

## The Highland Council

### Transport Environmental and Community Services Committee 7 November 2013

Agenda Item	<b>3</b>
Report No	<b>TEC 75/13</b>

#### Review of Recycling Point Network

#### Report by Director of Transport Environmental & Community Services

##### Summary

This report considers the Council's Recycling Point Network and invites Members to agree that glass recycling should continue through the Council's network of recycling points unless there is a legal imperative which requires the method of collection to change, that further work is undertaken to examine the options to change the use of the paper and can banks, and that a review of textiles collection is undertaken with a view to contracting out the collection service to realise an income.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Council provides 229 recycling points throughout Highland of which 18 are part of the facilities offered at our recycling centres. Glass recycling is the oldest form of recycling undertaken by the Council through the recycling point network.
- 1.2 Virtually all communities of 100 households or more are provided with a recycling point. In addition there are 24 communities with less than 100 households which are also provided with recycling points. Overall this represents a significant level of coverage across the Highlands.
- 1.3 The facilities vary as follows:
  - 223 facilities have glass (clear, brown and green) banks;
  - 211 facilities have can (aluminium and steel) banks;
  - 206 facilities have paper banks; and
  - 190 facilities have textile banks with the service providers as follows:
    - Nathans Wastesavers service 116 sites
    - Blythswood care service 27 sites
    - Salvation Army service 35 sites
- 1.4 The locations of recycling bank sites vary across Highland. All major shopping sites have a recycling point. Others are located in car parks, streets or vacant land owned by the Council and at community halls.

- 1.5 The tonnage handled by individual sites varies from hundreds of tonnes to just a few tonnes per annum.
- 1.6 The recycling banks are much larger (and heavier) than bins and require to be emptied by mechanical means. The Council has contracts in place for emptying the banks with two contractors: Baillie Brothers Ltd for cans and paper, and Viridor for glass.

## **2. Legal Framework**

- 2.1 The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 places a duty on Councils to separately collect dry recyclables (metals, plastics, glass, paper and card) from households and from businesses who request a service.
- 2.2 A comingled service which collects paper, card, plastics and metals is provided to virtually all households and commercial customers in Highland through the “Blue Bin” collection service.
- 2.3 Householders and commercial customers are encouraged to use our extensive network of recycling points to recycle glass.
- 2.4 Whilst some authorities have introduced kerbside collections for glass, Highland has collected glass through its network of recycling points, and it is recommended that this is adopted as the formal method to comply with the Council’s duty under the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012.
- 2.5 Members should note however that the current view on compliance with the new regulations is in its infancy and it is possible that at some point in the future kerbside collection of glass may become mandatory.
- 2.6 More pertinently the effectiveness (quantity and quality) of the collection method is likely to determine whether or not, in the view of the Regulator (SEPA), Councils meet their duties.

## **3. Current Situation**

- 3.1 As a result of the introduction of alternate weekly collections the quantity and quality of material collected through the can and paper banks have fallen sharply.
- 3.2 By contrast the quantity of glass collected through the network of recycling banks has increased.

## **4. Glass Collection through Recycling Points**

- 4.1 The Scottish Government’s view on glass reprocessing is that the best option (in terms of hierarchy) is for glass containers to be reprocessed by the re-melt industry to produce new glass containers thereby achieving “closed loop” recycling.

- 4.2 Highland glass is currently reprocessed into glass wool insulation products. We will when re-tendering the collections service, consider a number of options to ensure that we receive the best overall outcome for Highland.
- 4.3 There are currently 223 facilities across the Highland where glass can be recycled.
- 4.4 In addition, 10 smaller glass recycling points, which were recently purchased through grant funding from the Scottish Government, will be rolled out in Inverness using commercial type bins.
- 4.5 The new glass recycling points will be emptied using the Council's waste collection fleet (this can only be done in areas where our fleet base is in close proximity to the banks and where there is storage for the glass) with the objective of increasing access to glass recycling in urban areas. This will help to determine the quantity and quality of glass obtained and whether the banks location (placed close to houses) will generate complaints and attract fly-tipping.
- 4.6 Given the current use of glass banks, and the Council's statutory duty, glass recycling will continue to develop through the "recycling bank system" as funding permits.

