

Agenda Item	12
Report No	CP/16/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Communities and Place Committee

Date: 24 May 2023

Report Title: Waste Projects Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with information on waste projects. This includes: the development of waste transfer station infrastructure; an update on the position regarding the assessment of long-term waste management options; and the investment in recycling and general waste collection services being made possible through Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) capital funding.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the contents of this report.
- ii. Note that the application to the Recycling Improvement Fund has been successful and will enable investment in collection services to improve recycling within Highland.
- iii. Note the updated position on waste transfer station infrastructure in Inverness and Fort William.
- iv. Note that Highland Council support funding for mobile shredders for treating bulky waste has been approved.
- v. Note the work is underway to provide an updated perspective on the feasibility and viability of long-term waste management options for The Highland Council.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource Implications

- a. The Highland Council has secured significant capital investment finance from the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF). The £6.5m

award will support a range of improvements to the Council's recycling performance and includes financial input to employ three additional members of staff over twenty-two months to prepare and implement the service rollout.

- b. On 2 March 23, The Highland Council approved funding of £275k to develop and implement an extensive communications programme to underpin the implementation of the RIF-backed service collection changes.
- c. On 2 March 23, The Highland Council also approved funding of £1m for the provision of up to three mobile waste shredders which will allow shredding of bulky waste down to a size for subsequent delivery of such waste to energy-from-waste facilities.

3.2 Legal Implications

- a. Highland Council has entered into an interim licence to occupy arrangement with the site owner at Fort William for the Household Waste Recycling Centre's use of the site. The Waste Team is working in conjunction with Highland Council's Legal and Estates Management Teams to determine the detail for a long-term lease agreement.
- b. More generally, the Council's Waste Management Service operates in a highly regulated environment. This regulatory regime covers the type of collection services that must be provided to households and businesses, the operation of our landfill sites and other facilities, and how material can be processed.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) Implications

The implementation of waste management services is undertaken in accord with Scottish Government legislation and takes community factors appropriately into account. A key aim of the RIF programme is to extend recycling opportunities to all including rural areas.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever Implications

The infrastructure developments, evolving the waste and recycling collection services and the investment in mobile waste shredders highlighted in this paper are intended to contribute to the effective management of waste in the Highlands. The use of mobile shredders will further improve diversion from landfill and assist in complying with the ban on landfilling biodegradable municipal waste. Redirecting waste away from landfill will have positive climate/carbon impacts.

3.5 Risk Implications

- a. Within the Recycling Improvement Fund activity to deliver the collection services changes there are a number of risks to be managed given the extent and complexity of the processes behind delivering the transformation. Of particular importance will be:
 - i. The timely delivery of new food waste collection vehicles.
 - ii. Securing the various new bin supplies.
 - iii. Householder engagement.
- b. Inverness waste transfer station – operating procedures require closer monitoring at the new transfer station whilst the range of users of the facility become familiar with its scale, layout and procedures.

- c. Fort William
 - i. An interim licence to occupy the Household Waste Recycling Centre to continue operations provides latitude to secure the long-term lease required to ensure continuation of operations at the current site.
 - ii. Work is underway to secure a suitable site and associated planning permission for developing a waste transfer station. An extension to the current waste management contracts with commercial providers is being sought to cover the period until a waste transfer station is built and operational.

3.6 Gaelic Implications

The are no Gaelic implications at present. Where changes to services are developed, information will be produced to include Gaelic language in keeping with Council policy.

4. **Waste Infrastructure Projects**

4.1 Inverness Waste Transfer Station

4.1.1 The new Inverness facility began operating as planned on 3rd April 2023. The residual waste (that which isn't going to be recycled) being aggregated at this facility is being sent to the Dunbar energy from waste facility under The Highland Council's waste management contract with the facility's operator, Viridor.

4.1.2 The co-mingled recyclate materials aggregated at the Inverness facility are transported by articulated lorry to a materials recycling facility at Broxburn operated by Biffa.

4.1.3 As agreed at the Communities and Place Committee on 23rd February 2023, a further visit to the facility will be arranged for Members to see the transfer station in operational mode.

4.2 Fort William Waste Transfer Station

Regarding the intention to establish a Council-operated waste transfer station in Fort William:

- a. The documentation to support a planning application is being prepared for submission at the end of May 2023;
- b. Discussions concerning the detail of a ground lease are continuing with the site owner's representatives;
- c. An application will be made to SEPA for a site waste management licence;
- d. Working towards a waste transfer station being operationally ready late 2024/early 2025.

