



Subject:	Resources and Fleet Waste Update
Date:	3rd December 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	John McConnell, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet)

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide an update to members on waste collections, management and performance.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report and to support the proposal to develop and introduce a HWRC Waste Access and Acceptance Policy.
3.0	Main report
	Key Issues
	<u>Waste Performance & Recycling Rates</u>
3.1	The most recent waste statistics published by the NIEA are the April to June 2024 quarterly statistics. The report is a snapshot of the first quarter of the 24/25 financial year versus the same period for the previous year.
3.2	The overall picture for NI was one of; an increasing quantity of waste collected (271,500 tonnes collected, up 1.5%), a static municipal reuse and recycling rate (53.8%) combined with a significant decrease in the landfill disposal rate, down to 15.4% the lowest quarterly landfill rate ever recorded.
3.3	An examination of the figures for Belfast City Council, indicates the following; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Municipal Waste Arisings - the total tonnage of all types of waste collected by the Council was 42,566 tonnes. This is an increase of approximately 825 tonnes (2%) on the same quarter last year.• Municipal Waste Recycling Rate – the percentage of all types of waste collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, increased by 2.8% to 41.5%. This increase was primarily due to increased organic tonnages.• Household Waste Recycling Rate– the percentage of household waste only collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, increased by 3.6% to 44.9%.

- **Landfill Diversion Rate** – the percentage of all Council waste sent to landfill was 0.6%, down from 28% in the previous year.

For Q1 2024/25 the main contributors to the uplift in these figures were

- the increased tonnage of organic waste captured and
- the onboarding of the new arc21, interim residual waste treatment contract, resulting in significant quantities (10,800 tonnes) of waste being diverted from landfill to energy recovery.

3.4

As noted within this report and brought to the attention of Members through various consultation responses, there are a number of legislative, strategic and financial drivers which are going to shape future waste management arrangements. The full nature and implications of these policy drivers still remain somewhat unclear and in the absence of sufficient clarity, radical, systemic change aimed at delivering significant improvements in NI environmental targets is unlikely.

3.5

Waste Framework Update

At the People & Communities Committee meeting of June 2017, Members approved the Waste Framework document. It provides an overview of options on how waste could be managed within the city over the next decade. It was developed to align with the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and Resourceful Belfast (Circular Economy), designing out waste, improving the quantity and quality of recycling and supporting local jobs.

The Waste Framework focuses on four themes (i) Collection Arrangements, (ii) Infrastructure, (iii) Behaviour Change and (iv) Technology. The following sections provide an insight on the work and initiatives currently being undertaken under the four main workstreams.

(i) Collection Arrangements

3.6

Inner City Recycling Scheme Update

On 1 August 2024, the new contract for the delivery of the kerbside recycling in the inner city commenced with service delivery carried out by Bryson Recycling. Officers continue to work with the contractor to ensure that the contract delivers according to the terms, conditions and service delivery plan. As a consequence of the new contract, the contractor has appointed a Customer Liaison Officer to deal with issues on the ground and answer customer complaints, new vehicles will be delivered and the contractor plans to install their own inCab technology solution to deliver improved customer service.

3.7

Kerbside Glass

As part of the 2024/25 revenue estimates setting process, Members committed to delivering phase one of this scheme which involves an expansion of kerbside glass to approximately 23,000 households. Internal funding and support funding from DAERA under the Household Recycling Collaboratives Change Programme has been secured to deliver phase 1 of the project. An update is provided in the accompanying report 'Resources and Fleet Pilot / Project Updates'

