

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	10
Report No	CP/22/23

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 31 August 2023

Report Title: Waste Management Service Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides information to members on Waste Management activity, this includes:

- i. The emerging and immediate service changes that is required to be applied to the collection, storage and treatment of Upholstered Furniture.
- ii. The ongoing work being undertaken for implementing collection service changes that are being funded through the Recycling Improvement Fund. In addition, the report also includes information regarding the planned Waste Transfer Station in Fort William.
- iii. An update on the Nairn Reuse Feasibility Project.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the service response to the imminent ban on Upholstered Furniture being landfilled.
- ii. **Note** the work and progress being made connected to the Recycling Improvement Fund project and that a detailed report including the scheduled and planned roll-out will be reported to this committee in November 2023.
- iii. **Note** the updated position on the planned Waste Transfer Station in Fort William.
- iv. **Note** the scope of work and progress on the Nairn Re-Use Feasibility Project.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

There will be an additional cost impact connected to the required separation, treatment and in particular haulage of upholstered domestic seating. The overall cost increase is being calculated but as the Council does not, nor is required to, hold such specific data so it is challenging to forecast accurately just how much upholstered furniture that will need to be managed. The service changes outlined in section 4 of this report as the Council will reduce the cost impact wherever possible.

3.2 Legal

The Council is required to introduce immediate service changes to comply with the SEPA statutory guidance on the collection, storage and treatment of Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

The public show a high satisfaction with waste and recycling services, they are regarded among the most important services provided to the public. The aim of the service changes provided through RIF project is to improve recycling services further.

To enable our compliance with the new statutory guidance on upholstered furniture, it is necessary for the Council to limit the acceptance of upholstered furniture at certain smaller recycling centres. This is detailed in section 4 of this report and within appendix 1 that accompanies this report.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

The planned service changes through the delivery of the Recycling Improvement Fund project will contribute to more effective sustainable waste management practices in the Highlands. Reducing residual waste and increasing the quantity and quality of collected recycling will have positive climate/carbon impacts.

3.5 Risk

The Council is required to secure and maintain a separate treatment solution to comply with SEPA's statutory guidance on the collection, storage, and treatment of Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating. There is limited compliant treatment solutions in Scotland, if the Council failed in securing a solution the option of pausing the acceptance of this waste would need to be considered. This risk has been mitigated through the services pro-active market engagement.

The current waste and recycling collection system is well established, the proposed service change through the RIF project will further move the balance of collections away from non-recyclable waste. The risks associated with the implementation of the service change will be mitigated by communicating the rationale clearly through a communication and engagement strategy that will assist householders maximise the use of the service change.

3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are organic chemical substances which pose a risk to health and the environment due to their persistence in the environment. The Stockholm Convention was developed to address the continuing release of POPs into the environment and protect human health and the environment. SEPA is the competent and enforcing authority for the UK POPs Regulations in Scotland. The service changes detailed in section 4 of this report will achieve compliance with SEPA's statutory guidance.

3.7 Gaelic

There 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. **Statutory Guidance on Upholstered Furniture**

4.1 Currently the Council directs all Upholstered Furniture to landfill either at its own facilities or a contractor's facility. During 2023 SEPA engaged with Councils on the

implications of research undertaken by the Environment Agency (EA) on the chemical content of Upholstered Furniture.

- 4.2 This research had identified that a large proportion of Upholstered Furniture contained Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). Such chemicals were largely used as fire retardants.
- 4.3 Legislation requires that when such chemicals become waste they must be permanently destroyed as they can bioaccumulate and cause negative impacts on animals, humans and the environment. The SEPA statutory guidance has not yet been published on the management of Upholstered Furniture and POPs contaminated waste.
- 4.4 Prior to July 2023 it was understood that there would be a transition period for Councils, and their contractors, to put in place managed alternatives to landfilling Upholstered Furniture upon the statutory guidance being published.
- 4.5 Councils were advised, in mid-July, that there will be an immediate ban to landfill of any Upholstered Furniture or waste that has been mixed with such Upholstered Furniture (as it is potentially POPs contaminated) from the date the statutory guidance is published. This is expected to be the end of August or early September 2023.
- 4.6 Under current Council operations this would result in all non-recyclable waste collected at HWRCs and that managed in smaller waste transfer stations being considered as POPs contaminated and hence would need to be diverted from landfill.

5. Statutory Guidance on Upholstered Furniture – Implications

- 5.1 The Council will be obligated to divert Upholstered Furniture, and any other waste that is mixed with such Upholstered Furniture, from landfill with immediate effect when the guidance is published.
- 5.2 There are no local facilities that would be able to treat Upholstered Furniture.
- 5.3 If current operations were maintained, a significant proportion of non-recyclable waste managed by the Council would be classed as contaminated with POPs material. Such waste would need to be diverted to an alternative treatment facility at increased haulage and treatment costs.

