

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY

REPORT TITLE: REUSE AND RECYCLING CENTRE UPDATE

REPORT OF: HEAD OF STRATEGY AND SERVICES

FOR SUBMISSION TO: AUTHORITY MEETING

DATE: 24 June 2021

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report provides an update to members on the progress made and the proposed areas of work officers will undertake as part of a comprehensive review of the Authority's Reuse and Recycling Centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Authority is recommended to:

- A. To approve the permanent implementation of an appointment booking system for Reuse and Recycling Centres (Section 5)
- B. Note the findings of the review of current third party off takers and proposed next steps.
- C. Note the planned review of service and operational costs.

SIGNED: .....Head of Strategy and Services

Dated: 14 June 2021

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This report provides an update to Members on the progress officers have made in conjunction with LondonEnergy Ltd (LEL) and Borough officers in reviewing the operational and service arrangements at the Authority's network of Reuse and Recycling Centres (RRCs).
- 1.2. The North London Waste Authority (NLWA) has a statutory responsibility for providing municipal waste disposal services for the seven constituent borough councils and has powers to arrange for the reuse, recycling and composting of municipal waste and to operate RRCs.

2. RRC USAGE BY RESIDENTS

- 2.1. Visitor numbers have been steadily increasing since the turn of the year. When there was a general relaxation in late March of Government COVID-19 restrictions on society, LEL increased the number of slots available by 33 per cent at each of the RRC sites. Table (1a) below shows tonnages in 2021 for RRCs operated by LEL.

	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21
Hornsey Street	299.90	317.62	477.06	464.40
Regis Road	221.38	263.16	354.80	357.20
South Access Road	299.74	363.54	592.64	552.70
Kings Road	55.98	101.60	145.82	170.90
Western Road	273.24	309.38	464.70	458.98
Summers Lane	573.94	530.50	955.50	1,074.58

3. OFF TAKERS

- 3.1. LEL enter into contracts with "off-takers" to accept and treat recyclable materials received at RRCs. The income from these contracts is paid directly to the Authority, but NLWA has not to date had an approval or consultation role in relation to such contracts. Authority officers and LEL executives have conducted in March a joint review of contracts in place for these materials. This concluded that for the majority of commodities, the Authority is benefiting from terms that are in line with or slightly ahead of the market rate.
- 3.2. However, there are two issues that require further action.
- 3.2.1. Wood recycling is currently treated at a cost to the authority. The charge currently being paid is slightly higher than the average market rate. This highlights volatility in the market and the need to regularly test for value in longer term arrangements. The existing contract comes to an end on 30 June 2021. As a direct result of this review an option to extend is not being taken up. It is LEL's intention to retender this contract with the

support of NLWA officers in developing the specification. and contract terms as well as playing a role in evaluation and award process.

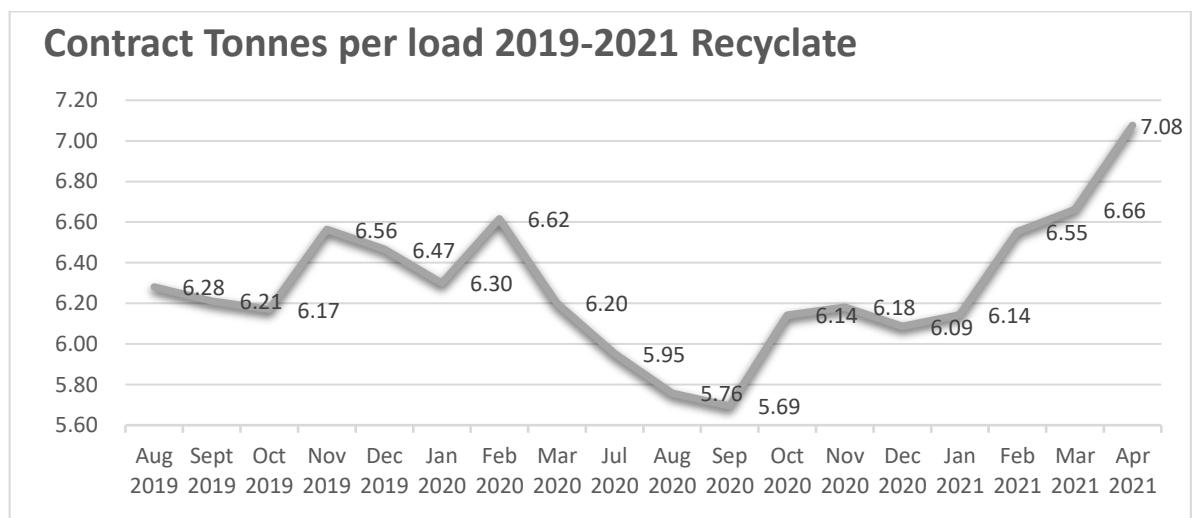
3.2.2. There are a number of off-taker arrangements that are not contracted and where LEL rely on “spot” sales, for example batteries, plasterboard and books. It has been agreed that these will be subject to a quarterly review between NLWA officers and LEL executives to ensure spot arrangements are achieving best value.

4. RRC EFFICIENCY REVIEW

4.1. In addition to the off-taker analysis, NLWA officers and LEL executives are conducting a review of the RRC operations, with bespoke workshops planned to start on 15 June. The workshops will evaluate the operational methodology and resource profile for each facility and the collective arrangements such as the use of pool staff and agency.

4.2. In preparation LEL have agreed to share all operational documents, including staff schedules, method statements, risk assessments etc. NLWA officers have created a financial modelling tool and are in the process of gathering benchmarking information from other WDAs that operate RRCs. We hope to have completed the review and report back to members at Authority meeting on 7 October.