3.8






Community Repaint Scheme

	<p>The Service is planning for the implementation of a RePaint scheme at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). The scheme seeks to reduce the amount of paint sent for treatment and disposal by diverting quality paint for resale to the public and to community groups via donation as community paint.</p>
	<p>The Service has completed a procurement exercise for the RePaint service and is now working with the successful contractor, East Belfast Mission (EBM) to go live in early 2025.</p>
	<p><i>Pre-loved Toys</i></p>
3.9	<p>The Service explored alternative delivery models for 2024 and issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) for partners interested in delivering this scheme. Following discussions with those organisations responding to the EOI it was evident that the single, lead operator model would again be the delivery model for 2024. As a result, East Belfast Mission were appointed as the lead delivery partner for 2024.</p>
3.10	<p>The pre-loved toys scheme will run at the four HWRCs from 11 November to 15 December 2024. EBM will be collecting the pre-loved toys at these sites and will then have the option to sell some of these at a competitive price through their retail outlets and at the same time will be gifting bundles of these toys to feeder community organisations to distribute before Christmas. The project has been promoted on social media and signage has also been erected at sites regarding the scheme.</p>
	<p>(ii) Infrastructure</p>
	<p><i>Recycling Centres & Dargan Road WTS</i></p>
3.11	<p>Following SP&R approval for capital funding, the Service completed a procurement exercise for a multi-year, container provision contract. Orders have been placed for the new skips with the priority to replace those skips which are currently on hire. It is anticipated these will start to arrive on sites in December 2024. This will subsequently reduce the revenue costs associated with the rental of these skips.</p>
	<p><i>Recycling Centres and Pedestrian Access</i></p>
3.12	<p>The pedestrian access gate at Alexandra Park, Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) has been completed and operational as of August 2024.</p> <p>The service has requested that colleagues in Property & Projects commission a feasibility study regarding pedestrian access for Palmerston Road and Blackstaff Way HWRC. Discussions with the consultant are ongoing and a programme for delivery of the study is expected soon.</p>
	<p><i>Recycling Centres and Repair Works</i></p>
3.13	<p>Members will be aware that at the committee meeting of 8 October 2024, it was noted that Alexandra HWRC would have to undergo a temporary closure in order to carry out essential repair works to the service bay and simultaneously introduce changes to the layout of the site aimed at improving health and safety for site users. These works took just over 3 weeks to complete with the site re-opening to the public on 14th November.</p>
3.14	<p>Similar repair works to the service bays will be required at both Ormeau HWRC and Palmerston Road HWRC in 2025. Further details will be provided once a full works schedule has been compiled by Property & Projects.</p>

	<p><i>arc21 Residual Waste Project and Interim Residual Waste arrangements</i></p>
3.15	<p>arc21 is awaiting the determination by the Stormont Executive regarding the planning decision on the proposed Residual Waste Treatment Project. Due to the prolonged timescales regarding the residual waste treatment facility at Hightown, arc21 initiated a procurement exercise to secure future services for the treatment and/or disposal of constituent councils' residual waste. This service was broken down into a number of lots to reflect the different time scales and material requirements of the constituent councils.</p>
3.16	<p>Arc21 awarded the Belfast City Council lot to ReGen and the contract was scheduled to commence on 1 July 2023. The Council's contractor at that time, River Ridge Recycling challenged this decision through the courts and sought an injunction. On the 26 June 2023, the court refused to grant an injunction to stop the implementation of the contract and the contract for services related to interim residual waste disposal for use by Belfast City Council commenced as planned on 1 July 2023. It should be noted that while the injunction to prevent commencement of services was not successful, there is still a legal challenge by River Ridge against the award of this contract by arc21. The time frame for this case is likely to be Summer 2025.</p>
3.17	<p>As noted in the performance statistics above, this contract is delivering a step-change in diverting residual waste from landfill to energy recovery.</p>
	<p><i>Connected Circular Economy - Shared Island Project</i></p>
3.18	<p>The Service has worked with colleagues in the Economic Development Unit and Climate Team along with Dublin City Council (DCC) to deliver a feasibility study into a "Connected Circular Economy." This report investigated how the two cities can share knowledge and good practice with the ambition for the development of hubs in Dublin and Belfast to support the growth of the circular economy across the island.</p>
3.19	<p>In collaboration with DCC as lead partner, a further funding request has been submitted to the Shared Island Fund seeking to progress the report's recommendations and develop more detailed business cases for the preferred option(s). No update on this funding application has been received from the Shared Island Fund to date.</p>
	<p>(iii) Behaviour Change</p>
	<p><i>Performance Pressures at HWRCs</i></p>
3.20	<p>During the course of 2023/24, the Service noted a general, downward trend in the recycling rates achieved by the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)¹. Anecdotal evidence suggested that neighbouring councils had introduced robust access and waste acceptance policies at their recycling centres which may have resulted in some residents either returning to their own Council area to deposit waste or indeed availing of alternative facilities which by comparison lack access and acceptance policies. In essence, the sector may be witnessing a shift in the location of waste disposal across council boundaries</p>
3.21	<p>The Service, with the assistance of colleagues in the Performance Management Unit, decided to carry out a performance analysis of the Council's HWRCs to determine the validity of this argument. A comparison of the performance of the Council's HWRCs in 2023/24 versus the previous year is provided in the table below.</p>

¹ Performance figures refer to both Household Waste Recycling Centres and Civic Amenity Sites (CAS) unless otherwise stated.

