

**NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY**

**REPORT TITLE:** SERVICES UPDATE

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

**FOR SUBMISSION TO:** AUTHORITY MEETING

**DATE:** 25 JUNE 2020

**SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

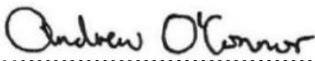
This report informs Members about the latest operational activities and associated issues dealt with by the Strategy & Services team of the Authority during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Authority is recommended to:

A. note performance on service delivery in the current year.

B. delegate authority for the Managing Director to respond to the Government consultation on plastic packaging tax, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs as described in section 9.

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

**DATE:** 15 June 2020

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This report provides Members with an update of the main operational matters that have arisen since the consultation meeting held with Members in April 2020, as well as the latest available validated tonnage information from municipal waste collected by the seven London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest. The North London Waste Authority (NLWA) has a statutory responsibility for providing municipal waste disposal services for the seven constituent borough councils and powers to arrange for the reuse, recycling and composting of municipal waste and to operate Reuse and Recycling Centres (RRCs)
- 1.2. Following the introduction by Government of coronavirus movement restrictions with effect from 24 March, officers provided daily reports to constituent Borough Emergency Coordination Centres (BECCs) on management of waste streams. This daily reporting continued until 19 May when reporting moved to be weekly and by exception. Officers required timely and clear information from contractors to achieve this. Business continuity was effectively managed in all organisations and officers were able to provide a clear picture of the position. In addition, officers organised co-ordination calls with borough service teams to ensure that any emerging problems were raised and quickly addressed. The waste sector gained a positive profile with the public as collection and disposal organisations maintained a high level of operation and were recognised as an essential service protecting safety and public health.

## 2. PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

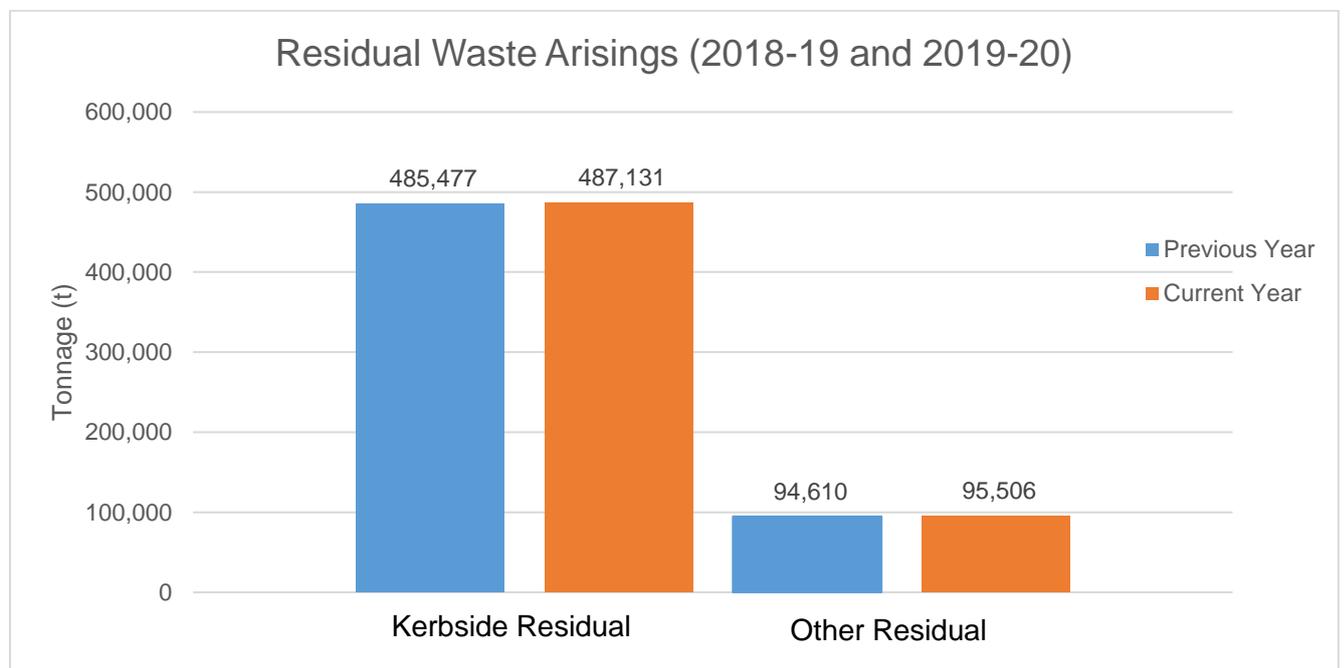


Figure 1: Residual Waste Arisings comparison April 2018-March 2019 April 2019-March 2020

- 2.1. Comparing data from the full financial year of 2018-19 to 2019-20, Kerbside Residual waste rose by 0.34% and Other Residual waste rose by 0.95%. This slight

increase in residual waste may be attributable to the pandemic, with more residents working from home, thereby producing more household waste.