6. Statutory Guidance on Upholstered Furniture – Actions

- 6.1 To mitigate these costs the Council is therefore implementing immediate changes to its operations which in summary are as follows:
 - Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) that have suitable space will have an allocated skip container so that residents can separate their Upholstered Furniture. It is intended that there will be at least one site in each region of Highland.
 - HWRCs that do not have suitable space to accommodate an additional skip container will cease accepting Upholstered Furniture. Residents will be directed to alternative sites or to use the bulky waste collection service.

- The bulky waste collection service will continue to be provided as normal as these can separate Upholstered Furnishings at the point of collection.

- 6.2 Appropriate communications will be provided at all sites and through media channels to advise the public of the proposed changes.
- 6.3 Collected Upholstered Furnishings and other waste contaminated with POPs will be directed to either the Waste Transfer Station at the Seater Landfill or Longman.
- 6.4 The waste will then be bulked up at these two sites prior to them being sent for treatment. Although mitigated through a lower tonnage, a cost increase is still expected due to increased haulage costs, a greater distance to the treatment facilities that can manage POPs and increased treatment costs when compared to the existing landfill solution.
- 6.5 The Council continues to progress procuring shredders to allow such Upholstered Furniture to be managed in a more efficient manner (e.g., to maximise payloads). However, these are not currently expected to be available until the end of 23/24.

7. Summary on Upholstered Furniture

- 7.1 The Council is required to make immediate changes to managing Upholstered Furniture to comply with the introduction of the new statutory guidance. As such an amended service is to be provided for managing Upholstered Furniture at Council Household Recycling Centres and these are intended to be introduced when the SEPA guidance is published. Detail of the Recycling Centres that will continue to accept upholstered furnishings is provided at appendix 1 with this report.

8. Recycling Improvement Fund Project

- 8.1 Members will recall the application submitted by the Council to the Recycling Improvement Fund which sought funding support towards a range of related works to support waste and recycling collection service changes across all of Highland was successful.
- 8.2 The service changes are described in detail within the paper submitted to Communities & Place Committee on 23 February 2023. ([Agenda Item 10](#))
- 8.3 The Recycling Improvement project funding agreement between the Council and Zero Waste Scotland was signed by Executive Chief Officer for Communities and Place on the 14 June 2023. The agreement sets out key obligations we are required to undertake to enable the project to be delivered effectively and the project outcomes to be fully realised.
- 8.4 The distribution of bins and food caddies to households for a phased implementation of service change is scheduled to be undertaken between Spring 2024 and Summer 2025. A detailed report including the scheduled roll-out will be taken to this committee in November 2023, this will include details of the significant work involved, such as essential procurement for the delivery of the project.
- 8.5 The preparation of a comprehensive communications plan is already underway. This will include a variety of communications channels to fully inform and support service change. Formal communication will commence in November 2023 well in advance of

the first area roll-out in Spring 2024. Reports on progress will be presented to this Committee for Members scrutiny.

- 8.6 The RIF award will **fully fund** a number of capital projects that are essential to achieving successful 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

9. Fort William – Waste Transfer Station

- 9.1 A planning application has been submitted (on 5th June 2023). The application number is 23/02722/FUL, accessible via <http://wam.highland.gov.uk>. The application has been notified to consultees for their review and comment. It has not yet been determined to which South Planning Applications Committee the planning submission will be put.
- 9.2 A Heads of Terms Agreement for the development site is being progressed with the site owner's representatives. As part of that process a visit was hosted at the Aviemore waste transfer station on 1st August 2023 to illustrate the nature of operations undertaken within such a facility.
- 9.3 Should lease negotiations progress smoothly towards a positive conclusion following the site information visit, and should the planning application be successful, Council officers are working towards the waste transfer station being operational by late 2024/early 2025.
- 9.4 A set of Frequently asked Questions concerning the proposed waste transfer station development at Fort William, previously distributed to Lochaber Members, is included at Appendix 2 of this report.

10. Nairn Reuse Feasibility Project

- 10.1 Enscape Consulting Ltd. were appointed by the Highland Council in June 2023 to undertake a feasibility study for the potential development of a Reduce, Reuse and Recycle facility in Nairn.
- 10.2 The study will seek to evaluate the financial, environmental and socio-economic benefits of pursuing a Reduce, Reuse and Recycle pathfinder model and will aim to identify a viable set of proposals which are capable of implementation.
- 10.3 The study schedule was set at around 12 weeks and has focused on:

