



## Clearing combustible materials and keeping the environment maintained helps protect an empty property

**Site: Former Community Centre, Dudley near Birmingham**

### INTRODUCTION

#### Why should a vacant property be 'cleaned and cleared' quickly?

The owner of the property, the Diocese of Worcester, and its insurers, Ecclesiastical, were concerned that the property might be at risk from fire and fly-tipping.

### FIRE RISK

When a property suddenly falls empty, it is important to clear it of combustible materials and maintain the surrounding grounds. Last year 76,000 fires in the UK were as a result of arson – that's over 200 a day – and vacant properties in particular are often targets.

Fires that are started deliberately in an empty building or in its grounds can spread to nearby occupied buildings and endanger lives, pollute the immediate vicinity with smoke and ash, and create environmental eyesores long after the event. Also, they are costly to undo the damage: the bill for insurance claims came to £1.2 billion.

So it is quite critical that rapid action is taken to clean and clear the inside of such properties, and the external areas too, to significantly manage down the risks associated with arson attacks.

The Wren Community Centre was full with a variety of combustible materials, such as cardboard, carpet rolls, sofas, wooden furniture, papers, files and bags of rubbish.

### FLY-TIPPING RISK

Despite recent government efforts, incidents of fly-tipping rose by 43% last year, to well over a million incidents. That is the equivalent of an illegal fly-tipping occurrence happening every 40 seconds. Private landlords and public authorities are forced to clean up the mess, sometimes costing them tens of thousands of pounds. As soon as a property becomes empty, if it has a carpark or surrounding grounds, it can very quickly become a magnet for fly-tippers.

The Community Centre has both a car park and overgrown grass areas with pathways already attracting litter, which could easily become a magnet for fly-tippers

### OVERVIEW

<b>SECTOR</b>	Church of England
<b>CUSTOMER</b>	Diocese of Worcester
<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of arson and fly-tipping</li> </ul>
<b>SOLUTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VPS clean &amp; clear services</li> <li>• Grounds maintenance</li> </ul>





## THE TASK

To ensure the 'clean and clear' was carried out as quickly as possible, VPS Security Services brought in a team of eight – they arrived at 6.30am, carried out risks assessments, and then completed the task of clearing two skip loads of waste and combustible materials by 1.30pm. The long grass was cut back, and litter removed to enhance the immediate environment.

- General rubbish removal both internal and external
- The removal and safe disposal of white goods, TV and monitors, paint tins, oil, chemicals and flammable liquids, gas bottles, garden waste and food
- Removal and legal disposal of combustible materials

The team is trained to also carry out needle sweep, with their removal and safe disposal. They can also drain down or close off utilities, and pump out, investigate and make repairs after flooding and water ingress.

Regular grounds maintenance of the external area of the property is carried out to ensure it remains clear of combustible materials.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND RECYCLING

The VPS Group targets as high as possible landfill diversion for all waste - over 90%, seeking to achieve 95% with specialist waste and recycling partners. All waste removal skips are taken to a transfer centre where the waste is sorted. The recyclates that result from the sorting operation may be processed on the same site that the sorting took place or forwarded on to more specialised facilities for treatment.

Further processing of recyclables and other waste materials can involve composting, scrap & metal recycling, electrical and electronic equipment, chemical waste, recovered paper, wood recycling, plastics and rubber.

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## WHAT VPS SECURITY SERVICES SAY

**“When a property falls vacant, it is all too easy to ignore it. Unfortunately, neglecting empty sites can be a very expensive oversight, as an arson attack or the removal of tons of waste rubbish can be very costly to either the owner or the insurer, or to both. Tens of thousands of pounds of damage could have occurred with the highly flammable contents of this community centre had they been allowed to remain there and vandals had broken in.”**

Nick Bye  
Business Development Director