Table 1: HWRC Performance Data 2023/24 versus 2022/23 – Full Year Comparison

Indicator	2022/23	2023/24	+/- Change
HWRC Recycling Tonnage	14,173	14,450	 1.95%
HWRC Residual Waste Tonnage	13,310	14,086	 5.83%
HWRC Recycling Rate	51.6%	50.6%	 1%
HWRC Ranking (Recycling Rate) amongst NI Local Authorities	11th	11th	
HWRC Recyclables as a percentage of Total Municipal Recyclables	24.2%	23.5%	 0.7%

3.22 While the tonnage of recyclables captured increased slightly by 1.95%, the growth of the non-recyclable/residual waste at 5.95% has resulted in a fall in the overall recycling rate of the sites. It is notable that the recycling rate figure of 50.6% at the HWRCs is the lowest rate in the last 15 years (2009/10 = 50.1%). This is of particular concern as the HWRCs would always outperform other areas of Waste Collection within the council and would underpin the overall Household Recycling and Municipality Recycling Rates.

3.23 However, these figures disguise an underlying trend. In September 2023, in an effort to improve its recycling rate, Ards & North Down Borough Council (A&NDBC) introduced an online booking system for all users of their recycling centres. An analysis of the data from the Council's HWRCs for the period September to March 23/24, the period immediately post A&NDBC scheme, compared with the previous year, shows a much more significant impact on the recycling centre performance and financial impact.

3.24 As highlighted in table 2 below, an examination of the residual waste since the introduction of the A&NDBC online booking system indicates a 12% increase rather than the 6% annual figure above, which covers the first five months of the year when no such booking system was in place. In addition, while the increase across all sites is 12%, there are marked increases in particular at Palmerston HWRC, which sits in close proximity to Holywood CA site operated by A&NDBC.

Table 2: Residual Waste Disposed of at HWRCs & CA Sites – 6 month comparison

Residual Waste Tonnages								
	Alex	Bstaff	Palm	Orm	Creg	Spring	Agnes	Total
Sep22- Mar23	1,386	1,938	1,149	1,229	289	588	588	7,167
Sep23- Mar24	1,574	2,121	1,395	1,422	272	595	657	8,036
Tonnage Var	188	183	246	193	17	7	69	869

% Var	14%	9%	21%	16%	-6%	1%	12%	12%
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3.25 This growth rate of residual waste at the sites is stark and without doubt has played a significant part in the decline in the overall recycling rate at the centres. Applying the growth rate for these 7 months to the full year and adjusting for the normal overall waste growth rate (+1.5%) gives a scenario of an additional 1,300 tonnes of residual/non-recyclable waste accepted at the Council's sites over the course of a year, with an estimated additional cost of handling and treatment of £194,000.

3.26 The Council operates an online booking system for light goods vehicles/vans seeking to access the recycling centres. This data was analysed over the same period (Sep'23-Mar'24 versus Sep'22 - Mar'23) in an effort to identify potential sources of increased residual tonnage. As demonstrated in table three the sites have witnessed on average a 13% increase in the number of van bookings during this period and again of particular note is the 25% increase witnessed by Palmerston.

3.27 *Table 3: Number of Van bookings to BCC HWRCs*

Van Bookings					
No. of visits	Alexandra	Blackstaff	Palmerston	Ormeau	Total
Sep'22 - Mar '23	5,141	7,870	5,082	7,190	25,283
Sep'23 - Mar '24	5,606	8,324	6,352	8,164	28,446
Variance visits	465	454	1,270	974	3,163
Variance %	9%	6%	25%	14%	13%

3.28 This increase in residual tonnage and van bookings coincides with the introduction of the new access and acceptance policies in neighbouring councils. Indeed, shortly after the introduction of the A&NDBC booking system, media channels noted the emerging phenomenon of “waste tourism” – residents crossing Council boundaries to deposit waste at recycling centres.