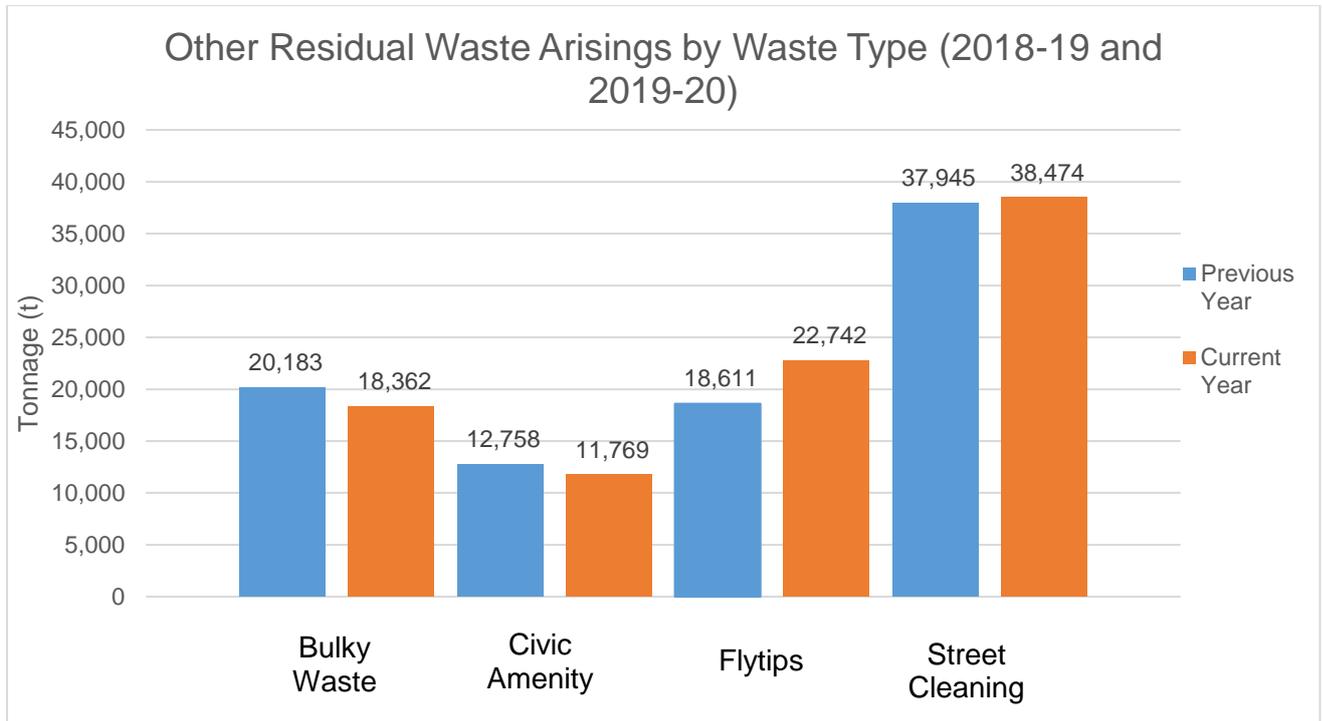


Figure 2: Other Residual Waste Arisings comparison April 2018-March 2019 and April 2019 -March 2020

- 2.2. During the current financial year (2019 – 2020) we saw a decrease in Bulky Waste and Civic Amenity waste by a combined 8.53% in comparison to the previous financial year. Flytips have risen by 22.20%. Officers will liaise with the constituent Boroughs on ways to address this in the coming year. Finally, Street Cleaning waste remains relatively stable, with a small increase of 1.39%.
- 2.3. The Mixed Food and Green waste and separately delivered Food waste tonnages were lower this year than in 2018/19 by 5.24% and 13.55% respectively. Green Waste volumes grew by 3.39% compared to last financial year. Finally, having tackled a decline in Mixed Dry Recycling tonnages over the recent years, Boroughs saw an increase in tonnage by 1.37% compared to 2018-19.

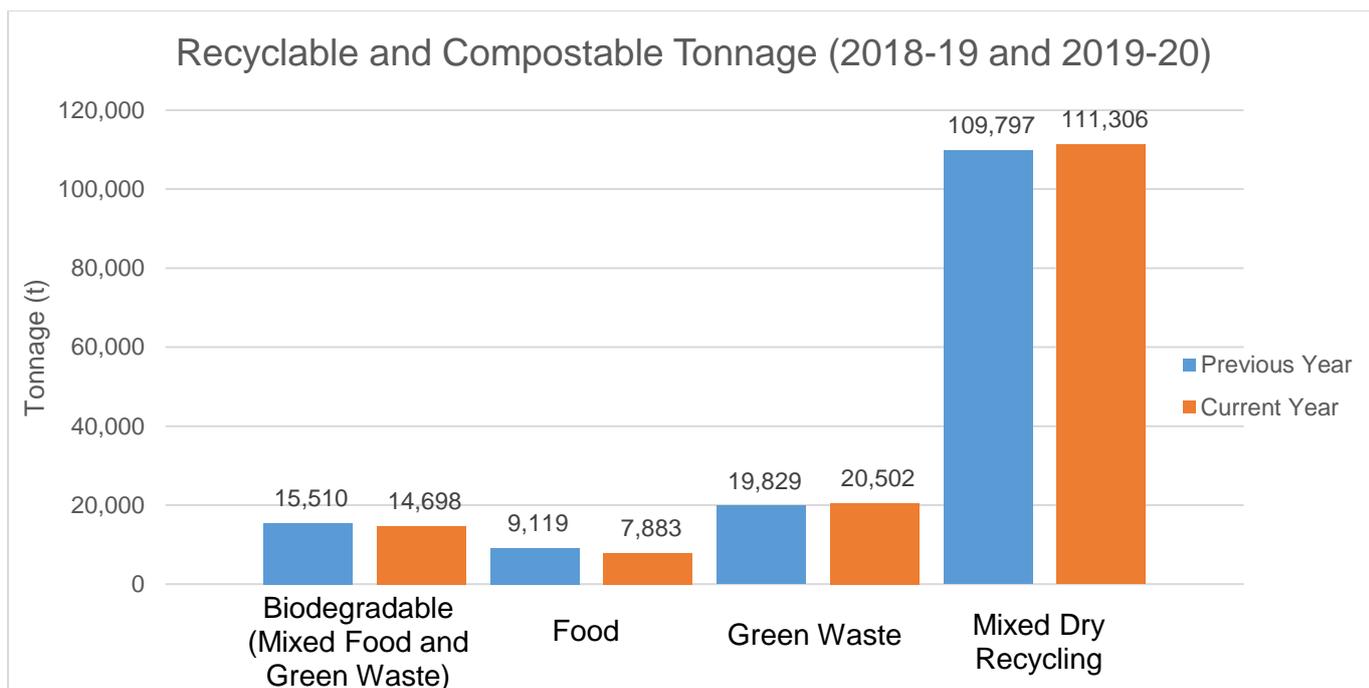


Figure 3: Recyclable and Compostable tonnage April 2018-March 2019 April 2019-March 2020

