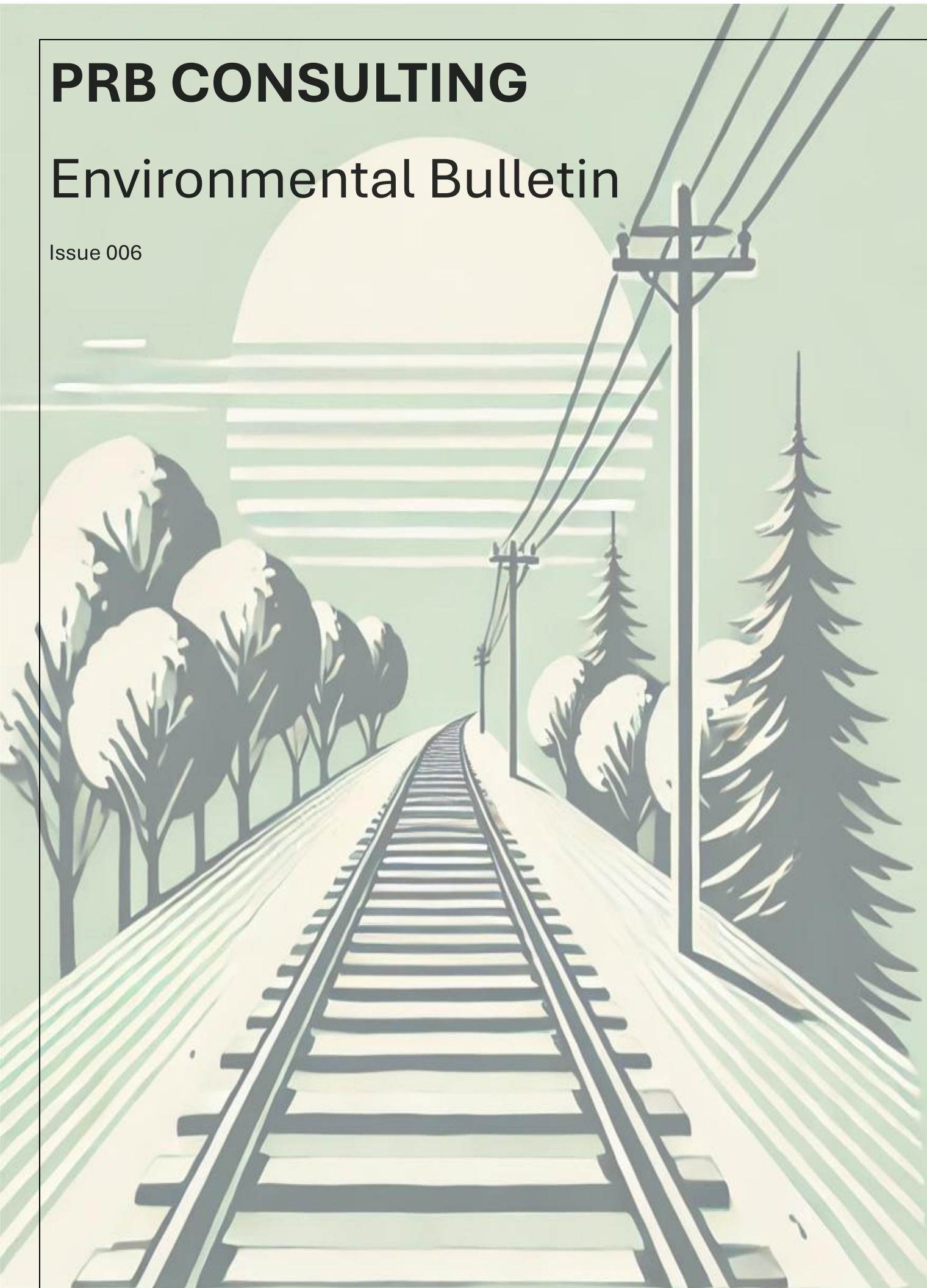


PRB CONSULTING

Environmental Bulletin

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This Month's Feature Article from Encompass Environmental



Vegetation Management on the UK Railways: Safety, Sustainability, and Invasive Species

Introduction

Vegetation along the UK rail network is both essential and problematic. Managed well, it supports biodiversity and stabilises infrastructure. Left unchecked, it creates safety hazards, delays, and mounting costs.

At **Encompass Environmental Ltd**, we see these challenges daily—and provide the solutions.

Why It Matters

Unmanaged growth leads to:

- **Safety hazards** – falling branches, obscured signals, slip risks from moss.
- **Fire risks** – dry arisings around depots and sidings.
- **Infrastructure damage** – roots weakening masonry, drainage, and retaining walls.

Our **RISQS-accredited teams** work nationwide to keep rail operators compliant, safe, and sustainable.