4.3. A further area where there has been action relates to payloads. Some materials are funded on a “per load basis” – ie the same transport price is charged from LEL to NLWA irrespective of the tonnage carried on a journey from our RRCs. The chart below shows that loads were variable pre-COVID-19. Tonnes per load fell in the early period after sites reopened following lockdown in May 2020, and have improved since October 2020 to achieve an average payload increase from 5.69t to 7.08t



5. ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEM

- 5.1. In March 2021 in response to the COVID-19 emergency, RRCs across the country were required to close as part of the first national “lockdown”. On 13 May 2020 RRCs reopened in north London.
- 5.2. As part of the programme of reopening RRCs, the Authority and its contractors (principally LEL) introduced temporary changes to the RRC operation. These were designed to help residents and staff to maintain social distancing and to avoid extensive queuing and disruption affecting roads around sites when capacity at the RRCs was heavily limited. These included the introduction of a temporary booking system.
- 5.3. The booking system requires residents to fill in a short form online with details including their name, address and car registration details. The system requires residents to book 24 hours before their intended visit to the RRC of their choice.
- 5.4. The booking system has been well received by users with residents enjoying the predictability of experience that it delivers. 43 percent of residents surveyed in July 2020 agreed the bookings system had improved their experience of the RRC, with a further 34 percent indicating it had no impact on their experience.
- 5.5. The use of an online booking system introduces a number of environmental and practical benefits these include:
 - 5.5.1. Avoiding long queues at the busiest times. Long queues adversely affect users’ experience of visiting the RRC and can create problems for people who live nearby. Current experience including over recent bank holiday weekends, is that there is enough capacity to accommodate demand with the smoothing of peaks.
 - 5.5.2. Supporting the operation to have appropriate numbers of staff and containers to meet the expected demand. This reduces the number of containers movements.
 - 5.5.3. Experience has shown there has been a reduction in users seeking to dispose of waste inappropriately.
- 5.6. There have also been a handful of complaints based on the need to book the day before to secure a slot and the lack of availability.
- 5.7. Although it was necessary when heightened COVID-19 protocols were in force to know the number of visitors that would be visiting each site ahead of time and to limit visitor numbers on a handful of occasions to maintain social distancing. As we enter a period of less stringent COVID-19 protocols these precautions could appear heavy handed.

- 5.8. The number of slots that are available can be varied as required. As mentioned in the previous report, the number of booking slots was increased by 33 percent in May and it is envisaged further booking slots will be made available when circumstances permit.
- 5.9. It is proposed that a booking system is retained at all of the Authority's RRC sites on a permanent basis.
- 5.10. It is proposed that the Authority will work with LEL and Bywaters to improve the functionality of the booking system. Improvements will include:
- 5.10.1. Half an hour booking slots to further smooth peaks associated with the beginning of the hour.
 - 5.10.2. Removing the requirement to book the day before the proposed visit.
 - 5.10.3. The continuation of a phone booking system to support residents with limited access to digital platforms.
 - 5.10.4. Digital Tablets at sites that will allow residents to book in real time and use the sites if slots are available.
- 5.11. Officers have undertaken a formal review of the RRC booking system that includes operational feedback and an overview of other London boroughs, (appendix c1). LEL have also consulted with members of the public after the introduction of the system across the RRC network, (appendix b1).
- 5.12. These papers have been shared with the Borough officers who have responded positively to continue with the online booking system.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Officers have carried out a stage 1, Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) attached as Appendix A1. The initial assessment has determined the potential impacts of the proposal are minor and as such a full EqIA is not required.

6.2. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISER

- 6.3. The Legal Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments have been incorporated.

7. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISER

- 7.1. The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments have been incorporated.

List of documents used:

Reuse and recycling centre (RRC) Visitor Booking System Report
RRC CUSTOMER SURVEY
Stage 1 EqlA

Contact officer:

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APPENDIX A1

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage 1 Initial Assessment

Background:

The Authority is responsible for the operation of seven Reuse and Recycling Centres's (RRC's). In March 2021 in response to the COVID-19 emergency, RRC's across the country were required to close to support the governments COVID-19 protocols. In May of 2021 the Government allowed RRC's to reopen to the public. As part of the programme of reopening RRC's, the Authority and its contractors introduced a number of temporary changes to the RRC operation, which were designed to help residents and staff to maintain social distancing. These included the introduction of a temporary booking system.

Proposal:

It is proposed that the Authority retain a booking system at all of its RRC sites on a permanent basis. This proposal is based on significant support for a Booking System from users of the site and the environmental and practical benefits of flattening the peaks and troughs in visitor numbers associated with the post pandemic arrangements.

Indicate the impact for each protected characteristic and give your reason. Include any positive impacts that resulted in improved access or services.

Protected Characteristic	Issue	Positive or Negative	Mitigation to policy	Impact After Mitigation (None, Minor, Severe)
Health Status/ Inequality	None			
Age, Disability	Computer Literacy may be a problem in accessing appointments.	Negative	Residents will be able to book an appointment over the phone on a dedicated line. Additionally, all sites will have access to the booking system and will be able to book a resident into the site if they do turn up without an appointment. We will keep between 1 and 2 % capacity in each booking slot for those with protected characteristics to gain access.	M
All Groups	Appointments reduces waiting times and allows our contractors to provide additional support to vulnerable residents.	Positive		M
Gender Reassignment	None	N/A		
Sex/Gender	None	N/A		
Sexual Orientation	None	N/A		
Race	None	N/A		
Religion or Beliefs	None	N/A		
Marital Status	None	N/A		
Other	None	N/A		

You Must Complete a Full EqIA if:

You find a significant impact on any protected characteristic after mitigation.