### 3. THE CLOSURE AND RE-OPENING OF REUSE AND RECYCLING CENTRES

- 3.1. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and following the implementation of government restrictions for essential travel only, all seven of the reuse and recycling centres (RRCs) in North London were closed on 24 March 2020 to slow the spread of the virus. Authority officers worked with LondonEnergy Ltd (LEL) (operators of six of the seven RRCs) and Bywaters (operators of Gateway Road RRC) to ensure the site closures were signed appropriately. The team led communications with borough officers, residents, and Members to ensure the position – and the rationale for it – was understood. All RRCs in London and most of such sites across England closed at that time.
- 3.2. Borough collection service crews were initially disadvantaged by the closure of the RRCs. This is because, in addition to the service they provide to North London residents, RRCs are also used as a delivery point for waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) including fridges and freezers. Initially LEL said that they were unable to provide any WEEE drop off facility for borough crews at RRCs, therefore all boroughs were required to transport fridges directly to European Metal Recycling (EMR) in Willesden. LEL were able to assist at Summers Lane and South Access Road RRCs under fixed prescribed conditions to the Authority with the service starting on Thursday 2 April. Bywaters also provided a flexible WEEE drop off service for boroughs developed in partnership with Authority officers from the 20 April to increase resilience of the RRC WEEE service and was used as the main drop off point by Waltham Forest.
- 3.3. It was apparent in mid April that the Government was looking to encourage the opening of RRCs, suggesting this was to enable residents to remove waste which might be causing danger to households. It was important for the Authority to be able to consider whether, and if so how, RRCs could safely be opened should

restrictions be eased. Officers therefore sought proposals for RRC opening plans on 17 April. The initial LEL opening plan envisaged the service below:

Table 1: LEL initial opening plan

Site	Days of the week	Hours of operation	Capacity of site
Summers Lane, Barnet	Thurs to Sun	9am to 3pm	2 cars on site at any time
South Access Road, Waltham Forest			
Western Road, Haringey			1 car on site at any time
Regis Road, Camden	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Horney Street, Islington	Closed	Closed	Closed
Kings Road, Waltham Forest	Closed	Closed	Closed

- 3.4. At this stage Bywaters were still considering their position in relation to Gateway Road
- 3.5. Following two weeks of discussions involving officers, borough Directors of Environment and operators it was agreed to open sites with effect from 13 May. The service offered is set out in the table in para 3.9.
- 3.6. Within the planning phase, officers arranged meetings with chosen representatives from each borough and the site operator (mainly LEL) to discuss the external site operation, traffic management and any risk mitigation. This involved several borough colleagues who do not regularly deal with waste issues and their involvement was much appreciated.
- 3.7. To have an aligned approach across all RRCs, officers decided to recruit the services of event management company Combined Services Provider (CSP) to implement a plan for queue management outside the RRCs, minimising the impact on the road network. The service CSP provided included mobilising marshals with Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) qualifications for the opening of the sites as well manufacturing and displaying information and traffic management signage.

