

**NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY**

**REPORT TITLE:** SERVICES UPDATE

**REPORT OF:** HEAD OF STRATEGY AND SERVICES

**FOR SUBMISSION TO:** AUTHORITY MEETING

**DATE:** 15 DECEMBER 2022


**SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

This report informs Members about the latest operational activities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Authority is recommended to:

- A. Note the operational, performance and recycling updates provided; and
- B. Note the update on changes to regulations that govern the management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) found in items of soft seating.

Signed:  ..... Head of Strategy and Services

**Date:** 5 December 2022

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This report provides Members with an update of the main operational matters that have arisen since the report to the Authority meeting on 31 October 2022.

## 2. ABOUT NLWA'S SERVICES

- 2.1. The North London Waste Authority (the Authority or NLWA) has a statutory responsibility for the provision of municipal residual waste disposal services for the seven constituent borough councils (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Waltham Forest), serving over two million people. NLWA also manage the recycling collected by six of the seven boroughs.
- 2.2. The Authority has powers to arrange for the reuse, recycling and composting of municipal waste and to operate Reuse and Recycling Centres (RRCs). Waste disposal services are mostly delivered through a contract with LondonEnergy Ltd (which is owned by NLWA).
- 2.3. The seven boroughs collect nearly 820,000 tonnes of waste and recycling a year, of which 675,000 tonnes comes from households. NLWA's aim is to preserve the resources and the environment today and for future generations. The Authority is committed to innovation and careful planning to ensure waste resources are managed effectively and sustainably.

## 3. DESTINATIONS UPDATE

- 3.1. The table below details the end destinations for Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) collected across the six participating Boroughs that use the NLWA Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) contract with Biffa. Enfield Dry Mixed Recyclate is currently processed under a separate agreement managed by the London Borough of Enfield.

Material	March 2020 baseline			Q2 2022-2023			2023 Target			2030 Target
	UK	Europe	Far East	UK	Europe	Far East	UK	Europe	Far East	UK
Cardboard	0%	0%	100%	58%	42%	0%	10%	50%	40%	100%
Mixed Paper	43%	19%	38%	7%	93%	0%	70%	30%	0%	100%
Glass	68%	32%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Aluminium Cans	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Steel Cans	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Plastic Bottles	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Other Plastics	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%

- 3.2 The table highlights significant progress in reducing our reliance on processors from the Far East and non-European countries. In Quarter 2 of 2022/23 we saw none of our Cardboard or Mixed Papers (fibrous materials) being treated in the Far East. In addition, a high volume of our recycle is reprocessed in the UK which supports green jobs and encourages the development of further new reprocessing capacity knowing that demand exists for the service.
- 3.3 While there has been welcome reduction in the percentage of fibrous materials going to long haul destinations, the lack of capacity within the UK market for the processing of cardboard and mixed paper remains a significant problem.
- 3.4 Due to the high price of paper, UK paper mills are able to acquire high quality, source segregated paper particularly from industry. Paper which has been through the waste collection and MRF process is of lower quality, and with UK capacity taking more high-quality material a high proportion of NLWA paper has been processed in Europe.
- 3.5 NLWA has continued to call for central government to initiate a program of measures that will stimulate the growth of processing capacity within the UK, so that there is a consistent market in the UK for recycled paper and cardboard.

#### **4. CONTAMINATION/ PROCESS LOSS**

- 4.1. The table below details the percentage of rejected (contaminated) Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) collected by the six participating Boroughs and delivered to the Edmonton Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) operated by Biffa.
- 4.2. Gate rejects represent whole or part loads that are rejected before processing because they contain more than 15% of non-target materials (disposable nappies, food etc). Gate rejects are low making up approximately 1-2% of total material collected, this is a major benefit of having a downgraded materials category that ensures loads that contain more than 5% and up to 15% contamination are still processed. Therefore NLWA rejects are low for an Authority in our situation.
- 4.3. Process rejects are materials that are rejected during the sifting and sorting process – ie non-recyclable materials which have been put wrongly in recycling collections. Processed rejects for Q4 of 2021/2022 were 11%. There has therefore been an increase this year. This may relate to enforcement action being taken by the Environment Agency over the level of contaminants contained in processed recycling materials. While it is positive action to ensure that materials are of a high quality when they leave MRFs, it means that any “non target material” is more likely to be removed.

