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## **HILLS JOINS NATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST “ZOMBIE BATTERIES” IN BID TO TACKLE RECYCLING AND WASTE FIRES**

Consumers across the UK are today (Monday 26 October) being urged to “join the fight against Zombie batteries” in a bid to tackle the growing number of fires caused by carelessly discarded dead batteries.

Hills Waste Solutions supports the new national *Take Charge* campaign, which urges consumers to only recycle dead batteries using specialist battery recycling services, and to never throw batteries away alongside general rubbish or other recycling.

**Henry Newbery, Recycling Manager at Hills**, said: “Used batteries can be easily recycled at any of Wiltshire’s household recycling centres and this campaign’s website [www.takecharge.org.uk](http://www.takecharge.org.uk) has an online postcode checker where consumers can find other local battery recycling points.”

Dead batteries thrown away with other waste and recycling, which the campaign refers to as “zombie batteries”, are likely to be crushed or punctured once the waste is collected and processed. Some battery types in particular, like lithium-ion (Li-ion) and nickel-metal Hydride (NiMH), can ignite or even explode when they’re damaged. Once this happens, the batteries can quickly set fire to other materials present in the waste, like paper, leading to serious incidents that put lives at risk.

Although safe to use normally, powerful lithium-ion batteries are typically the most dangerous if they are not recycled properly. These batteries are often found in products like laptops, tablets, mobile phones, radio-controlled toys, Bluetooth devices, shavers, electric toothbrushes, power tools, scooters and even e-cigarettes.

The recycling and waste management trade body, the Environmental Services Association (ESA), which launched the campaign, conducts an annual survey of its members to record the proportion of fires occurring at recycling and waste facilities that are known or thought to have been started by lithium-ion batteries in particular.

Recent data collected by the ESA shows that, between April 2019 and March 2020, lithium-ion batteries alone were thought to be responsible for more than 250 fires at its members’ facilities during the year – or well over a third (38%) of all fires.

**Henry Newbery continues:** “We have experienced incidents at our recycling facility and in a waste collection vehicle where batteries thrown away with other recycling have ignited. If it was not for the quick reaction of our staff to extinguish them, these could have caused

serious injury to people not only from fire but also noxious fumes, and damage to the plant.”



Images : Examples of ‘zombie’ batteries - one ignited at Hills recycling facility and the other in a waste collection vehicle but were both extinguished before causing any serious harm.

Members of the ESA hope that by encouraging the public to recycle batteries responsibly, it will reduce the number of “zombie batteries” present in general waste and recycling, thereby reducing the number of fires in future.

**Executive Director of the Environmental Services Association (ESA), Jacob Hayler said:** “Unfortunately, the majority of batteries thrown away in the UK at the moment are not recycled properly. Fires caused by carelessly discarded batteries endanger lives; cause millions of pounds of damage and disrupt waste services. We urge consumers to please recycle batteries responsibly by using widely available local battery recycling services.”

*Take Charge* is supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). **Mark Andrews, NFCC Waste Fires Lead said:** “Batteries in household waste and recycling can lead to large scale and protracted fires. These incidents are often very challenging for fire services to deal with and can cause significant disruption to communities. Many people may not realise the importance of the correct disposal of batteries so this simple advice can make a real difference in preventing waste fires.”

Consumers can find out more about the dangers of Zombie Batteries, by visiting the campaign website at [www.takecharge.org.uk](http://www.takecharge.org.uk)

**ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

For media enquiries about Hills Waste Solutions, please contact Monique Hayes at [info@hills-group.co.uk](mailto:info@hills-group.co.uk) or phone 01793 781200

For media enquiries about the campaign, please contact Ben Johnson at [takecharge@esauk.org](mailto:takecharge@esauk.org) or by phone on **07966 304330**.

### **About the campaign**

The *Take Charge+* Campaign was established in October 2020 and is managed by the Environmental Services Association (ESA). It is sponsored by the [ESA](#) and the battery compliance scheme, [European Recycling Platform \(ERP\)](#).

To find out more about the Take Charge campaign, and see a full list of supporters, please visit [www.takecharge.org.uk](http://www.takecharge.org.uk). A short **campaign film** is hosted on YouTube (access from website) and may be shared or embedded for editorial use.

# TAKE CHARGE

Recycle Batteries Responsibly