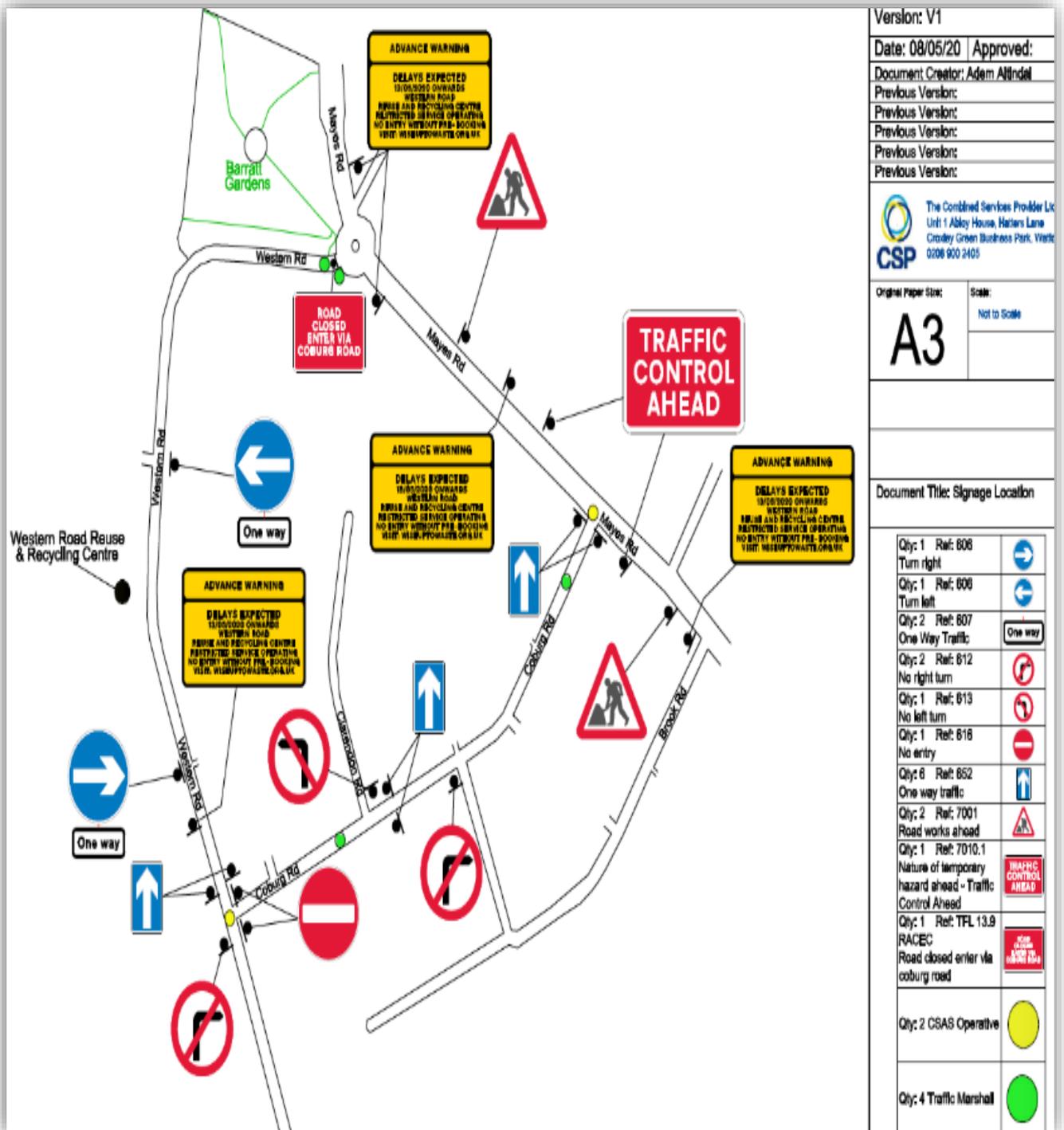


Figure 4 : Traffic management plan produced by CSP for a one-way system implemented for the re-opening of Western Road RRC, Haringey. Planned in coordination with Haringey borough, LEL and the authority.



Figure 5: Examples of some of signage designed by NLWA communications team to provide additional information to residents. Printed and deployed by CSP.

- 3.8. Following feedback on initial plans and early dialogue with borough highways officers, LEL took the initiative to develop a new booking system for the RRCs to control expected demand. This was developed at very short notice, has operated well initially, and has had a key role in ensuring the reopened facilities have operated in an orderly manner. As the number of bookings increased, there was feedback from some residents that the booking system was running slow. These comments were noted and the problems were addressed. Most sites elsewhere in London have reopened without a booking system in place and have experienced significant queues at peak periods, and several authorities are looking to follow the initiative of introducing booking systems. To have a consistent approach across the RRCs, officers requested that LEL's booking system include Gateway Rd RRC in Waltham Forest (operated by Bywaters). Following involvement from the Chair, LEL were able to add Gateway Road in time for the RRC opening. The communications campaign accompanying the opening of RRCs emphasised the need to book, the fact that the service was limited, and people should use the sites only if necessary.
- 3.9. Internal site operations focused on maintaining government guidelines on social distancing which was achieved in many ways. For example, reduced cars allowed on site allowed for more space between residents, reducing and duplicating waste streams containers on site prevented the need for residents to come in close contact with one another and finally, bolstering sanitisation of handrails and contact spots significantly reduced any potential spread of the virus.



*Figure 6: Revised layout for Gateway road RRC prior to opening. 3 vehicle bays with 2 waste streams accepted at each maintaining social distancing between residents.*

Table 2: A summary of key changes in the phase 1 and phase 2 LEL RRC re-opening plans. This table also includes the phased plan for Gateway Road RRC operated by Bywaters.

Operator	Site	Opening Date	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2
			Days and Hours of operation	Waste Streams Accepted	Pedestrian access (via booking) allowed	Number of vehicle booking slots available in a day				
LondonEnergy	Barnet - Summer Lane	13/05/2020	7 days a week, 10am - 6pm	7 days a week, 9am - 4pm	Residual Waste Garden Waste	All waste streams	No	Yes	256	312
	Camden - Regis Road	08/06/2020	Site Closed	7 days a week, 9am - 4pm	Site Closed	All waste streams (Less plasterboard and Hardcore)	No	Yes	Site Closed	104
	Haringey - Western Road	13/05/2020	7 days a week, 10am - 6pm	7 days a week, 9am - 4pm	Residual Waste Garden Waste	All waste streams (Less plasterboard and Hardcore)	No	Yes	128	208
	Islington - Hornsey Street	13/05/2020	7 days a week, 4pm - 8pm	7 days a week, 9am - 4pm	Residual Waste Garden Waste	All waste streams	No	Yes	128	208
	Waltham Forest - South Access	13/05/2020	7 days a week, 10am - 6pm	7 days a week, 9am to 4pm	Residual Waste Garden Waste	All waste streams	No	Yes	256	260
	Waltham Forest - Kings Road	16/05/2020	7 days a week, 10am - 6pm	7 days a week, 9am - 4pm	Garden Waste	All waste streams (Less plasterboard and Hardcore)	No	Yes	128	156
Bywaters	Waltham Forest - Gateway Road	13/05/2020	7 days a week, 9am - 6pm	6 days a week, 8:30am - 4:30pm	Residual Waste Garden Waste	All waste streams	No	Yes	210	280

3.10. On 13 May, RRCs opened in line with the Phase 1 in the table above, with the booking system providing approximately 7000 slots per week across the NLWA area. This timing aligned with the majority of other RRCs opening in London including Enfield's Barrowell Green RRC. Following the safe and successful operation of the sites in May a second phase of service was initiated by operators from 2 June. The second phase included increased waste streams, increased capacity and allowed pedestrians and cyclists to access the sites (given the unpredictability of public reaction to the initial opening, at first access had been constrained to those in cars where social distancing could clearly be managed effectively while waiting). Table 2 sets out the services offered in phase 1 and phase 2.