Q1 2022-2023		Q2 2022-2023	
Rejects	Percentage total	Rejects	Percentage total
Gate Rejects	2%	Gate Rejects	1%
Processed Rejects	14%	Processed Rejects	14%
Total MRF Rejects	16%	Total MRF Rejects	15%

## 5. SPECIALIST RECYCLING UPDATE

### Expanded Polystyrene (EPS)

- 5.1. The Authority continues to accept Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) across the network of RRCs with dedicated shredders/compactors in operation at both Summers Lane and South Access RRCs. A third unit has been installed at Wembley Waste Transfer Station (WTS), acting as a hub site for EPS collected at the remaining RRCs. This trial started in November 2021, when NLWA added polystyrene to a list of waste streams recycled at RRCs.
- 5.2. Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) is extremely light (13kg per cubic meter) which means in tonnage terms the scheme will not divert significant tonnages from the residual stream. However, EPS has long been considered by residents and those in the industry to be a problem material; difficult to recycle and very often too big to place in a residential bin. The NLWA scheme to recycle this material, the only one of its kind in the UK, provides residents with a non-disposal option across the RRC network.
- 5.3. During the life of the trial so far (12 months), 600kg of EPS has been processed. NLWA officers are currently evaluating the trial (in December 2022). As part of this review, officers are measuring the carbon footprint of the scheme, to determine the wider environment benefits of the scheme with the cost associated with extending the trial or moving it to a business as usual service.

### Mattress Recycling

- 5.4. Mattress recycling has continued across the Authority's network of Reuse and Recycling Centres (RRCs) and transfer stations. London Energy Limited (LEL) procured a long-term contract for the processing of mattresses. The three-year contract started on 1 April 2022 and will ensure the continuation of this new service.
- 5.5. The number of mattresses being recycled continues at high levels. 109,040 mattresses have been recycled since the scheme began in June 2021.

5.6. The table below details the tonnage of mattresses apportioned to the constituent boroughs.

Tonnes	Summers Lane	Western Road	South Access Road	Wembley	Bulky Waste Recycling Facility	Total
Barnet	169.90	0.74	0.05	221.43	213.75	605.87
Camden	0.67	0.06	0.05	141.97	95.94	238.69
Enfield	2.56	2.33	0.44	0.00	281.07	286.40
Hackney	0.07	1.54	3.73	0.00	331.57	336.90
Haringey	6.22	141.63	1.31	0.00	146.43	295.59
Islington	0.15	0.62	0.29	0.00	112.77	113.82
Waltham Forest	0.07	0.55	114.57	0.00	499.87	615.06
<b>Total</b>	179.6	147.5	120.4	363.4	1683.1	2494.0

### Hard plastics

5.7. Hard plastics (children’s toys, patio furniture etc) are currently not recycled by the Authority. This is because there has been a lack of capacity in the reprocessing sector meaning that it has not been economic to do so; and containers required to store Hard Plastic also take up valuable space at our RRCs and can restrict space for other commodities that are always recyclable.

5.8. NLWA are working with LEL to roll out a new trial to collect hard plastics at one of our RRCs (Regis Road). The proposed trial would require LEL to remove one of two Green Waste Containers to accommodate a Hard Plastics container. This will require additional container exchange of Green Waste during the summer peak. NLWA officers are currently working to secure an off taker with capacity to collect and process the material and establish the cost/benefit for this development.

5.9. It is estimated that every 100 tonnes of recycled rigid plastic will avoid 250,000 kg CO2 emissions. The new trial will begin in early February 2023, it will run for 3 months and will be assessed at the end of this period. If successful, the initiative will be established as a permanent feature and potentially rolled out across the Authority’s network of RRCs. NLWA officers will provide a further update at the June Authority meeting.