3.29 A further analysis of the van booking system for the period Jan-Mar'24 was conducted. The purpose was to identify usage patterns which would be considerably greater than the average household and which may identify opportunistic individuals or organisations availing of the recycling centres to dispose of their commercial waste and thereby avoid paying for its disposal but rather placing this burden on the Belfast rate payer.

3.30 All accounts which booked 14 times or more during this period i.e. used the site more than once per week, greater usage than the average householder, were examined in terms of their total number of visits to the sites.

3.31 Over this three-month period, 156 accounts placed 6,868 bookings. These 156 accounts represented around 56% of total bookings. The range in the number of bookings was 14 – 246. Of these 156 accounts, the average number of bookings over this 13-week period was 44 occasions. These figures would suggest that the lack of formal waste acceptance policies may be leaving the recycling centres vulnerable to commercial waste abuse.

3.32 Council officers have met with their counterparts in A&NDBC to discuss their policies and to view a demonstration of their online booking system. An online demonstration was also provided by the company behind alternative software, the “Booking Lab” which is in use at

	<p>over 70 councils across the UK. Both systems were more suitable to the waste environment than the current system in place at the Council to manage van bookings which was installed as an off the shelf solution to manage visitor numbers in the context of the Covid-19 Public Health Regulations and social distancing.</p>
3.33	<p>The project also examined the performance of A&NDBC recycling centres over the same period to ascertain if their new booking system had in fact delivered the anticipated benefits. Despite the initial reservations expressed on various media channels, the introduction of the booking system and supporting policies has enabled A&NDBC to reverse the trend of declining recycling performance at the sites and at the same time generate efficiency savings. For the period Oct'23-Mar'24 versus the same period the previous year, the sites achieved an overall uplift in the recycling rate of 7%. This improved performance also resulted in significant avoided costs of landfill disposal.</p>
3.34	<p>Through desk research and interviews with neighbouring Councils and industry sources, Council officers noted that neighbouring councils have varying policies with regard to waste access and acceptance at HWRCs, ranging from simple proof of residency within the council catchment area to online booking systems for all users and fair use policies. At present, the Council does not have any such policy. The Service is therefore extremely limited in the terms of the tools at its disposal to challenge suspect behaviour and drive improved recycling performance at the sites. A summary of the policies in place in neighbouring councils is contained in Appendix 1 – Waste Access & Acceptance Policies.</p>
3.35	<p>The absence of a Waste Access & Acceptance policy means the Council is the path of least resistance for those who may wish to exploit this opportunity. As outlined above, this is having a detrimental impact on the recycling centre recycling performance and financial position.</p>
3.36	<p>Taking the above into consideration, it is recommended that an action plan is developed to tackle this issue in an effort to drive improved performance at the sites, and subject to members approval, develop and introduce a HWRC Waste Access and Acceptance Policy, designed to run in parallel with the current Waste and Recycling Collection Operational Policy which is in use for Waste Collections. The Service is exploring options which might be considered as components of an action plan for recycling centres and will provide a report to Committee in due course.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">(iv) Information Technology</p>
3.37	<p>In-Cab Technology</p> <p>The in-Cab technology project has been advancing through the procurement process. A preferred supplier has been identified by the evaluation team and a Final Business case will be presented to the Financial Oversight Board before going through Council Governance. On passage, it is hoped to award the contract in January 2025.</p>
3.38	<p>Focus for the project team and project board will now switch to focus on a detailed implementation plan, with a phased roll out of the solution to take place throughout the 2025/26 financial year.</p>

3.39	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications associated with this report.</p>
3.40	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Waste Access & Acceptance Policies</p>

Appendix 1 – Waste Access & Acceptance Policies

HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES (HRCs) AT NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

9 household recycling centres at Bangor, Comber, Holywood, Kircubbin, Ballygowan, Donaghadee, Millisle, Newtownards & Portaferry

Since September 2023, on-line booking system (& mobile phone, tablet and via telephone). The system introduced is in use in many other local authorities across Great Britain. Bookings can be made from 30 mins before visit to up to 2 weeks ahead. Users have to provide email address, household address, type and vehicle reg, categories of waste, takes 1-2 minutes.