- a. Potential operational models
 - b. Detailed cost benefit analysis
 - c. Material stream mapping
 - d. Opportunities for funding and associated barriers
 - e. Applicability of the model across other nonspecific sites in the Highland region
- 10.4 Stakeholder engagement has been a significant part of the study and been carried in parallel to the work above. The approach has incorporated interviews with local and regional organisations as well as a public consultation survey which closed on the 4th of August. The Highland-wide survey conducted independently by Enscape Consulting closed with 640 responses. This is a very healthy response which will allow the Council to consider a broad range of interests in Reduce, Reuse and Recycle models in Highland.
- 10.5 The final report will include the outcomes from all stakeholder engagement as well as make recommendations on a path forward to be considered by the Nairn Area Committee and to Communities & Place Committee in due course.
- 11. Long-term Residual Waste Management Options – Feasibility Study**
- 11.1 Members at the Waste Strategy Working Group which took place on the 8 August 2023 received a progress update on the Energy from Waste feasibility assessment report. The final report which is being completed by SLR consulting will be reported in detail to the Communities and Place Committee in November 2023.
- 11.2 Minutes from the Waste Strategy Working Group are included within agenda item 13 of this Committee.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

Date: 10 August 2023

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Sites accepting and not accepting Upholstered Furnishings

Appendix 2 - Fort William Waste Transfer Station FAQ's

Appendix 1 – Sites accepting and not accepting Upholstered Furnishings

Table 1.0 details the sites that will, and won't be, accepting Upholstered Furnishings from the date that SEPA enforce their ban to landfill.

Table 1.0 Upholstered Furniture Acceptance across Highland Council Recycling Centres

Household Recycling Centre	Upholstered Furniture Accepted	Upholstered Furniture not Accepted
Badenoch and Strathspey		
Aviemore	X	
Grantown on Spey		X
Kingussie		X
Nairn	X	
Caithness		
Thurso HWRC	X	
Wick HWRC	X	
Inverness		
Henderson Drive, Inverness HWRC	X	
Lochaber		
Fort William HWRC	X	
Kilchoan HWRC		X
Ross and Cromarty		
Alness HWRC	X	
Dingwall HWRC	X	
Gairloch HWRC	X	
Tain HWRC		X
Ullapool HWRC		X
Skye & Lochalsh		
Portree HWRC	X	
Sutherland		
Bonar Bridge HWRC		X
Brora HWRC	X	
Durness HWRC		X
Lairg HWRC	X	
Tongue HWRC		X
Torbreck HWRC		X

Fort William Waste Transfer Station

Frequently Asked Questions

Summary

The Highland Council is proposing to construct a Waste Transfer Station in Fort William to support waste and recycling collection service change, divert waste from landfill and manage waste in an efficient manner. The following provides a list of common Frequently Asked Questions that may arise associated with the development of a Waste Transfer Station.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of a Waste Transfer Station?

A waste transfer station is designed to bulk waste to allow it to be transported more efficiently. The kerbside vehicles (known as Refuse Collection Vehicles or RCVs) that collect waste and recycling from the individual households, or smaller lorries that collect waste and recycling from Household Waste Recycling Centres, will deliver the waste to such transfer stations where it is bulked up into larger quantities within a contained building. The waste is then loaded into articulated lorries - this minimises the number of vehicle movements needed to manage waste within the local region.

2. What will happen to the different waste and recycling that will be delivered to the Waste Transfer Station

The Waste Transfer Station is likely to accept a variety of waste and recycling, in the majority being made up of:-

Paper and Card (or "Fibres") that is collected separately will be sent to paper mills, potentially via an intermediary sorting facility, where it can then be repurposed into new clean paper and card.

Containers, including cans, plastic bottles and tubs and trays will be sent to a Material Recovery Facility where the individual types of plastics and metals will be separated. These materials will then be sent to facilities that will remanufacture them into the clean materials suitable for using in new products.

Food Waste will be loaded into dedicated containers and transported to either In-vessel Compositing or Anaerobic Digestion Facilities. These facilities biodegrade the food waste to produce a compost to a standard that can then be used as a soil improver or natural fertiliser.

"Black bag" mixed waste generally collected from householders (or business premises) at the kerbside will be sent to an Energy from Facility based at Dunbar, under contract with the Council. The waste is incinerated which drives turbines and generates both electricity and heat.

“Bulky” mixed waste generally collected at Household Waste Recycling Centres and from bulky waste collections. This will be pre-treated with the intent to prepare it for being sent to an Energy from Waste facility.

3. When is the Transfer Station intended to be operational?

It is expected that the Waste Transfer Station will be operational during the winter/spring of 2024/25.

4. What are the proposed operating hours of the site?

The Waste Transfer Station will be open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Saturday, barring exceptional circumstances.

5. How many people would be employed at the Waste Transfer Station?

It is expected that two full time members of staff will be on site at any one time.

6. Will any operations be undertaken outside the building.

The waste operations will be undertaken within the building. This includes loading, unloading and bulking of waste. Some movement of containers, refuelling of equipment and similar activities are likely to take place outside of the main building but within the overall site compound.