Invasive Species: A Costly Enemy

Species like **Japanese Knotweed**, **Himalayan Balsam**, and **Floating Pennywort** spread rapidly and cost the rail industry millions each year.

As PCA-accredited specialists, we deliver long-term control programmes that stop invasives at the source and prevent repeat costs.

Spotlight on Buddleia

Often sold as the “butterfly bush,” **Buddleia** is one of the worst offenders we face on rail sites.



WE NEED YOU

PRB Consulting extends its thanks to Encompass Environmental for their contribution to this month's Environmental Bulletin.

If your business would like to feature in any of our forthcoming bulletins, please get in touch on 01323 887186



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It thrives in brickwork and embankments, its roots accelerating decay and its windborne seeds spreading into new cracks and corners. Despite its pollinator-friendly image, it reduces biodiversity and drives up maintenance bills.

At Encompass, we believe Buddleia should join Knotweed and Balsam on **Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act**. Until then, rail operators will continue to pay the price for its removal.



Buddleia in high-level brickwork, Worcester Foregate Street Station

Smarter, Sustainable Solutions

Our approach is practical and forward-looking:

- Targeted herbicide use under UK regulations.
- Mechanical solutions such as chippers and robo-flails.
- Drone surveys for safer, faster inspections.
- Biodiversity-friendly management around nesting and habitats.

Why Clients Choose Encompass

Rail clients choose **Encompass Environmental** because we combine nationwide coverage with the reassurance of full **RISQS** and **PCA accreditation**. Our expertise in managing invasive plants such as Japanese Knotweed, Horsetail, Himalayan Balsam, Floating Pennywort, and Buddleia sets us apart, and every project is delivered by fully qualified, highly experienced teams who understand both the safety and sustainability demands of the rail industry.

Call to Action

Vegetation challenges on the railway are only increasing. Partnering with **Encompass Environmental** means safe, compliant, and sustainable solutions from start to finish.

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Toolbox Talk: Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2025

1. Why Are We Talking About This?

From 31 March 2025, new waste regulations came into force in England. They require businesses to separate recyclable and food waste from general waste. This helps increase recycling, reduce landfill, and protect the environment.



If your business has fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees, you're exempt from mandatory compliance until 31 March 2027

2. What Does It Mean for Us?

We must now ensure that waste is placed in the **correct bin**:

- **Paper & Cardboard** – clean paper, office paper, cardboard packaging.
- **Dry Mixed Recyclables** – plastics, tins, cans, glass bottles and jars.
- **Food Waste** – leftovers, tea bags, coffee grounds, kitchen scraps.
- **Residual Waste** – anything that cannot be recycled (e.g. contaminated materials, non-recyclable packaging).

⚠️ **Mixing waste streams (contamination)** means materials may end up in landfill instead of being recycled.

3. Our Responsibilities

- **Everyone** is responsible for separating waste correctly.
- Follow **signs on bins** and use the right containers.
- Report any damaged or missing bins to your supervisor.
- Never put liquids, oils, or hazardous substances in general waste bins.

4. Benefits of Doing It Right

- Complies with **legal requirements** (Separation of Waste Regulations 2025).
- Reduces waste disposal costs.
- Supports our company's sustainability goals.
- Protects the environment for future generations.

5. Questions for the Team

- Do you know where the correct bins are located in your work area?
- What should you do if you see someone using the wrong bin?
- Can anyone give examples of common items that go in **residual waste only**?

✅ **Remember:** Waste separation is now a **legal requirement**. Doing it correctly is part of keeping our workplace compliant and environmentally responsible.



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Safe Labelling and Storage of Hazardous Substances

The storage of hazardous substances is strictly controlled under UK and EU legislation, with the **CLP Regulation (EC 1272/2008)** at its core.

This requires clear classification, labelling and packaging, alongside safety data sheets (SDSs) that set out storage conditions and emergency measures.

Although the EU is introducing new hazard classes (such as endocrine disruptors and persistent pollutants), Great Britain now operates under its own version — **GB CLP** — following Brexit.



Key principles of safe storage:

- **Identify hazards:** Take into account toxicity, flammability, corrosivity, and environmental risks.
- **Segregation:** Incompatible substances (e.g., acids with hypochlorite's, oxidisers with organics) must not be stored together.
- **Quantities matter:** The larger the volume stored, the stricter the requirements. COMAH regulations may apply at higher thresholds.
- **Gas cylinders:** Store upright, secure, well-ventilated, away from ignition and heat sources.
- **Flammable liquids/gases:** Use approved containers, ventilated storage areas, and keep quantities as low as practicable.
- **Oil storage:** Containers over 200 litres require secondary containment (bunding) under the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) Regulations.

Emergencies and training:

Plans must be in place for fire, explosion, or spillage. Employees should be trained in safe storage, spill response, and fire procedures.

Takeaway:

Proper labelling, segregation, and storage are not just compliance issues — they are critical to protecting people, property, and the environment. Employers must ensure SDSs are followed, storage is well managed, and staff are trained to respond to incidents safely.