3.11. Both NLWA and operators had appropriate staff present at sites for the first 5 days to ensure issues could be quickly resolved; and in the case of Authority officers to monitor the service of CSP.

#### 4. GERON WAY TRANSFER STATION

4.1. Officers continue to review various options with the Regional Enterprise (RE), a joint venture between Capita Plc and London Borough of Barnet in looking at the requirement of a road to road transfer solution as the existing Hendon site is required for the Brent Cross project.

#### 5. MRF SERVICES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

5.1. At the outset of the pandemic, several key risks to Material Recycling Facility (MRF) service continuity were identified:

5.1.1. staff sickness.

5.1.2. infectious contamination.

5.1.3. increased tonnages arising.

5.1.4. materials market stability.

5.2. Full details of these risks are identified in Appendix A, together with the actions taken by Biffa, the Authority (the communications team) and the wider industry. It also addresses the implications of those actions on the service. Authority officers and the Biffa contract manager were in daily contact through the peak of the pandemic, and officers additionally received two letters from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Biffa setting out key changes implemented across the national business to ensure service continuity could always be maintained. Despite the challenges, no Authority Mixed Dry Recyclables (MDR) had to be diverted to disposal. During the peak of the pandemic, tonnages were up to 40% higher than the same period last year, as demonstrated in the following graph:

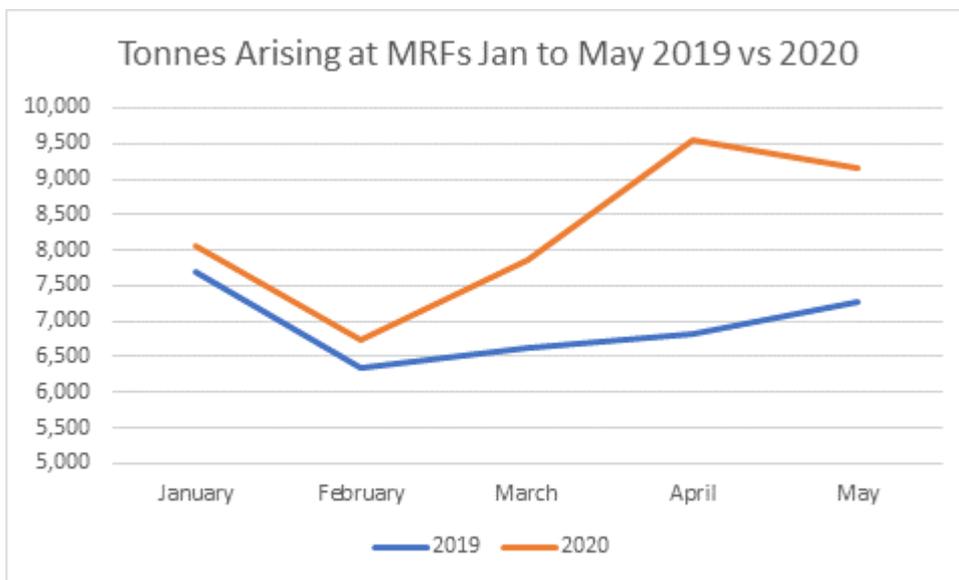


Figure 7: Tonnage of mixed dry Recyclables from Jan -May 2019/2020

Contamination increased disproportionately to the tonnage levels. After an initial reduction in the proportion of tonnage rejected following commencement of the new MRF contract in December 2019, since the pandemic started, contamination levels have risen and in May 2020, they were higher than in May 2019, as shown in the following chart:

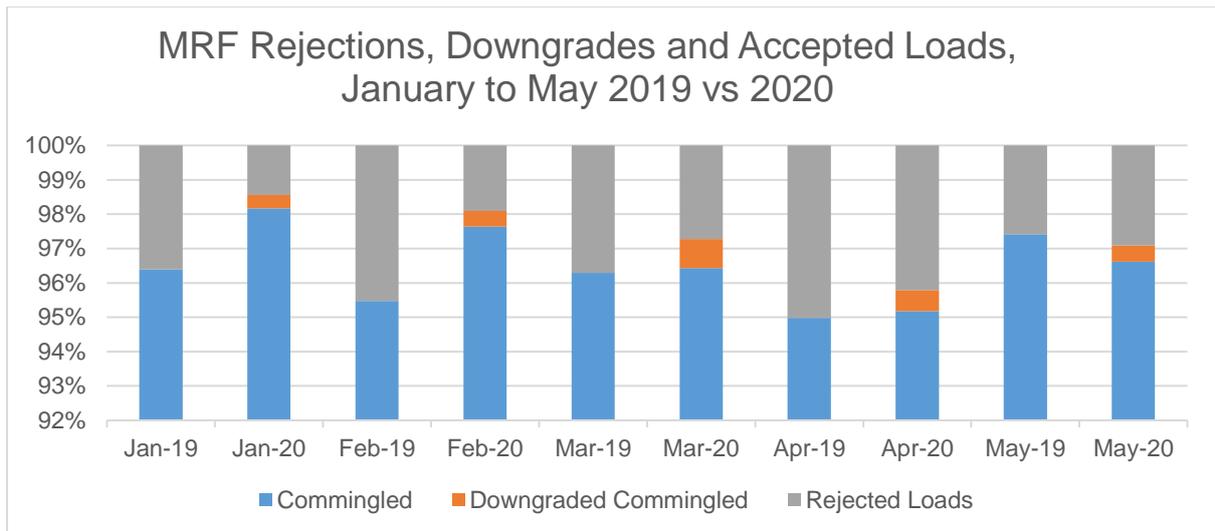


Figure 8: Material Recycling Facilities (MRF) Rejections, Downgrades and Accepted loads Jan to May 2019/2020

## 6. COMMODITY PRICES

6.1. The chart below provides the latest market information, and shows commodity prices between January and May 2020, taken from LetsRecycle.com, which is used to index MRF income against.