This is a high-profile policy that is likely to impact many people, or have a severe impact on smaller group of people.

Is a Full EqIA required?

NO

If no please explain why briefly.

A resident survey of site users was overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the booking system.

There is an overall benefit for residents in not having to endure long waits at peak times. With know number of visitors it is possible to provide additional support to residents when depositing their items.

The proposals will enable LEL and Bywaters to better manage their respective sites and prevent access to those disposing of Commercial waste inappropriately.

Where a potential negative impact has been identified, these can be mitigated to ensure the impact is minor.

Person Conducting Assessment

Position

Michael Clarke

Interim - Head of Strategy & Service

APPENDIX B1

RRC Customer Survey

July 2020

906 respondents

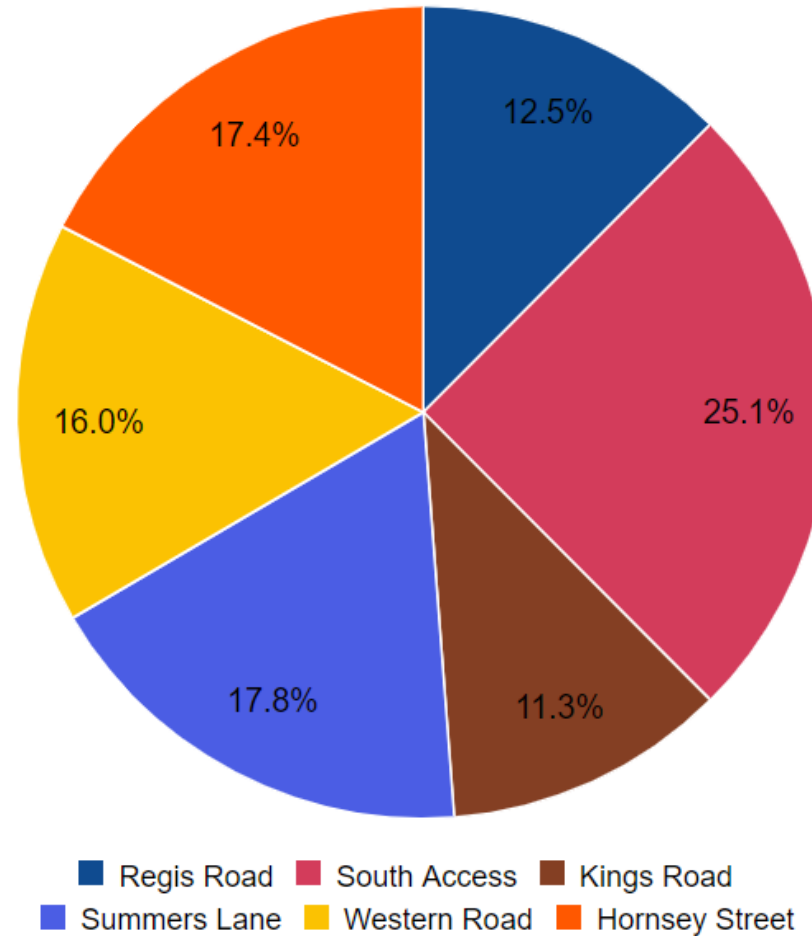


LondonEnergy

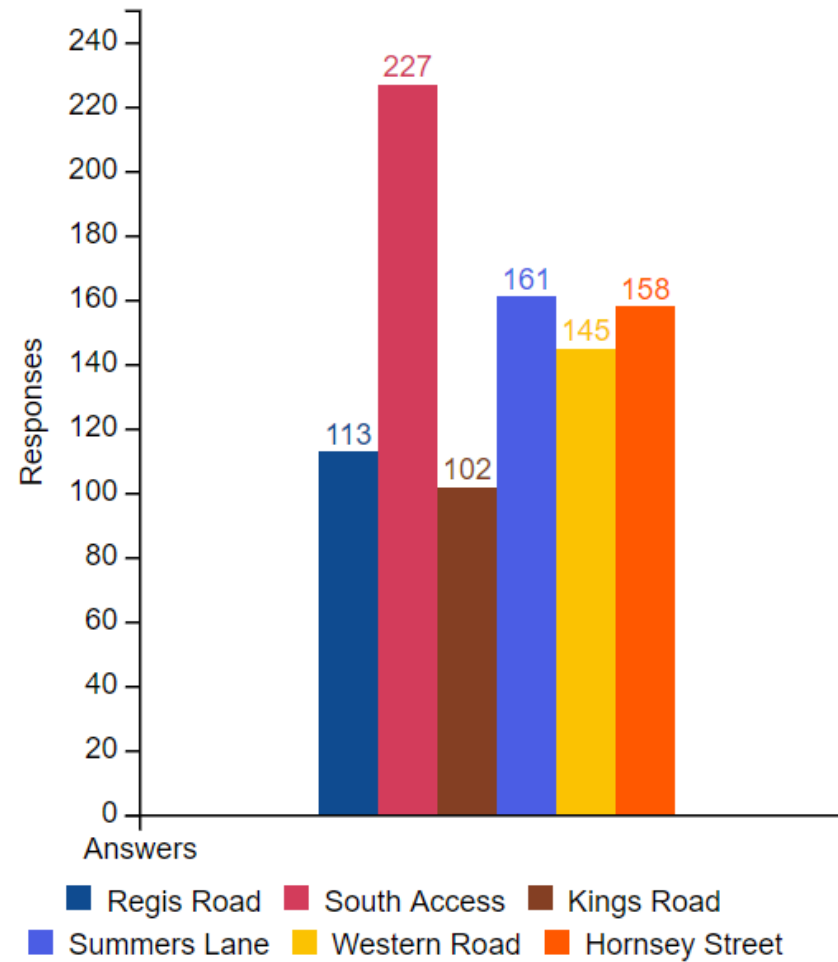
Great Place To Work



907 Responses



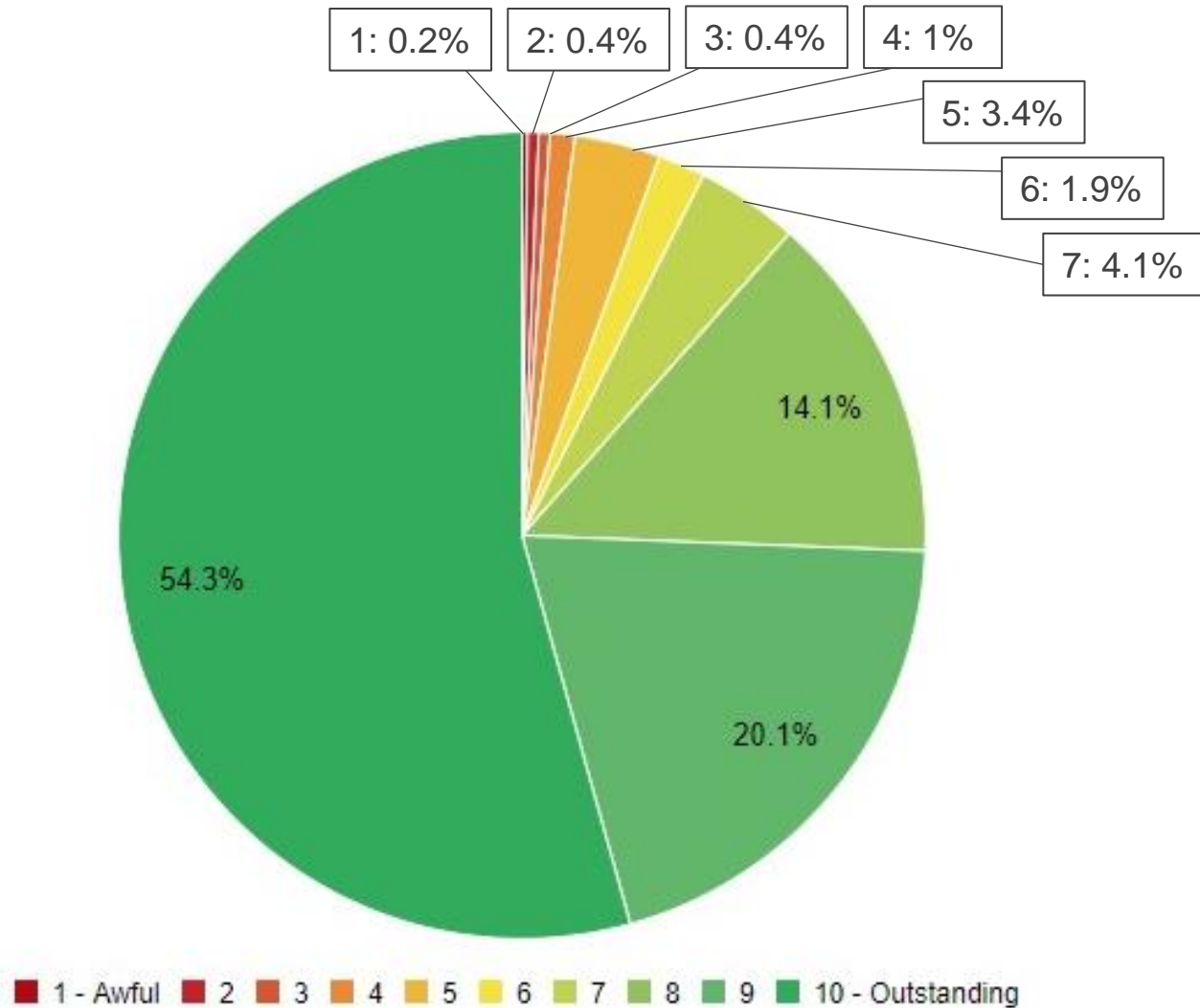
Responses per Recycling Centre



How has your experience been on site ?

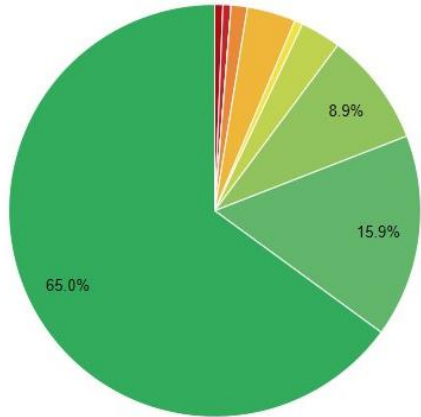
A total of 798 customer scored between 8-10

10 – 490
9 - 181
8 - 127
7 - 37
6 - 17
5 - 31
4 - 9
3 - 4
2 - 4
1 - 2



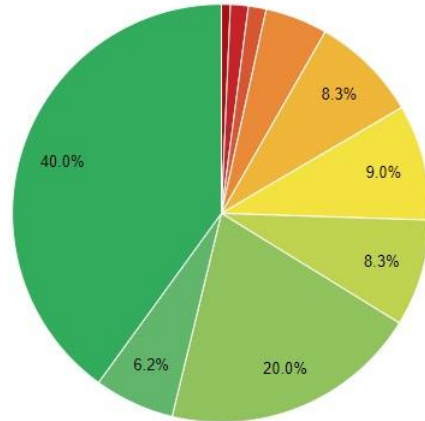
How has your experience been on site ? – Per site