## **5. Can and Paper Collection through Recycling Points**

- 5.1 Cans and paper are now collected at the kerbside through the alternate weekly collection service to both households and commerce thereby meeting the Council's statutory duty.
- 5.2 Given the roll-out of the new service was completed in July 2012 we only have access to a short-term data set on annual throughput. However, the data over the past 3 year indicates that the tonnages passing through the recycling points has fallen, as shown in the table below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Cans</b>
2010/11	2,474t	161t
2011/12	1,721t	75t
2012/13	580t	14t

- 5.4 Given that the Council already meets its statutory duty for paper, card and cans through the "blue bin" collection service the opportunity exists to change the use of the recycling bank network to further increase our levels of recycling. Some of this work may require capital investment in new recycling banks.

## **6. Textile Collection Through Recycling Points**

- 6.1 Around half of the textiles (667t of 1,365t) diverted to re-use/recycling comes through the Recycling Point network, with the remainder coming through community group and schools collections.

- 6.2 The current provision uses three different operators to provide the banks and to collect textiles from the recycling point network. Two of these organisations receive no payment for this service whilst the community group is paid through Social Enterprise funding.
- 6.3 Members will recall that there is an on-going review of funding to our Social Enterprise partners and the matter of funding textiles will be dealt with as part of the review, with the outcome reported to a future Committee.
- 6.4 In the meantime we are in dialogue with the main textile processor in Scotland on the potential options available to the Council to obtain value from the textile bank network (within the Council's control). The outcome will be reported to a future Committee.

## **7. Options for Change**

### **7.1 Glass Collections**

- 7.1.1 As stated earlier in this report the Council has a statutory duty to separately collect glass and it is recommended that the current service, using recycling points, continues and where opportunity arises and funding permits, the network is expanded.

### **7.2 Can and Paper Collections**

- 7.2.1 Given that the Council already meets its statutory duty with respect to the collection of paper and cans, and there is a significant drop in tonnage through the recycling point network it is proposed to investigate the following:

1. Use the existing recycling point network to collect different set(s) of recyclables not currently collected, thereby increasing recycling and choice;
2. Use the existing network to collect those mixed dry recyclables that are currently accepted through the blue bin collections but add a further suite of recyclables;
3. The feasibility of a pilot scheme to determine logistics and levels of contamination;
4. Whether the existing recycling banks can be modified/used to collect different recyclables; or whether new investment would be required.

### **7.3 Textile Collections**

- 7.3.1 Given the developing market for textiles, there may be an opportunity to seek a contract (we do not have any internal capacity to do this work) for the collection of textiles which could provide a new income stream to the Council. However it would be prudent to consider the potential benefits together with any potential impacts on our Social Enterprise Partners.

## **8. Conclusions**

1. Glass recycling should continue through the Council's network of recycling points unless there is a legal imperative which requires change;
2. The reduced tonnages passing through the existing paper and can banks are such that there needs to be change to the current arrangements;
3. The collection of textiles needs to be examined more closely to determine whether or not it would be prudent to seek a contract for collection;
4. Further work is undertaken to examine the options to change the use of the paper and can banks, including the costs and benefits.

## **9. Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct resource implications from this report, however where a change in service leads to greater recycling and a reduction in waste going to landfill there will be a revenue saving.
- 9.2 The recycling point network will be the method used to fulfil the Council's duty under the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 unless the contrary is indicated by the Regulator whereupon a review will be undertaken and reported to Members.
- 9.3 There are no equality issues associated with this report.
- 9.4 Increased recycling with a corresponding reduction in landfill will make a positive contribution to the Council's Carbon Clever initiative.
- 9.5 Changing the suite of recyclables accepted at recycling points may increase the risk of contamination in household bins. Depending on the suite of materials there may also be a risk of contamination of the recyclables in particular where food packaging is collected.

## **10. Recommendations**

### **10.1 Members are invited to approve:**

- a) That glass recycling should continue through the Council's network of recycling points unless there is a legal imperative which requires the method of collection to change.
- b) That further work is undertaken to examine the options to change the use of the paper and can banks, including the costs and benefits, with a report on the outcome taken to a future Committee.
- c) That a review of textiles collection is undertaken, in consultation with our Social Enterprise Partners, to explore the options for the efficient and effective collection of this wastestream, with a report on the outcome taken to a future Committee.

Designation: Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Date: 25 October 2013

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