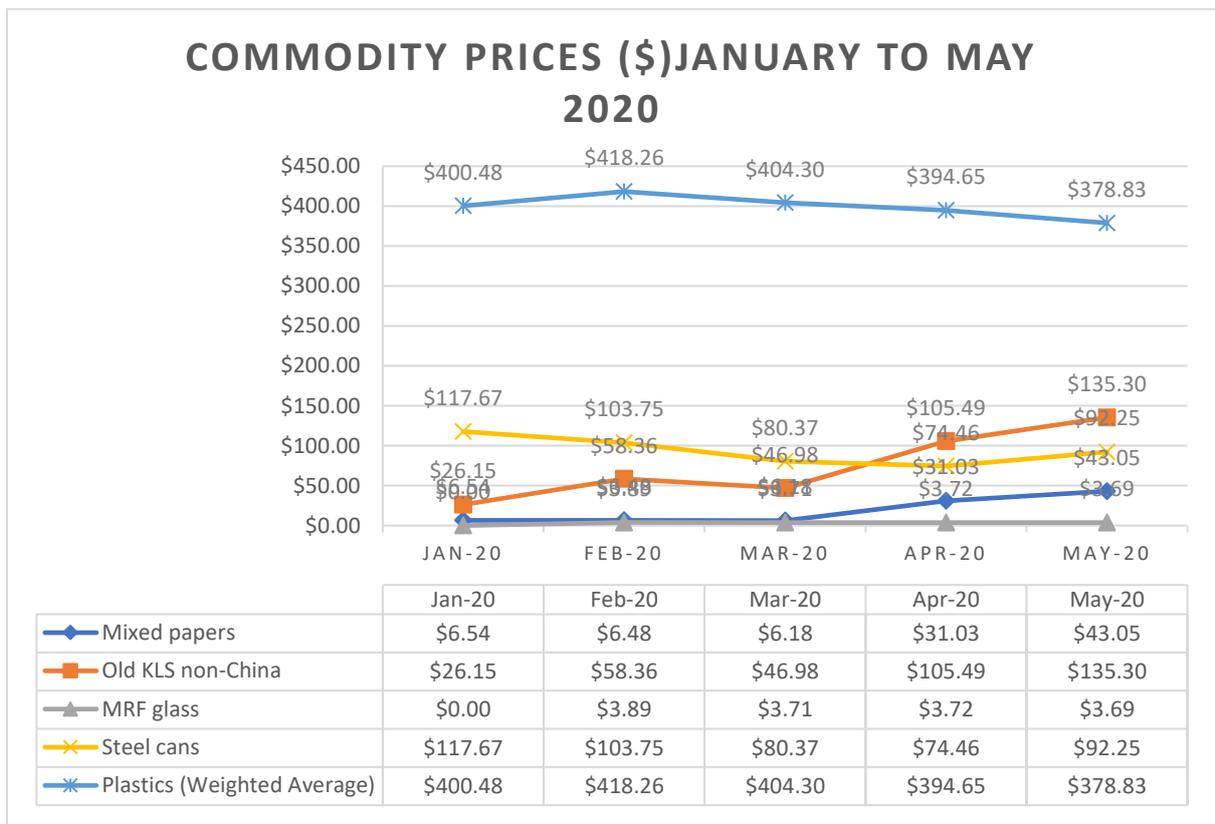


Figure 9: Commodity Prices October 2019 – February 2020

6.2. The price of fibre has increased since lockdown as commercial volumes of paper and cardboard (cardboard is classified as Old KLS non-China in the table above) have fallen significantly. There were reports of paper mills from continental Europe seeking cardboard from the UK as there was a shortage. This helped to increase

the price of fibre in April and May. The price of cardboard has undergone a price correction in June after demand decreased as waste collection systems across Europe resumed operation.

- 6.3. The price of metals dropped as manufacturing slowed down and there has been a well-documented slump in the production of vehicles. The drop in oil price also weighed down the price of recycled plastic during the height of the pandemic.

## 7. NON-CONFORMING WASTE

- 7.1. LEL has expressed concerns that inappropriate waste is being tipped into the energy centre bunkers. Such items can damage equipment in the energy from waste plant. This causes repair costs, reduction in capacity of the plant and can affect the efficiency of combustion and emissions. The company therefore took an initiative to identify “non-conforming” waste loads dropped off by boroughs. The company issued non-conformance reports to boroughs and proposed the banning of vehicles from LEL sites for vehicles which were detected as supplying “non-conforming waste”, as defined by LEL on multiple occasions.

- 7.2. The table below indicates the number of “non-conforming” loads identified by LEL. It is clear that the company made a very significant change in approach in in April, which Authority officers became aware of when they received reports of delays to borough collection services at transfer stations. LEL’s most recent board report indicates that the company undertook 3,566 vehicle inspections in April. Of these inspections, 1163 took place at the EcoPark, 1553 took place at Hornsey Street transfer station and 850 took place at Hendon transfer station.