Residents then have to take to the HRC their booking reference number, and documentary proof of residency in Borough (acceptable proofs on booking page an included in confirmation email).

Multiple slots throughout the day, online system controls number of users at any time, enhances customer experience by minimising queues and site congestion.

On-line includes recycling guide, hard copy also delivered to houses. Unlimited bookings for compostable garden waste, bookings to dispose of compostable garden waste ONLY in a double-axle trailer are also unlimited. Where bookings for particular address appears to be excessive for normal householder use, users may be prompted to call for further booking request ('Fair Use Policy').

The system recognises if users have a van and double-axle trailer or another vehicle that normally would have required a permit once you enter it online. There is no need to separately apply for a permit. As previously, if a form of transport is used that normally would have required a permit, such visits will still be limited to six visits per residential address in a calendar year.

A&ND do not accept commercial or industrial waste from tradespeople at any of their HRCs, ie they do not accept rubble from construction, building or demolition sites at recycling centres. They will accept a small amount of rubble from household DIY projects (no powdered plaster, gypsum products or hazardous wastes), up to a maximum single axle trailer load and must be broken down into small pieces. This can be taken to Balloo (ie Bangor) recycling centre only. As rubble is classified as industrial rather than household waste, larger amounts of rubble or construction waste should be disposed of by the resident engaging a private waste contractor to remove it.

A&ND Council offers free 1-to-1 support to local businesses, helping them to manage recycling and waste disposal in the most cost-efficient way. Their Recycling Team can come and take a look at the waste a business is producing and help with the implementation of recycling best practice. They collect waste from commercial premises with agreement and at a cost.

LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH

3 HRCs at:

Carryduff HRC, 8 Comber Road, Co Down BT8 8AN

Drumlough HRC, Dromarra Road, Hillsborough, Co Down BT26 6QA

The Cutts HRC, Derriaght, Co Antrim BT17 9HN

Access to HRCs restricted to Lisburn and Castlereagh residents only.

Users have to bring photographic ID with proof of address available for inspection on arrival. If photo ID does not show address, user should bring a recent utility bill. Users asked to report to member of staff in Security Kiosk on arrival.

Website also lists all 37 'bring bank sites' across Council area, for (variously) mixed textiles and clothes, mixed glass and bottles, steel cans, and plastic pots, tubs trays and bottles.

The HRCs are primarily for the recycling and disposal of household waste by residents in the council area. To dispose of trade waste a Trade Waste Disposal Ticket is needed and is issued by the council. Contractors carrying household waste (ie gardener, joiner, handyman) are required to have a Waste Transfer Note (£78) covering the waste they are carrying. Charities should have a Charity Letter issued by the council.

Depending on size of vehicle, trade waste tickets cost £96 - £255, recycling tickets cost £38.50 - £101.

The following trade waste materials are not accepted at any of the recycling centers: oil, electrical, batteries, tyres, paint, plasterboard, and any hazardous waste.

A trade waste collection service is offered to businesses within the council area, which is flexible and can be adapted to suit specific needs. The service is for refuse disposal only and does not include recycling, and collections are chargeable.

ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY

4 HRCs at:

New Park HRC, Orchard Way, Antrim, BT41 2RU

Bruslee HRC, Ballynure Road, Ballyclare, BT39 9LS

Crumlin HRC, Main Street, Antrim BT29 4UP

O'Neill Road HRC, O'Neill Road, Glengormley BT36 6UQ

Only domestic residents of the Borough are permitted to use the Household Recycling Centres. Photographic proof of address must be provided, or site admittance will be refused. Vans and trailers are permitted.

All permitted commercial waste is directed to Bruslee Recycling Centre. Users are required to register prior to use. Disposal of permitted materials will be at rates agreed during the annual review of waste collection charges in the pricing schedule.

OTHER NI COUNCILS

From BBC News (September 2023):

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council: No proof of residency required.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council: Proof of residency not required.

Derry City and Strabane District Council: Booking is required at two of 11 sites.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council: Proof of address may be requested.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council: Proof of residency required.

Mid Ulster District Council: Proof of residency may be required at Tullyvar, near Aughnacloy.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council: Proof of residency is not required but an online booking system is in place for large vehicle access.