5. **Additional Planned Investment**

5.1 There are two particularly notable areas of significant, additional investment intended:

- a. The waste collection service changes, with supporting infrastructure, which will be enabled through the successful Recycling Investment Fund application; and

- b. As agreed at the 2nd March 2023 meeting of The Highland Council, Waste Service will acquire and deploy up to three mobile shredders to reduce bulky waste to a sufficiently small size to be accepted by its contracted energy-from-waste service provider, Viridor (located Dunbar, East Lothian).

5.2 Recycling Improvement Fund – Service Change Investment

5.2.1 Members will recall that the Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) is a five-year programme of £70m running from 2021. It aims to accelerate progress towards Scotland’s waste and recycling targets and net zero commitment. Funding is being provided to increase recycling performance in Council areas.

5.2.2 An application was submitted by Highland Council to Zero Waste Scotland during February 2023 to seek £6.5m of capital funding assistance towards a range of related works to support service collection changes across all of Highland as described in the paper submitted to Communities & Place Committee on 23rd February 2023 ([Agenda Item 10](#)).

5.2.3 The application has been successful, and a number of capital projects will be funded by the RIF award to enable the service change. These are outlined in the table below.

No.	Project Description
01	Skye Waste Transfer Station extension
02	Seater Waste Transfer Station enhancement
03	Supply and distribution of household 140 litre & 360 litre bins (plus bin stickering)
04	Supply and distribution of household 180 litre bins (plus bin stickering)
05	Supply and distribution of kitchen food waste (internal and external) caddies
06	Supply of six food waste collection vehicles
07	Purchase of food waste caddy liners
08	Design and purchase of bin stickers
09	Supply and distribution of trade waste bins
10	Project staff
11	Supply and delivery of 5 x WEEE Small Domestic Appliance recycling banks for rural areas

5.2.4 The service changes will be wide-reaching to benefit Highland recycling performance:

- a. The project will undertake a phased roll-out of the new service delivered from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025 and will introduce a twin-stream recycling service to all households across Highland.
- b. The service change will require the introduction of an additional wheeled bin. The existing green general waste bin will be converted to collect the containers mix (plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays, cans, tins, foil, cartons). The existing blue

bin currently used for mixed recycling will be converted to collect the fibre mix (paper/card).

- c. Residual (general) waste capacity will be reduced at the kerbside for all Highland householders as part of the service change. The application to the Recycling Improvement Fund includes the provision of replacement smaller general waste bins for all households. Households in receipt of the weekly food waste recycling service will be provided with a new 140 litre general waste bin while all other households will be provided with a new 180 litre general waste bin.
- d. The food waste collection service will be expanded beyond Inverness to include households within accessible conurbations across the Ross & Cromarty, Nairn, and Fort William areas. This change will take place alongside the roll-out of the twin-stream recycling service and will require the funded provision of both internal and external food waste caddies and the additional vehicles required to service the areas.
- e. Residual waste bins will continue to be collected fortnightly, with twin-stream recycling being collected on a 4-week rotation:

Week 1	Residual (general) waste bin collection
Week 2	Fibre mix (paper/card) recycling bin collection
Week 3	Residual (general) waste bin collection
Week 4	Containers mix recycling bin collection

- f. Five small domestic appliance recycling banks will be placed in rural areas furthest from existing Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) or in areas where there is limited access to HWRCs, to gather Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). The Council will work in partnership with ILM (Highland) who operate a WEEE reuse operation and undertake collections as the appointed provider by REPIC the Producer Compliance Scheme. The banks will be located in Fort Augustus, Kingussie, Lochinver, Kyleakin and Lochcarron.

5.2.5

The 2nd March 2023 meeting of The Highland Council agreed funding of £275k for a communications package which would support the RIF service change implementation if the application for RIF funding were successful. As the application has been successful the communications package funding will be called upon.

- a. An effective communications with householders is vital to ensuring the projected outcomes and ambitions contained within the RIF application can be achieved and sustained.
- b. Multiple communications channels and targeted messaging will be used to explain why the service change is being introduced and what service recipients will be required to do. Advice and guidance on how to reduce waste will also be integral part of the communications plan.
- c. In advance of each geographic rollout, there will be co-ordinated communications. Information will be supplied via numerous routes including Highland Council's website, social media channels, advertising, community

engagement events and through the provision of a detailed booklet and service collection calendar with the new bin deliveries.

- d. There will also be an internal campaign to inform Members and Community Councils, to engage and prepare with Customer Services, to brief and train Waste Collection Crews and, to pursue alignment with the Net Zero Waste Action Plan, dialogue and interaction with senior colleagues within the Education Service and within Property and Facilities Management.