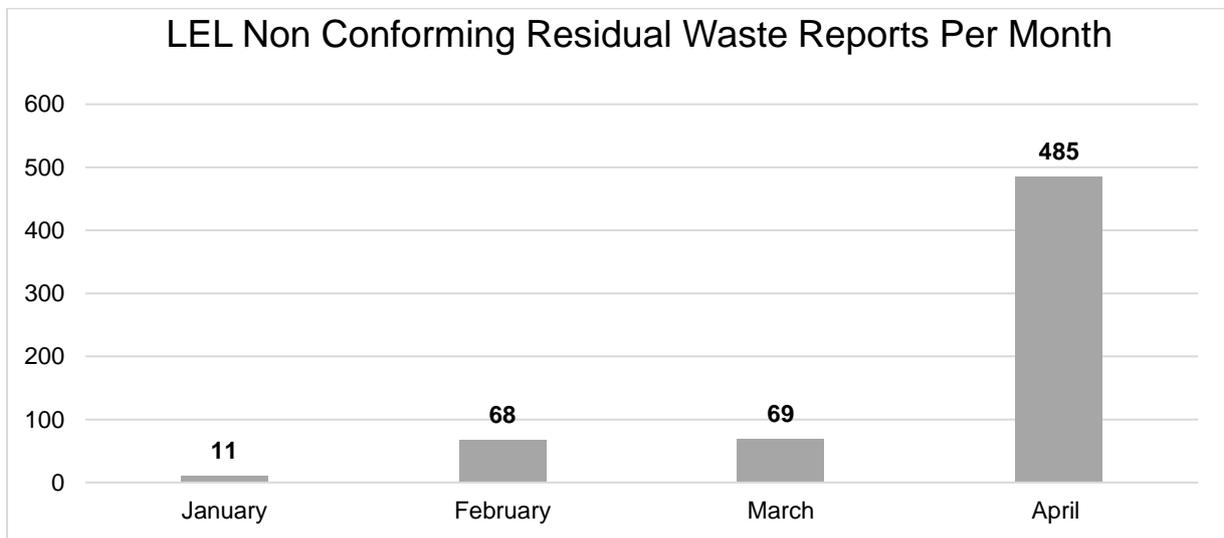


Figure 10: Number of non-conforming waste reports provided by LEL per month from January 2020 to April 2020.

- 7.3. There is agreement that items such as mattresses should not be loaded into a Refuse Collection Vehicle carrying residual waste, and there are efforts to work with boroughs to minimise these occurrences. However, a large volume of non-conformances was identified for bulky items contained in street cleansing loads collected by caged tippers. So long as the waste is not hazardous, the Authority, and its contract with LEL, requires all waste to be contract waste to be accepted.

- 7.4. As mentioned above LEL proposed to ban vehicles which had multiple instances of “non-conforming” waste and pointed to the fact that in April the energy centre had 98% availability compared with 95% which was the planned availability. However, Authority officers advised LEL that issuing any ban to a borough vehicle under the umbrella of non-conforming waste would constitute a default under the contract. This default would be because issuing bans to borough vehicles is not a methodology contained within the contract. Furthermore, this would be a breach of the requirement that LEL shall “accept all contract waste that is delivered to it by or under the direction of the Authority”. No bans based on non-conforming waste have been issued by LEL to the Authority’s knowledge.
- 7.5. LEL’s definition of “non-conforming” has been indicated in broad terms but has not been shared in a precise form with NLWA or borough officers. Officers are now supporting LEL in defining undesirable waste as per the European Waste Catalogue (EWC) with the aim of producing documentation that will be distributed to boroughs and drivers. This will support in educating stakeholders on the materials that could cause damage to the energy from waste plant if not declared at the weighbridge.

## **8. LONDON ENERGY LTD NEW WEIGHBRIDGE SOFTWARE**

- 8.1. LEL has been developing and implementing new enterprise resource planning (ERP) software systems incorporating Windows D365. The latest element of the project has been to introduce a system called WinWeigh which replaces Gatehouse to record vehicles at weighbridges. This should in time bring benefits for both the Authority and Boroughs along with efficiencies to the LEL business. The “go live” date was 1 June. Some implementation problems have arisen including delayed training material for borough crews and the company’s proposed app for sharing data not being compatible with the Haringey IT system used by NLWA, affecting provision of data to boroughs. Having implemented the new system, LEL is now working with Authority officers to address the issues which have been identified in operation.

## **9. PLASTIC PACKAGING TAX CONSULTATION**

- 9.1. From April 2022 a Plastic Packaging Tax will apply to plastic packaging manufactured in or imported into the UK containing less than 30% recycled plastic. The rate will be set at £200 per tonne.
- 9.2. This latest consultation from HMRC is the next stage in the consultation process, following a Call for Evidence (March 2018) and an initial consultation seeking views on the initial Plastic Packaging Tax design (February 2019).
- 9.3. The current consultation seeks views on the detailed design, implementation, and administration of a Plastic Packaging Tax to ensure it best meets the government’s environmental objectives while placing only proportionate burdens on business. It considers what specific parts of packaging the tax would be applied to, rules around importing and exporting plastics, the definition of plastic packaging and the exemptions and reporting methods to be applied.
- 9.4. The consultation is primarily aimed at plastics packaging producers rather than collection and disposal Authorities, however there are some implications for local

authorities. These include how the funds generated from the tax will be used and how this aligns with the introduction of the deposit return scheme (potentially 2023) and consistent collections changes (potentially 2023).