## 6. DIY REUSE SCHEME

6.1. In October 2022, NLWA launched a new trial service at South Access Road RRC in Waltham Forest to offer a place for residents to share their unwanted DIY materials. Bricks, left over paving slabs, odd tiles or that extra bit of timber are now being made available for other local residents to take for free to help them finish their home improvement projects.

- 6.2. The scheme complements the existing Community Repaint Scheme, which enables residents to drop off and collect leftover paint. The new scheme could save tonnes of DIY material each year from going to waste, as well as helping residents save money, which is particularly important during the current cost of living crisis.
- 6.3. When the scheme was launched, NLWA undertook to roll out the scheme at its other RRCs. NLWA officers have now agreed with LEL to set up a further DIY Reuse Scheme at Summers Lane in the London Borough of Barnet. This will be in place from January 2023. An update on the roll out will be provided at the February Authority meeting.

## **7. PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS (POPS)**

- 7.1. In August 2022, the Environment Agency (EA) wrote to all local authorities, advising that all upholstered waste seating containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) must be incinerated. Large levels of POPs are found in older seating textiles and foams. The EA's concern was that if this were not disposed of properly, it could become widely harmful to the environment.
- 7.2. The EA require that waste upholstered seating containing POPs must not be landfilled, mixed with other non-POPs-containing wastes or recycled. This reflects the EA's view that incineration is the safest way of dealing with POPs material contained in soft seating. All local authorities must write to the EA to confirm they are compliant by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. There is a continuing dialogue at national level between the EA and representative bodies such as the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO).
- 7.3. Whilst it is important to ensure the safe, effective and appropriate management of this waste, there are clear concerns shared among operators and local authorities that there are practical factors which affect the ability to comply with these requirements on the proposed timescale.
- 7.4. There is a concern about a general lack of capacity across the country to deal with this waste stream. It is estimated that several hundred thousand tonnes of waste which is currently capable of partial or whole recycling would need to be diverted to Energy from Waste (EfW) facilities. This capacity concern does not directly affect NLWA but is a concern for other authorities. Whilst NLWA is able to incinerate POPs waste at the Edmonton facility, the changes will nevertheless have implications.
- 7.5. The EA requires the separate collection, storage and transport of soft seating containing POPs from all other bulky waste. If POPs (soft seating) and other wastes are collected together or are mixed at any point in the waste management process the mixed waste should be treated as if it were POPs contaminated. This places real restrictions on what can be sent for re-use or recycling at RRCs and what waste is

suitable for pre-sorting and extraction to remove recyclables. Not all seating includes POPs but if furniture does not have clear information about its age and the treatment of material in it, the EA's expectation is that operators would exercise caution and not seek to recycle it.

- 7.6. To help mitigate these impacts, working with LEL, officers will introduce:
- 7.6.1. Additional containers at RRCs for soft seating to ensure we have the ability to recover recyclate from the non-POPs waste stream. This does however take up valuable space for other recycling streams.
  - 7.6.2. At our network of Waste Transfer Stations, we will make bays available for the storage of soft seating, ensuring it is kept separate from other waste streams.
- 7.7. NLWA officers are currently discussing operational arrangements with LEL and the Boroughs, in order to manage the situation and ensure compliance; and we are represented in discussions at national level as active members of NAWDO (National Association of Waste Disposal Officers).
- 7.8. Should any of the seven constituent boroughs decide that it is not possible to collect soft seating POPs separately from non-POPs bulky waste, all such waste will need to be treated as POPs contaminated material and incinerated irrespective of its recycling potential. This does not support the Authority's circular economy and recycling ambitions.
- 7.9. An update will be provided at the February Authority meeting.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

## **9. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISER**

- 9.1. The Legal Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **10. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISER**

- 10.1. The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments.

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