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Managing Electronic Waste – Your Responsibilities and Opportunities

The world produces **over 53 million tonnes of electronic waste each year**, with the UK contributing an estimated **1.45 million tonnes**. Worryingly, around **145,000 tonnes of commercial e-waste** are discarded without evidence of recycling. Given the hazardous substances found in electrical and electronic equipment (EEE), businesses must take steps to manage this waste responsibly.



Legal obligations

Under the **Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations 2013**, organisations have a **duty of care** when disposing of electrical equipment. This includes:

- Correct **classification, storage, transport and disposal** of waste via a licensed carrier.
- Applying the **waste hierarchy** – prevent waste where possible, then prioritise reuse, recycling, or recovery before disposal.
- Ensuring compliance with producer obligations: manufacturers and importers must finance the collection and treatment of WEEE placed on the market after August 2005.

If replacing older (pre-2005) equipment, end-users may be responsible for financing safe disposal. In some cases, organisations can agree with suppliers to retain control of the recycling route, particularly for **data-sensitive IT equipment**.

Good practice for businesses

- **Plan purchases:** Choose durable, energy-efficient equipment designed for recycling or easy upgrades.
- **Extend lifespan:** Upgrade or repair items where possible rather than replacing them outright.
- **Reuse before recycle:** Consider donating or reselling working equipment. Extending a product's life is more sustainable than recycling.
- **Work with compliance schemes:** Most producers are members of schemes that handle recycling obligations – check your suppliers' arrangements.

Why it matters

Responsible WEEE management not only ensures legal compliance but also:

- **Reduces disposal costs**
- **Protects the environment** from hazardous materials
- **Preserves valuable resources** used in manufacturing
- **Supports your sustainability goals** and enhances your business reputation

Key takeaway

With electronic waste rising, businesses must adopt smarter purchasing, reuse and recycling strategies. By managing WEEE responsibly, organisations can cut costs, reduce risks, and make a positive environmental impact.

Construction Firm in Court after Exposing Workers to Asbestos Risks

A Manchester-based construction company has been fined after workers were put at risk of exposure to asbestos.

The company was acting as the principal contractor during work at the former Unicorn Public House on Liverpool Road, Eccles, Greater Manchester.

During a routine inspection to the site on 16 May 2022, a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector discovered that 12 square metres of asbestos insulating board (AIB) had been present in a dumb waiter lift shaft – but had already been illegally removed by unknown individuals. This led to the inspector issuing a prohibition notice stopping all work on site until an asbestos survey had been completed.

Previously, after noticing the pub door had been broken into, a site worker had entered the building, where they discovered what appeared to be asbestos debris in the area around the lift shaft. The debris was later wrapped and removed by a licensed asbestos removal contractor.

However, the company failed to carry out a full asbestos survey to confirm that all asbestos-containing materials had been removed before allowing further construction work to take place.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(6) of The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. It was fined £5,360 and ordered to pay £5,117 in costs at a hearing at Tameside Magistrates' Court on 30 July 2025.

Speaking after the hearing, a HSE spokesperson said:

“This was a serious incident and put those working in the building at risk of being exposed to the harmful effects of asbestos.

“Duty holders are reminded of the need to review without delay an asbestos assessment if there has been a significant change in the premises to which the assessment relates.”



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Fluorescent Lamp Ban – What You Need to Know

From **1 February 2024**, the UK and EU began phasing out almost all types of **fluorescent lamps**. Manufacturers and importers can no longer place them on the market, although suppliers may sell existing stock and businesses can continue using what they already have. A small number of specialist applications remain exempt until 2025 or 2027.



Why the change?

- **Mercury content** – Fluorescent lamps contain mercury, a hazardous substance.
- **Energy inefficiency** – They use far more power than modern LED alternatives.

Safe disposal is essential

Fluorescent lamps are classed as **hazardous waste** and cannot be mixed with general waste. They must be:

- segregated and stored safely,
- collected by a compliant waste contractor, and
- accompanied by a hazardous waste consignment note using the correct European Waste Catalogue code.

Certain compact fluorescent lamps may also contain **persistent organic pollutants (POPs)**, meaning they must be destroyed rather than recycled.

The LED advantage

Many organisations are already moving to LED lighting. LEDs are:

- **80–90% more energy efficient**,
- **longer lasting** (up to 3x the lifespan of fluorescents),
- free from mercury,
- often direct replacements for fluorescent tubes,
- available in a wide range of colours and do not flicker.

While some LED casings may still contain POPs, LEDs are generally **easier and cheaper to dispose of** than fluorescent lamps.

Key takeaway

If your business still uses fluorescent lamps, now is the time to plan a switch to LED technology. Not only will this ensure compliance, but it also delivers significant cost and environmental benefits.



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