7. How big will the building on site be?

The Transfer Station building will be approximately 49m long, 24m deep and 11.5m high (to the apex). In addition, there will be a small office on site. This is approximately twice the operational area (but similar height) of the transfer station built recently near Aviemore.

8. Will any hazardous materials be stored on site

The site will include a small fuel tank for the purpose of fuelling the equipment used to load and unload waste.

9. Will any waste be disposed of on-site?

No, the site is not a landfill site. It is designed to accept waste and then manage such waste to allow for its more efficient transport. No disposal operations are to be undertaken at the site.

10. What types of waste will be accepted at the site

The Transfer Station will largely accept waste collected from the kerbside or the Recycling Centres. This would include 'black bag' mixed waste, bulky (e.g. sofas, tables) waste, and recyclable wastes, such as food, card, paper and containers.

11. Will the site accept waste from delivered directly from businesses or other industry

No, the site is being designed to accept waste that the Highland Council has collected (from householders or Business Waste collections) or other similar household "municipal" waste sources.

12. Why is there a need for a Waste Transfer Station?

Currently the Council is reliant on a nearby landfill site to dispose of its mixed waste and for bulking up of the recyclable material the area generates ready for onwards transportation for reprocessing. From the end of 2025 Scottish legislation will ban municipal waste from landfill. The Council has a contract with Viridor to accept mixed waste at an Energy from Waste facility located in Dunbar. The Council therefore requires a facility to allow the efficient transport of waste to this facility.

Additionally, the successful Recycling Improvement Fund bid will result in the roll out of food waste collections and the separating of recyclable waste into paper/card and containers (such as cans and plastic bottles). This will require additional bulking areas to ensure that these can be stored separately to maximise the amount of material that is recycled.

13. Why is the facility being located at the Ben Nevis Industrial Estate, Fort William?

Waste Transfer Stations are best located near where the waste arisings are generated.

14. Will the site be noticeable from residential properties

The Fort William Transfer Station is to be approximately 250m from the nearest residential property within the Ben Nevis Industrial Estate which vehicles will access the site through. It is not expected that the site will have any impact on these residential properties.

15. Will the site generate any noticeable smell, dust or pests?

No, the Waste Management Licence (issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency) will limit the time that putrescible waste can be stored on site. Additionally, the building will be installed with doors that will be closed when the Transfer Station is not in use. The site will not generate any noticeable smell, dust or pests outside its boundary.

16. How will the Waste Transfer Station manage fire risks?

The site has been designed to ensure that the various types of waste and recyclables can be kept separate to minimise fires. Loads of waste and recyclables will regularly be removed from the site to ensure that at any one time the tonnage of waste and recyclables on site is low, reducing the risk of fires starting.

17. What is the site currently used for?

The proposed site is currently a brownfield site that has been used for commercial and industrial purposes in the past. It is currently derelict with areas of detritus and stockpiles of soil that will be cleared or levelled in advance of any development.

18. How many tonnes of waste is the site likely to manage

It is estimated that approximately 12,000 to 13,000 tonnes per annum of waste and recyclables will be managed through the Transfer Station when it commences operations.

19. How many vehicle movements are expected at the site?

Based on current estimates, it is expected that there will be 34 vehicle movements at the site per day when it commences operations. This includes staff car movements. This is equivalent to an average of 4-5 per hour.

20. Will the facility allow the Council to be more carbon efficient with its waste?

The Council currently uses a landfill site for the disposal of its waste in Lochaber region. Although this facility is local, the disposal of mixed waste in landfill will generate methane, a gas that is a significant contributor to climate change. The waste transfer station will allow the Council to direct 'black bag' mixed waste to an Energy from Waste facility which would result in approximately a 27%¹ reduction in carbon emissions compared to disposing of such waste to landfill.

21. What other environmental benefits will the Transfer Station bring?

The development of the waste transfer station will allow a greater separation of recyclable material. In combination with the roll out of the new service the Council will be able to introduce a number of measures to allow residents to increase their recycling. This includes the introduction of a food waste collection service and the separation of fibres (paper and card) and containers (cans, plastics etc). The increased diversion of waste to recycling will support the overall aims of a circular economy and minimising the waste that needs to be disposed of or sent to thermal recovery.

22. How is the Council offsetting the removal of the trees and other vegetation on the site?

¹ <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/resources/climate-change-impact-burning-municipal-waste-scotland>

The site has previously been used for industrial purposes and had a number of soil and stone stockpiles from these activities. Over time this has become self-seeded but was assessed as having very low amenity value. The planning application includes a tree avenue as part of the development with the intent that this will introduce new tree growth in the area. The development should hence result in an overall improvement to the amenity of the area.