- 9.5. The deadline for submitting responses is 20 August 2020 and more information about the plastics packaging tax proposals can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plastic-packaging-tax-policy-design>. We seek delegation for the Managing Director to respond to this consultation, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. The main equalities implication of the changes to the existing service is the requirement for the public to book to visit the RRCs due to COVID-19. The results impact those who are digitally disadvantaged. Officers have overcome this by making bookings on residents' behalf where requested.
- 10.2. Some residents were concerned that the initial opening of RRCs did not include pedestrians and cyclists. As mentioned in para 3.10, this was a safety precaution when there was significant uncertainty about public understanding of the need to book, and the risk of queues in places where social distancing could be hard to maintain. In the light of early experience, pedestrian and cyclist access was made available from 2 June.

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

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

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

- 12.1. The Financial Adviser has been consulted during the preparation of the report and all comments have been incorporated.

### **List of documents used:**

WasteDataFlow - national web-based waste data reporting system

Available at <http://www.wastedataflow.org/>

Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England, HM Government, 18 December 2018, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/Government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england>

Letsrecycle Website: -Trade website

Available at: [www.letsrecycle.com](http://www.letsrecycle.com)

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## APPENDIX A: KEY RISKS TO MRF SERVICE CONTINUITY

During the pandemic, there was increased cross-team working, with the Communications Team increasing their social media activity and production of material. This includes the production of this infographic to identify the correct disposal method for waste when residents present symptoms:

### COVID-19 HOW TO DISPOSE OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE SAFELY

**If you do not have COVID 19 symptoms and you are not self-isolating**

-  Wash your hands regularly, especially before and after handling your waste bins.
-  Clean bin handles with disinfectant before putting them out for collection.
-  Keep a safe distance when crews are collecting.

**If someone in your household has symptoms similar to COVID 19 and you are in self-isolation**

-  Make sure you put tissues and face masks in your black bin and never mix them with the rest of your home recycling.
-  Double bag tissues and face masks and make sure that the bag is closed properly.
-  Waste should be stored safely for at least 72 hours before taking out for collection or to the designated communal areas.

#Care4YourCrews

## Identification of risks, mitigation actions and outcomes to MRF services during the Coronavirus pandemic

Risk	Action	Implications
<p><u>Staff Sickness</u></p> <p>High staff sickness levels may result in reduced capacity to process MDR, which could result in loads being diverted to disposal</p>	<p>Introduction of one-hour gaps between shifts to maintain social distancing for operatives</p> <p>Installation of protective screens around picking operatives</p> <p>Enhanced cleaning programme, especially for high-contact areas, such as handrails and door handles</p> <p>Introduction of a one-way walking route to minimise staff contact with one-another</p>	<p>Staff sickness levels did not exceed 4.5% during the peak of the pandemic</p> <p>Aside from the two hours each day between shifts, there was no impact on the capacity of the MRF to process MDR due to staff sickness</p>
<p><u>Contamination</u></p> <p>MDR containing infectious Coronavirus particles from residents with the infection or which is contaminated with discarded PPE could pose serious risks to operative's health</p>	<p>Revision of load assessment criteria to include any loads containing black bagged waste or discarded PPE, regardless of the contamination percentage level</p> <p>Biffa is a joint signatory on an industry-wide letter which identifies necessary actions for residents with Coronavirus symptoms to take to avoid passing the infection on within their recycling; whereby MDR is stored in the property for 72 hours beyond the period of self isolation</p> <p>Increased activity by the Authority's Communications Team, supplementing ongoing contamination posts on social media, with guidance specific to Coronavirus best practice</p>	<p>The reductions in tonnages of rejected loads seen since the commencement of the new MRF contract in December have declined and the proportion of tonnage rejected in May 2020 exceeded the proportion in May 2019</p> <p>There is no evidence that contaminated MDR has resulted in staff sickness</p>
<p><u>Increased Tonnages</u></p> <p>Increase in tonnage of MDR arising due to more people working from home could</p>	<p>Due to concerns of becoming overwhelmed, Biffa were forced to set limits of MDR which they could accept from all customers nationally, based on tonnages received in the previous year</p>	<p>At no point was the MRF overwhelmed to the that Biffa had to turn vehicles away</p> <p>No MDR had to be sent for disposal, rather</p>

Risk	Action	Implications
<p>overwhelm the MRF, leading to long queues for Borough vehicles, or to turn Boroughs away due to having no space to accept MDR</p>	<p>Biffa invoked Cabinet Office procurement note PPN 02/20, which advises contracting Authorities not to enforce KPIs during the Coronavirus pandemic, to ensure service continuity is maintained</p> <p>Biffa assisted the Authority by securing alternative arrangements for excess tonnages which could not be processed at the MRF.</p> <p>A reduction in tonnes from other customers led to Biffa being able to accept higher quantities than the determined weekly limit within a fortnight of the limit being imposed</p>	<p>than recycling</p> <p>No Borough vehicles were redirected from their primary tipping point</p> <p>A total of 370 tonnes was diverted to third party MRFs from Hornsey Street transfer station. This was to enable the Biffa MRF to manage within its capacity limits. The additional cost to the Authority was approximately £9,000</p>
<p><u>Materials Markets</u></p> <p>Shutdown of industry and restrictions on international freight transit could limit the availability to place sorted recyclates onto the market for recycling, leading to them being sent for disposal or to the MRF running out of space for storage</p>	<p>Biffa's long-term strategy to recycle as much as possible within the UK and Europe has helped to maintain outlets for Plastics, Glass, and Metals</p> <p>Demand for paper products such as cardboard packaging and toilet roll has increased during the pandemic, which has led to continued demand from MRFs</p> <p>National Government action was taken to ensure trade transit routes remain open</p>	<p>No plastic carrier bag off-taker in the UK has been available; therefore, this material has not been recovered from MDR, instead being sent for disposal</p> <p>All other recyclates have continued to be placed on the market and the MRF has therefore continued to process material</p> <p>The rise in supply of MDR and fall in demand has caused further decline in income derived from the sale of recyclates</p>