5.3 Mobile Waste Shredders Investment

- 5.3.1 A business case was put to Council on 2nd March 2023 ([Revenue and capital budgets 2023/24 and medium-term financial outlook](#), from Page 96 of the report) as one of the invest-to-save proposals. This was agreed by Council.
- 5.3.2 The Council manages two types of non-recyclable, household, waste. The majority is collected at the kerbside which is increasingly being sent to an energy-from-waste (EfW) facility. The second type includes larger domestic items that are too large to fit into a kerbside bin; generally referred to as 'bulky waste'. These might be collected as part of a chargeable collection or deposited at a Recycling Centre. Due to size acceptance constraints at EfWs these items cannot be thermally treated and traditionally have been sent to landfill.
- 5.3.3 An investment in up to three mobile shredders will allow the Council to reduce bulky waste items to a sufficiently small size to be accepted by its contracted energy-from-waste service provider, Viridor (located Dunbar, East Lothian). Bulky waste cannot currently be treated through the residual waste management contract given the energy-from-waste facility's operational constraints. Mobile shredders will offer a solution to that exclusion for all appropriate bulky waste components.
- 5.3.4 Recent assessment by the Environment Agency of some bulky waste (soft furnishings such as sofas, chairs, cushions etc) has identified that they can contain high concentrations of chemicals that do not readily degrade in the environment (known as Persistent Organic Pollutants or POPs).
- 5.3.5 Such waste chemicals are controlled internationally and can only be destroyed through a thermal treatment process. As EfW facilities will not accept bulky waste due to size acceptance constraints there is a requirement to pre-treat via shredding to allow such waste to be diverted from landfill.
- 5.3.6 Initial market engagement with suppliers is currently being undertaken to determine the range of shredders available that would meet both the Council's needs and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency statutory guidance (which is still being finalised). It is intended that a procurement to purchase the shredders would be progressed later this year so that installation and commissioning can be undertaken in early 2024.
- 5.3.7 Shredding bulky waste will ensure that the Council can:
 - a. Meet its obligations to divert all waste that contains persistent organic pollutants from landfill in accordance with any forthcoming SEPA statutory guidance; and

- b. Meet the commitments that all biodegradable waste should be diverted from landfill by the end of 2025.

6. Long-term Waste Management

6.1 Ministerial Meeting

6.1.1 The Highland Council, represented by the Communities and Place Committee Chair, by the Executive Chief Officer for Communities and Place, and by the Waste Service's Strategic Lead for Waste Strategy and Operations, met with Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity on 2 May 2023 in Edinburgh regarding long-term waste management and the circular economy agenda.

6.1.2 The Highland Council and The Scottish Government will continue to work closely together including on the long-term waste management solution for Highland.

6.2 Residual Waste – Long-term Management Requirement

6.2.1 The study to provide an updated perspective on the feasibility and viability of long-term waste management options for The Highland Council, taking account of all relevant factors, is underway. This work includes an assessment of the likely carbon impacts of the different waste management approaches. The options in focus are either establishing an energy-from-waste (EfW) facility at the closed Longman landfill site, Inverness or utilising the services of a merchant energy-from-waste facility outside of the Highlands. (Note: merchant plants typically take business from a range of clients under contracts of varying duration.)

6.2.2 The findings will be presented to this Committee possibly as early as August 2023 and no later than November 2023.

6.2.3

In undertaking the study, a range of factors are being considered including:

- a. Recommendations from the Incineration Review (May 2022) including seeking to reduce the recyclable plastics content of residual waste, to limit planning consents for new EfW plants, to implement combined heat and power output requirements on EfW operations and for carbon capture technologies to be included in the design of future EfW infrastructure.
- b. The significant changes in many areas including finance, interest rates, inflation etc. over the last couple of years that need to be reflected.
- c. The recommendation from the Decarbonisation Review (February 2023) that by 2030 all plastic should be removed before incineration.
- d. The data from the recent study into the Highland's waste composition, the potential impact of the Deposit Return Scheme in altering the composition of waste going into EfW plants and the impact this may have on the power output performance of EfW operations.
- e. The consideration being given at a UK level to the introduction of a carbon tax (under the UK Emissions Trading Scheme or separately) to incentivise action on limiting rising emissions from the increasing number of UK EfW plants.
- f. The EfW developments in different stages of preparation within Scotland at this time (for example four new merchant facilities are currently under construction at Grangemouth, Westfield [Fife], Glasgow and Airdrie).
- g. The views and opinions of various subject matter experts within Highland Council teams including Waste, Development and Regeneration, Development Planning, Ecology, Climate Change, Project Design Unit and Contaminated Land Unit.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

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