling technology, raising questions about future initiatives and safety protocols in the sector.

Lambkin, when contacted by the Daily Record, claimed that the EA's refusal of the Willenhall licence was influenced by charges against him, from which he was subsequently acquitted. He stated that post his redundancy in 2024, he had no involvement with operations at Kilwinning, asserting, “I deeply sympathise with the residents of Kilwinning affected by this latest incident” and expressing trust in the authorities to address the risks resulting from the company's safety shortcomings.

As investigations continue, the community of Kilwinning remains on alert, grappling with the implications of the recent explosions and the ongoing scrutiny of Fenix Battery Recycling Ltd's operations.

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

## References

* <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/massive-fire-at-kilwinning-battery-recycling-plant-not-suspicious-after-explosions-heard> - This article reports on the recent fire at Fenix Battery Recycling in Kilwinning, Scotland, describing the incidents, evacuations, and residents' reactions, which highlights the safety concerns at the facility.
* <https://www.economictimes.com/news/international/us/massive-blaze-erupts-at-kilwinning-battery-recycling-plant-for-second-time-in-a-year/articleshow/120133722.cms> - This news piece describes the second major fire at the Kilwinning facility, occurring almost exactly a year after the first, and notes the reactions from local residents who described the scene as a 'war zone'.
* <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/kilwinning-residents-demand-action-after-panic-and-terror-of-second-fire-at-battery-recycling-plant> - This article discusses the fears and reactions of residents following the second fire and mentions that local residents are planning to take legal action due to the lack of safety measures at the facility.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency> - The Environment Agency (EA) website is relevant to the article as it mentions the EA's role in assessing and regulating facilities like Fenix Battery Recycling, which had been denied a licence due to compliance issues.
* <https://www.sepa.org.uk/> - The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) website provides context for the regulatory actions taken against Fenix Battery Recycling Ltd, including the revocation of its waste management licence due to non-compliance.