Hornsey – 9.16



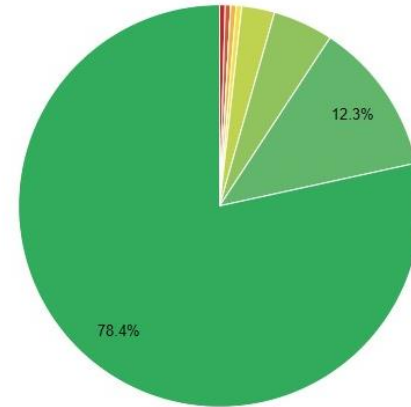
1 - Awful 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Outstanding

Western Road – 7.86



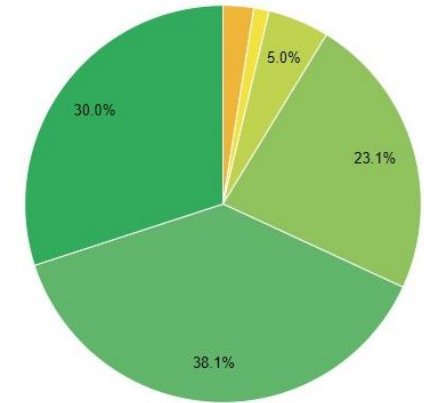
1 - Awful 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Outstanding

South Access – 9.59



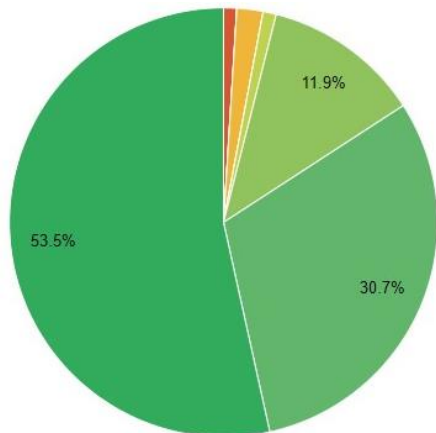
1 - Awful 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Outstanding

Summers Lane – 8.83



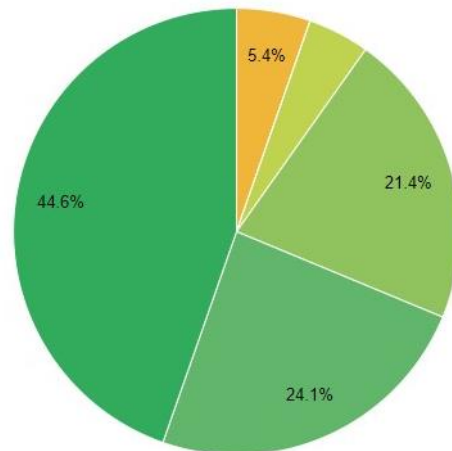
1 - Awful 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Outstanding

Kings Road – 9.26



1 - Awful 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Outstanding

Regis Road – 8.92

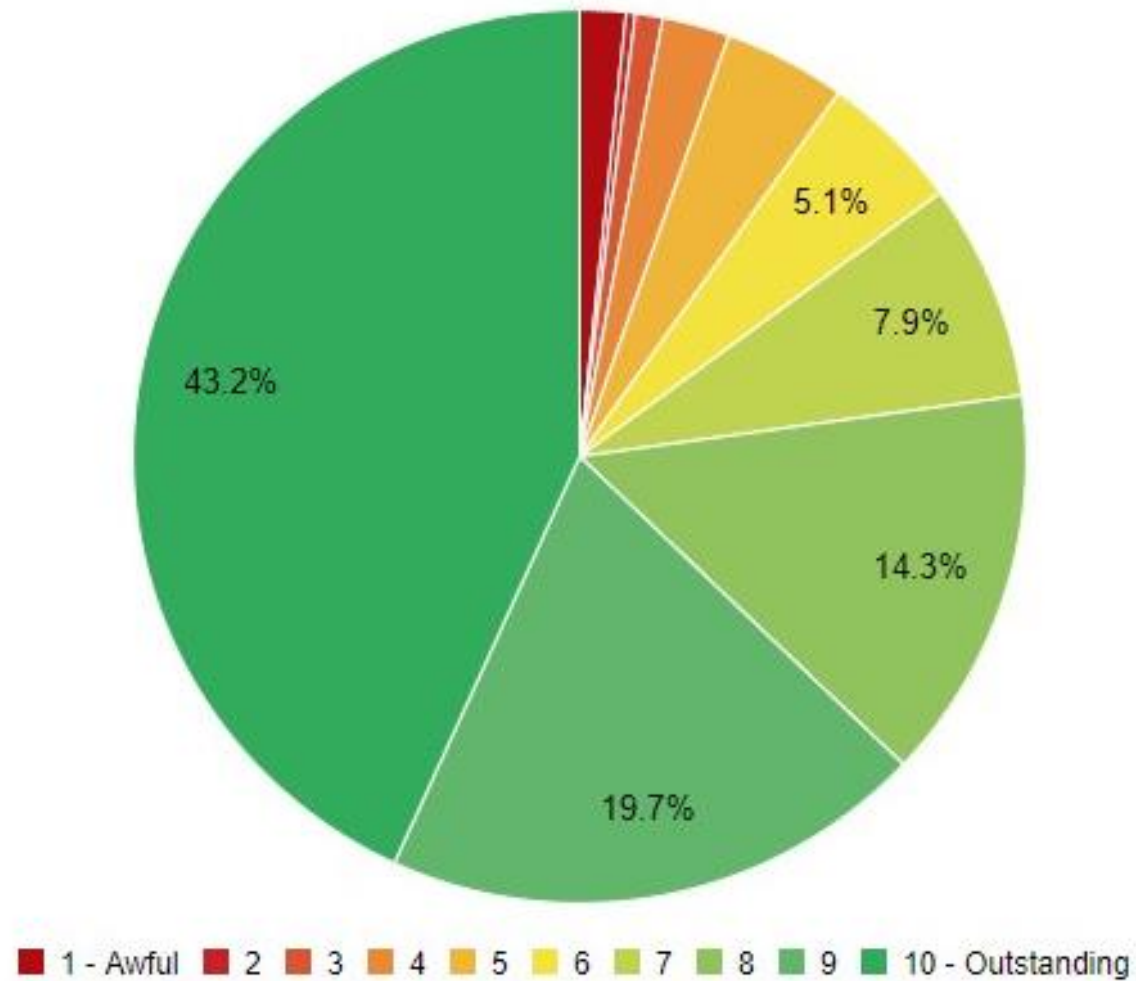


1 - Awful 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Outstanding

How has your experience been with the booking system ?

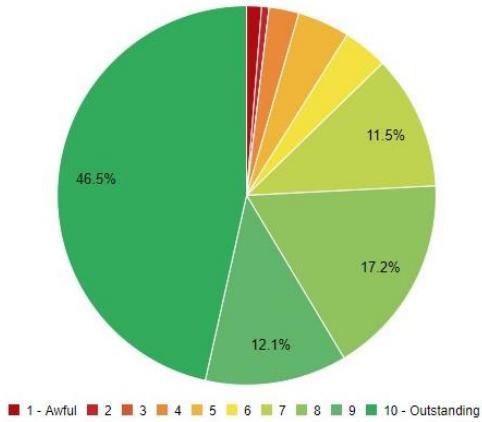
A total of 697 customer scored between 8-10

10 – 390
9 - 178
8 - 129
7 - 71
6 - 46
5 - 40
4 - 22
3 - 9
2 - 3
1 - 15

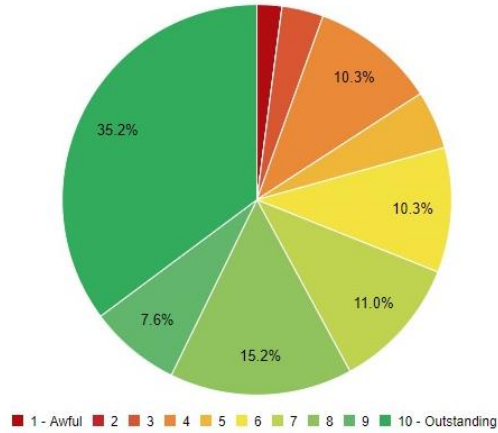


How has your experience been with the booking system? - Per site

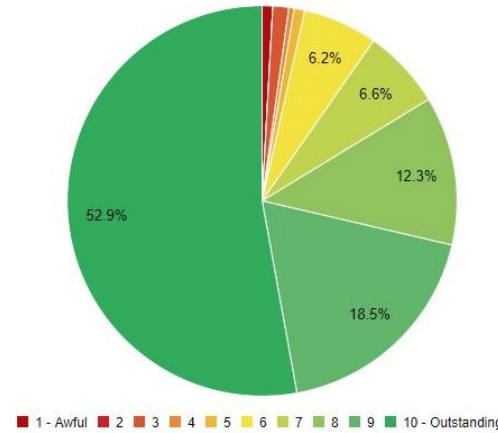
Hornsey – 8.44



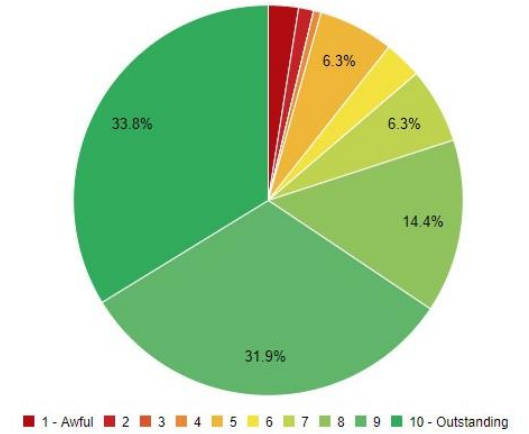
Western Road – 7.59



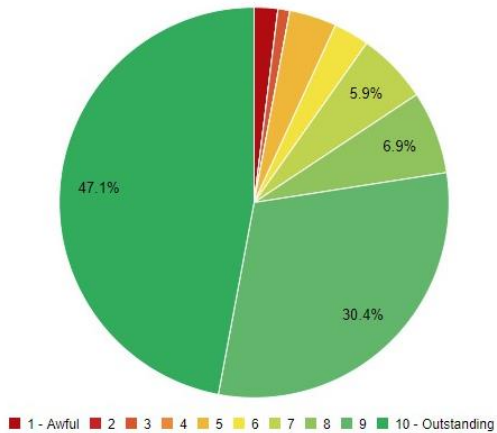
South Access – 8.88



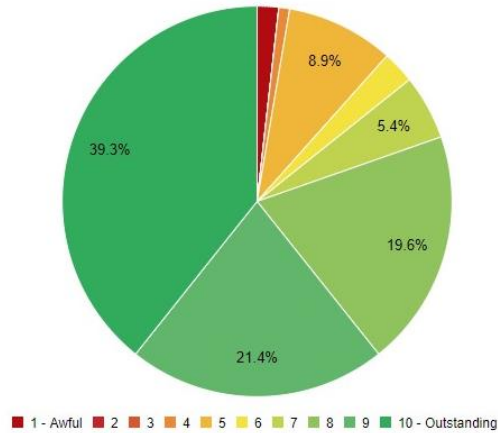
Summers Lane – 8.40



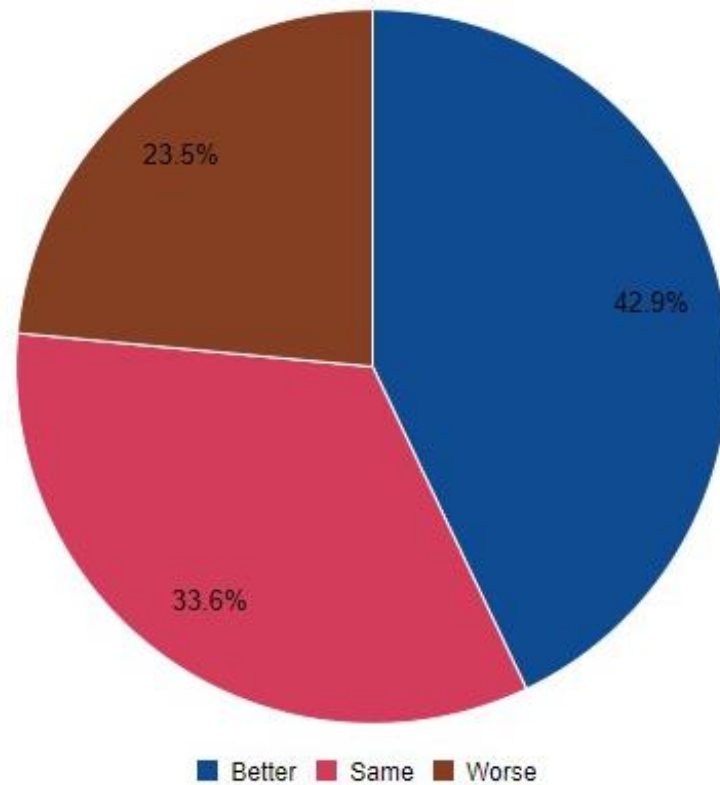
Kings Road – 8.82



Regis Road – 8.46



Do you think that your experience with the booking system is



Overview of the survey results

- A total of 906 customers completed the RRC Customer Survey across our six Reuse and Recycling Centres.
- The highest number of response was from South Access RRC (227) and the lowest from Western Road (102)
- 798 (88%) customers have scored between 8 to 10. When asked – ‘How has your experience been on site?’ *(with 10 been outstanding.)*
- 697 (76%) customers scored between 8 to 10 when asked ‘How was your experience using the booking system?’ *(with 10 been outstanding)*
- 387 (42%) customers selected ‘Better’ - ‘to the question ‘Do you think that your experience with the booking system (compared to coming on site without having to book) is’
- 340 (37%) customers visit the sites less that once a month.

APPENDIX C1

Reuse and recycling centre (RRC) Visitor Booking System Report

Introduction

The North London Waste Authority (NLWA) is currently reviewing its RRC operations, and the role of the booking system is part of the review.

This report provides details about the NLWA RRC visitor booking system which was implemented in May 2020 to meet the Government guidance on COVID-19, allowing visitors to visit RRCs safely.

It includes benchmark information from RRCs across the capital to further inform the decision for booking arrangements when COVID restrictions begin to ease later this year.

Background

NLWA is responsible for the disposal of waste for seven north London boroughs (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest) and manages recycling for all of them excluding Enfield. There are eight reuse and recycling centres in the NLWA area of which seven are managed by NLWA, with Enfield managing its own. The RRCs allows residents to recycle and dispose of larger household items which they couldn't otherwise dispose of through their usual waste and recycling collection services.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RRCs had to temporarily close in March 2020 and NLWA reviewed the requirements needed for residents to attend RRCs when they reopened. Prior to COVID-19 north London residents were not required to book an appointment to visit an RRC. However, in line with government guidelines and social distancing requirements it was not possible to continue using this method, which prompted NLWA and London Energy to introduce an online booking system for their seven sites in May 2020.

Current system

The current online booking system is delivered by Vello and managed by London Energy. There are a specified number of visitor slots allocated per hour, per site per day which residents can book on a first come first served basis.

What others are doing?

NLWA has contacted all of the London waste disposal authorities and unitary authorities to determine what approach they use for resident bookings. The table below provides a summary of the requirements currently in place for residents to attend RRCs across London.

Waste Authority / Borough	No. of RRCs	Online booking system in place	Change in system due to COVID?	Further information
North London Waste Authority (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Waltham Forest)	8	Yes - online	Yes	
East London Waste Authority (Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham and Redbridge)	4	No – turn up	No	They expected a booking system to cause more problems. Currently installing webcam streaming so that residents can check to see if

				roads approaching the RRC are busy before arriving.
West London Waste Authority (Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond upon Thames)	7	Yes – online for 6 out of 7 RRCs	Yes – introduced July 2020	They intend to keep the booking system once COVID restrictions lift.
Western Riverside Waste Authority (Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth and Wandsworth)	1	Yes – online	Yes – introduced March 2021	6-month trial went live on 20/03/21. They did not introduce the booking system before due to COVID. The main aims are to reduce the queuing and to stop non-residents using the centre.
South London Waste Partnership (Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Sutton)	6	Yes – online	Yes	They noted that the booking system helps to remove peaks and troughs in daily demand and whilst COVID measures are in place allow greater site control. However, not all boroughs in the partnership will keep the booking system when lockdown restriction ease. It has worked for some boroughs and not others.
Bexley (unitary)	2	No	No	Currently operating a number plate system.
Bromley (unitary)	2	No	No	Live webcam link allows for residents to see queues at RRCs prior to visiting. They have trailed a booking system which was removed. Issues included 'no shows' and resident complaints. They felt that traffic would flow better without it but are considering using it in the future following some infrastructure changes that are due to take place.
Greenwich (unitary)	1	No	No	As of September 2020, they no longer operate a booking system for their RRC. The system caused problems such as 'no shows' and disappointment/complaints when people were turned away without a booking and was resource intensive.
Lewisham (unitary)	1	Yes	Yes – introduced May 2021	Benefits of the system include controlled access and social distancing. Some complaints initially but has now stopped.
Southwark (unitary)	1	Yes	Yes	Benefits of the system include more control over traffic peaks during the day, manage problem users who might be seeking to misuse the facility. Monitor usage rates, and frequencies of use.

Tower Hamlets (unitary)	1	No	No	They did not have a booking system in place before COVID but require visitors to provide proof of residency. There are some considerations for permits in the future.
City of London (unitary)	0			CoL has an arrangement for their residents to use Tower Hamlets RRC in Northumberland Wharf.
Westminster (unitary)	0			Westminster has an arrangement for their residents to use Smugglers Lane RRC (managed by West London Waste Authority).

Summary of the key findings in the table above – most Boroughs have implemented some sort of booking system since COVID-19.

Based on the information collected for this report there are 34 RRCs located across London managed by five waste disposal authorities and six unitary (collection and disposal) authorities. 68% of these RRCs operate a form of online booking system and the majority of these were implemented since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

Comments from other Authorities

The majority of Authorities are using a booking system and find it helpful to manage their sites. However, Authorities such as East London Waste Authority, Greenwich, Bromley and Bexley do not currently use a booking system. Some of the reasons for this include the risk of complaints from residents, the resource required to manage an online system and some Authorities felt it restricted their management of the recycling centres.

Comments from London Energy

The Assistant Head of Operations at London Energy noted that the response to the RRC booking system has been ‘largely positive’ and something that residents have now adapted to using. Other benefits that have been noted include the ability to deterring trade waste by being able to identify customers visiting site an excessive number of times, control of access to site e.g. the ability to block further bookings from abusive/banned residents and limiting the number of vehicles on site at peak times such as Bank Holidays etc.

It was also noted that the booking system is relatively low cost of operating and that ‘consideration should be given to keeping the booking system post-covid.’

Advantages

Based on the evidence from the LEL/NLWA booking system and the majority of respondents the main advantages in having such a system were:

- Better control of commercial waste.
- No cross - boundary visitors from outside of NLWA area.
- Ability to keep a record of people visiting multiple times and therefore enforce bans if required.
- Ability to control social distancing requirements which may be required for a long period of time.

- Site operatives are better able to manage 'traffic' on site and spot trends when the site is quieter or busier and arrange container changes and staffing resources accordingly.

Disadvantages

In some cases it can create an administrative burden as people have more queries before they make a booking although this can be mitigated by having more detailed information available online.

Furthermore, people can't be spontaneous and just visit an RRC unannounced if they are passing although those visitors could be accommodated if the site isn't busy. Site staff can book them in on arrival if using a tablet or smart phone. Some of the boroughs noted that 'no-shows' presented a problem on-site and making it less efficient than a turn up and go system.

Proposal

Overall, a large proportion of the 34 London RRCs currently operate successfully using an online visitor booking system for residents. While there is a need for technical and administrative resource to monitor and maintain these systems the advantages appear to outweigh disadvantages.

The list below provides a number of options to be considered in relation to the visitor booking system in north London as COVID restrictions begin to ease.

Options:

1. Continue to use a booking system in north London for RRC visitor appointments in place of traditional 'turn-up' approach.
2. Continue to use the booking system for an extended period of time to further monitor the impact of the system. Additionally, seek resident feedback in order to make a more informed decision.
3. Remove the system once lockdown restrictions ease.
4. Remove the system once restrictions ease but introduce additional measures that aid residents in using the site e.g., CCTV camera.

Next steps

The Authority intends to share this report with Boroughs to gain their views about the booking system and consult with site users. An equalities impact assessment on options will also be undertaken with proposals to be brought to the June 2021 Authority meeting.

Request for comments and feedback from Members.

Appendix

RRC visitor booking system questions

1. Are you currently operating a booking system for your reuse and recycling centres?
2. Is this for all types of vehicles including bicycles and pedestrians?
3. What are the benefits you have noticed from using a booking system?
4. Have you experienced any problems since the booking system has been in place?
5. Are you intending to keep your booking system once COVID restrictions are lifted?
6. If no, why not?
7. Before COVID restrictions were implemented, did you already have a booking system or visitor control measures in place such as permits or proof of residency?
8. If you do not intend to retain a booking system, will you change how you managed RRC visitors prior to COVID measures once restrictions have been removed?
9. If yes, what will be the difference?

Useful links

- <https://eastlondonwaste.gov.uk/gerpins-lane/>
- <https://westlondonwaste.gov.uk/recycling-sites/>
- <https://wrwa.gov.uk/>
- <https://wrwa.gov.uk/news/introduction-of-a-booking-system-trial/>
- <http://www.slwp.org.uk/household-recycling-partially/>
- https://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/200084/recycling_rubbish_and_waste
- <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/waste-and-recycling/covid-19-waste-services>
- https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200171/recycling_and_rubbish/285/reuse_and_recycling_centre
- <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/wasterecycle/reuse-and-recycling-centre-covid>
- <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/recycling/recycling-centres/reuse-and-recycling-centre?chapter=2>
- https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lqnl/environment_and_waste/recycling_and_waste/reuse_and_recycling_centre.aspx